6-2-1961

A Critical Study of John Milton's On the Morning of Christ's Nativity

Daniel Patterson

Recommended Citation

Patterson, Daniel. "A Critical Study of John Milton's On the Morning of Christ's Nativity." (1961). https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/engl_etds/186

JOHN MILTON'S ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY ▪ PATTERSON

This thesis by Daniel Patterson has been used by the following persons, whose signatures attest their acceptance of the above restrictions.

A Library which borrows this thesis for use by its patrons is expected to secure the signature of each user.

NAME AND ADDRESS	DATE
Roberta O'Neill	May 9, 1962

A CRITICAL STUDY OF JOHN MILTON'S *ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY*

By

Daniel Patterson

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in English

The University of New Mexico

1961

This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Committee of the University of New Mexico in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

E. F. Castetter
DEAN

DATE June 2, 1961

A CRITICAL STUDY OF JOHN MILTON'S ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

Daniel Patterson

Thesis committee

Morris Freedman
CHAIRMAN

Hoyt Trowbridge

F. M. Dickey

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

A BRIEF REVIEW OF PAST CRITICISM

One can hardly avoid, in writing a critical study of John Milton's <u>On the Morning of Christ's Nativity</u>, the sense of having been preceded by a sizable vanguard of scholars. Upon virtually every tree there is a blaze, in nearly every trail a footprint. But without the successes, failures, guesses, and assertions of those who have gone before him, the aspiring critic of so complex a poem might return without ever having sighted his quarry. Criticism of Milton's <u>Hymn</u> has not been remarkable for any deviation from the common patterns of literary scholarship during the past centuries. In fact, to trace the history of comment on the poem is to find the changing canons of critical practice reflected with considerable accuracy.

Though the criticism of the poem may be easily classified according to chronological periods, another principle of organization becomes apparent at least as early as the Wartons. This is the division between those critics who see the poem as essentially a string of striking images and those who see it as a stately

A BRIEF REVIEW OF [illegible]

One can hardly avoid, in reading a [illegible] of John Milton's [illegible] sense of having been [illegible] scholars. Upon [illegible] in nearly every [illegible] successes, failures, [illegible] who have gone before [illegible] complex a poem [illegible] his quarry. Criticism of [illegible] remarkable for any [illegible] of literary scholarship [illegible] fact, to trace the [illegible] find the changing [illegible] with considerable [illegible].

Though the criticism of [illegible] may be easily classified according to [illegible] principle of [illegible] early as the [illegible]. [illegible] those critics who [illegible] of striking images and [illegible] march of profound ideas. While members of the first school have generally taken a dimmer view of the poem, critical evaluations even within the two schools have not always coincided, and one critic's beauty has been another's flaw. But whether he has come to praise or blame, every critic has tended to see the poem in terms of one description or the other.

Except for the letter from Sir Henry Wotton, printed as a part of the 1645 volume in which the poem first appeared, which praised "a certain Dorique delicacy" in Milton's songs and odes, no comment on the Nativity Hymn from the period of Milton's lifetime has been preserved.[1] During the next hundred years the critics, as cited by Henry John Todd in his variorum edition of 1801, largely confined themselves to annotating allusions and suggesting parallels.[2] Bishop Newton's 1773 edition of the poems, however, commended the close of the proem as a "beautiful allusion" and complained

---

[1] William Riley Parker, Milton's Contemporary Reputation (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1940), p. 24.

[2] Henry J. Todd (ed.), The Poetical Works of John Milton (7 vols.; 2d ed.; London: J. Johnson, etc., 1809), VII, 3-28.

march of profound power. [illegible] school have generally [illegible] critical evaluations [illegible] always coincided, [illegible] another's flaw. [illegible] blame, every critic [illegible] of one description or [illegible]

Except for [illegible] printed as a part of the [illegible] first appeared, which [illegible] delicacy" in Milton's [illegible] Nativity Hymn from the [illegible] been preserved. [illegible] critics, as cited by [illegible] edition of 1801, [illegible] ing allusions and [illegible] 1773 edition of the [illegible] of the poem as a [illegible]

---

[1] William Riley Parker, Milton's Contemporary Reputation (Columbus: [illegible] 1940), p. 24.

[2] Henry J. Todd (ed.), [illegible] Milton (7 volumes; [illegible] 1809), VII, 1-28.

"that for Peace to strike a peace is an inaccuracy" in stanza iii.[3] Joseph Warton thought the picture of the Dragon swinging "the scaly Horrour of his foulded tail" a "strong image" and remarked of stanza xix: "Attention is irresistibly awakened, and engaged, by the air of solemnity and enthusiasm that reigns in this stanza and some that follow. Such is the power of true poetry, that one is almost inclined to believe the superstitions real."[4]

But by far the most important of the eighteenth-century critics of the poem is Thomas Warton. He considered (1785) the "many learned allusions" of the poem to be "highly poetical." With his brother he found stanza xix outstanding, praising it and stanza xxvi, astonishingly, as "the best part of the Ode." "The words pillows and chin," he thought, "throw an air of burlesque and familiarity over a comparison most exquisitely conceived and adapted;" further, "it is a very poetical mode of expressing the departure of the fairies at the approach of morning, to say that they 'fly after the steeds of Night.'" On the other hand he

---

[3] Ibid., p. 8.

[4] Ibid., p. 19.

"that for [illegible]

stanza iii.[3] Joseph Warton [illegible]

Dragon swinging "the scaly [illegible]

a "strong image" and [illegible]

is irresistibly [illegible]

solemnity and enthusiasm [illegible]

seems that follow. [illegible]

that one is almost [illegible]

real."[4]

But by far the most important of the eighteenth-century critics of the poem is Thomas Warton. He considered (1785) the "many learned allusions" of the poem to be "highly poetical." [illegible] stanza six outstanding, [illegible] astonishingly, as "the best [illegible] words pillows and orb," [illegible] burlesque and familiar [illegible] exquisitely conceived [illegible] very poetical mode of expressing the [illegible] fairies at the approach of morning, [illegible] 'fly after the steeds of [illegible]

---

[3] Ibid., p. 9.

[4] Ibid., p. 10.

noted, founding a line of Hymn criticism: "The rest of the Ode chiefly consists of a string of affected conceits, which his [Milton's] early youth, and the fashion of the times, can only excuse."[5]

When the reader learns how many of the condemned stanzas are subsequently redeemed, he is tempted to regard this remark chiefly as a phrase Warton could not resist turning. Stanza iv, for example, possesses a "dignity and simplicity . . . worthy the maturest years, and the best times." "Nor is the poetry of the stanza immediately following, an expression or two excepted, unworthy of Milton." Warton defended stanza iii against Newton's complaint and argued against Newton's remark that the "allusion to the notion of the cessation of Oracles at the coming of Christ" was something "allowable enough in a young poet." He commented: "Surely, nothing could have been more allowable in an old poet. And how poetically is it extended to the pagan divinities, and the oriental idolatries?" Of the line, "The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep," he observed: "A line of great energy, elegant and sublime."[6]

---

[5] Ibid., pp. 3-4, 26-27.

[6] Ibid., pp. 4, 8, 21, 17.

noted, founding a list of [illegible] the ode as the Ode chiefly consisted of [illegible] which his [Milton's] early [illegible] times, can only excuse.[5]

When the reader [illegible] stanzas are [illegible] this remark chiefly [illegible] turning. Stanza [illegible] and simplicity . . . worthy [illegible] best times." "Nor in [illegible] following, an [illegible] Milton." Warton [illegible] complaint and [illegible] "allusion to the [illegible] the coming of Christ" [illegible] a young poet." [illegible] have been more [illegible] poetically is [illegible] the oriental [illegible] tramp of [illegible] observed: "A [illegible]

---

[5] Ibid., [illegible]

[6] Ibid., [illegible]

Similarly, he found stanza xxiii superior to the treatment of the same idea in Paradise Lost, where the "dreadful circumstances, of themselves sufficiently striking to the imagination, are . . . only related." He continued:

> In our Ode, they are endued with life and action, they are put in motion before our eyes, and made subservient to a new purpose of the poet by the superinduction of a poetical fiction, to which they give occasion. "The sullen spirit is fled of a sudden, and has left his black burning image in darkness and solitude. The priests, dancing in horrid gesticulations about the blue furnace from which his idol was fed with fire, in vain attempt to call back their griesly king with the din of cymbals, with which they once used to overwhelm the shrieks of the sacrificed infants." A new use is made of the cymbals of the disappointed priests. He does not say, "Moloch's idol was removed, to which infants were sacrificed; while their cries were suppressed by the sound of cymbals. . . ." Milton, like a true poet, in describing the Syrian superstitions, selects such as were most susceptible of poetical enlargement; and which, from the wildness of their ceremonies, were most interesting to the fancy.[7]

This is valuable not only as an example of Warton at his best, but as description of the way in which Milton's poetic genius works in the Nativity Hymn.

Dr. Johnson passed over the Hymn with the dogmatic assertions that "all that short compositions can commonly

---

[7] Ibid., pp. 24-25.

Similarly, he [illegible]

treatment of the [illegible]

"dreadful circumstances" [illegible]

striking to the imagination [illegible]

He continued:

> In our Ode, they are [illegible] they are put in motion before [illegible] subservient to a new [illegible] superinduction of a [illegible] they give occasion. [illegible] of a sudden, and [illegible] in darkness and solitude, [illegible] in horrid [illegible] from which his idol [illegible] attempt to [illegible] din of cymbals, [illegible] overwhelm the [illegible] A new use is made of the [illegible] disappointed priests [illegible] idol was restored [illegible] sacrificed [illegible] by the sound of cymbals. . . . [illegible] true poet, in conceiving, [illegible] selects such as [illegible] enlargement; and which [illegible] ceremonies, were [illegible]

This is valuable not only [illegible]

his best, but as [illegible]

poetic genius [illegible]

Dr. Johnson [illegible]

assertions that [illegible]

---

[7] Ibid., [illegible]

attain is neatness and elegance" and that "Milton never learned the art of doing little things with grace."[8] To this Warton replied that odes "can often attain sublimity. We have the proof before us," and that "if by _little things_ we are to understand _short_ poems, Milton had the art of giving them another sort of excellence."[9]

Todd not only reprinted the most important critical and scholarly comment up to his time but also added a number of his own notes and comments where he thought further information would be useful. He agreed with Joseph Warton that "Milton's description of the dragon's venting his rage is certainly masterly and striking," and concluded his annotation by echoing Thomas Warton, calling the poem "this sublime and wonderful Ode."[10] Todd and his predecessors pointed out borrowings of words or ideas from Euripides, the Scriptures, Horace, Virgil, Athanasius, Eusebius, Gregory Nazianzen, Petrarch, Chaucer, Ariosto, Tasso, Spenser, Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas, Sandys, Kyd, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Chapman, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, and Giles Fletcher.[11]

---

[8] _Ibid._, p. 28.

[9] _Ibid._

[10] _Ibid._, pp. 19, 28.

[11] Ibid., pp. 3-28 _passim_.

attain to neatness, and [illegible]

learned the art of [illegible]

To this Warton replied [illegible]

sublimity. We have the [illegible]

"if by little things we [illegible]

Milton had the art [illegible]

excellence."[9]

Todd not [illegible]

critical and scholarly comment [illegible]

added a number of his [illegible]

thought further information [illegible]

with Joseph Warton that "Milton's [illegible]

dragon's venting his rage is [illegible]

striking," and concludes his [illegible]

Thomas Warton, calling the poem [illegible]

wonderful Ode."[10] Todd [illegible]

out borrowings of words, or ideas [illegible]

Scriptures, Horace, Virgil, [illegible]

Nazianzen, Petrarch, [illegible]

Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas, [illegible]

Marlowe, Shakespeare, Chapman, [illegible] and Fletcher,

Massinger, and other [illegible]

---

[8] Ibid., p. 29. [9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., pp. [illegible] [11] [illegible]

Thus the possible sources of the Hymn had been pretty thoroughly noted by the end of the eighteenth century.

In 1809, the year that Todd was publishing his enlarged second edition of Milton's Poetical Works, what was perhaps the first published American criticism of the Hymn appeared in The Monthly Anthology and Boston Review. The reviewer, protecting himself from posterity under the single initial "R.," felt bold to proclaim that "the ode under consideration abounds with those absurd conceits, forced analogies, vulgarisms and quibbles, which deform the pages of Shakespeare, Waller, and other writers of the age."[12]

But "R." must have felt like a voice crying in the wilderness indeed under the weight of the encomiastic criticism that was to follow Henry Hallam's judgment (1839) that the Hymn was "perhaps the most beautiful ode in the English language."[13] Sir Egerton Brydges had elevated it (1835) to a new status among Milton's early work, stating:

---

[12] Harris Francis Fletcher, Contributions to a Milton Bibliography (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1931), p. 13.

[13] Henry Hallam, Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries (4 vols. in 2; New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1880), III, 263.

Thus the possible [illegible] the Hymn to [illegible] thoroughly noted by the end of [illegible]

In 1809, the year [illegible] enlarged second edition of [illegible] what was perhaps the [illegible] of the Hymn appeared in the [illegible] Review. The reviewer, [illegible] under the single initial "A.," [illegible] that "the ode under consideration [illegible] absurd conceits, forced [illegible] quibbles, which [illegible] and other writers [illegible]

But "B." [illegible] wilderness indeed [illegible] criticism that was to follow [illegible] (1839) that the Hymn was [illegible] in the English language.[13] [illegible] elevated it (1839) to a [illegible] work, stating:

---

[12] Harris Francis Fletcher, Contributions to a Milton Bibliography (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1931), p. 13.

[13] Henry Hallam, Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries (4 vols.; [illegible] and Son, 1880), [illegible], 108.

> There is no doubt that the prima stamina of the bard's divine epics are exhibited in this poem; but it has several peculiarities, which distinguish it from the poet's other compositions: it is more truly lyrical; the stanza is beautifully constructed; and there is a solemnity, a grandeur, and a swell of verse, which is magical. The images are magnificent, and they have this superiority of excellence; that none of them are merely descriptive, but have a mixture of intellectuality and spirituality. . . . The vigour, the grandeur, the imaginativeness of the conception; the force and maturity of language; the bound, the gathering strength, the thundering roll of the metre; the largeness of the views; the extent of the learning; the solemn and awful tones; the enthusiasm, and a certain spell of the epithets, which puts the reader into a state of mysterious excitement, may be better felt than described.[14]

This view of the Hymn as a "sublime" and "magnificent" poem, a "miniature of Paradise Lost," was repeated with some moderation of language by the Reverend George Gilfillan in his 1853 edition of the Poetical Works.[15] And when David Masson came to make his edition of the poetry in 1874 he thought no critical comment more apropos than Hallam's.[16]

The nineteenth-century editors of Milton by and large dropped the elaborate critical apparatus bequeathed

---

[14] Sir Egerton Brydges (ed.), The Poetical Works of John Milton (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Co., 1855), p. 755.

[15] George Gilfillan (ed.), Milton's Poetical Works (2 vols.; Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1853), I, viii.

[16] David Masson (ed.), Poetical Works of John Milton (London: Macmillan & Co., 1877), p. 406.

> There is no doubt that [illegible] of the bard's distinctive [illegible] but it has [illegible] distinguish it [illegible] it is more [illegible] constructed [illegible] and a skill of [illegible] are magnificent, [illegible] excellence, [illegible] but have [illegible] spirituality. [illegible] imagination [illegible] maturity of [illegible] strength, [illegible] largeness of [illegible] ing; the [illegible] and a certain [illegible] the reader [illegible] may be better [illegible]

This view of the [illegible] poem, a "miniature epic" [illegible] some moderation of [illegible] Gilfillan in his [illegible] And when David Masson came to [illegible] poetry in 1874 he thought [illegible] apropos than Brydges's.[16]

The nineteenth-century [illegible] large dropped the [illegible]

---

[14]Sir Egerton Brydges [illegible] of John Milton (Boston [illegible] 1835), p. 753.

[15]George Gilfillan [illegible] (2 vols.; [illegible]

[16]David Masson [illegible] (London: Macmillan [illegible]

to them by Todd, and it was not until A. W. Verity's 1891 edition that the _Hymn_ was printed with better annotation than it had had ninety years earlier. But Verity, though he brought a wealth of learning to the task of annotation, could not escape the critical categories of his century. He saw the _Hymn_ as "a foretaste of the epic" with "the same absolute grandeur of style." And he heard in it a "majesty of music, a dignity of sound . . . [like] the strains of an organ."[17]

If Verity continued the "majestic march" line of critical thought about the poem, someone else had revived the "string of images" school. Mark Pattison, in his 1879 condensation of Masson's biography, commented that "the Ode, notwithstanding its foretaste of Milton's grandeur, abounds in frigid conceits. . . . The Ode is frosty, as written in winter, within the four walls of a college chamber."[18] Writing in 1900, Sir Walter A. Raleigh found a pair of metaphors to express a compromise view. He cited the _Hymn_ as an example of "the carefully

---

[17] Quoted in Clarence Griffin Child (ed.), _Comus, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso and Lycidas with other of Milton's Shorter Poems_ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), pp. 73-74.

[18] Mark Pattison, _Milton_ (New York: Harper, 1899), p. 22.

to them by Todd, [illegible] 1891 edition [illegible] annotative than it [illegible] Verity, though he brought [illegible] task of annotation [illegible] categories of [illegible] taste of the epic [illegible] style." And [illegible] dignity of sound . . . [illegible]

If Verity [illegible] critical thought about the poet, [illegible] the "string of [illegible] 1879 condensation of [illegible] "the Ode, notwithstanding [illegible] grandeur, abounds in [illegible] Hymn, as written [illegible] a college student.[18] [illegible] Raleigh found [illegible] view. He cited the *Hymn* as an [illegible]

---

[17] Quoted in [illegible] *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso* [illegible] *Milton's Shorter Poems* [illegible] Sons, 1910], pp. 72-74.

