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THE BIBLICAL ELEMENTS IN MILTON'S "PARADISE REGAINED"

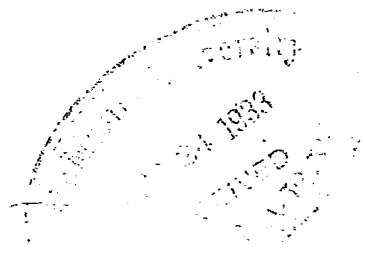
A

STUDY IN ENGLISH

Presented By

Alfreda C. N. Hall.

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THE BIBLICAL ELEMENTS IN MILTON'S "PARADISE REGAINED"

Introduction

That Milton's greatness is largely due to the Biblical influence in his writings is such a commonly accepted fact that the task of examining a poem, even other than his masterpiece, is one yielding delights of new interest in this aspect of Miltonic criticism.

As a first and general point of interest we may note that Milton's life was filled with thinking on religious questions in which his profound knowledge of the Bible was his guide and bulwark. His early life was spent in a home where predominated a spirit of serious Puritan piety, which naturally included deep reverence for the Holy Scriptures. During his childhood, religious matters were constantly discussed in family and community owing to the rise of Puritanism, and thus attracted Milton.

→ His education had for its accepted end the ministry and, although Milton rejected that profession to become a scholar and poet, his studies had prepared him to take a deep and lifelong interest in theological questions which were, indeed, continually raised in connection with the varying fortunes of Puritanism and the Church. He studied the Bible carefully, reading the Hebrew Scriptures daily until his death¹, and was familiar with the Scriptural commentaries of many eminent divines by which he could be aided in his own interpretations.² ^{Text} ~~He~~ by text he had

1. Fletcher

2. Hanford

laboriously and studiously formulated his Christian doctrine from the Bible¹ and in 1647 had thus prepared a complete system in Latin². In spite of his scholarly approach to it he always retained simple faith in its teachings and valued it above all other books in the world. This love and regard for its narratives, teachings and phraseology is nowhere in his writings more evident than in "Paradise Regained", which, as a briefer epic, gives the New Testament completion to his elaboration of an Old Testament narrative in "Paradise Lost".

The following study of Biblical elements in this poem will deal first with the argument, examining particularly sources, plan and interpretations, secondly with the literary epic, examining title, style and structure, and finally with Milton's additions.

The Argument

Sources and Aim

Milton's aim, as has been indicated, was to provide a sequel for "Paradise Lost" in which Christ's triumph over Satan would be told in a form as nearly parallel as possible to the form of the story of Satan's triumph over man. Probably bearing in mind Giles Fletcher's earlier use of the story of the Temptation in the Wilderness in his work entitled "Christ's Victory and Triumph",³ he too selected that story, believing that it fulfilled his requirements. He intended to experiment with the brief epic form, and therefore did not deal with the subsequent

1. Dowden 2. Masson 3. Hanford.

triumph over Sin and Death which he held to be the inevitable result of the first victory. He wished to elaborate on the bare outline of the story as given in the Bible and

"to present it in that form of vivid optical phantasy which constitutes a poem proper as distinct from a song or lyric."¹

The outline forms the outstanding Biblical element and as such must be carefully studied.

The sources for it are found in the synoptic gospels: Matt.4: 1-11; Mark 1: 12,13; Luke 4: 1-13. Compared with the ornate elaboration of the Biblical element in "Paradise Lost", in this poem Milton has almost suppressed his imagination and has kept strictly to the events of the gospels. In many places the poem is little more than a paraphrase of the Bible narrative: e.g. the words of the three temptations and Christ's replies.

"It is a marvel of ingenuity that more than two thousand lines of blank verse have been constructed out of some twenty lines of prose without the addition of any invented incident or the insertion of any irrelevant digression. Nor can it be said that the version of the gospel narrative has the fault of most paraphrases, viz, that of weakening the effect and obliterating the chiselled features of the original."²

Plan

In order to work out a unified narrative, Milton introduces events in Christ's life which occurred before the Temptation in the retrospective speeches of Satan, Christ and Mary. The information which in this way enters the plot in

a natural manner is based even more strictly than the main plot on Biblical accounts, and because of the need for conciseness is very close to them in order and phraseology: e.g. Account of Christ's Baptism, I: 8-32 = Matt 3:16,17; the Annunciation, I, 136-140 = Luke 1:35; Christ in the Temple, I, 213 = Luke 2:46; Christ's Birth, I, 235-258 = Luke 1:26-35, Luke 2: 8-18, Matt. 2:9-11; the Flight into Egypt, II, 76-79 = Matt 2:13-23 etc. In addition Milton has brought in later events by implication or as the fulfillment of prophecy: e.g. Conquest of Sin and Death, I, 160; His death, I, 264; Casting out of Demons, IV, 630 = Matt 8: 28-33, -- so that the story of Christ's life is referred to very fully throughout the poems in a manner incidental to the main points of the story.

Owing to the fact that the two gospels which give the fullest accounts of the Temptation differ in the order of episodes, it was necessary for Milton to decide which one to follow in the development of the plan of his adaptation. He prefers Luke's arrangement and places the Temptation of the ~~Temptation of the Pinnacle~~ of the Temple last.

"This enables him to close with that fine visual effect of Christ standing alone on the pinnacle after Satan's inglorious fall till the fiery globe of ministering angels surrounds him."¹

In doing this he places his own interpretation upon this temptation in that, whereas it is usually considered to be an appeal to Christ to tempt the providence of God in a foolish act which is met by Christ's rebuke, he interprets it as an almost

violent test of His Sonship which is met by Christ's revelation of His own Deity. Thus the Biblical element is retained, but also made to conform to the dramatic principles of climax and surprise.

Interpretations

In other respects Milton's interpretation of the Scripture which he uses so freely is in accord with the commentaries of his time and faith. He finds the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy that the woman's Seed should break the Serpent's head in Christ's victory in the temptations of Satan. The first temptation, which closely follows the Bible, he interprets, as does Calvin, as an attack on the faith of Christ¹. The second he elaborates to form a scale of values in worldly attainment, and the lowest step in the scale is the banquet which parallels the first step in Eve's fall. The third carries the special interpretation that we have noted. Throughout the poem Satan is represented very much as in the Book of Job where he is the adversary of the saints, an official of Heaven inspecting the earth but delighting to discover evil. Milton shows Christ's divinity in the repetition of the pronouncement at Christ's baptism, at the Annunciation, in the prophecies of Simeon and Anna, and in His final answer to the third temptation. He shows His humanity in His hunger, in the facts that He must endure temptation in the form of doubts and appeals to His will to sin against God² and that he resists it as man does, being given full liberty of choice which is an essential condition of true virtue

1. Hanford

2. Farrar

in a creature. In His submission to Divine will and Desire to co-operate with it, He shows the Jewish virtue of Obedience¹. Milton's inclination to Arianism, which states that God did not actually come to earth in Christ but filled him with His Logos or Power, lends the epical contingency that it was within the realm of possibility that Christ might succumb to the temptations.² Yet he believed that there had been

"wrought out in the life of Christ the promise and certainty of the perfect redemption which had been predicted to Adam by the Archangel Michael"³

at the close of "Paradise Lost", and it was to emphasize Christ's right to ~~the~~^{be} Salvation for man that he wrote "Paradise Regained." Finally, the fact must not be overlooked that the invocation of the epic is directly to the Divine Spirit whom he had often addressed under classical symbols in "Paradise Lost." He seems to conceive of the Spirit as the same which led the Israelites into the land of Canaan and Christ into the Wilderness, thus subtly connecting it with the idea of the Hebrew Shekinah.⁴

The Epic

Title

The title is explained in the first seven lines of the poem and with them forms a link with "Paradise Lost." As is commonly known, it was suggested in 1665 by Quaker Ellwood's remark on reading "Paradise Lost":

"Thou hast said much here of Paradise Lost but what hast thou to say of Paradise found?"⁵

Although Milton realizes that Paradise can never actually be restored, his poetic imagination seizes on the implications in Romans 5:19 -

"As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous";

and in Isaiah 51:3 -

"He will comfort all her waste places and he will make her wilderness like Eden." -

which he embodies in these opening lines, and by the close of the poem he has suggested to his reader that men may regain a Paradise within themselves through Christ and look for the actual restoration of it at His second coming, ideas which are thoroughly in accord with Bible teaching.

