MILTON'S LITERARY REPUTATION DURING THE VICTORIAN ERA

A Dissertation

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Calvin Huckabay
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ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to trace Milton's literary reputation in England from the appearance of Macaulay's Essay on Milton (1825) to the publication of Walter Raleigh's Milton (1900). I maintain as a fundamental premise that Milton remained one of England's "accepted" writers throughout the period, that there is no justification for the idea that the Miltonic tradition declined during those years.

Victorian scholarship on Milton alone attests to his standing as a man of letters. His works were edited and re-edited. The Victorians wrote more than a score of critical biographies of Milton, and his poetry was always a lively topic of discussion in the journals. Political analysts drew upon his prestige as a writer to strengthen their arguments for reform bills. Some scholars studied Milton's source materials extensively. Several Milton concordances and bibliographies were compiled. His prosody was analyzed in detail.

In what amounted to a reinterpretation of Milton the man, there was a shift from Milton idolatry to a more critical attitude. Several critics disparaged the man because of his domestic difficulties and political controversies. Later critics made allowances for Milton's supposed inhumanity to man, and a few brought forth documentary proof to show that he had been kind and gentle. The extent of Milton's Puritanism was debated, but no appreciable degree of agreement was reached. Some critics were beginning to interpret him as a Christian humanist.

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veered away from the eighteenth-century idea that *Paradise Lost* is a devotional poem, but no one interpreted correctly its central meaning. There was universal agreement that the metrics of *Paradise Lost* exhibit flawless excellence. The late Victorians neglected the content of the epic. Satan's position in *Paradise Lost* was debated throughout the era.

The critics neglected *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. When they mentioned these poems, they usually compared them unfavorably with *Paradise Lost*. Only one critic came close to an interpretation of the central meaning of *Samson Agonistes*; the others merely noticed parallels between Samson and the poet. *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Comus*, and *Lycidas* were never studied in any detail, but they were often mentioned in glowing terms. In short, Milton's reputation as a poet was maintained because of the recognized merits of *Paradise Lost*.

Milton's polemical pamphlets received even less attention than the shorter poems. The early Victorians did not discuss the prose as literature. They either tried to show the correctness of Milton's ideas or attempted to prove that he had been in error. After 1855, however, critics became conscious of Milton's prose style and cited the purple passages for their poetic language. In 1900, commentators were beginning to appreciate the timeless truths and high ideals presented in the pamphlets.

Milton the philosopher fared well during the Victorian era. It is true that some critics thought that *Paradise Lost* had become a monument to dead ideas, but they were in the minority. The late Victorian years witnessed, of course, a reassessment of traditional values, and it was
quite natural that the relevance of *Paradise Lost* as a philosophical poem be questioned.

*De Doctrina Christiana* neither added to nor subtracted from Milton's reputation as a thinker. Most of the critics over-emphasized the heresies of that work. It is significant that with the exception of Channing and other Unitarians, *De Doctrina Christiana* was never lauded as a liberal Christian document. By 1900, many writers had noticed the value of the treatise as a commentary on *Paradise Lost*.

At the close of the Victorian era there was little or no agreement on several aspects of Milton's personality and works; the general disagreement reflected the complexity of almost every problem involving the poet.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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John Milton has always been a controversial figure. Writing in 1856, an anonymous essayist said, "Those of the great dramatist alone excepted, Milton's writings have been the object of more conjecture, praise, and detraction, of more worthless and elegant criticism, than those of any other English poet." The purpose of this study is to examine a part of the criticism which the anonymous writer has in mind, and we shall limit our inquiry to criticism that was produced in Great Britain during the Victorian era.

During his own lifetime, Milton was praised by men like Dryden and Marvell; conversely, he was despised by men like Roger L'Estrange and the author of The Censure of the Rota. The men who lived during the century following Milton's death could not reach a verdict on the man and his works. The illustrious Samuel Johnson wrote a scathing attack on the man, but he was immediately challenged by scores of critics, to such an extent that his Life of Milton had repercussions throughout the nineteenth century. During that hundred years Milton remained a figure of controversy. Like the neo-Augustans, the Romantics and Victorians could agree, for the most part, on the merits of the blind bard's poetry as a form of art; they never agreed, however, on the validity of the ideas expressed in Milton's poetry and prose.

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Some critics, following Johnson's argument, were continually suggesting that Milton had not been very pleasant as a human being. In our own century, Milton has had his defenders and his detractors. Critics of high repute, such as S. B. Liljegren and T. S. Eliot, have expressed their disgust with Milton the man. On the other hand, critics of equal standing, E. M. W. Tillyard and Douglas Bush, for example, have defended both the man and his works. Nevertheless, the half-way point of the present century finds critics divided on every point of concern to the student of Milton.

There are several reasons for such disagreement. First, Milton was so closely connected with the political movements of his own age that it has been difficult for critics to approach him objectively on his political views. Second, Milton wrote so much on theology that the creed or lack of a creed of a particular critic has often colored his remarks on this aspect of Milton's career. Third, accounts of the poet's life written by his contemporaries have provided a fertile field for analysis of Milton the man. These accounts tell a great deal; yet they leave much for conjecture. Other reasons, some of them as basic as the ones stated here, are responsible for the fluctuation of opinion on Milton.

Milton's critical reputation should be of interest to the literary historian, and the object of the present study is to discuss his reputation in Great Britain during the Victorian age. For purposes of convenience, however, the terminus a quo will be 1825 rather than 1837,
the year in which Victoria came to the throne. The *terminus ad quem* will be 1900. Although the old queen was still alive in 1900, the turn of the century marks the end of an era as far as movements in ideas are concerned. The year 1825 is important to the student of Milton, for during that year his *De Doctrina Christiana* was first published, and a new factor was thus introduced into the stream of Milton criticism. Interested critics were then free to examine in detail the religious opinions of the author of *Paradise Lost*. Bishop Newton and others during the eighteenth century had suspected Milton of holding heretical views; after 1825, their suspicions could be substantiated or dispelled. *De Doctrina Christiana* also made possible a broader interpretation of *Paradise Lost* and the other major poems. Views which were only hinted at vaguely in *Paradise Lost* were discussed at length in the newly discovered treatise on religious doctrine, for example, the position of the Son in the godhead. The year 1825 is important again from the critical point of view; the publication of *De Doctrina Christiana* brought forth Thomas Babington Macaulay’s famous *Essay on Milton*. That particular essay may now seem to be merely a panegyric on Milton the Whig written in overflowing rhetoric, but it made a deep impression on the Victorian mind. The number of editions it went through reflects the extent of its audience. On the other side of the Atlantic, William Ellery Channing wrote his exposition of Milton’s doctrinal views in 1825. His essay, though now regarded as a Unitarian defense of Milton, also found a
large audience. At the end of the century, 1900 is another year of importance to the student of Milton, for in that year Walter Raleigh published his Milton. Raleigh's study represents the culmination of a trend that had been at work for several years. Like some of his contemporaries, Raleigh appreciated the poet's artistry but felt that the poet's ideas, as found in Paradise Lost, were of no consequence for the modern reader. Finally, by 1900 the literary historian could determine whether or not the publication of De Doctrina Christiana had resulted in a shift in the stream of Milton criticism.

Several studies have already been made of Milton's reputation during the nineteenth century. Frank W. Plunkett made the first of these in 1931, but his study extends only to 1832. It is otherwise limited in its scope in that Plunkett is concerned only with periodical criticism. During the period discussed by Plunkett (1778-1832) there were several highly significant book-length studies written about Milton. These, of necessity, must be included before any final evaluation of Milton's literary reputation during those years can be made. M. C. Albrecht's dissertation was completed in 1937. Albrecht has

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2 The Milton Tradition in One of Its Phases: The Criticism of Milton as Found in the Leading British Magazines of the Pre-Romantic and Romantic Periods (1778-1832) (State College, Arkansas: Arkansas State College Press, 1934). This work is a slightly revised version of Plunkett's 1931 Indiana University dissertation. My references are to the dissertation.

adequately covered the material listed in the various Milton bibliographies. His study, however, is not a complete discussion of Milton's reputation from 1800 to 1860, as it purports to be. He omits, for the most part, three important aspects of the Miltonic tradition: criticism of the prose, of Milton's political theories, and of Milton's character and personality. The organization of his material, moreover, leaves much to be desired. He attempts to classify the critics as "major" and "minor" and devotes much more space to the so-called major critics than he does to those critics whom he classifies as minor. The validity of such a method is doubtful, for the Victorians did not feel as we do concerning the standing of their critics. For example, Sir Egerton Brydges was highly regarded as a critic by his contemporaries, and his pronouncements on Milton were looked upon with respect, even though some of his readers disagreed with his views. At the present time, Brydges is in oblivion, as he may well deserve to be. But it does not follow that in studying Milton's nineteenth-century reputation, Brydges' remarks should take second place to those of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In bulk, Brydges produced much more criticism on Milton than Coleridge did, and his remarks had as wide an audience, if not a wider one.

Shou Wing Chan's dissertation,4 as its title states, is a study of nineteenth-century opinion on Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and

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Samson Agonistes. Like Albrecht, he omits important aspects of Milton criticism that ought to be included in any study of the writer's reputation. Furthermore, his chief conclusion, that Paradise Lost received most of the attention of the critics, seems rather obvious.

The final study to be mentioned in connection with nineteenth-century criticism of Milton is the Harvard dissertation of James E. Thorpe.\(^5\) His work is by far the most satisfactory attempt that has been made to survey the state of Milton's reputation during the preceding century. He is forced to omit complete discussion of some significant critical material that was produced during the century, since he has to devote considerable space to the writer's twentieth-century critics in order to fulfill his stated purpose. Thorpe presses some of his conclusions to extremities, and some of them are possibly erroneous. For instance, the decline of Milton the man was not nearly so obvious in 1900 as Thorpe maintains. Since he is interested in tracing the decline of the Miltonic tradition, he would have done well to begin his study with the attacks on Milton which occurred in or around 1642, when Milton first became active as a pamphleteer.

It will be necessary to limit the scope of the present study to the criticism that was published by the English commentators between

1826 and 1900. Milton's literary reputation on the continent is a study in itself, and Lester F. Zimmerman has admirably discussed the writer's reputation in the United States. However, books and articles written by non-English critics will be noted if they gained the attention of the English public.

My method of investigation has been to notice British remarks on Milton, wherever they are found, which were written between 1825 and 1900. The bulk of the material is derived from specific studies on Milton, such as Keightley's and Masson's critical biographies. Anonymous articles that appeared in the various reviews have likewise been noticed. Several editions of Milton's works have been examined. Another source of information is the inevitable literary history, such as Saintsbury's History of Elizabethan Literature. Some political histories have been taken into account, for example, Gardiner's History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate. Finally, anthologies of English literature have been read so that their critical comments might be recorded and their selections from Milton noticed. Quite relevant

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to my attempt to make this a comprehensive study of the Victorian opinion on Milton is Plunkett's remark that "In all accounts, moreover, of the criticism of Milton, the emphasis has been upon his reputation with those of his own intellectual class; comparatively little attention has been paid to the popular reputation of Milton, to the opinion held by the ordinary man of culture concerning the Latin secretary to Oliver Cromwell and the author of _Paradise Lost_. The study of the Milton tradition has been centered on the criticisms of scholarly biographers and great essayists, and upon the influence of Milton upon the poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries."8

In this study the primary concern is to discuss the criticism as it is found. The critical value of the material is only of secondary importance.

The first chapter of this study will be a survey of the Victorian scholarship on Milton. It is necessary in a work of this kind to mention in some detail the type of criticism which the era under discussion produced. Non-critical material like that which was published by the Camden Society also has a place in a study of this kind. Although such matter does not contain specific evaluations of a writer's productions, it reflects not only the general regard which an era has for him but also the points of interest of the age in his connection. An account of the achievements of important critics of Milton, such as

Masson, Arnold, Brydges, and Keightley, deserves mention in a work of this type. Facts like these, however, belong in a chapter of their own and should not be interspersed in chapters in which they would be irrelevant. Information concerning Masson's achievements as a Milton scholar, for example, would be out of place in a discussion of his criticism of Milton's poetry. For the most part, the material examined on Milton and his works divides itself into four main headings: that dealing with Milton the man, with Milton the poet, with Milton the prose writer, and with Milton the moral and political philosopher. These four headings will form, in succession to Chapter One, the topics for the four chief chapters of this study.

The writer has consciously avoided an introductory chapter which would be an account of the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century background. Thorpe, Chan, Plunkett, and Albrecht have chapters in their studies which adequately cover this material. Ants Oras, Milton's Editors and Commentators from Patrick Hume to Henry John Todd (1695-1801) (London: Oxford University Press, 1951).

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Edward Dowden, 14 and John W. Good 15 are specifically concerned with
the neo-Augustan criticism of Milton, and Raymond D. Havens 16 is
cconcerned indirectly with this problem in his study. William R.
Parker 17 includes an excellent essay on Milton's seventeenth-century
reputation in his exploratory work on that phase of the Miltonic
tradition.

15 "Studies in the Miltonic Tradition," University of Illinois
Studies in Language and Literature, I (1915), 1-310. See also George
Sherburn, "The Early Popularity of Milton's Minor Poems," Modern
Philology, XVII (1920), 259-278 and 515-540; and Alfred E. Richards,
Notes, XLI (1926), 322.
17 Milton's Contemporary Reputation (Columbus: Ohio State
University Press, 1940). Raymond D. Havens also discusses this aspect
in "Seventeenth Century Notices of Milton," English Studies, XL (1909),
175-186, and in "The Early Reputation of Paradise Lost," English
CHAPTER I

A SURVEY OF VICTORIAN SCHOLARSHIP ON MILTON

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and evaluate the contributions of the Victorians in the field of Milton scholarship. As I stated in the introduction, such a chapter has a place in any study dealing with a author's reputation. A writer's literary standing is invariably reflected in the amount of critical scholarship and research being pursued on that writer. The present interest in John Donne and the other metaphysical poets, for example, indicates the high regard which our own age has for that group. Then too, there is usually scholarship of a non-critical nature. This includes concordances to a writer's works, bibliographies of studies which have been made on him, editions of his works, discussions concerning his source materials, documentary research on his life, and the like. The nature and extent of such work is also indicative of a writer's standing. Such pursuits will be discussed in the present chapter in addition to the material that is primarily critical.

Milton received his just share of attention during the Victorian age. Only a cursory examination of the various bibliographies on different English writers will show that with the possible exception of Shakespeare, no other writer received as much critical attention during the age as he. Milton had been accepted as one of England's great writers as early as the age of Pope, and by the end of the eighteenth
century, *Paradise Lost* was looked upon as something sacred. It lay beside the Bible and Shakespeare in almost every English home. Milton's eighteenth-century detractors, such as Johnson and Lauder, had not been able to diminish the poet's reputation. Charles Symmons published his seven-volume edition of Milton's prose during the first decade of the nineteenth century. His edition included a *Life of Milton*, which was intended as a refutation of Johnson's remarks. Beginning with Symmons, interest in Milton continued unabated throughout the century. Numerous book-length studies, as well as shorter biographies of the poet, were written. An impressive number of anonymous articles were published in the reviews after the appearance of *De Doctrina Christiana*, each defending or debasing that important work, but all reflecting interest in Milton. At the same time, anonymous critics discussed and re-discussed the merits of Milton's verse. Writers of party bias drew Milton's political opinions into their own discussions; Tories opposed his views, while Whigs emphasized his opinions on liberty. Thus, during the nineteenth century, Milton continued to hold a place as an "accepted" writer, worthy of extensive criticism and scholarship.

Book-length critical studies form the most significant portion of the scholarship on Milton. Most of these purport to be biographies,

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but they are really critical discussions of some phase of Milton's work, such as his political views or his doctrinal opinions. Some are concerned mainly with his poetry. A few are primarily panegyrics or censures on the man.

Among the first book-length studies that appeared after 1825 was a treatise written by the Reverend Joseph Ivimey. Had it not been for the publication of De Doctrina Christiana, Ivimey would probably never have written his book on Milton; for he drew most of his material from that work. Ivimey himself was a nonconformist, having previously written a history of the English Baptists. His primary concern was to prove that Milton, in doctrine, had been closer to the Baptists than to any other sect. A secondary purpose was to refute Johnson's statements on the personal character of Milton. He interspersed derogatory remarks on Johnson's Life throughout the study, but his main attack on Johnson came in an appendix, called "Animadversions on Dr. Johnson's Life of Milton." Ivimey was so zealous in his Baptistio vindication of Milton that he neglected scholarship altogether. He explained away Milton's Arian views, for example. Still, his work represents the eulogistic point of view toward Milton which was prevalent among the neo-Augustans but which was rapidly passing even as early as 1833, the date of the

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4 Ibid., pp. 349-382.
publication of Ivimey's book. In trying to find some justification for Milton's conduct during the period of the divorce pamphlets, Ivimey writes: "The fact is, Milton in this instance appears 'to have been left by God to walk in his own counsels,' in order that he might be tried, and know what was in his heart. Instead of trusting in God with all his heart, he leaned to his own understanding, and thus furnished an affecting proof, that the best of men are but men at the best." 6
Ivimey was among the last to write of Milton in such a rationalistic tone.

Sir Egerton Brydges was one of the most prolific of Milton critics during the first part of the nineteenth century. Perhaps his most outstanding contribution is the Life. 6 Published in 1835, Brydges' biography of Milton was intended as an antidote to Johnson's Life. In this respect, Brydges was on the side of Ivimey; but there the resemblance ends, for Brydges' work was a Tory interpretation of Milton. Since Brydges was a Tory, and since he had a profound respect for the man Milton, he was forced to rationalize when he discussed the pamphlet period of Milton's career. He simply regretted that Milton wasted so

5Ibid., pp. 96f.

much of his creative energy on pamphlets which the critic considered as worthless. The most noticeable characteristic of Brydges' biography is his awareness of the Miltonic tradition. Apparently, he wrote with a knowledge of most Milton critics from Addison to his own day. Writing in the twilight of his life, Brydges wished to give justice to Milton the man and poet. He focused some attention, quite properly, on the minor poems. On the credit side, his biography is lacking in that he ignored, whenever possible, Milton's prose. He touched only lightly on Milton's controversies with Salmassius and Morus. He quoted considerably, however, from autobiographical passages in Milton's writings.

If Brydges' biography was deficient in its discussion of the political aspect of Milton's career, that deficiency was compensated for by William Carpenter in his critical biography of Milton. In his preface Carpenter stated that his purpose was to bring into proper focus the political aspect of Milton's life. Concerning Brydges' study, he declared "...his Tory Predilections render the 'puritan' and 'regicide' an object of his strongest dislike, and prompt him to assume the office of an apologist for Milton, where no extenuation or apology is called for." Carpenter's attempt to discuss adequately Milton's political career resulted in a one-sided study. He made almost no mention of the

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8 Ibid., p. ii.
9 Ibid., p. iii.
poetry. Moreover, Carpenter can hardly be called objective because he adopted the Whig point of view altogether. He defended the essayist on every question, including his coarseness. Besides praising Milton's every action, Carpenter defended the Puritans by means of a long tirade against Laud and his followers. Such criticism can hardly be called dependable. Yet, as in the case with Ivimey and Brydges, Carpenter represented a point of view that was to find expression throughout the period.

Probably the fiercest attack on Milton that has ever been written, including those composed around 1660, came from the pen of Samuel Roberts. His study, which was made when Roberts was "between four and five score years of age," was an attack on both the man and his works. Quite obviously, Roberts was offended by the very subject of Paradise Lost. Milton, he felt, was meddling where he had no business. Roberts regarded the whole of Paradise Lost as a sacrilege. It is blasphemous, he declared, for Milton to permit his Adam to converse face to face with God. As far as the personal character of Milton is concerned, Roberts outdid Johnson in making derogatory statements. Probably the only works Roberts had read in connection with Milton were Johnson's Life and the Paradise Lost itself. De Doctrina Christiana would have furnished him with more ammunition than he possessed, but evidently he had never read it, since there is no mention of the work in his study. Roberts added

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nothing to Milton scholarship. One can read the ravings of the old man only with pity.

Edwin Paxton Hood, another Victorian critic of Milton, wrote in the idolatry tradition. His point of view toward Milton was made obvious in his preface: "To present to the young men of England a compendious Digest of the Life, Writings, and Character of the noblest and sublimest of their countrymen, is the object of the Editor of this volume." Hood followed Carpenter in emphasizing the political aspects of Milton's career. However, he discussed the poetry more fully than did Carpenter. His remarks on Satan will be discussed in another chapter, but it can be stated here that he demonstrated the necessity for reading all of Paradise Lost before attempting to name the hero of the poem.

Hood's study contributed little to the store of scholarship on Milton. The work is well-written for the most part, but it is devoid of fresh interpretations regarding both the poet and his works. It is merely another Whig effort to vindicate the political career of one of their party.

The first critical biography of Milton that can be called "good" in the modern sense was written by Thomas Keightley in 1855. Like Brydges, Keightley was acquainted with the previous criticism on Milton;


12 Ibid., p. ix.

he surpassed Brydges, however, in his objectivity. Keightley divided his material into three main parts: the life, the opinions, and the writings of Milton. In the section on Milton's life, Keightley tried to analyze the materials available and then he drew his own conclusions. He clarified erroneous notions regarding the writer's life by following such a method. For example, he discussed at length Johnson's remark that Milton received a flogging at Cambridge and that Milton was perhaps the last to undergo such punishment at an English university. Having weighed the evidence, he concluded that Johnson had distorted a small bit of information into what seemed an accepted fact. \(^{14}\) When discussing Milton's opinions, Keightley remained objective. He accepted De Doctrina Christiana for what it is and made no ado over its heretical chapters.

By 1855, both the Whigs and the liberal Tories were drifting toward acceptance of the principles of liberty as set forty by Milton; therefore, Keightley could discuss Milton's political views without seeming to take sides. In criticizing the writings of Milton, Keightley gave the minor poems the attention they deserve. He was among the first, to do justice to the Latin poems, which make up a significant part of the poet's writing. He attempted to list the qualities of the poetry and noted the peculiarities of the language of Paradise Lost. Keightley was aware of

\(^{14}\) Of Keightley's study, a reviewer wrote in the North American Review, LXXXII (1856), 388-404: "To pick the way amongst the debris of more than two hundred years, to know when to accept and when to reject, to weigh nicely so many clashing opinions and judgments, is no trifling task; but Mr. Keightley has performed the labor with equal skill and penetration."
the Victorian interest in Milton's sources, and he devoted several paragraphs to this phase of criticism. Finally, he analyzed the cosmology of *Paradise Lost*. Keightley was a pioneer in Milton scholarship in one respect; he was the first to note the evolution of Milton's religious thought. The twentieth century has yet to study in detail what Keightley only suggested concerning this evolution. Keightley's critical biography was a landmark in Milton criticism. However, it was soon to be overshadowed by Masson's monumental study.

Most contemporary Miltonists will agree that Masson's biography of Milton was the most significant contribution made to Milton scholarship during the Victorian age. Since the completion of that study, every critic of the poet has had to reckon with it. Although Masson's emphasis on Milton's **Puritanism** has troubled twentieth-century critics, who consider him more of a humanist than a Puritan, his work remains the standard biography of the poet. In writing the work, Masson's chief purpose was, as its subtitle states, to narrate Milton's life "in Connexion with the Political, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of his Time." This Masson did admirably in many respects. For example, before he discussed **Comus** he reviewed the entire history of the mask so

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15 *The Life of John Milton: Narrated in Connexion with the Political, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of His Time* (Cambridge and London: Macmillan, 1859-94), seven volumes. The following is a list of the volumes with their respective dates of publication and the years of the poet's life they covered: I (1608-27), 1859; II (1628-43), 1871; III (1643-49), 1873; IV (1649-54), 1877; V (1654-60), 1877; VI (1664-74), 1880. Volume VII, an index, was published in 1894. Volume I was revised in 1861. See the Bibliography for a complete list of Masson's numerous works on Milton.
that the reader might examine that work in its historical setting.
The results of following such a method, however, was a lack of penetrating criticism on the compositions themselves, especially the poems. There simply was lack of space for remarks of that nature. When he made any kind of critical observation, Masson tried to adopt the point of view of the seventeenth-century reader. For example, he observed that *Paradise Lost,* for its scholarliness, its extraordinary fulness of erudition of all sorts, must have been admired immediately. What abundance and exactness of geographical, as well as astronomical, reference and allusion; what lists of sonorous proper names rolled lovingly into the Iambic chant; what acquaintance with universal history; what compulsion of all the lusciousness of Aegean myth and Mediterranean legend into the service of the Hebrew theme.

Aside from its material on Milton, however, Masson's work is one of the best histories of seventeenth-century England that have been written.

Masson's contemporaries could not agree on the merits of his long biographical study. Commenting on the first volume, Walter Bagehot insisted that Masson "has no dread of overgrown bulk and overwhelming copiousness." An anonymous writer criticized Masson for including so much history in his first volume: "From the maze, indeed, of Mr. Masson's

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16Ibid., VI, 556.


excursions on politics, church-government, and literature, Milton himself is continually disappearing." The same writer admired Keightley's volume more than he did Masson's because the former's remarks on Milton "are brief, yet pregnant with knowledge." Then on October 5, 1878, Richard W. Dixon wrote to Gerard Manly Hopkins, "I fear that Masson's Life of Milton is second rate, from the little that I have seen of it: a vile imitation of Carlyle in style." The general verdict of Masson's contemporaries was stated by another anonymous critic in the North British Review: "We repeat our opinion, that the 'Life' ought to have constituted one work, and the 'Times' another; but, with this deduction from the constructive perfection of the first installment of Mr. Masson's book, we may give it our hearty welcome as one of the most laboriously, and upon the whole, judiciously written works of its class which have been issued in recent years." It is worth mentioning that not one reviewer of Masson's study remarked that his time had been ill-spent in studying Milton and his era.

After Masson's voluminous work, Milton's biographers devoted less space to strictly biographical matter and more space to critical observations.

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19 Ibid., p. 312.
20 Ibid., p. 315.
This was true of the work written by Stopford A. Brooke, which was one of the first critical biographies to appear after Masson's. Of the one hundred and sixty-seven pages in Brooke's study, only seventy-six were devoted to the life of the poet. The remaining pages consisted of remarks in connection with Milton's works. For seventy-four pages Brooke dealt with *Paradise Lost* alone. He was among the first of the Victorians to discuss Milton's style with any degree of satisfaction. Not content to praise the poetry for its beauties, he discussed its specific qualities. In this respect, his work was also a landmark in Victorian criticism of Milton. Brooke included a special section on the characters of *Paradise Lost*. His analysis of Satan was one of the most thorough that appeared during the century. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Brooke displayed a knowledge of the whole of *Paradise Lost*, not the first two books only. Therefore, he was able to trace the progressive decline of Satan. The only serious fault of Brooke's work is his erroneous dating of several of Milton's compositions, such as the early polemical pamphlets. Brooke's *Milton*, however, still has a modern ring that is obviously lacking in many of the Victorian criticisms of Milton.

Mark Pattison published his critical biography of Milton in the

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same year that Brooke published his. Although Pattison's study seems to be more widely read today than Brooke's, the former lacks the critical perception of the latter. It is worth mentioning, however, that Pattison did profit more from the information contained in Masson's volumes than Brooke. For example, he avoided the errors made by Brooke in dating the polemical tracts. Pattison's work is little more than a condensed version of Masson's. In his own day, Pattison was highly regarded as a critic of Milton, but he actually added little to the body of Milton scholarship. His chief contribution was to popularize the idea that Milton had been a disagreeable, stern, and austere Puritan whose undesirable character is reflected in domestic difficulties. The outstanding quality of his book is its readability resulting from a lucid style.

Another readable critical biography of Milton was written by Richard Garnett in 1890. Garnett followed the late Victorian practice of lending the bulk of his space to criticism of the works. It seems, however, that he went out of his way to elaborate upon Milton's trying home life, especially his troubles with Mary Powell and with his daughters. Like many of the Victorians, Garnett was concerned with Satan's function in the poem, and he concluded in favor of the Satanists.

25 For example, he was chosen to write the introductory essay on Milton in Thomas H. Ward's anthology, The English Poets (London: Macmillan, 1880), II, 293-306.

While discussing the merits of Paradise Lost in general, Garnett permitted his late Victorian scepticism to get the best of him. For example, he criticized Milton's angels as ridiculous beings. His Life also exemplified the growing tendency to discuss the artistry of Paradise Lost at the expense of the ideas set forth in the poem. Yet he did not dismiss Milton's philosophy so lightly as did some of the other critics.

All the late Victorian trends in attitudes toward Milton meet in Walter A. Raleigh's Milton. Previous critics had hinted that the poet's ideas were old-fashioned, but Raleigh was the first to be so bold as to state that Paradise Lost is a monument to dead ideas. The twentieth century has remembered Raleigh's book chiefly because of this opinion, but it is memorable in other respects. Raleigh was the first critic of modern times to discuss in detail the architectonics of Paradise Lost. Also, he emphasized the art of the poem rather than the "message." He was unconcerned with Milton's ideas which are stated in the prose. When Raleigh discussed the pamphlets, for example, he wrote mainly of their style. His comments on Milton's prose vocabulary were more acute than those of any other writer of the century. Raleigh followed Masson, Pattison, and Garnett in emphasizing the Puritan side of Milton and in stressing the disagreeable aspect of his character.

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27 London: Edward Arnold, 1900.

28 I am quoting from the second impression (1905), p. 88.
He still found Johnson's Life worth mentioning, but his remarks on that biography were surprisingly objective. He saw no reason why Johnson's statements needed refutation in 1900. Raleigh's distance from Johnson enabled him to view the latter's remarks with more perspective than earlier critics had viewed them. The new democracy had been accepted in England by 1900, and men could look upon violent eighteenth-century Tories like Johnson with a degree of objectivity.

Besides the book-length biographical accounts of Milton, there were numerous short biographies written between 1825 and 1900. They appeared in various places. Several were published anonymously in the reviews; some were used as introductions to editions of Milton's works; a few were included in collected lives; and a dozen or more were written for encyclopedias. Almost all of the shorter lives are matter-of-fact biographies, taking into account events ranging from the poet's birth on Bread Street, London, to his death in 1674. The more vitriolic biographers paid undue attention to the divorce episode and to other unpleasant incidents in Milton's career. Others stressed the pamphleteer's fight for English liberty. Very few contributed much to the storehouse of information on Milton. Like most of the more significant biographers, these writers usually did not inform their readers as to where they had acquired their material. Presumably, some followed the seventeenth-century accounts, while others simply condensed the more recent, but much longer, biographies of the poet.
Thomas De Quincey's *Milton* is rather typical of the shorter biographies that appeared between 1825 and 1860. For the most part, De Quincey included the traditional biographical material. He discussed Milton's life quite objectively until he arrived at his marriage to Mary Powell. Then he paused to make conjectures regarding the causes of the trouble and to consider whether the divorce tracts would have been written had Mary Powell never returned to her parents. When De Quincey came to the Morus episode, he paused again to moralize concerning Milton's conduct toward Morus. He finally concluded that Milton had grounds for complaint against this adversary, but he did censure Milton for lacking "both charity and candour." Like the other biographers of the age, De Quincey took a position on Samuel Johnson's *Life*. Comments on Milton's compositions were interspersed throughout the factual statements relative to Milton's life. Some of these statements are striking, but De Quincey's most penetrating Milton criticism is to be found in places other than his *Life of Milton*. His purely critical remarks will be noted in appropriate places in the succeeding chapters of this study.

Between 1825 and 1860 there were several other short biographies similar in scope to De Quincey's. Robert Bell wrote one in 1839.

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29De Quincey's *Life of Milton* was first published anonymously in *Distinguished Men of Modern Times* (London: Charles Knight, 1838), II, 228-305. It was reprinted in successive editions of De Quincey's works.

30Ibid., p. 299.

David McBurnie composed a triad of essays on Milton in 1840, the first of which is primarily biographical. He varied the theme by stressing, quite anachronistically, Milton's interest in the working man. McBurnie had been enveloped by the Victorian concern for downtrodden humanity, and he wanted a champion of high literary standing. David Masson wrote a biographical essay called "Milton's Youth" in 1856 and a full life of the poet for the Encyclopedia Britannica in 1858. These contained opinions which were to be extended into his longer biography. Walter Bagehot composed an anonymous essay for the National Review in 1859 which was ostensibly only a review of Masson's first volume. It, however, contained some biographical information on Milton. Like De Quincey, Bagehot interspersed critical comments on the works throughout his essay.

John Tulloch's collection of lives of the Puritan leaders--Cromwell, 


Milton, Baxter, and Bunyan—appeared in 1861. Like some of the writers of longer biographies, Tulloch's account of Milton shows the growing Victorian tendency to emphasize the Puritan element in him. When he wrote of Milton, Tulloch's first task was to justify the poet's inclusion as a Puritan leader. Then he went on to interpret the poet's life and works from the Puritan point of view. He even regarded Milton as a Puritan during the period in which *L'Allegro* and the *Il Penseroso* were composed. He had little difficulty in establishing pamphlets such as *Of Reformation* and *The Reason of Church Government* as products of the Puritan mind. He bogged down, however, when he came to the divorce pamphlets. Undaunted by this difficulty, Tulloch listed the Puritan elements in *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*. His moment of greatest difficulty came when he tried to reconcile *De Doctrina Christiana* with Puritanism. He sidestepped the issue at this point by stating that "It is absurd...to identify Puritanism with any uniform series of doctrinal conclusions. It represents a mode of theological thought, rather than a definite sum of theological results; and Milton's Arianism, so far from being at variance with this mode of thought, might be argued to be only a consistent use of it."37


James E. Thorpe and others give Masson credit for spreading the concept of the Puritan Milton before the English mind, but some credit should go to Tulloch. His work is the most extended argument setting forth this point of view that has ever been written. It is true that Tulloch might have been influenced by Masson, but this hardly seems likely since only the first volume of Masson's biography had appeared in 1861. Masson's views on Milton's Puritanism were stated mainly in the later volumes. Therefore, that Masson was influenced by Tulloch appears more likely than the opposite.

After Tulloch's work, numerous other short biographies of Milton were published. Among them, the one written by William Michael Rossetti was significant because it represented the Pre-Raphaelite point of view. The biographical matter included by Rossetti is rather commonplace, and his criticism is definitely in the Milton idolatry tradition. David H. Stevens makes an understatement when he annotates this study as "Antiquated in biography, and not good criticism." Nevertheless, Rossetti must have had a following; therefore his account is significant for our purposes regardless of its shortcomings. It is worth mentioning that his edition of Milton's poems went through three editions.

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38 Milton Criticism, p. 12.


41 In 1871, 1880, and 1881 (London: Moxon).
Herbert New wrote another biographical account. It was one of the last to adopt an avowed Whig point of view toward Milton. Augustine Birrell wrote another pedestrian biography, in which he opposed the view that the ideas of Paradise Lost are outmoded. Leslie Stephen prepared the last of the shorter biographies which were composed during the Victorian era. His account is straightforward and objective.

In addition to the lengthy critical studies and shorter biographies, there were, of course, accounts of Milton which were published in the literary histories. The first literary history of the period in which Milton was discussed was compiled by Stanhope Busby in 1837. Although Busby had almost nothing to say in connection with the poet's life, he evaluated the various poems. Busby's remarks are noteworthy because of his discussion of Paradise Lost. He made one of the first psychological analyses of Milton's Satan. Although he would not state that Satan is the hero, he indirectly led his readers to such a conclusion. The one flaw in Busby's evaluation of the epic as a whole is his ignorance of epic technique. He objected to Milton's beginning the poem in "the midst

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42 "John Milton," Living Age, CXLVIII (1881), 515-525.


of things." Then, too, the digressions, he felt, make it difficult for the reader to follow the narrative. When mentioning the prose, Busby, a good Whig, wrote glowingly of Milton's fight for liberty.

Charles D. Yonge, another literary historian, came much later than Busby, and he, like others who wrote after Masson, illustrated the late Victorian tendency to minimize biographical discussion. Almost all of his remarks on Milton pertain to *Paradise Lost*. Yonge followed Johnson in criticizing that epic for its distance from human actions and human manners. On the other hand, he saw fit to refute Johnson's disparagement of *Lycidas*. Illustrating the fact that the Victorians reached almost no agreement on any aspect of Milton criticism, he maintained that the order of events in *Paradise Lost* is easy for the reader to follow, an argument quite different from Busby's.

Ten years after Yonge, Anna Buckland published a shallow, almost childish, literary history of England. On every hand, she attempted to whitewash the character of Milton. For example, she wrote of Mary Powell: "The breaking up of her home and all its gay doings made her feel, perhaps, how much more beautiful was the life of her husband, rich in love and duty and self-denying service, and bright with a joy that could not pass away." Buckland also included long summaries of the major

46 *Three Centuries of English Literature* (London: Longmans, 1872).


48 Ibid., p. 261.
poems. Her work represented the persistent, if not predominant, tendency to romanticize the man Milton during the Victorian era.

John Dennis, unlike his eighteenth-century namesake, also wrote in the tradition of Milton idolatry. In a book designed especially for young readers, he glamorized both the poet and his works. No mortal could have been so stainless as Dennis pretended that Milton was. Although Dennis' book has practically no value as criticism today, it, along with Buckland's study, testifies to the extent to which Milton idolatry lingered on in late Victorian England.

An account of Milton found a place in George Saintsbury's History of Elizabethan Literature. Saintsbury's remarks consisted mainly of the familiar cant about Milton's being a disagreeable man. Saintsbury considered Milton one of the "great poets of the world," but he derived this conclusion from the qualities of Comus, not from an appreciation for Paradise Lost. He was the lone critic of the century to name Comus as Milton's outstanding contribution to the storehouse of English poetry.

J. H. B. Masterman's Age of Milton is the last literary history to be mentioned in connection with the poet. His work was intended as a handbook, and, as a consequence, much of his criticism is commonplace.

51 (London: George Bell, 1897), pp. 1-72.
Passing over the prose lightly, he eulogized all of Milton's poems. Masterman followed most of his contemporaries in placing Milton in the Puritan tradition. He seems to have been influenced chiefly by Pattison.