[18] [illegible] Raleigh, *Milton* [illegible] p. 22.

jewelled mosaic style . . . practised very early by Milton," and described it as a poem exhibiting "the same deliberateness and gentle pause of words one after another rounding and falling like clear drops" which characterizes the Sabrina Fair portion of Comus.[19]

In 1909 Professor Albert S. Cook made the first substantial American contribution to the criticism of the poem, sixty-two pages of perceptive annotation. Building on the foundation laid by the annotators of the previous century and a half, Cook extended our knowledge of the poem's background virtually to its limits. His notes developing the ideas inherent in the figures of stars:angels, Pan: Christ, and the music of the spheres were particularly full and useful.[20] And in 1911 Saintsbury spoke a final word for the pre-World War I sensibility in the Cambridge History of English Literature. After commenting that the proem might have been written by Spenser or a number of other poets, he went on:

---

[19] Walter A. Raleigh, Milton (London: Edward Arnold, 1900), p. 199.

[20] Albert S. Cook, "Notes on Milton's 'Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity,'' Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, XV (July, 1909), 307-368.

> The Hymn itself, in its very first lines, not merely in metre but in diction, in arrangement, in quality of phrase and thought alike, strikes a new note---almost a gamut of new notes. The peculiar stateliness which redeems even conceit from frivolity or frigidity; the unique combination of mass and weight with easy flow; the largeness of conception, imagery, scene; above all, perhaps, the inimitable stamp of phrase and style---attained, chiefly, by cunning selection and collocation of epithet---give the true Milton. . . . The greater beauties of the piece that follow---the "reign of peace"; the music of the spheres; the silencing of the oracles; and the flight of the dethroned idols---are well known. The piece gives us all its author's poetry in nuce--his union of majesty and grace, his unique and all-compelling style, his command of "solemn music" such as had never before been known.[21]

One can see that Saintsbury has totally rejected Johnson's strictures, but as defense this merely refines the expansive remarks of Brydges. The ideas behind the words remain rather general.

Twentieth-century criticism of the Nativity Hymn may be dated from the appearance of E. K. Rand's 1922 article, "Milton in Rustication."[22] Rand emphasized the pastoral note in the poem, comparing it to Virgil's Fourth Eclogue. He contended that Milton deliberately

---

[21] George Saintsbury, "Milton," Cambridge History of English Literature, ed. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911), VII, 125-126.

[22] E. K. Rand, "Milton in Rustication," Studies in Philology, XIX (April, 1922), 109-135.

The form itself, [illegible]
merely in [illegible]
in quality as [illegible]
a new note since [illegible]
peculiar [illegible]
from [illegible]
tion of mass and [illegible]
largeness of [illegible]
all, perhaps, the [illegible]
style--[illegible]
and collocation [illegible]
Milton, . . . [illegible]
that follow--the [illegible]
the spheres, the [illegible]
the flight of [illegible]
the piece [illegible]
ring--his [illegible]
and all-[illegible]
music" such as [illegible]

One can see that [illegible]
strictures, but he [illegible]
expansive remarks of [illegible]
remain rather general.

[illegible]
may be dated [illegible]
article, "Milton [illegible]
the pastoral [illegible]
French Eclogue [illegible]

---

[21] George [illegible]
of English Literature [illegible]
(New York: [illegible]

[22] [illegible]

modeled his poetic career on that of Virgil and that the Hymn (which Rand says it should not be called) is thus meant as a counterpart to Virgil's Messianic eclogue: "The poet starts with a Classical model; he means us to see this; his act is a challenge. To match the Pagan's Messianic prophecy, he has written a pastoral Birth Song for the real Messiah, in which Christian purity and truth dispense with the gaudy trim of Pagan imagery."[23]

G. Wilson Knight glanced at the poem (1939) long enough to note that "the *Nativity* Ode, though it offers a satisfying lyric integrity, remains somewhat fluid in its addition of stanza to stanza: there is no complex inter-knitting, that is, of central action with design, nor is such necessary."[24] As if to answer this charge, Arthur Barker's "The Pattern of Milton's *Nativity Ode*" (1941) argued that the poem divides into "three equal movements": the first eight stanzas "describe the setting of the Nativity," the next nine present "the angelic choir," and the next nine describe "the flight of the heathen gods." The last stanza then returns the

---

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

[24] G. Wilson Knight, *The Burning Oracle: Studies in the Poetry of Action* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 64.

modeled his poem, [illegible]

Hymn (which Rand [illegible]

meant as a counter[illegible]

"The poet starts with [illegible]

see this; his act [illegible]

Messianic prophecy [illegible]

for the real beatitude, [illegible]

dispense with the [illegible]

G. Wilson Knight, [illegible]

enough to note that [illegible]

a satisfying lyric [illegible]

its addition of [illegible]

inter-knitting, [illegible]

nor is such necessary."[24] [illegible]

Arthur Barker's [illegible]

(1941) argued [illegible]

movements": [illegible]

setting of the [illegible]

angelic choir," [illegible]

the heathen gods." [illegible]

---

[23] Ibid.

[24] G. Wilson Knight, [illegible] in the [illegible] 1939), p. 64.

reader to the pastoral scene of the opening stanzas. Further, "the three movements each present a single modification of the simple contrast, preserved throughout the poem, between images suggesting light and harmony and images of gloom and discord." In contrast to Rand's view, Barker saw the poem as making an "intricate fusion" of both pagan and Christian traditions and successfully "transcending the conflict between the two."[25]

A simpler view of the Hymn's structure was taken by Cleanth Brooks and John Edward Hardy ten years later. In their 1951 edition of the minor poems, they stated that "the Hymn breaks up into two parts: the first part, which is filled with sun and star imagery, treats a morning scene. . . . The second part of the Hymn, beginning with Stanza XVI, deals with what might be called the negative aspects of the occasion." Their analysis amounts to a running commentary on the action of the poem, pausing here and there to point up a delicate or complex touch. They saw the poem as insisting upon the

---

[25] Arthur Barker, "The Pattern of Milton's Nativity Ode," University of Toronto Quarterly, X (January, 1941), 167-181.

reader to the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. Further, the [illegible] part [illegible] [illegible] modification of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the poem, [illegible] images [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and images of [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] view, Barnes [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] fusion" of [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] successfully "[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] two."[25]

A similar view of the [illegible] structure [illegible] by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren. In their 1950 edition of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] that "the [illegible] breaks [illegible] [illegible] part, which is [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] a morning [illegible] [illegible] the second part of the [illegible] beginning with [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] called the negative [illegible] [illegible]. Their analysis [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of the poem, [illegible] [illegible] or complex [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

---

[25] [illegible] [illegible], "[illegible] [illegible] Ode," University of [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] 167-181.

satisfaction of Justice before Mercy can be granted to men and emphasized Milton's aesthetic distance and detachment, expressed both by the cosmic scale and the stanzaic form.[26]

In the meantime a never-altogether-silenced attitude toward the poem found new voice in Malcolm M. Ross. Attacking from a frankly Anglo-Catholic stance, Ross charged (1949) that Milton's Protestantism deprived the traditional Christian symbols of the "real presence" and, therefore, of ritual value. "It seems beyond doubt that Milton was unable to imagine poetically the humanity of God. His symbolization of Christ is never incarnational." The result in the _Hymn_ is "no poetic continuity . . . but rather a series of separate symbolizations of the might and goodness of God."[27] Such criticism makes the Catholic view of experience a prerequisite to the writing of good Christian poetry. Robert M. Adams has replied (1955) that it is unlikely that "we can usefully consider poets as under a special obligation to invent or

---

[26] Cleanth Brooks and John Edward Hardy, _Poems of Mr. John Milton_ (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951), pp. 95-104.

[27] Malcolm M. Ross, _Poetry and Dogma_ (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1954), pp. 188, 191.

satisfaction [illegible]

men and [illegible]

detachment, expressed [illegible]

standard rank.

In the [illegible]

attitude toward [illegible]

R. Rose. [illegible]

Rose charged (1942) that [illegible]

the traditional [illegible]

and, therefore, [illegible]

that Milton [illegible]

of God. [illegible]

tical." The [illegible]

. . . his [illegible]

the might and [illegible]

the Catholic view of [illegible]

writing of [illegible]

replied (1947) [illegible]

consider [illegible]

[illegible]

1951), pp. [illegible]

[illegible]

H. J.: [illegible]

accept a sacramental view of life" or that such a criterion will "bring us very close to an esthetic judgment of the poetry."[28]

The next contribution to Hymn criticism was Don Cameron Allen's study of the poem in The Harmonious Vision (1954). He noted the connection in the poem of the music of the spheres with the idea of the Golden Age and showed Milton's association of the two images with the Platonic vision of cosmic concord and the spindle of Necessity in Prolusion II and Arcades.[29] The Hymn itself Allen divided into three sections (stanzas i-vii, viii-xviii, xix-xxvii) while he read the poem as a "series of poetically expressed contrasts" from which "Milton draws a compromise. . . . From the variance between the past and the present, he extracts the solution of timelessness; from that between Nature abandoned and Nature redeemed, he creates a Nature as immutable and untarnished as Faith, Hope, and Peace;

---

[28] Robert M. Adams, Ikon: John Milton and the Modern Critics (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1955), pp. 219-220.

[29] Don Cameron Allen, The Harmonious Vision: Studies in Milton's Poetry (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1954), pp. xiii-xiv.

accept a sacramental view [illegible] criterion [illegible] judgment of the poetry.[18]

The [illegible] Cameron Allen's study [illegible] *Vision* (1954). [illegible] the music of the spheres [illegible] and showed [illegible] the Platonic [illegible] Necessity in [illegible] itself Allen [illegible] a "series of [illegible] "Milton during a [illegible] . . . [illegible] between the past and the present, [illegible] solution of [illegible] abandoned and [illegible] immutable and [illegible]

---

[18] Robert M. Adams, [illegible] *Modern Critics* [illegible] pp. 219-223.

[19] Don Cameron Allen, *The Harmonious Vision: Studies in Milton's Poetry* (Baltimore: [illegible] Press, 1954), pp. [illegible]

from the disagreement between pagan and Christian harmony, he derives the harmony of God."[30]

The most recent important comment on the _Nativity Hymn_ was provided by Rosemond Tuve's analysis (1957) in _Images and Themes in Five Poems by Milton_.[31] Miss Tuve saw the _Hymn_ as composed of "three or four great figures" which are identified as Light, Harmony, Nature, and the binding of the Dragon. As her title indicated, she was primarily concerned to understand the theme of the poem as worked out in its images. In the case of the _Hymn_, this was thought to be Christ's bringing of "our peace" through the Incarnation. Stressing the principle of decorum and the medieval and antique Christian background of Milton's images, she developed the argument of the poem so as to make clear its religious content to a secular age. In so doing, she defended the poem from the various charges brought against it because of failure to perceive the traditional content of the imagery or the traditional assumptions of Christianity.

---

[30] _Ibid._, pp. 25-29.

[31] Rosemond Tuve, _Images and Themes in Five Poems by Milton_ (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 37-72.

from the distinguished [illegible]

he devised the concept of "M.B.T."

The [illegible]

Kyd was [illegible]

Hamlet had [illegible]

was the Kyd [illegible]

which are [illegible]

ination of the [illegible]

primarily concerned [illegible]

as worked out [illegible]

this was thought to be [illegible]

through the [illegible]

decorum and [illegible]

ground of [illegible]

on the [illegible]

a similar [illegible]

the various [illegible]

to perhaps the [illegible]

traditional [illegible]

---

[1] Ibid., p. [illegible]

[2] [illegible] in [illegible] (Cambridge, [illegible] 1957), pp. [illegible]

In placing so heavy an emphasis on the religious nature of the poem, Miss Tuve naturally insisted that it was a "hymn" and cited Sidney's description of the hymn as a "praise" written "to imitate the inconceivable excellencies of God." She traced Milton's figures through the poem, showing how the ideas or themes introduced by one set of images in the proem are carried forward into more complex patterns by the following sets of images. Thus she was more successful than earlier critics both in placing the poem in its historical setting and in illustrating the way in which the poetry works. Finally, she recognized the full range (so far as I can determine) of thematic concerns in the _Hymn_.

It is difficult if not impossible to recover the common insights (I mean those so common that no one would think of stating them) of a past age. We do not know whether Milton's contemporaries or immediate successors read the _Nativity Hymn_ as the surprisingly "original" poem which Miss Tuve is now able to call it. But it is apparent that by the time of the Wartons the meaning of the _Hymn_ was but partially grasped. Perhaps knowledge of the poem had been increasing to that time, perhaps declining. Certainly, whatever setbacks the nineteenth

century may have brought, our understanding of the Hymn has become both broader and deeper in moving from the Wartons to Rosemond Tuve.

CHAPTER II

THE PLACE OF THE POEM IN MILTON'S DEVELOPMENT

The *Nativity Hymn* has usually been recognized as standing at the beginning of Milton's poetic career in the sense that it is his first great poem and therefore marks his emergence as an important poet. We may speculate that Milton himself, in placing it at the head of his first published volume, so viewed the poem. But the sense of the *Hymn* as having an additional significance for Milton (and thus for his readers) was early strengthened by the unequivocal reference to its composition in *Elegy VI*.

The *Elegy*, written shortly after the *Nativity Hymn*, is a reply to a letter from Milton's school friend Charles Diodati. Diodati, visiting in the country over the Christmas holidays, had presumably written to Milton complaining that because of the feasting and drinking he had not been able to write worthwhile poetry. Milton's answer, in Latin elegiacs, chides Diodati with the argument that "Song loves Bacchus and Bacchus loves songs" and develops at length the association of the elegiac poet with festivity. Then he turns to the epic poet:

But he whose theme is wars and heaven under Jupiter in his prime, and pious heroes and chieftains half-divine, and he who sings now of the sacred counsels of the gods on high, and now of the infernal realms where the fierce dog howls, let him live sparingly, like the Samian teacher; and let herbs furnish his innocent diet. Let the purest water stand beside him in a bowl of beech and let him drink sober draughts from the pure spring. Beyond this, his youth must be innocent of crime and chaste, his conduct irreproachable and his hands stainless. His character should be like yours, O Priest, when, glorious with sacred vestments and lustral water, you arise to go into the presence of the angry deities.

By this rule it is said that the wise Tiresias lived after the loss of his eyes, and Ogygian Linus, and Calchas when he was a fugitive from his doomed home, and Orpheus in his old age, when he tamed the wild beasts among the lonely caves. So Homer, the spare-eater and the water-drinker, carried Ulysses through vast stretches of ocean, through the monstermaking palace of the daughter of Phoebus and Perseis, through the seas made treacherous by the songs of the Sirens, and through your mansions, O infernal King, where he is said to have constrained the hosts of shades by means of a libation of dark blood. For truly, the bard is sacred to the gods and is their priest. His hidden heart and his lips alike breathe out Jove.

But if you will know what I am doing (if only you think it of any importance to know whether I am doing anything)--I am singing the heaven-descended King, the bringer of peace, and the blessed times promised in the sacred books--the infant cries of our God and his stabling under a mean roof who, with his Father, governs the realms above. I am singing the starry sky and the hosts that sang high in air, and the gods that were suddenly destroyed in their own shrines.

These are my gifts for the birthday of Christ--gifts which the first light of its dawn brought to me. For you these simple strains that have been

> meditated on my native pipes are waiting; and
> you, when I recite them to you, shall be my
> judge.[1]

The close connection in time, thought, and reference between the Hymn and the description of the epic poet make it obvious that Milton was thinking of the English poem when he wrote the Latin lines.

This fact has greatly encouraged those critics who wish to view the poet's work in terms of his life. The temptation to see the Hymn as an early promise of the great religious epics to come was, as we have been in Chapter I, widespread long before James Holly Hanford, but it was he who first attached a special biographical significance to the combined texts of the Hymn and the Elegy. Tracing the development of the poet in his ground-breaking study of "The Youth of Milton,"[2] Hanford interpreted a passage from the Apology for Smectymnuus (1642), in which Milton described the progress of his early career, as a key to the early poems themselves. The crucial passage with regard to the Hymn, in Hanford's view, follows:

---

[1] Merritt Y. Hughes (ed.), John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose (New York: Odyssey Press, 1957), pp. 52-53. Translated by the editor.

[2] J. H. Hanford, "The Youth of Milton," Studies in Shakespeare, Milton, and Donne ("University of Michigan Publications: Language and Literature," New York: Macmillan and Co., 1925), I, 87-163.

> meditated on my native pipes are waiting for
> you, when I recite them to you, shall be my
> judge.[1]

The close connection in time, thought, and language between the Hymn and the description of the holy poem make it obvious that Milton was thinking of his Nativity poem when he wrote the Sixth Elegy.

This fact has greatly encouraged those critics who wish to view the poet's growth in terms of his life. The temptation to see the Hymn as an early precursor of the great religious epics to come was, as we have seen in Chapter I, widespread long before Hanford's essay appeared, but it was he who first attached a special biographical significance to the sentiments expressed in the Hymn and the Elegy. Tracing the development of the poet in his ground-breaking study of "The Youth of Milton," Hanford interpreted a passage from the Apology for Smectymnuus (1642), in which Milton describes the phases of his early career, as a key to the early poems themselves. The crucial passage with regard to the Hymn, in Hanford's view, follows:

---

[1] Merritt Y. Hughes (ed.), John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose (New York: Odyssey Press, 1957), pp. 52-53. Translation by the editor.

[2] J. H. Hanford, "The Youth of Milton," Studies in Shakespeare, Milton and Donne (University of Michigan Publications: Language and Literature, I; New York: Macmillan Co., 1925), pp. 87-163.

