

# THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF GERRARD WINSTANLEY

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ONE of the major domestic issues of mid-seventeenth century England was the problem of how to work out and apply a pragmatic concept of the power of government. Consequently England during the period of the Interregnum became a significant battleground of ideas when diverse militant and articulate groups struggled for power and dominance. The military phase of the Great Rebellion began on August 22, 1642, when King Charles I raised the royal standard at Nottingham. This action represented the culmination of some forty years of intensified struggle for supremacy between the Stuart dynasty and Parliament. Intermingled with the constitutional causes were religious, economic, and social factors. A remarkable feature of the English civil war is the point that although both sides suffered from internal dissension, the faction which suffered the most from such disputes won the war. After nearly four years of military strife the first phase of the conflict ended when Charles I surrendered himself to the Scots on May 5, 1646.

Following the royal surrender a wave of radicalism permeated the ranks and even the staffs of the Army. With the intervention of the Army in political affairs during Charles I's imprisonment, sharp divisions appeared in English Puritanism, and the various sects devised their own Utopias. The existence of a multiplicity of sects led to mutual jealousies and rivalries.<sup>1</sup>

Among these groups were the political Levellers. Dissatisfied with the cautious and conservative plan of reform worked out by certain officers, this militant soldiers' party advocated a more radical program, political in its emphasis rather than social.<sup>2</sup> In *An Agreement of the People* the political Levellers proposed the establishment of a democratic form of government, limited and restrained by an exact written statement of the laws of nature and of reason.<sup>3</sup> The political thought of these Levellers

<sup>1</sup> Similarities of the different groups are set forth in William Y. Tindall, *John Bunyan Mechanick Preacher* (New York, 1934), pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*, rev. ed. (New York, 1950), p. 480.

<sup>3</sup> This pamphlet is printed in *Leveller Manifestoes of the Puritan Revolution*, ed. by Don M. Wolfe (New York, 1944), pp. 226-34.

rested on the conviction that the life of a nation should be in accordance with certain moral principles.<sup>4</sup> John Lilburne was probably their best known and most vocal leader.<sup>5</sup>

Among the interesting offshoots of the political Levellers were the social Levellers or 'Diggers' of St. George's Hill. They were led by the egalitarian-minded Gerrard Winstanley, a native of Lancashire. In this paper an effort has been made to present the governmental organization proposed by Gerrard Winstanley and to show how he hoped to carry out the social and political philosophy of the Digger Movement. This phase of Winstanley's philosophy seems to be inadequately presented in published monographs.<sup>6</sup>

David Petegorsky has stated that the Digger Movement represents another link in the long chain of socialist thought that successive centuries of agrarian revolt have forged. The comprehensiveness of the Digger's social philosophy constituted an interesting effort to give the age-old vision of a cooperative society an adequate theoretical framework.<sup>7</sup> The reason for the rise of the Digger Movement, which at first was considered a left wing of the Leveller party, can probably be stated best in Winstanley's own words addressed to Oliver Cromwell:

For is not this a common speech among the people, we have parted with our Estates, we have lost our Friends in the Wars, which we willingly gave up, because Freedom was promised us; and now in the end we have new Task-Masters, and our old burdens increased; and though all sorts of people have taken an Engagement to cast out Kingly Power, yet Kingly Power

<sup>4</sup>For a detailed discussion see Theodore C. Pease, *The Leveller Movement; a study in the history and political theory of the English great civil war* (Washington, D.C., 1916), and Joseph Frank, *The Levellers; a history of the writings of three seventeenth-century social democrats; John Lilburne, Richard Overton, William Walwyn* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955). Also useful is *The Leveller tracts, 1647-1653*, ed. by William Haller and Godfrey Davies (New York, 1944).

<sup>5</sup>The fullest account is by M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne, the Leveller, a Christian democrat* (London, 1947). William Haller's *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York, 1938) discusses Lilburne's writings and career up to the Long Parliament.

<sup>6</sup>Lewis H. Berens, who made the first extended study of Winstanley, has interpreted him essentially as a forerunner of Henry George. See *The Digger movement in the days of the Commonwealth as revealed in the writings of Gerrard Winstanley* (London, 1906). Eduard Bernstein in his *Socialismus und Demokratie in der grossen englischen Revolution*, translated by H.L. Stenning as *Cromwell and Communism...* (London, 1930) interprets Winstanley as a forerunner of Marx.