Style and Language

Milton's great familiarity with the Bible and the fact that he is dealing with a Biblical subject accounts for the ease with which he uses Biblical language and for his own almost scriptural "mannerism of grandeur".¹ He adds few embellishments and it is only here and there that one can point out features reminiscent of "Comus" or "Il Penseroso" amid

"a sobriety that never becomes prosaic."²

Milton preserves as far as possible the words of the Bible, so that in many places his work is a paraphrase of the Scriptural language: e.g. II, 87 -

"As old Simeon plain foretold,^{he}
That to the fall and rising ~~he~~ should be,
Of many in Israel, and to a sign
Spoken against that through my very soul
A sword shall pierce" -

cf Luke 2: 34,35-

"This child shall be set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against. (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also)."

In others ~~words~~ he has taken words or phrases directly from the Scriptures and incorporated them into his work: e.g. I, 208.

"The Law of God I read, and found it
sweet;

Made it my whole delight."

cf. Ps. 119:103 -

"How sweet are thy words" -

and Ps. 1:2 -

"His delight is in the law of the Lord."

Again, many of his lines are reminiscent of Scripture in their ideas and cadence of expression: e.g. I, 56 -

"for longest time to him is short";

cf. II Peter 3:8,

"A thousand years is but a day,"

or
II, 442 -

"And reign in Israel without end,"

cf. Is. 9:7,

"Of the increase of His government and
peace there shall be no end."

There are numerous examples for each of the three types of similarity and the class of each reference is indicated in the accompanying list. It may be interesting at this point to note

that there are in "Paradise Regained" two hundred and twenty-two definite references to the Bible of which nineteen are to longer passages, with only fourteen used twice or more and with thirty references to more than one Scriptural passage. There are only eighty references to the Old Testament, probably because the subject is a New Testament one, with ninety-five references to the Gospels, some of which are of more than two verses. More than half the books of the Bible are represented and nearly all the longer ones.

Structure

In choosing as the theme of "Paradise Regained" a portion of the life of Christ which would form the nearest to "Paradise Lost", it was necessary to keep the counterpoise counterpoise, as far as possible in structure also. This parallelism is worthy of mention as a continuation of Biblical influence in "Paradise Lost" where there is a very marked Biblical element in the explanation of God's purposes and in their working out in the temptation and its results, the very points in which the two poems are most similar. Within the limits of a briefer space and in spite of a curtailment of adornment from ancient poetry, myth and classical references, in "Paradise Regained" we find an introduction and invocation similar to that of "Paradise Lost", and a narrative plan that reminds us of it. There is, first, the conference of Satan with the Powers of the Air which recalls the great council in Pandemonium, the result of both being that Satan sets forth to the world to discover whether the report of God's

ordinance be true or no. At this point in each story God explains His purposes and foretells the outcome of Satan's interference. Then follows a description of those who are to be tempted (in "Paradise Lost", carried to great detail) introducing the commencement of the temptations themselves which are similar in appealing first to lust of the appetite and then to reason which doubts God's judgments. The swift close of "Paradise Regained" is more suitable to the theme and length of the poem than the longer account of events after the fall of Man in "Paradise Lost".

In "Paradise Regained" Milton was attempting a different type of epic from "Paradise Lost", and therefore did not fail in an attempt to repeat his earlier triumph but rather achieved another in this which has been acclaimed

"one of the most artistically perfect poems in any language."¹

As a brief epic a different set of rules, was necessary to govern its construction, (from that employed in writing "Paradise Lost,") The model for such a work was found in the Bible and as "Paradise Lost" resembled the long epics of Vergil and Tasso, so "Paradise Regained" resembles the Book of Job. After the two opening paragraphs which (1) link the poem to its predecessor and (2) satisfy the demand of epic poetry for an invocation, Milton introduces his theme by stating the events leading up to the divine declaration that Christ is the Son of God, which is the reason for the summoning of ^{the} Council of Powers of the Air in which

Satan asserts his intention of making proof of this fact; God in His Council declares that He has given up His Son to be tempted by Satan and that Satan will be defeated. The Book of Job opens similarly with a concise description of Job's position in life and with God's permission given in Heavenly Council for the trial of Job, but these details are presented as short scenes more dramatically than was suitable in Milton's epic form. The temptation of Christ is meant to be a parallel with the trial of Job (I.146¹) to prove that God can produce a man able to resist Satan's wiles and at length "drive him back to Hell". As does Satan in the Book of Job, so Milton emphasizes the temptations which involve satisfaction of personal comfort, stressing the first by repeating it in more elaborate form as a starting point for the second and stressing the safety of Christ's body in the third. Christ's first temptation, like Job's, is narrated briefly, giving a splendid grandeur in the opening shock of onset. The two epics proceed in their development in exactly the same manner: by the use of dialogue accompanied by short introductory, concluding and linking passages of narrative. In each there is a dramatization of philosophical argument of the age which each represents. In each the solution is presented by divine intervention, in the Book of Job a contributory solution through the voice of God in the storm,² in "Paradise Regained" a conclusive solution in the miracle of Christ standing on the pinnacle. The close of both epics is a "soft dying fall" after the climax.

1. Hanford

2. Moulton

The Additions

It has been said that Milton was the prince of plagiarists and that his defence was that he always improved on the material that he took. Since in "Paradise Regained" he used material that in itself could hardly be improved upon, we must look to his additions for his own imprint on his work. They occur principally in connection with the second temptation, making it the most subjective and philosophical part of the poem. In some passages the peaks of his intellectual and imaginative powers are reached: e.g. the descriptions of the Parthian military expedition, of the Roman empire at its zenith, of the art and wisdom of Greece. Here too, Milton makes the arguments of the debate answer each other point by point and in them his own thoughts are frequently expressed: e.g.

- (1) "Christ speaks of the applause of the people in the spirit of an intellectual aristocrat such as Milton."¹
(III, 43-83)

- (2) "Milton's opinion on Greek and Hebrew literature is stated in speeches of Satan and Christ."
(IV, 238-365)

Thus are exemplified Milton's scholarly characteristics. In briefer beautiful passages his poetic characteristics are evident: e.g. the descriptions of the fall of night (I.500; IV.397) and of the coming of dawn (II.279; IV.432), the thought inspiring the descriptions of the anxiety of the disciples and Mary over Christ's absence, the fury of the night before the third temptation, and the ministrations of the angels at the close. Had the poetic characteristics been more frequent, Milton's poetry, scholarship

and Christianity would have united to form a poem of equal quality to "Paradise Lost" though not perhaps so massive. As it is, "Paradise Regained" is eminently worthy of association with the former, and standing alone it would live immortally, by virtue, indeed, of its indebtedness to the Bible.