Passing from the literary histories, we now turn our attention to another facet of the Victorian criticism of Milton, the separate short studies of his poetry. Most of these appeared originally in the reviews, but many were later published in collections of the works of their authors. The authorship of some, however, still remains unknown. Unqualified praise was the keynote of an anonymous article which appeared in the Edinburgh Review in 1825. Reviewing anthologies of English poetry, the critic said, "In regard to Milton, we scarcely know whether to prefer his sublimity or beauty. His power over both was perfect. We prostrate ourselves before him, alternately in fear and love; while he lets loose the strictures of Hell upon us, or unbars the blazing doors of Heaven, or carries us 'winding through the marble air,' past Libra and the Pole, or laps us in a dream of Paradise, and unfolds the florid richness of his Arcadian landscapes." The criticism which followed in the article was, as we would expect, eulogistic. All of it extolled the beauties of Milton's lines. It is necessary, perhaps, to remind the reader at this point that the Edinburgh Review was a Whig publication and that the political bias of its writers too often determined their critical views.

52LXII (1825), 31-64. This was not Macaulay's famed article which appeared in the same volume.
53Ibid., p. 56.
Remarks opposed to those in the Edinburgh Review found a place in the same year in the pages of the Quarterly Review, a Tory publication. Another anonymous critic discussed sacred poetry in general, and of course he was forced to call attention to Milton's poems, particularly Paradise Lost. The critic would not classify the epic as a sacred poem because he felt that the temper of its writer is too evident in the work. He went on to discuss other "shortcomings." Milton, he held, makes Eve too inferior, Satan too attractive, and heaven too materialistic. Thus at the beginning of the period it was obvious that party affiliations of critics would determine their approach to the problem of criticizing Milton's poetry in the reviews. There were several other critical articles written to conform with party lines, but these two will suffice as examples.

As the century progressed, however, the separate studies of Milton's poetry became more objective and less political. An example of this trend is an essay written by J. R. Seeley in 1869. His only bone of contention was the late Victorian group of escapist poets who were pursuing the "art for art's sake" theory of literature—namely, the Pre-Raphaelites. In this connection he called attention to Milton's political activities. He did not take sides but simply held Milton up as an example of a poet who did not shrink from the political and social movements of his day.

Politics, Seeley felt, is not below the notice of poetry. When he mentioned the poetry, Seeley placed the poems in the tradition of humanism, rather than of Puritanism. He stressed the ideas found in the poems and not Milton's poetic technique, as later critics were to do.

The late Victorian tendency to discuss the poetry without recourse to biographical material or politics found its fullest expression in the two essays on Milton which were written by Matthew Arnold. The first, published anonymously in 1877 and later included in the Mixed Essays, was an attempt to popularize Edmund Scherer's opinions on Paradise Lost. Arnold noted that few Englishmen can criticize Milton objectively, since he has always been "to one of our great English parties a delight, to the other an offence." He believed, however, that Scherer had been more objective than critics such as Addison, Macaulay, and Johnson. Accordingly, he quoted long passages from Scherer's work. Arnold agreed with Scherer that Paradise Lost had declined as a force for religion, but he felt that its "unfailing level of style" would insure its immortality as a work of art.

57 Arnold had read Scherer's essay on Paradise Lost in the latter's Etudes sur la Litterature Contemporaine (Paris: C. Levy, 1868). In this study my references to Scherer are to Essays on English Literature. Translation, George Saintsbury (New York: Scribner's, 1891), pp. 111-149.
Arnold's second essay on Milton was originally delivered as a lecture at St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, on February 13, 1888, but in that same year it found a place in the Essays in Criticism, Second Series. He continued the discussion begun in the first essay on Milton's grand style. Here Arnold stated his concern over the Victorian lack of a sense of perfection, and he felt that Milton's style is an example of flawless excellence. In the last part of this essay Arnold discussed the question, "To what does Milton owe his supreme distinction?"

Several different strands of late Victorian criticism of the poetry merged in Arnold's two essays on Milton. His emphasis on the poetry itself has already been mentioned. Also, Arnold wrote of Milton's personality only fleetingly; but when he did mention that subject, he sanctioned the idea that Milton had been an unpleasant man. Likewise, Arnold exemplified the growing tendency to exalt the art of Paradise Lost at the expense of the thesis of the poem. Finally, he was objective enough in regard to Milton's politics to realize that most previous discussions of the poetry had been colored by the political prejudices of his critics. Although he did not make any specific pronouncements on this phase of the poet's career, he was so aware of the pitfalls of such


60 Arnold's specific remarks concerning the grand style will be discussed in Chapter Three of this study.
discussions that he most likely would not have become a victim to the "party line" had he chosen to discuss Milton's politics.

The trends in Milton criticism mentioned in connection with Arnold were carried on in essays written by Francis Thompson and by an anonymous reviewer who also wrote in The Academy. The only variation of the theme made by Thompson came in his discussion of the sublime in Paradise Lost. The anonymous reviewer also stressed Milton's poetic qualities and insisted that the author of Paradise Lost should be the model for all aspiring young poets. This point is of special interest in view of the early twentieth-century reaction against Milton as a teacher of young poets.

From the preceding discussion on separate articles which were written on Milton's poetry, several observations can be made. First, whenever Victorian critics thought of his poetry, they usually had Paradise Lost in mind. There were comparatively few articles on Paradise Regained, Samson Agonistes, and the minor poems. Second, it was only toward the end of the era that non-politically inspired articles began to appear and these were mainly analyses of Milton's grand style. Thus there was a reversal in emphasis from idea to technique. These conclusions correspond to those drawn concerning the book-length critical

61 "John Milton," The Academy, LI (1897), 357-358.
62 "Milton in the Market Place," The Academy, LIX (1900), 385-386.
biographies written between 1825 and 1900.

Separate discussions of the prose were even less numerous than those of the minor poems. During the seventy-five years under consideration in this study there were fewer than ten. One was written in 1827 as a review of a small volume called The Poetry of Milton's Prose. The anonymous writer listed reasons for neglect of the prose, the most obvious being Milton's pedantic, involved prose style. The writer's main purpose was to point out poetic passages in the prose pamphlets. Another article of a similar nature appeared in 1834. Reviewing Robert Fletcher's one-volume edition of the prose works, the critic lamented the neglect of the pamphlets and concluded that "there must be a great moral change wrought in the hearts of those who hold our destiny in their hands, before the works of Milton can yield them real and permanent advantage."  

Other critics who were interested in the prose works wrote in a similar vein; nevertheless, the majority of the Victorians continued to

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neglect these important political and theological documents. *Areopagitica* and *On Education* were often mentioned, but separate studies of those works were rare. When they were named, however, it was usually in complimentary terms. *Of Reformation, Tetrachordon, Colasterion,* and *The Reason of Church Government* received almost no separate attention. Studies such as William O. Haller's *Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution,* which would have utilized the material available in Milton's prose tracts, were non-existent during the Victorian era.

Edward Dowden was the last of the Victorians to discuss Milton's prose. Only now can we estimate the significance of his study. His work was an indication that future students of Milton would give the prose tracts the place of importance they deserve. When writing of those works, Dowden maintained, quite correctly, that "behind all that is occasional lies what gives these writings an enduring value—a series of ideals, more lofty, complete, and in a high sense reasonable, than can readily be found elsewhere among his contemporaries, ideals for the domestic and corporate life of England, which form a lasting contribution to the higher thought of our country." He also analyzed and discussed, one by one, all of Milton's great prose compositions in connection with the poet's conception of liberty. Dowden's study was another landmark in Milton

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70 Ibid., p. 134.
criticism. Most of the other writers of the age discussed the prose works only in connection with the immediate situation which produced them. Dowden regarded the works as worthy of separate treatment.

At this point it should be sufficiently impressed upon the mind of the reader that Milton and his works were still a political issue during the Victorian era. It has been remarked in the present chapter that the political bias of the critics often influenced their accounts of Milton. Most of them, however, did not intend to write purely political articles. There were a few treatises, however, which were altogether political. We can classify Macaulay's "Milton" as such. His essay consisted of superlatives from the beginning to the end. Macaulay was attempting to vindicate his political group, the Whigs, through Milton. For this reason he described and defended in perfect rhetoric Milton's republican ideas. For the same reason, he discussed at length the Puritans and the Royalists, always giving the Puritans the edge over the Royalists. He regretted that Milton's prose was being so little read, and it was obvious that such regret stemmed from the fact that Milton had written upon political subjects in a way that was pleasing to Macaulay. Macaulay lived to repent having written the essay, but, as I mentioned in the Introduction, the article must have made a profound impression on the Victorian mind, for it went through numerous editions.

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Commenting on Macaulay's essay, Matthew Arnold said with truth, "A reader who only wants rhetoric, a reader who wants a panegyric on Milton, a panegyric on the Puritans, will find what he wants. A reader who wants criticism will be disappointed." 72

The Quarterly Review printed several articles during the century which should be classed as purely political, along with Macaulay's Milton. The only difference between these reviews and Macaulay's essay was that they took the opposite political point of view. An example of such journalism appeared in the Quarterly Review in 1827. 73 The anonymous writer used Todd's edition of Milton (to be discussed later) as his point of departure. He saw no reason for a new edition of Milton's works. Also, he mocked Milton's ideal plan of state and church government and listed inconsistencies in Milton's political thinking. Johnson's Life, he maintained, is superior to Symmons' Life, and in that connection he saw Symmons as a pigmy standing beside a giant. He concluded by stating that the mind of Milton was a perfect fairyland. Such writing is often the method of party. In fairness to the editors of the Quarterly Review, however, it should be stated here that such prejudiced attacks lessened after the mid-point of the century.

Most nineteenth-century English critics were more interested in what Milton had said than they were in his manner of expression. Even at the end of the century when Milton's ideas were being questioned and his art

exalted, there was a dearth of critical work on his prosody. Matthew
Arnold, it is true, emphasized Milton's grand style, but he made
practically no attempt to analyze that style. Of course, R. D. Havens
has shown that Milton profoundly influenced some of the nineteenth-
century poets, but influence is not always a matter of literary reputation.
In noticing this aspect of Victorian scholarship on Milton, we shall find
that remarks on Milton's versification were general during the first
eight decades of the century. After 1880, there were a few detailed
studies. One such study, however, made by Robert Bridges, was of such
a quality that it came to be considered "standard" during the twentieth
century.

Several of the early Victorian critics were interested in Milton's
poetic technique. After 1825, William Crowe was the first to discuss
the poet's versification. In accord with many of his contemporary
critics who were interested in Milton, Crowe eulogized the poet's verse.
His remarks contained nothing new, for the eighteenth-century students
of Milton's prosody had already formulated the stock qualities of Milton's
which he listed. Crowe was followed by Edwin Guest who wrote a history.

74 The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (Cambridge, Massachu-
setts: Harvard University Press, 1922). See also William Bradley,
The Early Poems of Walter Savage Landor, a Study of His Development and

75 A Treatise on Versification (London: John Murray, 1827), pp.
316-334.

76 A History of English Rhythms, two volumes. (London: William
Pickering, 1838), passim.
of English rhythms. Guest's approach is interesting in that he did not attempt any analysis of Milton's poetic technique. He indirectly acknowledged Milton's artistry, however, when he cited Milton's lines throughout his study to illustrate different types of rhythms. Sir Egerton Brydges\(^77\) made another attempt to define Milton's versification. As we might expect, he was again at issue with Johnson. His specific comments, however, will be discussed in the third chapter of this study. Although his remarks were rather general, Brydges justly felt that Johnson had applied the wrong yardstick to Milton's poetry.

The study of Milton's verse technique was carried further through the efforts of John Addington Symonds,\(^78\) who wrote an essay on Milton's blank verse in 1874. Like Brydges, Symonds took Johnson to task for his comments on Milton's verse. He made a remark concerning Johnson which may now seem commonplace but which, nevertheless, was relevant to the situation in 1874. Johnson, he declared, "attempted to reduce blank verse to rule by setting up the standard of an ideal line, any deviation from which was to be called 'licentious, impure, unharmonious,' remaining ignorant the while that the whole effect of this metre depends upon the massing of lines in periods and on the variety of complicated cadences."\(^79\)


\(^78\)"The Blank Verse of Milton," The Fortnightly Review, XXII (1874), 767-781.

\(^79\) Ibid., p. 768.
Symonds then analyzed the melody of Milton's blank verse. His study was no mere rebuttal of Johnson, as Brydges' remarks practically were; it was an objective account of the poetic effect Milton achieves through the use of variety in his verse. Symonds' essay was the first detailed study of Milton's prosody that appeared in the Victorian era.

Robert Bridges was the last and foremost of the Victorians to study Milton's prosody. Beginning with a modest essay in an edition of Book I of Paradise Lost, he continued to study the poet's prosody until 1921, when he published his revised edition of Milton's Prosody. Today, his work remains the standard study of the poet's versification.

In the 1901 edition of his work, he said, "My intention throughout has been to provide a sound foundation for a grammar of English prosody, on the basis of Milton's practice, which is chosen not as the final model, but as a convenient norm, a middle and fixed point, to which all other practice may be referred for comparison." To Bridges, the blank verse medium had reached its peak in the major poems of Milton, and all students

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81 P. iii.
of prosody would do well to regard Milton's verse as the norm. In all editions of Milton's Prosody the two main chapters were concerned with Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes. He altered the appendices in successive editions, but they were on such subjects as elision in Milton, Milton's pronunciation, recession of accent, and the use of Greek terminology in English prosody. We need not dwell here on the merits of Bridges' work. It is sufficient to state that everywhere in the work Bridges displayed a keen poetic ear, catching now and again the rhythm and metrical variations of Milton's blank verse. In Bridges, the Victorian investigative spirit was at its best.

Of course other Victorian critics mentioned Milton's prosody. Most of the critical biographers who were discussed earlier in the present chapter took this important aspect of Milton's poetry into account. Their remarks, however, were very general in nature, as we might expect them to be in a critical biography. Whenever the critics did attempt to analyze Milton's poetic technique, they almost invariably had Paradise Lost in mind. The prosody of the earlier poems was never studied at any length by the Victorian critics.

Another significant part of the Victorian scholarship on Milton is primarily non-critical. Some of this material is interesting at the present only because it reflects Victorian attitudes. An example is Anne Mannings' account of Mary Powell. 82 Other studies, such as those made

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82 The Maiden and Married Life of Mary Powell, Afterwards Mistress Milton. (London: Hall, 1850) The work was first printed serially in Sharpe's Magazine in 1849.
by the source hunters, still have scholarly value. There were also a few Milton documents which were first published during the Victorian era; these added to the store of information concerning the poet's life. A few bibliographies and concordances were compiled. Finally, there were books and articles published which defy any sort of classification. We can only say that they were non-critical. Although none of the works in this group were attempts to evaluate either Milton or his works, they did indicate scholarly interest in Milton and indirectly reflected his standing among the Victorians.

A curious Victorian oddity was Anne Manning's *The Maiden and Married Life of Mary Powell, Afterwards Mistress Milton*. This work was an unintentional burlesque of the *Pamela* type of epistolary novel. Here Milton's first wife tells her story by means of her diary and letters she writes to her friends. Mary Powell is made to conform to the typical early Victorian lady. The narrative begins when Milton comes to visit Mary's father. Long descriptions of Milton follow. Mary describes how he eats at the table and takes note of his ability to converse well. Then she relates their brief courtship. She realized that it is a marriage of convenience for her father; he is unable to repay debts owed to the Milton family and instead offers his daughter as restitution. When Mary goes with Milton to London as his wife, she naively writes back to her rural friends and tries to depict the London sights. She tells how her brother tricked Milton into thinking that her father was ill so that Milton would permit her to return to the country for a brief vacation. Once at home,
she tries to justify her protracted stay by writing that her father will not let her leave. She describes herself as wailing at the upstairs window while Mr. Powell turns Milton's servant away. At this point, Manning makes her heroine a typical Victorian. Mary's conscience begins to bother her, and some of her friends convince her that she has no right to remain away from her lawfully wedded husband. Therefore, she takes leave of her family and returns to the studious Milton, who receives her into his bosom after she has confessed and repented while lying prostrate before him. Upon her return, Mary Powell becomes an ideal wife who is constantly trying to serve her husband. She no longer yearns for the pleasures of her father's house; instead, she becomes immersed in Milton's books.

Such a work is of course an absurd account of Milton and his first wife. It does, however, reflect the interest of the Victorians in Milton's first marriage. The framework of the narrative afforded Manning an opportunity to lecture to her audience concerning the duties of husbands and wives. Manning had little sympathy for Mary for she let Milton accept none of the blame for the trouble between Mary and him. Manning's attitude toward Milton is in accord with the attempts of his more scholarly nineteenth-century biographers to whitewash the entire episode.

Mrs. Anna B. Jameson exemplified a similar attitude in her Loves of the Poets. The purpose of her book was to prove that women have

83 (London: Colburn, 1823). My quotations are from the 1864 edition (Boston: Tichnor and Fields).
profoundly influenced the lives of the poets. She first discussed Milton in connection with Leonora Baroni, the Italian singer, and tried to show that the poet was a great lover before Mary Powell embittered his life. Good women, she held, had an effect on Milton when he portrayed female characters in his works: "What but the most reverential and lofty feeling of the graces and virtues proper to our sex, could have embodied such an exquisite vision as the Lady in Comus? or created his delightful Eve?"84 Mrs. Jameson even attributed the existence of Paradise Lost to Milton's third wife: "One biographer [unnamed] has not scrupled to assert, that to her,--or rather to her tender reverence for his studious habits and to the peace and comfort she brought to his heart and home,--we owe the Paradise Lost: if true, what a debt immense of endless gratitude is due to the memory of this unobtrusive and amiable woman!" 85

Jane E. Giraud's Flowers of Milton 86 represented again the sentimental attitude which some early Victorians held toward Milton. Her book is a series of color plates picturing bouquets of flowers. Underneath each plate is an appropriate quotation from Milton in which he mentions flowers. Most of the quotations are from the earlier poetry, but a few are from Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. The modern reader can only smile when he examines such a book. For the Victorians, however,

84 Ibid., p. 253.
85 Ibid., p. 264.
86 London: publisher not stated, 1846.
this sort of publication was not unusual.

Quite apart from these books in organization but similar to them in attitude was W. T. Dobson's *The Classic Poets, Their Lives and Their Times, With the Epics Epitomised*. Dobson's comment in the Introduction is indicative of his point of view: "The mode adopted in the preparation of this work has been to give, first, a short notice of the poet, of the literature of the period to which the Epic belonged, this being followed by an epitome of the Epic itself, interspersed with selected passages." When he came to Milton, Dobson followed this pattern. First, there is a four page matter-of-fact biography of the poet. Then there is a summary of the entire action of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, with passages from them "interspersed" here and there. Dobson made no attempt to criticize the poems. He only said that they are "great."

Of more permanent value than the books just mentioned were the source studies which were produced during the Victorian era. It will not be possible here to mention every study in this connection that was made, but I will try to indicate some of the aspects of the source studies. Almost invariably, the source hunters were concerned with *Paradise Lost* only.

Milton's possible debt to the Old English poet Caedmon occupied

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the minds of several of the source hunters. In our period, the first
to suggest Milton's borrowing from Caedmon was J. J. Conybeare. 89
He carried further a suggestion made by Sharon Turner in his History of
the Anglo-Saxons (1815) that Milton had used Caedmon's Genesis. The
problem was discussed later in the century by W. H. F. Bosanquet 90 and
J. O. Westwood. 91 Some of the German scholars 92 also made conjectures
concerning the problem. The century closed, however, with no agreement
reached. And at the present time, the question of Milton's borrowing
from or even being able to read the Junius manuscript, which contains
Caedmon's poems, is still an open one.

The Victorians were in more agreement concerning Milton's use of
Vondel's Lucifer as a source of Paradise Lost. Edmund Gosse 94 began
the discussion in 1879. He insisted that the Dutchman's poem was one
of the last that Milton could have read with his failing eyes. Most of
his essay consists of parallel passages between Lucifer and Paradise Lost.

89 Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry (London: Harding and
Lepard, 1826), pp. 186f.
90 The Fall of Man, or 'Paradise Lost' of Caedmon (London:
Longman, 1860), passim.
91 "Milton and Caedmon," The Academy, XXXV (1889), 10.
92 See, for example, R. Wulker, "Caedmon und Milton," Anglia,
IV (1881), 401-405.
93 Charles W. Kennedy summarizes the different positions taken
on this problem in his edition of The Caedmon Poems (London: George
94 Studies in the Literature of Northern Europe (London: C. Kegan
Gosse's reasoning often seems illogical, and he took too much for granted. For example, he declared, "The remarkable points of resemblance between this long and spirited description of the fall of the rebel angels and that given in the Sixth Book of 'Paradise Lost' are, of course, far too close and too numerous to be mere coincidences. There can be no doubt whatever that deep impressions made on Milton's imagination by the battle in the 'Luoifer' remained vivid before him when he came to deal with the same branch of his subject."  

Other source hunters developed the thesis set forth by Gosse. George Edmundson 96 wrote a book on the subject and later defended his position in the reviews. 97 An anonymous writer noted additional parallels. 98 Continental scholars, 99 particularly the Germans, also contributed to the idea that Milton borrowed from Vondel. The method of all of the scholars was to cite parallels. To them, the existence of the parallels proved that Milton had borrowed from the Dutch poem. Needless to say, their studies added little to an understanding of Milton.  

95 Ibid., p. 305.  
96 Milton and Vondel (London: Trübner, 1885).  
97 "Milton and Vondel," The Academy, XXXVIII (1890), 613-614.  
F. C. L. Van Steenderen, in an article published in 1905, though, used the Vondel material to point out the significance of Milton's borrowing. But his study threw more light on Vondel than it did on Milton.

The source hunters of the Victorian era contributed little to an evaluation of Milton's works. Their studies do indicate, however, that interest in Milton was keen. And in no instance did a writer suggest that Milton had not improved upon the material which he had allegedly borrowed. It is also worth mentioning that no source hunter accused Milton of plagiarism, as Dr. William Lauder had done in the eighteenth century.

Several documents pertaining to Milton came to light between 1825 and 1900. These were in turn made available to the public at large by publication. The packet which Robert Lemon discovered in the State Paper Office contained much more than the manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana. It included Milton's Letters of State. These were edited by W. Douglas Hamilton and published by the Camden Society in 1859. Hamilton, an authority on English constitutional history, performed his task with the acuteness of the scholar that he was. Writing in the Preface of the volume, he quite properly stated the significance of the

\[100\]Vondel's Place as a Tragic Poet," Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, XX (1905), 546-566.

The following documents, now published for the first time, from the originals in the State Paper Office, will be found to contain much new information, illustrative both of the public and private history of Milton; while, in particular, the sixteen Letters of State, never before printed, are absolutely requisite to complete that noble series of Diplomatic Correspondence which the Secretary for Foreign Tongues to the Commonwealth has left, at once as a monument of his political genius, and of the elegance of his classical acquirements. Of course the documents were to be of use to Milton's future biographers and to future English historians. In addition to the letters themselves, Hamilton included in an appendix a list of documents relevant to Milton's connection with the Powell family. In another appendix he noted that there were several other John Miltons who lived during the seventeenth century. Likewise, he observed the existence of other Mary Powells. Hamilton, of course, was trying to instill caution into the minds of Milton scholars.

Joseph Hunter made another documentary study. Delving into late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century records, he produced new evidence concerning the Milton family, especially Richard Milton and the elder John Milton. He also reprinted the baptismal records of John, Sarah, Tabitha, and Christopher Milton. A thorough scholar, Hunter was concerned with the truth of the often repeated assertion that the poet

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102 Ibid., p. v.

had been unkind to his father. He found that the only evidence for such a charge was Bishop Hacket's *Life of Lord Keeper Williams*, written in 1657 and published in 1693. Hunter noted that Bishop Hacket had been a bitter royalist and concluded that the assertion should not be given much credence. Thus another ill-founded charge against Milton was made suspect, if not refuted. Hunter's work illustrated the persistence of some Victorian literary historians who were vitally interested in clearing away the debris that had accumulated around the man Milton.

Another milestone in the publication of the Milton documents was made in 1876 when the Camden Society printed the Commonplace Book. This important document was edited by the able hand of Alfred J. Horwood. It is not relevant to go into the history of the manuscript of the Commonplace Book here. The document, called the Netherby manuscript, came into the possession of Sir James Graham, who consented to its publication by the Camden Society. It, like the Letters of State, was to add considerably to the understanding of Milton, especially his mental development. Its importance as a basic tool for Milton study can scarcely be overestimated.

Other tools for Milton study were published throughout the century. Several bibliographies were compiled. Henry John Todd's edition of the *Poetical Works of John Milton* (London: Rivington, 1826), IV, 525-544.
consisted of lists of the editions of the works, translations, and critical studies. Richard Garnett's study of Milton contained a bibliography as an appendix. This was compiled by J. P. Anderson and of course supplemented Todd's. The most complete Milton bibliography to appear during the century, however, was the British Museum Catalogue of Printed Books. The compilers devoted fifty-six columns to Milton. But for practical purposes, Anderson's bibliography was perhaps the most useful one published during the century.

Three concordances of note were compiled by the Victorians. G. L. Prendergast completed the first one in 1859. Although his concordance was published in Madras, where he was teaching at the time, it was intended for a British audience. Charles Dexter Cleveland compiled the second in 1867; it went through two printings. Cleveland was an American, but his work was published by a London firm. The third concordance was made by John Bradshaw. It has become the standard one; therefore, it deserves special attention here. Bradshaw used the Aldine

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107 London: W. Clowes, 1892.
Edition (1894) of Milton as his text. He included all Milton's poems except the Psalms and the translations in the prose works. He did not live to see his work in print, but the proofs were revised by his father, W. H. Bradshaw, a Dublin school administrator. Bradshaw's work is the most complete concordance of Milton that has ever been made. Thus the Victorian Age produced another basic tool for Milton study.

Besides those nineteenth-century works which have been discussed thus far, there were a number of articles that defy categorizing. They range from studies on the effect of Milton's blindness on his poetry to discussions concerning Milton's different residences. Toward the end of the century such articles began to take on a more scholarly air. John W. Hales is representative of this later aspect of Milton scholarship. In 1893 he published a volume of essays which had previously appeared in the British reviews, several of which dealt with Milton. In the first, "Milton's Macbeth," Hales noted that in the Trinity manuscript Milton mentioned the Macbeth theme as a possible subject for epic treatment. Then he asked why Milton would consider such a subject when it had already been "done" by Shakespeare. Hales offered two reasons. First, perhaps Milton had been dissatisfied with Shakespeare's disregard for historical fact. Second, the Macbeth theme was relevant to the fall of mankind, in which Milton was vitally interested. Hales noted in this connection that

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112 Ibid., pp. 198-219.
there are similarities between Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Paradise Lost*. The dramatist's character, he maintained, is really a latter day Adam. Finally, he insisted that Milton had felt that Shakespeare did not sufficiently emphasize the free will involved. Such work as this would naturally not have found a favorable climate in the twentieth century, when comparative studies are not in order. However, if Hales was at all representative of the interests of his generation, his work is indicative that at least some of the late Victorians were interested in what Milton had to say.

In his other essays on Milton Hales continued to analyze some of the finer points in Milton's poetry. The second, "Milton and Gray's Inn Walks," was less successful than the first. Hales' thesis was that in the *Elegia Prima* the place of residence to which Milton refers was not Horton but Gray's Inn Walks. Upon this thesis, he based another conjecture, that Francis Bacon must have known the young Milton. His final point in this essay was that the poem in question was written in April, 1626. All of the essay is pure conjecture. Yet it foreshadowed the Leslie Hotson type of scholarly investigation that was to become popular in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

The third essay, "An Unexplained Passage in *Comus*," was an attempt to explain why Milton let his lady mention the *Meander* in one of her songs.

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113 Ibid., pp. 220-230.
114 Ibid., pp. 231-238.
Hales concluded that "the Meander was a famous haunt of swans, and the swan was a favorite bird with the Greek and Latin writers—one to whose sweet singing they perpetually allude."\footnote{Ibid., p. 232.}

"The Name Lycidas,"\footnote{Ibid., pp. 239-242.} Hales' fourth essay on Milton, consisted of a discussion on why Milton selected the name Lycidas to designate his college acquaintance. Hales' thorough knowledge of the elegiac background permitted him to conclude that Milton had been influenced by Virgil's Ninth Eclogue, in which the Latin poet referred to a Lycidas as a \textit{poeta}. Moreover, Hales was also able to observe that the name Lycidas had been used by three other pastoral poets, Theocritus, Sannazaro, and Amalthei, and that the tradition of a poet-shepherd named Lycidas would have been commonplace knowledge to a poet who had read as widely as Milton. Of special interest also is Hales' remark that the poet-shepherd Lycidas had been associated with sea imagery. Today this article is relevant to an interpretation of Milton's great elegy.

Hales' fifth and last essay on the poet, "Did Milton Serve in the Parliamentary Army?"\footnote{Ibid., pp. 243-245.} is an indication that Masson's monumental work prompted Milton scholars to investigate further the more or less unresolved events in Milton's life. Hales observed that Masson had hesitated on the subject of Milton's military service but had finally concluded that Milton
was never in the Parliamentary army. He agreed with Masson's conclusion and strengthened it by quoting a passage from the Second Defence in which Milton justified himself for not joining the armed forces.

The essays of Hales and of those who were writing in a similar fashion are illustrative of the shift that took place in nineteenth-century Milton scholarship. It was primarily a shift from subjectivity to objectivity. In 1825 most critics were interested in stating whether they agreed with what Milton had to say. It has already been pointed out that most of the earlier studies were biased either for or against Milton. With critics like Hales, however, their own agreement or disagreement with Milton was a matter that was entirely irrelevant. They were interested in other matters—Milton's sources, mythological allusions in his poetry, his specific action toward military service, the date of composition of his poems, and the like. In reality, the better late nineteenth-century investigations were preparatory for the scholarly studies on Milton which have been produced in the twentieth century.

The final aspect of the Victorian scholarship on Milton to be considered in this chapter is in connection with his nineteenth-century editors. As we might expect, Milton had a prominent place in all the anthologies of the era, such as Leigh Hunt's and Thomas H. Ward's. But here we are mainly concerned with those editors who brought out

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separate editions of the writer's works. Milton's editors were so
numerous between 1825 and 1900 that it will be quite impossible to name
and discuss all of them. We can only mention those who seem to be the
most important and make generalizations concerning the rest.

The large number of editions of Milton's works seems evident when
one glances at any of the Milton bibliographies. Stevens' bibliography
is incomplete, as every Miltonist knows, but the editions he lists are
indicative of the amount of time the Victorians spent editing Milton's
works. He lists more than eighty editions of the complete poetical
works. Paradise Lost alone underwent at least thirty-seven separate
editions. The Victorians often published Books I and II of Paradise Lost
in a single volume. Such a practice could have resulted in the widely
held view that Satan is the hero of the poem. There were fewer separate
editions of Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes. Separate editions
of the earlier poems were almost non-existent. These statistics coincide
with my earlier statement that when the Victorians thought of Milton's
poetry, they usually had Paradise Lost in mind. The prose works underwent
fewer editions than Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes. Fewer than
ten editions of the complete prose works appeared during the seventy-five
years under discussion here. The Areopagitica, however, was often edited
as a separate volume.

One of the most important editors of Milton in the earlier part of
the period was Henry John Todd. In 1826 Op. cit. he published his third edition
of the poetical works; it consisted of six volumes. Unlike Todd's previous editions, it contained a life of the poet. Also in 1826 Todd could discuss *De Doctrina Christiana*, which had been published the year before. Todd's method of editing was eclectic in that he tried to bring together all the glossings and the like of previous editors. He was the first editor to note the importance of the documents that were discovered with the manuscript of *De Doctrina Christiana*, and he published a few of the Letters of State in his 1826 edition. There were subsequent editions of Milton's poetry, but Todd's was one of the best to appear during the nineteenth century.

John Mitford\textsuperscript{121} edited the poetical works again in 1831. This edition was widely used by the Victorians. It is memorable because of Mitford's critical comments. He possessed a sense of perception that was lacking in many of the earlier nineteenth-century editors of Milton. The edition went through several printings, but it did not displace Todd's work.

The well-known Bohn edition of the prose\textsuperscript{122} was published in 1848. Edited by J. A. St. John, this edition was without doubt the best that appeared during the entire century. St. John's work was combined with a two-volume edition of the poetry that had appeared in 1843\textsuperscript{123} to form a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{121} The Poetical Works of John Milton (London: Pickering), Two Volumes.
\item \textsuperscript{122} The Prose Works of John Milton (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848), Five Volumes.
\item \textsuperscript{123} The Poetical Works of John Milton, with a Memoir and Critical Remarks on His Genius and Writings by James Montgomery....With One Hundred and Twenty Engravings from Drawings by William Harvey (London: Tilt and Bogue, 1843), Two Volumes.
\end{itemize}
seven volume edition of Milton's complete works. The "Bohn Library Edition" of Milton was repeatedly reprinted during the century.

David Masson edited the poetical works for several different series. His editions had prominence because of Masson's widespread reputation as a Miltonist. They were not, however, superior to the other editions that have been discussed. Their one remarkable feature was the introductory essay that was printed in each one. The essay was a condensed version of Masson's longer work on Milton.

The prodigious number of editions reflects indirectly Milton's standing among the Victorians. They might have regarded Shakespeare as a better poet, but they edited and discussed Milton as much as they did the dramatist. Of course their editing in itself offers little indication of the points of Milton criticism. The editions simply prove that Milton continued to be one of England's accepted writers in spite of his detractors.

In summary, we have found that the Victorians did a considerable amount of scholarship on Milton. A score or more of critical biographies were written. The critical biographers gradually shifted from a consideration of the man to an emphasis on his works. At the end of the century, they were stressing his art rather than his ideas. The writers of the shorter biographies used commonplace material for the most part.

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A few, such as Tulloch, exalted the Puritan Milton. Tulloch especially caused some of the late Victorians to think of Milton as a Puritan rather than as a man of the Renaissance or as a Christian humanist. Milton fared well with the literary historians, but their attitude was mainly eulogistic. Several separate short studies of Milton's poetry were made. Toward the end of the century, the critics discussed the poetry more objectively than it had been discussed in early Victorian England. Like the critical biographers, though, these critics began to discuss the style of the poetry rather than its content. The prose received comparatively little attention in itself. Most of the studies that did appear were slanted politically. But Dowden became almost completely objective in 1900 and attempted to analyze the content of the major prose productions. Several efforts were made to discuss in detail Milton's metrics, the most successful being Bridges' Milton's Prosody. Many books on Milton were mere panegyrics and had little critical value. The majority of such works appeared before 1850 and were written by women. The period was productive in source hunting, but source studies were usually considered as ends in themselves. A few of the late critics developed a concern for special problems in connection with Milton's poetry. The works were edited and re-edited throughout the century; Paradise Lost was edited more often than any of Milton's other works. The Victorians broke much ground. They almost exhausted the available biographical material, and they provided several basic tools for Milton study. Some of them were questioning the validity of Milton's ideas in
1900, but this showed that they were concerned with a problem of vital importance in Milton criticism. The late Victorian wondered whether Milton's great epic would live, since it had become a monument to dead ideas. But the answer lay with the twentieth century, not with the Victorians.
CHAPTER II

THE REINTERPRETATION OF MILTON THE MAN

Milton's character and personality are so closely related to his writings that the critics have often taken recourse to the poet's biography to interpret his works. This was true during the Victorian era, and comments on Milton the man were so extensive in that period that they merit attention in a separate chapter in the present study. Accordingly, the purpose of this chapter is to discuss the reinterpretation of the man Milton which took place between 1825 and 1900. In analyzing the many comments that were made, I cannot go along with James E. Thorpe, who argues in his dissertation that the Miltonic tradition declined after 1800. He says, "I maintain, as a fundamental premise of this study, that during the last hundred and fifty years the Miltonic tradition has been suffering a general decline which is most noticeable in our own times."\(^1\) Of course Thorpe has the poetic aspect of the tradition in mind as well as the personal aspect, but throughout his study he insists that Milton declined in reputation as a man during the nineteenth century. I admit from the beginning that a definite shift in emphasis took place after 1800, but to me this shift does not indicate that a decline was the result. It may signify a re-evaluation. And although twentieth-century criticism of Milton is beyond the scope of this study, Thorpe perhaps overstates his case when he maintains that Milton's reputation has declined still further since 1900. It is true

\(^1\) "The Decline of the Miltonic Tradition," pp. 2f.
that a man of such eminence as T. S. Eliot has never admired Milton personally; he even states in his so-called recantation essay that he has "an antipathy towards Milton the man." The new critics, however significant their work may be, hardly form a majority. It is also doubtful that they speak for the multitude of present-day students of Milton. They most likely do not.

Notwithstanding Thorpe, I contend that the majority of the Victorians continued to admire Milton personally. Their reasons for admiration were different, however, from those of the neo-Augustans. For one thing, the Victorians stressed Milton's struggle for English liberty more than did their forefathers. By and large, the Englishmen who wrote after 1825 continued to notice Milton's alleged shortcomings, but they usually concluded their essays on him by defending his actions. There were detractors during the period, but they are in the minority. Even the substantiation of Milton's suspected heresies, made possible by the publication of De Doctrina Christiana, did not, in the final analysis, cause him to decline in stature as a man of high moral integrity. At the end of the century, Milton was considered more of a Puritan than in 1800, and the word "Puritan" did have an unpleasant connotation to some minds. But the century closed with indecision on the extent of his Puritanism. In fact, long before 1900 a few critics had begun to suggest that Milton was a man of the Renaissance, a Christian humanist, rather than a Puritan.