<sup>7</sup>David Petegorsky, *Left-wing democracy in the English Civil War; a study of the social philosophy of Gerrard Winstanley* (London, 1940) p. 13.

remains in power still in the hands of those who have no more right to the Earth than ourselves.<sup>8</sup>

For them the revolution had not gone far enough. Those who formed the Digger party appear to have been drawn from those members of the less prosperous middle class forced by economic stress into the ranks of the propertyless.<sup>9</sup> This was true of Winstanley himself, an unsuccessful small merchant.

The aims of the Diggers were summed up briefly by Winstanley as follows: government without buying and selling, laws that assure a free and peaceful commonwealth, separate residence for each family, improvement of every trade to greater excellency, education of all children, greater subjection of children to parents and elders, common planting and reaping of the earth, common store houses for all, and no idle persons or beggars in the land.<sup>10</sup> In contrast to the political Levellers, emphasis was placed primarily on social reform.

Winstanley's earliest writings showed a mystic influence. In these writings he relied on non-worldly forces to bring about his ideal society. God, he said, would destroy the power of darkness, and when His work was completed, He would dwell in the whole creation;<sup>11</sup> neither would He suffer the scoffers to destroy His people.<sup>12</sup> One should be patient in his bondage for the work of freedom was in the hand of Christ.<sup>13</sup> This point of view was somewhat altered by 1649. Although Winstanley retained his conviction that only God could achieve the final redemption of mankind, he urged that the propertyless class itself begin the process through direct action.<sup>14</sup> The action took the form of the Saint George Hill endeavour. Aided by a small group of followers, Winstanley for a year attempted to take over the commons of Saint George Hill and set up his experimental state. After about a year this experiment failed as a result of the opposition of the surrounding populace. This endeavour was no effort to seize control by force. Only the ancient commons, wasteland, and recently won lands were to be set free to all who were willing to come into the

<sup>8</sup> 'The law of freedom in a platform or true magistracy restored,' in *The words of Gerrard Winstanley, with an appendix of documents relating to the Digger movement* (hereinafter cited as *Works*), ed. by George H. Sabine (Ithaca, New York, 1941), p. 507.

<sup>9</sup> Sabine, *Political Theory*, p. 479.

<sup>10</sup> 'To the friendly and unbyassed reader,' *Works*, p. 515.

<sup>11</sup> 'The Myserie of God', *Works*, p. 81.

<sup>12</sup> 'The saints paradise', *Works*, pp. 94-5.

<sup>13</sup> 'The new law of righteousness budding forth, to restore the whole creation from bondage of the curse', *Works*, p. 183.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

practice of the new government and to be obedient to the laws thereof. Others would have remained, as Winstanley phrased it, in the way of the conqueror, buying and selling, until they were willing to join.<sup>15</sup> A last change was made in Winstanley's approach in 1652 when Cromwell was beseeched to use his influence and power to put into effect the new government suggested in *The Law of Freedom*, a work dedicated to him. The head of the Commonwealth had the opportunity to act for common freedom if he would.<sup>16</sup>

*The Law of Freedom* may be taken as a summation of the basic political and social concepts of Winstanley. Primarily in this work is one able to see a detailed consideration of how the earlier Digger concepts were to be put into effect. This document was not meant as a final constitution, but instead Winstanley submitted it to Cromwell in the form of suggestions on which to base a future constitution.

Winstanley believed that in the beginning the earth and its fruits were held in common. Every man had an equal right to till the soil and to have dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowls of heaven, and the fish in seas. But this freedom was broken by the power of covetousness, pride, and self love.<sup>17</sup> Kingly power rose: first, by drawing the people from a common enjoyment of the earth to the crafty art of buying and selling, and by advancing itself through the power of the sword, when the art of buying had made the people quarrel among themselves.<sup>18</sup> This concept is somewhat in keeping with the old vision of the Golden Age held by the early Christian fathers and Seneca, the Roman philosopher.