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LIST OF BIBLICAL REFERENCES IN "PARADISE REGAINED"

Classification:

Par. = Text is paraphrase of Scripture

P. - Similarity of phrase in text

I. - Similarity of idea in text

* * *

Bk I

- L.2 Rom.5:19 (I) --- As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.
- L.7 Is.51:3 (P) --- he will comfort all her waste places and he will make her wilderness like Eden.
- L.8-32, Matt.3:13-17 (Par) Account of Baptism.
Lu.3:21-23 "
- L.18-21 Lu.3:21,22 (I) -- Now when all the people were baptized it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, ~~The~~ heaven was opened/ And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him. And a voice came from heaven which said. Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased.
- L.19 Is. 58:1 (I) --- Lift up thy voice like a trumpet.
- L.24 Jn 1:33 (I) --- I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Unto whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.
- L.33 Job 1:7 (I) --- Whence comest thou? - From going to and fro in the Earth and from walking up and down in i
- L.33 I Pet.5:8 (P) --- Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.
- L.40 Eph.2:2 (I) --- The prince of the Power of the Air
- L.44 Eph.6:12 (I) --- We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities against powers. -

- L.54 Gen.3:15 (I) --- I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed, and it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.
- L.56 II.Pe.3:8 (I) --- A thousand years is but a day.
- L.68 Lu.2:52 (I) --- Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and favour.
- Lu.2:40 (I) --- the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.
- L.70 Lu.1:76 (I) --- Thou child shall be called the prophet of the highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.
- L.74 I Jn.3:3 (I) --- And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.
- L.78 Rom.16:26 (I) --- According to the revelation --- now - made manifest -- made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.
- L.92 Jn.1:14 (I) --- The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.
- Jn.14:9 (I) --- He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.
- L.136-140 Lu 1:35 (Par) --- The angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.
- L.162.Jn 16:33 (P) --- Be of good cheer, I have overcome ~~this~~^{the} world.
- II Cor.13:4 (I) --- though he was crucified through weakness yet he liveth by the power of God.
- L.176 Matt 11:27 (I) --- No man knoweth the Son but the Father
- L.181 I Cor.2:6 (I) --- Howbeit we speak -- not the wisdom of this world nor of the princes of this world that come to nought.
- L.183 Jn 1:28 (I) --- These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan where John was baptizing.

- L.191 Mk 1:35 (I) --- He went out and departed into a solitary place and there prayed.
- L.193 Math 4:1,(P) --- into the wilderness
Lu 4:1, "
- L.204 Jn 18:37 (Par) --To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.
- L.208 Ps 1:2 (P) --- His delight is in the law of the Lord.
Ps 119:103 " --- How sweet are thy words unto my taste.
- L.213 Lu 2:46 (I) --- they found him in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions.
- L.240 Lu 1:32,33 (Par)- He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of his Father David-- and of his kingdom there shall be no end.
- L.244 Lu 2:8 (P) --- there were -- shepherds-- keeping watch over their flock by night.
- L.250 Matt 2:9 (I) --- the star--went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was.
- L.251 Matt 2:11 (I) --- they presented him with gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.
- L.253-4.Matt.2:2(P) --- Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him.
- L.255 Lu 2:25 (P) --- There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon and the same man was just and devout.
- L.255 Lu 2:36 (P) --- there was one Anna a prophetess.
- L.256 Lu 2:26 (I) --- It was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost
- L.257 Exr28:43 (I) --- they (the garments) shall be upon Aaron and upon his sons when they come in unto the tabernacle of the congregation or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not iniquity and die: it shall be a statute for ever unto him and his seed after him.
- L.261 Lu 4:21 (I) --- This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.

- L.266-7 Is 53:6 (I) --- The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.
- L.271. Jn 1:31 (P) --- And I John knew him not.
- L.278 Matt 3:14 (I) --- I have need to be baptized of thee and comest thou to me?
- L.280 Matt 3:16 (Par) --- Jesus when he was baptized went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him.
- L.283-6 Matt 3:17 (Par)- And, lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.
- L.286 Gal 4:4 (P) --- But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his son -
- L.294 Rev 22:16 (P) --- I am the root and the offspring of David and the bright and morning Star
- L.308 Matt 4:2 (P) --- When he had fasted forty days and forty nights he was afterwards an hungered.
- Luke 4:2 (P) --- Being 40 days tempted of the devil And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended he afterward hungered.
- L.310 Mk 1:13 (P) --- He was there in the wilderness --- and was with the wild beasts.
- L.342 Matt 4:3 & (Par) -- When the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.
Lu 4:3
- L.349 Matt 4:4 & (Par) -- It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.
Lu 4:4
- L.351 Ex 16 (I) Story of manna in wilderness.
- L.352 Ex 24:18 (P) --- Moses was in the mount 40 days and 40 nights.
- L.353 I Kings 19:8 (I) -- He arose and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat 40 days and 40 nights unto Horeb the Mount of God.
- L.368 Job 2:1 (I) --- Again there was a day when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.

L.369 Job 2:6 (I) --- The Lord said unto Satan Behold, he is in thine hand.

L.371-376

I Kings 22:19-22 (I) I saw the Lord sitting on his throne and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? And one said on this manner and another on that manner. And there came forth a spirit and stood before the Lord and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.

L.408 John 8:44 (I)- Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

L.427 I Kings 22:6 (I) The king of Israel gathered the prophets together about 400 men.

L.460 Jn 14:26 (I) ---The comforter which is the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things.

L.462-5 Jn 14:16,17 (P) He shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you forever -- even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you.

Jn 16:13 (I) - When he the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you in all truth -- and he will show you the things to come.

L.488 Is 1:12 (P) --- who hath required this at your hand to tread my counts?

L.491 Num.22 (I) Story of Balaam.

Bk II L8 Jn 1 (I) --- Story of Simon & Andrew.

Bk II

- L.16 II Kings 2:11 (I) --- Behold there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.
- L.17 Mal. 4:5 (I) --- Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.
- Matt 17:11 (I) And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.
- L.18 II Kings 2:17 (I) --- They sent therefore 50 men; and they sought 3 days, but found him not.
- L.21 Deut 34:3 (P) -- Jericho the city of palm trees
- Jn 3:23 (P) --- John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim.
- Gen 33:18 (I) --- Jacob came to Shalem
- L.34 John 1:14 (P) --- The word was made flesh and dwelt among us full of Grace and Truth.
- L.44 Ps 2:2 (I) --- The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed
- Neh 9:26 (I) --- Same idea.
- L.68 Lu 1:28 (P) --- Hail - highly favoured - blessed art thou among women.
- L.75 Lu 2:7 (P) --- and laid him in a manger
- L.76 Matt 2:13 (I) --- Arise - and flee into Egypt.
- L.77 Matt 2:15 (I) --- And was there until the death of Herod
- L.78 Matt 2:16 (I) --- Herod sent forth - and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem.
- L.79 Matt 2:23 (I) --- And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth.
- L.87 Lu 2:34-5 (Par) --- This child is set for the fall, rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against. (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also) -

- L.96 Lu 2:42 (I) --- When he was twelve years old
- L.98 Lu 2:49 (P) --- Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business.
- L.99 Lu 2:51 (I) --- His mother kept all these sayings in her heart.
- L.103 Lu 2:19 (I) --- Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.
- L.168 I Kings
11:3-8 (I) --- see L.204.
- L.180 Gen 6:2 (I) --- It came to pass that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives.
- L.204 I Kings 11:4 (I) When Solomon was old -- his wives turned away his heart after other gods.
- L.236 Matt 12:45 (I) - Then goeth he and taketh with himself ~~of seven~~ other spirits more wicked than himself and they enter in and dwell there.
- L.258 Matt 5:6 (I) -- Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.
- Jn 4:34 (P) -- My meat is to do the will of him that send me, and to finish his work.
- L.261 Ps 4:4 (P) -- Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still.
- L.266-70 I Kings
17:1-7 (I) -- Story of Feeding of Ravens
- L.271-6 I Kings
19:4-8 (Par) Story of Elijah under Juniper Tree.
- L.277 Dan 1:12 (I) -- Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat and water to drink.
- L.310-14 Gen.21:12-21 (I) Story of Hagar
Ex 16 " Story of Feeding by Manna
I Kings 19:4-8 " Story of Elijah and Juniper Tree.
- L.327 Leviticus -- Laws for unclean meat etc.
- L.329 Dan 1:8 (I) -- Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat. --

- L.369-71 Gen 2:17 (I) -- But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.
- L.384 Ps 78:19 (P) -- They said Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?
- L.385 Matt 26:53 (I) -- Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than 12 legions of angels.
- L.414 Matt 13:55) (P) -- Is not this the carpenter's son?
Mk 6:3)
- L.416 Job 18:12 (P) -- His strength shall be hunger bitten.
- L.421 cf Matt 14 (I) -- Story of Feeding of 5000
- L.439 Judges 6:15 (I) -- (Gideon) My family is poor in Israel and I am the least in my father's house.
- Judges 11:1-2 " (Jephthah) ~~the~~ son of a harlot -- they thrust out Jephthah and said -- Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house.
- I Sam 16 " David's youth.
- L. 442 Is 9:7 (I) -- Of the increase of ^{ment}this govern~~ment~~ and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David ~~and~~ upon his kingdom -
- L.454 Lu 8:14 (I) --- When they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.
- L.466 Prov 16:32 (I) --- He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

Bk III

- L.3 Jn 8:46 (P) --- Which of you ^{convinceth} ~~convinceth~~ me of sin?
- L.9 Matt 12:34 (P) --- Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.
- L.67 Job 1:8 (P) --- And the Lord said unto Satan Hast thou considered my servant Job that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man.