> Nor blame it, readers, in those years to propose to themselves such a reward as the noblest dispositions above other things in this life have sometimes preferred: whereof not to be sensible when good and fair in one person meet, argues both a gross and shallow judgment, and withal an ungentle and swainish breast. For by the firm settling of these persuasions I became, to my best memory, so much a proficient that, if I found those authors anywhere speaking unworthy things of themselves or unchaste of those names which before they had extolled, this effect it wrought with me, from that time forward their art I still applauded, but the men I deplored; and above them all, preferred the two famous renowners of Beatrice and Laura, who never write but honor of them to whom they devote their verse, displaying sublime and pure thoughts, without transgression. And long it was not after, when I was confirmed in this opinion that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem, that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honorablest things--not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy.[3]

Of this Hanford remarks:

> Milton's language suggests that the confirmation of his convictions regarding the relation between personal conduct and poetic achievement and the accompanying resolution to devote himself to something higher and more serious than amatory lyrics marks a definite stage in his inner history. We can fix the moment of this change with considerable precision, for its first fruits in his poetry are to be found in the sixth Latin elegy, written at the Christmas season of 1629, some six months later than [the amatory] _Elegy V_.[4]

---

[3] Hughes, pp. 693-94.

[4] Hanford, p. 122.

And he argues that the formula "for the discipline of the epic poet" (not confined to the quote above) is "so nearly identical" with that of Elegy VI that Milton must have been "looking back to and thinking in terms of" the Elegy. Thus, "we may infer that the Latin utterance represents a definite resolution regarding his life work."[5]

The Hymn, then, was composed in a new and different mood from that which had characterized the earlier poems. It "strikes a new note in the poetry of Milton. . . . We feel that here, for the first time, we have the genuine and characteristic reaction of Milton's personality upon a serious religious object."[6] Seeing the poem as "the lyric prelude of Paradise Lost and in an exacter sense of Paradise Regained," Hanford insisted that "the moment in Milton's literary life represented by Elegy VI and the Nativity is something more than a passing mood."[7]

Hanford's view of the Elegy as a "definite resolution" was expanded by E. M. W. Tillyard. Convinced that the special qualities of the Hymn derive from a sense of deep commitment and self-dedication, Tillyard argued that "taken together, the passages from the Sixth

---

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

Elegy and the Apology for Smectymnuus make it highly probable that about Christmas 1629 Milton made a mental dedication of himself to the high calling of epic poet."[8] And, repeating his understanding of the Elegy as "neophytic and ascetic" in tone, he said eight years later that "it is quite possible that at the time of his sixth elegy Milton not only dedicated himself to epic poetry but contemplated the history of Christ as the subject of his future epic."[9]

Arthur Barker attached an even greater religious significance to the Nativity Hymn. Following Hanford and Tillyard, he thought that the Hymn marked Milton's "conversion," not of course to Puritanism, but to the role of "poet-prophet of special calling, whose inspiration was from God." The poem is the result of an aesthetic "moment of impact" on Milton's imagination which "produced a confident and harmonious purposefulness by overcoming the forces of gloom and confusion."[10] Further, the poem is Milton's "recognition of the

---

[8] E. M. W. Tillyard, Milton (London: Chatto and Windus, 1930), p. 40.

[9] E. M. W. Tillyard, The Miltonic Setting: Past and Present (London: Chatto and Windus, 1938), p. 178.

[10] Barker, UTQ, X, 169.

Elegy and the [illegible]

probable that [illegible]

dedication [illegible]

And, repeating his [illegible]

phytic and aesthetic [illegible]

that "In [illegible]

elegy Milton not only [illegible]

but contemplated [illegible]

his future.[9]

Arthur Barker [illegible]

significance [illegible]

and Tillyard, he thought both [illegible]

"conversion," [illegible]

role of "poet-priest" [illegible]

tion was from God." [illegible]

aesthetic "pattern of [illegible]

which "produces [illegible]

by overcoming the [illegible][10]

Further, the poem [illegible]

---

[9] [illegible] Windus, 1930), [illegible]

[10] [illegible] and Puritan [illegible]

[11] Barker, [illegible]

significance of the Incarnation," especially in its personal application to him.[11] Such an experience would at least be analogous to conversion as understood by the Puritans.

However, in spite of the attractiveness of seeing the Hymn as the first fruit of a personal dedication that was to culminate in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, Milton made no immediate shift to heroic, epic, or religious themes. Hanford tempered his opinion by noting that "we need look for no such complete break with the past as would result from a sudden religious conversion . . ."[12] On the contrary, Milton remained a humanist who delighted "in the pure artistry of verse" and in giving himself "to various more or less impersonal aesthetic moods."[13] Such qualifications are imperative, for the poems immediately following the Nativity Hymn certainly include "On Shakespeare," the epitaphs on the university carrier, "An Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester," and L'Allegro and Il Penseroso. In addition,

---

[11] Ibid., p. 175.

[12] Hanford, p. 124.

[13] Ibid., p. 126.

as W. R. Parker has argued,[14] it is most likely that the Italian sonnets and Elegy VII, with their prominent amatory elements, belong to the same period. In any case, Milton is clearly capable of throwing off the garb of the priest and substituting a more aesthetic than ethical attitude in the ensuing years.

Tillyard's proposal that Milton may have intended an epic based on the history of Christ when he wrote the Nativity Hymn comes in the midst of his review of the growth of Milton's plans for an Arthurian epic, plans which developed later than 1629. While we can be sure that Milton's Arthuriad would have been heroic and ethical, an Arthurian epic would have deprived the Hymn and the second half of Elegy VI of the appositeness that the religious epics give them in retrospect.

Nor is December, 1629, the only possible moment for Milton's serious dedication of himself to his art. Tillyard himself has called attention to the sense of serious purpose in a passage from the "Vacation Exercise" written in July, 1628.[15] And A. S. P. Woodhouse has

---

[14] William Riley Parker, "Some Problems in the Chronology of Milton's Early Poems," Review of English Studies, XI (July, 1935), 276-83.

[15] Tillyard, Miltonic Setting, pp. 170-72.

as W. R. Parker has shown,[1] [illegible]

Italian sonnets [illegible]

[illegible] Indeed, [illegible]

case, Milton is clearly [illegible]

garb of [illegible]

ethical [illegible]

Tillyard's purpose, [illegible]

an epic based on the History of Britain [illegible]

Nativity Ode [illegible]

growth of Milton's [illegible]

which developed [illegible]

that Milton's [illegible]

ethical, [illegible]

and the [illegible]

that the [illegible]

Not inconceivably, [illegible]

for Milton's [illegible]

Tillyard himself [illegible]

serious purpose in [illegible]

written in only [illegible]

---

[1] [illegible] logy of Milton's Early Poems," [illegible] XI (July, [illegible]

[2] Tillyard, *Milton*, [illegible]

severely modified the positions of Hanford, Tillyard, and Barker by suggesting that Sonnet VII, "How Soon Hath Time," (1632) is "the record of an experience just as definite and far more decisive" than that associated with the Elegy and Hymn. He argues against Hanford that "the decision which Milton finally reached in respect of his poetry, and the religious experience from which the decisions sprang, turned on a larger axis than the rejection of the elegiac and erotic."[16]

Making the most of the secular verse Milton composed later than the Hymn, Woodhouse grants an "act of self-dedication" in December, 1629, but qualifies his assent by adding that the act "required to be renewed, as it was in Sonnet 7." The sonnet thus assumes new importance, becoming the real turning-point in Milton's career:

> From the determination there taken, to live and write hereafter "As ever in my great Taskmaster's eye," there is no retreat: it leaves its mark on the whole of Milton's subsequent career. And this time the decision subsumes in silence the rejection of erotic in favour of religious themes. Moreover, the recognition that if the December of 1629 sees a first decision and

---

[16] A. S. P. Woodhouse, "Notes on Milton's Early Development," University of Toronto Quarterly, XIII (October, 1943), 67.

severely modified [illegible] conclusion [illegible] by suggesting that [illegible] (1632) is "the record of the experience [illegible] and far more decisive, than that [illegible] *Elegy* and *Hymn*. No [illegible] decision which Milton [illegible] poetry, and [illegible] decisions [illegible] rejection of the [illegible]."

Noting the [illegible] composed later than the *Elegy*, [illegible] of self-dedication" in [illegible], 1632, [illegible] his answer by [illegible] that [illegible] renewed, as if [illegible] new importance, becoming [illegible] Milton's answer:

> [illegible]

---

16. [illegible] Development," [illegible] (October, 194[illegible]), [illegible]

> resolve, that of 1632 sees its final and irrevocable confirmation, removes the difficulty of Sonnets 1-6 and the other secular verse of 1630-2.[17]

Revising Barker's thesis, Woodhouse sees in the Hymn and Sonnet VII taken together "evidence of an experience which stands to Milton in place of what the Puritans called conversion," naturally enough stressing its "gradual character and the absence of any marked self-abasement."[18] Thus, "vastly important as is the experience recorded in the Nativity Ode, it is not final."[19]

But such a poem as Ad Patrem, which in all likelihood comes still later in the poet's career, can formulate a serious sense of purpose almost wholly in aesthetic rather than religious terms. And E. K. Rand has asserted that "for the most part, Milton is a young Ovid" at the time of the Hymn and Elegy VI.[20] This of the poet who is supposed to be dedicating himself as a Puritan prophet to religious themes!

The supposed dedicatory quality of Elegy VI has also been sharply questioned by William Riley Parker in

---

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., p. 73.

[19] Ibid., p. 77.

[20] Rand, SP, XIX, 111.

> necessity, which in [illegible]
> irretrievable [illegible]
> unity of [illegible]
> weave the [illegible]

Retaining [illegible]
and Sonnet VII [illegible]
which attends to [illegible]
called [illegible]
"gradual [illegible]
obsession.[18] [illegible]
experience referred to in the [illegible]
final."[19]

The [illegible]
hood comes [illegible]
into a [illegible]
[illegible]
Maud [illegible]
a young [illegible]
This [illegible]
on a [illegible]

The [illegible]
also [illegible]

a review of Tillyard's _The Miltonic Setting_. Rather than being a "personal self-dedication" to the writing of epic poetry, the _Elegy_, according to Parker, is composed in "the spirit and method of an academic exercise."[21] It is a rhetorical "debate" presenting first the "thesis that song and feasting belong together" followed by "the case for temperance."[22] This view is justified as follows:

> Confronted with the difficulty of citing authorities for spare living among the Greek _gods_ [as he had for feasting], Milton, instead of turning to the Bible, apparently invents a few appropriate details about Tiresias, Linus, Calchas, and Orpheus. As an illustration he does not mention Virgil, but, contradicting Horace and (to a certain extent) his own later account in the _Apology_, he offers the Homer of the Odyssey. He does not mention himself as an aspirant to epic honors (although he had cited Diodati as an elegaic poet), but gives Pythagoras as an example of living sparingly, and uses him to enlarge his theme again (as he had used Diodati in the first argument). Besides temperance, epic poetry also belongs with purity, chastity, and blameless behavior. This side of the "debate," like the preceding, ends by pointing out that the bard is sacred to the gods. Every element in the defense of feasting is present in the shorter defense of temperance. The parallelism is not precise, but neither is it in "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso." Yet Dr. Tillyard would here, I think, make Milton "Il Penseroso" and not "L'Allegro."[23]

---

[21] William Riley Parker, [Review of _The Miltonic Setting_], _Modern Language Notes_, LV (March, 1940), 216.

[22] _Ibid._, p. 217.

[23] _Ibid._

a review of [illegible] *[illegible]*. Rather than being a "personal autobiographical" or [illegible] of epic poetry, the *Elegia* [illegible] composed in "the spirit and mood of a [illegible] exercise."[21] It is a [illegible] first the 'wheels that [illegible]' followed by "the [illegible]."[22] This view is justified as follows:

> Confronted with the difficulty of citing authorities for sparse living among the great gods [as he had for festivity], Milton [illegible] of turning to the Bible, apparently [illegible] a few appropriate details about Tiresias, Linus, Calchas, and Orpheus. It is interesting he does not mention Vergil, [illegible] Horace and [illegible] account is the *Telemachy* [illegible] of the Odyssey. He does not [illegible] the aspirant to emulate Homer (although he had cited Diodati as an elegiac poet), [illegible] Homer chiefly as an example of living sparingly, and uses him to enlarge his [illegible] in the first [illegible]. Besides temperance, epic poetry also belongs with purity, chastity, and blameless behavior. This idea of the 'priest,' like the preceding, [illegible] of the bard is [illegible]. Every element in the defense of [illegible] in the shorter defense of [illegible]. The passage [illegible] is not peculiar, [illegible] and "Il Penseroso." [illegible] I think, more [illegible] "Il Penseroso" than "L'Allegro."[23]

---

[21] William Riley Parker, [illegible] *[illegible] Setting]*, [illegible], [illegible].

[22] *Ibid.*, p. [illegible]. [23] *Ibid.*

It is possible to make an answer to each of Parker's points, but the argument as a whole has substance. Certainly Milton is reticent about naming himself as one who has chosen the role of epic, heroic, or religious poet.

It is important to remember that we read the *Elegy* and the *Hymn* with the whole course of Milton's subsequent career in mind, whereas Milton as a youth of twenty-one, regardless of his genius and personality, could not possibly have projected his actual future. Whatever intentions he may have had for himself in December, 1629, few of them could have been realized in the specific ways he had foreseen. Even the experiences related in the *Apology for Smectymnuus* are seen in the simplifying light of hindsight, long after any doubts or obscurities joined to the event had been resolved by the passing of time.

If the *Hymn* and *Elegy* are to be taken as a specially significant event in Milton's development as a great religious poet, one expects a change of direction, a new set of goals, as with St. Paul, Luther, or even John Donne. But there is nothing like this in Milton's life and work. From the beginning his goals are remarkably

It is possible to make an honest [illegible]
points, but the statement [illegible]
Certainly Milton [illegible]
one who has chosen the role of [illegible]
poet.

It is important to [illegible] Elegy
and the Hymn with the knowledge of Milton's subse-
quent career in mind, [illegible]
twenty-one, regardless of his [illegible],
could not possibly have [illegible]
Whatever intentions he [illegible]
December, 1629, few of them could have [illegible]
the specific ways he had [illegible]
related in the [illegible]
simplifying light of [illegible]
or obscuring [illegible]
by the passing of [illegible].

If the Hymn and Elegy [illegible]
significant event in [illegible]
religious poet, [illegible]
new set of [illegible]
Donne. [illegible]
and world [illegible]

clear and consistent; the only change is the gradual firming and sharpening of the terms in which the life is to be lived and the vision expressed. It is more in accord with the facts to imagine Milton dedicating himself again and again to the great tasks he had set himself as these became more clearly defined by experience.

Thus it would be no distortion to find a new sense of purpose expressed by the _Hymn_ and the _Elegy_, as by the "Vacation Exercise," Sonnet VII, and, in fact, a number of other works. But to identify the two poems with a "conversion," with the "resolution" of the _Apology_, or with a "self-dedication" to epic poetry is to emphasize some aspects of the occasion at the expense of others. Specifically, it is to make Milton too much in command of his life and muse.

Probably our view should be close to that suggested by Northrop Frye, who reminds us of what a twenty-one-year-old poet without an important poem behind him must have felt after writing the _Nativity Hymn_.[24] Though there is little hint of it in the _Elegy_

---

[24] Northrop Frye (ed.), _Paradise Lost and Selected Poetry and Prose_ (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1951), p. v.

clear and consistent; the only [illegible] [illegible] timing and [illegible] [illegible] is to be [illegible] and [illegible] in accord with the [illegible] himself again and [illegible] himself as [illegible] [illegible] experience.

Thus it [illegible] sense of [illegible] by the "[illegible] a number of [illegible] with a "[illegible]" [illegible] [illegible] or [illegible] "[illegible]" is to [illegible] expense of [illegible] too much [illegible].

[illegible] suggested by [illegible] twenty-one-year-old [illegible] behind his [illegible] [illegible].[24] [illegible]

---

[24] [illegible]
[illegible]

unless we so understand the references to the epic poet, Milton must have experienced a tremendous exuberance in the composition of the poem. Such an experience might well result in the feeling that "the major poet must think of himself as a priest of poetry."[25] This puts a proper perspective on the matter: if one writes a great poem then one may think himself inspired, but it is folly to think oneself inspired and set out to write a great poem. The poem is prior to its significance. Thus we do better to avoid seeing the *Hymn* as the result of anything exterior to itself.

---

[25] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER III

THE PLACE OF THE POEM IN ENGLISH POETRY

Hardly any question about the Nativity Hymn has been more vexed than the problem of how to describe or characterize the poem's style. Is it to be regarded as a metaphysical poem? Or is it more accurately described as baroque? Wylie Sypher has suggested that it is mannerist,[1] and others see it as simply continuing the manner of the Renaissance. Perhaps it can be called Jacobean. But we shall learn little about the poem from such labels. The truth is that, lacking any consistent theory of periodization or classification, no one can safely use any of these terms (with the possible exception of Jacobean in its strict chronological sense) without first defining it for his readers.

Not only are such terms inadequately defined, but we have no consistent basis for classifying poetry into such groups. Is it a matter of diction, structure, tone, thought, sentence types, or a combination of all or some

---

[1] Wylie Sypher, Four Stages of Renaissance Style (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1955), p. 106.

[illegible]

THE PLACE [illegible]

Hardly any [illegible] the [illegible] has been more vexed than the [illegible] characterize the [illegible] a metaphysical poem? [illegible] as baroque? Wylie Sypher has [illegible] mannerist,[1] and others [illegible] manner of the Renaissance. Perhaps it should be called Jacobean. [illegible] such labels. The [illegible] theory of periodization [illegible] safely use any of these [illegible] of Jacobean in [illegible] first defining it [illegible].