The original source of magistracy was common preservation, and it arose first in the private family. The two roots of law were common preservation and self preservation. A true magistrate's work was to maintain the common law, which was the root of right government, to preserve peace for everyone, and to cast out all self centered principles and interests which were tyrannical and oppressive.<sup>19</sup>

True freedom, in Winstanley's conception, lay where a man received his nourishment and preservation, and that was in the use of the earth. A man was better to have no body than to lack food for it; therefore, this denial of the use of the earth to brethren was oppression and bondage.<sup>20</sup> In the government of a land there were three factors—laws, fit officers, and a faithful execution of the laws, for therein lay the very life of govern-

<sup>15</sup> 'The law of freedom...' *Works*, p. 513.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 510.

<sup>17</sup> 'The new law of righteousness', *Works*, p. 182.

<sup>18</sup> 'The law of freedom...', *Works*, p. 531.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 536-8.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 519-20.

ment.<sup>21</sup> One had to establish either a commonwealth or a monarchy.<sup>22</sup>

William, Duke of Normandy, had taken possession of the earth for his freedom and had disposed of the English land to his friends as he pleased, thereby making the conquered English his servants. At least this was Winstanley's belief. Every king from William I to Charles I had been a successor of that conquest, and laws had been made to confirm the seizure. Winstanley's disapproval applied likewise to the old and new gentry, who were but the successors of the Normans. Lawyers and the clergy, appointed to enforce the foreigner's law, stuck close to their master, the king, and to his monarchical oppressing government, otherwise they would have to work to support themselves.<sup>23</sup> Regal government might well be called the government of highwaymen, who had stolen the earth from the younger brethren by force and held it from them. The ruler of such a state sheds blood not to free the people from oppression, but in order that he might dominate them.<sup>24</sup>

In contrast, a Commonwealth government appeared to Winstanley to govern the earth without buying and selling, and thereby it became an organization of peace and freedom. This government would make provision for the oppressed, the weak, and the simple, as well as for the rich, the wise, and the strong; it would not depend upon the will of any particular man or men, for it was seated in the spirit of mankind.<sup>25</sup> The victory over the king provided an opportunity to re-establish the only basis of quality, which had been prevented so long by the descendants of the conquerors.

In *The Law of Freedom* Winstanley provided for four levels of government — the family, the town or the parish, the county, and the nation. A father, as head of the family, was to cherish his children until they grew wise and strong. Also he was to instruct them in reading, languages, arts and sciences, or he was to provide for their instruction in some trade.<sup>26</sup>

On the second level of government, there were to be peacemakers, overseers, soldiers, task-masters and executioners. The principal duties of the peacemakers were to sit in council, to administer the parish, to prevent troubles, and to preserve the common peace. In their efforts to settle quarrels between individuals they were empowered to use only persuasion. If unable to reconcile the parties, they were to command the offenders to appear at the Judge's court, a higher tribunal in the judicial system. These peacemakers were also to be responsible for warning officers who

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 528-9.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 527.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 527-8.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 533-4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 545.

neglected their duty, and in case the neglect continued they were to notify the County Senate or National Parliament.<sup>27</sup>

Overseers were divided into four classifications. One group would aid the peacemakers in preserving order. Smaller matters could be settled by the overseer without reference to the peacemaker if the solution was mutually satisfactory to the disputants. Supervision of the training of young people in the trades was a second task. Every type of trade or rural skill had an overseer. No one could be idly reared. Seven years of apprenticeship were necessary before one could become a Master. Other overseers saw that tradesmen brought in their work to the stockhouses and shops. Regulation of the clerks of these establishments was a further responsibility. Finally, there was a group, over sixty years of age, who served as general overseers. The theory of this elaborate system was that so many watchful eyes would compel obedience to the law.<sup>28</sup>

The soldier was like a city marshal of today and always under an order from an officer, usually a peacemaker, or one with greater authority. His duty was to apprehend offenders and bring them before the officers or courts. One could be released while awaiting trial unless his actions warranted the death penalty. This freedom was permitted for two reasons: first, to prevent prison cruelty, and second, to present an opportunity for the accused to aid himself by the example of his righteous living. If an offender should escape while in this state of temporary freedom, the penalty was death.<sup>29</sup>

Task-masters were to take under their supervision those who were sentenced by the Judge to lose their freedom and to assign them work. The quantity and quality of the prisoner's food was lessened if he did not work. 'A rod is prepared for the fool's back' was to be the motto of these officers. Again there was the death penalty for a prisoner who ran away while serving a sentence.<sup>30</sup> If such an extreme penalty became necessary, the executioner performed this function.<sup>31</sup>