Since Milton's death in 1674, there have been two strands of comment relative to his character. The first is in connection with Milton and his contemporaries, particularly his family and his adversaries in debate. Whenever his qualities as a person have been discussed, questions like the following have been deliberated upon: Was he justified in his behavior when it was apparent that Mary Powell did not intend to return to him? Did Salmasius merit the violence of the attack which Milton thrust upon him? Did Milton treat his daughters kindly or was it his ill nature which forced them to flee from his home? The second strand of criticism is based upon his political beliefs. He played such an active role in the struggle between Charles I and Parliament that no critic has been able to ignore completely this important aspect of his career. Milton discussed certain problems relative to English government which did not resolve themselves until the late nineteenth century, and all too often a critic's predilections concerning these questions has prejudiced his interpretation of Milton the man. Such was the case with Samuel Johnson, who wrote his Life of Milton in 1779. But Johnson was neither the first nor the last to let political considerations color his opinion of Milton. From 1825 to 1900 these two strands of criticism continued to manifest themselves whenever Milton's character and personality were in question. Of course, in many cases the two strands overlapped. A critic's opinion on the first often was carried into his conclusion regarding the second, and vice versa.

In this chapter the material on Milton the man will be divided into
two sections. First, I shall discuss Milton's detractors during the Victorian era and shall make an attempt to show on what points he was disclaimed. Second, I shall list those critics who wrote favorably of Milton the man. Most of them did not ignore the poet's shortcomings, but they drew conclusions in his favor. In this connection it will be necessary to notice the numerous censurers of Samuel Johnson. The Victorians were profoundly moved by Johnson's strictures on Milton, and often his comments were used as points of departure by those who defended the man. Criticism of Johnson's disparagement of *Lycidas*, however, will be reserved for the next chapter, where Milton's reputation as a poet will be discussed.

Derogatory comments on Milton's character, written in 1825 or shortly thereafter, indicated the points on which he was to be criticized throughout the period. The *Quarterly Review* led in the attack, which was continued in the *Monthly Review*. Writing in the former journal, an anonymous critic emphasizes Milton's intellectual and spiritual pride. The poet's haughtiness, he maintains, is manifest in the character of his Satan. He also dislikes Milton's vindicative republicanism. Then in the same journal another article appeared in 1827. It is ostensibly a review of Todd's edition of the prose works, but it really is an attack on Milton the man. Johnson, the critic insists, wrote truthfully of Milton. This anonymous

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writer states further that Milton has never exerted any influence on the English political scene. He regards Todd's edition as a farce, "so heavy a disgrace to our literature." A similar note was struck in 1828, when another anonymous critic reviewed William Ellery Channing's essay on Milton in the Monthly Review. It is quite obvious that this reviewer has a high regard for Milton's poetry, but he dislikes Milton personally. Therefore, he defends Johnson for the latter's remarks on the poet's character. In speaking of Johnson's over-all criticism of Milton, he writes, "Yet--Johnson was not blind to the spots in the sun: he notices them, but he neither increases their number, nor aggravates their darkness." Channing, the critic thinks, has gone too far in emphasizing the good qualities of Milton's character.

The most violent of Milton's Victorian detractors was Samuel Roberts, whose Milton Unmasked (1844) is a highly prejudiced onslaught against the poet's personal integrity. Roberts regards Swift in Ireland, Burns in Scotland, and Milton in England as the three poets with the worst characters ever to flourish in the British isles. Milton's great failings, Roberts argues, were his bad temper, his high opinion of himself, and his inflexible
obstinacy. He declares further that "No existing laws . . . could satisfy him, whether of God, of the Church, or of the State." To this shortcoming of Milton, he links the poet's early advocacy of divorce. Roberts goes so far as to say that Milton was not a Christian: "If God be love, and Christianity the religion of Love, Milton could not be a Christian." It is painful to Roberts to read *Paradise Lost*, in which Milton's "fancy went mad." The poet took too much liberty with the Scriptures. Roberts is not concerned with the epic tradition and the fact that Milton was forced by that tradition to include such passages as the catalog of the fallen gods and the various invocations in the poem. To him, these elements constitute a sacrilege. He insists finally that Milton's audacity in writing *Paradise Lost* "is leading, almost compelling, weak or lax Christians to consider the Bible statements to be (not cunningly but) stupidly devised fables,—and to consider those of Milton as being, not only more interesting, but also, more authentic." The closing pages in Roberts' book are devoted to a discussion of Christ and his relations with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, as that story is related in the four gospels. He tries here to show how one can paraphrase the Scriptures without committing a sacrilege.

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Of course the modern reader cannot take Roberts' attack on Milton's character very seriously. He represents the early Victorian evangelical type of Christian, and he may with justice be classified as a fanatic. He is totally ignorant of the problems Milton faced when he set out to justify the ways of God to man. Obviously, he is concerned with the popular appeal of Paradise Lost, and his alarm confirms the often-stated idea that Milton gave to Englishmen their conception of heaven and hell and the fall of man. His Milton Unmasked is an example of how the poet might affect the evangelical, literal-minded Christian, whose religious fervor is stronger than his educational background. As far as his remarks on Milton's personal character are concerned, they are strikingly close to those made by Samuel Johnson. Roberts, then, is significant in that he is propagating in Victorian England the Johnsonian interpretation of Milton's character.

Almost all of the Milton detractors mention the poet's intellectual pride. This is true of an anonymous reviewer who wrote in 1859. This critic reviews the first volume of Masson's biography, and he praises the book for the most part. He looks upon Milton as a poet worthy of such an undertaking as Masson's. However, he feels that Masson has written too sympathetically of Milton as a person:

On reaching the period of Milton's departure from the university, in his twenty-fourth year, Mr. Masson pauses to make the inferences that are to be deduced as to his hero's character, from the various data set forth in this biography. The chief fault we have to find with his estimate is, that, although he points out distinctly enough the moral and intellectual pride which so remarkably characterized the poet, he does not remark upon it as an evil. Such, nevertheless, it decidedly was, both in itself, and in its chilling and narrowing effect upon his feelings, his opinions, and his poetry.\textsuperscript{14}

Although George Saintsbury is quite appreciative of Milton's poetry, he may be properly classified as one of the disclaimers of Milton the man. In his History of Elizabethan Literature (1887)\textsuperscript{15} he continues the strand of derogatory criticism that is evident in the articles which have been cited from the Quarterly Review. By his time, mention of the unpleasant qualities of the poet which he lists is so commonplace that it is almost jargon. He says that Milton was not amiable and that he was too exacting, superior, egotistical, and intolerant.

Of course Milton's divorce pamphlets were often points of discussion during the Victorian era. England was gradually changing her divorce laws, and it was natural that Milton's pronouncements on the subject would be brought into public focus by those who favored more leniency in the granting of divorces. However, there were those who used the pamphleteer's divorce tracts as a means of attacking him personally. William E. Gladstone\textsuperscript{16} wrote

\hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 161.

\hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{15}P. 317.

\hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{16}"The Bill for Divorce," Quarterly Review, CII (1857), 251-288.
an essay on the bill for divorce which was pending in Parliament in 1857. Naturally, he was forced to discuss Milton's views. He calls Milton a charmer but admits that he charmed most skillfully. Then, twenty years later, on April 3, 1877, in a letter to Robert Bridges, Gerard Manly Hopkins declares, "Don't like what you say of Milton. I think he was a very bad man: those who contrary to our Lord's command both break themselves, and as St. Paul says, consent to those who break the bond of marriage, like Luther and Milton, fall with eyes open into the terrible judgment of God." His comment is interesting in that he calls Milton "bad" only because of the latter's stand on the divorce question. There are, as we shall see, many others who do not favor Milton's pronouncements on marriage and divorce, but, by and large, they do not let his views on that subject detract from their general appreciation of the man.

Although the poet Francis Thompson was an avid admirer of Milton's verse, especially Paradise Lost, he must, like Saintsbury, be classed as a Milton detractor. In 1897 he wrote a short essay on Milton in which he discusses the fine qualities of the great epic. He concludes, however, with a paragraph on Milton the man. Thompson wishes that Milton had been more human. Like some of the other critics, he mentions the poet's pride and completes his essay with the sentence, "He could not forget, nor can we forget, that he was Milton."

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18 "John Milton," The Academy, LI (1897), 357-358.
19 Ibid., p. 358.
Walter Raleigh 20 is more interested in Milton's art than in his characteristics as a man, but in the opening pages of his study 21 he names some of the reasons why Milton commands little sympathy. His reasons are of interest here because they incorporate most of those on which Victorian detractors based their points of view. First, Raleigh maintains that Milton is not sympathized with because so much is known about his biography. This would include his alleged mistreatment of his daughters, among other indiscretions. Second, Raleigh states that Milton's attitudes on so many subjects are very well-known, that those who disagree with him on these attitudes, mostly political and religious theories, often dislike Milton personally as a result. Third, Raleigh insists that Milton lacked humour. Fourth, this critic declares that Milton's advocacy of toleration in religion has cost him admirers. Fifth, the pamphlets on divorce and Milton's contemplation of taking another wife when Mary Powell refused to return has resulted in little sympathy for the man. Finally, Raleigh argues that Milton was too impractical in some of his theories for people to admire him. Raleigh does not elaborate upon this final point.

It seems that Raleigh takes too much for granted in believing that Milton does not command the sympathy of the average Victorian. The latter's avowed detractors are relatively few. The better of the favorable critics, though, are not blind to Milton's shortcomings. They usually discuss them

20 Milton (1900). Raleigh's book has fewer comments on the man than any of the other critical biographies.

21 Ibid., pp. 5-7.
but balance the scales in the poet's favor. Many of the critics do identify Milton as a Puritan, but in Victorian England such a classification placed no stigma on one's character. It should be remembered that Queen Victoria, the great exemplar of the age that bears her name, preferred the simplicity of the services in the Church of Scotland to the ritual of the Church of England. And a Scotch Presbyterian was of course a kind of Puritan himself.

The views of Channing, the American Unitarian, should be considered in this study because his essay on Milton had widespread reading and discussion in England. Although he is primarily concerned with the dogmas expressed in De Doctrina Christiana, he makes a few remarks on Milton's character. Instead of becoming personal, however, he tries to evaluate Milton's intellectual qualities. He regards the poet as one of the supreme intellectuals of the seventeenth century. Milton's vast knowledge, Channing insists, made him a scholar-pet:

To many he seems only a poet, when in truth he was a profound scholar, a man of vast compass of thought, imbued thoroughly with all ancient and modern learning, and able to master, to mould, to impregnate with his own intellectual power, his great and various acquisitions. He had not learned the superficial doctrine of a later day, that poetry flourishes most in an uncultivated soil, and that imagination shapes its brightest visions from the mists of a superstitious age; and he had no dread of accumulating knowledge, lest it should oppress and smother his genius.

Channing writes further that Milton always loved the higher virtues, such

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23 Ibid., pp. 4f.
Magnanimity is another quality which he sees in the poet. This quality, he believes, was exemplified by the conditions under which Milton composed *Paradise Lost*. Finally, Channing interprets his subject's love of freedom as his crowning asset: "Freedom in all its forms and branches was dear to him, but especially freedom of thought and speech, of conscience and worship, freedom to speak, profess, and propagate truth."\(^{24}\)

Channing does not choose to discuss Milton's relations with his contemporaries. The essay is more than a panegyric, but it is obvious that he is linking Milton's struggle for freedom with his own efforts along similar lines, especially in the field of religion. Channing is pursuing a method of criticizing Milton the man that is to be very common throughout the period.

Joseph Ivimey's study of Milton is another attempt to make Milton the champion of the critic's predispositions. Ivimey is a non-conforming Baptist himself, and he tries to make Milton the man become his advocate. In the preface, Ivimey states that he will treat Milton "as a patriot, a protestant, and a non-conformist."\(^{25}\) Then he proceeds to interpret all of the early polemical pamphlets as products of the non-conforming mind. Of course, none of the pamphlets, except those written on divorce, offer much opposition to such an interpretation. The poet's pronouncements on that question do not deter Ivimey's appreciation of the man in the final analysis.

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\(^{25}\) *John Milton: His Life and Times*, p. iii.
Ivimey does a beautiful job of rationalization. Being a Baptist, Ivimey cannot agree with Milton. He says, however, that the "spirit" had temporarily departed from Milton at this point, that the entire Mary Powell episode was a means by which God was trying his chosen servant: "The fact is, Milton in this instance appears 'to have been left by God to walk in his own counsels,' in order that he might be tried, and know what was in his heart. Instead of trusting in God with all his heart, he leaned to his own understanding and thus furnished affecting proof, that the best of men are but men at the best." 26

In connection with Milton's alleged abuse of his adversaries in debate, Ivimey is thoroughly in sympathy with Milton. He believes that Milton gave his opponents just what they deserved. Speaking of the Morus episode, Ivimey states that Milton "so completely baffled his opponent, that he prudently quit the field, and Milton was proclaimed, by general consent, the People's Champion and Conqueror: an honour this, greater than what many monarchs have attained even from their sycophants and parasites—more valuable, more permanent." 27

Only one of Milton's works really worries Ivimey; that is De Doctrina Christiana. 28 Ivimey is fully aware of the heretical views expressed in that work, but, in the end, the existence of these heresies does not cause

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26 Ibid., pp. 96f.
27 Ibid., p. 158.
28 Ibid., pp. 331-349.
him to admire Milton less. First of all, Ivimey states that he is not fully convinced that the work is Milton's. He would welcome any attempt by anyone who will show that someone else, not Milton, wrote the treatise. But even if Milton did write the work, Ivimey insists, it only proves that mortals are subject to erroneous interpretations of the Scriptures. He is evidently not aware that he is close to the Catholic point of view in holding such an attitude concerning the Scriptures.

One of the most extended refutations of Johnson's Life of Milton to appear during the period is contained in an appendix which Ivimey calls "Animadversions on Dr. Johnson's Life of Milton." He pursues a "measure for measure" method of attacking Johnson and is almost as unfair to Johnson as the latter is to Milton. He declares that there "never was so flagrant an instance of downright misrepresentation and perversion of facts, for the mean purpose of caricaturing and distorting the features of a public man, than in Johnson's Life of Milton: a foul blot on English biography, a lasting disgrace to the man who could lend himself to such baseness." He says that Johnson hated Milton because of the poet's principles regarding civil and religious liberty. Throughout the discussion of Johnson's Life, Ivimey intersperses remarks which reveal that he too lacks the milk of human kindness that is so obviously missing in Johnson. Concerning Johnson's statement relative to Milton's insertion of the prayer from the Arcadia into the Eikon Basilike, Ivimey insists, "No,

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29 Ibid., pp. 349-382.
30 Ibid., p. 349.
Doctor Johnson, Milton was incapable of such palpable meanness and lies: he would not have been so degraded as to have even suspected another of such unmitigated folly and meanness." He labels the Life with such epithets as "malignant assertions" and "groundless suppositions." Finally, he declares that Johnson does not cease writing until "he has expended all the poisoned arrows of his malignity."

Ivimey's entire interpretation of Milton the man is close to Channing's in its point of view. Ivimey is more violent in his defense of the man than Channing, but, nevertheless, he regards Milton as a champion of the causes which he himself espouses. Time and again he rationalizes away the poet's shortcomings and tries to make his subject the perfect man who only occasionally lapsed into error. He wants to see only the good side of Milton's character. Ivimey is one of the many Victorians who argue in terms of absolutes. His defense of Milton is interesting because it is a carry-over from the Milton idolatry tradition of the eighteenth century.

Sir Egerton Brydges' biography of Milton (1835) is another refutation of Johnson and consequently another defense of the man. Brydges' avowed purpose is to reckon with Johnson's Life. This is clear from a passage in the preface: "His [Johnson's] Life of Milton, by some strange chance, yet keeps its hold at least on a part of the public; but as it is flagrantly derogatory to the unrivalled bard's fame, both as a poet and as a man, it has appeared to me not only a pleasure, but a duty, to counteract its

31 Ibid., p. 380.
32 Ibid., pp. 379f.
33 The Life of John Milton, passim.
Then Brydges disparages Johnson further. His remarks on Johnson are significant because in this instance a Tory is refuting a Tory. Therefore, party bias cannot be said to have entered into the question. In speaking of Johnson's hatred for Milton the man, Brydges writes:

Johnson's political hatred to Milton was neither rational nor moral. Milton might carry his love of democracy much too far... but to doubt that he acted on conscientious principles, is to have no faith in human protestations or human virtues. If Milton was a bigoted democrat, Johnson was a most bigoted and blind royalist. There is not a particle of benevolence or candour in this furious and bitter piece of biography of the celebrated critic; nor is there any research; nor is the narrative well put together. There are not even many splendid passages, which commonly occur in other lives by this popular author, except what are borrowed from Addison's criticism on the great Epic Poem.

In other passages Brydges refutes Johnson's censure of Milton. For the most part, his comments are rational and objective. The twentieth-century reader will almost invariably agree with Brydges. Most of us feel, like Brydges, that Johnson's Life is a highly biased biography.

Brydges has little sympathy for Milton's political views, but he does not permit himself to become prejudiced against the poet's character because of this. When he reaches the usual point of attack against Milton the man—the Mary Powell episode—he remains cool and calculating. He is one of the first of the Victorians to discuss the matter without prejudice.

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34 Ibid., pp. xxf.
36 Ibid., pp. 103-106.
Brydges simply observes that Mary Powell was by temperament unsuited for Milton and that she probably married him only to help her father in the first place. The Milton documents which were published later in the century substantiated this conjecture, for the Powell family was financially obligated to Milton's father.

Since Brydges is not interested in his subject's political career, he passes over the public years of the poet's life rather rapidly. Again, however, he does not pause to censure Milton for the treatment meted out to Salmassius and Morus.

Here and there Brydges makes observations on Milton's character. He will hardly classify Milton as a Puritan. He states that even though Milton's gigantic mind gave him a temper that spurned all authority, his imaginative ability was not suited to the cold and dry hypocrisy of a Puritan. He observes further that Milton never had a taste for the vulgar pleasures of life and that no immorality can be attributed to him. Brydges mentions Milton's enthusiastic love for fame, but he does not regard this as a blight on the poet's character. His one point of censure is in regard to Milton's lack of tenderness; he thinks the writer should have had more. Perhaps the following statement sums up Brydges' feeling toward the man: "The poet was never compliant to the ways of the world; from his early childhood he kept himself aloof; he nursed his visions in solitude, and soothed his haughty hopes of future loftiness of fame by

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Ibid., p. 184.
lonely musings: the ideal world in which his mind lived would not coalesce with the rude concorse of mankind." Thus Brydges, writing in 1835, continues to uphold the tradition in which Milton is regarded as almost sacred.

Brydges' edition of Milton's poetical works was reviewed the year after its publication in the Gentleman's Magazine. Like many of his contemporary reviewers, the anonymous critic mentions the work under scrutiny very fleetingly and then interprets the subject for himself. In this instance, the reviewer is concerned with Milton's personal characteristics. It is at once evident that he does not idolize Milton in the way Brydges does. However, he is in general sympathy with the poet. He follows the current fashion and mentions Johnson's Life. The critic clearly recognizes the reasons why Johnson disliked Milton, and he for the most part is in agreement with Brydges on this point. He attempts to refute one of Johnson's assertions, though, which had been overlooked by Brydges. It is in connection with Milton's quarrel with the authorities at Cambridge. The critic doubts the validity of Johnson's statements. To him, they are inconsistent with what we know for certain about the poet's life: "To any offences against College discipline, connected with laxity of moral conduct, it would be unjust, indeed absurd, to look; and it would show a total ignorance of Milton's character—in all that respects purity

\[38\] Ibid., p. 206.

of life, consistent from youth to age." On other possible points of attack, the quarrels with Mary Powell and Salmasius and Morus, the critic, though not blind to Milton's actions, takes the side of the poet. He does believe that Milton would have been unhappy had he persisted in his first impulse to divorce Mary. In discussing Milton's controversies with the continental defenders of Charles I, the unnamed critic believes that all concerned displayed faulty reasoning in their treatises but that it is mere conjecture to state that Milton caused Salmasius' untimely death. He maintains that there was a fundamental defect in Milton's mind throughout his life, the tendency to exaggerate the points he was advocating. But he attributes this to the seventeenth-century political situation as much as to Milton.

As I stated in the previous chapter, William Carpenter's Life and Times of John Milton (1836) was written in order to bring Milton's political activities into what Carpenter believed should be their proper focus. Like Ivimey and Channing, Carpenter accepts Milton as his champion, except that in this instance Milton becomes the great advocate of Victorian social legislation. As far as I can tell, Carpenter never admits that Milton had a fault. When he discusses the divorce pamphlets, he admires the cogency of Milton's arguments. When he mentions Mary Powell's return, he admires the pamphleteer's forgiving nature. When he comes to the period of the Prima Defensio, he defends Milton on every point; for example:

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40 Ibid., p. 452.
The truth is, that Salmasius held a high reputation throughout Europe, and Milton condescended to fight him at all points with his own weapons. He 'answered a fool according to his folly.' When, in abusing the people of England, Salmasius imputed to them crimes of which they knew nothing, Milton retorted, by unmasking the calumniator, and convicting him of ignorance, venality, malevolence, and an utter destitution of principle. When he played the verbiloquist, and pedant, Milton stripped him of his plumes and held him forth naked to the laughter of the learned world. On no single point would he permit him to escape; he followed him through his work sentence by sentence; and exploded forever the slavish doctrine of the divine right of kings.  

Carpenter goes on to prove that the principles advocated in the Prima Defensio are constitutionally sound.

Carpenter's remarks on the other prose works are in the same vein as the passage quoted above. The last pages of his work are a eulogy on Milton the man, as we might expect. Carpenter pictures Milton as a selfless individual who was anxious to serve his country. He describes the poet as unostentatious, unassuming, magnanimous, and intrepid.

Only a casual perusal of Milton's prose tracts will convince any reader of the pamphleteer's concern for English liberty. Yet Milton himself despised the English rabble. He favored a government based on the rule of an intellectual aristocracy. It is doubtful that Milton would have been sympathetic toward the social reformers of the Victorian era, especially the extremists like Carpenter. Yet such writing as that illustrated by Carpenter's book forms a significant portion of the nineteenth-century

42 Ibid., pp. 165-171.
criticism of Milton the man. Although Carpenter and his school are guilty of writing in an anachronistic manner, they do prove that the early Victorians were interested in relating Milton and his works to the social problems of their own age.

Alfred A. Fry wrote another encomium on Milton in 1838. Like Brydges, he is concerned with the current popularity of Johnson's Life, the opinions of that critic having "been taken for granted by the great mass of society—the half-educated, who are content to hold their opinions on trust and authority. . . ." Therefore, he writes still another refutation of Johnson. Fry interprets Milton's "utter absence of selfishness" as the great principle of the poet's life. He is struck by the variety of Milton's talents and the vastness of his learning. One passage from Fry will summarize his opinion of Milton the man: "He venerated himself, not as a poet, not as a statesman, but as a man—'as high and heaven-born man'—and therefore he venerated every human being." Most of Fry's other statements relative to Milton's character are the same as those made by Brydges, Channing, Ivimey, and Carpenter. In no way does he find fault with his subject. It is no wonder that the late Victorians would react against this type of eulogistic criticism. Generally speaking, they are to continue to admire but they are not to be content to heap upon

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44 Ibid., p. 6.
46 Ibid., p. 51.
him every sort of praise, as the majority of the early Victorians do.

Several other critics wrote eulogistically of Milton between 1838 and 1850. Thomas De Quincey is one of these. He too considers it necessary to refute Johnson, but he discourses a point made by Johnson which had been missed by previous critics. Johnson had stated that Milton hastened home from Italy, "promising much but performing little." In rebuttal, De Quincey says, "It is not true that Milton had made 'great promises,' or any promises at all. But if he had made the greatest, his exertions for the next sixteen years nobly redeemed them." Throughout his "Life of Milton," De Quincey adopts a more moderate point of view than some of his contemporaries, but this account is not his most distinguished commentary on Milton. Robert Bell defends the man Milton on every question and argues that Johnson's Life is the "most bigoted, ungenerous and untrue" composition in the English language. John Sterling admires Milton because of the poet's high character and believes that it alone will insure Milton's immortality. He insists that "Pure poetry will not maintain an author in the thoughts of Englishmen; or Spenser would not be almost forgotten. There must be some cause different from all these for our


48 Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men, I, 138-140.

49 Ibid., p. 139.

50 J. C. Hare, Editor, Essays and Tales (London: John Parker, 1848), I, 73-86.
national admiration of Milton; and it can be found in nothing but the
dignity of his character."51 Concerning Milton's reported acerbity,
Sterling maintains, "He had scorn indeed and vehemence for all the
baseness that met his eye. But let us not forget that the meekest man
who ever lived, drove the money-changers from the temple with a scourge,
and threatened to purge the garner with a terrible and destroying fan."52
J. A. St. John makes another attempt to link Wilton's political ideas
with Victorian Whig aspirations. He declares that Johnson hated Milton
because the poet "was the advocate of good government."53

Edwin Paxton Hood wrote the last of the panegyrics that appeared
during the Victorian era. A sentence from his preface is indicative of
his general point of view toward Milton the man: "To present to the young
men of England a compendious Digest of the Life, Writings, and Character
of the noblest and sublimest of their countrymen, is the object of the
editor of this volume."54 Hood, a Whig writer, makes still another attempt
to let Milton become the advocate of his party. Unlike Brydges, he does
not regard the prose years as wasted. He compares Milton and Hobbes, to

51 Ibid., p. 76.
52 Ibid., p. 80.
53 Edition of Prose Works, I, i-xl.
54 Ibid., p. xxxiv.
55 John Milton: The Patriot and the Poet, passim.
56 Ibid., p. ix.
Milton's advantage of course. His comment in this connection is interesting because, strange as it may seem, Hobbes was not often mentioned in relation to Milton during the century. Hood notes that during the struggle between Charles I and Parliament, Milton hurried home, while Hobbes travelled on the Continent. Then he makes this observation:

Well, I suppose, if, like Hobbes, we believed in nothing—if ours was a cold, dead materialistic despotism—like him we should wisely fly; but if, like John Milton, we believed in Truth and Freedom, and that God does defend the right, and that justice, in the long run, comes round, why, I think we, too, like him, should hasten to take our parts where duty beckons in the great strife. 57

When he comes to the divorce pamphlets, Hood attributes their existence to Milton's own unfortunate marriage. He does not try to rationalize at this point; instead, he says that England's divorce laws have always been too harsh and that they ought to be amended. Hood includes the usual chapter in derision of Johnson's Life, but he adds little to the body of refutations which has accumulated by the time he is writing. In fact, his remarks on Johnson must have seemed commonplace in 1852. Hood makes no qualifications in his praise of Milton; without question, he writes in the tradition of Milton idolatry.

Although David McBurnie is also in the Milton idolatry tradition, he makes a few striking observations concerning Milton the man. It is clear that he regards Milton as a humanist. He places Milton over Bacon because

57 Ibid., p. 50.
59 Mental Exercises of a Working Man, pp. 283-300; 301-320.
the former exalted man. When he compares the two, McBurnie makes a striking comment on Milton's philosophical outlook:

Regarding with becoming respect all the productions of science and art, Milton still considered the material elevation of men and society as only secondary to the sublimer elevation of the soul and heart through freedom, education, and religion. Knowing that mind must always keep pace with, or rather lead philosophy and the arts, he would still make these only the stepping-stones, or the scaffolding, for elevating man to a higher and purer existence, and drawing him in all his aspirations nearer to God.

Having interpreted the poet's philosophical outlook with acuteness, McBurnie relates it to the man:

Holding such views, Milton longed to see a nation--nay, more, a world--of such men; and anxious to show them their true position in society, he strips disguise after disguise, from the corrupt conventionalism of courts, the decrees of tyrannical rulers, and rapacious, persecuting priests, and then points them to the remedies for eradicating the social disease from the mind and heart of the nation, and preparing the way for a healthier tone of morals and a nobler freedom. And while thus arousing and directing the national mind, his own life corresponded in many respects with his great doctrine and precepts. He was his own exemplar. he sought to elevate man, that through men nations might be elevated, the rigours of law relaxed, humanity cherished, the temple of freedom reared and universally admired, and moral justice and truth, based upon religion, influencing all the acts and negociations of enlightened and enfranchised man throughout the world. Thus, though Milton the poet be great, Milton the man is equally great.

McBurnie, then, is interested in Milton the man from a philosophical point of view. In neither of his essays on Milton does he discuss the
usual matters, such as the divorce episode or Milton's controversies with his political antagonists. The significance of these two essays on Milton cannot be over-emphasized. The majority of the Victorians, although they have great admiration for the man, are satisfied to write about surface matters. Very few of them have an insight into the man's philosophical position. McBurnie must be classified as one of the few who do. The only point of criticism in connection with McBurnie is his effort to make Milton the champion of the working classes in their attempts to secure progressive social legislation.

Thomas Keightley has a sentimental attitude toward Milton. For example, he states in his critical biography of the poet (1855) that he feels a kind of pride in the reflection that his own route while traveling in Italy had several points of coincidence with Milton's. However, Keightley tries to write an accurate account of the man. When he speaks of Milton and Mary Powell, he blames neither for their disagreement but observes that "Mrs. Milton could not change her natural disposition, and that, we know, was not by any means adapted to that of her husband." He also concludes that Milton was justified in the treatment meted out to his daughters. Using the available documents, he shows that the daughters were provided for by the Powell estate and that the Milton widow needed the poet's legacy more than did the daughters. Keightley believes that Milton's temper was warm.

62 An Account of the Life, Opinions, and Writings of John Milton, passim.
63 Ibid., p. 21n.
64 Ibid., p. 40.
but sometimes overbearing. He interprets the poet's disposition, moreover, as being compatible with the highest moral excellence. Like Channing, who wrote some thirty years earlier, Keightley is interested in the intellectual qualities of his subject, and he lists practically the same ones as does Channing. He is the first of the critical biographers after 1825 to omit a chapter in refutation of Johnson. Occasionally, he is in disagreement with Johnson, but usually the disparity in thought stems from the earlier critic's remarks on the poetry. Keightley probably feels that Johnson's censure of the man needs no refutation.

In several ways Keightley is a transitional critic in his interpretation of Milton. He does not see the pamphleteer as the champion of the Victorian idea of social progress, even though he is in sympathy with his politics. Nor is Keightley blind to the human aspect of his subject. He is aware that Milton was human and consequently was prone to have some of the failings common to all mankind. He is more investigative in his approach to Milton than any of his predecessors are. He remains fairly objective when he discusses the poet's religious opinions. Disagreeing with Milton on several questions of theology, he nevertheless manages to alienate this disagreement from his evaluation of the man. The critics that are to follow Keightley will be more scholarly in their approach than he. Still, they will develop tendencies which are evident in his critical biography of Milton.

John Tulloch was mentioned in Chapter One in connection with his advocacy of the idea that Milton was a Puritan and little else. He probably had more to do with the propagation of such an idea than any other critic.
His account of Milton in *English Puritanism and Its Leaders* (1861) is the most extended exposition of Milton's alleged Puritanism that has ever been published. Tulloch interprets the term "Puritanism" as an attempt to realize the divine ideal during this life:

Puritanism was not merely a mode of theological opinion, such as we discern in the Westminster Confession and the prevailing theological literature of the time. It was a phase of national life and feeling, which, while resting on a religious foundation, extended itself to every aspect of the Anglo-Saxon thought and society. Its distinguishing and comprehensive principle was the adaption of State and Church to a divine mode. In all things it sought to realize a divine ideal.

It follows that Milton must have been a Puritan:

He never outlived the dream of moulding both the Church and society around him into an authoritative mode of the divine. In all his works he is aiming at this. He is seeking to bring down heaven to earth in some arbitrary and definite shape. . . . Even when he is least Puritan, in the limited doctrinal sense of the word—as in his writings on divorce—he is eminently Puritan in spirit.

We who live in the "enlightened" twentieth century can of course quarrel with Tulloch's definition of Puritanism. The word actually means a great deal more than he allows. But granting that his definition may be accurate, we still do not have to agree that Milton was a Puritan. Tulloch, like so many of his contemporaries, really misses the essence of Milton's philosophy. The poet never believed in Utopias, and consequently he did not feel that mortal man could ever establish a divine order.

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65 *op. cit.*, pp. 242f.
Milton did believe that man can improve himself by striving toward the goal of perfection. The essence of *Paradise Lost* is that man fell from a state of perfection through his own volition and thereby upset the order of the universe. Man is to be redeemed by following the divine model or sacrifice which God provided, not by erecting a Utopia on this earth. But whether Tulloch is correct is neither here nor there so far as the present study is concerned. The fact remains that with this critic an elaborate exposition of the Puritan Milton is made.

Tulloch mentions the unfavorable aspects of Milton's character, but he does not censure the man. In general, he remains sympathetic. He notes that Milton could be ill-tempered and that he often lacked tact, but he concludes his interpretation with praise:

> But if there are other characters that more elicit our affection, there is none in our past history that more compels our homage. We behold in him at once the triumph of genius and the unwavering control of principle. He is the intellectual hero of a great cause; he is also the purest and loftiest, if not the broadest, poetic spirit in our literature. If there is harshness mingling with his strength, and a certain narrowness and rigidity in his grandeur, the most varied of tastes and the widest oppositions of opinion have yet combined to recognize in John Milton one of the highest impersonations of poetic and moral greatness of which our race can boast.

It is worth mentioning that Tulloch in no way intends to give the term "Puritan" an unfavorable meaning. Throughout his book on the Puritan leaders he reveals his genuine admiration for them. And even though many Victorians accept Tulloch's central thesis concerning Milton's Puritanism,

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67 Ibid., p. 278.
Milton the man does not decline in their estimation. Their acceptance of Tulloch's opinion simply means that a change in emphasis has taken place.

David Masson's opinions on Milton are rather elusive. In his long biography of the poet, he seems to accept from the first page Milton's greatness as a personality. He is not especially concerned with the problems usually discussed by the critics, such as the justness of the poet's treatment of his contemporaries. He is primarily interested in narrating the story and letting the reader decide for himself. That Masson does have a sentimental attitude toward the man, however, is made plain in a short biography of Milton which he wrote for a collection of lives of the poets in 1894. The entire account of Milton is a romanticized biography reminiscent of the one written by De Quincey in 1838. Masson portrays Milton as a sympathetic, kind man and makes no mention of the poet's supposed ill temper.

Masson's chief contribution to the over-all interpretation of the man Milton, if we may call it a contribution, is his insistence on the writer's Puritanism. The last sentence of the final volume on Milton's life is written to the effect that, above all, the writer of Paradise Lost should be remembered as a Puritan: "Only an unscholarly misconception of Puritanism, a total ignorance of the actual facts of its history, will ever seek, now or henceforward, to rob English Puritanism of Milton, or Milton of his

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68 David Masson et al., In the Footsteps of the Poets (London: Ibister, 1894), pp. 13-104.
At least three writers who published essays on Milton near the time of Masson's first volume reveal that they are in no way influenced by his conception of Milton. In a review of Masson's Life, Volume One, Walter Bagehot interprets the character of the author of Paradise Lost. Though not eulogistic, he defends Milton on the usual points of attack. He believes that Milton's knowledge of human nature is one of the poet's outstanding traits. Like some of the previous critics, Bagehot discusses the intellectual qualities of Milton and concludes that he was part ancient and part modern. The ancient aspect is reflected in the poet's simple art; the modern aspect, in his complex art. In no way does Bagehot interpret Milton as a Puritan. Writing in 1860, Arthur L. Windsor accepts Milton's greatness as a man per se. He notes that there was always a sort of condescension in Milton's attitude toward his contemporaries, but he attributes this to his subject's intellectual supremacy. Windsor sees two distinct entities in the man: "Milton, in fact, contrived a complete divorce between his two characters of poet and man of business. The secretary was never the poet, except in the embroidered richness of his official diction."  

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69 The Life of John Milton, VI, 840.  
70 Literary Studies, I, 173-220.  
71 Ethica: or, Characteristics of Men, Manners, and Books (London: Smith, Elder, 1860), pp. 51-111.  
72 Ibid., p. 75.
He is the lone critic of the Victorian era to make a statement to this effect. J. W. Morris' study is mainly an attempt to prove that Milton was no Arian. Consequently, much of his time is spent discussing the poet's theology. However, it is evident that his admiration for the man stems from the man's theology, which he believes is orthodox. Therefore, the two points are interwoven. Morris is a carry-over from the early Victorian tradition that Milton could do no wrong. The conclusion of his book is indicative of his approach: "O glorious Milton! Thy eloquence, thy mastery of truth, thy eagle scrutiny of shifting error, thy rush of argument, vehement and victorious, are needed here. Thyself to vindicate thyself." The opinions expressed by these three critics in no way indicate a decline in the Victorian estimate of Milton the man.

J. R. Seeley's remarks on Milton are very significant. Coming after Masson's long biography had been begun and after Tulloch's exposition of the Puritan Milton had been published, they are all the more important because they reaffirm the idea that Milton was a man of the Renaissance. In one instance, Seeley does mention Milton's Puritanism, but his definition of the word is not in accord with Tulloch's meaning. Seeley sees Puritanism as a kind of offspring from the Renaissance. He interprets Milton as a Renaissance man because of the poet's appeal to antiquity, especially Greek and Latin antiquity:

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74 Ibid., p. 116.
He is still, as much as ever, an ideal poet. He presents to us, not the world as it is, but grander and more glorious. . . . But his ideal is no longer the ideal of his own age. Nothing in habitual English life, nothing in the European life of a thousand years past, suggested the order of things presented in these poems. Yet the ideal is not original. . . . In his quarrel with the age he falls back upon antiquity. He revives the ancient world. His poems are the English Renaissance. 75

Then Seeley mentions Milton's specific Renaissance qualities:

And it may certainly be said of him, that first of all Englishmen he saw the ancient Greeks. Shakespeare had some notion of an ancient Roman, but the Greek was rediscovered for Englishmen by Milton. He is the founder of that school of classical revival which is represented in the present age by Mr. Matthew Arnold. But further, it is characteristic of Milton that he revives Greek and Jewish antiquity together. His genius, his studies, his travels, had made him a Greek, his Puritanism made him at the same time a Jew. In this Renaissance there is no taint of Paganism. Under the graceful classic forms there lives the sternest sense of duty, the most ardent spirit of sacrifice. 76

Such an interpretation of Milton is certainly at odds with Masson's concluding statement, quoted above, that Milton was the genius of Puritan England. Seeley would categorize him as the genius of the English Renaissance.