- L.78 Joel 2:3 (I) -- A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.
- L.107 Jn 7:18 (I) -- He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.
- Jn 8:50 " I seek not my own glory.
- L.108 Heb 5:5 (I) - So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest; but he that said unto Him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.
- John 14:13 (I) -- that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
- L.118 Gal 3:28 (I) - There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.
- L.159 Lu 13:1 (I) - There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.
- L.175 Ps 69:9)
Jn 2:17) (P) - For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.
- L.183 Eccles 3:1 (P) - To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven.
- L.185 Acts 1:7 (I) - And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.
- L.199 Ps 145:13 (P) - Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.
- L.221 Is 25:4 (I) - Thou hast been -- a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat.
- L.242 I Sam 9:20,21 (I) Saul seeking asses finds a kingdom.
- L.245 Matt 4:8 (I) - He sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.
- L.252 Matt 4:8 (P) - The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain.

- L.277 Dan 2:38 (I) - Thou (Nebuchadnezzar) art this head of gold.
- L.281-4 II Kings
24-25 (I) - Facts concerning history of Babylon.
- L.283 Ezra 1-2 (I) - Facts about Persepolis etc.
- L.352 II Samuel 2(I) - Facts concerning David's accession.
- L.374 II Kings
18:11 (I) - And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan and in the cities of the Medes.
- L.384 Gen 15:18 (P) - Unto they seed have I given this land from
I Kings 4:21 " the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.
- L.387 II Chron 32:8 (P) With him is an arm of flesh
Jer 17:5 "
- L.396-7 John 7:6 (P) -My time is not yet come
- L.409 I Chron 21:1(P) And Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel.
- L.415-182 I Kings 16:32 (P) And he (Ahab) reared up an altar for Baal.
3. I Kings 11:5 (P) For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess.
4. II Kings 17:10 " And they set them up images and groves in every high hill and under every green tree.
I. Ex 32:8 (P) They have made them a molten calf.
- L.431 Jer 5:19 (I) - Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours.
- L.436 Rev 16:12 (I) - And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the East might be prepared.
- Is 11:15-16 (I) And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dry shod. And there shall be a highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

L.437 Is 51:11 (I) -- The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come with singing into Zion.

Bk IV

L.103 Lu 4:6 (P) -- All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whom soever I will I give it.

L.136 Is 18:2 (P) -- Go to a nation ~~and~~ scattered and peeled.

L.148 Dan 4:10-14(I) -- Nebuchadnezzar's dream

L.149 Dan 2:44 (Par) - And in the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever.

Is 9:7

L.150 Ps 2:9 (I) See L 150

L.151 Lu 1:33 (P) -- And of his kingdom there shall be no end.

L.162 Lu 4:6-7 (Par) - All this power etc. -- If thou therefore wilt worship me all shall be thine.

Matt 4:9 " All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

L.176 Matt 4:10) (Par) It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord
Lu 4:8) they God and him only shalt thou serve.

L.193 Lu 4:8 (P) - Get thee behind me Satan
Matt 4:10 "

L.203 II Cor 4:4 (P) - In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds -

L.216-20 Lu 2:45 (I) - Story of Christ in Temple.

L.219 Matt 23:2 (P) - The scribes and the pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

L.321 Eccles 12:12 (I) of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

L.347 Ps 137;3 (P) - Sing us one of the songs of Sion.

L.366 Eph 6:16 (P) - Take the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

- L.386-9 Is 53:3-5 (I) - Idea of sorrows.
- L.455 Job 26:11 (P) - The pillars of Heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof.
- L.544 Lu 4:9 (P) - And he brought him to Jerusalem and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him. If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence.
- Matt 4:5 (P) - Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple.
- L.555 Matt 4:6 (Par) - And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.
- Lu 4:9-11 "
- L.560 Matt 4:7) (Par) It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.
- Lu 4:12)
- L.581-636 Matt 4:11) (I) Angels came and ministered unto him.
- Mk. 1:13)
- L.596-600 Jn 1:14 (I) - And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.
- L.603 John 10:1 (I) - He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but ^{climb} ~~climb~~eth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.
- L.611 Ps 124:7 (P) - The snares are broken and we are escaped.
- L.620 Lu 10:18) (P) - I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven
- Rom 16:20) (P) - And the God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.
- L.623 Rev 9:11 (P) - The angel of the bottomless pit whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon.
- Is 3:26 " - And her gates shall lament and mourn.
- L.628 Rev 18:2 (I) - Babylon the great is fallen - and is become the habitation of devils and the hold of every foul spirit and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.
- L.630 Matt 8:28-33 (I) - Casting out of demons into swine.

L.631-2 Rev 20:1-3 (I) - And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he might be loosed a little season.

L.636 Matt 11:29 (P) - for I am meek and lowly in heart

L.638 ~~Is 3:26~~ ~~(P) - And her gates shall lament and mourn.~~
Acts 21:5 (P) - they all brought us on our way.

L.639 Lu 4:14 (P) - And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.

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THE CLASSICAL FEATURES IN MILTON'S "SAMSON AGONISTES"

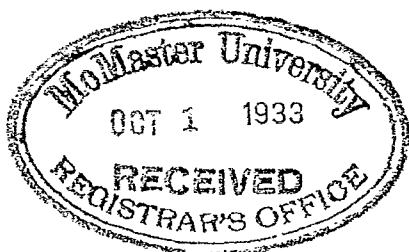
A

STUDY IN ENGLISH

Presented By

Alfreda C. N. Hall.

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THE CLASSICAL FEATURES IN MILTON'S "SAMSON AGONISTES"

The study of Milton's dramatic poem "Samson Agonistes" is full of disappointment and surprise. One looks for action; in finding very little in a modern sense one is disappointed, only to discover on closer penetration that there is action, - of a different type from what was expected, the play of emotions to develop a resolution from the despair of inner suffering. One looks for tragedy of the spectacular, breath-takenly beautiful type of "Paradise Lost"; in finding it to be calm and impersonal, one is disappointed, only to discover on closer penetration that the tragedy is permeated by such triumph that it is ennobled and can stand unblushingly beside Milton's masterpiece. One looks in this tragedy "after the ancient manner" for a close parallel with the classical strophic form; in finding the novelties of Monostrophic measure one is disappointed, only to realize later that it has given Milton more freedom of expression. So, too, in other lesser matters of form is this peculiar impression given as we shall see as we proceed in the study of the classical features. Finally and most outstandingly perhaps, is the disappointment and surprise found in the spirit of the poem: one looks for the intellectualism and fatalism characteristic of Greek drama; in finding a predominating spirituality and faith one is disappointed, only to realize that the disappointment would have been far greater if Milton had failed us in

his strong Puritanism, his belief in Providence and in the ultimate triumph of the soul who trusts in God. The surprise comes in the fact that here, where so easily Milton's character might have been submerged in the form of art which he was attempting, he reasserts himself and fulfills again his purpose of justifying the ways of God to man.

The classical features of the poem are evidenced most in its structure, and we shall examine first the plan, then special dramatic points and, lastly, its style.

