

(K) Milton, by E. M. W. Tillyard late master of Jesus College, Cambridge. Revised edition. Barnes & Noble, Inc.:New York) 1967

### Introduction

p.3 In some ways Milton is a romantic, and there are signs that recent opinion is setting against him as well as against the avowed romantic school of the nineteenth century. Anyhow, it is not safe to assume that his reputation will continue to stand as high as it has done for the last two hundred years. I cannot myself see that Milton's value is superannuated, and in the epilogue I have stated very simply why I hold this opinion.

p. 97 If Paradise Lost presented a complete unity, not merely a/ construction but of tone, then the above remarks would be futile. But, as I shall point out, the tone changes during the course of the poem, and the later books ally themselves more closely to Paradise Regained than to the activity of the opening. It would be possible to imagine a division of form better corresponding to Milton's change of feeling than the present division into Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained.

Finally, it is well that the uncommon exuberance of Milton's prose style<sup>1</sup> should be stressed. People are still in the habit of contrasting the richness of Shakespeare's vocabulary with the confinedness of Milton's. It is perfectly true that Milton's verbal range in his poems is considerably smaller than Shakespeare's in his plays. But it should be evident that if Milton was deficient, it was from choice not necessity.

p. 201 It is strange how little, till quite recently, critics have concerned themselves with the meaning of Paradise Lost. The style, the versification, the celestial geography, the thought, who is the hero: all these have concerned the critics far more than what the poem is really about, the true state of Milton's mind when he wrote it. Perhaps to those of earlier generations the meaning appeared too simple to need discussion: does not Milton himself tell us all we need to know about it in his opening lines? But such simple-mindedness can ill satisfy a generation which is sceptical of professed motives and which suspects the presence of others, either concealed or not realized by the author. It is not surprising, then, that in the last ten years or so there has been more discussion of the subject than in all the rest of the time during which Paradise Lost has been in print. From the differences of opinion it may be judged that the question has by no means been settled, and another attempt to answer it may well be pardoned.