Seeley does not pass judgment on the traditional questions relative to Milton the man. He remains, on the whole, philosophical. The last paragraph of his essay on Milton's poetry, however, contains a statement pertaining to Milton's personality:


76Ibid., p. 413.
Let me collect in one closing sentence the features of this great character: a high ideal purpose maintained, a function discharged through life with unwavering consistency; austerity, but the austerity not of monks but of heroes; a temperament of uniform gladness, incapable of depression, yet also, as far as appears, entirely incapable of mirth, and supplying the place of mirth principally with music; lastly—resulting from such a temperament, ripened by such a life—the only poetical genius which has yet arisen in the Anglo-Saxon family, combining in Greek perfection greatness with grace.

In several respects, Seeley's criticism of the man Milton is unusual for 1869. Unlike many of the commentators, he has little interest in such subjects as the Mary Powell episode and Milton's alleged mistreatment of his daughters. Seeley interprets the man from his works and tries to establish him in a definite philosophical medium. Another unusual feature of Seeley's criticism is his lack of political bias. He neither lets Milton become his champion nor degrades him for his outspoken views. Finally, Seeley does not use Milton's religion as a yardstick for measuring the man.

The Reverend F. D. Maurice in an essay called "Milton" traces the poet's career in some detail and makes a few comments on his character. His opinions show that Tulloch's thesis has been accepted by some of the writers. Maurice declares that he is not "Milton's panegyrist or apologist."

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77 Ibid., p. 421.
78 The Friendship of Books, and Other Lectures (London: Macmillan, 1874), pp. 244-270.
79 Ibid., p. 263.
Yet, his essay contains some of the characteristics of a panegyric. He names Milton as a Puritan, but at the same time he lauds the poet's every act. This proves that the word "Puritan" suggests nothing unpleasant to at least some of the Victorians. Maurice's essay also is indicative that Milton's reputation as a man is holding its own as late as 1874, the year in which the volume containing the essay was published.

In 1875, J. D. Shairp composed an article in which he discusses Keble's criticism of Milton's poetry. Although Shairp is primarily interested in the poetry, the entire problem, as he sees it, is so closely connected with Milton the man that it deserves attention here, rather than in the chapter on the Victorian criticism of the poetry. Milton, to Shairp, is a secondary poet for several reasons. First, Milton was not a man of universal humanity; that is, his sympathies did not extend to every form of human life. Shairp argues that the poet was interested only in the select few. Second, Milton's chief source of strength, his vast and profound learning, of necessity shut him out from the universal appreciation of mankind. Third, Milton was by nature a polemicist. This characteristic impairs "his openness of heart, narrows his range of vision, and repels those--and they are many--who, like Keble, are neither Puritans nor Republicans." Milton's disposition as a man, then, limits the value of his poetry. Such an approach is unique in the annals of Milton criticism.


81 Ibid., p. 558.
in its outspokenness. Some of the previous critics who have been noticed disclaim the poetry because of their antipathy for the man, but none of them have been so bold as to admit such. Shairp's article, then, is a rather isolated approach to the man.

The Milton idolatry of early Victorian England lingers on in the works of E. H. Bickersteth. This critic differs from earlier ones, though, in that he qualifies his praise with perhaps cogent remarks on certain aspects of Milton's character. For example, he writes, "Milton is an illustrious example how God prepares the instruments which He designs to employ." But at the same time, he adds that "No impartial student of his life and writings would justify all he did or wrote--especially the blind self-love of his arguments for divorce, and the vehemence of his political partisanship." It is quite apparent that Bickersteth looks upon the man as a kind of model for the Victorians to follow. He is alarmed by the rise of the new science with its accompanying scepticism, and he feels that Milton's Paradise Lost might be able to lead his countrymen back to God. Bickersteth is still another critic whose remarks point in no way to a decline of the Miltonic tradition.

Matthew Arnold is somewhat contradictory in his interpretation of Milton the man. In his "A French Critic on Milton" he insists that Macaulay passes over Milton's temper too easily and declares that temper was a


83 Ibid., p. 255.

84 Ibid.
fundamental defect in the poet's character: "If there is a defect which, above all others, is signal in Milton, which injures him even intellectually, which limits him as a poet, it is the defect common to him, with the whole Puritan party to which he belonged--the fatal defect of temper." But in the same essay Arnold makes other statements which render it difficult to decide just what his opinion of the man is. For example, he states that Milton's poetic power comes from a moral quality in him--his pureness. Again, he writes of Milton's personal grandeur: "As a poet and as a man, Milton has a side of grandeur so high and rare, as to give him rank along the half-dozen greatest poets who have ever lived...." Regardless of what Arnold's precise opinions are, in the final analysis his essay reflects the late Victorian tendency to interpret Milton in shades, not in terms of absolutes. Arnold does see Milton as a Puritan, and in this instance, at least, the word seems to have an odious meaning. It could have no other connotation, however, to a man able to write a book like God and the Bible.

As I indicated in the previous chapter, Stopford Brooke is not chiefly concerned in his Milton with the man. He sketches the poet's life rather briefly and writes mostly of Paradise Lost and the theology of De Doctrina Christiana. Brooke makes no specific pronouncements relative to Milton's alleged Puritan qualities, but in one passage he declares, "It is plain from many of these propositions [i.e. dogmas in De Doctrina Christiana] that to

85 Quarterly Review, CIXIII (1877), 189.
86 Ibidd., p. 193.
call Milton Calvinistic is absurd." The coarseness of some of the passages in the prose is offensive to Brooke's delicate ear, but on the whole, he has a very high opinion of Milton the man. When he discusses the traditional points of disparagement, he is mild in his evaluation of Milton's behavior.

Mark Pattison shows that he has been influenced by the new science. Consequently, the main problem in his study is to determine the modernity of the poet's works, especially Paradise Lost. However, he accepts the tradition that Milton was an ill-tempered man, but he admires the man because of his art. Unlike Seeley, Pattison does not attempt to place Milton in a specific philosophical position. He believes that Milton was a Puritan, and he links most of the poetry to the Puritan tradition. For example, he interprets Samson Agonistes as a poem allegorizing the defeat of the Puritan cause. The size of his book, coupled with his reputation as a Miltonist, made it immediately attractive to the English public, and its influence in the propagation of the Milton-Puritan concept cannot be over-estimated. The book underwent numerous editions both in England and in the United states.

During the decade of the 1880's, contrasting views toward Milton persisted. Some of the critics continued to emphasize his unpleasant qualities, but the majority of them remained sympathetic. Writing in 1881, Herbert New notes what to him is a repugnant feature of the poet's mind. He

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88 Milton, p. 195.
89 "John Milton," Living Age, CXLVIII (1881), 515-525.
insists, "Still, there is one characteristic feature of Milton's mind which removes him from the admiration and sympathy of a considerable section of the religious world. This is his rigid, anti-sacerdotal spirit. Milton is essentially Protestant, and therefore, repugnant to all ritualists, whether Roman or Anglican.... Milton is both a Puritan and a heretic, and draws from his countrymen a less complete, though perhaps an intenser, worship than Shakespeare." 90 New goes on, however, to summarize Milton's entire career. In doing so, he reveals an intense admiration for the man. It is clear that the admiration stems from Milton's advocacy of English liberty. Thus, in spite of his initial statement, he cannot be classified as one of Milton's detractors. John 91 Dennis has an attitude toward Milton similar to New's. He states that Milton is more admired than loved but at the same time his admiration is fervent because of the sublime in the poet's nature.

An article by Theodore Hunt 92 relative to what Hunt describes as Milton's "doctrinal errors" is indicative of the effect which the heresies of De Doctrina Christiana had on the late Victorian conception of Milton the man. In this connection it should be remembered that some of the earlier detractors had capitalized on the heresies in order to defame the man. Hunt regrets that Milton ever wrote such a treatise on religion; but

90 Ibid., p. 515.
91 Heroes of Literature, pp. 126-128.
he adds that since it is Milton's, it must be approached with historical objectivity rather than with pious regret. He is concerned with the effect which the heresies had on Milton's private life and morals and concludes that they had little. Hunt insists that Milton remained a Christian in spite of the heresies: "Objectionable as his position was, so careful was he to avoid the extreme positions of the Deist and Socinian, that he adored Christ as his divine and personal savior." He declares further, "It is, however, a matter of rejoicing, explain the enigma as we may, that his character was so much better than his creed; that the errors which he held lay, after all, upon the surface of his thought, rather than deep down within him at the centre of his life. He was far more consistent than his own theory would allow." Although Hunt is an orthodox Christian himself, he appreciates the investigative spirit of the new science. He contends, however, that speculation can go too far, and he looks upon Milton as an example of a man who speculated beyond bounds. Hunt makes no suggestion as to the poet's Puritan qualities.

Writing in 1887, Augustine Birrell serves as an antidote to all the Milton detractors of the time. He defends Milton on two points. The first is in connection with the growing tendency to question the relevance of the poet's ideas to the problems of the nineteenth century. He especially

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93 Ibid., p. 264.
94 Ibid., p. 265.
finds fault with Arnold and Scherer, who have said, in effect, that
Paradise Lost is a monument to dead ideas. But the second point of
defense is of more importance in the present chapter than is the first.
Birrell defends Milton the man and insists that there is nothing in the
poet's biography to be ashamed of: "It is possible to dislike John Milton.
Men have been found able to do so, and Women too.... But there is nothing
sickening about his biography, for it is the life of one who early conse­
crated himself to the service of the highest Muses, who took labour and
intent study as his portion, who aspired himself to be a noble poem, who
Republican though he became, is what Carlyle called him, the moral king of
English literature." 96 This critic exemplifies a tendency that has been
at work for some time in the Victorian interpretations of the man Milton.
Quite obviously, he regards the traditional problems connected with Milton's
character as periphery, and, like Seeley, he has a philosophical approach
to the man.

Robert Newman 97 has little use for the poet's ideas, but he has a
great deal of respect for the man. He glances at Milton's personal life
only briefly, but he likes what he sees there. For example, he admires
Milton for taking Mary Powell back into his home. Newman, too, is interested
in a philosophical interpretation of the man. He declares that Milton had
the highest type of intellect. Although he does not interpret Milton as a

96 Ibid., p. 2.
97 John Milton: A Lecture, Read at Newton Hall, May, 1886 (London:
Reeves and Turner, 1889).
Puritan poet, he sees him as the poet of Protestantism. Milton, he maintains, "is above all things the poet of Protestantism. In him its revolutionary ardour, its individualism, its irrational crotchets, its impotency as a spiritual guide to every-day life are exemplified as he yielded to its forms or interpreted them to suit his own circumstances." Disagreeing with some of the Milton idolaters, he believes that the man lives because of his poetry: "But that poetry is the product of Milton, the deeply religious, yet free-thinking citizen, the man of much domestic misfortune, and blind for the last third of his life. It is stamped with his individuality throughout and its complete enjoyment is only possible to those who have the biographical key to its peculiarities." Newman interprets all of the poet's works in an autobiographical fashion.

Edward Dowden is another critic who emphasizes Milton the Puritan. In his first essay on the poetry, "The Idealism of Milton," he states that Milton was essentially a Puritan, akin to the Bunyan type. Such an attitude toward the man prompts him to interpret all of the works as a struggle between good and evil. For example, when he discusses Comus, he identifies the Lady with Milton. "There is much in the Lady," he insists, "which resembles the youthful Milton himself—he, the Lady of his college—and we may well believe that the great debate concerning temperance was not altogether dramatic...but was in part a record of passages in the poet's

98 Ibid., p. 4.
99 Ibid., p. 30.
100 Transcripts and Studies (London: Kegan, 1887), pp. 454-473. The article was first printed in the Contemporary Review, XIX (1872), 198-209. My references are to the 1887 edition.
own spiritual history." Dowden again names Milton as a Puritan. This time, however, he says that all of the poet's works revolve around the idea of liberty and obedience. The word "Puritan" certainly is not odious to Dowden. To him, in Milton's case it signifies a revolt against authority, and he interprets the revolt as essentially good. Dowden maintains that the poet's fight for English liberty is the keystone on which his fame rests. But he is not attempting to make Milton any kind of champion for the cause of social legislation as the earlier Victorians had done.

The comments made by Richard Garnett in his study are important. Garnett incorporates attitudes toward the man which are neither in the tradition of Milton idolatry nor in the stream of Milton detraction. The nature of his study forces Garnett to dwell on the questionable aspects of Milton's career. On each point he remains fairly objective. He does not condone Milton's every act; still he avoids criticizing the man too severely. Garnett readily admits that Milton was at times affiliated with the Puritan party, but he cannot classify the man as one of them because of the existence of De Doctrina Christiana. For Garnett, the heresies expounded in that work would separate him from the Puritans. He does not go so far as to insist, like Seeley, that Milton was strictly a man of the Renaissance. Rather, he sees Milton as a blend of the Puritan and the

102 Puritan and Anglican, pp. 133-163, 164-196.
103 The Life of John Milton, passim.
Cavalier. For example, when discussing De Doctrina Christiana, Garnett declares, "His exposition of social duty tempers Puritan strictness with Cavalier high-breeding, and the urbanity of the man of the world." At the end of his book, Garnett writes his final evaluation of Milton's character. In this evaluation he tries to equate the poet and the man. He feels that the two have been separated beyond justification. Garnett quotes the common Victorian conception of Milton: "He is looked upon as a great, good, reverend, austere, not very amiable, and not very sensitive man. The author and the book are thus set at variance, and the attempt to conceive the character as a whole results in confusion and inconsistency." Then Garnett states his own opinion regarding the character of the man and poet:

To us, on the contrary, Milton, with all his strength of will and regularity of life, seems as perfect a representative as any of his comppeers of the sensitiveness and impulsive passion of the poetical temperament. We appeal to his remarkable dependence upon external prompting for his compositions; to the rapidity of his work under excitement, and his long intervals of unproductiveness; to the heat and fury of his polemics; to the simplicity with which, fortunately for us, he inscribes small particulars of his own life side by side with weightiest utterances on Church and State; to the amazing precipitancy of his marriage and its rupture; to his sudden pliability upon appeal to his generosity; to his romantic self-sacrifice when his country demanded his eyes from him; above all, to his splendid ideals of regenerated human life, such as poets alone either conceive or realize. To overlook all this is to affirm that Milton wrote great poetry without being truly a poet.

104 Ibid., p. 192.
105 Ibid., p. 196.
106 Ibid.
Such an interpretation of the man in no way signifies a decline in the Miltonic tradition. On the contrary, it indicates a more healthy and sane attitude toward Milton than was present during the first twenty-five years under consideration in this study. Garnett is fairly representative of the late Victorian interpretation of Milton. Instead of heaping upon the poet every sort of praise, he approaches him with an examining point of view. Conversely, he can view the man's politics and religion with sufficient perspective to avoid both detraction and excessive praise on that score.

The studies on Milton which were produced during the last decade of the nineteenth century indicate that no clear-cut verdict was reached by the Victorians on the man. Although to most of the critics he remains a man deserving admiration, to some he is still the odious Puritan. Frederick Pollock, by far no idolater, has high praise for the man. Concerning the problem of Milton's Puritanism, he tries to take both sides. He states that Milton was a man of the Renaissance and at the same time a Puritan poet. To Pollock, Milton blends the classical forms which were revived during the Renaissance with the Puritan matter of the seventeenth century.

J. J. Astorman, writing in 1897, has practically the same interpretation of Milton's Puritanism as Pollock. He insists, "Paradise Lost is the product of two great movements--Puritanism and the Renaissance. Or,

to put the same thought in another way, the conception of the poem is Hebraic, its form and imagery are classical. 109

An essay written in 1898 by Frederic W. Farrar, the dean of Canterbury, is reminiscent of the early type of Victorian criticism of Milton the man. Farrar has nothing but praise for his subject. A staunch Anglican, he admits that Milton has always been to him a great example of the noble man. He writes, "To me, for years, not only have the poems of Milton been a delight, but his character has been an example, and his thoughts a strong consolation and support.... Milton was not only one of the world's mightiest poets, but also a supremely noble man." 111 Farrar, like the early Victorians, discusses the traditional points of censure and comes to Milton's defense on every question. For example, when he mentions Milton's daughters, Farrar declares that they "cheated and pilfered him in his blindness, and lit the fires of hell upon his hearth." 112

This critic lists the characteristics of the youthful Milton as steadfastness of purpose, resolute purity of life, and lofty self-respect. The qualities of the aged Milton are named as indomitable fortitude and unswerving faith. Farrar makes one of the most effective rebuttals of the

109 Ibid., p. 54.
111 Ibid., p. 183.
112 Ibid., p. 207.
idea of the Puritan Milton that appeared during the century. It is all the more important because it comes from a man of high position in the church which Milton wished to have reformed or abolished. Hilton to Farrar was no ordinary Puritan: "The ordinary Puritan hated cathedrals, and loved 'to break down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers....' The ordinary Puritan affected severe precision in dress. Milton liked what was comely. The ordinary Puritan anathematized stage-plays. Milton wrote masques to be acted, and liked to refresh himself at the theatre." 113

Farrar is the last critic to be discussed who wrote before the publication of Walter Raleigh's Milton in 1900. And Raleigh has already been mentioned in this chapter in connection with Milton's Victorian detractors. As we have seen, Raleigh is wrong in holding that Milton is not sympathized with by the men of the nineteenth century. Yet detractor though he is, Raleigh is somehow awed by the character of Milton, wrong though he is:

Put the qualities that make Milton a poor boon-companion are precisely those which combine to raise his style to an unexampled loftiness, a dignity that bears itself easily in society greater than human. To attain to this height it was needful that there should be no aimless expiation of the intellect, no facile diffusion of the sympathies over the wide field of human activity and human character. All the strength of mind and heart and will that was in Milton went into the process of raising himself. 114

In summary of the Victorian interpretations of Milton the man, we have

113 Ibid., p. 191.
seen that the early critics approached Milton with an air of reverence. Some of them admired his piety, while others glorified his fight for English liberty. Throughout the earlier part of the period, the writers discussed the traditional questions that arise when Milton the man is discussed. Most of them defended the poet wholeheartedly. As the century progressed, however, the comments on Milton became more objective. For one thing, critics began to interpret the man in more human terms than previous critics had done. They suggested that at times Milton was ill tempered. But his alleged ill temper did not cause them to respect him less. When discussing his politics and religion, they were less inclined to make him their champion than were the early critics. After 1855, the writers became more philosophical in their interpretations of the man. Tulloch, for one, saw Milton as the great Puritan. Then Masson and Pattinson, among others, popularized this point of view. At the same time, writers like McBurnie and Seeley stressed the poet's Renaissance qualities. The century closed with no agreement reached on the problem. By 1917, enough people had been influenced by Tulloch et al., however, for Professor Hanford to publish his article on Milton the humanist. As a whole, the century remained sympathetic toward the man, even though there were a few dissonant voices here and there. In no way can a case for a decline in Milton's stature be made. What it all amounted to was a reinterpretation of the man.
CHAPTER III

THE VICTORIAN EVALUATIONS OF MILTON'S POETRY

The objective of the present chapter is to discuss the Victorian criticism of Milton the poet. During the Victorian age, there were numerous critics who discussed Milton's status as a poet in general. Their comments will form the basis of the first section in the chapter. However, when the Victorians thought of Milton's poetry, they for the most part had Paradise Lost in mind. Consequently, the bulk of the chapter will be devoted to an exposition of their remarks on the long epic poem. A special problem in this connection was the Victorian attempts to name the hero of the poem. Many chose Satan as the hero; others suggested that the central character is Adam. But the period was not void, by any means, of criticism of the other poems. Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes took second place; still, there was ample comment on these two shorter poems. The former poem suffered, perhaps, because it was constantly compared with Paradise Lost; the latter poem never received the attention it deserved as poetry on account of the numerous attempts to interpret it strictly as autobiography. Lycidas also was evaluated by many of the critics. There were reactions to Johnson's condemnation of that poem throughout the age. Remarks on the poems other than Paradise Lost will thus form the third section of the present chapter.

I maintain as a fundamental premise that Milton did not decline in status as a poet during the Victorian era. Long before 1825, Milton had been accepted by the English public as one of the nation's great poets.
He had come to hold a place next to Shakespeare in the hierarchy of world literature. The Victorians never let his position wane. Indeed, in 1900 his standing was more firmly secure than it had ever been before. The reasons, however, for his poetic eminence were not the same as they had been in 1825. As in the interpretations of Milton the man, a shift in emphasis had taken place. In 1825, Milton was looked upon mainly as a poet with a great religious message to impart to his fellow countrymen. In 1900, he was admired for his superior artistry, for his grand style. Some of the critics, though, still took to heart the thesis of Paradise Lost and interpreted the poem as an antidote to the increasing scepticism of the era.

This shift in emphasis should not, I believe, be considered with regret. Milton's style and technique had never received the attention and analysis they deserved. Critically speaking, it was not enough to state that Milton had been the supreme master of blank verse technique and let the problem rest there. The early Victorians did just that. It was inevitable that the late Victorians would give more attention to the poet's artistry. The sceptical attitude toward the ideas of Paradise Lost was likewise inevitable. It was natural that men who had questioned the truths of the Bible should also question the ideas expressed in Paradise Lost. Happily, Paradise Lost withstood the questioning attitude of many sceptical minds. Walter Raleigh did not express the opinion of the majority when he wrote in 1900 that Paradise Lost is a monument to dead ideas. And in our own century Douglas Bush has sufficiently demonstrated in Paradise Lost in Our Time, the age-old
problems of mankind.

Many of Milton's Victorian critics took the poet's pre-eminence for granted, but some of the others commented on his status as a poet in comparison with other writers of verse. The opinions of the latter group are important for our present purposes because they indicate that Milton continued to hold his own as the foremost English poet, with the possible exception of Shakespeare. One of the first to write about Milton's standing was the inevitable Sir Egerton Brydges.\(^1\) He compares Milton with other poets according to the traditional points of criticism, the fable, the characters, the sentiment, and the language. Of course he is thinking mainly of Paradise Lost when he makes the comparison. Concerning the fable, Brydges states that before the sun of Milton all other stars are paled. He holds that even Homer and Virgil cannot stand before "the divine brightness of the bard of angels."\(^2\) When he speaks of Milton's characters, Brydges compares them with Dryden's and Pope's and insists that Milton has more sublimity of poetic invention. Dryden's and Pope's characters, he declares, are mere portraits, having neither the magnificence of Satan and his brother rebels because he is more in conformity with the moral and intellectual traits of the characters represented than are other poets. Brydges lets Dryden and Pope suffer further when he writes of Milton's language. The couplets of the former writers are too monotonous. At the same time, Brydges admits that Milton's language is too sublime for the taste of the common intellect,

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1 The Life of John Milton, pp. 239-243.

2 Ibid., p. 239.
but he declares that it is the duty of everyone to attain a cultivated
education so that he may study Milton's verse with labor and care.

Thomas De Quincey was another critic who upheld Milton's pre-eminence
in his essay on Milton's poetry. His central thesis is that "Milton is
not an author amongst authors, not a poet amongst poets, but a power amongst
powers; and the Paradise Lost is not a book amongst books, not a poem
amongst poems, but a central force amongst forces." To substantiate this
idea, De Quincey compares Milton and Samuel Butler. He argues that if Butler
had failed to write Hudibras, another poet could have expressed the Butlerian
type of satire in a poem similar to Hudibras. The same would not have been
ture, however, had Milton failed to compose Paradise Lost. Quite obviously,
De Quincey looks upon Milton as the only English poet capable of expressing
the sentiments of that epic: "If the man had failed, the power would have
failed." This critic states further that excepting the inspired Bible and
Prometheus Bound, there is no composition except Paradise Lost which cannot
be challenged as constitutionally sublime. "In Milton only," he maintains,
"first and last, is the power of the sublime revealed. In Milton only does
this agency blaze and glow as a furnace kept to a white heat without inter-
mission and without collapse."

4 Ibid., p. 777.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., p. 778.
De Quincey's general view toward Milton was continued in the writings of F. A. Cox, who was interested in Paradise Lost both as a sacred poem and as a work of art. Concerning the artistic aspect, Cox states that the poem is incomparable, that it is as great as Homer's epics. As a sacred poem, Paradise Lost makes other religious poems sink into insignificance because its theme "comes home...to every man's business and bosom." Cox adds that the poem possesses a universality which comprehends the moral condition and future destiny of all mankind. He observes that Homer's poetry inspires us to a love of heroism, while Milton's great epic animates us with Christian piety. Thus Cox places Milton on a pedestal to himself because of the poet's universal appeal.

Leigh Hunt makes a few appropriate comments concerning Milton's status as a poet. In his anthology of English poets (1844), he classifies Milton as a very great poet, second only to Dante and Shakespeare. He places Milton second to these two writers because, contrary to Cox and De Quincey, he believes that Milton does not have the universal appeal which they have. Hunt is one of the first writers to insist that Milton's "gloomy religious creed removed him still farther from the universal gratitude and delight of mankind." Hunt makes further observations on Milton's status as a poet in

8 Ibid., p. 242.
10 Ibid., p. 172.
another essay, "Wordsworth and Milton." He believes that Wordsworth's sonnets are superior to Milton's, but he looks upon Milton as the better poet. He regards Wordsworth as a mere "dreamer in the grass" when that poet is placed beside Milton. Objecting to both writers because of their sectarianism and "narrow theological views," Hunt nevertheless admits that Milton widened his opinions as he grew older, while Wordsworth always displayed a timidity and fear "of a certain few, such as Milton never feared." Although Hunt sharply disagrees with some critics as to Milton's universal appeal, still he regards Milton as one of the better poets of the world.

An anonymous critic, writing in 1853, compares Milton, Dante, and Aeschylus. Unlike Hunt, this critic does not place any poet over Milton. He interprets the works of the three writers as embodying one central idea, the freedom of the will of man and man's fallibility. This critic holds that every educated Englishman should know Milton's poetry by heart. Milton and Shakespeare, he argues "are, indeed, everything to us, which Homer ever was to the Greeks,—our text-books of the nobler knowledge of the humanities. It is unnecessary that we should cite instances from a volume which lies with the Bible in every English home, and which is the best, often the only, literary treasure of the common man."

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12 Ibid., p. 131.


14 Ibid., p. 649.
David McBurnie, as we might expect from what has been said of his criticism already, allows no poet to occupy a position higher than Milton's. He states that Milton's hell is greater than Dante's because the Italian poet's hell is only earth transformed into torment. Paradise Lost to him is a more unified piece of art than the Inferno. He declares also that Milton has more imagination than Dante. McBurnie objects to the often-repeated assertion that Milton's Satan is patterned after Tasso's Lucifer; he regards Satan as a far superior character to Lucifer. This critic is fond of Milton's verse not only because of the imaginative skills displayed in it, but also because of Milton's ability to color "tinsel with hues of gold." He places Milton above the other poets because the seventeenth-century writer has an unfailing level of style. Milton, McBurnie argues, did not have flashes of genius and then sink into mediocrity. He consistently maintained a dignity and grandeur in his poetry that other writers have been unable to match.

In the previous chapters of this study, Thomas Keightley has been mentioned as a transitional critic. The transitional nature of his Account of the Life, Writings, and Opinions of John Milton (1855) is borne out again when he discusses Milton's qualities as a writer. Keightley takes it for granted that Milton is second only to Shakespeare. Yet he does not deliver a panegyric on Milton's rank. Instead, he discusses "the qualities of the

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16 Ibid., p. 317.
writer's poetry, and he criticizes his subject on one or two points. Keightley likes the logical order and sequence of Milton's thoughts. He also admires the simple and idiomatic language in the earlier poems. He notes, however, that some of the academic poems have an unnatural and artificial style from which Milton soon emancipated himself. The early poems alone, Keightley believes, would have insured Milton's immortality as a poet. Quite obviously, Keightley admires Paradise Lost more for its content than its art. Although he discusses the qualities of Milton's verse, Keightley does not choose to analyze it in detail. Such an analysis was reserved for some of the later critics.

After Keightley, several other critics discussed Milton's status as a poet in general. J. R. Seeley states that "we do right to allow no name to be placed altogether above his, and we should study him as one possessing a secret into which we have not yet been initiated." William M. Rossetti writes of Milton in a manner which we would expect from that romantic critic: "Anyone who has even an inkling of self-knowledge must feel, two centuries after the death of Milton, that to pretend to say much about the qualities of his poetry would be an impertinence. Admiration and eulogium are long ago discounted: objections sound insolent, and are at any rate superfluous. One's portion is to read and reverence." Stopford Brooke concludes that

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19 Lives of Famous Poets, p. 77.
Milton had no predecessor or follower, that his name shines only less brightly than Shakespeare's. John Dennis insists that Milton is the most sublime of English poets, that next to Wordsworth, he is the most intense. George Saintsbury evaluates Milton as one of the few great poets of the world, falling short of Homer and Dante "chiefly because he expresses less of that humanity, both universal and quintessential, which they, and especially the last, put into verse." Saintsbury sees narrowness as the poet's chief fault and intense individuality as his chief virtue. Francis Thompson, writing in 1897, declares that Milton was "one of the most perfect geniuses ever born." Then in 1899, an anonymous critic argues that Milton was the "first and supreme poet who introduced a high, serious, and noble strain into our literature and life, clothing it in the most perfect artistic forms ever conceived among us, and permeated it with an idealism sane and... thoroughly English on the one hand, while yet religious on the other."  

From all these comments on Milton the poet's status, several conclusions can be drawn. The most obvious is that the poet continued to rank very high in the estimation of the Victorians, especially when he was compared with other poets. Some of the earlier critics laud him for his universal appeal, while a few of the later critics believe that he is lacking in this respect. But even a writer like Saintsbury, who is very critical of the man, cannot

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21Heroes of Literature, p. 127.
22A History of Elizabethan Literature, p. 329.
23"John Milton," The Academy, LI (1897), 357-358.
refrain from giving the poet his due when he speaks of his rank in comparison with other poets. Even though John Cooke was writing after 1900, he perhaps sums up the attitude of the average Victorian toward the poet when he insists:

Shakespeare's not excepted, no name is better known in the households of the land than Milton's. The popular Protestant conception of hell is largely Miltonic. The nursery teaching of the temptation in Eden, the rebellion of Satan and his punishment are traditionally Miltonic also, and much of the Puritan tone and colour of the sacred themes treated of in the great epic have entered into the religious thought of the ages from the poet's death until now.

We turn our attention now to the criticism of Paradise Lost between 1825 to 1900. First, I shall discuss the remarks pertaining to the poem which were of a general nature. For purposes of convenience, the critics will be divided into three groups. The first group consists of those critics who wrote during the early part of our period, from 1825 to 1854. The second group is made up of those writers who produced their criticism between 1855 and 1880, and the last group includes those who wrote between 1881 and the end of the century. From the general criticism we shall proceed to a consideration of remarks concerning the style and versification of Paradise Lost. I shall mention the different interpretations in connection with the hero of the epic poem.

Both Channing and the anonymous critic of the Edinburgh Review set

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26 Ibid., p. 5.
27 Remarks on the Character and Writings of John Milton, passim.
28 XLII (1825), 31-64.
the pace, so to speak, for the type of critical remarks on Paradise Lost that would be produced between 1825 and 1855. The anonymous critic has only praise for Paradise Lost. That poem, he holds, is unparalleled both in sublimity and in beauty in the history of fiction. The critic applauds the imagination displayed in the poem. For him, the descriptions of hell, the characters of the poem, and the "richness of the Arcadian landscape" remain unsurpassed in world literature. Channing, like the critic of the Edinburgh Review, admires the poem because of its many beauties. He especially likes the tranquil bliss displayed by Adam and Eve before the fall: "Their souls, unsated and untainted, find an innocent joy in the youthful creation, which spreads and smiles around them. Their mutual love is deep, for it is the love of young, unworn, unexhausted hearts, which meet in each other the only human objects on whom to pour forth their fulness of affection...." Channing does not attempt to criticize the poem philosophically. He is interested only in its beauties. It is quite natural for him, however, to concentrate his attention on the part of the poem which takes place before the fall, Unitarian that he is.

After these two initial essays, the tradition of eulogistic criticism was continued by Sir Egerton Brydges. It should be stated here, however, that Brydges' contributions to the study of Paradise Lost are negative, rather than positive, for Brydges is more interested in refuting previous critics, especially Johnson, than in making evaluations of his own. Brydges

first deals with Hayley and Bishop Newton as critics of the epic poem. 30

Hayley, he insists, had an amiable enthusiasm, but his style was languid, often sickly, and full of colloquial and feminine superlatives. Brydges evidently is not aware that he is guilty of committing the same offense. He states further that Bishop Newton was feeble and unoriginal as a critic of Paradise Lost. Then Brydges devotes two chapters to a discussion of Addison and Johnson as critics of the poem. 31 Not willing to make any concessions to the merits of Johnson's remarks on Paradise Lost, Brydges argues that Johnson was entirely unoriginal, that he borrowed most of his criticism from Addison. He censures both critics for taking exception to Milton's spirit world and to Adam and Eve before the fall. But as a whole, Brydges likes what Addison has to say about the poem, especially the critic's remarks relative to the war in heaven. When he makes his own statements concerning Paradise Lost, Brydges simply declares that it is one of the world's great poems. Milton's own life was a poem, he argues, and the critic adds that while the poet was composing Paradise Lost, he "battled with the angels, and lived in the garden of Eden." 32

Perhaps a word should be said at this point about Brydges' criticism of Milton in general. It has already been shown in this study that he is chiefly concerned with refuting Johnson's every statement on Milton. In general, he is unfair to Johnson. Some of Johnson's opinions on Paradise Lost

32 Ibid., p. 209.
itively sound. The crux of the matter lay in Brydges' general theories. He was a romantic, having cast aside the neo-classical shield during the eighteenth century. He and Johnson, then, were to opposing principles from the beginning. Brydges did make one ant statement in connection with Johnson, to the effect that Johnson ally unfit to criticize Milton. Brydges had no objections to remarks on Dryden and Pope because those poets had written to the rules which Johnson adhered to. In making this distinction was, without doubt, ahead of his time, for it took most critics years to realize the truth of what he had said.

his study of Milton, William Carpenter was not primarily interested poetry. He wrote the study, in fact, to compensate for what he termed ignorance of the political years of the poet. Yet he makes a few s concerning Paradise Lost. He observes, "It would be out of the to attempt any thing like a criticism or analysis of this epic uffice it to say, that for grandeur of conception, fertility of, profundity and variety of learning, and sublimity of language, et equalled by any production in any language, in ancient or modern

Moreover, Carpenter’s interpretation of the meaning of Paradise is a peculiar twist for the time in which he is writing. Disregarding gious interpretations set forth by most of the earlier critics, he s the epic mainly as a political poem. Milton, he holds, never

33 The Life and Times of John Milton, passim.
34 Ibid., p. 102.
ceased to long for his country's emancipation. Carpenter believes that this fact is discernible in his long epic poem: "This is evident from many passages in Paradise Lost; the great object of which, in truth, was to exhibit the different effects of liberty and tyranny--to trace natural and social evil to their source in human perversity and wickedness, and thus 'justify the ways of God to man.'"\(^{35}\) Such criticism of the poem, of course, is to be fairly common in late Victorian England, but it is unusual for 1836.

Stanhope Busby,\(^{36}\) like many of his contemporary critics, summarizes the entire action of Paradise Lost. In a way, he continues the tradition of idolatry, for he pays a great deal of attention to the beauties of the purple passages. However, he finds a basic flaw in the construction of the epic of the fall of man. The flaw is in connection with the various digressions in the poem. Busby insists that the episodes related by means of the "flash-back" are too remote from the events celebrated in the poem and that they are not sufficiently incidental to its catastrophe. He argues that when the continuity of the action is broken, the reader's train of thought is destroyed. The perfect poem, he believes, carries the reader on from the beginning to the end. The digressions in Paradise Lost, Busby declares, "are streams that branch from, rather than flow into the tide of the story; and although deep and grand in themselves, they do not add to the

\(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 163.

\(^{36}\) Lectures on English Poetry, pp. 55-105.
waters of the main channel, but rather diminish their volume before they reach their destiny."

Such criticism is especially curious, deriving as it does from a man of Busby's stature. He evidently is not aware of the tradition that an epic must begin in the midst of things. Furthermore, he evidently has not read the poem carefully, for all of the digressions are closely related to the central purpose of Paradise Lost. The digression concerning the war in heaven is related to Milton's purpose, for example, because it is intended to prepare Adam for the temptation and at the same time to inform the reader more about the ways of God and the nature of Satan and his cohorts.

The criticism made by Alfred A. Fry in 1838 is strongly reminiscent of Macaulay and Channing. In other words, Fry delivers a panegyric. He believes that Paradise Lost is superior to anything Homer or Virgil ever wrote. In fact, it stands alone in the writings of men because of the "awful sublimity, and the vastness of imagination and majesty of thought displayed by it...." Fry is one of the first of the Victorians to notice Milton's use of sources in the composition of the epic. Moreover, his awareness of the sources does not diminish his appreciation for the poem: "...the images and ideas were taken by Milton in stucco and returned in marble." Fry also admires the poem because of the character of Satan.

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37 Ibid., pp. 94f.
38 A Lecture on the Writings...of John Milton, passim.
39 Ibid., p. 46.
40 Ibid., p. 47.
He asks, "Where shall we look for another Satan?" Although Fry contributes but little to the body of criticism pertaining to *Paradise Lost*, his comments are significant because they indicate to us that the tradition of Milton idolatry, so far as the poetry is concerned, lingers on in the minds of some of the early Victorian critics.