Not only are such terms [illegible] we have no consistent [illegible] such groups. [illegible] thought, sentence types, [illegible]

---

[1] Wylie Sypher, [illegible] (New York: Doubleday and Co., [illegible]

of these qualities? Again, no one can proceed without stating his particular criteria for settling questions of classification. For these reasons, though I do not consider the problems insoluble, I wish to avoid the attempt to categorize the Nativity Hymn in terms of the larger aesthetic movements of its time. Let us instead turn our attention to the simpler matters of genre and stylistic forebears.

The stylistic precursors of Milton's poem are not far to seek. "Spenser and Jonson," says F. T. Prince, "are taken by Milton as his masters in the earliest English poems. The influence of Spenser prevails in the specifically religious pieces. . . . Milton's cultivation of English verse begins appropriately under the joint auspices of these two poets, for they alone among the great Elizabethans and Jacobeans held the lofty Renaissance ideal of a learned poetry; and they alone upheld and applied critical theories which Milton could respect."[2] The principal figures whose influence is either absent or concealed are obviously Shakespeare and

---

[2] F. T. Prince, The Italian Element in Milton's Verse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 59.

of those qualities" [illegible], as was [illegible] [illegible] stating his particular regard for the [illegible] [illegible] of classification. With this in mind, I shall [illegible] not consider the problem as [illegible] which I shall only attempt to categorize the *Pastorals*, then I shall [illegible] larger confines of length of the [illegible] [illegible] turn our attention to the similar [illegible] and stylistic features.

The stylistic [illegible] of [illegible] are, as far as [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] "are taken [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] English poems." [illegible] specifically [illegible] of English verse in [illegible] suggestions of [illegible] the [illegible] great [illegible] and [illegible] Renaissance ideal of [illegible] upheld and applied [illegible] which [illegible] respect."[8] The [illegible] either [illegible]

---

[8] [illegible], [illegible] Verse (Oxford: [illegible]), p. [illegible].

Donne. Shakespeare founded no school, which is perhaps why it is so difficult to trace his influence upon the poets who follow him. No one would doubt that he has affected the poetry of all his successors, but his success is such that imitators are doomed to fail, and we may surmise that Milton knew as much. Donne is another case, and I think we may safely assert that Milton consciously rejected the great metaphysical as a master. E. M. W. Tillyard, in his book-length study of The Metaphysicals and Milton, notes that the Nativity Hymn "approaches in its manner nearest to the Metaphysicals; . . . A reason for this approximation is the number of ingenious and fanciful comparisons that Milton introduces. These, however, are not at all like the contortions of Donne . . ."[3] He concludes that Milton "is more like Jonson and Marvell than he is like Donne and Crashaw."[4]

The "ingenious and fanciful comparisons" stem, rather, from the School of the Fletchers. Giles and Phineas Fletcher apprenticed themselves to The Faerie Queene as early as 1603 and continued to write in the

---

[3] E. M. W. Tillyard, The Metaphysicals and Milton (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956), p. 42.

[4] Ibid., p. 74.

Donne. [illegible]

why it is [illegible]

poets who [illegible]

affected the [illegible]

is such that [illegible]

surprise that Milton [illegible]

and I [illegible]

rejected the [illegible]

Tillyard, in his [illegible]

and Milton, notes that [illegible]

his manner [illegible] . . . [illegible]

for this [illegible]

fanciful [illegible]

however, are not [illegible]

Donne . . .[3] [illegible]

Jonson and Marvell [illegible]

The Elizabethan [illegible]

rather, from the [illegible]

Phineas Fletcher [illegible]

[illegible]

---

[3] E. M. W. Tillyard, [illegible] (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956), p. [illegible]

[4] Ibid., p. [illegible]

Spenserian style all their lives.[5] Their most important poem from the standpoint of the Nativity Hymn was Giles Fletcher's Christs Victorie and Triumph in Heaven, and Earth, over, and after Death, published in 1610. The poem combines "vatic fervor"[6] and extravagant language in an eight-line variant of the Faerie Queene stanza. It begins, significantly in view of Milton's subsequent concern with the theme, with an allegorical debate in Heaven between Justice and Mercy. As Herbert E. Cory describes it:

> Justice has the winged lightning for her Mercury. About her throng pale Sickness, "with kercher'd head," Famine, bloodless Care, Age, Fear, and many more. Justice leans her bosom on two stony tables. Her speech inflames the Heavenly Hierarchies to destroy corrupted mankind. But Mercy steps forward like the sun from the clouds. Upon her breast sleeps Delight. She pleads for man, especially since Christ is now wandering on earth; and her efforts are successful.[7]

Then, with Christ taking a role similar to that of a Spenserian hero, Fletcher recounts his life from the temptation in the wilderness to the Ascension. Two stanzas can hardly illustrate the poem's influence on

---

[5] Herbert E. Cory, "Spenser, The School of the Fletchers, and Milton," University of California Publications in Modern Philology, II (June, 1912), 314.

[6] Ibid., p. 326.

[7] Ibid.

Spenserian style all their own.[8] [illegible] [illegible]

poem [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible]

Fletcher's Christs Victorie and Triumph in Heav'n and

Earth, over and after death, published in 1610. The

poem consists of four cantos [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

in an eight-line variation of the Spenserian stanza. [illegible]

begins, significantly for [illegible] [illegible] a statement [illegible]

concern with the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Heaven between [illegible] and Mercy. [illegible] [illegible]

describes her:

> Justice into the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
> About her throne [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
> head,[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and
> many more. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
> tables. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
> [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
> Mercy steps forward [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
> Upon her breast [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
> man, especially [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
> earth, and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Then, with Christ [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of

Spenserian hero, Fletcher [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

temptation in the wilderness [illegible] [illegible]

stanzas [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

---

[8] Herbert E. Cory, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] Fletchers, and Milton," [illegible] [illegible] tions in Modern Philology, [illegible] [illegible]

[9] Ibid., p. [illegible]

Milton, but perhaps they can suggest some idea of Fletcher's intermediate place between the two greater poets:

> All suddenly the hill his snowe devours,
> In liew whereof a goodly garden grew,
> As if the snow had melted into flow'rs,
> Which their sweet breath in subtill vapours threw,
> That all about perfumed spirits flew.
> For what so ever might aggrate the sense,
> In all the world, or please the appetence,
> Heer it was powred out in lavish affluence.[8]

If that stanza looks backward, the following one looks forward:

> It was but now they gathered blooming May,
> And of his armes disrob'd the branching tree,
> To strowe with boughs, and blossomes all thy way,
> And now, the branchlesse truncke a cross for thee,
> And May, dismai'd, thy coronet must be:
> It was but now they wear so kind, to throwe
> Their owne best garments, whear thy feet should goe,
> And now, thy selfe they strip, and bleeding wounds
> they show.[9]

Summing up his study of the influence of the School of the Fletchers on Milton, Cory asserts that "for a while Milton was certainly definitely enlisted in this school."[10] Further:

---

[8] Christs Victorie on Earth, 39, The Poetical Works of Giles Fletcher and Phineas Fletcher, ed. Frederick S. Boas (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908), I, 49.

[9] Christs Triumph over Death, 33, ibid., p. 66.

[10] Cory, p. 345.

Milton, however, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Fletcher's [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

poets:

All suddenly the hill his snowe devours,
In liew whereof a goodly garden grew,
As if the snow had melted into flow'rs,
Which their sweet breath in subtill vapours threw;
That all about perfumed spirits flew.
For what so ever might aggrate the sense,
In all the world, or please the appetence,
Heer it was powred out in pleasing affluence.

If that stanza [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible]

forwards:

It [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
And [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
And [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
And [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
It was [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
And [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible]

Speaking of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

the Fletchers as [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Milton was [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

further:

---

[1] Charles W[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
of Giles Fletcher and Phineas Fletcher [illegible] [illegible]
Book [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
(1908), I, 13.

[2] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[3] [illegible]

> It is high time that we understood more clearly than any critic has yet set forth the immediate poetic environment of *Lycidas*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Paradise Regained*, the welter of religion and sensuality . . . from which the great Puritan drew far more than we commonly realize. . . . Apart from the great Greek and Latin poets and from the great books of philosophy and religion, Milton's literary lineage is to be traced from his master Spenser and from these strange perverted works of a group of poets who had a much greater academic vogue than is now generally understood, the School of the Fletchers.[11]

But Milton not only followed the Fletchers in his matter and manner when he wrote the *Nativity Hymn*, he also drew upon other early Spenserians. Among those who turn up in the notes to the poem, we may mention Fairfax, the translator of Tasso, and Joshua Sylvester, the translator of Du Bartas.[12] In addition, while the influence of Ben Jonson has usually been seen in the polished simplicity of many of the lines, it is tempting to find the example of the Marlowe of *Hero and Leander* in the polished sensuousness of others. The question of Marlowe's influence on Milton has never been satisfactorily explored, though it is obvious. If Milton learned from

---

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 344.

[12] Placed among the early Spenserians by Bernard Groom, *The Diction of Poetry from Spenser to Bridges* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955), pp. 19-25.

Hero and Leander in writing the Hymn, the influence may be forever concealed under Marlowe's debt to Spenser.[13]

Spenser can advance yet two other claims to be the "original" of the style of the Nativity Hymn. The stanza of the proem of Milton's Hymn is copied from that of Spenser's Fowre Hymnes, except that the final line has been changed to an Alexandrine.[14] And the stanza of "The Hymn" proper, while resembling Jonsonian ode stanzas as George N. Shuster insists,[15] nevertheless is perhaps equally close to the stanza of the song in the "Aprill" eclogue of The Shepheardes Calender. It is from this latter poem that Milton is generally said to have borrowed his conceit of the sun eclipsed by a greater Sun. There are other similarities between the poems as well, though they are so common to the poetry of the age as to forbid identifying them as conscious parallels.

Probably Milton felt no contradiction in combining the styles of Jonson and Spenser, as he almost certainly

---

[13] On Marlowe as a Spenserian, especially in Hero and Leander, see, e.g., Groom, p. 58.

[14] George N. Shuster, The English Ode from Milton to Keats (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), p. 68.

[15] Ibid.

Hero and Leander is [illegible] be forever concealed under [illegible]

Spenser had [illegible] "original" of the [illegible] of the poem of Milton's Hymn is [illegible] Spenser's Fowre Hymnes, except [illegible] been changed to an Alexandrine. [illegible] "The Hymn" proper. [illegible] as George N. Shuster [illegible] equally close to the stanza of [illegible] eclogue of The Shepheardes Calender, [illegible] latter poem that Milton is [illegible] borrowed his conceit of the [illegible] Sun. There are other [illegible] well, though they are [illegible] as to forbid identification [illegible]

Professor [illegible] the styles of Spenser, [illegible]

---

[13] On [illegible] and Leander, see [illegible]

[14] George N. Shuster, [illegible] to Keats (New York: [illegible]), p. 64.

[15] Ibid.

saw no distinction between a hymn and an ode on religious themes. Jonson's religious odes were termed "hymns,"[16] and not even a prophet could have predicted the sequence of events that would divide the two terms between two increasingly divergent genres by the end of the eighteenth century. Addison's "The Spacious Firmament on High" was called both hymn and ode,[17] an indication that Milton's view of the genre did not die with him. According to Shuster, the English Renaissance added David the Psalmist to Pindar, Horace, and Anacreon as "the great exemplars" of the classic ode.[18] Thus from its inception the English ode was viewed as at least parallel to the hymn, though even then there were almost as many conceptions of the ode as poets writing.

Pindar and David, however, exerted the greatest influence, possibly because they both pointed in the same direction. Shuster emphasizes "the lofty religious character of their verse" and "the seemingly untrammeled, even wild, character of their prosody."[19] Odes, psalms,

---

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., pp. 181-182.

[18] Ibid., p. 6.

[19] Ibid., p. 10.

saw no distinct [illegible]

themes. [illegible]

and not even a phrase [illegible]

of events that would [illegible]

increasingly [illegible]

eighteenth century, [illegible]

on Milton" [illegible]

that Milton's [illegible]

According to [illegible]

David the Psalmist [illegible]

"the great [illegible]

its inception [illegible]

parallel to the [illegible]

as [illegible]

Pindar and Cowley [illegible]

influence; probably [illegible]

same direction. [illegible]

character of [illegible]

even until, [illegible]

---

[10] [illegible]

[11] [illegible]

[12] [illegible]

and hymns all exhibit an original and an Elizabethan connection with music, and (as the Elizabethans thought) with each other. Puttenham, for instance, refers to the "hymns of Pyndarus,"[20] and Thomas Lodge made David an imitator of Pindar and Horace.[21] George Sandys, says Shuster, probably "looked upon David as the compeer of Pindar and Callimachus and felt that a 'Psalm' was an 'ode,' with the difference that the first word connoted a sacredness the second did not suggest."[22]

Sidney said that "Psalm" meant "Song,"[23] and there was a steady flow of translations of the Psalms, often with musical settings, right up through the time that Milton made his paraphrases at the age of fifteen.[24] Milton's Psalms are usually dated 1624 and are said to be "influenced by the simple rhythms and rhymes of the Sternhold and Hopkins version (c1547), which was widely used in congregational singing."[25] While this famous psalter could not have been out of Milton's mind as he

---

[20] _Ibid._, p. 38. [21] _Ibid._, p. 51. [22] _Ibid._, p. 52.

[23] "The Defence of Poesie," _The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney_, ed. Albert Feuillerat (4 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), III, 6.

[24] Shuster, p. 51. [25] Hughes, p. 3.

and hymns [illegible] [illegible] in [illegible]
connection with [illegible], [illegible] [illegible]
with each [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible]
"Hymn of [illegible] [illegible]
Milton [illegible] [illegible]
Sonnets, [illegible] [illegible]
Pindar and [illegible] [illegible]
'ode,' with the [illegible] [illegible]
a [illegible] [illegible]

Sidney [illegible] [illegible]
was a [illegible] [illegible]
with musical [illegible] [illegible]
Milton [illegible] [illegible]
Milton's [illegible] [illegible]
be "influenced by [illegible] [illegible]
Sternhold and [illegible] [illegible]
used in [illegible] [illegible]
printer could [illegible] [illegible]

---

[18] [illegible]

[19] [illegible] Sir Philip Sidney [illegible]

[20] [illegible]

worked, it is not at all clear that he would think primarily in terms of its predictable rhymes. On the other hand, Milton's father had contributed three harmonizations to Thomas Ravenscroft's *Whole Book of Psalms* in 1621, the last significant treatment in a long line of musical settings for the Sternhold-Hopkins Psalter.[26] It was the "Golden Age of psalm singing," when "almost every English composer of note tried his hand at harmonizing" the hymn tunes joined to the psalter.[27] Milton may even have intended his paraphrase of Psalm 136, with its insistently metrical refrain, for actual singing.[28]

At any rate, the poet would feel an instant identification of psalms with hymns. The association of odes and hymns might be a little less direct but nonetheless unavoidable. The only detour, if there was one, would have stemmed from the amatory associations of the Ronsardian ode, introduced into England by the anti-Puritan party.[29] But Ben Jonson, by bringing his style

---

[26] Ernest Brennecke, Jr., *John Milton the Elder and His Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), pp. 98-108.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 109.

[29] Shuster, pp. 26-31.

worked. It is [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

primarily in terms of the music [illegible] [illegible] On the

other hand, [illegible]

harmonizations in [illegible]

Psalms in 1651, [illegible]

line of musical settings [illegible] [illegible]

Psalter.[26] It was the [illegible] [illegible]

when "almost [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

hand at the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the

psalter.[27] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

of Psalm 136, with [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

for [illegible]

[illegible]

identification [illegible]

ones and hymns might [illegible]

[illegible]

would have [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Puritan [illegible].[28] [illegible]

---

[26] [illegible] [illegible] New York: [illegible], 19[illegible]), pp. 95-100.

[27] Ibid., p. [illegible]. [illegible]

[28] [illegible], pp. [illegible].

and his taste to the Ronsardian ode, had replaced it with a more classic and exalted poetry that Milton, even at his most Puritanical, could unhesitatingly take as a model.[30] As poet laureate, Jonson had made the "birthday ode" a part of English literature, and the type itself goes back to a 1574 Latin "Ode natalita . . ." for St. Stephen.[31]

The other major candidate for suggesting the form of the poem is, as we have noted, Spenser, and the _Fowre Hymnes_ have a significance beyond Milton's adaptation of their stanza to the proem of his _Hymn_. Spenser's hymns are "modeled in all probability on Alamanni's adaptations of the Petrarchan _canzone_,"[32] which may or may not be related to the classic ode. But the _Epithalamion_, though there is no indication Spenser thought it an ode, is related both to the _Fowre Hymnes_ and to Pindaric patterns.[33] It may be merely circumstance, but the style and tone of the _Epithalamion_ is that of an ode, and Milton could have perceived its resemblances

---

[30] _Ibid._, pp. 43-46.

[31] _Ibid._, p. 59.

[32] _Ibid._, p. 25.

[33] _Ibid._, p. 26.

and the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
a more classic and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
his most [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
model.[30] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
ode." A part of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
goes back to a [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
Stephen.[31]

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
of the mode [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
Hymnes have [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
of their [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
hymns are "modal" [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
adaptations of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
may not be [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
thought it [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
and to Pindaric [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
but the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
ode, and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

---

[30] [illegible] [illegible]

[31] [illegible] [illegible]

both to the *Fowre Hymnes* and Jonson's odes. F. T. Prince thinks that "the pattern and movement of the stanza [of the *Nativity Hymn*], and the very notion of employing such a stanza for a solemn ode of this sort, could only derive from the tradition of the *canzone*."[34] Whether this is so or not, Milton's possible models were all converging toward a single ideal thoroughly suited to his purposes. Hebrew, Greek, Italian, and English, they might all have appeared to be instances of the same genre of poetry.

Shuster notes that the *Nativity Hymn* "established the religious ode as a permanent art form, wedding David and classical antiquity in an exemplary manner," and insists that the poem should be termed an ode on the basis of its overt structure.[35] Though there is no reason to question Shuster's reasoning, I have tried to show that Milton very likely equated the terms "hymn" and "ode." Further, the religious nature of the poem is not conveyed by the modern understanding of the term "ode." For this reason, it has seemed preferable not only to myself but to a number of other modern critics

---

[34] Prince, p. 60.