Over these local governmental units were imposed the county authorities, a Judge and the Judge's Court or County Senate. A Judge heard cases referred to him by the peacemakers and lower authorities. Under no circumstances could he interpret the law, as Winstanley implied the royal judges had done. Furthermore, no fee'd lawyer could practice before the court.<sup>32</sup> Assisting the Judge was the County Senate, composed of the Judge, all peacemakers, overseers, and soldiers within the circuit. Its duty was the supervision of county officers and the settlement of disorders

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 545-6.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 546-51.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 552-3.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 553-4.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 554.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 554-5.

that might break or disturb the people.<sup>33</sup> This Senate or Court was to meet four times a year in the County and four times in the large cities.

At the head of the whole government was a yearly elected parliament which served as the highest court of equity and oversaw all other courts, officers, and actions of governmental officers. This parliament possessed the power to remove all grievances and to ease any oppression of the people. Its particular work was four-fold: first, as a tender father it gave out orders for free planting and reaping of the Commonwealth land (abbey lands, crown lands, Bishops' lands, parks, forest and commons); second, this body, with the consent of the people, could abolish old laws and substitute new laws for the comfort of the people; third, it was to see that all burdens were actually removed from the people and when the land was freed to keep it so; and last, this central authority had the right to wage war and manage the army.<sup>34</sup> This army originated from the necessity of common preservation. In peace time the magistracy alone composed the army.

Information was to be secured for this central government through a system of postmasters, who were required to send detailed statements of the news of their respective areas. This information could be used to prepare an overall program for the nation.<sup>35</sup>

Winstanley urged the election of those who had shown themselves to be promoters of common freedom. Office holders, he stated, should be men of peaceful spirits and conversation. These men should have suffered under royal oppression and have chanced the loss of their lives and estates and yet remained constant, for this type of official would be sympathetic to the bondage of others. In addition, those chosen were to be experienced men in the laws of peaceful and right ordered government, those not afraid to speak the truth, and men over forty, who were more likely to be experienced, courageous and non-covetous. In fact, Winstanley believed few were fit to be officers because the royal clergy were continually instilling their principles into the people and nursing ignorance in them.<sup>36</sup>

Winstanley believed those competent to select the officers of the Commonwealth were males over twenty years of age,<sup>37</sup> except drunkards, quarrelers, fearful or ignorant men, those given to pleasure and sports, and those who brought and sold. Furthermore, both monarchical supporters and followers of the Parliamentary party were to be denied the right to vote. Supporters of Parliament were not to be allowed to vote because an ignorant spirit of revenge might move them to disturb the common peace.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 555-6.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 556-61.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 570-1.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 543-4.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 596.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 542.

Throughout the nation there was to be a Commonwealth ministry elected yearly, whose duty was to read to the people on three subjects: first, the affairs of the whole land; second, the law of the Commonwealth; and third, entertaining speeches concerning the old government of Israel and the 'arts and sciences'. Not only could the chosen minister give sermons, but any one who had experience could speak. The minister could not assume all of the power for himself, as the clergy were accused of having done.<sup>35</sup> Thus the clergy assumed the role of teachers and became quite secularized. Organized religion, as such, ceased to have a place in the new State. Winstanley had definite concepts of the role of the Church in society.

The education of the Commonwealth was, under no circumstances, to create a scholarly class. Winstanley believed that this group would spend time trying to become masters of those who laboured. Yet as part of the preparation for a trade all were to study Arts and Sciences, as this knowledge would enable one better to govern himself and prepare himself for the foreign service. This study made better Commonwealth men as the citizens would be acquainted with the nature of government.<sup>36</sup>

In answer to the question in what trade should mankind be instructed, Winstanley suggested study in every trade. Also arts and sciences were not to be neglected, for thereby one might discover the secrets of creation and know how to govern the earth in right order. The major subjects on which to concentrate were: husbandry, mineral employment, cattle, woods and timber, and the study of astrology, astronomy, navigation, and the like. The knowledge found in all these fields was practical and good. Traditional knowledge, obtained by reading or by being instructed by others, was not considered good, for it led to an idle life. It was from this last mentioned education that the lawyers and clergy arose. Like men, women should receive a practical education and thus be able to manage their households.<sup>37</sup>

This type of education could hardly be considered sufficient for an advanced state; at best it would serve for a simply organized rural society. Certainly, it could not have produced great men of science, such as Newton or Harvey. In this respect *The Law of Freedom* seems an inadequate blueprint for a state of its day.