Thomas De Quincey's essay on Milton which appeared in *Blackwood's* (1839) has already been mentioned in this chapter in connection with his comment on Milton's status as a poet in general. In this same essay, however, De Quincey writes specifically of *Paradise Lost* when he defends Milton against Addison and Johnson on two counts. The first is in connection with the poet's supposed too ambitious display of pedantry in that epic. De Quincey observes that the critics themselves displayed "broadly the very perfection of ignorance, as measured against the perfection of what may be called poetic science." The second charge dealt with by De Quincey is the often-repeated assertion by pious Christians that Milton blended pagan and Christian forms in *Paradise Lost*. He answers this charge by stating that to Milton, the false gods of heathen antiquity were the fallen angels: "They are not false, therefore, in the sense of being unreal, baseless, and having a merely fantastical existence, like our European fairies, but as having drawn aside mankind from a pure worship." This interpretation of Milton's fallen gods has never been challenged by subsequent critics of the

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41 *Ibid.*; Fry identifies Satan as the hero.


poet. De Quincey, therefore, made a positive contribution to Milton scholarship when he cleared the air of misconceptions concerning Milton's blending of pagan and Christian deities.

Henry Hallam's *Introduction to the Literature of Europe* made its appearance in 1839, the same year in which De Quincey wrote his celebrated essay on Milton. Hallam made a few comments on the poet's versification and on his Satan, but those comments will be considered in their appropriate place in this chapter. Concerning *Paradise Lost* in general, Hallam states that Milton's subject is the finest ever chosen for heroic poetry, and he believes that this subject is handled by the poet with remarkable skill. Nevertheless, Hallam finds a few flaws in the epic poem. He feels that the epic catalogs are sometimes merely ornamental and displaced. Hallam also repeats the charge that Milton is pedantic in some places. But he adds, "The faults, however, of *Paradise Lost* are in general less to be called idiosyncrasies of a mighty genius. The verse of Milton is sometimes wanting in grace, and almost always in ease; but what better can be said of his prose."  

Hallam was highly regarded as a critic in his own day, as numerous references to his *Introduction* will testify. However, his remarks on *Paradise Lost* do not in themselves justify the rank he held among his contemporaries. Perhaps he excelled more when he evaluated other poets. He is

44. *My references are to the fourth edition (New York: Crowell, 1880), 11, 224-233.*

important for our present purposes in that he shows that a more critical attitude toward *Paradise Lost* is being adopted by some of the critics.

Walter Savage Landor wrote several imaginary conversations on Milton. One in particular, "Southey and Landor," pertains to *Paradise Lost*. Written in 1846, the conversation is an attempt to note the blemishes in the epic. Landor states that the poem has many more blemishes than Johnson noticed. For the most part, the colloquy consists of statements pertaining to lines Landor does not like. His opinions are highly subjective. For instance, he makes the statement, "I wish however he had omitted the 46th and 47th verses, and also the 60th, 61st, 62nd, and 63rd," and does not state precisely why he would strike these lines from *Paradise Lost*. He follows the same logic when he insists that he would omit the invocation to Book III. Of course, this is criticism at its worst. Few Victorians would follow Landor's method. He does indicate, however, that he has a high opinion of the poem in general: "Adverse as I am to everything relating to theology, and especially the view of it thrown open by this poem, I recur to it incessantly as the noblest specimen in the world of eloquence, harmony, and genius."  

46 The *Works of Walter Savage Landor*. Editor, T. Earle Welby (London: Chapman and Hall, 1927), V, 230-334. Samuel Roberts' *Milton Unmasked* (1844) comes chronologically between Hallam's and Landor's contributions. However, I have omitted discussion of it here. Roberts' general attitude toward *Paradise Lost* has been made sufficiently clear in Chapter Two. His remarks on the poem, moreover, are abuse, not criticism.


An approach to *Paradise Lost* such as that pursued by Landor could not remain unchallenged. Thomas De Quincey replied to Landor in 1853, in an essay which he chose to call "Milton versus Southey and Landor." De Quincey easily refutes Landor. Concerning the "objectionable" passages, the former critic declares, "You might as well tax Mozart with harshness in the divinest passages of 'Don Giovanni,' as Milton with any such offence against metrical science. Be assured, it is yourself that do not read with understanding, not Milton." De Quincey does not believe that Milton was incapable of making a slip, but he feels that Landor has displayed lack of caution in making such a blanket condemnation of so many of the poet's lines. He looks upon Milton's poetry as he thinks one should regard a dead lion in the forest. The lion may seem dead, but he may only be sleeping. After this rebuttal, Landor made no further efforts to condemn Milton's lines.

As they were in respect to Milton the man, Edwin Paxton Hood's comments on *Paradise Lost* are among the last to exemplify the eulogistic approach toward the poem. Hood writes with the purpose of proving that Milton should be the "darling, the Eikon Basilike of all young men;" therefore, it is understandable when he writes of the epic in flowing terms. He insists that the design of the poem is "the most superhuman that ever filled the mind of a poet, the design of every other mighty epic looks tame when compared with

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50 Ibid., p. 467.


52 Ibid., p. ix.
This design is superhuman, he insists, because Milton portrays a world of spirit, a world without sin, and a world changed by sin. Milton had to exert more imagination than any other poet in order to depict such scenes. Hood's chapter on Paradise Lost is little more than a list of the beauties in the poem. For example, when he describes Milton's Eden, Hood writes, "But Eden—it is a wilderness of beauty; what a perfect opulence of sweets!"

The Victorian critical temper was changing even as Hood wrote his panegyric on Milton. After Hood, the critics are, for the most part, more objective and critical when they write on Paradise Lost. This tendency is noticeable in an essay written in dialogue form in 1852 by John Wilson. Although Wilson does not laud Milton as some of the earlier critics have done, he nevertheless accepts Paradise Lost as one of the world's great poems. He sees four large movements of composition in the poem: (1) the sublime of disturbed powers in the infernal agents, fallen and warring; (2) heaven in humanity, while Adam and Eve are yet sinless; (3) man, earthly, when they have eaten; and (4) heaven, extended, where the good angels go. Wilson also makes some striking comments relative to Satan's position in the poem, but they will be considered later. It may be stated here, though, that he believes that we have to love the devils in the poem because...

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53 Ibid., p. 177.
54 Ibid., p. 186f.
56 Ibid., p. 149.
fires of hell reflect something in our own soul; wrath and smouldering hate and raging desire." Wilson likes Milton's precise contrast of good and evil. As a whole, his essay is based on an analysis of the entire poem. Unlike Busby, Wilson is aware of the epic tradition, and he interprets the poem in terms of that tradition, taking note of Milton's skill in weaving his thesis into the epic framework.

Thomas Keightley and John Wilson are among the first of the Victorians to avoid a strictly religious interpretation of the poem. They try to focus attention on the literary aspects of *Paradise Lost* and are not particularly concerned with its "message." In other words, to them *Paradise Lost* is more than a devotional piece. It is great literature and merits interpretation as such. For this reason, it may be said with truth that they initiate the type of criticism of the poem that is characteristic of the middle years of the Victorian era. Such criticism is marked by a more precise analysis of the epic, a greater attention to its language and style, a fuller interpretation of its characters, and more awareness of the problems involved in epic technique. Keightley, however, is not altogether "modern" in his approach to *Paradise Lost*. For example, in his chapter on the poem he includes a long summary of the action that is characteristic of the early Victorian criticism.

Keightley's study of *Paradise Lost* is significant because of the attention it pays to Milton's sources. Keightley is aware that the poet did

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57 Ibid., p. 381.
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Keightley's study of *Paradise Lost* is significant because of the attention it pays to Milton's sources. Keightley is aware that the poet did

57Ibid., p. 331.

not just sit in his study and compose in vacuo. Rather, Keightley insists, Milton paid attention to a long epic development which was begun with Homer, and was continued by Virgil, and was carried still further by the Renaissance poets like Ariosto, Tasso, and Camoens. Moreover, Keightley has read previous assertions concerning the origins of Paradise Lost. He defends Milton against charges made by Voltaire and Lauder relative to his alleged plagiarism. Likewise, the critic classifies Conybeare's belief that Milton used Caedmon's Genesis as an absurdity. He anticipates James L. Hanford somewhat in noticing the dramatic elements in the poem. As he does in his interpretation of Milton the man, Keightley omits any lengthy refutation of Johnson. But he does defend the Sin-Death episode because he finds it artistically necessary that Milton include it. Keightley also points out that Johnson's stricture for Milton's confusing of matter and spirit is no longer relevant. Having studied De Doctrina Christiana, Keightley realizes the nature of the poet's materialistic ideas. The one fault this critic finds in Paradise Lost is the inclusion of the Paradise of Pools. To him, the passage is incongruous and in discord with the whole scheme of the poem.

In his chapter on Paradise Lost, Keightley includes a section on the language of the poem. It, likewise, is unusual for 1885. The critic notices seven distinct characteristics of the language. They are (1) a frequent employment of words of Latin origin in their original sense, (2) a use of

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Latin adjectives as nouns, (3) a utilization of the Latin practice of letting simple verbs take the place of the usual compound verbs, (4) a frequent omission of verbs, (5) a repetition of the same words often, (6) a play upon words, and (7) an avoidance of the unpleasant "sh" sound of Hebrew proper names.

David Masson of course believes that *Paradise Lost* is one of the extraordinary productions of world literature. He states that in whatever respect the poem is examined, it answers the test of the superlative. He admires it for the conduct of the story, the sustained elevation of style, the perfect texture of the wording, the music of the verse, the plentitude of gem-like phrases, and the maxim and weight of the thought. Masson, however, tries to interpret the poem as it was interpreted by the seventeenth-century reader. For example, he observes that the poem's

...scholarliness, its extraordinary fulness of erudition of all sorts, must have been admired immediately. What abundance and exactness of geographical, as well as astronomical, reference and allusion; what lists of sonorous proper names rolled lovingly into the iambic chaunt; what acquaintance with universal history; what compulsion of all the lusciousness of Aegean myth and Mediterranean legend into the service of the Hebrew theme.

Continuing this same method of criticism, Masson states further that in 1667, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton were thenceforth to be "the quaternion of the largest stars in the main portion of the firmament of

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62 Ibid., p. 555.
63 Ibid., p. 556.
English poetry." He interrupts such remarks with the statement, "Meanwhile we are still in the year 1667. *Paradise Lost* has yet to find its readers, and there are lions in the path." Then he continues his narrative of Milton's life and times.

It is difficult to evaluate Masson's contributions to the criticism of *Paradise Lost*. The problem has been debated time and again by Miltonists, and no clear-cut decision has been made. In my opinion, Masson is a first-rate literary historian. He writes of the background material with a more extensive knowledge than any Milton critic of the century. He is a good narrator. He always keeps his story progressing at a steady pace. He fails, however, when he attempts to make critical judgments. For example, the comments quoted above relative to *Paradise Lost* were commonplace at the time he was writing. Masson simply is not capable of criticizing Milton's poetry with a perceptive ear. Wilson, De Quincey, and Seeley, among others, surpass him in passing critical judgments on *Paradise Lost*. However, it should be remembered that Masson's voluminous biography of Milton supplied a definite need of the late nineteenth century, so far as Milton scholarship was concerned. Let us hope that the next person who writes such an extensive biography of the poet will be a critic as well as a literary historian.

John Tulloch's criticism of *Paradise Lost* is an exception to the general kind of criticism that was being produced during the middle years of the Victorian era. He interprets the poem as a Puritan document and little else.

64 Ibid., p. 558.
65 Ibid.
Pursuing his thesis to absurdities, Tulloch states that the author of *Paradise Lost* is everywhere a Puritan. He feels that the divine decrees lie at the basis of the poem: "The fall of the rebel angels, the creation and fall of man, are merely successive exigencies by which the divine mind carries out its preconceived plans." Tulloch has little else to say concerning *Paradise Lost*. It is hard to believe that a man of Tulloch's learning would interpret *Paradise Lost* so erroneously. He either had not read the poem or he was intellectually dishonest.

J. R. Seeley has been mentioned several times previously in this study. In the preceding chapter, he was discussed in connection with his interpretation of Milton the man. We saw that he interprets Milton as a man of the Renaissance, not as a Puritan. Modern opinions on Milton the man will largely coincide with Seeley's. However, Seeley's conception of the man resulted in an erroneous interpretation of *Paradise Lost*. He feels that the tone of the poem is too Greek for the Christian mind:

Milton's pictures of the spiritual world not only fail somewhat in the awe and tenderness which the Christian imagination demands, but they do not adapt themselves to any existing belief or sympathies. One feels here and there the cold touch of the Renaissance. These Greek angels appearing in the costume of Achilles or Aeneas, or declaiming each other, like Aeschines or Demosthenes, on their infernal Pnyx, are not such as either Catholics or Protestants have ever believed in. The workmanship is magnificent.... But the poet speaks for himself alone.... He is a brilliant, but often a frigid, and... even a frivolous mythologist. I confess that I can never read without a shiver that cold-blooded myth of the creation at the end of the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*.

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67 *ibid.*, i. 415.
Unlike some of the earlier critics who had complained of the structure of *Paradise Lost*, Seeley is fully aware of the epic tradition. He simply believes that Milton failed when he attempted to impose Christian matter upon a pagan form. Seeley has other mistaken ideas concerning the epic. He feels that Milton's subject prohibited him from displaying his full powers. Milton was at his best, Seeley contends, when he was writing of liberty. This critic is unaware that Milton's concept of liberty is one of the keystones of *Paradise Lost*.

Although Seeley's conception of *Paradise Lost* is faulty, he nevertheless illustrates most of the characteristics listed for the criticism of the mid-Victorian years. As I have stated, he is aware of the epic tradition. He also interprets the poem as literature, not dogma. In general, he follows the analytical method of criticism. Then too, panegyrical remarks are lacking in his essay on Milton's poetry.

Charles J. Yonge's remarks on *Paradise Lost* are a reversion to the type of criticism pursued by Samuel Johnson and Samuel Rogers. Although Yonge refutes Johnson's remarks on *Lycidas*, his general criticism of the epic is little more than a paraphrase of Johnson's opinion on the poem. For example, he states that if we look at *Paradise Lost* as a work of art, a serious drawback to the subject is that it comprises neither human action nor human manners. Yonge declares further, "...the man and woman who act and suffer are in a state which no other human beings can ever know; and the inevitable consequence is that the reader can feel little or no interest in...

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their fortunes." The critic suggests that the reader can have little interest in the battle between the devils and the forces of the Almighty because he knows from the start what the outcome will be. Yonge repeats Roberts' censure of the scene in heaven between the Father and the Son. To him, the personification of God is an irreverent and indecent sacrilege. Again, Yonge is in agreement with Roberts when Yonge criticizes Milton for his continual "intrusion of allusions to heathen mythology." This particular critic is in accord with his contemporary critics only in that he admits that he admires the grand style of certain passages in the poem. Such passages, he feels, give Milton his claim to pre-eminence as a poet.

The opinions of J. C. Shairp concerning Milton the man were discussed in the previous chapter. It was pointed out that Shairp would classify Milton as a secondary poet because of his disposition as a man. This critic defines poetry as "the natural relief of minds filled with some over-mastering thought—some absorbing but unattainable ideal—some deep emotion, or imaginative regret, which, from some cause or other, they are kept from directly indulging or carrying into action." Hilton's poetry could be fitted into this definition, but Shairp is unwilling to concede that Milton is a great poet. Milton did have a primary enthusiasm, Shairp admits, but

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69 Ibid., p. 197.
70 Ibid.
72 Ibid., p. 555.
he feels that the poet does not impart this enthusiasm sufficiently to his readers. It follows that *Paradise Lost* is not a great poem. The religion exhibited in the poem is lofty and severe, but it lacks warmth and wants fervor. The reason for this lack of warmth and fervor, Shairp insists, is Milton's enthusiasm for his art rather than for his subject.

Most of Shairp's contemporary critics have more appreciation for *Paradise Lost* than he. His reasoning is unique for 1875, but it should be kept in mind that Shairp is only applying to Milton the ideas that were set forth much earlier by Keble. Shairp's lack of harmony with his age, then, may be attributed to his method of criticizing Milton. He is pursuing the method followed by Yonge, except that he paraphrases Keble instead of Johnson and Roberts.

When he writes of *Paradise Lost*, F. D. Maurice\(^\text{73}\) is reminiscent of critics like Macaulay, Channing, and Hood. Unqualified praise is the keynote of his criticism of the poem. He calls it the "deepest, most complete utterance of a human spirit" and holds that it "comes forth as the final expression of the thoughts of a man who has been fighting a hard battle, who appears to have been worsted in the battle, who thinks that he has fallen on evil days and evil tongues...."\(^\text{74}\) Like his earlier forbears, Maurice sees the epic as a treatise containing moral instruction and little else. He thinks that it throws light on the Puritan period, but he likes the poem for this quality. Maurice contributes little to scholarship on *Paradise Lost*.

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\(^{73}\) *The Friendship of Books*, pp. 244-270.

His criticism, though, is significant because it is indicative of how long the tradition of Milton idolatry lingered in England. His study was published in 1874.

For our present purposes, the late Victorian period began in 1879, the year in which Mark Pattison published his important study on Milton. The traits of these later critics of Paradise Lost are practically the same as those mentioned in connection with Keightley, Wilson, and most of the critics of the mid-Victorian era. The chief difference is that the late Victorian critics developed tendencies evident in writers like Keightley. Some of them, for example, wrote long essays on the style and versification of Paradise Lost. Others looked for the sources of Paradise Lost which had been missed by previous critics. Again, a few critics wrote as if they were early Victorians; that is, their praise for the poem exceeded their ability to analyze it.

Mark Pattison illustrates the late Victorian tendency to exalt the art of Paradise Lost at the expense of its ideas. Quite obviously, Pattison feels that the ideas in the poem are not relevant to the contemporary situation. However, when he speaks of the art exhibited in the poem, he makes very few striking comments. Pattison notes that Milton is not a poet with an accurate imagination. Milton, to him, is a musical poet who "does not often think in terms of pictures but in a dream." Milton creates a feeling of vastness in Paradise Lost, Pattison observes, by avoiding a

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75 Milton, passim.

76 Ibid., p. 142.
presentation of his spiritual personages in definite form to the eye.

In spite of the critic's going overboard in stressing the poet's Puritanism, he fairly accurately interprets and evaluates *Paradise Lost* as a whole. For example, Pattison insists that it is artistically necessary for Milton to degrade his devils in Book X of the poem. This degradation is intended to show that Satan has not triumphed but failed. Thus the bruising of his head has already commenced. Although Pattison has an abiding appreciation for Milton's long epic, he believes that in his own day the poem is more admired than read. He attributes this neglect to the decline of Christian mythology and to the deficiency of the human element in Milton's imagination.

However, Pattison concludes his discussion of the whole matter by stating, "An appreciation of Milton is the last reward of consummated scholarship." 77

Stopford Brooke composed one of the best interpretations of *Paradise Lost* that appeared during the Victorian era. It is true that he exalts the art of the poem at the expense of its philosophical import; nevertheless, his analysis of the structure of the poem remains one of the best that have ever been written. Brooke evidently disagrees with Pattison that *Paradise Lost* is more admired than read, for he lists four reasons why people read the poem: (1) the story interests them, (2) the poem has fine passages, (3) it is great art, and (4) it is wrought into a splendid whole and unity by the imagination of a great genius. 79 When he analyzes the structure of

77 Ibid., p. 218.
79 Ibid., p. 94.
the epic, Brooke argues that man himself is the center and that all the action involved centers around man.

In reality, Brooke sees two levels of meaning in Paradise Lost. The first is religious and is connected with Milton's attempt to justify the ways of God to man. The second level is political. The heaven of the epic is a republic in which order is kept by the choice of the best in power and intellect and goodness to rule the rest. Hell, on the other hand, is aristocratic, "a picture of a state under an imperial tyrant who has made a servile court around him." 80 The Puritan saw in Satan, Brooke declares, the picture of the tyranny against which he had fought, the adversary surrounded by the representatives of sensuality and the oppressive forces of evil wealth.

In the final analysis, Brooke feels that some of the elements in the poem are alien to art, the theology in particular. He also believes that the reader is not much interested in Adam and Eve. He concludes, however, that in spite of these "flaws" the interest in the epic is sustained by the reader's interest in the work of the artist. 81 Brooke's real appreciation for Paradise Lost is derived from his evaluation of Milton's style. His remarks on the style, though, must be reserved for another section in this chapter.

John Dennis 82 was one of the late Victorians who reverted to the

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80 Ibid., p. 93.
81 Ibid., p. 94.
eulogistic criticism of the early nineteenth century. In this respect, he was out of step with most of the critics who wrote on Paradise Lost between 1879 and 1900. When discussing the three major poems, he declares, "These three immortal works written by Milton in age, in poverty, in blindness, need to be approached with reverence." Then when speaking of the long epic in particular, Dennis eulogizes, "The sense of beauty, too, fills this great epic. It would be easy to quote superbly lovely passages, especially from the fourth and fifth books; but the beauty to which I allude pervades the whole poem like an atmosphere, and is felt not only upon the imaginative heights where the poet breathes the air of Paradise, but also in the valleys in which it is his pleasure to rest his fancy and fold his wings." Such statements as these quoted here permeate Dennis' entire discussion of Paradise Lost. Like Maurice's comments, Dennis' are indicative of the idolatrous attitude toward the poem that persisted so long in Victorian England.

In his earliest essay on Milton, Edward Dowden attempts to discover a dominant idea in all of Milton's works. He finds that there are always two parties represented in the works; they are good and evil. Then he interprets each of the poems in terms of this idea, and Paradise Lost presents no exception to this. He interprets the poem as a struggle between Satan, who represents evil, and God, who is good. He sees little else in the epic, his

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83 Ibid., p. 134.
84 Ibid., p. 138.
85 Transcripts and Studies, pp. 454-473.
criticism of the poem being very limited in scope. Dowden does, however, reflect the late Victorian tendency to be analytical whenever Paradise Lost is criticized.

Richard Garnett in his Life of Milton illustrates most of the late Victorian tendencies that have been mentioned in connection with critics like Pattison and Brooke. He finds fault with the theology of Paradise Lost and feels that Milton follows the Scriptures too slavishly. The result, he insists, is a decline in interest on the part of the reader after Book III. "The fall of man and its consequences could not by any device be made as interesting as the fall of Satan..." Garnett insists. In other words, this critic maintains that Milton's material limits him. He argues that after Book III interest in the action of the poem is not regained until toward the end of Book XII, and he regards this as a lamentable fault. On the debit side, Garnett is appalled by the artistry exhibited in Paradise Lost, for he declares, "One of the greatest charms of 'Paradise Lost' is the incomparable metre, which, after Coleridge and Tennyson have done their utmost, remains without equal in our language for the combination of majesty and music...." The critic cites the coming of night passage from Book IV as one of the most memorable in the entire poem. This passage, he declares, has dignity, complicated artifice, perpetual retarding movement, concerted harmony, and grave but ravishing sweetness. Garnett finally lists the

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87 Ibid., pp. 166f.
88 Ibid., p. 167.
achievements of Milton, and they are all in connection with *Paradise Lost.* First, Milton has given to England a national epic, inferior to no other, and founded on a universal theme. Second, Milton has enriched the native literature with an imperishable monument of majestic diction. Third, the poet has reconciled as no other poet the Hellenic spirit with the Hebraic, the Bible with the Renaissance. And fourth, Milton has established the continuity of ancient poetry with modern poetry. In other words, *Paradise Lost* serves as a bridge between ancient and modern literature.  

Besides being in accord with Pattison and Brooke in his general approach to *Paradise Lost,* Garnett illustrates another tendency common to late Victorian criticism of the poem. He is concerned with the sources of *Paradise Lost.* He cites as possible sources the works of Calderon, Caedmon, Grotius, Adreneieni, and Vondel. Unlike some of the source hunters, however, he does not press the borrowing on Milton's part too far. If Milton did borrow from other authors, he insists, his greatness is in no way impaired. "The obligation is rather theirs, of whose stores he has condescended to avail himself."  

Writing during the last decade of the nineteenth century, both Frederick Pollock and Francis Thompson exhibit the tendencies dominant in late
nineteenth-century criticism of *Paradise Lost*. Pollock barely mentions the ideas presented in the poem. Instead, he admires the sustained level of poetry maintained throughout the poem. He notes that the blank verse medium found its perfection in this epic and believes that Milton's achievement is shown by the failure of English poets to produce blank verse of any real distinction for more than a century after his death. Pollock also likes Milton's handling of the epic devices in the poem. The other critic, Thompson, insists that the special greatness of *Paradise Lost* is its sublimity. Milton's imagery, he notices, is "not simply spacious, but undefined."94 The poem to this poet-critic is a "mine of words" and is the "treasury and supreme display of metrical counterpoints. It is to metre what the choruses of Handel are to music." It should be pointed out in passing, however, that both of these essays are quite brief. Still, their remarks on Milton are indicative of the trend to discuss *Paradise Lost* only as a work which exhibits metrical perfection.

Walter Raleigh wrote one of the most extended interpretations of *Paradise Lost* that appeared in the nineteenth century. His work has received special consideration during the present century, probably for one reason alone. He was the first critic so bold as to say that *Paradise Lost* is a monument to dead ideas. It is easy, I think, to overemphasize the significance of his Milton. Although he is a rather perceptive critic, he does not speak for the great majority of the Victorians. He does

94 Ibid., p. 357.
95 Milton, pp. 81-170.
represent the culmination of trends evident in the works of the so-called major Miltonists, like Pattison, but it has already been pointed out that some of the critics were looking upon the epic poem as an antidote to the growing scepticism of the age. The eminent David Lasson, who has been discussed in this chapter as a mid-Victorian but who in reality was an active Milton scholar until after 1890, makes no mention of the decline of philosophical import of the ideas in the epic. Raleigh's criticism, I insist, is only an indication that the Victorian temper had not entirely adjusted itself in the relationship between science and religion. Nor had the Bible been reconciled to the new science in 1900, the date of Raleigh's study.

Since Raleigh has been so widely read in this century, we might do well here to quote at length some of the statements this critic makes relative to Paradise Lost. Like Pattison, Bellock, Thompson, and others, Raleigh is aware of the beautiful language in the epic and little else. He takes note of the poem's beauties and then observes:

All these grandeur and beauties are as real and living today as they were on the day when Milton conceived them, but the other advantage claimed for his epic, that it deals with matters of the dearest concern to all of us, has sharply been questioned.... The world is not thinly peopled with men and women who, having bestowed their patronage on other authors, care little about Adam and Eve, and who therefore feel that Milton's poem is fitting in the note of actuality. Then Raleigh writes the famous "so fare" passage. Note in what manner

96. Lasson, p. 25.
he respects the art of the poem:

The epic poem, which in its natural form is a kind of cathedral for the ideas of the nation, is by him \[Milton\] transformed into a chapel-of-ease for his own mind, a monument to his own genius and his own habits of thought. The Paradise Lost is like the sculptured tombs of the Medici in Florence. . . . The same dull convention that calls Paradise Lost a religious poem might call these Christian statues. Each is primarily a great work of art; in each the traditions of the two eras are blended in a unity that is indicative of nothing but the character and powers of the artist. The Paradise Lost is not the less a monument to dead ideas. 97

The critic feels that Milton had two strikes against him from the start when he set out to compose Paradise Lost. 98 There was the unpromising monotony of Adam's life in Eden. There was the difficulty of giving versimilitude to the conversation between Eve and the snake. Milton also had to name objects which were not yet named. He had to introduce points of history about which Adam and Eve could know nothing. Raleigh feels that the poet overcame these obstacles beautifully and thereby evaded the limitations of his subject. He notes that Milton uses several devices to evade his obstacles. The poet lets the historical episodes be related by angels, and he himself makes allusions to events in history, although Adam and Eve cannot. Raleigh also points out that the poet uses the fallen angels to foretell future events. In noting how Milton overcomes the obstacles, Raleigh again emphasizes the poet's artistic abilities.

On the other hand, Raleigh notices several places in which he insists

97 Ibid., p. 88.
98 Ibid., p. 87.
that Milton went wrong in handling his subject matter. The critic dislikes Milton's presentation of the deity. The poet's god, Raleigh laments, is little more than a tyrant who exacts from his creatures an obedience which differs from brute submission only in their power to disobey his will. Milton's god has too hardened and too narrow a heart. His Satan is presented with too much pathos. The theology, aside from being a monument to dead ideas, is a metaphysical bramble-bush displayed with blind recklessness. Adam's character is not developed sufficiently. He does nothing to make Satan afraid of him. The truth is that Raleigh likes nothing about Milton's subject or his theology.

Raleigh has admiration neither for the man nor for his ideas. He feels, however, that the poet redeems himself by embodying the "dead ideas" in a magnificent art structure. Thus Raleigh is a critic who achieves a complete divorce between subject matter and art. He is the only Victorian critic of Paradise Lost to accomplish such a complete separation. Raleigh never takes into account the fact that Homer, Virgil, and the other epic writers can be criticized on the same grounds on which he has found fault with Milton.

I refuse to conclude that Raleigh's opinions on Paradise Lost represent the final verdict of the Victorians. Few of them go so far as he in making such a blanket condemnation of the philosophy exhibited in the epic. John

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99 Ibid., pp. 128-132.
100 Ibid., pp. 138-140.
101 Ibid., p. 141.
102 Ibid., p. 147.
Cooke is more typical of the late Victorian attitude, although his work on Milton extends into the first decade of the twentieth century. Like many of his contemporary critics, he is interested in emphasizing the art of the poem. Yet he does not condemn its ideas. He states that the epic embraces "in its horizon the destinies of the whole human race" and concludes that "Milton has long since entered into his inheritance. He needs no defense and no eulogium..."  

A special problem in connection with Milton's literary reputation during the Victorian era is that of his style and versification. This problem deserves attention here, moreover, because the Victorians always thought of Paradise Lost when the poet's versification came to mind. The early poems did not usually even have a place in their discussions on the subject, and Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes were looked upon by many as representing a decline in the poet's poetic power. When we consider the evaluations of Milton's style and versification during the era as a whole, we find that the studies produced before 1850 are rather general in their scope. A few of the critics paraphrased ideas formulated by the eighteenth century critics of Milton's style, while some adapted the new theories of the Romantics to the verse of Paradise Lost. During the latter part of the century, on the other hand, more detailed studies were made, the most lengthy being Walter Raleigh's. The great length of these studies

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103 Ibid., passim.
104 Ibid., p. 40.
105 Ibid., p. 53.
is compatible with the general attitude of the critics that the art of **Paradise Lost** is more important than the philosophy.

After 1825, William Crowe\(^\text{106}\) was among the first to discuss Milton's versification. He is one of the critics who paraphrase eighteenth century evaluations of the verse. Crowe finds that Milton's verse has at least six outstanding qualities. He lists them as (1) a great variety of feet, (2) a great variety of pauses, (3) a remarkable use of elisions, (4) a great length of periods, (5) frequent inversions, and (6) a skillful manner by which the lines are connected and run into one another. Crowe of course feels that Milton is a versifier of the first order.

Sir Egerton Brydges\(^\text{107}\) is another of the early Victorian critics who discuss Milton's versification. As we might expect, he is again at issue with Johnson. Brydges believes that Johnson's entire theory of poetry is at fault. He questions Johnson's dictum that true heroic verse is iambic and that all departures from the iambic foot are irregularities. According to Johnson's theory, Milton is a regular offender of the rules. But in this instance Brydges does not merely refute Johnson. He sets forth a theory of versification of his own, and defends Milton because of the poet's conformity to it:

\[\text{106 A Treatise on English Versification, pp. 318-334.}\]

\[\text{107 Works, pp. 550-553.}\]
I believe that Milton's principle was to introduce into his lines every variety of metrical foot which is to be found in the Latin poetry, especially in the lyrics of Horace; such as not merely iambic, but spondee, dactyl, trochee, anapest, &c.; and that whoever reads his lines as if they were prose, and accents them as the sense would dictate, will find they fall into one, or rather several of these feet; often ending like the Latin, with a half-foot: wherever they do not, I doubt not that it arises from a different mode of accenting some word from that which was the usage in Milton's time. If there is any attempt to read Milton's verses as iambics, with a mere occasional variation of the trochee and the spondee, they will often sound very lame, instead of being, as they really are, magnificently harmonious.

Prydges believes, then, that Johnson has followed a rigid rule which will not serve as a yardstick when applied to Paradise Lost.

Henry Hallam, like Brydges, is very general in what he says concerning the versification of Paradise Lost. He observes that we rarely meet with feeble lines in the epic, though we do find some that are hard and prosaic. Hallam calls Milton's style artificial and sparing in English idiom. The flow of the rhythm is responsible for the elevation of the verse. He concludes, however, by stating that Milton's versification is entirely his own, framed on a Virgilian model.

Leigh Hunt makes general observations concerning Milton's style and versification in a number of passages. In one place he insists that Paradise Lost is a study for imagination and elaborate musical structure. Hunt believes that a lecture might be read from any passage on contrasts


and pauses and other parts of metrical harmony. Every word of the poem, he declares, has its higher poetical meaning and intensity. Then in another essay Hunt cites several passages from *Paradise Lost* as crowning specimens of variety of pause and accent because they contain no verses which are not varied and harmonized in the most remarkable manner. On the credit side, Hurt feels that Milton's versification exhibits too constant a perfection. He argues that Milton often forces upon us too great a consciousness on the part of the composer, the result being weight and heaviness.

Two essays which were composed around the mid-point of the century by anonymous writers present interesting sidelights in the Victorian evaluations of Milton's verse. The first critic is concerned with the effect of Milton's blindness on the composition of *Paradise Lost*. He concludes that only a blind man could have written the epic. To substantiate his argument, the critic cites several passages from the poem and points out that they all present vague pictures of things Milton had once seen, before he lost his sight. The second essay was possibly written by the same critic who wrote the first essay. It appeared in the same journal five years after the former essay and has an identical theme. The effect of the blindness in *Paradise Lost*, the writer believes, is a result of Milton's employment of ambiguity.

111 A. J. Cook, *Editor, or Answer to the Question: What is Poetry?* (Boston: Ticknor, 1851), pp. 55-16.


the portrait of Death from Book II and insists that the terror of the picture is immeasurably increased by the ambiguity and indistinctness in which it is enveloped. This critic cites other passages which have the same effect as the one depicting Death. The type of criticism displayed in these two essays is very unusual for the mid-Victorian years and even for the age as a whole. Very few critics were specifically interested in Milton's imagery and the effect which the poet achieves through the conscious employment of vague images.

As we might expect of a man of John Ruskin's bent, that critic is mainly interested in the artistry of Paradise Lost. In a letter to his father, dated April 23, 1852, Ruskin states that Milton surpasses both Shakespeare and Dante in the setting forth of a sublime vision by the best possible words and metaphors, even though the two older poets are superior in tenderness. Ruskin knows of nothing in Shakespeare or Dante so grandly painted as the two scenes of preparation for battle in Paradise Lost, between Satan and Death [II. 704ff] and Satan and Gabriel [II. 977ff]. Like many of his contemporaries, Ruskin feels that the verse of Paradise Lost is infinitely superior to that of Paradise Regained. In another letter to his father, dated January 10, 1852, Ruskin informs, "I have been reading Paradise Regained lately. It seems to me an exact parallel to Turner's latest pictures—the mind failing altogether, but with irregular intervals and returns of power, exquisite momentary passages and lines."  


115 Ibid., p. 112.
The modern reader will agree with Ruskin on his unusually perceptive judgments concerning the verse of various poets. We often wish, however, that Ruskin would tell us what he is basing his remarks on. Like Landor and Hunt, he often seems too subjective in admiring certain lines and disliking others.

Thomas Keightley is again a transitional critic when he writes of Milton’s versification. He agrees with many of his contemporaries in believing that with Paradise Lost the high-water mark in the blank verse form was reached. Keightley, moreover, notices several peculiarities in connection with the verse of the epic. He notes that Milton (1) employs a peculiar kind of anapest, (2) often makes trochees of the first two feet of his lines, (3) does the same after his caesuras, and (4) retains the use of the hypermetric syllable after the caesura. This critic is the first, after Crowe, to make specific statements relative to the versification of Paradise Lost.

If Stopford Brooke’s Milton has a conspicuous absence of comment in praise of the poet’s theology, this absence is compensated for by ample eulogistic comments on the poet’s style. Brooke does not analyse the versification of Paradise Lost as much as Symonds and Keightley do before him or as much as Raleigh does after him; however, he feels that the style of the poet meets the test of the superlative in every way. Brooke states that all who care for blank verse would do well to study Milton’s metrics. He knows of no instances in which the rule of the five accents is violated.

although "there are thousands of instances in which the accents are placed with a freedom, an audacity, an absolute carelessness of mere rule which are only lawful to a great artist."\textsuperscript{117} Then in another passage Brooke lists further the qualities of the poet's style:

The style is always great. On the whole, it is the greatest in the whole range of English poetry, so great that when once we have come to know and honour and love it, it so subdues the judgment that the judgment can with difficulty do its work with temperance. It lifts the low, gives life to the commonplace, dignifies even the vulgar, and makes us endure that which is heavy and dull....No style, when one has lived in it, is so spacious and so majestic a place to walk in....Fullness of sound, weight of march, compactness of finish, fitness of words to things, fitness of pauses to thought, a strong grasp of the main idea while other ideas play round it, power to return, equality of power over vast space of imagination,...A majesty in the conduct of thought, and a music in the majesty which fills it with solemn beauty, belong one and all to the grand style....\textsuperscript{118}

On the other hand, Brooke is aware of certain qualities in the style, which he terms as faults. They include a frequent involvement of the lines, an occasional lack of freedom of movement in involutions, an occasional delay in the expression of a thought, troublesome ellipses, and wearisome inversions. "But blame us we may," he declares, "one thing is true, the style is never prosaic."\textsuperscript{119}

It has already been pointed out in this study that Matthew Arnold thinks Paradise Lost is a great poem only because of its grand style. Arnold, like Brooke, writes in superlatives when he discusses the style of

\textsuperscript{117} \textit{op. cit.}, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 83f.
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 84.
the poem. In his essay called "Milton," he speaks of the modern lack of a sense of perfection. Then he speaks of Milton's style as an example of flawless perfection and holds it up as a model for the English race:

If to our English race an inadequate sense for perfection of work is a real danger, if the discipline of respect for a high and flawless excellence is peculiarly needed by us, Milton is of all our gifted men the best lesson, the most salutary influence. In the sure and flawless perfection of his rhythm and diction he is as admirable as Virgil or Dante, and in this respect he is unique among us. 120

Having praised Milton's style, Arnold places it over that of Thomson, Cowper, and Wordsworth. He argues that Shakespeare himself does not possess Milton's sureness of style. Arnold's remarks on the style of Paradise Lost are entirely critical and not analytical.