[35] Shuster, pp. 67-68.

both to [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
thinks that [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
the [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
a stanza [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
from the [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible].[24] [illegible] [illegible]
or not, Milton's [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
toward a [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
Selmon, [illegible], [illegible], [illegible] [illegible]
appeared to be [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Shafer [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
the religious [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
and classical [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
insists that [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
basis of [illegible] [illegible].[25] [illegible] [illegible]
reason to question [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
show that [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
and "ode." [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
is not conveyed by [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
"ode." For this [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
only to [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

---

[24] [illegible], p. 46.

[25] [illegible]

including Rosemond Tuve to call the poem a "hymn."[36]

Sidney gives us what is probably the most accurate description of the "kinde" to which Milton's poem belongs:

> The chief [kind of poesie] both in antiquitie and excellencie, were they that did imitate the inconceivable excellencies of GOD. Such were, David in his Psalmes, Salomon in his song of Songs, in his Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs: Moses and Bebora in theyr Hymnes, and the writer of Job; . . . In this kinde, though in a full wrong divinitie, were Orpheus, Amphion, Homer in his hymes, and many other, both Greekes and Romaines: and this Poesie must be used, by whosoever will follow S. James his counsell, in singing Psalmes when they are merry: and I knowe is used with the fruite of comfort by some, when in sorrowfull pangs of their death-bringing sinnes, they find the consolation of the never-leaving goodnesse.[37]

Writers of this "first and most noble sorte," Sidney continues, "may justly bee termed Vates."[38] That Milton composed his Hymn in the spirit of the vatic poet and in the genre of the lofty religious song seems clear.

However little biographical significance we may wish to attach to the description of the poet as prophet immediately preceding the description of Milton's personal role as poet of the Hymn in Elegy VI, no one seems likely to question its relevance as a picture of Milton's conception of the true poet--one whose life and

---

[36] In Images and Themes.

[37] Sidney, p. 9.

[38] Ibid., p. 10.

including Roscommon's [illegible] of [illegible]'s lyre.

Sidney gives us what is probably the most accurate description of the "kinds" to which Milton's Hymn belonged:

> The chief [kind of poesie], both in antiquitie and excellencie, were they that did imitate the inconceivable excellencies of God. Such were David in his Psalmes, Salomon in his song of Songs, in his Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs: Moses and Debora in theyr Hymnes, and the writer of Job . . . . In this kinde, though in a full wrong divinitie, were Orpheus, Amphion, Homer in his hymnes, and many other, both Greekes and Romaines: and this Poesie must be used by whosoever will follow S. James his counsell, in singing Psalmes when they are merry: and I knowe is used with the fruite of comfort by some, when, in sorrowfull pangs of their death-bringing sinnes, they find the consolation of the never-leaving goodnesse.[37]

Writers of this "first and most noble sort," Sidney continues, "may justly bee termed Vates."[38] That Milton composed his Hymn in the spirit of the same poet and in the genre of the lofty religious song seems clear.

However little biographical significance we may wish to attach to the description of the poet as prophet immediately preceding the description of Diodati's personal role as poet of [illegible], it [illegible] seems likely to [illegible] its relevance as a picture of Milton's conception of the [illegible] poet—one who [illegible] the

---

[36] In [illegible].

[37] Sidney, p. [illegible]. [38] [illegible]

poetry both show forth the divine truth.[39] In any case, the conception of the religious poet and his poem in the _Elegy_ is precisely the same as that in the proem to the _Hymn_ itself. Milton concludes the regimen to be pursued by the epic poet with the statement: "For truly, the bard is sacred to the gods and is their priest. His hidden heart and his lips alike breathe out Jove" (ll. 77-78). Then comes the news of the _Hymn_:

> But if you will know what I am doing (if only you think it of any importance to know whether I am doing anything)---I am singing the heaven-descended King, the bringer of peace, and the blessed times promised in the sacred books---the infant cries of our God and his stabling under a mean roof who, with his Father, governs the realms above. I am singing the starry sky and the hosts that sang high in the air, and the gods that were suddenly destroyed in their own shrines. These are my gifts for the birthday of Christ--gifts which the first light of its dawn brought to me. (ll. 79-90)

The poem is a gift to God, a divine hymn of praise, not however the poet's own creation but a divine inspiration given to him, the prophetic voice of the divine muse. The proem recapitulates the statement of the _Elegy_, even pointing out that the time is just before dawn:

---

[39] Milton's adherence to the tradition of the poet as _vates_ is developed by Allen, "Introduction," pp. xi-xx.

> Say Heav'nly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
> Afford a present to the Infant God?
> Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,
> To welcome him to this his new abode,
> Now while the Heav'n by the Sun's team untrod,
> Hath took no print of the approaching light,
> And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?[40]

Milton's role as intermediary is stressed by his calling the Muse "thou" ("Hast thou no verse. . ." and "Have thou the honor first . . .") and by references to "thy sacred vein," "thy humble ode," "thy Lord," and "thy voice."[41] Again, the sacred poet according to the elegy is "he whose theme is wars and heaven under Jupiter in his prime, and pious heroes and chieftains half-divine, and he who sings now of the sacred counsels of the gods on high . . ." (ll.55-57). The proem states that the subject is one "the holy sages once did sing" and proceeds to speak of

> That glorious Form . . .
> Wherewith he wont at Heav'n's high Council-Table,
> To sit the midst of Trinal Unity . . . (ll. 8-11)

Even more striking is the use of the same image to conclude both the picture of the divine poet, whose "hidden heart and . . . lips alike breathe out Jove," and the

---

[40] Lines 15-21. The text of the Nativity Hymn is that given in Hughes, pp. 43-50. Cited hereafter by line number only in the text.

[41] Tuve, p. 43.

proem's Invocation to the Heav'nly Muse, who is urged to

> . . . join thy voice unto the Angel Choir,
> From out his secret Altar toucht with hallow'd fire.
> (ll. 27-28)

The last line has long been recognized as an allusion to the purifying coal from the altar laid on Isaiah's lips by the seraph to call the prophet to speak for the Lord.[42]

Thus Milton's poem is conceived as a hymn in the full religious as well as the full poetic sense. Once more Sidney is illuminating, for hymns, like "Psalmes," are songs some of which "maketh you as it were, see God comming in his Majestie. . . . wherein . . . [the poet] sheweth himself a passionate lover, of that unspeakable and everlasting beautie to be seene by the eyes of the minde, onely cleered by fayth." Such poetry, he warns, "deserveth not to be scourged out of the Church of God."[43] So Milton, after an Invocation of divine presence, raises a song in praise and worship to God--a hymn of the divine glory and power, filled, as so many hymns are, both with the joy of triumph and the dedication to struggle. The form of the stanza, though far removed from the simple musical patterns of most

---

[42] Isa. 6:5-9.

[43] Sidney, p. 7.

proem's [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

> . . . [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
> From out his [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
> (ll. 27-28)

The last line has long [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the pacifying note [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] by the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

Thus Milton's [illegible] is [illegible] [illegible] full [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] more [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] are songs [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] coming in his [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] minds, [illegible] [illegible] "[illegible] not [illegible] [illegible] God."[43] So Milton, [illegible] [illegible] presence, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] a hymn of the [illegible] [illegible] many hymns are, [illegible] [illegible] dedication [illegible] [illegible] far removed from [illegible] [illegible]

---

[43] Ibid., [illegible]

church hymns, is nevertheless hymnic in the way each verse, or stanza, comes to rest in the final Alexandrine, its thought related to the rest of the hymn and yet self-contained, so that we get a series of vignettes instead of a continuous narrative. Inasmuch as Milton puts full weight on the decorum of the genre in making the poem, we shall miss something of the poem's richness and complexity unless we are aware of the total tradition leading up to the poem in Milton's mind.

CHAPTER IV

THE STRUCTURE OF THE POEM

Milton's Hymn, for all its antecedents, is a unique creation, arising in a particular time and place and displaying a distinctive form and purpose. Milton not only noted the occasion of its composition in Elegy VI, but he reiterated the details in the proem and filled in the one missing part of the date by printing the poem with the superscription "Compos'd 1629." Few poems can be so precisely dated. This is Milton's personal hymn, sung in the privacy of his room at a specific moment of time. Yet it is also a hymn of the whole creation, sung timelessly in the cathedral of the universe. This is the paradox hinted in the opening line, which brushes away the centuries to say that this is the morn of the first Christmas, a statement possible only because the first Christmas is eternal.[1] This reconciliation of opposites

---

[1] Poetry, of course, only makes the statement metaphorically, not existentially, though Milton could doubtless make the statement both ways. The paradox is explored at greater length by both Allen, p. 26, and Tuve, p. 45.

CHAPTER [illegible]

THE [illegible] OF THE [illegible]

Milton's [illegible], for all its [illegible] creation, [illegible] displayed [illegible] only noted the occasion of its [illegible] but he [illegible] the one [illegible] with the [illegible] be so precisely dated. [illegible] sung at the [illegible] time. But [illegible] timelessly in the [illegible] paradox [illegible] the centuries [illegible] Christmas, [illegible] Christmas is eternal.[1] This [illegible]

---

[1] Poetry, of course, may make [illegible] metaphorically, [illegible] doubtless [illegible] explored at greater length [illegible] Time, p. [illegible]

(here time and eternity) into paradoxical wholes through metaphorical unities is the informing structural principle of the poem. Time and eternity is the first, but by no means the last, of the antitheses which give the poem its form.

The proem is clearly divided from "The Hymn" proper, and itself may be divided into two parts. The first two stanzas set the scene and prefigure the theme; the final two stanzas are, as we have seen, an Invocation of divine favor and assistance. "The Hymn" proper divides into two major sections between stanzas xv and xvi. The break in tone is obvious at a first reading: the first half, though the language is much more exact, is not unlike the Nativity poems of Crashaw and Traherne in its mood of praise and adoration, but the second half is filled, not with light, harmony, and joy, but with "smold'ring clouds," "a horrid clang," and struggle. This section comes to an end with the transition stanza xxvi, leaving the largely neglected stanza xxvii to close the poem and unify its diverse and divergent strands.

The major classical sources of the poem are two. The first, as E. K. Rand has pointed out, is Virgil's (hence time and eternity) into [illegible] metaphorical unit, so is the [illegible] of the poem. Time and eternity [illegible] means the last, of the [illegible] its form.

The proem is clearly [illegible] proper, and itself may be divided into [illegible] first two stanzas set the scene and [illegible] the final two stanzas [illegible] of divine favor and assistance. [illegible] into two major sections [illegible] break in tone [illegible] half, though the [illegible] unlike the nativity poems of [illegible] mood of praise and adoration, [illegible] filled, not with light, harmony, and [illegible] "smould'ring clouds," [illegible] section comes to an end [illegible] leaving the largely [illegible] poem and unify its [illegible]

The major classical [illegible] The first, as R. M. [illegible]

Eclogue IV.[2] Milton was doubtless as aware as Spenser and Pope of the tradition that the youthful poet begins his career with the pastoral. But the Fourth Eclogue offered an additional relevancy as a model because of its fame as a classical prophecy of the birth of Christ. Milton has slighted the pastoral to emphasize the prophecy, but there can be little doubt that his poem is written as a Christian counterpart of the Virgilian one. Passing over the more obvious parallels which enabled the Middle Ages to read the Eclogue as a prophecy of Christ's birth, let us take special note of two passages which Milton has developed as controlling images in the Hymn. The first of these is the marking of a new golden age in history by the return of Astraea or Justice, fabled as the last of the immortals to leave the earth: "Now is come the last age of the song of Cumae; the great line of the centuries begins anew. Now the Virgin returns, the reign of Saturn returns; now a new generation descends from heaven on high."[3] The second is the ratification of this new period by ultimate destiny or fate: "'Ages such as these, glide

---

[2] SP, XIX, 109-135.

[3] Lines 4-7, Virgil, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (2 vols.; London: William Heinemann, 1922), I.

Eclogue IV.[2] Milton was doubtless aware as Spenser and Pope of the tradition that the [illegible] poet begins his career with the pastoral. But the fourth *Eclogue* offered an additional [illegible] because of its fame as a Messianic prophecy of the [illegible]. Milton has adapted the [illegible] as prophecy, but that [illegible] is written as a Christian counterpart of the [illegible] one. Passing over the [illegible] which enabled the Middle Ages [illegible] the *Eclogue* as a prophecy of Christ's birth, let us take up [illegible] of the passages which Milton has developed as [illegible] themes in the *Hymn*. The first of these is the coming of a new golden age in history by the return of Astraea, or Justice, feigned as the last of the immortals to leave the earth: "Now is come the last age of the song of Cumae; the great line of the centuries begins anew. Now the Virgin returns, the reign of Saturn returns; now a new generation descends from heaven on high."[3] The second is the characterization of that new period and ultimate destiny of [illegible]: "Ages such as these, [illegible]

---

[2] *Ep.* XIII, 113-133.

[3] Lines 4-7, *Virgil*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (2 vols.; London: William Heinemann, [illegible]), I, [illegible].

on!' cried to their spindles the Fates, voicing in unison the fixed will of Destiny!"[4] It is precisely this kind of moment in history that Milton is writing about, and it is precisely these images that he selects to carry his meaning.

The Parcae provide a connecting link for us, as they may have for Milton, with the second classical analogue of his poem--the myth of Er with which Plato closes _The Republic_. The entire vision, a mystical affirmation of the triumph of justice and the reward of virtue, should be read if one is to appreciate how thoroughly Platonic ideas pervade Milton's poem. Especially pertinent, however, is the description of the travelers' arrival at the center of the universe, in which Plato has symbolized the heart of his thought:

> Then on the fourth day they come to a place whence they can see stretching from above through all the earth and sky a light straight like a pillar, most resembling the rainbow but more brilliant and pure. To this light they came in a day's march; and there at the middle of the light they saw the ends of its chains stretched from heaven; for this light was the bond of heaven and held together all the revolving vault like the undergirdings of ships-of-war. From the ends was extended the Spindle of Necessity, through which all the

---

[4] _Ibid._, ll. 46-47.

and order to their souls? [illegible] in [illegible] the fixed will of man. [illegible] necessary that [illegible] of moment in history than either is [illegible] it is precisely these larger [illegible] of [illegible] his sonship.

The [illegible] they may have [illegible] analogue of his [illegible] with which Plato closes *The Republic*. [illegible] affirmation of the [illegible] of justice and [illegible] in virtue, should be read [illegible] thoroughly Platonic [illegible] Especially [illegible], [illegible] the travellers' arrival at the [illegible] in which Plato has symbolized the [illegible] of his cosmology:

> Then on the fourth day they came to a place
> whence they could see [illegible]
> through all the heaven [illegible]
> like a pillar, [illegible]
> more [illegible]
> came in a [illegible]
> of the light they [illegible]
> stretched from [illegible]
> band of heaven and [illegible]
> revolving vault like [illegible]
> ship-of-war. [illegible]
> Spindle of Necessity, [illegible]

---

[4] Ibid., ll. [illegible]

> orbits were turned; its shaft and hook were of adamant, the whorl of adamant with a mixture of other things. This is how he described the whorl. . . . there were eight whorls in all fitting each into the next, . . . The rim of the widest was spangled. . . . The spindle revolved turning as a whole in the same movement, but within the whole as it revolved the seven inside circles revolved quietly in the opposite direction to the whole. . . . The spindle itself was turned on the knees of Necessity.
>
> Perched above upon each of the circles is a Siren carried round along with it, and singing one sound, one note, so that from all the eight there was one concord. Others were seated around at equal distances, three, each on her throne, daughters of Necessity, the Portioners, robed in white, with ribands upon their heads, Lachesis and Clotho and Atropos, singing to the concord of the Sirens, Lachesis the past, Clotho the present, Atropos what is to come.[5]

Milton had already developed the idea of the music of the spheres in _Prolusion II_ and was to return to it again and again in the following years. The hero and author of the myth, as Milton tells it in the second _Prolusion_, was Pythagoras, who "followed the example of the poets--or, what is almost the same thing, of the divine oracles--by which no sacred and arcane mystery is ever revealed to vulgar ears without being somehow wrapped up and veiled" in thus symbolizing "the intimate

---

[5] _Great Dialogues of Plato_, trans. W. H. D. Rouse (New York: New American Library, 1956), pp. 417-418.

relations of the spheres and their even revolution forever in accordance with the law of destiny." Pythagoras is the only mortal to have heard this harmony, Milton argues, because he was "sent down by some ordinance of the gods to imbue the minds of men with divine knowledge and to recall them to righteousness." We do not hear the music because we are sinful. "If our hearts were as pure, as chaste, as snowy as Pythagoras' was, our ears would resound and be filled with that supremely lovely music of the wheeling stars. Then indeed all things would seem to return to the age of gold. Then we should be immune to pain, and we should enjoy the blessing of a peace that the gods themselves might envy."[6] Thus the divinely inspired poet-prophet brings to man his poetic-prophetic vision of the divine harmony and peace of the golden age.

We are now in a position to read the _Hymn_ with some of the ideas in mind which Milton used in writing it. Miss Tuve has said that the theme of the poem is stated in the last lines of the first stanza:

> That he our deadly forfeit should release,
> And with his Father work us a perpetual peace. (ll. 6-7)

---

[6] Hughes, pp. 603-604.

relations of the spheres and their even revolution forever in accordance with the law of destiny. Pythagoras is the only mortal to have heard this harmony, Milton argues, because he was "some good spirit sent by the ordinance of the gods to imbue the minds of men with divine knowledge and to recall them to righteousness." We do not hear the music because we are sinful. "If our hearts were as pure, as chaste, as snowy as Pythagoras' was, our ears would resound and be filled with that supremely lovely music of the wheeling stars. Then indeed all things would seem to return to the Age of gold. Then we should be immune to pain, and we should enjoy the blessing of a peace that the gods themselves might envy."[6] Thus the ideal teacher and prophet brings to man his poetic-prophetic vision of the divine harmony and peace of the golden age.