Law, according to Winstanley, was a rule whereby man and other creatures were governed in their actions for the preservation of the common peace.<sup>38</sup> Short and pithy laws were best to govern a Commonwealth, otherwise people erred through lack of knowledge. This ignorance provided a

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 562-4.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 576-7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 577-9.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 587.



good source for lawyers to entrap the people and obtain their estates from them by craft.<sup>43</sup> The bare letter of the law established by act of Parliament was to be the rule for officers and people. Law was not to be administered for money. Two or three witnesses were needed to make an accusation. Both the accuser and accused appeared together. If one made false charges, the penalty would be the same for the accuser as if the accused had been guilty. In general, the spirit of the law was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The regulations suggested by *The Law of Freedom* fall into numerous categories. There were to be laws for storehouses, laws concerning overseers, laws against buying and selling, laws regarding treachery, etc.

Once again Winstanley's outlook was too short-sighted. Even in his day, life had long since been too complicated for any system of law to be as simple as he envisioned. The system he proposed represented a yearning for what had long before passed on, never to return. Observation will show that this cooperative society was to be idealistic, all inclusive, economically archaic, and governed by elder citizens.

All inclusive is the key word to use in describing the activities of the government. Some governmental officer was to supervise every detail, no matter how minute. This supervision ranged from planting and harvesting the crops to the clothing of the smallest child. Officials assigned private individuals a small part to play in the great economic life of the nation, while in return individuals were to be assured permanent security. Regardless of what one needed, he had merely to apply at the appropriate government agency and his desires were fulfilled. Only in the homes was there the least escape from government supervision, because this supervision extended over one's work, education, pleasure and religion.

Such a bureaucratic government tended by its very nature to be extremely paternalistic. The idealism behind this 'Christian communism' caused the government to feel a great concern for the individual. Yet the paternalism and varied scope of the government called for an extensive regimentation of society. One was selected for his job by some overseer. If he was weak he would be given a lighter post, such as that of a clerk in a common storehouse or shop. On the other hand, one who seemed proficient in agriculture might be placed in some part of the rural organization. Through a system, including apprentices and masters, the state provided a detailed and specialized training for everyone. Although it was urged that initiative not be blocked in the young, it is hard to see how a system so regimented could fail to stifle individualism and initiative.

The economic system, which was based upon the archaic medieval

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 590.

guild, was extremely idealistic for the mid-seventeenth century. Already the guilds had begun to fall before the rising mercantile class of this period. Self sufficiency and simplicity of wants were practical essentials of a system that employed no money. Whatever trade existed would have been entirely under the control of the government. Such a condition would limit trade to the barest necessities and do much to hinder the country's internal growth. All initiative would be discouraged.

Punishments were quite stern, judged by modern standards. For example, the death penalty was invoked if an offender ran away from the supervision of his taskmaster,<sup>44</sup> or for buying and selling.<sup>45</sup> As has been stated, the general code provided for an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and a limb for a limb.<sup>46</sup> The Old Testament concept of the harsh God is carried over to a harsh father — the state. The aim always remains the same — the peaceful cooperative state.

In the lower echelons of government, great emphasis was placed on persuasion. The peacemaker, soldier, or overseer had no authority to settle an issue by any means other than persuasion. If this means failed, the higher authorities were empowered to make a decision based upon a law clearly stated. Winstanley's great dislike for lawyers in general appears when he stipulated that there could be no fee'd lawyers. The law profession for profit ceased to have a reason for existence.

The importance of age was greatly stressed. Although all males over twenty years of age could work, no one under forty could hold office. General overseers were to be sixty years of age. Once one had reached the age of forty, work was no longer a requirement. The worker now had the leisure time possible to join the great bureaucratic class that watched over every move of the citizenry.

With the exception of Niccolò Machiavelli, the Bible alone appears to have provided Winstanley with his basic concepts. The references to Machiavelli appear to come not from a reading of the author himself, but from an assimilation of some of the Machiavellian ideas resulting from contact with others.<sup>47</sup> Yet Winstanley is quite close to Machiavelli's concept of man's nature. One of the major reasons for yearly elections was to prevent any development of oppression.<sup>48</sup> Certainly, Winstanley considered the clergy, lawyers, and landowners evil by nature. Although he believed that good could be brought out in society, he asserted that the two roots of law and magistracy were common preservation and self preservation.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 554.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 594-5.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 591-2.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 531.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 541.