Before the poem proper there are two explanatory additions which, while necessary to a clear understanding of the nature of the poem, follow classical examples. The Preface which explains the artistic purpose of "Samson Agonistes" is similar, as Milton states, to the Epistles with which Martial sometimes introduced his works. In it, he denounces the careless freedom of the English stage and sets himself to show what can be done following Greek models. The Argument which explains the story of the poem is as markedly a feature of the work of Sophocles as of Milton, who proved its worth in the long books of "Paradise Lost." The title then proclaims the poem for what it is, and it opens with a Prologue which, as in Greek choral tragedy, precedes the first appearance of the Chorus. This prologue would be a monody or lyric solo if its interest were not primarily narrative, for Milton uses it, as Attic

5.

tragedians did, to recall to the minds of the audience the previous history of the hero and, as did Aeschylus, he makes it a soliloquy. The dirge over Samson's blindness in the prologue beginning with L.80, "O dark, dark, dark amid the blaze of noon", introduces, however, some of the characteristics of monody. Sir E. K. Chambers points out that the opening of the prologue is somewhat similar to the opening of Sophocles' "Oedipus at Colonus". The blind Samson, like Oedipus, is led on the stage asking his guide to take him to a pleasant seat and leave him alone there. But Samson's guide is a mute character of no importance to the plot while Oedipus' guide is his daughter, Antigone, with whom he converses in animated dialogue, giving the effect of a briefer introduction to the setting of the story.

The Parode or Chorus entry does not, as it often did in Greek tragedy, include a dialogue but is simply an ode showing the contrast between Samson's present misery and his former splendour.

Then follow five Episodes divided by Choral interludes or Stasima which follow the Greek outline. The episodes are dramatic scenes in which Samson takes the part of leader of the Chorus and converses with the Chorus itself which represents the "friends and equals of his tribe"¹ or with other actors who are introduced in each episode. Milton says

"the Greek play was so conventional that it was more like a series of statuesque groupings in the episodes";

1. Argument

this ^Surely applies to "Samson Agonistes". Occasionally short lyrical passages intervene in an episode contrasting the situation of the story with a legendary one, as in L.275,

"Thy words to my remembrance bring
How Succoth and the fort of Penueel
Their great deliverer contemn'd," etc.

This is common in classical tragedy. A better example of monody than the one already mentioned occurs in the Second Episode after Manoa's departure when Samson bewails his sufferings and wishes for death. The Second and Third Episodes show Samson's rejection of deliverance and we see that he must die in captivity, either worn out by sorrow or in some great agony inflicted by the Philistines; the Fourth makes this punishment almost inevitable, but the last sees the outcome in critical action. The action has not seemed to advance from episode to episode, yet each has contributed something which helps to determine Samson's final resolution and in doing so each shows progress in action. In this "still" action composed of influences on the will of Samson which finally brings about the catastrophe, "Samson Agonistes" is similar to "Prometheus Vinc-tus" by Aeschylus.¹

The Stasima are, as usual, sung by the Chorus and are accompanied not by action on the stage but by rhythmic movements. Usually, however, they are strophic and in Milton's deviation from this characteristic of classical style we find one of the most outstanding lapses in classical structure, yet

1. Jebb.

one which Milton has used to his own advantage. These lyrics are not planned with the idea of gaining regular grace in balanced structure; they have no stanza form and the length of their lines varies at the poet's will, giving him much more freedom of expression than the Greek form would allow. The Stasima arise out of situations which spring up from time to time in the course of the plot, and for this reason are what Moulton calls "Odes of Situation", emphasizing particular situations or for lyric situations. The first Stasimon sums up the preceding scene and adds reflections arising from it; the second sympathizes with Samson's mood; the third moralizes on what has gone before, approaching the type of an "Ode on Human Life"; the fourth reflects on the beauty of strength in the hands of a man of God; the fifth gives a prayer for success after the manner of a "Hymn or Ritual Ode". These odes fulfill the purpose of the Chorus according to classical traditions as we shall see more clearly when we observe the Chorus separately.

The last section of the poem is an Exode, which comprises all action subsequent to the last Stasimon. It is longer than the closing ode or dialogue commonly used in the Greek play. In this section there is more dramatic form than in the others. There is the irony of Manoa's desires for a peaceful old age with his son; there is the speech of the Messenger who tells of the catastrophe of the play; there

is Manoa's closing summary, and lastly, the Chorus' closing assertion that "All is ^{best}". In the exode, then, is reached the climax of dramatic feeling ^{so} that an evident rise of interest can be traced throughout the play, whereas the Greek play often had several high points of interest so that a final climax was not so noticeable. In the final speech of the play Milton expresses himself in an essentially Christian belief in the Providence of God and in the assertion that "calm of mind" comes from the "true experience from this great event", a desire for which he had stated in the Preface. It is in the Fifth Episode and Exode that the surprise comes which makes up for the disappointment of the monotony of the earlier part of the poem.

"Samson Agonistes" is, like all Greek tragedy, not pure drama but a union of lyric odes and dramatic episodes bound together by the Chorus¹. It will be well, then, to see what was required of the Greek chorus and how Milton's chorus meets those demands. Milton's chorus is of the type found in the final stage of development in the choral tragedy when its characterisation was taken from the story. This chorus is, as we have seen, composed of Samson's friends who will naturally be sympathetic with him, but farther than that the characterisation does not go. The Chorus never allows itself to become personal, and we think of it as a group with the function of commentat^{ion}~~ion~~ rather than as individuals. Like

1. Moulton.

Greek Choruses, it is composed of spectators in and of the drama, who, apart from the Prologue, render soliloquy unnecessary. Like Greek Choruses too, it shows the impression that the dramatist wishes to make on the minds of the hearers and expresses their reactions to events; e.g. L.1511,

"Noise call you it, or universal groan
As if the whole inhabitation perished?
Blood, death, and deathful deeds are in that noise;
Ruin, destruction at the utmost point."

It catches the religious bearing of the action; e.g. L.1287,

"But patience is more oft the exercise
Of saints, the trial of their fortitude,
Making them each his own deliverer,
And victor over all
That tyranny or fortune can inflict."

It enters into human emotions only with chilling qualifications to obtain a normal state of mind; so that the larger significance of the successive moments of action is clarified; e.g. Samson, L.649, says

"This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,
No long petition - speedy death,
The close of all my miseries and the balm."

Chorus replies with meditations on the hollowness of philosophical consolations, the instability of human fortunes and finally prays, L.708,

"Behold him in his state calamitous, and turn
His labours, for thou canst, to peaceful end."

It celebrates incidents that cannot be acted; e.g. in the Parode it relates Samson's famous deeds of strength: killing the lion, routing the army with the jaw-bone of the ass, carrying^{away} the gates of Gaza. It evades difficult problems and

is always timid in time of danger, e.g. L.1521,

"Best keep together here, lest, running thither,
We unawares run into danger's mouth."

It acts as a division between the episodes, thus corresponding to the modern act divisions, and in "Samson Agonistes" it announces the arrival of new characters to the blind man and the audience. It provides the generalizations on human suffering and the maxims which pervade Greek drama. Milton's adaptation of the Chorus, then, follows the classical model very closely. His deviation from strophic form is the only important difference. Raleigh thinks that at times Milton deviated from the best Greek tradition in assigning inappropriate matter to the Chorus; e.g. the generalization concerning women, L.1010-60, the result of intensity of feeling concerning Dalila; but since bitterness concerning women was Euripidean, this criticism does not appear to be of much moment.

Also a dramatic feature of "Samson Agonistes" is the inclusion of the Messenger, who was a characteristic part of the Greek play. The fact that the messenger appears only once suggests the opinion that Milton's poem is a Greek play in little, - not intended to imitate the classical plays in length and content, but rather to exemplify in a shorter work of perfect symmetry and close imitation the main features of classical dramatic art. The messenger's speech always marks a transition, telling of some development in the plot that cannot be presented on the stage. The classic principle behind its use

was "to focus attention not on the sensation^{a)} event but on its dramatic significance."¹ The Greeks considered that to show the audience the fall of the building which involved the death of Samson would fill them with horror and sadness, so that the significance of the deed, its triumphant fulfillment of God's purposes, would be lost. The messenger, then, himself forms as it were an act of the play. Here it is the catastrophe, the crisis of action to which all has been leading. It is inevitably a disappointing disposal of the climax to one accustomed to the intensity of Shakespeare's high points of action, but it brings its surprise as one discovers depths of meaning and impressiveness in the fact that the true drama is of spirit rather than of action.