We are now in a position to read the Hymn with some of the ideas in mind which Milton uses in writing it. Miss Tuve has said that the theme of the poem is stated in the last lines of the first stanza:

> That he our deadly forfeit should release,
> And with his Father work us a perpetual peace. (ll. 6-7)

---

[6] Hughes, pp. 603-604.

And these lines do indeed foreshadow the first half of the hymn proper. But if we are to maintain Milton's patterns of meaning, we should give equal attention to the concluding lines of the succeeding stanza, in which we are told that Christ

> Forsook the Courts of everlasting Day,
> And chose with us a darksome House of mortal Clay.
> (ll. 13-14)

Only here are the clash and conflict of the second half of the hymn adequately forecast. Both ideas are essential parts of the total thought of the poem. Milton meant to balance one idea of the Nativity against a second idea of the same event, and he is very careful to avoid tipping the scales one way or the other. In fact, the extraordinary symmetry of the Hymn's patterns may be remarked as one sign that the poem is an early one. As Milton grew into mature power and the spirit of thought and feeling we have come to call Baroque, he developed more complex and perhaps more dynamic balance in his art.

The first section of "The Hymn" proper, stanzas i to xv, moves toward a vision of the triumphant return to earth of Truth, Justice, and Mercy while the Gates of Heaven are thrown open "as at some festival." This climax is anticipated in the descent of "the meek-ey'd

And these lines, in [illegible]

the hymn proper [illegible] Christ's

potential [illegible]

the conclusion [illegible]

we are told that [illegible]

Forever [illegible]

And [illegible]

Only here are the [illegible] and conclusive [illegible]

of the hymn (because [illegible]

essential parts of the [illegible]

Milton meant to balance the [illegible]

a second [illegible] of the negative [illegible]

to avoid eclipse [illegible]

fact, the [illegible]

patterns may be [illegible]

an early one. [illegible]

spirit of [illegible] and [illegible]

Because he [illegible]

dynamic balance to [illegible]

The [illegible]

to sky, [illegible]

earth of Truth, Justice, and [illegible]

Heaven and [illegible]

climax is [illegible] to the [illegible]

Peace" in stanza iii. Thus, to borrow our terms from the sonata, we may take the first three stanzas as the "exposition" of the theme of the first "movement." This theme, simply stated, is that the reign of Nature, with "her foul deformities," is now superseded by the birth of Christ, which "strikes a universal Peace through Sea and Land." Milton moves quickly from the physical setting of "It was the Winter wild" to the statement of the theological and philosophical considerations of his theme as Nature "sympathizes" with "her great Master." Yet these abstractions are expressed through the development of the symbolic values which inhere in the physical setting. So the concealing snow that each of us has seen and felt becomes a "Saintly Veil of Maiden white" that hides the faults of earth. It is perfectly and precisely "natural," but it is also radically metaphorical. Nature and the Sun take on in an instant their "natural" mythological personifications--their pagan mythological personifications--when confronted with the personification of a greater power. So Milton shows the confrontation of the pagan truth with the truth of Christ--the natural truth with the truth of nature's Maker--while giving it the fullest significance by drawing on the

total imaginative conception of [illegible]. [illegible] we are
not surprised, but prepared, [illegible]
Peace personified and invested [illegible] with [illegible]
value. And we are prepared to [illegible]
subject its full [illegible]
logical significance.

The "development" [illegible] three stanzas is the [illegible] In stanzas iv through vii [illegible] the "universal Peace" [illegible] the ocean and [illegible] this sense, [illegible] "the Winds, with wonder whist," [illegible] the ocean wave." Birds sit "still brooding" on the "charmed wave" [illegible] by the absence of "their bright Lord" [illegible] and the sun

> The Stars with deep amaze
> Stand fixt in stedfast gaze,

while the sun hides "his head for shame," [illegible] "a greater Sun" has appeared. [illegible] tion between God and His creation, [illegible] radical is the break with the past, [illegible] change, that the [illegible] in their metalled ways "Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go."

Stanzas viii through xii continue Milton's presentation of the "universal Peace," but now, instead of a charmed stillness, it becomes a cosmic harmony. Milton makes this overwhelming idea real by beginning its statement with "The Shepherds on the Lawn," occupied, as is the humanity they symbolize, with "silly thoughts" of "their loves, or else their sheep," unaware of the descent of the "mighty Pan," shepherd of all. Thus with a touch Milton relates his poem to the pastoral tradition, specifically to Virgil's prophetic eclogue and Spenser's Shepheardes Calender, and enriches his poem with the stored wealth of classical, humanistic, and Christian pastoralism. But this is secondary. More important, he has related our poor humanity to the cosmic concord which now becomes his subject. Suddenly the shepherds, as in the Bible story, are visited by a choir of angels, singing and playing harps. This divine music, "As never was by mortal finger struck," Milton calls "unexpressive," i.e., inexpressible, and Nature is so struck by its sweetness and beauty that she thinks "her part was done," because in their [illegible] "[illegible]," [illegible] and bid them go.[4]

Stanzas viii [illegible] presentation of the "[illegible]," [illegible] of a [illegible] stillness, [illegible]. Milton makes this [illegible] its statement with "the shepherds on the lawn," [illegible] as is the humanity they symbolize, [illegible] of "their loves, or else their sheep," [illegible] descent of the "mighty Pan," [illegible]. [illegible] a touch Milton relates his poem to the [illegible] specifically to [illegible] Renaissance [illegible] stored wealth of classical [illegible] pastoralism. But this is secondary. [illegible] he has related the [illegible] to the [illegible] which now becomes his subject. [illegible] as in the Bible story, are visited by a choir of angels, singing and playing harps. This divine music, [illegible] was by mortal finger struck," Milton calls "unexpressive," i.e., inexpressible, and [illegible] creatures and [illegible] done," [illegible]

> She knew such harmony alone
> Could hold all Heav'n and Earth in happier
> union. (ll. 107-108)

Milton is here clearly implying what he is to state expressly a few stanzas later: that this heavenly music, like the music of the spheres which it both is and is not, manifests the divine harmony which lies at the center of reality and which now promises to reconcile heaven and earth in a new and timeless concord. In stanza xi we can see Milton constructing his poetic equation in which the angels' song becomes the music of the spheres. "The helmed Cherubim / And sworded Seraphim" appear as "A Globe of circular light" arrayed "in glittering ranks." And in the next stanza Milton merges the "glittering ranks" of angels into the "spangled host" of stars. The music of the angels is like the music which filled the universe while God created it, "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."[7] Milton combines the "morning stars" and "sons of God" of Job's story into "the sons of morning," so that the latter, at least, are equated with the spheres, or with Plato's Sirens who sing the notes that

---

[7] Job 38:7.

She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all Heav'n and Earth in happier union. (ll. 107-108)

Milton is here already implying what he is to state expressly a few stanzas later: that this heavenly music, like the music of the spheres which it both is and is not, manifests the divine harmony which lies at the center of reality and which now promises to reconcile heaven and earth in a new and timeless union. In stanza XI we can see Milton constructing his poetic equation in which the angels' song becomes the music of the spheres. "The helmed Cherubim / And sworded Seraphim" appear as "A Globe of circular light" arrayed "in glittering ranks." And in the next line Milton merges the "glittering ranks" of angels into the "glittering host" of stars. The music of the angels is like the music which filled the universe while God created it, "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."[7] Milton combines the "morning stars" and "sons of God" of Job's story into "the sons of morning," so that the latter, at least, are equated with the spheres, or with Plato's Sirens who sing the notes they

---

[7] Job 38:7.

make the music. In the process, however, everything has been thoroughly Christianized.[8] And now we are ready for the last three stanzas of the first "movement," the sonata-like "recapitulation" culminating the themes so far developed.

The two subjects of the recapitulation should now be clear. First, there is the descent from heaven to earth of the bringer of peace and blessed times; second,

---

[8] This immensely suggestive metaphor (stars:angels) involves a host of resonating images which appear with greater prominence at other points in the _Hymn_. Arthur Barker has pointed out the "intricate fusion of traditions," Biblical, Greek, and Roman, which the equation of stars with divine beings calls to mind. Plato's Sirens are associated with the nine Muses in Plutarch through a common linking with the spheres. Crashaw used the association of the songs of praise sung by the angels in heaven with the music of the spheres in "In the Glorious Epiphany." Crashaw's poem also makes the sun symbolic of the sin which prevents man from hearing the heavenly music. Barker notes that associations with the nine orders of angels and with Pan are suggested by Milton's metaphor. Another connotation which Milton may have had in mind has been developed by Laurence Stapleton, "Milton and the New Music," _University of Toronto Quarterly_, XXIII (April, 1954), 217-26. This is the tradition of seeing Christ as the New Music, i.e., the music of the spheres, through which men are redeemed. Stapleton notes that Clement of Alexandria linked the music of the spheres with the cessation of the oracles.

make the reality of the [illegible] [illegible] has

been thoroughly [illegible] [illegible] in the [illegible] for

the last three [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] words

like "incarnation" [illegible] the [illegible] of the

developed.

The two elements of the [illegible] must

be clear. First, that in the [illegible] on

earth of the [illegible] of [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible],

---

[9] This [illegible] involves a host of [illegible] which [illegible] greater prominence [illegible] in the [illegible]. [illegible] Parker has pointed out the "Nativity [illegible] tions," [illegible], [illegible], and [illegible]. [illegible] of stars with [illegible]. [illegible] Sirens are [illegible] through a common [illegible]. [illegible] used the association [illegible] the [illegible] in heaven [illegible] "In the [illegible]," [illegible] the sun [illegible] hearing the heavenly music. [illegible] tions with the [illegible] suggested by Milton's [illegible] which Milton may have had in mind, [illegible] by Laurence Stapleton, "Milton and the New Music," University of Toronto Quarterly, XXIII (April, 1954), [illegible]. This is the [illegible] of the New Music, i.e., [illegible] which [illegible] of Alexandria [illegible] cessation of the oracles.

there is the presence on earth of the music of the spheres. In the recapitulation Milton moves from the second to the first. Stanza xiii becomes the explicit statement (couched in the conditional) of what has immediately preceded, i.e., the development of the idea that the angels' song to the shepherds is the earthly revelation of the divine harmony. Drawing deeply upon the Pythagorean myth of the music of the spheres and the Platonic vision of the order of the universe as an expression of the divine purpose and will, Milton's hymn rises to a peak of triumphal joy in the linguistic evocation of the joined choir of "th'Angelic symphony" and the full "ninefold harmony" of the organ of the universe, in which the earth has joined in perfect concord with the heavens. The effect is reminiscent of one of Bach's thunderous organ climaxes.[9]

If it were so (remember Milton's conditional), if such harmony were indeed the music of the spheres heard by man, then

> Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold,
> (l. 135)

for if man should hear then he will be cleansed of sin,

> and Hell itself will pass away. (l. 139)

---

[9] Cf. "At a Solemn Music."

there is the presence of [illegible] [illegible]. In the recapitulation [illegible] [illegible] first. [illegible] [illegible] (couched in the conditional) of what [illegible] preceded, i.e., the development of the [illegible] angels' song to the shepherds [illegible] of the divine harmony. [illegible] Pythagorean myth of the music of the spheres, the Platonic vision of the order of the universe as an expression of the divine mind, and [illegible] rises to a peak of [illegible] ... in the apocalyptic evocation of the [illegible] chorus of [illegible] and the full [illegible] harmony of the [illegible] universe, in which the [illegible] concord with the heavenly [illegible] one of Bach's [illegible].[3]

If [illegible]

if such harmony were indeed the sound of [illegible] heard by man, then

> Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold,
> [illegible]

for if we should [illegible]

> and [illegible] (l. [illegible])

---

[3] Cf. [illegible]

In short, time with its "deadly forfeit" will be replaced by eternity with its "perpetual peace." And, if this come to pass, then time is confounded and we are present on the eternal Christmas morn, and it is our ears which strain to hear the celestial music. Thus, Milton makes us hopeful participants (as indeed he doubtless saw all men) in the event of which he writes. We strive (at least aesthetically) to apprehend the divine harmony and to bring the world to participation in it.

For when such an earnest of a new golden age is received:

> Yea, Truth and Justice then
> Will down return to men, (ll. 141-142)

just as Virgil had noted in recalling the myth of Astraea. If Astraea, as goddess of innocence and purity, was the last immortal to leave the earth after the onset of the Iron Age, then her return must mark the end of all the dismal ages since.

Something needs to be said here about the identity of Milton's "Justice." While she has clear connections with Virgil's Astraea, there may be some doubt that she is the same figure. In fact, just as the angelic song both is and is not the music of the spheres, she both is

and is not Astraea. Astraea is referred to as the Virgin by Virgil because, after her departure from the earth, she was placed among the stars as the constellation Virgo. This facet of her history obviously emphasizes her innocence and purity, aspects which Virgil had in mind but which Milton leaves entirely to implication. On the other hand, she is the daughter of Themis (etymologically, "that which is established," thus, "law") who is usually considered the goddess of justice herself. Nevertheless, this relationship provides some justification for seeing Astraea as Justice, an identification not unique to Milton, as it is Astraea who is traditionally pictured holding aloft the pair of scales on which she weighs the conflicting claims of parties. One might suppose that Milton calls his figure "Justice" in order to present a more Christian and less pagan conception, and, of course, this is true. But there is more meaning to it than that. Certainly Innocence and Purity are more compatible with the Infant Jesus than Justice, yet Milton chooses the latter emphasis. Why? The answer is, of course, the poem as a whole, what it "means," and we shall try to unravel that before we finish. But this much is clear at once: by calling and is not Pathos. [illegible] by Virgil Lessons, raised her, [illegible] she was placed among the [illegible] Virgo. This [illegible] her innocence and purity, [illegible] mind but which [illegible] On the other hand, [illegible] (etymologically, "that which [illegible] "law") who is usually [illegible] herself. Nevertheless, [illegible] justification for [illegible] cation not [illegible] traditionally [illegible] on which the [illegible] One might suppose [illegible] in order to [illegible] conception, [illegible] is more [illegible] and Purity [illegible] than Justice, [illegible] Why? The answer [illegible] what it "means," [illegible] we finish. [illegible] his figure "Justice" Milton merges Virgil's Astraea with her mother, Themis, and brings into play the associations surrounding both. Prominent among these is the myth which makes Themis mother also of the Fates.[10]

To put it another way, Milton could have ended his poem here by putting the emphasis where Virgil put it: on the return of purity and innocence and the beginning of a new golden age with the birth of the child. This would be the poem Miss Tuve thinks we have, its theme "That he . . . should . . . with his Father work us a perpetual peace." But Milton did not end the poem here, for at least two very good reasons. In the first place, to have done so would have been to subscribe to a pagan myth about the nature of history (as Virgil, of course, did) which sees it as cyclical, and the return of the golden age as something to be brought about in its time by the steady revolution of the "spindles of the Fates, voicing in unison the fixed will of Destiny." While such a view may be given a Christian interpretation, the ultimate Christian view of history is radically opposed

---

[10] See, e.g., Charles M. Gayley, The Classic Myths in English Literature and in Art (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1911), p. 38.

his figure "Justice" Milton merges Virgil's Astraea with her mother, Themis, and brings into play the associations surrounding both. Prominent among these is the myth which makes Themis mother also of the Fates.[10]

To put it another way, Milton could have made his poem here by putting the emphasis where Virgil put it: on the return of purity and innocence and the beginning of a new golden age with the birth of the child. This would be the poem Miss Tuve thinks we need, its theme "That he . . . should . . . with his Father work us a perpetual peace." But Milton did not end the poem here for at least two very good reasons. In the first place, to have done so would have been to subscribe to a pagan myth about the nature of history (as Virgil, for instance, did) which sees it as cyclical, and the return of the golden age as something to be brought about in due time by the steady revolution of the spheres or the years, voicing in unison the fixed will of Destiny. While such a view may be given a Christian interpretation, the ultimate Christian view of history is radically opposed

---

[10] See, e.g., Charles M. Gayley, *The Classic Myths in English Literature and in Art* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1911), p. 38.

to the cyclical theory. To the profound Christian such as Milton, history had a beginning, has a middle, and will have an end--that is, a "progress," so long as we think of Bunyan's term and not the nineteenth century's. In this sense, then, to have ended the poem with stanza xv would not have been Christian. In the second place, it would not have been true.

For it is obvious that the reign of perpetual peace has not come to earth, Truth and Justice have not returned, and the music of the divine harmony goes daily unheard. It is this state of affairs which leads, even forces, Milton into the second major section of the poem. But let us not give the impression that Milton discovered this only after writing the first part. On the contrary, we may now look backward over the path we have come to see how Milton has carefully prepared us for the second half of the poem. Again and again he makes us aware of the conditional aspect of the earthly participation in the divine event. The lines which tell of the temporary peace which stills man and Nature do so in terms which bring before us the accustomed violence of both. The stars, "fixt in steadfast gaze," are bade go on. Nature, on hearing the angel choir, is but "almost won / To think her part was done." And as the "Crystal spheres" ring out

to the cyclical theory. [illegible] such poets
as Milton, history [illegible]
will have [illegible]
think of Bunyan's [illegible]
In this sense, [illegible]
we would not have been [illegible]
it would not have been [illegible]

For it is obvious that [illegible] of perpetual
peace has not come to earth, [illegible]
returned, and [illegible]
unheard. It is thus [illegible]
forces, Milton [illegible]
But let us not give [illegible]
this only after [illegible]
we may now look backward over the [illegible]
see how Milton has [illegible]
half of the poem. [illegible]
the conditional [illegible]
the divine system. [illegible]
peace which [illegible]
bring before us the [illegible]
seats, "[illegible]
on hearing [illegible]
her part was [illegible]

we discover that <u>if</u> we might hear them, <u>then</u> Hell would pass away, <u>then</u> Truth and Justice and Mercy might once more walk the earth, and the gates of Heaven "open wide." But in fact the millennium is not come; we have not heard. With the recognition of this fact, "But wisest Fate says no," Milton begins the second half of the hymn.