Walter Raleigh was the last of the Victorians to write on Milton's style, and his discussion of the subject is one of the most detailed analyses that have ever been written. 121 Raleigh lists the characteristics of Milton's blank verse, and of course he principally has Paradise Lost in mind. He notes that Milton (1) has a sparing use of the double ending, (2) uses variety of stresses in the lines, (3) lets the caesura occur anywhere, (4) never repeats a monotonous tattoo, (5) adjusts sound to sense, (6) does not sing with regular alternate stress, (7) uses no time-worn expressions but carefully chooses every word, (8) is fond of inverted word order, (9) packs meaning into the fewest possible words, (10) uses no sliding connectives (11) employs no superfluous races, and (12) utilizes

120 Works, IV, 46.
Raleigh also discusses the problem of imitating Milton. He feels, quite rightly, that no poet since Milton's day has "recaptured the solemnity and beauty of the large utterance of Gabriel, or Belial, or Satan." This critic maintains that on the whole the influence of Milton on English poetry has been unfortunate. Poets of lesser talents have tried to imitate him, only to their own detriment. Thus Raleigh is a forerunner of the early twentieth-century school of poets and critics, among whom T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound are conspicuous, that reacted against Milton as a model for modern poets. Perhaps the only difference between Raleigh's point of view and that of the modern critics is that the moderns do not identify themselves as poets of an order inferior to Milton.

A problem of paramount importance in connection with the Victorian criticism of Paradise Lost is the function of Satan in the poem. John Dryden, William Blake, and Percy B. Shelley, among others, had

122 The works of John A. Symonds and Robert Bridges on Milton's versification have been discussed in Chapter One. These critics are not mentioned in detail here because their works are primarily analytical. See also George Saintsbury, "Milton and the Grand Style," in Milton: A Critical Lectures, 1884 (London: Henry Frowde, 1900), pp. 63-108.


suggested that Satan is the hero of the epic, and the problem had not
resolved itself satisfactorily by 1825. It was natural, then, for the
Victorian critics of Milton to be concerned with the leader of the rebel
angels. The Victorians were never able to agree on the problem. At the
beginning of the period, there were those who named Satan as hero; others
were adamant in denying him such eminence. At the end of the century the
situation was practically the same. The Satanists, however, never were
able to build an "air-tight" case in support of their contention. On the
other hand, some of the better-informed critics, like John Wilson, analyzed
Satan as only an aspect of Milton's epic machinery and concluded that he
could not be called the hero, that Milton was forced by necessity to paint
the great antagonist as a formidable character in order to heighten the
central conflict in the epic.

There are several reasons why Satan was given the title of hero by
some of the Victorian critics. ... Few of them disliked Milton the man, and
they were glad to glorify Satan in order to defame the poet. If Satan could
be made the hero, then Milton's theology was at fault. Then too, this
group of critics usually identified Satan with the poet himself. The prime
element of these critics was Samuel Rogers, who, as I have pointed out,
 wrote the most vindictive attack on the man that appeared during the era.
Another reason for Satan's eminence in the eyes of the Victorians rests in
the fact that some of the critics indicated through their remarks that they
had read only the first two books of Paradise Lost. F. A. Jow is an example
of the critics in this second group. They showed little familiarity with
the other ten books. Of course, Satan is the prime actor in Books I and II. At the same time, no reliable judgment on his function can be made without considering the totality of the epic. It was mentioned in Chapter One of this study that the first two books of *Paradise Lost* were often published as a separate volume during the century. This phenomenon, I believe, is connected with the widespread belief that Satan is the hero. Still another reason for Satan's eminence among the Victorians was their lack of knowledge of epic technique. John Wilson was the lone critic of the era to take the epic formula into consideration when he discussed Satan's position in the poem. I agree with Sister Mary Thecla Danison who argues in her dissertation that the eighteenth-century critics like Johnson, Addison, Dennis, and Pope knew more than the nineteenth-century critics about the theory and techniques of narrative poetry and were, therefore, better equipped to recognize the excellence of Milton's narrative structure.\(^{128}\)

The articles which were written in 1828 were indicative of the type of controversy that was to take place concerning Satan. Both of these articles have been mentioned several times previously in this study. The first, published in the *Edinburgh Review*, \(^{129}\) contains much praise for Milton's portrayal of Satan, as we might expect. The anonymous reviewer calls that character the "most magnificent creation in all poetry."\(^{130}\)

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\(^{129}\) "Milton's Poetry," *Edinburgh Review*, XLII (1828), 31-64

\(^{130}\) ibid., p. 50.
Satan has, the writer maintains, "the strength of a giant, the fashion of an angel, the intellect of heaven and the pride of earth." The reviewer holds further that Satan is ideal. He never states that Satan is the hero, but he seems to imply as much. This would not dampen the critic's general appreciation for Milton's portrayal, however. On the other hand, another anonymous reviewer who was writing for the Tory Quarterly Review, feels that Milton makes his Satan too attractive in Paradise Lost. He observes that readers can hardly keep from sympathizing with Satan and holds that in the arch-fiend Milton has painted himself: "The most probable account of which surely is, that the author himself partook largely of the haughty and vindictive republican spirit, which he has assigned to the character, and consequently, though perhaps unconsciously, drew the portrait with a peculiar zest." This reviewer condemns Milton the man before he turns his discussion to Satan, and his comments on that character are what we would expect them to be. He sees no good in either the man or his works.

The two critics who write immediately after the publication of the 1825 articles generally follow the position taken by the critic in the Edinburgh Review. William E. Channing clearly recognizes the "awfulness" of Milton's Satan, but he does not state that Satan is the hero of the epic.

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131 Ibid., p. 57.
133 Ibid., p. 229.
To Channing, the poet's description of Satan attests to the power of his genius. He feels that in that character, imagination has achieved its highest triumph. The critic notes further that there is an indefiniteness in Satan which "incites without shocking the imagination, and aids us to combine in our conception of him the massiveness of a real form with the vagueness of spiritual existence." 135

Stanhope Busby, 136 like Channing, believes that Milton reveals great skill when he constructs the personality of Satan. Busby does not feel, however, that the character should be regarded as the hero. This critic interprets him as a blend of evil and nobility, and he argues that Milton's supreme poetic powers are reflected in the blending. Milton, the critic insists, did not merely want to personify vice; nor did he wish to create a character that all men would admire. Therefore, he blended both good and bad qualities to give Satan a certain majesty fitting for a fallen archangel. Busby, unlike some of his contemporaries, is aware of the progressive degeneration of Satan as Milton's story of the fall of man unfolds itself.

Arthur Henry Hallam 137 was the first critic after 1628 to suggest specifically that Satan is the hero. He takes note of the majesty of the first two books of Paradise Lost and declares that they serve to "confirm the sneer of Dryden, that Satan is Milton's hero; since they develop a plan of action in that potentate, which is ultimately successful; the triumph that he and his host must experience in the fall of man being hardly compen-
sated by their temporary conversion into serpents; a fiction rather too grotesque." 138 Hallam reflects his unawareness of the epic tradition when he contends that one personage is not required in an epic to predominate over the rest. Also, notwithstanding his reputation as an acute scholar, Hallam reveals that he has read Books I and II more thoroughly than Books III through XII. He concludes his discussion of Satan by stating that the character is the first effort of Milton's genius, that Dante could not have given so much luster to a ruined archangel in an age when horns and a tail were the orthodox creed. 139

Walter Savage Landor is somewhat contradictory when he discusses the hero of Paradise Lost. He first states 140 that in the poem no central character seems to have been intended. He finds no truth in assertions that Satan is the hero. Then he reverses himself and maintains that Adam is the main character because that personage acts and suffers most and receives most of the consequences of the action performed in the epic. Whether Landor really felt that Adam is the hero or not, it is worth noting that he is the first critic of the era who even suggests that Adam is the central character in the poem.

Some of the Victorian critics who continue to regard Paradise Lost as a devotional poem discuss the character of Satan from a purely religious

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138 _Ibid._

139 Writing shortly after Hallam, Samuel Roberts (op. cit., p. 25) holds that Satan is "the real hero of the inexplicable tragedy," but he does not elaborate.

140 _Op. cit.,_ V, 227. Of course, it is sometimes difficult to determine Landor's own views in his _Imaginary Conversations._
point of view and forget that the poem is an epic. F. A. Cox is one of these. He believes that the moral influence of Milton's portraiture of Satan has had a detrimental effect on people with high poetic temperaments, such as Byron and Shelley. Cox declares that he can hardly avoid feeling sorry for Satan. He concludes his comments on the character, however, by stating that Milton did not intend to do honor to rebellion, that "his genius has prompted him at times to violate proprieties and shock the feelings of a sensitive piety." Cox, who is a Milton idolator, tempers his criticism of the poet by observing that the "roaring lion," the "dragon," and the "devil and his angels" are found in the Scriptures.

John Wilson's analysis of the problem of having a hero for *Paradise Lost* has been mentioned previously in this study, but his discussion deserves detailed attention here. In his dialogue-essay called "Christopher Under Canvas" Wilson discusses the problem in the light of the epic tradition. He argues that Satan is not the hero, even though that character is the agent upon whom the action rests. Wilson believes that the heart of the poet is with the human personalities, not Satan. Thus he names Adam as the hero and Eve as the heroine. To support his contention in this respect, he goes back to Homer. In the *Iliad*, Wilson observes, the principal supporters of the human action are the human beings, the supernatural ones are the rudders of the actions. His critic goes even further...
that if we must seek a hero among the superhuman characters in the epic, we must choose the Vanquisher of Satan rather than the fiend himself. Another cogent observation made by Wilson is that Hilton was forced by artistic necessity to make Satan a formidable character: "To be the great antagonist of Heaven, Author of Evil, Seducer of Man, Tempter of the Savior—Satan has to have an intellectual endowment of the highest order."144 Wilson's over-all analysis of the problem is one of the best to appear during the Victorian era.

In the same year as Wilson (1862), Edwin Laxton Good names Satan as the prime actor of Paradise Lost. He argues that all other characters in the poem are subservient to the author of evil: "Where he moves through the poem, the human characters are passive to his power; and there is an indistinctness in the impersonation of the divine beings most grateful to our feelings, but at the same time unfavorable to the one balancing of that tremendous lordship which Satan asserts over our imaginations throughout the whole book."145 Good adds, however, that our feelings for Satan change as we read the poem. Satan becomes the meanest of beings so that at the end of the epic "we hate more passionately but more wisely, than we admired; we exult, as the unexpected and applauding his conquests the achievement in pandemonium, and the fiend becomes the reptile he simulated."147 In spite of his observation that our feelings for Satan change as we read the poem,
Hood bases his characterization of Satan mainly on the first two books of *Paradise Lost*. He seems to be unaware of the epic tradition.

Hood is a great believer in the idea that poets reveal their own characters in their personifications. Therefore, he feels that the poet is reflected in his characterization of Satan. Milton's portrait of that being, he insists, "is a colouring caught from the poet's own mind; it illustrates our first thought, that in painting Satan, the poet painted himself: this sublime and daring determination was a part of his soul...." In making such a statement, Hood is only voicing again what has been stated earlier by an anonymous reviewer in the *Quarterly Review* in 1825. Hood, however, in his other comments on Milton shows that he is writing in the tradition of Milton idolatry. He does not condemn Milton for his alleged portrait of himself in his characterization of Satan. Hood's inconsistency is of course obvious to the reader.

David Schurr is another critic that bases his remarks pertaining to Satan on the first two books of *Paradise Lost*. The action of the flood, he argues, gives him precedence over every other character in the epic. To support this contention, Schurr cites passages from books I and II only. Schurr's comments on Satan are disappointing to the reader after he has read that critic's acute remarks on Milton the man. Like most of his contemporaries, Schurr reflects an ignorance of the epic tradition.

Some readers might expect an extensive analysis of Satan's character...

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148 Ibid., p. 155.

149 Ibid., pp. 320ff.
and function in the works of David i^sson. However, such an exegesis is not forthcoming. i^sson remains the literary historian and side-steps the issue as much as possible. In one passage, he does indicate that he is on the side of the Satanists: "If 'the hero' of an epic is that principal personage who figures from first to last, and whose actions draw all the threads, or even if success in some sense, and command our admiration and sympathy in some degree, are requisite for the name, then not wrongly have so many of the critics regarded Satan as 'the hero' of Paradise Lost." i^sson adds that there is no other hero unless it be humanity. he does not elaborate upon this statement. Therefore, he remains non-committal in the final analysis.

Writing in 1862, J. ... corris convincingly refutes those who hold that Satan is the hero of Paradise Lost. In reality, he strikes at the core of the entire problem. This critic argues that the Satanists have taken isolated passages from the epic and have built their case very carelessly from them. "The ocean is not to be judged of by one of its waves," he insists, "or by as much of it as we can carry home in a pail. The 'Satan' must be taken as a whole, and then there will be little room for sympathy or admiration, a just and righteous horror will assert its place."
Then Morris asks, "Is not Adam the hero?" In support of his belief that Adam is the chief personage, Morris points out that all the action of the poem centers upon that character. Adam is involved, the critic feels, in the counsels of heaven and in the machinations and malignity of hell. Morris therefore arrives at the same conclusion as Wilson. He is aware of the epic tradition, but his argument is based on the text of the poem itself. Morris may be in error in holding that Milton was no Arian; but when he discusses *Paradise Lost*, he shows that he possesses great familiarity with the lines of the poem.

E. L. Bickersteth has been previously mentioned in this study in connection with his attitude toward Milton the man. It was pointed out that Bickersteth is one of the critics who continued to look upon the man as the author of a devotional poem. When he discusses the poet's treatment of Satan, Bickersteth approaches the problem with the same pious attitude. He admits that the reader cannot help admiring Satan as that character is presented in *Paradise Lost*. The critic adds, however, that Milton has not followed the Scriptures in his portrayal of the fiend: "Now here I am deeply persuaded that Milton has failed of his own purpose, because, passing by certain hints which the Word of God supplies, he has laid the scene of Satan's fall in heaven and not on earth...." Bickersteth mentions several other divergences from the Scriptures in Milton's narrative, but he does not

154 *Companions for the Devout Life*, pp. 253-274.
believe that the poet consciously misinterpreted the Satan of the Scriptures. He feels that *Paradise Lost* is a fitting "companion for the devout life" in spite of Milton's mistaken conception of Satan. Bickersteth's comments on the problem are worth mentioning only because they represent the late nineteenth-century reversion to the earlier devotional interpretations of the poem. But this reversion is evident in only a few of the critics.

In 1876, Frester John's article on Milton's Satan appeared in one of the journals. The significance of the article cannot be overestimated. It was the only separate essay on Milton's archangel to appear during the century, and it exemplified the type of psychological criticism which A. C. Bradley was to adopt when writing his essays on Shakespeare's characters. Like many of the Victorian Miltonists, John takes Satan's pre-eminence in *Paradise Lost* for granted from the beginning: "Of this significant epic Satan is, without a rival, the central figure." John repeats the familiar statement that the reader is irresistibly attracted towards the great apostate. Likewise, he agrees with some of his contemporaries that Milton has projected himself into his character. The critic insists, "Milton has stamped himself on the Apostle his own individuality. There is not in the whole range of literature any spectacle so wonderful as that of the great Puritan poet, blind and friendless, dependent upon others even for the transcribing of his poem, yet over-riding every obstacle and subduing every

156*"Milton's Satan,"* *Dublin University Magazine*, LXVIII (1876), 737-741.

157*ibid.*, p. 707.
difficulty by the force of an indomitable will: the poet possessed in an
eminent degree the untiring energy, the iron determination with which he
invests the ruined archangel."158 John adds, however, that Milton projects
only his better side into his Satan. Quite obviously, he looks upon the
poet's rebellious nature as virtue.

John goes farther than most of the critics who observe the nobility
of the Satan of Paradise Lost. For he considers the implications of such a
portrayal. Like Eickerstath, he is aware that Milton's Prince of Devils
is not the Satan of the Scriptures. John observes that the Scriptural
devil is wicked, sly, false, treacherous, cowardly, and cruel. At the same
time, the critic points out that the chief feature of Milton's Satan is his
deity. Yet he feels that Milton should not be condemned for making his
fiend so attractive. John observes that the poet was always a lover of
virtue and morality, and he believes that, in the final analysis, Milton's
Satan is immoral. Milton, the critic declares, reveals vast skill in
characterization when he blends villainy with sin, vice, treachery, and shame
to create his Satan. John concludes that Satan does not or should not have
a bad effect on the reader. In other words, the critic feels that the
reader will finally realize that the inherent evil in Satan outweighs his
noble qualities.

John exhibits a perspicacity in his regard for Satan that is lacking
in some of the other critics, of whom Lenin is an example. Unfortunately,
John is unaware of the epic tradition. One of his sources of epic

158 Ibid., p. 708.
forms and epic technique, he makes a fallacious assumption at the beginning of his essay, when he takes it for granted that Satan is the hero. John thus falls into an error all too common among the Victorian critics of Milton. The seventeenth-century poet was so familiar with the epic tradition, including the epic machinery, that he would never, intentionally or otherwise, have permitted a supernatural being to function as the hero of any epic he wrote. This fact, coupled with analyses of the poem like Morris', should prove to any student of Paradise Lost that Adam, not Satan, is the central character. Yet, let me reiterate my earlier statement that John's article on Satan is very significant because of its scope. Significance, though, has little to do with critical accuracy.

After the appearance of John's article in 1876, most of the critics added but little to the body of criticism on Milton's Satan that had accumulated by that time. Walter Besant repeats the lament that the devil of Paradise Lost is too attractive, that Milton develops the fiend at the expense of the good angels, Chadworth. Hodgeson indicates that he has read the entire poem when he states that Satan try as the hero of the the setting, but that Adam is the hero of the entire action. 161

159 cit., p. 30f.
161 ibid., p. 189.
162 The Story of English Literature, p. 107.
denies Satan the position of hero in *Paradise Lost*. She insists that all of Satan's utterances do not represent Milton's opinions, and she points out that in his soliloquies Satan reveals the despair and lack of courage and fortitude that is absent in his speeches to his cohorts. She substantiates her opinions by citing passages from all twelve books, not just the first two. John Dennis follows Buckland in contending that Satan is not the hero. He cites that character's address to the sun in book IV as a confession that it is Satan's own pride and ambition which makes him supreme in misery. Robert Heman is another critic to repeat the idea that Milton embodies his own aspirations and disappointments in the Great Antagonist.

Two critics who wrote on Satan remain to be dealt with here. Richard Garnett feels that Satan is the hero of the epic. His remarks are more than a repetition of the idea, however, for Garnett tries to refute those who hold that Adam is the hero. Garnett admits that until Adam partakes of the forbidden fruit, he seems to represent humanity in the ideal state. The critic also observes that the taking of the fruit itself does not detract from Adam's greatness, for epic canon decrees that the hero shall not be faultless. But Garnett concludes, "The moment, however, that he begins to wrangle with Eve about their respective shares of blame, he

162 *Heroes of Literature*, pp. 140f.
164 *John Milton: A Lecture*, pp. 35f.
forfeits his estate of heroism more irretrievably than his estate of holiness—a fact of which Milton cannot have been unaware, but he had no liberty to forsake the Scripture narrative. Satan remains, therefore, the only possible hero, and it is one of the inevitable blemishes of the poem that he should disappear almost entirely from the latter books. Garnett does not concede the possibility that the lamented disappearance of Satan from the latter books is a phenomenon that might be used to refute the idea that the fiend is the hero.

Walter Raleigh allies himself on the side of the Satanists, but, as usual, I refuse to concede that he represents the final opinion of the Victorians. Without doubt, Raleigh is a critic of much learning and acuteness. When he writes of Paradise Lost, he is clearly aware of the epic tradition. Yet he holds that Satan is the main personage in Milton's epic. Raleigh believes, however, that Milton let Satan become the hero without knowing it and that in the latter books the poet tried to rectify the error made in the first two, but without success. In one passage, Raleigh insists that before he knew what had happened, Milton was in the service of the Devil, and the critic says, "Milton can hardly have foreseen this chance.

Although there are not wanting signs in the poem itself that, before it was half completed, he became uneasily conscious of what was happening, and attempted, too late, to remedy it." Then when Raleigh discusses the

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166 Ibid., p. 156.
168 Ibid., p. 94.
actors of Paradise Lost, he makes another revealing observation concerning Satan:

Satan unavoidably reminds us of Prometheus, and although there are essential differences, we are not made to feel them essential. His very situation as the fearless antagonist of Omnipotence makes him either a fool or a hero, and Milton is far indeed from permitting us to think him a fool. The nobility and greatness of his bearing are brought home to us in some half-dozen of the finest poetic passages in the world. The most stupendous of the poet's imaginative creations are made the foil for a greater than themselves.

Raleigh's analysis of Satan's position in Paradise Lost has several implications, the most obvious being that the theology of the epic is faulty. Evidently, Raleigh does not feel that Satan's being the alleged hero detracts from the value of the poem as a work of art, for in numerous passages, as I have previously mentioned, Raleigh sings Milton's praises as an artist of the first order. However, I find a basic contradiction in the position taken by Raleigh. He lauds the poet's art and at the same time declares that the poet had little control over his characterization of Satan, that Milton was of the Devil's party before he knew it. Does not a great artist have complete control over his material at all times? I think so. Fine poetic artistry is no mere accident. And if there ever was a poet who was the master of his art, it was Milton. The poet indicates complete mastery of his material as well as of his metrics from the early poems like Lycidas, L'Allegro, and Il Penseroso to the last poem written during his career, Samson Agonistes. Therefore, if Satan is the hero, Milton intentionally

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169 Ibid., pp. 126-150.
170 Ibid., p. 133.
made him so. But Satan is not the central figure. Raleigh's critical
capabilities fail him when he does not perceive the artistic necessity of
the poet's building up of Satan as the Great Antagonist in the first two
books of *Paradise Lost*. Raleigh would have done well to read John Wilson's
discussion of the problem of Satan, but he does not even mention that critic
in his study of Milton.

We have seen, then, that divergent opinions concerning Satan existed
side-by-side throughout the Victorian era. The critics were fairly evenly
divided as to the hero of the poem. The most eminent, however, tended to
regard Satan as the central character, especially those after 1675. Among
these, Mason, Burnett, and Raleigh are conspicuous. At the same time, John
Wilson made the last analysis of the entire problem, in my opinion, that
appeared during the century. He concluded that Adam is the hero. Almost
all of the critics, whether they were Satanists or not, admired Milton's
portrayal of Satan. With the exception of Samuel Roberts, none of the
Satanists regarded the envoy's exculpation as an artistic flaw in the poem.
A few, like Dickerstein, seemed to think that Satan's exculpation is unfortunate,
but they based their opinions solely on theological grounds. Therefore, the
controversy over the position of Satan did not detract from Milton's reputa-
tion as a poet.

An interesting sidelight in connection with the Victorian criticism of
*Paradise Lost* was the tendency to read some of the passages as autobiog-
ographical. The chief passage that was read as such was the one \[X, 937-945\]
in which Eve implores and obtains Adam's forgiveness. The first mention of
autobiography in the passage was made in the Gentleman's Magazine in 1836. The anonymous reviewer conjectures that "Milton had the unexpected interview with his wife in his relation's house in his mind, when in the tenth book of his great poem he describes the repentant supplication of Eve, and the forgiveness of Adam. It may be so, for the incident was too uncommon and affecting easily to be forgotten." Hood likewise voices the opinion that Eve weeping before Adam in Paradise Lost is a picture of Mary Powell before the poet. Others who repeat the conjecture are Keightley, Pattison, and Raleigh.

Let us at this point review the state of the criticism of Paradise Lost in 1900, our terminus ad quem. First of all, the critics were continuing to admire the poem, mostly because of its art. A few of the critics, like Raleigh, were bold enough to state that the ideas in the poem are "dead," and this being the case, there was little left to admire except the art. The result of the increased attention paid to Milton's artistry was an accelerated effort to analyze and study the metrics of Paradise Lost. Robert Bridges had adequately done this by 1900, but he had made no attempt to evaluate the

172 Ibid., p. 458.
174 Op. cit., p. 40. Keightley also lists other passages (pp. 122-126) in Paradise Lost which, he believes, refer to Milton's first marriage. They are: IX, 1155-1161; and X, 898-907.
poem on the basis of his analysis. He simply accepted Milton's lines as the norm. Raleigh, however, did write a long critical chapter on Milton's style in 1900, and his comments were to be developed further by George Saintsbury in 1909. By 1900, most of the sources used by Milton in the composition of Paradise Lost had been identified, but the problem of sources was far from solved. Most of the source hunters thought of their findings as ends in themselves; consequently, they did not attempt to discover new meanings in Paradise Lost through the use of sources. At the end of the era, most of the critics had gotten away from the idea that Paradise Lost is a devotional poem. At the same time, some of them did not realize that the poem is an epic, and this resulted in the widespread misconception of Satan's function in the poem. The chief deficiency in the criticism as it stood in 1900 was the lack of interpretations of the poem as a whole. The space vacated by the earlier critics who had looked upon the epic as a poem of devotion remained unfilled. Not one critic was aware of the deep philosophical significance of the poem. The great bulk of critics was interested in what Milton would have regarded as ephemeral matters. The nineteenth-century critics failed, then, to arrive at the central meaning of Paradise Lost.

Turning from the Victorian criticism of Paradise Lost to that of Paradise Regained, one cannot help but feel that the latter poem was neglected throughout the age. Milton's reputation as a poet was sustained because of the critics' high regard for Paradise Lost. Most of the writers who criticized the poetry devoted the bulk of their pages to the long epic; they mentioned the short epic only in passing. When it was mentioned, Paradise
Regained was almost invariably compared with Paradise Lost. Consequently, the poem suffered; it was always overshadowed by its predecessor. Although they pretended to admire the poem, the critics looked upon it as a pigmy beside the giant, Paradise Lost.

Since most of the attention was given to the epic of the fall of man, there is little continuity in the Victorian criticism of Paradise Regained. Comment is scattered. Some of the critics did not even bother to mention the poem. No trends in criticism or shifts of emphasis, therefore, can be noted in connection with the various evaluations of Paradise Regained. The majority of the critics simply pointed out that the short epic contains patches of great poetry.

Joseph Ivimey was among the first to write of Paradise Regained after 1825. As we would expect, judging from Ivimey's comments on other points concerning the poet, he looks upon the short epic as a devotional poem and little else. Having given most of his attention to Paradise Lost, he states that Paradise Regained is more than equal to the other poem because it is much better suited to convey information as to real life than the fanciful descriptions of Paradise Lost. Like a number of the evangelicals, Ivimey likes Milton most when the poet adheres closely to the Scriptures. It is natural, then, for him to declare his approval of the short epic.

Stanhope Busby is not in accord with most of his fellow critics, for he states that Paradise Regained should not be compared with Paradise Lost.

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177Life of John Milton, p. 301.
He maintains that it is a great poem in its own right. Nevertheless, Busby gives most of his space to the long epic.

Both Edwin Paxton Hood and Alfred A. Fry make practically identical statements when they discuss Paradise Regained. Hood argues that though the short epic is inferior to the long epic, it is still a great poem. He observes that Satan's language is always rich, scholarly, high-colored, and pictorial and that Christ's language is ever pictorial and plain. To Hood, "The 'Paradise Regained' is like some wonderful allegory, which man must read by his life experience. The temptations of the Savior, it is easy to see, were regarded as the temptations common to us all--those of depraving sensualism, of glory, and of literary and intellectual vanity." Fry states that though it is inferior to Paradise Lost, the short epic is superior to any poem produced since.

Thomas Keightley was the only critic of the century, in my opinion, who arrived anywhere near the central meaning of Paradise Regained. He interprets it in terms of the Paradise that was lost by Adam:

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To Milton's logical mind...it must have appeared that as the cause of the loss of Paradise was the first Adam's succumbing under the temptations of Satan, the mode of its recovery must be the triumphant resistance to his arts and wiles by the second Adam. As therefore the only account of any temptation of our Lord by Satan is that in the wilderness after his baptism, in Milton's view the victory was then gained, the power of Satan was broken for ever, and all the subsequent deeds of our Lord were in order to secure his conquest and establish his empire. 183

I believe that such an interpretation is entirely compatible to Milton's purpose in writing Paradise Regained.

Keightley also takes into account the conventional opinion that the versification and style of Paradise Regained is inferior to that of Paradise Lost. To him, the notion is a strange one. He admits that the language of the earlier poem is more figurative and more brilliant in general. At the same time, he argues that the language of the later poem is less fluent, less inverted, and somewhat less Latinized, but that when the occasion demands it, the language rises "fully to the level of its predecessor." 184

Writing with the problem of style in mind, Keightley points out that Paradise Regained will never be as popular as Paradise Lost, because few readers relish the pure reasoning and the sustained dialogue in the short epic over the action described in the other epic poem.

As I have pointed out in several previous instances, I believe that Keightley's critical biography of Milton is one of the best that appeared during the Victorian era. It has never received the attention that it

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183 Ibid., p. 404.
184 Ibid., p. 405.
deserves. Perhaps it was overshadowed by Masson's voluminous labors and by other studies by more eminent critics than Keightley. Keightley's biography of Milton stands out because it is so unshackled by the conventions of criticism of the Victorian age. His remarks on *Paradise Regained*, for instance, are unusual for 1855, and they could have prompted more interest in that poem, resulting in an increased understanding of it. But such was not the case. The critics who followed Keightley lapsed back into the general sort of criticism and paraphrased comments on the poem which had been made hundreds of times before. For example, when David Masson discusses *Paradise Regained* in his *Life*, he summarizes the action and then makes a rather general critical statement: "There are few poems indeed that possess in so marked a degree this quality of visuality, or pictorial clearness and coherence, from first to last."\(^{185}\)

Other critics of the late nineteenth century are practically as vague as Masson. J. W. Morris,\(^{186}\) ever the apologist for Milton's theology, argues that *Paradise Regained* is not Arian in doctrine, that all the Arian ideas in the poem are uttered by Satan. Another critic, J. R. Seeley,\(^{187}\) who writes at length concerning *Paradise Lost*, notes that there is in the short epic a simplicity, a homeliness of greatness, that is wanting in the earlier poem. He observes further that there is not a useless word in the

\(^{185}\) *Life of John Milton*, V, 656.


poem, hardly a single flight of fancy, yet not a touch of commonness. He attributes this simplicity to "the great life he led."\textsuperscript{188} P. D. Maurice\textsuperscript{189} looks upon \textit{Paradise Regained} as a document which throws light on the Puritan period. Like Seeley, he admires the self-restraint of the poet, but at the same time, he laments the omission of the "personal allusions" such as those found in \textit{Paradise Lost}. John Dennis\textsuperscript{190} is another critic who speaks of \textit{Paradise Regained} only in passing. He observes that there are some descriptive passages in the poem of the highest beauty, such as the pictures of Rome and Athens in Book IV. Frederick Pollock\textsuperscript{191} also remains general in his observations concerning the short epic; he likes the sustained level of poetry and the intense dignity, both of which are achieved without the help of rhetorical or dramatic movement. The anonymous critic who writes of Milton in the \textit{Living Age} in 1899 does not choose to repeat the conventional epithets; instead, he makes an attempt to interpret the poem as a political document. He insists that the greater part of the poem is dedicated to the idea "of that inner freedom, that liberty of the soul, to be gained solely by obedience to divine law which should come in priority to mere political liberty, as the real guardian and guaranty of free

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{190} \textit{Op. cit.}, p. 144.
\textsuperscript{191} \textit{Op. cit.}, p. 519.
institutions." Still, he does not relate this statement to the central meaning of the poem. Thus the critics remain general to the last.

Most of the writers do not state precisely why they feel that *Paradise Regained* is inferior to *Paradise Lost*. They only give hints. Yet two critics list three reasons for the later poem’s inferiority. Mark Pattison insists that the short epic exaggerates the defects of the longer poem. These defects are too little action, too few agents, and the superhuman character of those few; a less ornate language which is not charged sufficiently with subtle suggestion; and a barrenness of human interest. In spite of his opinions concerning the defects, though, Pattison argues that the short epic has a sense of power "which awes all the more because it is latent." And Stopford Brooke maintains that the verse of *Paradise Regained* shows a languor of a man doing the second time what he has done already with his full force.

One might expect to find a lengthy discussion of *Paradise Regained* in Walter Raleigh's *Milton*. There is none. Like the other critics of the Victorian era, Raleigh shows little interest in the poem. This critic feels that Milton wrote all he needed to say concerning man's redemption in *Paradise Lost*. He argues that the poet used Ellwood's suggestion that

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194 Ibid.
he ought to write of "Paradise Found" as a mere pretext for writing the latter epic, and Raleigh observes, "one of the commonest kinds of critical stupidity is the kind that discovers something 'unfinished' in a great work of art, and suggests desirable trimmings and additions." He adds, however, that the problem of temptation probably appealed to Milton more than it seems to in Paradise Lost. Raleigh does see great beauty in the lines of Paradise Regained even if he cannot accept the philosophy presented therein. There is a severity of style in the poem, he notes but he does not regard this as a fault, as does Pattison. Nor does he attribute the severity to waning poetical powers. Milton's interests had changed. Raleigh believes that the poet has turned more to thought and reflection and less to action and picture. Finally, Raleigh insists that Milton was right in "not bearing with patience" the suggestion that the earlier epic is superior to the latter, because "its merits and beauties are of a different and more sombre kind, yet of a kind perhaps further out of the reach of any other poet than even the constellated glories of Paradise Lost itself." 

The Satan of Paradise Regained received very little attention from Milton's Victorian critics. He was overshadowed of course by the Satan of Paradise Lost. There never was any controversy concerning his position in the latter poem. In the short epic, Milton had followed the Scriptures too closely for controversy to develop as to Satan's character.

Like Paradise Regained, Samson Agonistes, Milton's dramatic poem,

Ibid., pp. 161f.

Ibid., p. 159.
suffers for attention because of the time devoted by the critics to
_{Paradise Lost_. Comments on the drama are scarce and usually brief when
they do appear. As far as I can tell, the Victorian era produced no
extended study of the poem. Most of the critics read it only as an auto-
biographical poem in which Milton deplored his situation after the Rest-
toration. Aside from autobiographical interpretations, most of the comments
were very general in nature, as they were in regard to _Paradise Regained_.

Only a few critics, however, write unfavorably of _Samson Agonistes_.
Stanhope Busby is one. He believes that a dramatist should not project
himself into his characters and states that Milton has violated this
principle. Milton, he insists, did not have the ability to create charac-
ters which are not a reflection of himself: "Milton did not possess this
individualizing power; we trace the author speaking through his characters,
prompting, elevating, and rendering them reflective rather than active.
Their words have a studied dignity, their thoughts a diffuseness which in
narrative would be effective, but in tragedy destroys the terse expression
of passion, and stands in the way of nature."^{199} On this one count, then,
Busby makes a sweeping condemnation of the _Samson_.

Arthur P. Hallam is another critic who has little regard for Milton's
dramatic poem. Although he admits that an uncommon grandeur prevails
throughout _Samson Agonistes_, he argues that we see in the poem the ebb of
a mighty tide. The language is less poetical, and it lacks its former
elsquence. The lyric tone, he declares further, is not well maintained by

^{199}_Op. cit., pp. 100f._
the chorus, which is too sententious and slow in movement. The meter is infelicitous, the lines being frequently of a number not recognized in the usage of English poetry, and, desitute of rhythmical measure, fall into prose."  Hallam, we must conclude, condemns the drama on account of its language.

Mark Pattison maintains that if we view Samson Agonistes as art, it is a failure. As a composition, the drama is languid, nerveless, occasionally halting, and never brilliant, he argues. However, this critic feels that the poem comes to life if it is viewed as a page of contemporary history. But in the final analysis, Pattison agrees with Hallam that the drama shows a decline in Milton's poetic powers: "The simplicity of Samson Agonistes is a flagging of the forces, a drying up of the rich sources from which had once flowed the golden stream of suggestive phrase which makes Paradise Lost a unique monument of the English language." 202

The other critics who mention Samson write favorably of the poem, but it is still evident that Milton's reputation as a poet is maintained by Paradise Lost. John Mitford dislikes the measures and rhythm of the poem but argues that it is nevertheless a noble drama because of its moral sentiment, pathetic feeling, noble and dignified thoughts, wise and weighty maxims, and its severe religious contemplations. 203 Sir Egerton Brydges, a contemporary

202 Ibid., p. 197.
203 Poetical Works of Milton, I, lxxxii.
of Mitford, assigns Samson third place among Milton's productions. He says that no one should neglect to read it because of its novelty, truth, and wisdom.

Thomas Keightley takes Hallam to task for having criticized the metrics of Samson Agonistes. This critic declares that Milton is always the master of his metrics, that they are not faulty in the drama. He disputes the idea that the poem shows a decline in poetic power. Keightley argues, rather convincingly, that when Milton's metrics are criticized, the fault usually lies in the reader's own ignorance, not in the poet's artistry. He is confident that "most of the complaints of want of harmony which have been made against Milton and other great poets have their origin in want of skill in the reader."