In this last respect his thought seems close to the political philosopher Thomas Hobbes, who likewise lived in this troubled time. Although one might say that he showed a low regard for a great portion of mankind, his solution was not the establishment of an absolute government, such as Hobbes advocated, but an idealistic government which in many respects was quite absolutist itself. Yet one may perceive that the spirit of the two solutions is quite different.

The thought of Winstanley was in keeping with that expressed in Sir Thomas More's political satire, *Utopia*, and in some of the social theories of the later Middle Ages. A community consisted of classes, each entrusted with some task necessary to the common good, each performing its proper function and receiving its due reward.

Although Winstanley and the early Christian Fathers have quite similar beliefs as to the state of man before government, their attitude toward governmental institutions, and, particularly, property, differed greatly. Ownership of property, far from being accepted as a necessary fact recognized by civil law, was looked upon as oppression of the worst character, as it violated man's basic freedom — the right jointly to till the soil. These views were further contrasted in regard to slavery. Whereas the early Church recognized slavery, the new state would not recognize such a violation of man's equality.

Winstanley's use of the Old Testament as the source for his ideal state reflects either a curious interpretation of the Scriptures or the use of some rather free translations of the original to fit a preconceived opinion. The rather extensive misuses of Biblical quotations tends to substantiate the latter possibility. More consideration might well be given to Winstanley's method of citing scriptural references. A few examples of his use of Biblical quotations follow. In regard to Ecclesiastes 2:24, Solomon was quoted as stating that all that man laboured for was to enjoy the free use of the Earth with the fruits thereof.<sup>49</sup> The King James translation gives this verse as follows: 'There is nothing better for a man, than that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God'. The impression which one receives when he reads the actual translation is certainly different from that conveyed by Winstanley.

In a reference to Joshua, Chapters 16, 17 and 18, Winstanley stated that Israel was made a free Commonwealth in power as well as in name. Furthermore, the land was made a common treasury for the livelihood of the whole Commonwealth of Israel.<sup>50</sup> These chapters refer, in reality, to the allotment of the conquered territory in Palestine. This was an

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 520.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 525.

arbitrary division on the part of Joshua, and considerable dissatisfaction followed. Certainly the land formed no common treasury. Winstanley wrote:

The Winter's past, the Spring time now appears,  
 Be gone thou King Tyrant, with all thy Cavaliers.  
 Thy day is past, and sure thou dost appear  
 To be the bond-mans son, and not the free-born Heir.

He gives as a reference Matthew 15:13. This verse reads: 'But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up'. One fails to see a logical basis for the use of this quotation. In his glorification of the Commonwealth type of government, Winstanley characterized it as one which provided for all classes of society. Furthermore, it made elder and younger brothers freemen on the earth. The reference given was Micah 4:3, 4 and Isaiah 33:1 and 65:17 to 25.<sup>51</sup> Not one of these references alludes to a Commonwealth type of government. The first describes what shall come in the last days. Numerous other examples of the misuse of Biblical quotations could be given. From the above it would appear that he improperly used the Old Testament as a source to illustrate his belief in common ownership.

The New Testament does not provide the basis for many of the author's concepts. The Book of Revelation is used to a minor extent, but most references are to the Old Testament.

In conclusion one may point out that the Digger Movement reflected some of the prevailing seventeenth century ideas about popular sovereignty, government by consent, government limited by law, written constitutions, and land reform. In this respect it was following the liberal trend of the age which was to be continued in the eighteenth century. Essentially, Winstanley began his career as an exponent of a chiliastic mysticism. Indeed, his social concerns and interests are properly understood through the framework of a mystical millenarianism.<sup>52</sup> He was a preacher rather than economist. His *Law of Freedom* set forth the blueprint for an ideal Commonwealth which he thought should be established as a necessary prerequisite to the millenium.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 533.

<sup>52</sup> Winthrop S. Hudson, 'Economic and social thought of Gerrard Winstanley. Was he a seventeenth-century Marxist?' *Journal of modern history*, XVIII (March, 1946), 5.