Once more Milton makes use of an expository beginning, followed by the development of the theme thus stated. Stanzas xvi, xvii, and xviii constitute the "exposition" of the second "movement" and bear an interesting relationship to the first three stanzas of the first half of the poem. Where Milton began with the manger he now displays the cross, and the difference in tone between these two symbols is the difference in tone between the two halves of the poem. Where formerly Peace descended, now "The dreadful Judge in middle Air shall spread his throne," and the myrtle wand is replaced by the "trump of doom." Instead of Nature clothed in "innocent Snow" we find "Th'old Dragon" swinging "the scaly Horror of his folded tail."

That is, life is not innocent, pure, and peaceful, however much we may yearn for it to be so. On the contrary, it is guilty, sinful, and violent, and ends we discover that in [illegible] pass away, that Truth and Justice will [illegible] once walk the earth, and the gates of [illegible]. But in fact the millennium is not [illegible] heard. With the [illegible] "But wisest Fate says no," Milton begins the second half [illegible].

Once more Milton makes [illegible] or [illegible] beginning, followed by the development of the theme thus stated. Stanzas xvi, xvii, and xviii [illegible] "exposition" of the second "movement" and [illegible] interesting relationship with the first [illegible] stanzas of the first half of the poem. [illegible] with the manger he now displays the [illegible] tone between these two symbols is the [illegible] between the two halves of the poem. [illegible] descended, now "The dreadful Judge in middle Air shall spread his throne," and [illegible] the "crown of doom." Instead of [illegible] "innocent Snow" we find "the old Dragon" [illegible] scaly Horror of his folded tail."

That is, life is not [illegible] however much we may expect that [illegible] contrary, it is [illegible] not in life, but in death. None of this has been changed by the Nativity. Man is still man. He <u>will</u> not hear the divine truth; he <u>will</u> not join in the divine harmony. True, it is there, to be experienced for the mere desiring, but man's vanity and sinfulness, having once brought injustice and error into the world, preclude his desiring justice and truth. Eden lost is lost forever. We may dream longingly of Paradise, but we are by no means willing to undergo the judgment which would restore Truth and Justice to life. Instead of the advent of innocence, purity, and peace with the birth of the Babe, then, Milton looks beyond this to the eventual trial of the world and the final triumph of Truth and Justice in the war against evil:

> And then at last our bliss
> Full and perfect is. (ll. 165-166)

All will come under judgment, evil shall be destroyed, and man's evil, too. But man himself shall walk with Truth and Justice, "our [original] loss" redeemed by Christ's acceptance on the cross of the judgment upon man.

Nevertheless, while the Nativity has not brought the millennium, it has brought the true God and the true

not in life, but in death." [illegible]
by the Nativity. Man [illegible]
divine truth; he *will* not join in [illegible]
True, it is there, to be [illegible]
desiring, but man's vanity [illegible]
brought injustice and [illegible]
desiring justice and truth. [illegible]
We may dream longingly of [illegible]
means willing to undergo the [illegible]
Truth and Justice to [illegible]
innocence, purity, and peace [illegible]
then, Milton looks beyond [illegible]
the world and the [illegible]
the war against evil:

> And then [illegible]
> Hell and [illegible]

All will come under judgment, [illegible]
and man's evil, too. [illegible]
Truth and Justice. [illegible]
Christ's acceptance [illegible]
man.

Nevertheless, while [illegible]
the millennium, [illegible]

religion to man, and

> . . . from this happy day
> Th'old Dragon under ground,
> In straiter limits bound,
> Not half so far casts his usurped sway.
> (ll. 167-170)

For now, juxtaposed with Christ, the false gods will appear false. No longer will men worship their own creations in the belief that such creations are divine. Explicit idolatry, at least, is to cease. The Dragon's Kingdom no longer includes man's worship. God has claimed his own.

This "expository" statement is now developed in stanzas xix through xxv in the detailed picture of the flight of the pagan gods. Little need be said about this passage, which is largely a catalogue, except to make clear the light in which it was conceived and written, insofar as we may. Perhaps no other aspect of the thought of this much misunderstood poet is more often misunderstood than his "repudiation" of pagan wisdom in the _Paradise Regained_ passage in which Christ rejects classical learning as a supreme good. That Milton's foes should misread the passage is no surprise, but his friends should have seen, in the light of the treatment of the pagan gods in _Paradise Lost_ and the _Hymn_, that religion to man, and

> . . . from this happy day
> Th'old Dragon under ground,
> In straiter limits bound,
> Not half so far casts his usurped sway.
> (ll. 167-170)

For now, juxtaposed with Christ, the false gods will appear false. No longer will men worship their own creations in the belief that such creations are divine. Explicit idolatry, at least, is at an end. The Dragon's Kingdom no longer includes man's worship. God has claimed his own.

This "expository" statement in new form [illegible] stanzas xix through xxv in the detailed account of the flight of the pagan gods. Little need be said about this passage, which is largely expository, except to make clear the light in which it was [illegible], insofar as we may. Perhaps no other aspect of the thought of this much misunderstood poet is more often misunderstood than his "repudiation" of pagan deities in the Paradise Regained passage in which Christ rejects classical learning as a supreme good. That Milton's foes should misread the passage is no surprise, but his friends should have seen, in the light of the treatment of the pagan gods in Paradise Lost and the Hymn, that there never had been a contradiction between Milton's classicism and his Christianity because his classicism was always contained within his religion. Putting aside the epic passages, however, let us try merely to read the hymn aright.

We have already said that these stanzas represent a development of the theme stated in the three opening stanzas of the second half of the poem, a theme we may sum up as follows: The infant Christ now begins the battle with evil for the sake of mankind which is to end triumphantly only when the Last Judgment dooms the old Dragon's kingdom and begins man's perfect bliss. Milton notes clearly the winning of the decisive victory on the cross, but he chooses rather to emphasize the Judgment, which answers far better to his need for an image of final triumph than the paradoxical and painful Cross. With the Nativity, says Milton, the Dragon's sway is reduced by more than half, that is, by the vanquishing of the false Gods. The flight of the pagan deities is then developed as the symbol of the coming triumph over the whole kingdom of evil. It is worth noting, however, that Milton's tone varies from stanza to stanza as he moves, for instance, from the mourning of the Nymphs there never has been a [illegible] between [illegible] classicism and his Christianity [illegible] was always contained within his [illegible]. [illegible] the epic passages, however, [illegible] the hymn aright.

We have already [illegible] a development of the three [illegible] stanzas of the second half of the [illegible] may sum up as follows: The [illegible] the battle with evil for the sake of mankind [illegible] triumphantly only when the [illegible] the Old Dragon's kingdom and begins man's [illegible]. Milton notes clearly the winning of the [illegible] victory on the cross, but he chooses rather to [illegible] the [illegible], which answers far better to his [illegible] of final triumph than the [illegible]. With the Nativity, says Milton, the dragon's sway is reduced by more than half, [illegible] of the false Gods. The [illegible] then developed as the [illegible] of the [illegible] the whole kingdom of evil. [illegible] that Milton's [illegible] moves, for instance, [illegible]

"With flow'r-inwov'n tresses torn" to the "grisly king" Moloch, fled "sullen" with "The brutish gods of Nile" to "profoundest Hell." Milton is able to see that the pagan world was not all of a piece, that nymphs are charming and Moloch horrible. He has no hesitation in making significant use of Virgil and Plato where he finds them sound, as the Hymn makes plain. But when they (or any other classic source) pretend to divine truth, that pretension must be rejected as "full wrong divinitie." Thus, in all his work Milton is consistent in his use and acceptance of classical wisdom, so long as man-made wisdom makes no pretense to being revealed truth. It is a fact to Milton (whatever it be to the modern reader) that the pagan world erected and worshipped its false gods in spite of classical wisdom, and only the truth of Christ is able to show men the true nature of God. When viewed in this light it is apparent that the "repudiation" by Christ of the wisdom of Greece is no more than the recognition that not all truths have equal value and that the truth of God is on a level unapproached by the stammerings of man, however wise or beautiful. Milton is aware of the pathos of this, as stanza xxvi shows. Indeed, the recapitulation of this section in

"With flow'r-inwov'n tresses torn" and fugitive [illegible]
Moloch, fled "sullen" with [illegible]
to "precedent Hell." Milton is [illegible]
pagan world was not all [illegible] a place, [illegible]
charming and Moloch horrible. [illegible]
making significant use of Virgil and [illegible]
them sound, as the *Hymn* makes plain. [illegible]
any other classic source, pretend [illegible]
pretension must be rejected [illegible]
Thus, in all his work Milton is consistent in [illegible]
and acceptance of classical vision, [illegible]
wisdom makes no pretense to [illegible]
is a fact to Milton (who [illegible]
that the pagan world [illegible]
gods in spite of classical wisdom, and only the [illegible]
of Christ is able to [illegible]
When viewed in this light, [illegible]
"repudiation" by Christ of [illegible]
more than the recognition that [illegible]
value and that the truth of God [illegible]
by the stammerings of men, [illegible]
Milton is aware of the [illegible]
shows. Indeed, the [illegible]

stanza xxv reminds us that Christ is a Hercules come to do heroic battle against the Serpent:[11]

> Nor all the gods beside,
> Longer dare abide,
> Nor Typhon huge ending in snaky twine:
> Our Babe, to show his Godhead true,
> Can in his swaddling bands control the
>   damned crew. (ll. 224-228)

But the conclusion of the transition stanza xxvi reminds us that the pagan world also included beings of the greatest charm and beauty:

> The flocking shadows pale
> Troop to th'infernal jail;
> Each fetter'd Ghost slips to his several grave,
> And the yellow-skirted Fays
> Fly after the Night-steeds, leaving their
>   Moon-lov'd maze. (ll. 232-236)

As Brooks and Hardy have pointed out, this shows a solider grasp of the true nature of reality than those critics who indict Milton for "rejecting" humanistic learning for a rigid Christianity.[12] It shows as well a softening touch of love for whatever can call itself lovely.

---

[11] Cf. Eclogue IV, ll. 24, 62-63, and Areopagitica, where Typhon appears as the mangler and scatterer of Truth.

[12] Brooks and Hardy, p. 102n.

CHAPTER V

THE THOUGHT OF THE POEM

As the first section of the Nativity Hymn ends with the fancied image of Truth, Justice, and Mercy descending upon a purified and peaceful earth, so the second section ends with the implicit image of the infant Christ strangling the old Dragon of evil. In these two Virgilian images Milton projects the two aspects of the Nativity which he has presented in the two major parts of the poem.

Clearly these images are conflicting ones. The two parts of the poem seem utterly disconnected. On the one hand the Nativity is seen as an eternal event, bringing light to men and harmony and peace to the universe, so that truth and justice may reign, and freedom (symbolized by the passing of Hell and the opening of Heaven's gates) may succeed. On the other hand the Nativity happens in time, a time of darkness and discord, and carries forward a war against error and injustice which is necessary (expressed in "wisest Fate says no" and the repeated "must" of stanza xvi). Carrying

CHAPTER V

[illegible]

As the first section [illegible]
with the [illegible]
descending upon a purified and [illegible] earth, so the
second section ends with the [illegible]
infant Christ strangling [illegible]
these two Virgilian [illegible], reflects the
aspects of the Nativity which [illegible]
two major parts of the poem.

Clearly these themes are conflicting [illegible]. The
two parts of the poem [illegible]. On
the one hand the Nativity [illegible]
bringing light to men and [illegible]
universe, so that [illegible]
freedom (symbolized by the [illegible]
ing of Heaven's gates, may [illegible]
the Nativity happens in [illegible]
discord, and [illegible]
injustice which is necessary [illegible]
says no" and the [illegible]

the schematization one step further, we may say that the first half of the poem is built around the ideas of eternity, light, harmony, peace, truth, justice, and freedom. The second half expresses the contrary ideas: time, darkness, discord, war, error, injustice, and necessity. The balance is a nice one, but what are we to make of it?

I said at the beginning of Chapter IV that the poem is informed by a number of polarities or paradoxical ideas of which the first, perhaps, is that with the Nativity time and eternity are no longer mutually exclusive but have become participants in one another. This idea, raised in connection with Milton's opening line and his precise dating of the poem, is one of many similar paradoxes which underlie the two-part structure of the poem. Once we become aware of the opposition and combination of time and eternity in the poem (or any other of the polar patterns such as light-darkness, harmony-discord, or truth-error), we see that Milton's theme is chiefly conveyed through just such "complexes," to use a term which better suggests the interconnection and multiplicity of meanings involved. These complexes are never totally absent from any part of the poem but the schematization [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], we [illegible] [illegible] the first half of the poem [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] ideas [illegible] eternity, light, harmony, [illegible], [illegible], and freedom. The second half [illegible] the [illegible], are time, darkness, discord, [illegible] [illegible], [illegible], and necessity. The balance is [illegible] [illegible], but [illegible] [illegible] to make of it?

I said at the beginning [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] poem is informed by [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] doxical ideas of which the [illegible], perhaps, is [illegible] the Nativity time and eternity [illegible] [illegible] longer [illegible] exclusive but have become [illegible] in [illegible]. This idea, raised in connection with [illegible] line and his precise dating of the poem, [illegible] [illegible] similar paradoxes which [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] of the poem. Once we [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] combination of time and eternity in the poem [illegible] [illegible] other of the polar [illegible] such as [illegible] harmony-discord, [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] theme is chiefly conveyed [illegible] [illegible] to use a term which [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and multiplicity of meaning [illegible]. [illegible] are never totally [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] act to shape its meaning throughout its entire length, appearing and reappearing in subtle and unexpected ways.

The structure of the Hymn thus deliberately poses for the reader a problem of harmonizing opposites, of seeing the Nativity as both concord and conflict, and of making sense, i.e., consistent meaning, of the total image. Of course, if Milton has not managed this himself, the poem may be said to fail for want of a proper resolution. I believe it can be shown that Milton has complete control of the poem and that he has brought his various thematic complexes to a brilliantly balanced conclusion. To see how he has done this, we must turn our attention once more to the classical sources from which we have said that the poem's controlling images are drawn.

It may strike the thoughtful reader as odd to find a key role in a Christian poem about the birth of Christ assigned to Fate--yet this is precisely what Milton has done: "But wisest Fate says no." It will seem odd, that is, until we recall that Fate, as Destiny and Necessity, plays a key role in both Plato and Virgil and may thus stand in a synthesizing position for Milton's combination of the various materials of his sources. In Virgil the act to shape its meaning throughout the entire [illegible], appearing and reappearing in [illegible] [illegible] ways.

The structure of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], poses for the reader a problem of harmonizing [illegible] [illegible], seeing the Nativity as both [illegible] and [illegible], [illegible] of making sense, i.e., consistent meaning, of the [illegible] [illegible]. Of course, if Milton has not managed this himself, the poem may be said to fail [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] resolution. I believe it can be shown that Milton has complete control of the poem and that he [illegible] [illegible] various thematic complexes to a [illegible] [illegible] conclusion. To see how he has done this, we must turn our attention once more to the classical [illegible] from which we have said that the poem's [illegible] [illegible] are drawn.

It may strike the theological reader as odd [illegible] a key role in a Christian poem [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] assigned to Fate—yet this is [illegible] what Milton has done: "But wisest Fate [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], that is, until we recall that [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], plays a key role in both [illegible] and Virgil and [illegible] stand in a synthesizing position for Milton's [illegible] of the various materials of his sources. [illegible] Virgil [illegible] return of Astraea to the earth becomes an act approved by "the fixed will of Destiny." But Milton further emphasizes the relationship between the two by calling his figure "Justice" and having "Fate" "say no" to the descent. The special relevance to the poem of Plato's ultimate vision now becomes clearer. We may note as of secondary importance that Themis (the established, law, justice) is, according to some myths, the mother of the Fates and that the mother of the Fates in Plato's vision is Necessity. What is more to the point, the picture of the universe with Necessity seated at its center and the spheres turning upon her Spindle immediately follows a detailed description of the judgment of men after death and the achievement of justice through punishment and reward, and is at once followed by a description of the drawing of lots for new lives by those who are ready for rebirth. At this point Plato has this significant passage:

> 'Thus saith the Virgin Lachesis, daughter of Necessity. Souls of a passing day, here beginneth another cycle of mortal life that leads to death. No Destiny shall cast lots for you, but you shall all choose your own Destiny; let him that draws the first lot first choose a life, and thereto he shall cleave of necessity. But Virtue knows no master: as each honours or despises her he

return of [illegible] to the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

by "the fixed walls of [illegible]." [illegible] Virtue, [illegible]

emphasizes the relationship between the two by [illegible]

his figure "[illegible]" and saying "[illegible]" [illegible]

descent. The special [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

ultimate vision now [illegible], [illegible]

of secondary importance [illegible] [illegible]

law, justice) is, according to [illegible]

of the Fates and [illegible] the [illegible] of the [illegible]

vision is Necessity. [illegible] the

picture of the universe [illegible]

center and the [illegible]

follows a detailed description [illegible]

death and the achievement of [illegible] through [illegible]

and reward, and is at [illegible] followed by a [illegible]

the drawing of lots [illegible] by [illegible]

for rebirth. [illegible]

passage:

> "Thus saith the [illegible] daughter of
> Necessity. Souls of a day, here
> beginneth another cycle of mortal life that
> leads to death. No [illegible] shall [illegible]
> for you, but you shall [illegible] your own
> Deity; let him that draws the first lot
> first choose a life, and [illegible]
> slave of necessity. But Virtue [illegible]
> master; as each honours or [illegible]

> shall have more or less of her. The blame
> is for the chooser; God is blameless.[1]

The context of Milton's reference to "wisest Fate," then, is one which is concerned with the relationship between Destiny and Justice.