In his Life, David Masson ignores those who have written unfavorably of Samson. In addition to a summary of the poem, he devotes several passages to a criticism of it. He feels that Samson is superior to all contemporary seventeenth-century plays and admires it for its classicism. He likes the noble and beautiful language. In his opinion, the poem contains not one languid or flaccid passage. "It was if there were an English Sophocles or Euripides writing on a Hebrew subject. Here again, as in Paradise Regained,}

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204 Life of John Milton, p. 269.
206 Ibid., p. 327.
the optical coherence of the story was perfect."\textsuperscript{208}

The other critics speak of \textit{Samson Agonistes} in general terms. J. R. \textsuperscript{209} Seeley holds that the poem is a test of a man's true appreciation of Milton and not a bad test of his appreciation of all good literature. Richard Garnett \textsuperscript{210} notes a frequent harshness in the style of the drama, but at the same time he declares, "On the whole, 'Samson Agonistes' is a noble example of a style which we may hope will in no generation be entirely lacking to our literature, but which must always be exotic, from its want of harmony with the more essential characteristics of our tumultuous, undisciplined, irrepressible national life."\textsuperscript{211} Walter Raleigh \textsuperscript{212} observes the change in style in \textit{Samson} and notes that in the poem Milton is concerned with "the inscrutable course of Divine providence; the punishment so unwittingly and lightly incurred...; the temptation presenting itself in the guise neither of pleasure, nor of ambition, but of despair; and, through all, the recurring assertion of unyielding trust and unflinching acquiescence in the will of god..."\textsuperscript{213} But Raleigh goes no further in his analysis of \textit{Samson Agonistes}.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{208} Ibid., p. 668.
\item \textsuperscript{209} Op. cit., p. 418.
\item \textsuperscript{210} Op. cit., pp. 182-190.
\item \textsuperscript{211} Ibid., p. 184.
\item \textsuperscript{212} Op. cit., p. 159.
\item \textsuperscript{213} Ibid., p. 167.
\end{itemize}
As I have mentioned, the majority of the Victorian critics interpreted Samson as an autobiographical poem. They noticed parallels between Milton's own life and incidents and situations portrayed in the drama. Perhaps J. R. Seeley presents the resemblances as concisely as any other critic of the period:

Samson had giant strength; so, in a manner, had Milton. Samson had been betrayed by his wife; Milton had received a similar domestic wound which long rankled in him. Samson was a Nazarite, forbidden the use of wine; Milton, though he was not, at least a dozen years before, a total abstainer, was essentially an abstemious man. And then came the great point of resemblance. Samson had fought for the living God and had been conquered by the Philistines. He had fallen from his high position in Israel into ignominy and imprisonment. Milton felt the parallel strongly in those last years which he dragged out in obscurity in the neighborhood of a triumphant Court, which to him was Philistine, in a city which had become to him a city of the uncircumcised. 214

Among the other critics who concur with Seeley in such an autobiographical interpretation are Brydges, 215 Keightley, 216 Tulloch, 217 Maurice, 218 Brooke, 219 Masson, 220 Dennis, 221 Garnett, 222 and Raleigh. Some of these writers list

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different parallels, however. For example, one critic finds references to the poet's daughters in the drama. Another states that the final chorus allegorizes Milton's own re-emergence as a great poet before the astonished eyes of the Restoration world. Nevertheless, Seeley expresses the general consensus of the Victorian critics.

Aside from Paradise Lost, no other poem received as much attention from the Victorian critics of Milton as Lycidas. The reason for this attention lay in the blanket condemnation heaped upon the poem by Samuel Johnson in his Life of Milton. Although the Victorians differed among themselves in their evaluations of the elegy, not one of them agreed with Johnson that it is a bad poem. Among the first to refute Johnson after 1825 was Sir Egerton Brydges. He calls Johnson's censure of the poem "gross and tasteless" and holds that such criticism is "disgraceful only to the critic." Brydges agrees with Joseph Warton's statement that one's admiration or dislike for this poem is an infallible test of his poetic taste. Lycidas confers its spell through its epithets, the critic insists further. The only fault that Brydges finds in the poem is its learned allusions. He believes that there are perhaps too many of these.

Throughout the Victorian era, many of the critics repeat what Brydges has said earlier. They condemn Johnson's condemnation and then make a few comments of their own. Henry Hallam is one of these. He does not name

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225 Ibid., p. 43.
Johnson in his attack on those who dislike *Lycidas*, but it is obvious to
the reader that he has Johnson in mind. Hallam also repeats the idea
that the *elegy* is a test of a man's taste for poetry. In connection with
the pastoral theme of *Lycidas*, he points out that pastorals are always read
with an abandonment of credibility to the imagination of a waking dream.

Thomas Keightley calls Johnson's comments "a tirade," quotes the "tirade,"
and declares that it is a waste of time to enter into a formal refutation of
such criticism. Then a late Victorian, Stopford Brooke, feels that he
ought to refute Johnson. The eighteenth-century critic was in error, he
says, in not accepting the pastoral as a legitimate form of poetry. Brooke
states further that *Lycidas* represents an advance in technique over Milton's
previous poems. With an acuteness that is not unusual in a critic of Brooke's
caliber, he declares that one of its chief charms "is its solemn undertone
rising like a religious chant through the elegiac musick; the sense of a
stern national crisis in the midst of its pastoral morning; the sense of
Milton's grave force of character among the flowers and fancies of the poem;
the sense of Christian religion pervading the classical imagery."

Some of the other late Victorian critics did not concern themselves
with Johnson's remarks on *Lycidas*. The reaction against his condemnation
apparently had spent its force, just as it had in connection with Milton the
man. Instead of refuting Johnson, the critics try to evaluate the elegy and

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229 Ibid., pp. 26f.
establish its position among other elegies. Mark Pattison, for example, argues, "In Lycidas (1637) we have reached the high-water mark of English poesy and of Milton's own production. A period of a century and a half was to elapse before poetry in England seemed, in Wordsworth's Ode on Immortality (1807) to be rising again towards the level of inspiration which it had once attained in Lycidas." John Dennis ranks the elegy as the finest of its type in the language because of its splendor of versification and nobility of sentiment. He notes that some of the imagery is rough but reckons rightly in stating that such roughness could have been intentional. Writing in 1864, an anonymous essayist compares Milton's elegy with Adonais and In Memoriam. Although he devotes most of his attention to the latter two elegies, he feels that Lycidas is the best poem. He likes Milton's "happy adaptation" of the classics to some of the incidents of Edward King's career. J. H. M. W. Mackean interprets the elegy as "the last note of the inspiration of an age that was passing away." He holds that only Shelley's and Arnold's elegies deserve to rank with Milton's. Richard Garnett disputes Pattison's statement that Lycidas represents the high-water mark in English poetry. He insists, "Its innumerable beauties are rather exquisite than magnificent. It is an elegy, and cannot, therefore, rank as

230 Milton, p. 29.
high as an equally consummated example of epic, lyric, or dramatic art. Even as elegy it is surpassed by the other great English masterpiece, 'Adonais,' in fire and grandeur." Garnett argues that some of the passages of Lycidas, such as the one referring to St. Peter, are incongruous. But he adds that the beauties of Lycidas are of an inimitable sort, while those of Adonais are imitable.

Remarks on Lycidas remained fairly general throughout the period, just as they did on Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes. One article which appeared, however, is significant in connection with Lycidas for two reasons. First its anonymous author is concerned only with the elegy, and, second, he devotes his attention to a specific problem pertaining to the poem, its language. The author feels that critics often overlook Milton's fondness for Saxon words when they speak of the elegy's harshness. He sets out, then, to discuss the language which Milton employed when he composed the poem. The critic feels that "Perhaps the first thing that strikes the reader's attention is, that the language of 'Lycidas' is the language of a scholar." As evidence, he notices Milton's arrangement of his words; his peculiar forms of expression, which denote a familiar acquaintance with the classical authors; his inversions of style; his many Latinisms; and his

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236 Ibid., p. 273.
Latinized geographical names, such as "Deva" for "Dee" and "Camus" for "Cam." The author of the article has studied the origin of the words which appear in Lycidas, and he finds that eighty-one per cent are of Anglo-Saxon origin. He concludes that Milton uses the Anglo-Saxon words to achieve a genuine feeling of grief in the poem on the part of his English audience. The poet's subject itself, he argues, "would lead us to expect those hackneyed expressions of grief, which are as familiar as household words, and excite a grave smile when chiselled in marble on the church-yard stone."

This article is not perfect from the critical point of view. For example, we should like to know how its author arrived at the origin of the words employed in the poem. However, in his method the writer does foreshadow the kind of critical essays on Milton which are to be produced in the twentieth century, when a specific problem in connection with a poem is isolated and discussed with the intent of arriving at a better understanding of the poem itself.

I have not mentioned every Victorian critic who commented on Lycidas, but from the remarks that have been cited several conclusions can be drawn. Except for the usual derogatory comments on Johnson's condemnation of the poem, there is little continuity in the criticism which was produced. Most of the writers admired Lycidas, perhaps much more than the neo-Augustan

237 Ibid., p. 274.
238 Ibid., p. 296.
critics did, the chief reason being that during the Victorian era the pastoral form was in great vogue. Also, the exaltation of *Lycidas* was a part of the nineteenth-century reaction against the rules to which the eighteenth-century critics gave lip service. Notwithstanding one or two exceptions, the Victorian critics remained vague in their general appreciation of Milton's elegy. And finally, they never arrived at its central meaning. Most of them thought that it is only a lament for the departed Edward King.

Practically the same conclusions can be drawn in connection with the criticism of *Comus* as with those of *Lycidas*. At the beginning of our period, the critics, chafing because of the derogatory evaluation made by Johnson, defended Milton's mask. For example, Sir Egerton Brydges points out that *Comus* has to be criticized as a mask, that it was not written for a common audience, and that, for this reason, long speeches and lack of sentiment were permissible. But as the century progressed, critics tended to ignore Johnson. When they wrote of *Comus*, they criticized it in glowing terms. As in the case of the other minor poems, however, *Comus* always was overshadowed by *Paradise Lost*. Perhaps the fullest treatment given during the period is found in Masson. He, quite properly, places *Comus* in the tradition in which it was written. He feels that no mask has ever been composed that is more beautiful than Milton's poem.

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A unique evaluation of Comus was made by George Saintsbury. That critic places Milton's mask over Paradise Lost. He holds that the poem has none of the stiffness, none of the want of humor, and none of the Longueurs which characterize Paradise Lost. The verse of Comus, he insists, "has a spring, a variety, a sweep and a rush of genius, which are but rarely present later." No other critic of the Victorian era, though, felt that Milton's mask is superior to his long epic.

Very few of the Victorians ever attempted to interpret Comus, but a few critics who were interested in tracing a controlling idea in all of Milton's works interpreted the poem as an early indication of Milton's life-long concern for the struggle of good against evil. For example, Edward Dowden follows such an interpretation. He argues, "There is much in the Lady which resembles the youthful Milton himself--he, the Lady of his College--and we may well believe that the great debate concerning temperance was not altogether dramatic...but was in part a record of passages in the poet's own spiritual history." Likewise, Walter Raleigh makes use of Comus when he develops the idea that the struggle of good against evil was the dominant idea in all of Milton's writings.

L'Allegro and Il Penseroso were nearly always mentioned together in the Victorian era, just as they had been since the seventeenth century.

242 Ibid.
243 Transcripts and Studies, p. 454.
These two poems were often praised by the Victorians but scarcely studied and analyzed by them. John Mitford is representative of the predominant Victorian attitude toward the two poems when he says, "Of the picturesque imagery, the musical versification, and the brilliant language of these poems, praise too high cannot be heard." Another critic, Robert Bell, declares, "It may be said of them that they produce increased pleasure at every fresh perusal; that we can always discover new reasons for liking them, even after we think we have exhausted them; and that they impress themselves unawares upon the memory, so vivid and choice are the images and diction." Henry Hallam adds, "They satisfy the critics, and they delight mankind." Mark Pattison believes that had Milton never written Paradise Lost, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, and Lycidas would have set him off from other poets and maintained his reputation as a poet. And Stopford Brooke maintains that the two companion poems are "a landmark in the metrical art of poetry, and they are conscious of their art throughout." These remarks are typical of those that were produced in connection with the two poems. Opinion on them shifts very little during the entire course of the period. At the end of the century, they are still highly lauded, but

245 Editor, Works, I, liii.
always in general terms.

Sir Egerton Brydges and Thomas Keightley are exceptions to convention when they write of L'Allegro and II Penseroso. For once, Brydges finds some fault in the works of the object of his idolatry. He feels that the images in the two poems want dignity and argues that there is not enough sentiment in the descriptions and no moral pathos at all. Keightley, on the other hand, calls them "beautiful poems," but he cringes when he reads of the incestuous origin of Melancholy in the first poem. The critic declares, "The species of incest there described is such as no ideas of a Golden Age, or any particular state of society, can make accord with our moral instincts, and we must confess that we wish the poet had assigned her different parents."251

Most of the statements that have been made in this study in connection with Lycidas, Comus, L'Allegro, and II Penseroso apply to Milton's English sonnets as well. During the Victorian era, they were ignored more often than they were commented on. When the sonnets were mentioned, it was usually only in passing. A few of the critical biographers, though, thought that the sonnets were important enough for a special chapter on them.252 The consensus of the critics who discussed the sonnets seems to be that while Milton is not

250 Life of John Milton, pp. 401.
252 For example, Brydges (Life of John Milton, pp. 253-264) and Hood (op. cit., pp. 137-145) wrote chapters on the sonnets. Some of the late Victorians, like Garnett and Raleigh, ignored them almost entirely.
the prince of sonneteers, his sonnets are of superior value. Arthur Hallam expresses the idea when he says, "These sonnets are indeed unequal; the expression is sometimes harsh, and sometimes obscure; sometimes too much of pedantic allusion interferes with the sentiment; nor am I reconciled to his frequent deviations from the best Italian structure. But such blemishes are lost in the majestic simplicity, the holy calm, that ennoble many of these short compositions."²⁵³

Milton's Latin poems and his other English poems, most of which are compositions of his youth, received even less attention than did the sonnets. Keightley, one of the few to discuss the Latin poems, perhaps states the attitude of the majority of the Victorian critics of Milton when he observes, "Beautiful as Milton's Latin poetry must be confessed to be, it probably does not find, even among those familiar with the language, one reader for fifty readers of his English poetry, and few perhaps ever read his Latin poems without a secret wish that he had written them in English."²⁵⁴ The other English poems, like the Hymn to Christ's Nativity, were usually praised when they were mentioned, but the major poems have always demanded the bulk of critical attention. Milton's reputation as a poet, then, may be said to have rested on the Victorian estimations of the major poems, especially Paradise Lost.

We might pause again at this point to consider the state of criticism

of the poems other than *Paradise Lost* at the close of the nineteenth century. As we have seen, much remained to be "done" on *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*. The Victorians criticized the metrics of these poems with a fair degree of accuracy and perception, but their interpretations of them were always vague and of a general nature. It remained for twentieth-century critics to arrive at their central meaning. At the same time, the versification of *Lycidas* was commented on sufficiently. Still, the great majority of the critics looked upon it only as an elegy mourning the death of Edward King. They failed to recognize the fact that Milton uses King's drowning only as a means of expressing his youthful hopes and fears. Running concurrent with the critics' failure to arrive at the philosophic meaning of the major poems was their unawareness of the storehouse of ideas in the early poems which would aid in the tracing of Milton's evolution of thought. The root of the failure to interpret adequately Milton's philosophy was, I think, the general belief among the critics that the central meaning of the poems is obvious. In their surface observations of the poetry, the Victorians did not realize that deep inside it are meanings which would have been of use to their own times.

In summary, we have seen that Milton's position as a poet remained very high during the Victorian era. At the beginning of the period he was almost universally held in esteem because it was thought that in *Paradise Lost* he had composed an exceptional devotional poem. Thus the long epic was praised because of its religious content. That poem continued to hold most of the attention of the Miltonists, but at the end of the century, few called it a
devotional poem. Instead of being lauded because of Milton's portrayal of the fall of man and its consequences, the poem was admired as an artistic norm. The Satan of *Paradise Lost* was a figure of controversy throughout the period. There were always those who held that he is the hero; conversely, there were always those who denied him that eminence. The majority of the so-called Satanists fell into error through their ignorance of the epic tradition. One critic of note, John Wilson, explained satisfactorily Satan's true position in *Paradise Lost*, but subsequent critics seemed to be unaware of his explanation. From 1825 to 1900 certain passages in *Paradise Lost* and almost all of *Samson Agonistes* were given autobiographical interpretations. Invariably, the "autobiographical" passages were connected with Milton's first wife, Mary Powell. Since *Paradise Lost* received the lion's-share of critical attention, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* did not get the consideration they merited. However, they were usually spoken of in complimentary terms. The other poems, with the exception of *Lycidas*, were never studied in detail, but they too were highly regarded. In the final analysis, it cannot be held that Milton's position as a poet declined during the Victorian age. It is true, however, that in emphasizing Milton's flawlessness as an artist, critics like Raleigh were setting the stage for the reaction against Milton's poetry that took place during the second decade of the twentieth century.
CHAPTER IV

THE VICTORIAN EVALUATIONS OF MILTON'S PROSE

Milton's reputation as a writer of prose was undoubtedly connected with the religious and political predilections of the Victorians. In the chapter on Milton the man it was pointed out that the critics' preconceived political-religious notions often biased their interpretations of Milton's character and personality. The same principle was in effect when they discussed the man's prose as literature. And even if some of the critics separated his art from his philosophy when they evaluated Paradise Lost, with one exception they made no such distinction when they turned to his prose. Consequently, it is difficult to find evaluations of his prose per se. In the present chapter, nevertheless, I shall attempt to arrive at Milton's standing as a prose writer between 1825 and 1900. Since the critics did not separate manner from matter, there will of necessity be some overlapping between this chapter and the one that is to follow, in which Milton's reputation as a thinker will be discussed. But whenever practical, I shall omit mention of the critics' own opinions toward the ideas expressed in the prose pamphlets.

The organization of the present chapter will be different from that of the preceding one. It is not feasible to analyze the criticisms of each of the prose compositions separately as I did in connection with Milton's poetry. With the exception of De Doctrina Christiana, there was not enough study on any one of the prose compositions for it to merit separate consideration here. However, the nature of the remarks on
De Doctrina Christiana precludes their discussion in this chapter. The evaluations of that treatise properly belong in the chapter on Milton's reputation as a thinker. The Victorians themselves often did not treat each of the prose compositions separately. Even some of the critical biographers, like Pattison, discussed those works collectively.

As I concluded in the first chapter of this study, the number of editions of the prose indicates neglect. In comparison with the prodigious number of editions of the poetic works, those of the prose are relatively scarce. However, when we examine the criticism of the pamphlets, we can find enough remarks to draw conclusions in respect to Milton's standing as a prose writer throughout the period. At the same time, the bulk of Milton criticism is overwhelmingly in favor of the poetry.

If there was a dominant trend in the criticism that was produced, it was a tendency toward greater objectivity as the century progressed. Also, the late Victorians were not so concerned with expressing their own opinions toward the ideas set forth in Milton's pamphlets. Many of the problems analyzed by Milton in his prose had been resolved by the end of the nineteenth century. With the advent of the Liberal ministries of Palmerston and Gladstone, progressive social measures dealing with church, school, and state had been enacted. After 1885, it was no longer necessary for the critics either to accept Milton as their champion or to hold his proposed reform measures up for ridicule.

At the beginning of our period, many of the critics note that Milton's prose is in a state of neglect, but a few of them feel that the time has arrived when the pamphlets will be more widely read. William E. Channing
declares, "We rejoice that the dust is beginning to be wiped from his prose writings, and that the public are now learning, what the initiated have long known, that these contain passages hardly inferior to his best poetry, and that they are throughout marked with the same vigorous mind, which gave us Paradise Lost."

Channing is also aware of the old charge that the pamphlets contain too much abuse directed against Milton's antagonists. He feels that Salmasius and Morus, the two most memorable of the pamphleteer's foes, deserved no mercy. The critic adds that Milton had a fierce fight to wage and that the virulence of his enemies made it necessary for him to write with invective.

Then in 1827 an anonymous reviewer listed reasons for the neglect of Milton's pamphlets: "He wrote in a pedantic, involved style—he seems, except when he was under the influence of poetic inspiration, to have thought in Latin, and in the sort of Latin, too, which was not remarkable for its purity and elegance. Milton also wrote for merely temporary purposes; his antagonists speedily passed to oblivion, and his arguments have long ceased to interest his countrymen." At the same time, the critic feels that certain passages in the prose compositions contain great beauty; and since he voices an opinion which is to be heard throughout the century, his statements deserve further quotation here:

1 Remarks on the Character and Writings of John Milton, p. 16.
3 Ibid., p. 463.
But it was also admitted, that through the political and polemical works of this author, passages were to be found, in which all the grandeur of Milton's genius shone forth in a manner worthy of the poet of Paradise. In his theological compositions, the piety of Milton breaks forth, occasionally, in sentences of the purest sublimity; and his Areopagitica was always admired, not only for the union of learning, fancy, wisdom, and eloquence, of which it is composed, but for its total freedom from those imperfections of taste, which tend to degrade so many of his other productions in prose.

On the unfavorable side, then, Milton's prose is criticized for its involved, Latinate style, for the alleged temporary nature of its arguments, and for its coarseness. On the favorable side, certain passages are cited for their poetic qualities, and the Areopagitica is singled out as the one composition containing beauty of language and thought.

Joseph Ivimey, the next critic who writes of the pamphlets, is unconcerned for the most part with their qualities as literature. Instead, he glorifies the ideas espoused in them. Unlike most of the Victorians, he criticizes the prose works one by one. Taking them chronologically, he first discusses Of Reformation. He summarizes its content at length and in several instances points out the cogency of Milton's arguments. Ivimey dwells on the prayer at the end of that work, and many of the critics are to follow him in admiring the beauty of the passage. As we might expect, Ivimey especially likes the Areopagitica. Being a member of a minor religious sect, he quite naturally desires freedom of expression. The critic insists, "In this immortal work, even more so than by his exposure

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4Ibid.

5John Milton, His Life and Times, pp. 16-21.
of prelatical rank in the church, he \textit{Milton} greatly served the cause of rational, restrained liberty; because, if the press be free, we dare bishops, or any others, to be oppressive.\textsuperscript{6}

It was pointed out in Chapter Two that Ivimey's one point of criticism concerning Milton is the Mary Powell episode. He regards the entire affair as unfortunate. Consequently, he cannot afford to write of the divorce pamphlets in glowing terms. However, once Ivimey has passed this obstacle, he reverts once more to his eulogistic criticism of the prose writings. For example, in connection with the \textit{Tenure of Kings and Magistrates} Ivimey writes, "It is a pity that these Presbyterian magistrates and legislators had not felt, and listened to these cutting reproofs and significant warnings."\textsuperscript{7} This critic makes similar statements when he discusses the remaining pamphlets. He again falls into the group of critics who defend Milton and his works on almost every issue because of Milton's advocacy of reforms still desired by the critics. As I have stated previously, it is obvious throughout his study that Ivimey is a thorough republican at heart. Milton is his champion.

Sir Egerton Brydges\textsuperscript{8} looks upon all the prose compositions with regret. A staunch Tory, he agrees that the poet was only writing with his left hand when he wrote the pamphlets and wishes that he had applied his talents to

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{6}Ibid., p. 61.
\item \textsuperscript{7}Ibid., p. 117.
\item \textsuperscript{8}The \textit{Life of John Milton}, passim.
\end{itemize}
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verse alone. The result of Brydges' attitude toward the prose is an almost complete disregard for the polemical treatises. On the other hand, William Carpenter wrote his study to compensate for Brydges' slighting of the prose works. The latter critic is certainly not as violent as Ivimey in advocating reform measures, but he is nevertheless an avowed Whig. Carpenter discusses each of the pamphlets in some detail and quotes from them extensively.

Concerning Of Reformation, Carpenter states practically the same thing as Ivimey, remarking that Milton describes prelacy as it is "yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." When Carpenter analyzes the divorce pamphlets, he does not retract. Instead, he defends the skillful logic exemplified in them:

Every page is strewed with felicities, and the mens divinior shines out with a lustre unsurpassed by himself on happier, though not more interesting themes. He makes out a strong case, and fights with arguments which are not easily to be repelled. The whole context of the Holy Scriptures, the laws of the first Christian emperors, the opinions of some of the most eminent among the early reformers, and a projected statute of Edward the Sixth, are adduced by him for the purpose of demonstrating that, by the laws of God, and by the influences of the most virtuous and enlightened men, the power of divorce ought not to be rigidly restricted to those causes which render the nuptial state unfruitful, or which taint it with a spurious offspring.... The subtlety and acuteness of his reasoning will be apparent enough from the two following passages, which we transfer to these pages, in the hope that they will induce the reader of them to peruse the entire work.

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9 The Life and Times of John Milton, passim.

10 Ibid., p. 36.

11 Ibid., pp. 59f.
Carpenter's remarks on the other pamphlets follow the same general pattern as those on Of Reformation and the divorce tracts. He admires Milton's power of reasoning, his considerable but not ostentatious display of learning, and the constitutionality of his arguments. This critic makes several statements on the relevance of Milton's political and religious ideas in the nineteenth century, but assertions of such import will be considered in the final chapter of this study.

An essay which appeared during the same year as Carpenter's study is indicative that all of the early Victorians did not have a eulogistic attitude toward the prose. The anonymous writer has the usual praise for the Areopagitica. He likes its forceful arguments which are adorned with majesty of thought and noble language. At the same time, the critic believes that in some of the pamphlets Milton displays faulty logic and argues that in the divorce tracts, the pamphleteer does not take into consideration the full impact of his assertions. He cites the Prima Defensio as another example of Milton's illogical reasoning. However, he feels that Salmasius' logic is just as erroneous as Milton's. The critic does not point out specific lapses of logic in the Prima Defensio.

Alfred E. Fry is one of the critics who discuss Milton's prose in general without referring to each specific pamphlet. He feels that Milton has benefited mankind with his prose because "the eloquent effusions of his

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13 A Lecture on the Writings...of John Milton, passim. The nature of Fry's work, of course, forbids detailed discussion of the prose.
prose are becoming more and more known every day, and I heartily recommend every person present, not already acquainted with them, to become so forthwith." Fry does, however, single out the Areopagitica for specific comment. He labels that work with such epithets as "breathing the lofty spirit of the author" and "lively description of the value of books." Robert Bell's remarks on the Areopagitica are significant because they contain both positive and negative criticism of that work. Bell likes the treatise for its grandeur and power of style, its richness and fertility of illustration, and "the completeness with which every part and ramification of the subject is explored and laid upon." On the other hand, that critic contends that the parts want coherence, that the argument is not conducted to a close, and that the propositions are not stated directly.

As I stated in Chapter One, J. A. St. John's five-volume edition of the prose (1848) was the first adequate edition to appear during the Victorian age. It became a part of the Bohn edition. In his preface, St. John evidently has critics like Brydges in mind when he defends Milton for writing the pamphlets. "Poets," he argues, "should never forget they are men and citizens." Thus he foreshadows J. R. Seeley, who in his essay on Milton's

14Ibid., p. 52.
16Eminent Literary and Scientific Men, I, 181f.
17Ibid., p. 181.
poetry is to write disparagingly of the "art for art school" who are not concerned with the social problems of their day. St. John is convinced that Milton's prose is not read as widely as it should be, and he sets forth five reasons for the neglect: (1) It is overshadowed by the poetry. (2) The titles are uncomely. (3) Too many readers have believed hints about Milton's unpleasantness as a person. (4) Many readers dislike Milton's Latinate prose style. (5) The writer's subjects are often looked upon as being out-of-date.

The editor feels that such reasons are insufficient to justify an ignorance of the tracts, and the purpose of his edition is to familiarize the English public with the truths contained in them. He insists, "Had nature, however, gifted me with but a tithe of the eloquence which the author of these now obscure works possessed, I should not despair of making good his claim to stand at the head of our prose literature, instead of confirming myself, as I must, to maintaining that he deserves to be read...." Then St. John discusses the different prose compositions which Milton wrote. For the most part, he repeats ideas already expressed by Ivimey and Carpenter. It is rather obvious that this editor is an ardent Whig and that to him Milton advocates reform measures which still should be enacted.

In a review of St. John's edition an anonymous critic thanks the

19 Ibid., pp. viif.
20 Ibid., p. vii.
editor and "Mr. Bohn" for making possible an edition of Milton's prose for "the reading part of the English public."\textsuperscript{22} Having at least mentioned the work under review, this Victorian critic proceeds to interpret for himself Milton's services to the Commonwealth. Quite unaware of Ivimey's and Carpenter's studies, he feels that Milton's connection with the Commonwealth has never "received due attention from any of his biographers."\textsuperscript{23} Likewise, he believes that he ought "to take note of the works which during the period he composed."\textsuperscript{24} Like St. John and most of the other critics who mention Milton's prose writings, this reviewer advocates the Whig theories of government and attempts to justify all of Milton's political writings. For example, when he mentions the Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, the critic points out that the work is not an attack on Charles I. Rather, he argues, Milton was prompted to write it because of the unreasonable censures pronounced upon Cromwell and his friends.

The reviewer is in accord with most of those who criticize Milton's prose works. He admires the writings for their matter rather than their manner. In a passage pertaining to the Tenure, he declares, "It is one of the most condensed and closely reasoned of all Milton's writings, and satisfactorily established those great points of constitutional law which at an earlier period had been advocated by the classic pen of Buchanan,

\textsuperscript{22}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 224.
\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{24}\textit{Ibid.}
which in the age succeeding that of Milton, were so logically demonstrated by Locke, and which may now be considered as incorporated with the constitution of our country. When he evaluates the *Prima Defensio*, this critic follows the same method. He vilifies Salmassius and establishes the constitutionality of Milton’s arguments. He admits that the work contains much coarse abuse but adds that “for rich and varied learning, acuteness of reasoning, soundness of principle, and rhetorical effect, few efforts of human genius are entitled to rank by the side of Milton’s Defence of his countrymen.” His remarks on the other prose works are in a similar vein.

Edwin Paxton Hood follows the other Whig critics in formulating his remarks on the pamphlets. For example, he summarizes the *Areopagitica* and declares that it ought to be memorized by every young man, “whether we regard its political or theological ethics, the magnificence of its conceptions, or its diction.” Hood has nothing but praise for all of the tracts, but he especially likes the *Eikonoklastes*. To him, the work is a noble piece of literary architecture: “The sentences swell and heave, like bellying sails...; sometimes, and frequently, smart aphorisms meet us—truth distilled, and condensed into a line or two...; it contains some of the noblest truths of theology and religion,—of morals and politics.”

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Hood insists further that as we read alternately the pleas of Charles and the replies of Milton, the martyr sinks to the driviller, while the Latin secretary rises to the level of a king.

Thomas Keightley again demonstrates the transitional nature of his study in his remarks on the prose. He lists specific characteristics of Milton's writings, some of which apply to both the prose and the poetry. He likes the writer's logical order and sequence of thoughts and feels that vigor is the distinguishing quality of the prose. At the same time, he dislikes Milton's involved sentences and his fondness for Latin words. One of Keightley's purposes in composing his study is to bring the pamphlets into what he thinks should be their proper focus. Consequently, he summarizes them at length, and in his study Milton's prose is not overshadowed by the poetry. Keightley intersperses critical remarks of his own throughout the various summaries, and some of his evaluations are acute. For example, concerning the History of England, he observes, "Milton in effect was not an historian; he had not the requisite talent and frame of mind, and he never could have formed his style to the dignified simplicity belonging to the true historian." Also, when evaluating Milton's theories of government, Keightley argues, with reason, that the seventeenth-century writer's views were formed with an unawareness of the character of the English people, who

31. Ibid., pp. 331-387.
32. Ibid., p. 378.
are "the most attached to ancient usages and precedents, and the least inclined to depart from them of any people in Europe." Keightley lacks the eulogistic attitude toward the prose works that is so obvious in critics like Ivimey and Carpenter. Nevertheless, he insists to the last that the pamphlets should be read and studied.

After Keightley's study, most of the critics continued to remark that Milton's prose was read very little. They usually stated the reasons for the neglect, and their reasons were almost always identical with the ones listed earlier by St. John. In a discussion of Volume One of Masson's Life, a reviewer makes the expected favorable comments on the Areopagitica. However, he believes that that work is the only one of the prose compositions now generally read:

> There is no other such strain of oratory to be found among them. On the other hand, there is so great a preponderance of passion over reason, that their comparative oblivion is not to be wondered at. It is a notable fact, that Milton's works on Divorce, did not, as far as we remember, afford a single illustration to the great debate on the occasion of the recent Act; and we may affirm, from our own acquaintance with these writings—which we have read through—that the Debate in question lost little by honourable members' probable ignorance of them.

This writer most likely expresses accurately the extent to which Milton's prose is read, but he is in error in stating that the divorce tracts were

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33 Ibid., p. 232.
35 Ibid., p. 156.
not even mentioned during the debate on the divorce bill. Gladstone's speech on the bill was printed anonymously in 1857, and he specifically mentions Milton's views on that subject, though in uncompromising terms.

As we might expect, John Tulloch interprets all of the prose writings, including De Doctrina Christiana and the divorce tracts, as documents of the Puritan period. The pamphlets are Puritan to the very core, he insists, in the style of their reasoning, in the intensity of their feeling, in everything except their luxuriance of style. Although Tulloch is a Puritan himself and although he goes overboard in his attempt to make Milton a Puritan, he does not defend the writer on every question. For example, he notes that there is an unfairness in Milton's manner of writing the pamphlets that provokes sympathy for his opponents. But on the other hand, Tulloch feels that Milton compensates for this unfairness through the strength of his moral indignation. Tulloch is another critic to voice the generally accepted opinion that the prose works have fallen into oblivion, and he believes that, as a whole, the works have merited such. Like the anonymous critic who wrote in the Monthly Review in 1826, however, he argues that the pamphlets contain passages of the highest beauty. Milton is at his best, Tulloch declares, when he passes from polemics to general discussions,

37 English Puritanism and Its Leaders, passim.
38 Ibid., pp. 202f.
39 Ibid., p. 246.
personal descriptions, and intellectual references. The critic feels that once he gets away from controversy, Milton's austere enthusiasm causes his thoughts "to expand their natural dimensions" and his style to rise "into a corresponding majesty."  

David Masson thinks well of all the prose works, and he establishes the background of each pamphlet in detail. But as usual, he avoids committing himself on the merits of the compositions per se. Masson describes at length the struggles between Parliament and King, and he is sympathetic toward Parliament. Perhaps, however, he overestimates the importance of Milton's pamphlets insofar as the outcome of the struggle is concerned. Masson readily agrees that the *Areopagitica* is the only one of the prose works now generally read. Like so many of the other critics, he regards it more highly than any of the other pamphlets: "It is perhaps the most skillful of all Milton's prose writings, the most equable and sustained, the easiest to read through at once, and the fittest to leave one glowing sensation of the power of the author's genius."

In his essay called "Milton's Political Opinions," J. R. Seeley discusses the prose writings. This essay exemplifies the tendency to be more objective as the century passed. Indeed, Seeley is the first critic

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40 Ibid.
41 *The Life of John Milton*, III, 278.
42 Ibid.
43 *Lectures and Essays*, pp. 120-154.
of the era to be completely unbiased when discussing Milton's pamphlets.

He justly surmises the error made by earlier critics when they attempted to evaluate the prose: "I seldom find myself quite agreeing with the views of Milton as a politician taken by his biographers and critics. They are commonly perverted in two ways. First, by the influence of which I have spoken, party spirit. Neither the studied attack upon him which is called Johnson's Life, nor the rhetorical panegyric of Macaulay, which Macaulay himself afterwards confessed to be overdone, can satisfy any one who does not consider the subject from the party point of view." Then Seeley sets forth a reasonable attitude toward the pamphlets:

The true view, I think may be thus expressed,--Milton was a pamphleteer, only a pamphleteer of original genius. Had he had less originality, with the same power of language, he would have become more distinctly the mouthpiece of a party. But because the weight of his mind always carries him below the surface of the subject, because in these pamphlets he appeals constantly to first principles, opens the largest questions, propounds the most general maxims, we are not therefore unfairly to compare them with the complete treatises on politics, or to forget that they are essentially pamphlets still.

Drawing his information from the pamphlets, Seeley discusses Milton's political and religious beliefs. He remains the objective critic and neither praises nor blames. He feels, however, that were he still living, Milton would not be as critical of the modern Anglican Church as he is of the English Church of the seventeenth century. Seeley believes that

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44 Ibid., p. 92.
45 Ibid., pp. 96f.
sufficient reforms have been instituted into the church for Milton's satisfaction. He makes an interesting comparison between Milton and Carlyle. The two men, Seeley argues, have much in common. He believes that of the two, Milton was more optimistic because he lived at the beginning of an age. Carlyle was less optimistic toward reform because he lived near the end of the same age.

Seeley voices again the familiar opinion that the Areopagitica "is the only treatise of Milton's which can be said to live in English literature...." He declares that in writing the treatise Milton did the cause of liberty a great service and insists that the arguments set forth in the work are not at all obsolete.

Three of the late Victorian critics who wrote near the date of publication of Seeley's essay on Milton's politics entertained opinions concerning the prose that were often voiced during the era. John Tomlinson repeats the maxim that Milton's pamphlets were only partially read. He lists two reasons: (1) Milton was maligned to such an extent at the Restoration that it has been difficult to refute the malignities, and (2) the attention devoted to the poetry has caused a natural neglect of the prose. Tomlinson states that the three primal elements of Milton's prose style are strength, adaptation, and variety. Anna Buckland ignores many of the pamphlets, but

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46 Ibid., pp. 115-119.
she writes favorably of the Areopagitica and insists, "It was Milton's courageous love of Truth which produced this book, and this is the spirit which runs through every page, and gives life to its eloquent words."\textsuperscript{49} George Saintsbury is not so eulogistic concerning any of the prose compositions. Instead, he reverts to the old Tory type of criticism. Saintsbury argues that the pamphlets on church government represent an indecent conflict with Bishop Hall. He looks upon the divorce tracts as comic and condemns Milton's alleged haste in composing all of the early pamphlets. The result, Saintsbury conjectures, is a neglect of periods and sentences and a needless use of Latin words. He reluctantly admits that Milton wrote some good prose, and he cites the usual purple passages.