The use of the Messenger was due to Milton's desire ~~and~~ to allow no deed of violence to be brought on the stage and to adhere to the principles of Unity in classical tragedy as laid down by Aristotle in the Poetics and illustrated in the works of Aeschylus and Sophocles. This unity was made up of three: unity of action, one story told from one viewpoint with no secondary narratives or persons,—which causes Milton to limit the scope of the action to the final episode in Samson's career; unity of time, twenty-four hours; and unity of place, the scene of the play. Incidents outside these unities must be told in Choral Odes, e.g. in the Parode, the stories of Samson's deeds, in the Messenger's speech, e.g. the

story of the death of Samson, or in other dramatic devices. Milton in his preface, calls our attention to his observance of this "ancient rule and best example". He attempts by its use to secure an artistic effect and fulfill his aims of verisimilitude and artistic propriety by concentration of effort.¹

In the technicalities of its style the poem contains most of the characteristics of Greek tragedy. It is written chiefly in unrhymed heroic, or iambic pentameter, lines, for lack of rhyme was thought to be classical.

"The iambic pattern is a framework to carry the variations imposed upon it by the luxuriance of perfectly controlled art."²

These variations include parallel or stichomuthic structure, in which remark and answer in dialogue are of identical length, and the imitation of riddling question and answer characteristic of such dialogue³, e.g. the scene between the Messenger and Manoa, L.1552 to L.1570,

"MANOA. The accident was loud, and here before thee
With rueful cry; yet what it was we hear not:
No preface needs; thou seest we long to know.

MESSENGER. It would burst forth; but I recover breath,
And sense distract, to know well what I utter.

MANOA. Tell us the sum, the circumstance defer.

MESSENGER. Gaza yet stands; but all her sons are fallen;
All in a moment overwhelm'd and fall'n.

MANOA. Sad! but thou know'st to Israelites not saddest,
The desolation of a hostile city.

MESSENGER. Feed on that first; there may in grief be
surfeit.

MANOA. Relate by whom.

MESSENGER. By Samson.

MANOA That still lessens
The sorrow, and converts it nigh to joy.

1. Hanford

2. Raleigh

3. Hanford.

MESSENGER. Ah! Manoa, I refrain too suddenly
To utter what will come at last too soon;
Lest evil tidings, with too rude irruption
Hitting thy aged ear, should pierce too deep.

MANOA. Suspense in news is torture; speak them out.

MESSENGER. Take then the worst in brief: Samson is dead."

The variations also include acceleration of metre, in outbursts of excitement, as in the first line of the semichorus (l.1669)

"While their hearts were jocund and sublime", and and change from iambic pentameter to lyric measures to show distinction between portions of the play, e.g. Samson's monody, L.606,

MANOA "...meanwhile be calm,

And healing words from these thy friends admit.

SAMSON. O that torment should not be confined

To the body's wounds and sores,

With maladies innumerable

In heart, head, breast, and reins;" etc.

The lyrical effect of the choruses is due to alterations in rhythms and cadences by the use of lines of varying lengths, the occasional introduction of rhyme, and more numerous trochaic feet.¹ The ordinary variations of metre such as extra syllables, mutilation of feet, varying number of feet, change of position of pauses are, of course, frequently present in the blank verse. Milton also uses at the climax of the poem the device of semichoric excitement, in which the chorus breaks in two to express in dialogue form intensity of feeling; e.g. L.1660 to L.1707. In addition, "Samson Agonistes" shows in style some evidences of what Moulton calls "the disturbing

forces in ancient tragedy"; rhetoric and epic poetry.

There are many examples of rhesis, the long set rhetorical speech which is far removed from dialogue, e.g. Manoa's speech, L.340, beginning

"O miserable change! Is this the man,
That invincible Samson, far renown'd," etc.

The Third Episode, the scene between Samson and Delila, is a complete example of forensic contest in which the two discuss their respective cases formally in speeches which resemble those of advocates and which are often identical in length. The influence of epic poetry is shown in the Messenger's speech where the catastrophe is treated so vividly that dramatic effect is suspended for narrative interest.

Brief reference should perhaps, be made to the diction of the poem. The use of Latinisms in sentence structure and individual words makes for solemnity and dignity throughout the entire poem. The comments of various scholars on the language are interesting in their uniformity of opinion: "The language has the elevation of temperate dignity"¹; "monumental dignity, subtlety of metrical and rhetorical effect"²; "sculpture of sinewy strength"³; As Raleigh points out, the crowded and ostentatious magnificence of style in "Paradise Lost" is sacrificed to severity in "Samson Agonistes"; yet we must note that freedom of rhythm and melody prevent it from

1. Jebb 2. Hanford 3. Garnett.

being classed with the work of the classicists of the eighteenth century where severity predominates.

We may now turn to the more abstract aspects of the poem in which classical features may be found. First, let us examine the story or content of the poem in the light of ancient tragedy. Like Greek authors, Milton has chosen to dramatize an incident in the life of a hero whose career is well known to his audience. He deals with it according to the Greek tradition, as we have seen. He makes his characters conform to its influence. He has remoulded Samson in the form of the suffering hero of antiquity; he is like Prometheus in his grandeur of woe, like Heracles of Sophocles' "Deianira" in physical strength and spiritual weakness, and like Oedipus at Colonnus in his resistance of his friends' blandishments.¹ He follows the style of Greek characterisation in Manoa with his hopes for peaceful old age with his son, and in Dalila with her subtle attempts to beguile him. In Harapha, however, he surpasses Greek art in that he invents this person to bring out the strong features in the character of Samson, which prepares the reader for the catastrophe.² He approaches the idea of Sophocles in the stress he lays on free-will as a motive cause of the tragedy.³ Many profound topics accompanied by many maxims in true classical style are dealt with, such as "the dark tangle of human life, the inscrutable course of Divine providence, punishment so unwittingly

1. Hanford 2. Garnett 3. Chambers.

and lightly incurred yet lying on the whole nation, the temptation presenting itself in the guise neither of pleasure nor of ambition but of despair."¹ These show that the play is meant to be not a series of pictures but a vehicle of thought in which the plot presents ideas on which the poet meditates in the odes.² They remind us of the motives of Greek tragedy, of its interest in the problems of human life, Destiny, retribution; yet the Christian spirit pervades them all and we cannot feel that they are thoroughly classical.

Here the content merges with the spirit of the poem, and we have first to consider Milton's treatment of religion which was so prominent a feature of ancient tragedy. Destiny, according to the ancients, was an abstract Force compelling people to necessary actions by a kind of fatalism. When design emerges in the governing force of the universe, it becomes Providence. It is identified with retribution, and the type that Milton uses is that of justice rather than nemesis. In the drama there is continual interchange between deity and destiny as the controlling force of the universe. Sometimes deity seems subject to controlling destiny; at other times it sinks into the condition of an enlarged humanity, whence comes the dramatic motive of criticism of the deity. Destiny can be set in motion, or even controlled, by man and his deeds. Crime is judged by the spell of the Erinyes and punished by the Ate, a spiritual violence amounting

to a sort of haunting by fate. There are definite references to these beliefs to be found throughout "Samson Agonistes". The idea of fatalism is suggested in Samson's opening speech, L.60:

"But peace! I must not quarrel with the will
Of highest dispensation, which herein
Haply had ends above my reach to know,"

While the suggestion of design behind the "dispensation" conforms to the Providence of Greek drama. It recurs in the dirge on Samson's death, L.1663:

"Thou.....now liest victorious
Among thy slain self-killed;
Not willingly, but tangled in the fold
Of dire Necessity, whose law in death conjoin'd
Thee with thy slaughtered foes,"

and is linked with the idea of the retribution of moral right or justice. Elsewhere in the poem this idea of "highest dispensation" or "Highest Wisdom" (L.1747) seems to be synonymous with God, and here we see the Christian conception of deity. Yet deity is criticized to the extent of comments on the inscrutable workings of God. In the first Stasimon, the Chorus says, L.293,

"Just are the ways of God,
And justifiable to men,"

except to those who foolishly deny the existence of God and to those who perplex themselves by doubting the justice of God's ways. He must, then, have prompted Samson to marry Dalila, an action not to be judged by ordinary moral precepts,

"Down, Reason, then: at least, vain reasonings down."