Without attempting to resolve the question of free will and necessity in Plato's thought, we may nevertheless see clearly enough the implications for the poem. Man is free to choose any course he wishes, but once he chooses, i.e., once he begins to act, he becomes irrevocably ensnarled in the chains of Necessity. Man is then restored to freedom only through the operation of Justice. Justice, achievable only in another world, is itself a necessity before man can be reborn. If this necessity for justice is the heart of Plato's vision, as it seems to be, then the congruence of the vision at this point with Christian thought is evident. Indeed, the necessity of Christ's death on the cross in order to achieve justice is the essentially Christian point being made by the line "But wisest Fate says no." We are here arrived at a crucial instance of Milton's vital absorption of his classical materials into his Christian ordering of experience.

---

[1] Rouse, pp. 418-19.

> shall have [illegible]
> is for the [illegible]

The content of Milton's [illegible] then, is one which is concerned [illegible] between Destiny and Justice.

Without attempting to [illegible] free will and necessity in [illegible] nevertheless and clearly [illegible] the poem. Man is free to [illegible] but once he chooses, [illegible] becomes irrevocably committed [illegible] Man is then rendered [illegible] tion of Justice. [illegible] world, is itself a necessity [illegible] If this necessity [illegible] vision, as it seems to be, then the [illegible] of that vision at this point with Christian [illegible] Indeed, the necessity of [illegible] order to achieve justice [illegible] point being made by the line "But [illegible]" We are here arrived at a [illegible] vital absorption of [illegible] Christian ideals and experience.

---

[1] [illegible], pp. [illegible]

The importance of Milton's reference to Fate in connection with the failure of the Nativity to bring man Justice, then, is that it throws the reader back upon the total context of the poem, classical and Christian, in order to understand its thought. It should by now be apparent that this thought is fundamentally concerned with the ideas of Justice and Necessity. In fact, insofar as the poem may be said to be "about" anything, it is "about" the necessity for justice and the justice of necessity. Either way, we state only a fragment of the total idea of the poem, and a fragment distorted by its isolation from the whole at that. What we _may_ say in abstraction from the poem is that the poem is a working out of the paradoxes involved in a Nativity which brings both peace and war, both concord and conflict, both freedom and judgment.

Retaining, then, the total context of Milton's allusions, let us turn one last time to the poem itself to seek out what resolution may be achieved. In the final two stanzas Milton subtly and gently carries us back from the destruction of the false gods to the moment just before dawn on Christmas morning, 1629, when he looks out upon the starry sky and sees "all the spangled host

The importance of Milton's reference to Fate in connection with the failure of the Nativity to bring man Justice, then, is that it throws the reader back upon the total context of the poem, classical and Christian, in order to understand its thought. It should by now be apparent that this thought is fundamentally concerned with the ideas of Justice and Necessity. In fact, insofar as the poem may be said to be "about" anything, it is "about" the necessity for justice and the justice of necessity. Either way, we sense only a fragment of the total idea of the poem, and a fragment distorted by its isolation from the whole at that. What we can say in abstraction from the poem is that the poem is a working out of the paradoxes involved in a Nativity which brings both peace and war, both concord and conflict, both freedom and judgment.

Retaining, then, the total context of Milton's allusions, let us turn one last time to the poem itself to seek out what resolution may be achieved. In the final two stanzas Milton subtly and gently carries us back from the destruction of the false gods to the moment just before dawn on Christmas morning, 1629, when he looks out upon the starry sky and sees "all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright"--a moment pregnant with eternity, about to become, with the imminent reappearance of the sun, a moment in time once more. With the concluding stanza, all the various thematic complexes are brought to climactic rest:

> But see! the Virgin blest,
> Hath laid her Babe to rest.
> Time is our tedious Song should here have ending;
> Heav'n's youngest-teemed Star
> Hath fixt her polisht Car,
> Her sleeping Lord with Handmaid Lamp attending:
> And all about the Courtly Stable,
> Bright-harness'd Angels sit in order serviceable.
> (ll. 237-244)

After the image of Christ as the infant Hercules strangling the Serpent this comes as an image of peace and harmony and harks back to the vision of the first half of the poem. The innocence and purity of the Virgin and her Babe are emphasized by the picture of the Star of Bethlehem standing still over the sleeping King "with Handmaid Lamp attending." And only now is the full significance of Milton's earlier equation of the angelic choir with the stars of heaven apparent. For this stable is the center of a court which is the universe itself, and the "Bright-harness'd Angels . . . in order serviceable" are the "spangled host" from which issues the music of the spheres, the divine harmony into which man and Nature may now enter through Christ.

Keep watch in squadrons bright"--a moment, suspended in eternity, about to end, may, with this, indicate the [illegible] of the sun, a moment in time once passed. With the concluding stanza, all the various [illegible] are brought to climactic rest:

But see! the Virgin blest,
Hath laid her Babe to rest.
  Time is our tedious Song should here have ending;
Heav'n's youngest-teemed Star,
Hath fixt her polisht Car,
  Her sleeping Lord with Handmaid Lamp attending;
And all about the Courtly Stable,
Bright-harnest Angels sit in order serviceable.
(ll. 237-244)

After the image of Christ as the infant [illegible] the Serpent this scene is an image of peace and harmony, and harks back to the quietness of the first part of the poem. The innocence and purity of the Virgin and the Babe are emphasized by the picture of the Star of Bethlehem standing still over, [illegible] "Handmaid Lamp attending." And only now do [illegible] significance of Milton's earlier [illegible] choir with the stars as heaven's [illegible]. For this [illegible] is the center of a scene which is the universe [illegible] the "bright-harness'd angels" [illegible] are the "equipped host" from which comes the music of the spheres, the divine harmony [illegible] may now enter through Christ.

But this is but half the final stanza. For if the Virgin is Mary, as she surely is, she is also the Virgin of Eclogue IV and the Virgin of The Republic as well. She is innocence and purity, of course, but she is also Astraea, which is to say Justice, and Lachesis (with her equally virgin sisters), which is to say Necessity. The Babe is not only the child of purity, but also of Justice and Necessity. And if "heav'n's youngest-teemed Star" is the Star of Bethlehem, Milton is careful that she is also Virgo, the last of the immortals to flee the earth and thus the youngest of the stars. It is not difficult to see Justice as both mother of Christ and handmaid to Him, for she is born with Him who brings eternal justice and is yet the cause of His being born. Likewise, the stable is courtly not only because a King sleeps there, but also because it is the seat of the "dreadful Judge [who] in Middle Air shall spread his throne."[2] Finally, the "Bright-harness'd Angels [who] sit in order serviceable" are not only the heavenly choir who celebrate the birth of the Lord, the morning stars who sang at the Creation, the voices of the

---

[2] Cf. Rev. 19:11-16.

But this is but half the final stanza. For if the Virgin is Mary, as she surely is, she is also the Virgin of Eclogue IV and the Virgin of The Nativity as well. She is innocence and purity, of course, but she is also Astraea, which is to say Justice, and Lachesis (with her equally virgin sisters), which is to say Necessity. The babe is not only the child of purity, but also of Justice and Necessity. And if "Heav'n's youngest-teemed Star" is the Star of Bethlehem, Milton is careful that she is also Virgo, the last of the Immortals to flee the earth and thus the youngest of the stars. It is not difficult to see Justice as both mother of Christ and handmaid to him, for she is born with him who brings eternal justice and is yet the cause of His being born. Likewise, the stable is courtly not only because a King sleeps there, but also because it is the seat of the "dreadful Judge [who] in middle air shall spread his throne."[2] Finally, the "bright-harnessed Angels [who] sit in order serviceable" are not only the heavenly choir who celebrate the birth of the Lord, the morning stars who sang at the Creation, the voices of the

---

[2] Cf. Rev. 19:11-16.

divine harmony, but something more. They are also the bright-armored hosts of

> . . . helmed Cherubim
> And sworded Seraphim
> . . . in glittering ranks with wings
> display'd, (ll. 112-114)

ready to do battle with the forces of "Th'old Dragon" in order to overcome injustice and error, darkness and discord. To use Meredith's tradition-laden phrase, they are "The army of unalterable law," by whose ordered march "around the ancient track" Lucifer is ultimately judged. Thus the music of the spheres, sign of the golden age in which "Hell itself will pass away" and "Truth and Justice . . . down return to men," is created by the spheres' "even revolution forever in accordance with the law of destiny," sign of the necessity for justice at the heart of Creation.

In this final image Milton brings his complex vision of the paradoxical yet unified nature of the Nativity to a triumphant close. The poem looks from Genesis to Revelation, from Creation to Eschaton, and sees the Nativity as the central event in the history of man and Nature. But it insists that the birth of Christ is meaningless without the death of Christ, that

the divine harmony is meaningless (and impossible) without the divine judgment. In the one is the other. As the Nativity contains the Crucifixion, so man and Nature's peace is contained in their judgment, undergone by Christ. The concord and conflict inherent in the Nativity are reconciled in the merging into a single image of the images which symbolize both. Thus the poem itself is an aesthetic image of the reconciliation, through Christ, of God and not-God, a hymn in imitation of "the inconceivable excellencies of GOD."

the divine harmony is meaningless (and inconceivable) without the divine judgement. In the one is the other. As the Nativity contains the Crucifixion, heaven and Nature's peace is contained in God's judgement, undergone by Christ. The [illegible] and [illegible] images of Nativity are reconciled in the poetry itself which is image of the images which symbolize it. Thus, the poem itself is an aesthetic image of the reconciliation, through Christ, of God and man--God, which is [illegible] of "the inconceivable sweetness of God."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, Robert M. Ikon: John Milton and the Modern Critics. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1955.

Allen, Don Cameron. The Harmonious Vision: Studies in Milton's Poetry. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1954.

Barker, Arthur. "The Pattern of Milton's Nativity Ode," University of Toronto Quarterly, X (January, 1941), 167-181.

Boas, Frederick S. (ed.). The Poetical Works of Giles Fletcher and Phineas Fletcher. 2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908.

Brennecke, Ernest, Jr. John Milton the Elder and His Music. New York: Columbia University Press, 1938.

Brooks, Cleanth, and Hardy, John Edward. Poems of Mr. John Milton. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951.

Brydges, Sir Egerton (ed.). The Poetical Works of John Milton. Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Co., 1855.

Child, Clarence Griffin (ed.). Comus, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso and Lycidas with other of Milton's Shorter Poems. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910.

Cook, Albert S. "Notes on Milton's 'Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity,'" Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, XV (July, 1909), 307-368.

Cory, Herbert E. "Spenser, The School of the Fletchers, and Milton," University of California Publications in Modern Philology, II (June, 1912), 311-373.

Fairclough, H. Rushton (trans.). Virgil. (Loeb Classical Library.) 2 vols.; London: William Heinemann, 1922.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, Robert M. *Ikon: John Milton and the Modern Critics.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1955.

Allen, Don Cameron. *The Harmonious Vision: Studies in Milton's Poetry.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1954.

Barker, Arthur. "The Pattern of Milton's *Nativity Ode*," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, X (January, 1941), 167-181.

Boas, Frederick S. (ed.). *The Poetical Works of Giles Fletcher and Phineas Fletcher.* 2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908.

Brennecke, Ernest, Jr. *John Milton the Elder and His Music.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1938.

Brooks, Cleanth, and Hardy, John Edward. *Poems of Mr. John Milton.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951.

Brydges, Sir Egerton (ed.). *The Poetical Works of John Milton.* Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Co., 1855.

Child, Clarence Griffin (ed.). *Comus, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso and Lycidas with other of Milton's Shorter Poems.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910.

Cook, Albert S. "Notes on Milton's Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity," *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences*, XV (July, 1909), 307-368.

Cory, Herbert E. "Spenser, The School of the Fletchers, and Milton," *University of California Publications in Modern Philology*, II (June, 1912), 311-373.

Fairclough, H. Rushton (trans.). *Virgil.* (Loeb Classical Library.) 2 vols.; London: William Heinemann, 1922.

Feuillerat, Albert (ed.). The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney. 4 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922-26.

Fletcher, Harris Francis. Contributions to a Milton Bibliography. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1931.

Frye, Northrop (ed.). Paradise Lost and Selected Poetry and Prose. New York: Rinehart and Co., 1951.

Gayley, Charles M. The Classic Myths in English Literature and in Art. Boston: Ginn and Co., 1911.

Gilfillan, George (ed.). Milton's Poetical Works. 2 vols.; Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1853.

Groom, Bernard. The Diction of Poetry from Spenser to Bridges. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955.

Hallam, Henry. Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. 4 vols. in 2; New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1880.

Hanford, J. H. "The Youth of Milton," Studies in Shakespeare, Milton and Donne. ("University of Michigan Publications: Language and Literature," [New York: Macmillan and Co., 1925]), I, 87-163.

Hughes, Merritt Y. (ed.). John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose. New York: Odyssey Press, 1957.

Knight, G. Wilson. The Burning Oracle: Studies in the Poetry of Action. London: Oxford University Press, 1939.

Masson, David (ed.). Poetical Works of John Milton. London: Macmillan and Co., 1877.

Parker, William Riley. Milton's Contemporary Reputation. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1940.

_______. [Review of The Miltonic Setting], Modern Language Notes, LV (March, 1940), 215-218.

Feuillerat, Albert (ed.). The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney. 4 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912-26.

Fletcher, Harris Francis. Contributions to a Milton Bibliography. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1931.

Frye, Northrop (ed.). Paradise Lost and Selected Poetry and Prose. New York: Rinehart and Co., 1951.

Gayley, Charles M. The Classic Myths in English Literature and in Art. [illegible]

Gilfillan, George (ed.). Milton's Poetical Works. 2 vols. Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1853.

Groom, Bernard. The Diction of Poetry from Spenser to Bridges. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955.

Hallam, Henry. Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. 4 vols. 1842; New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1887.

Hanford, J. H. "The Youth of Milton," Studies in Shakespeare, Milton and Donne. (University of Michigan Publications: Language and Literature. [New York: Macmillan Co., 1925] I, [illegible], 87-163.

Hughes, Merritt Y. (ed.). John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose. New York: Odyssey Press, 1957.

Knight, G. Wilson. The Burning Oracle: Studies in the Poetry of Action. London: Oxford University Press, 1939.

Masson, David (ed.). Poetical Works of John Milton. London: Macmillan and Co., 1874.

Parker, William Riley. Milton's Contemporary Reputation. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1940.

______. [Review of] "The [illegible]," Saturday Review, 24 (March, 1941), 218-219.

_______. "Some Problems in the Chronology of Milton's Early Poems," Review of English Studies, XI (July, 1935), 276-283.

Pattison, Mark. Milton. New York: Harper and Bros., 1899.

Prince, F. T. The Italian Element in Milton's Verse. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954.

Raleigh, Walter A. Milton. London: Edward Arnold, 1900.

Rand, E. K. "Milton in Rustication," Studies in Philology, XIX (April, 1922), 109-135.

Ross, Malcolm M. Poetry and Dogma. New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1954.

Rouse, W. H. D. (trans.). Great Dialogues of Plato. New York: New American Library, 1956.

Saintsbury, George. "Milton," Cambridge History of English Literature, ed. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911, VIII, 108-161.

Stapleton, Laurence. "Milton and the New Music," University of Toronto Quarterly, XXIII (April, 1954), 217-226.

Shuster, George N. The English Ode from Milton to Keats. New York: Columbia University Press, 1940.

Sypher, Wylie. Four Stages of Renaissance Style. New York: Doubleday and Co., 1955.

Tillyard, E. M. W. The Metaphysicals and Milton. London: Chatto and Windus, 1956.

_______. Milton. London: Chatto and Windus, 1930.

_______. The Miltonic Setting: Past and Present. London: Chatto and Windus, 1938.

______. "Some Problems in the Chronology of Milton's Early Poems," Review of English Studies, XI (July, 1935), 276-283.

Pattison, Mark. Milton. New York: Harper and Bros., 1879.

Prince, F. T. The Italian Element in Milton's Verse. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954.

Raleigh, Walter A. Milton. London: Edward Arnold, 1900.

Rand, E. K. "Milton in Rustication," Studies in Philology, XIX (April, 1922), 109-135.

Ross, Malcolm M. Poetry and Dogma. New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1954.

Rouse, W. H. D. (trans.). Great Dialogues of Plato. New York: New American Library, 1956.

Saintsbury, George. "Milton," Cambridge History of English Literature, ed. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911. VIII, 108-161.

Stapleton, Laurence. "Milton and the New Music," University of Toronto Quarterly, XXIII (April, 1954), 217-226.

Shuster, George N. The English Ode from Milton to Keats. New York: Columbia University Press, 1940.

Sypher, Wylie. Four Stages of Renaissance Style. New York: Doubleday and Co., 1955.

Tillyard, E. M. W. The Metaphysicals and Milton. London: Chatto and Windus, 1956.

______. Milton. London: Chatto and Windus, 1930.

______. The Miltonic Setting, Past and Present. London: Chatto and Windus, 1938.

Todd, Henry J. (ed.). *The Poetical Works of John Milton*. 7 vols.; 2d ed.; London: J. Johnson, etc., 1809.

Tuve, Rosemond. *Images and Themes in Five Poems by Milton*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957.

Woodhouse, A. S. P. "Notes on Milton's Early Development," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, XIII (October, 1943), 66-101.

Todd, Henry J. (ed.). [illegible] 7 vols. 2d ed. London: [illegible]

Tuve, Rosemond. *Images and Themes in Five Poems by Milton.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957.

Woodhouse, A. S. P. "[illegible] Milton's Early Development," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, [illegible] (October, 1943), [illegible].