

Gilbert, Allan H., On the Composition of Paradise Lost, 1966

p. 9 (footnote cont'd)) Professor Harris Fletcher writes: Some of the old biographers state that this poem was written piecemeal, and the more the poem is studied, the more the reader's conviction grows that such was actually the case." - The Complete Poetical Works of Milton (Boston, 1941)p. 153. See also John Milton's Complete Poetical Works Reproduced in Photographic Facsimile, ed. Harris Francis Fletcher (Urbana, 1945), II, 9-11.

p. 9 Some parts of Paradise Lost may have been composed as independent poems. . .

Examination of Paradise Lost for such incorporated parts is not rewarding. Milton's workmanship is so careful and the story so unified that there is little hope of recognizing imbedded in the epic, work independently written. Looking at the book of the Creation, the seventh, one can imagine a Biblical paraphrase beginning about line 200, but a poem of 450 lines on such a subject seems unlikely; Du Bartas took more space. The lyrical portions offer more probability. The <sup>p.10</sup>hymn to light beginning Book III might have existed independently.<sup>7</sup>

Footnote 7 Mr. Tillyard (Milton, p. 195) thinks this hymn of about the date of Milton's Defensio secunda, 1654, and considers the similarity with the passage on blindness (Columbia ed., VIII, 62-72) evidence for the date of Book III. The likeness bears on the date of the hymn itself, but not on the date of the remainder of Book III, except as unified composition can be demonstrated. If Milton did compose the hymn independently, he must have revised it to fit its present place.

p. 10 It may be supposed that Milton had the complete manuscript read aloud to him at least once, perhaps several times. That would have enabled him to eliminate various seeming duplications that still remain in the poem. There is, however, no positive evidence for such reading. It may be that Milton - careful workman though he was - <sup>p.11</sup>slighted the final synoptic view of his manuscript. That is suggested by the repetitions and inconsistencies now to be found in Paradise Lost. It is possible to hold that some of these repetitions are deliberate, and yet to think that the poet failed in a minute adjustment to one another of the various occurrences of a theme.

p. 69 This condition strengthens the possibility that in an early arrangement Books V and VI were placed before Books I and II.

p. 69 The Two Accounts of Satan's Defeat in Heaven - Book III and Book VI. The brief account in the third book is much like the longer one in the sixth, even to verbal likenesses:

p. 70 . . . The repetition, then, is deliberate.