Manoa in true classical style criticizes Gods' dealings with Samson, L.368,

"Alas, methinks whom God hath chosen once
To worthiest deeds, if he through frailty err,
He should not so o'erwhelm, and as a thrall,
Subject him, to so foul indignities,
Be it but for honour's sake of former deeds."

Samson, however, re-echoes the assertion of the Chorus that

"just are the ways of God"

in replying

"Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me
But justly; I myself have brought them on,
Sole author I, sole cause."

There is further criticism in the Chorus' meditation on the instability of human fortunes, L.666-704, when they comment on the apparent lack of fairness in God's dealings with men. The idea of the Ate is worked in with the song of triumph over the final destruction of the Philistines who as pagans might themselves believe^{ve} in this form of punishment: e.g. L.1669-1686,

"While their hearts were jocund and sublime,
Drunk with idolatry, drunk with wine,
And fat regorged of bulls and goats,
Chanting their idol, and preferring
Before our living Dread who dwells
In Silo his bright sanctuary:
Among them he a spirit of frenzy sent,
Who hurt their minds,
And urged them on with mad desire
To call in haste for their destroyer:
They only set on sport and play
Unweetingly importuned
Their own destruction to come speedy upon them."

Hanford says,

"The principle of hybris (i.e. that overconfidence which leads men to trust too much in their own power and provokes an attack on them by the jealous gods) is ~~was~~ invoked in the description of the Philistines and a final chorus applies to them precisely the formula

of the Greeks. Offended at their mad pride God sends to them a spirit of frenzy - the ancient Ate - who impairs their judgments and makes them bring on themselves, by their own acts, an avenging Nemesis."

Patriotism and religion make Greek drama inexpressibly significant to the Greeks¹. The religious sentiment we have just seen to be every where apparent in "Samson Agonistes", but can one say as much of the patriotic? One has only to note Samson's references to the fact that he must perform a deed of destruction for his country's sake to realize that the ancient patriotic sentiment is there. He speaks of Israel's deliverance as "the work to which I was divinely called" (L.226). The Philistine is his "country's enemy". As he leaves for the amphitheatre he says

"Happen what may, of me expect to hear
Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy
Our God, our law, my nation, or myself;"

and Manoa at the end says that his deed has left to Israel honour and freedom if they will but use the occasion for gaining them, (L.1715).

The use of irony was closely allied with the idea of destiny and retribution as a dramatic effect on the ancient stage, and Milton uses it consciously and consistently, as does Sophocles. Outstanding examples of it occur (1) in the Chorus' exhortation of patience to Samson, L.1287-1296, (2) in the tumult which interrupts Manoa's plans to take care of Samson so that his strength may increase until he may be used again in some great service, (3) in the Chorus' suggestion

at the moment of destruction that Samson's eyesight may be restored and

"He now be dealing dole among his foes,
And over heaps of slaughter walk his way."

But further we do not find the classical spirit, for there is "through all, the recurring assertion of unyielding trust and unflinching acquiescence in the will of God."¹ A quotation from Hanford is especially enlightening on this point.

"Particularly noticeable as a feature derived from the very essence of Greek tragedy is Milton's attempt to interpret Samson's tragic error as hybris.....Milton's conception of Providence rather than Fate as the ruling force in the affairs of men prevents him, however, from presenting his hero's struggle exactly in the terms of ancient drama."

The action of the play is due not to the control of Destiny working swiftly over men's lives but to Divine prompting which works in a natural and gradual way.² The catastrophe, which is essentially an act suddenly performed in faith on the suggestion of the Holy Spirit, exemplifies a Hebraistic idea, when, according to the demands of Hellenic ideas, it should be an act long premeditated. The issue of the drama, according to the late Sir R.C. Jebb, is that Jehovah prevails over Dagon in spite of the weakness of the one through whom He is to work. Instead of making a contrast between man and fate or free will and destiny as the Greeks do, Milton contrasts

God and His servants with idols and their servants. This may be shown by comparison of Samson with Heracles. In epoch, mission, temperament, sufferings, and death the two were alike but Samson is triumphant in effacing the stain on God's honour caused by his betrayal of trust, while Heracles is persecuted and is the victim of fate.¹ Thus, this drama, like "Paradise Lost", is an assertion of eternal Providence and a justification of the ways of God to man.

The closing speech of the Chorus is typical of the whole poem. It is classical in form and commences with the Euripidean formula "All is best". It shows lyrical form but is classically serene in its resignation and triumph and quite Miltonic in its "dying fall". It expresses the Puritanic idea that the ways of God are past finding out but are always for the best. It disappoints, perhaps, in its reiteration of ideas previously expressed; it surprises by giving as a last impression a sense of contentment and well-being after the stress of following Samson's inner agony, and the destruction of his enemies.

Thus we leave the poem, satisfied that Milton has achieved a reproduction of the form and spirit of Greek tragedy without sacrificing in the slightest degree his witness to the righteous dealings of God with men. As we see

1. Jebb.

his life drawing to its close, we may repeat his own majestic lines on Samson's death:

"Samson hath quit himself
Like Samson, and heroically hath finished
A life heroic.....all this
With God not parted from him, as was fear'd
But favouring and assisting to the end.
Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise or blame; nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble."

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A summary of Milton's Second Defence of the People of England.

This defence was written against an anonymous libel which was, Milton believed, written by one Alexander More or Mores, a friend of Salmasius who had made previous attacks on Milton and his friends. He, however, was not the author but concealed the fact that the author was Peter Du Moulin, preferring to bear Milton's anger rather than to reveal the identity of an enemy who was a member of Milton's social circle.

Milton commences his defence with an acknowledgment of divine goodness which he recognizes in the facts that he is living at a time when the people of England have gained liberty in rule and in religion that Parliament had chosen him to vindicate the rights of liberty, and that he had done so successfully. In this victory he sees glory for his country, because it is a greater triumph than those that won fame in Greece and Rome in ancient days, and has given England the reputation of being favourable to the growth of liberty. The struggle against tyranny was undertaken wisely, and they resorted to arms "only to defend the sanctity of the laws and the rights of conscience". Milton himself took part in the struggle, not in arms but in performing with calmness and courage in the face of malice or death a more dangerous and more important task. As his mind had been trained rather than his physique, he was called upon to make a record of its achievements and to "defend the truth with reason rather than with arms". He is grateful for the opportunity to do this, for he believes that his subject is greater in dignity and interest than those of which the illustrious orators of Greece or Rome treated. So great is it that he feels that he must address not only his countrymen but also all citizens in

Europe who are watching with lively interest the progress of events in England, and, finally, the peoples of the world who look to England to show them the means of attaining the liberty which, through England's example, they have come to desire.

Milton then speaks of his opponent, Salmasius, and questions the rightness of his taking part in discussions of which he knew little and of his alliances with pope and bishops. With insistent rudeness he had brought personal charges of ugliness and blindness against Milton to which the latter now replies.

Humorously he says that he had never expected to enter a beauty contest in competition with the Cyclops or to be called, as he has been, "a monster huge and hideous, void of sight." His opponent has added, in order to ~~correct~~ ^{amend} this statement slightly, "there cannot be a more spare, shrivelled and bloodless form." So correct the erroneous impression that people may gain from this caricature, Milton describes his appearance. He is not deformed in any way but he is not remarkably handsome. He is of medium height, thin, but strong and courageous and so much accustomed to exercise in swordsmanship that he considered himself a match for anyone. These qualities remain although he is blind. His eyes are clear and do not appear to be defective; in this alone he appears to be something which he is not. His face is not pale, but so fresh, youthful and unwrinkled that he is frequently taken to be ten years younger than he is. He points out that it would not be to his advantage to be inaccurate about such statements and suggests that his opponents' falsehoods about this unimportant matter may be some indication of the quality of his statements on other subjects.

Milton rejects that the accusation of blindness is true.

3.

but says that his patient submission to his affliction has made it a strength to his character. Why should he not endure patiently what may befall anyone and what many others have had to endure? He gives examples of famous men of antiquity on whom blindness cannot be thought to have come as a punishment, and expresses his own firm belief that God sends such trials not as a punishment for men's deeds but as misfortunes in spite of which they may achieve and build greatness of character. Milton's enemies have said that his blindness came upon him to punish him for his writings, but since he wrote always with the desire and purpose of keeping to "truth, justice and piety," he cannot feel that God, who loves these qualities, can wish to bring retribution upon him. Then too, he desired no personal gain but wrote all in the interests of patriotism and love of civil and religious liberty.

When he was called upon to reply to the Defence of the Royal Cause, his physicians warned him that to do so would probably result in blindness. But he resolved that loss of sight was preferable to the sense of failure in duty, that he might do much good by suffering a little himself, and that blindness would not hinder him entirely from his work. Therefore, he used what remaining sight he had for the good of the public. On this account he is not ashamed or regretful concerning his affliction; he cannot be disturbed by those who revile him and his beliefs as regards God's justice are steadfast.

Indeed, he feels that God has shown signal favours to him in the protection, solace, strength and inspiration which have come to him in his affliction, and instead of complaining he is thankful for the great mercies God has bestowed on him. He feels confident that he has been in the right and in that confidence he has found

peace and joy. His physical blindness is not, he thinks, so great; an affliction as the mental and spiritual blindness which his opponent has shown. His blindness may be a strength in that he can contemplate virtue and truth and increase his mental and spiritual energies so that being blind he may yet more clearly see. He has close fellowship with God and experience of Divine favour because the sphere of the world are denied to him. He is so protected by the Divine spirit that he cannot be harmed by these attacks upon him. His friends, too, are more kind to him and the host of them did not leave him when his sight failed. Those of high distinction in the Commonwealth have shown their appreciation of his contribution to their cause and of his courage by giving him favour as reward for faithful service. They allow him to remain in a position of public trust; they allow him still to draw his full salary and they yield him full honour. Since both God and man give him such comfort for his affliction, let no one grieve for him; he himself will neither grieve nor refrain from upholding his own cause.

The next section of the Defence contains an account of his life. He was born in London. His father was a wealthy citizen and his mother was well known for her good works. His father had planned that Milton should be a man of letters and Milton was by no means opposed, for his desire for knowledge was so great that after he was twelve years of age he studied continually and rarely retired before midnight. Much study in youth, when his eyes were weak and he suffered from frequent headaches, was the primary cause of his blindness; but knowing the serious effect close reading might have, he did not

5. refrain from study. He attended the grammar school and had tutors at home until he gained proficiency in languages and knowledge of philosophy. Then he went to the University of Cambridge where he spent seven years in honourable pursuit of the usual courses of study, obtaining in the end the degree of Master of Arts. To the regret of his friends he then returned home and in the privacy of his father's estate he studied uninterruptedly the Greek and Latin classics. Sometimes he would visit London to buy books or learn more of his hobbies, mathematics and music.

After five years his mother died, whereupon with one servant he went abroad. He went first to Paris where he visited the English ambassador who gave him ^{illustrations} letters of introduction to the Swedish ambassador by whom he was cordially received. He moved on rapidly to Italy and spent two months in Florence where he was received in the literary clubs and was even allowed to take part in their proceedings. After this he spent two months exploring and investigating the antiquities of Rome. At Naples the marquis of Villa, who had been the friend and biographer of Lesso, entertained him. Here he was planning to go on to Sicily and Greece when he received news of civil war in England and decided to cancel his plans so that he might return to England to assist in the struggle for liberty.

This return journey, probably because he learned that the news he had first received was exaggerated or premature, was broken into stages. He went back to Rome although he had been warned that the English Jesuits had formed a plot against him there. He was in some danger, but in spite of his free speech against Roman Catholicism he remained there unharmed for two months. From Rome he went to Florence where he stayed

6. another two months and from there went to Venice where he spent a month. Then, after shipping to England the books he had collected in Italy, he proceeded through Verona and Milan to Geneva. At this point he pauses to say that during all his sojourns in these cities where temptation was lying in wait for a young man, his conduct was always virtuous and upright, for he believed that he lived ever in the sight of God. He spent a short time in Geneva and held daily conversations on theology with Deodati, a learned professor. Then he returned to England through France, after an absence of about fifteen months.

On his return Milton obtained a house in the city and renewed his studies, at the same time eagerly watching developments in the struggle between ~~the~~ King and the Parliament which Charles, after being routed by the Scots, had been forced to summon. The members had begun openly to denounce the bishops and to say that they should follow the word of God in the organization of the church. So Milton this seemed an opening for the establishment of real liberty and the casting off of the tyranny of popery. His studies had prepared him to share helpfully in this crisis and he, therefore, determined to give up his other interests in favour of this. He wrote two books on the reformation of the Church of England. When two bishops vindicated their privileges, he replied with books "Concerning Prelatical Episcopacy" and "Concerning the Mode of Ecclesiastical Government", and in Animadversions and an Apology. The ministers were grateful for his brilliant work in their defence and referred all refutations to him.

After that he turned to the subject of promoting real and substantial liberty through integrity of life. There were, he thought, three types of liberty: religious, about which he had already written;

7. civil, for which the Parliament was striving; and domestic, to which he now decided to turn his attention. This subject had three divisions: (1) marriage and divorce, (2) education, (3) liberty of the press. He wrote about each. He did not write on the prerogative of the crown until the trial of Charles when Presbyterian ministers who had opposed the king, through jealousy of the Independents, turned around and condemned them for permitting the trial. Then Milton showed what might lawfully be done against tyrants, questioning the authority of celebrated divines and reproaching the ministers for their conduct. This book did not appear until after the death of Charles and was meant to reconcile the people to this event.

Such were the services Milton rendered to the state, having inward pleasure that he was able to use his gift in discussion for a good cause. He never tried to gain favour and wealth by his services, but remained in seclusion, barely supported by his own means which had been much depleted during the unrest. He had already written a good part of a history of England when he was called upon to serve in the office for foreign affairs and soon after to reply to charges against the Parliament issued in a book written, as it was supposed, by the king. In this reply Milton was careful to avoid slander against the king, but the discussion was taken up by Salmasius to whom in turn Milton had to reply and justify himself by telling these details of his life.

The last section of the Second Defence is a panegyric on the life, character and triumphs of Oliver Cromwell. He considers that Cromwell's power to control men in war and government arose from his stern mastery of himself. He praises

8. the good discipline of the troops who could be received as guests by those who submitted to them and selects Fairfax for special mention. He then refers to some of Cromwell's most memorable deeds: the quick subjection of Ireland, the struggle with Scotland leading to its complete subjection and the protection of England against Scottish invasion, his wisdom in executive government, the Protectorate in which he gained the reward of his goodness and virtue in power, and his modesty. He then points out the dangers of Cromwell's present position and exhorts him to reverse the means by which liberty has been gained, to think not lightly of the importance of his office in world history, and to rely for help on those who were associated with him in arms and in Parliament in the Civil War, some of whom are mentioned by name. He advises him to leave the government of the church to its ministers, ~~and~~ to have only necessary laws so that the country will not be confused by much legislation, to provide for education and freedom of speech, and to work for equal rights and equal laws for all.

Unless the people have liberty which is the result of piety and right living, they will, Milton says, be subject to the designs of those who will be ready to take away from them what they have so hardily gained. The acts of peace must surpass the acts of war, or peace will oppose their interests. The triumphs of peace are triumphs over avarice, ambition and sensuality, and far more important than revenue, defence and treaties are justice and charity in internal administration. If the people fail in these, they will be guilty of the same offences as had those whom they have just overcome, and from that degradation there would be no hope of rescue. "To be free is the same thing

9. as to be pious, to be wise, to be temperate and just, to be frugal and abstinent, and lastly, to be magnanimous and brave. Without having learned obedience to reason and self-control the people must endure the management of a courageous guardian.

Milton hopes that this general defence of liberty has been beneficial. He has celebrated one exploit of his countrymen. Posterity will see from this that the beginning of freedom was glorious and will judge by this standard the subsequent conduct of those who gained it. Therefore, the people must realize their responsibilities and bear them worthily.