Stopford Brooke\textsuperscript{51} lists both positive and negative qualities of the pamphlets. He has the usual praise for the Areopagitica and maintains that the treatise is the most literary of the prose. The work, he says, is elegant and full of splendid images. Brooke adds, "Its defence of books and the freedom of books will last as long as there are writers and readers of books."\textsuperscript{52} He likes the other pamphlets for their intellectual force and victorious manner and argues that certain passages, like the autobiographical ones in the Secunda Defensio, rise above everything else in the storehouse of English prose literature. Brooke even regards them more highly than he

\textsuperscript{49}The Story of English Literature, p. 262.
\textsuperscript{50}A History of Elizabethan Literature, pp. 324f.
\textsuperscript{51}Milton, pp. 46, 65-68.
\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., p. 45.
does the *Areopagitica*. On the unfavorable side, Brooke discusses the personal abuse in the tracts. He maintains that passages containing such are coarse and unworthy of Milton's pen.

Even if he does popularize the idea of the Puritan Milton, Mark Pattison is generally sympathetic toward Milton the man. It is natural, then, that he speak of the prose compositions accordingly when he writes of them in connection with Milton's biography. However, in one passage Pattison criticizes the works from the point of view of style. From the beginning, he makes it evident that he has a high regard for Milton's prose style. Pattison declares, "One virtue these pamphlets possess, the virtue of style. They are monuments of our language so remarkable that Milton's prose works must always be resorted to by students, as long as English remains a medium of ideas." On the other hand, Pattison detects flaws in the prose style. He holds that in his pamphlets Milton often abandons his meaning to shift for itself; he believes that in this respect Milton compares unfavorably with Hooker. Milton, Pattison declares, does not seem to have any notion of what a period means; he simply closes the sentence when he is out of breath. Furthermore, Pattison argues that the whole arrangement of Milton's topics is loose, disjointed, and desultory. But he concludes that these faults are more than balanced by the virtues

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53 *Milton, passim.*
Putting Bacon aside, the condensed force and poignant brevity of whose aphoristic wisdom has no parallel in English, there is no other proseist who possesses anything like Milton's command over the resources of our language. Milton cannot match the musical harmony and exactly balanced periods of his predecessor Hooker. He is without the power of varied illustration, and accumulation of ornamental circumstances, possessed by his contemporary, Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667). But neither of these great writers impresses the reader with a sense of unlimited power such as we feel to reside in Milton. Vast as is the wealth of magnificent words which he flings with both hands carelessly upon the page, we feel that there is still much more in reserve.

Richard Garnett does not make as precise an analysis of Milton's prose style as Pattison, but his approach to all the pamphlets is somewhat unique for the Victorian age. He argues that all of them were produced by the dependence of Milton's "intellectual workings" upon the course of events without him. For example, when he discusses the Areopagitica, Garnett insists that we owe the work "not to the lonely overflowings of his soul, or even to disinterested observation of public affairs, but to real jeopardy he had incurred by his neglect to get books licensed." He takes the same position on the other prose works. If Mary Powell had never left Milton, the divorce tracts would not have been written, and so on. Garnett does not satisfactorily identify, however, the external events

56 Ibid., p. 70.
57 The Life of John Milton, passim.
58 Ibid., p. 78.
which prompted Milton to write the History of Britain, De Doctrina Christiana, or the Artis Logicae.

Garnett does not say so explicitly, but it is rather obvious that he feels as Brydges did, fifty-five years earlier, that Milton would have best benefited himself and everyone concerned if he had written poetry only and had not resorted to the use of his left hand. And he restates the idea that with the exception of the Areopagitica, the prose is in a state of neglect: "The 'Areopagitica' is by far the best known of Milton's prose writings, being the only one whose topic is not obsolete. It is also composed with more care and art than the others. Elsewhere he seeks to overwhelm, but here to persuade." 59

Pattison's analysis of Milton's prose style is parrotted by J. H. B. Masterman. 60 This critic disparages Milton's lack of methodical argument, his long and involved sentences, and his dullness. Repeating Pattison still further, Masterman points out that some passages in the prose are "inarticulately sublime." Likewise, he compares Milton's prose with that of Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne: "But there are passages in his prose works, the ornate splendour and stately rhythm of which are unsurpassed, even in an age adorned by the florid exuberance of Jeremy Taylor and the stately serenity of Sir Thomas Browne." 61 Of course these ideas have been repeated throughout the century, but the telling influence of Pattison is

59 Ibid., p. 79.
60 The Age of Milton, p. 46.
61 Ibid.
Masterman's mentioning of Taylor and Browne. This critic's repetition of often-stated ideas testifies that the criticism of the prose has reached a standstill at the time Masterman is writing.

Samuel R. Gardiner's interpretation of Milton's pamphlets is interesting, for he sets forth the historian's point of view. Heretofore, we have considered only the opinions of the literary critics. Gardiner's general thesis is that Milton was a very able prosaist but that he was not practical enough to lead utilitarians like Cromwell. For example, when he discusses the Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, Gardiner declares, "It was a work, indeed, of that kind which never convinces anyone, because it took for granted all that opponents denied, and because the author had too little knowledge of the human mind to adapt his reasoning skillfully, as the author Eikon Basilike had done, to the receptive powers of those whom he desired to persuade." Then in connection with Milton's Secunda Defensio Gardiner maintains that Cromwell would have liked to follow Milton's proposals but could not because the Protector always felt that he should pursue the practical trail of statesmanship. This historian quotes passages from Milton's pamphlets extensively, and it is noteworthy that he uses quotations from Masson's Life as his source, rather than an edition of Milton's prose. Gardiner disagrees with Masson, however, on the extent of Milton's influence on his contemporaries. He thinks that the seventeenth-century pamphleteer

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63 Ibid., I, 40.
64 Ibid., III, 1-4.
exerted little.

Walter Raleigh's study contains a somewhat lengthy chapter on Milton's prose works, but he does not evaluate each pamphlet individually. Instead, he attempts to criticize them collectively and philosophically. His remarks are fresh and often striking; they are not merely repetitions of platitudes which have accumulated in connection with the pamphlets.

First of all, Raleigh is concerned with the place of the poet in the world of politics. He is in general agreement with Seeley that poets ought not to dwell in greenhouses. Therefore, he takes issue with critics like Brydges and Garnett who look upon Milton's years of government service with regret. In the case of Milton, Raleigh argues that the years of fierce controversy were well worth the effort, for they enabled the poet to compose a poem like *Paradise Lost*. He insists, "We could not have had anything at all like *Paradise Lost* from a dainty, shy poet-scholar; nor anything half so great. The greatest men hold their power on this tenure, that they shall not husband it. Milton, it is too often forgotten, was an Englishman. He held the privilege and trust not cheap." Raleigh adds that Milton's classical background made it impossible for him to think of politics as a separable part of human life. Even as early as 1637, the poet could not "sport with Amaryllis in the shade."

On the other hand, Raleigh agrees with Garnett that Milton's pamphlets

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were products of his own experiences. Raleigh therefore cannot accept
as truth Milton's statement in the Secunda Defensio that the works arose
out of his concern for the various aspects of English liberty.

Raleigh believes that he has detected a basic flaw in all of Milton's
prose writings, his unreasonable confidence in man: "Whether he treat of
religion, of education, of divorce, or of civil government, the error is
always the same, a confidence too absolute in the capacity and integrity
of the reasonable soul of man. A liturgy, for example, is intolerable,
because it is a slur upon the extemporary effusions of ministers of the
Gospel." Also, Raleigh finds another error in Milton's prose, and it
stems from his excessive confidence in man. Milton, Raleigh insists, was
unable "to understand average politics, and that world of convenience,
precaution, and compromise which is their native place." In this respect,
he concurs in the opinion of the historian, Gardiner. Raleigh contends
further that Milton's inability to compromise led him to include the
vituperative passages in the pamphlets and that the inclusion in turn
weakened his position as a practical politician.

Like Pattison, Raleigh writes a somewhat detailed analysis of Milton's
prose style. Again, he is original in his statements. Not disparaging

67 Ibid., pp. 48-50.
68 Ibid., p. 64.
69 Ibid., p. 67.
70 Ibid., pp. 73-76.
the writer's Ciceronian style as the earlier critics have done, he places it in its seventeenth-century setting and concludes that it was perfectly logical for Milton to write prose as he did. This fin de siècle critic points out that Milton's prose is always the prose of a poet, that his sentences rarely conform to any periodic model, that the architecture depends on melody rather than on logic. Raleigh sums up his analysis of the style by declaring, "The balance of epithet, the delicate music, the sentence that resembles a chain with link added to link rather than a hoop whose ends are welded together by the manner--these are the characteristics of Milton's prose."\(^{71}\)

Most of the Victorians are not concerned with Milton's prose vocabulary, but Raleigh makes a few striking comments on the subject.\(^{72}\) He observes that the contrast between the writer's prose and poetic vocabularies is great, the chief difference being a preponderance of Saxon words in the prose vocabulary. Raleigh notes further that Milton does use his Latin store of words to rise to a point of vantage above his prey and that "then the downward rush that strikes the quarry is a Saxon monosyllable."\(^{73}\) In this connection, Raleigh states that Burke became Milton's pupil but was unable to achieve his master's vituperative effect because of his telling parsimony of Saxon words.

Raleigh is the only writer of the Victorian era who manages to separate

\[^{71}\text{Ibid.},\ p.\ 76.\]
\[^{72}\text{Ibid.},\ pp.\ 77f.\]
\[^{73}\text{Ibid.},\ p.\ 77.\]
Milton's style from his content when he discusses the prose compositions. This is exactly what we would expect from this critic, however. Even when he thinks of the prose, Raleigh looks upon Milton as the superb artist, the master of the grand style. Thus he achieves an almost absolute dichotomy between style and content.

A late Victorian, Edward Dowden, 74 goes beyond the majority of his contemporaries in his discussion of Milton's prose. This critic, I believe, is consciously trying to counteract the opinions of Raleigh, Pattison, and the others who argue that Milton's ideas are no longer of much interest. However, his statements pertaining to the modernity of the ideas properly belong in the following chapter of this study. It is important for us to note here that Dowden disregards biographical data in his interpretation of the prose. He ignores Garnett's thesis that external events prompted Milton to write all the pamphlets; instead, he evaluates each tract as an aspect of Milton's concept of liberty. For example, when he discusses the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, Dowden argues, "But his pamphlet, futile as are its practical suggestions, is still of worth as a plea for a noble joy and energy in domestic life as against faintness and timidity of heart, the lethargy of sadness and the indolence of despair." 75 He makes no mention of the Mary Powell affair in connection with the treatise. And having discussed each of the prose compositions, Dowden declares that he perceives a single thread running through all of them: "One primary truth filled all

74 Puritan and Anglican, pp. 133-196.
75 Ibid., p. 140.
his mind—acceptance of the divine rule, submission to the divine mandate; heroic patience in accepting the will of God, heroic energy in making the will of God prevail; entire obedience, and through obedience, freedom. 76

In minimizing the significance of Milton's biography in his interpretation of the prose, Dowden foreshadows the approach to be taken by a number of the Miltonists of the twentieth century.

Various strands of criticism concerning Milton's prose have been taken into account in the present chapter. As we have seen, there was little continuity in the remarks made by the critics. Several of the different strands of criticism, however, seem to combine themselves in a statement made by John Cooke in a lecture delivered at Dublin in 1908, on the occasion of the Milton tercentenary:

His prose is the prose of a great poet, and the great theme is liberty. With all its faults, and it has many, his prose is the mightiest and most sonorous prose of all English writers. It overthrows by its defiant tone of triumphant argument, driven home by the weight of a great moral power, and the strength of an intense individuality behind it. It takes magnificent flights, and rises and falls at times like the pealing of organ music that ever filled his ear with its majestic harmony. In scope, in wealth of illustration, in its unrivalled richness of epithet, and in the splendid balance of its descriptive phrases, it is one of the most fertile fields of study for the student of the English tongue. 77

Let us review the Victorian evaluations of Milton's prose writings.

One of the most common observations made throughout the period was that the pamphlets were in a general state of neglect. Most of the writers regarded

76 Ibid., p. 196.
77 John Milton: 1608-1674, p. 34.
this as unfortunate. At the same time, they explained the causes for neglect, the most popular one being Milton's involved style. Very few of the critics discussed the prose works individually; they usually mentioned them as a group. The Areopagitica was by far the most favored of the tracts. Moreover, the earlier prose received the bulk of the attention. Pamphlets like the Ready and Easy Way, which were written immediately preceding the Restoration, went unnoticed. At the beginning of the period, critics were inclined to evaluate the prose according to their estimation of the ideas expressed therein, while the late Victorians were not especially concerned with the ideas but with style and diction. Opinion remained divided on the prosaist's coarseness and abuse, but the majority of the critics justified him by stating that such was the usual seventeenth-century practice. The occasion for Milton's composing the various pamphlets was usually related in detail, especially in Masson's biography, and Garnett and Raleigh argued that Milton's "intellectual workings" were always governed by external circumstances. However, at the very end of the period, Dowden disregarded externalities and interpreted the works as products of Milton's abiding concern for English liberty, both domestic and political. There were absolutely no detailed studies of the prose during the era; therefore, the Victorians left much to be done by twentieth-century Miltonists. As far as Milton's reputation is concerned, the evaluations of the prose neither caused him to decline nor to rise in standing. Frankly, I am able to perceive no shift of opinion. Neglect, I feel, is the keynote of the entire matter. As one reads the scores of
articles in which Milton's prose is mentioned, he unavoidably gets the impression that the works were discussed only because they are Milton's. Had they been written by a more obscure poet than Milton, the prose works would probably have been almost totally ignored by the Victorians. But the critics seem to have felt that the man who composed an epic like *Paradise Lost* should be granted a hearing when he wrote prose, even though he was writing with his left hand.
CHAPTER V

THE REINTERPRETATION OF MILTON THE PHILOSOPHER

As far as possible, the opinions of the critics concerning Milton the philosopher have been reserved for this final chapter of the present study. At times, however, it has not been practical to omit references to the philosopher in previous chapters. For example, it has been necessary on several occasions to mention the late Victorian opinion that the ideas of Paradise Lost are of little value to the modern age. When we dealt with the problem of Milton the man, it was expedient to note that a critic's evaluation of Milton's ideas often influenced his final estimate of the man. But in Chapter Three, when Milton's reputation as a poet was discussed, the great bulk of material in connection with the theology of the poetry was purposely omitted. Nor has the Victorian criticism of De Doctrina Christiana been discussed previously in this study. There remains to be dealt with, therefore, a rather large "block" of Victorian criticism pertaining to Milton, and all of it is connected with the philosophical import of his writings. Accordingly, the purpose of this chapter is to discuss the Victorian interpretations of Milton the philosopher.

It is difficult to find objective accounts of Milton the political philosopher, especially during the early part of the Victorian era, when England was ripe for reform and when the Whigs were as adamant in advocating reform measures as the Tories were in opposing them. From the material which has been covered already in this study, we might conclude that the Whig critics looked upon Milton the politician very favorably.
because he had opposed the old order of government two hundred years previously. Also, he had advocated measures for which they were still agitating, such as a free press, the curbing of the authority of the bishops, more lenient marriage laws, and more Parliamentary authority in the activities of the government. The truth of the matter was, however, that Milton would have loathed the nineteenth-century Whigs, especially the extremists. From what we know of Milton, he would have gasped had he been able to foresee the extent to which the forces of democracy would go once the tide had started. He especially would have looked with disdain at the labor movement of the late Victorian era. Although he advocated English liberty in its various phases, he had little patience with the masses. Nevertheless, the Victorian Liberals found in Milton a champion. After all, he had been so bold as to advocate the overthrow of institutions which had begun their evolution a thousand years before he was born. Thus to the reformers he was a political theorist worthy of respect and admiration. To the conservatives, he was a politician who must be answered according to his folly. But the conservatives really attested to his repute as a politician through their vehement refutations of his ideas. In Milton, they saw a dangerous political moralist whose statements could not be allowed to remain unanswered.

The various essays which have been cited from the Edinburgh Review and from the Quarterly Review attest to the party spirit in the early Victorian evaluations of Milton the political philosopher. Macaulay's "Essay on Milton," published in the former journal, illustrates the Whig

\[1\text{LOXXIV (1825), 304-346.}\]
point of view toward the poet's political ideas. Numerous critics have
justly called the essay a panegyric on Milton and on the Puritans.

Macaulay lauds at great length Milton's republicanism. He describes the
Puritans and the Royalists to the advantage of the Puritans. To Macaulay,
the Royalists were those who sought to retain and increase the power which
they had accumulated since the Wars of the Roses, while the Puritans were
those who attempted to put an end to the abuses of a decadent monarchy
and a worldly church. The critic therefore praises Milton for lending
his aid to the latter group. On the other hand, in the Quarterly Review
an anonymous critic names Milton the politician as a "visionary." To
him, the name "Puritan" stinks "in the nostrils of men." Both essays
are examples of politically prejudiced writing. An objective account of
Milton the political philosopher was not forthcoming until the critics
were able to think of Milton essentially as a seventeenth-century reformer
who was writing with the immediate needs of his country in mind. The
agitation for reform was too prevalent in the minds of the early Victorian
critics for them to evaluate the politician without party bias.

With the exception of the writers for the Quarterly Review, most of
the critics between 1826 and 1850 had a high regard for Milton's political
views. However, it is worth mentioning that the majority of these writers
were Whigs, according to their own testimony; therefore, the prejudice of
party continued. For example, Joseph Ivimey, an avowed dissenter, wishes

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3 Ibid., p. 30.
4 John Milton, His Life and Times, passim.
that more of Milton's proposals had been enacted by Parliament. He declares that the Protestant dissenters are indebted to Milton's powerful advocacy "for all the civil and religious privileges which they now enjoy."\textsuperscript{5} Another Whig,\textsuperscript{6} who writes anonymously and looks upon the Restoration with great disfavor, is entirely sympathetic toward Milton's views on church and state. He argues, "The most resplendent period of the English nation was that at which the first of the Stuarts came to sway his pedant sceptre over these realms; the darkest and worst was that in which his profligate grandson returned from exile to take possession of his legitimate throne."\textsuperscript{7} William Carpenter's study\textsuperscript{8} is an extended defense of Milton's political activities and writings. A comment which he makes on The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates is illustrative of his point of view toward Milton's politics: "It is a noble argument, conducted in a dignified and dispassionate spirit, and fortified by authorities to which those immediately addressed could not refuse their assent."\textsuperscript{9} But again, the writer is a Whig. Alfred A. Fry adds a comment to the host of the defenses of Milton; he states that long after Charles I has been consigned to oblivion, Milton's name "will be consecrated, to the most distant ages, in the hearts of all.

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., p. viii. Ivimey (p. v) also gives Milton credit for the passages of the Reform Bill of 1832.


\textsuperscript{7}Ibid., p. 41.

\textsuperscript{8}The Life and Times of John Milton, passim.

\textsuperscript{9}Ibid., p. 82.
who shall be votaries of that holy cause."

That the early Victorian reformers looked upon Milton as their champion is substantiated in an essay written by Albert K. Stevens, who insists, "The influence which Milton has exerted on all generations after him took a peculiar and hitherto unrecognized direction in the second quarter of the last century. For Milton was the hero of the Chartists, advocates of social and political changes who were active during the decade from 1838 to 1848 and who got their name from their program of reform, called 'The People's Charter.'" Stevens has examined the several editions of the Chartist Circular and has found in that organ of the Chartists numerous references to Milton. He also discovers that Milton is mentioned as a champion of freedom in such poems as T. Gerald Massey's *Voices of Freedom* (1851) and Thomas Cooper's *Purgatory of Suicides* (1845). Stevens adds that the works of Milton most often quoted by the Chartists include the pamphlets pertaining to the evils of monarchy and the ideal commonwealth, such as *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* and *The Ready and Easy Way*. Milton most likely would not have relished the idea of identifying his proposals with those of the Chartists; he would have condemned, for one thing, their mass meetings at which hysteria was the rule. Nevertheless,

10 A Lecture on the Writings of John Milton, p. 39.
12 Ibid., p. 377.
13 Quoted by Stevens, op. cit., p. 382.
another group of reformers had found a champion in the seventeenth-century political philosopher.

Around the mid-point of the century, some of the critics became less enthusiastic about Milton's politics. Many of them noted the impracticality of his schemes for reform. For example, John Sterling states that Milton's "political opinions with regard to circumstances are of little value as rules for practice," and adds, "His views of church government are indeed far more opposed to anything that could safely be practiced than his political theories." And although John Wilson may defend Milton's portrayal of Satan, he has no such praise when he thinks of Milton as a politician. In one of his essays, Wilson's spokesman, Christopher North, declares, "Milton was a great poet, but a bad divine, and a miserable politician." Again, North insists, "Wordsworth often writes like an idiot; and never more so than when he said of Milton, 'his soul was like a star, and dwelt apart!' for it dwelt in tumult, and mischief, and rebellion." North does not elaborate upon or substantiate his statements. An anonymous critic who has been cited previously is entirely sympathetic

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14 Essays and Tales, I, 78.
15 Ibid., p. 80.
17 Ibid.
toward the causes which Milton espoused, but he too feels that Milton is impractical in a number of his proposals: "His church, his republic, his government, were all in theory. The visions in which he delighted had but little to do with the actual realities amidst which he lived and wrote. The people felt that he was among them, but not of them."\(^{19}\) Thomas Keightley, whom I have mentioned several times as a transitional critic, is still another to argue that Milton's plan of government, especially as it is set forth in the pre-Restoration pamphlets, is too visionary. He maintains, "We need hardly say, then, that his plan is impracticable under any circumstances."\(^{20}\) Keightley believes that Milton has ignored the love of the English people for ancient usages and customs.

Hints that Milton's politics are impractical continued here and there throughout the century. The historian, Samuel R. Gardiner,\(^{21}\) was among the last to voice such a point of view. However, it would be erroneous to conclude that the concept of the writer's impracticality was the dominant trend until the end of the century. By and large, the majority of the critics do not mention such when they criticize Milton's political theories. For example, Edwin Paxton Hood\(^{22}\) reverts to the old type of Whig

\(^{19}\)Ibid., p. 247.


\(^{21}\)History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, I, 40, 195; III, 1-4.

\(^{22}\)John Milton: The Patriot and Poet, passim.
criticism in his study of Milton. He especially admires the poet's abhorrence of popery. Milton was intolerant of papists because they were "inimical to the existence of perfect civil and religious liberty." 23 Herbert New is another critic who laud's Milton's stand for English liberty, and he makes no mention of the pamphleteer's impracticality.

The biographers of the late nineteenth century are unconcerned, for the most part, with Milton the political philosopher. David Masson, of course, narrates Milton's political activities at length, and exegesis of the pamphlets follow exegesis. 25 Although he sympathizes with Milton's aspirations for the political and religious life of the nation, he does not attempt to evaluate the causes which the poet espoused. Mark Pattison discusses each of the prose writings in some detail, but neither does he write of Milton's status as a politician. Richard Garnett likewise remains aloof from any discussion of the merits of his subject's theories of government. Stopford Brooke 28 and Walter Raleigh 29 are so interested in the poetry that they have little time for the politics. Raleigh does

23 Ibid., p. 222.


26 Milton, passim.

27 The Life of John Milton, passim.

28 Milton, passim.

29 Milton, passim.
feel that the poet's governmental career had an inestimable influence on the composition of *Paradise Lost*.

At least one critic, however, remains intensely interested in Milton the political theorist. Edward Dowden has the poet's ideas on English government in mind when he declares, "But behind all that is occasional lies what gives these writings an enduring value—a series of ideals, more lofty, complete, and in a high sense reasonable, than can readily be found elsewhere among his contemporaries, ideals for the domestic and corporate life of England, which form a lasting contribution to the higher thought of our country." He argues that Milton's politics are still applicable to the problems facing the English nation.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the criticism that has been cited here in connection with Milton the politician. First, the bulk of the criticism came during the first half of the Victorian era. The most obvious reason for this phenomenon lies in the intense agitation for reform during the earlier part of the period. As I have suggested in a previous chapter, most of the legislation advocated by the Whigs had been enacted by 1885. The reform measures that followed 1885 largely pertained to the problems that had been created by the Industrial Revolution; thus it was difficult for the Liberals to continue to use Milton as their champion. He simply had not discussed the issues that confronted the nation at that time. For example, there is no mention in his writings of workers' strikes

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30 *Puritan and Anglican*, p. 134.
or of the Irish situation as it presented itself during the late nineteenth century. Conversely, writers of conservative tendencies found it no longer necessary to cope with Milton's proposals.

Second, in ignoring Milton's politics the critics revealed that they were interested in other aspects of the writer's career. There was ample criticism of Milton being produced throughout the period, and an examination of the content of the criticism will show, I believe, that the critics were studying his poetry, especially *Paradise Lost*. Third, the trend toward the idea of the impracticality of Milton's theories of government was only a temporary one, even though Gardiner expressed it as late as 1895. Finally, the Victorian age failed to produce significant studies of Milton's politics. At the end of the century, however, there were signs that his theories of government would be topics for discussion in the twentieth century. Edward Dowden's *Puritan and Anglican* 31 contains an attempt to evaluate the full philosophical import of Milton's theories of government.

Turning from the political to the religious side of Milton's philosophy, we find that there were considerable comments made pertaining to the theology of the major poems, particularly *Paradise Lost*. As I have indicated earlier, most of the critics who wrote prior to 1860 regarded *Paradise Lost* as a devotional poem, and they criticized its theology accordingly. On the other hand, several of the late Victorians realized

that the long epic has profound philosophical implications, and they spoke of the philosophy of the poem without much regard for its Biblical content. It should be kept in mind, however, that throughout the late nineteenth century there were those, mainly clerics, who continued to write of *Paradise Lost* as if it were a devotional poem.

Joseph Ivimey is representative of those early Victorians who evaluated the ideas of *Paradise Lost* according to their orthodoxy. Speaking of the epic, he declares, "As to the correctness of its theological sentiments, I speak without any hesitation; and as to the sublimity of the sentiments, I profess myself to be lost in wonder and admiration."  

Ivimey agrees with every theological position which he believes Milton has taken in the epic. In a chapter on the theology of *Paradise Lost*, he quotes approvingly lines from the poem which establish Milton's position on such subjects as Providence, the Holy Spirit, the origin of evil, the divinity of the Son of God, personal election, the substitution of Christ, rational liberty, the entrance of sin into the world, Negro and colonial slavery, and baptism. Ivimey is aware of the heresies contained in *De Doctrina Christiana*, but he regards *Paradise Lost* as the work setting forth Milton's most mature thought. To him, *De Doctrina* is a product of Milton's dotage, and therefore he feels that it ought not to be considered

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seriously. With Ivimey, then, Milton the religious philosopher ranks very high.

William Carpenter's remarks on the ideas of Paradise Lost are unusual for the year in which he was writing (1636). Not interpreting the poem as a devotional treatise, he emphasizes again Milton's concern for English liberty. Carpenter argues that Milton's longings for his country's emancipation always remained unchanged. "This is evident," he insists, "from many passages in Paradise Lost; the great object of which, in truth, was to exhibit the different effects of liberty and tyranny—to trace natural and social evil to their source in human perversity and wickedness, and thus 'justify the ways of God to man.'" Carpenter thinks as well of Milton's ideas as Ivimey, but for different reasons. To the last, the former critic is interested in applying Milton's works to the nineteenth-century struggle for political and social equality in England.

An essay written by F. A. Cox is a reversion to the old eighteenth-century attitude toward Paradise Lost. Cox is even more adamant in upholding the truths exemplified in the poem than Ivimey is. He especially admires the work because of the universality of its theme: "But the theme of Milton comes home, as Bacon expresses it, to every man's business and bosom. It possesses a character of universality, comprehending the moral condition

and future destiny of every individual upon the surface of the globe." Cox lauds the poem further because it inspires people to better Christian living. He maintains, "When we read Homer and the kindred poets, we seem inspired with the love of heroism and of greatness; when we read Milton, we are animated with the love of truth and roused to the fear of God. We wish to practice private virtue and public piety, to fulfill the duties of life, and to be in alliance with the Great Supreme." Cox really is in agreement with everything Milton says in Paradise Lost. He likes the poet's portrayal of the deadly passions which characterize Satan, his analysis of the problem of free will in Book III, and his adherence to the teachings of the Scriptures. Cox believes that even though Milton paraphrases the Bible quite freely at times, he does not intend for the cursory reader to take the descriptions as dogmatic truth. Evidently, however, Cox has not read De Doctrina Christiana, for he insists that Milton's "terms" will not gratify the advocates of Arianism. To still another critic, then, Milton the religious moralist ranks very high.

Walter Bagehot’s views on Paradise Lost were mentioned in Chapter Three in connection with the criticism of the poem as a work of art. Some

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37 Ibid., p. 242.
38 Ibid., p. 245.
39 Ibid., p. 249.
40 Literary Studies, II, 168-220.
of his opinions will bear repetition here, however, for they exemplify the mid-century tendency to be more critical of the theology of the epic. It was stated that he looks upon Milton's portrayal of Satan as a fundamental defect of the poem. To him, Satan is made too interesting. Bagehot implies that if Satan is the hero of the epic, then the theology of the poem is faulty. But he perceives a still more basic defect in Paradise Lost, and this alleged defect is directly connected with its theological implications: "The defect of 'Paradise Lost' is that, after all, it is founded on a political transaction." Bagehot has in mind God's choosing of Christ as his ruler. He contends further, "The religious sense is against it. The worship which men owe to God is not transferable to lieutenants and viceregents." Bagehot notes other flaws in the poem, such as Milton's conception of God, an arguer who does not argue very well, and his portrayal of the good angels, who have no character and are essentially messengers. It will be remembered by the reader that Bagehot feels that Paradise Lost has no equal, from the artistic point of view. His criticism of the epic, therefore, is mainly theological. To this critic, Milton the theologian does not rank nearly so high as critics like Ivimey and Carpenter would pretend.

Critics like Bagehot did not initiate a trend in the criticism of the

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41 Ibid., pp. 209f.
42 Ibid., p. 206.
43 Ibid.
content of *Paradise Lost*, however; J. W. Morris, writing in 1862, has as his purpose the vindication of Milton from the charge of Arianism. Morris readily admits that *De Doctrina Christiana* is Arian in doctrine, but he does not accept that work as representing Milton’s final theological position. Morris is firmly convinced that *De Doctrina* is inconsistent with the sentiments of *Paradise Lost*, and he cites the pamphlet, *Of True Religion* (1673) to prove that Milton did not die an Arian. To show that the long epic is not heterodox in doctrine, Morris argues that in the epic, the Son is not created within the limits of time. Speaking of the scene in heaven in Book III, he insists, “The language of the conference which ensues between the persons of the Godhead, is anything but suggestive of a recent begetting of the Son, or a creation within the limits of time....” Then Morris makes statements pertaining to the philosophical purpose of Milton in composing the epic. They indicate a perception that is unusual for nineteenth-century critics of *Paradise Lost*:

All gathers around Adam as the real but inconspicuous centre, of the waves that roll far away in the Eternity. It is not a theological treatise upon the nature and being of a God that we are considering; but a poem upon the Divine interposition to redeem His creature, man. True to the line of this high argument, Milton looks back into the Eternity, so far as it concerns man, and there he finds, beaming like a star in the depths of infinite space, the decree of Messiahship, not the decree of creation.

44 John Milton: A Vindication, Specially From the Charge of Arianism, *passim.*


46 Ibid., p. 88.
Having concluded that *Paradise Lost* cannot be called Arian in doctrine, Morris finds that *Paradise Regained* is not Arian either. He notes that all of the Arian ideas uttered in the poem are spoken by Satan. To him, then, they cannot be held to represent Milton's own views. Such an attitude seems to be reasonable. In the case of *Paradise Lost*, critics have often erred in holding that Satan voices the poet's own feelings.

Of course Morris is wrong in minimizing the importance of *De Doctrina Christiana* as a record of Milton's mature religious thought. What is significant about his study of the doctrinal content of *Paradise Lost* stems from his general attitude. His opinions concerning the theological correctness of the epic almost parallel those of Joseph Ivimey, who wrote his study of Milton twenty-nine years earlier. In the minds of critics of orthodox bent, *Paradise Lost* remains the devotional poem useful for the religious instruction of man. Morris would hardly have such a high regard for the epic, however, if he were convinced that it contains Arian doctrine, as it probably does.

E. H. Bickersteth is not so defensive of the doctrinal content of *Paradise Lost* as Morris is. For example, he believes that Milton gets too far away from the Scriptures in places; he would like the epic better if the poet had not permitted his Satan to fall from heaven. Still, Bickersteth does not allow such an error of judgment to detract from his own general

47 Ibid., pp. 94-114.
48 *Companions for the Devout Life*, pp. 253-274.
appreciation of the doctrinal content of the poem. He feels that *Paradise Lost* reflects Milton's own religious piety; thus he believes that the poem is an instrument of instruction for the Christian: "This intense personality would have overpowered him if it had not been that Milton, with all his burning love of the true and the beautiful, ever reverently bowed before the authority of the Word of God, and ever knelt as a humble suppliant at the footstool of the Throne of grace. His profound reverence for Scripture is transparent in every page of *Paradise Lost,* and only reflects his deliberate purpose from his youth." Milton uses sound reasoning in his portrayal of the relationship of Adam and Eve before the fall as he does, Bickersteth believes, since "It is no small help to the devout life, so much of which depends on a true recognition of human relationships, to have such a pure and lofty ideal of Paradisiacal perfection engraven on the soul." With Bickersteth, then, *Paradise Lost* ranks very high as a poem of religious instruction.

The discussion of the value of *Paradise Lost* as a devotional work continued until the end of the century. An anonymous critic, writing in 1899, praises Milton for having introduced into English literature the strain of high seriousness. Milton, he insists, has caused us to think

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49 Ibid., p. 267.

50 Ibid., p. 263.

about divine things. The critic admires the theological correctness of Paradise Lost, and he also lauds Paradise Regained, the greater part of which is dedicated to the idea "of that inner freedom, that liberty of the soul, to be gained solely by obedience to divine law which should come in priority to mere political liberty, as the real guardian and guaranty of free institutions." 62

The relevance of the ideas of Paradise Lost was not questioned in the early part of the Victorian era; it was taken for granted. Some critics might complain that Milton had gone too far when he brought the pagan gods into a Christian poem, but no writer would question the validity of the central meaning of Paradise Lost. We find writers like Alfred A. Fry, who hopes that Milton is "every day becoming more and more felt among men, brightening and growing as they advance in knowledge and virtue...." 63 And we find writers like Thomas De Quincey, who insists that a poem such as Paradise Lost has much to offer the nineteenth-century reader:

Regularly as the coming generations unfold their vast processions, regularly as these processions move forward upon the impulse and summons of a nobler music, regularly as the dormant powers and sensibilities of the intellect in the working man are more and more developed, the Paradise Lost will be called for more and more; less and less continually will there be any reason to complain that the immortal book, being once restored to its place, is left to slumber for a generation. 64

62 Ibid., p. 847.
64 The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey. Editor, David Masson (London: Black, 1897), IV, 117.
De Quinacuy believes, then, that as men become more enlightened, they will appreciate the ideas of Paradise Lost more and more. Fry and De Quinoey, however, were to be challenged; some critics were to come forth to contend that the philosophy of Paradise Lost is outmoded.

The first hint that the long epic is no longer of much interest from the point of view of content came in an anonymous essay which has been cited on several occasions in this study. The unnamed critic declares, "It must be confessed that, in Milton's poetry, we are far less interested in what he says, than by his manner of saying it. Whenever his wonderful march of noble words flags—as it very often does—the chief charm of his poetry is gone; hence there never was another poet of Milton's rank whose poetry could so ill bear the test of translation." In emphasizing Milton's art rather than his philosophy, this critic is anticipating writers like Pattison, Brooke, and Raleigh. Following his thesis that Milton was not capable of uttering thoughts of profound philosophical significance, the writer argues further:

Milton's strength therefore, lay, not in the ability to rise, like Dante, to the height of 'great arguments,' but in that of so uttering matters of no very great moral, intellectual, or passionate depth, that they should have all the poetical effect of such arguments. If, as the poet professes, his chief object was 'to justify the ways of God to men,' it must be confessed he has done it very ill.... From a religious point of view, these works [Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained] are inferior, even poetically speaking, to the 'Pilgrim's Progress.'

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56 Ibid., p. 165.
57 Ibid., p. 166.
Then in another article, possibly written by the same author, the idea that Milton is out of touch with the nineteenth century is expressed. Bringing Shakespeare into his argument, the writer contends, "Prejudice apart, can we affirm that either Hamlet or the Paradise Lost, masterpieces though they are, accord thoroughly with the canons of taste now accepted for all practical purposes by the educated world?" We are not concerned here with what the critic's reasons for bringing Hamlet into the discussion; however, to prove that Milton is out of touch with the nineteenth century, he quotes several passages from Paradise Lost and concludes: "It is not that the allusions here are to obscure and unknown subjects, but simply that they magnify a set of ideas whose vividness is of the past; and that the progress of thought and restlessness of inquiry have opened up new departments of knowledge and new aspects of old facts, since the days when Milton's mind was stored, which have had the effect of a stimulating fancy in a fresh direction." The anonymous writer is implying that new scientific theories have caused a shift in the approach to the Scriptures, particularly the book of Genesis. It seems logical to him that should the Genesis story be a fable, then Paradise Lost is also a fable, since it incorporates much of the Genesis account of man in his infancy. He does not consider the possibility that Milton could have utilized the Biblical narrative only as


59 Ibid., p. 236.
a means of presenting his entire attitude toward man's relation to God. It remained, however, for a Frenchman to define precisely the modernity of *Paradise Lost.* Edmond Soherer published his *Etudes sur la Littérature Contemporaine* in 1868, and the work contained an essay on *Paradise Lost.* Soherer's essay would not be discussed in this study were it not for the fact that Matthew Arnold popularized it in one of his celebrated essays. In turn, George Saintsbury translated Soherer's essay into English. One has to read the Frenchman's essay on *Paradise Lost* to appreciate his influence on the late Victorian critics, particularly Arnold, Brooke, and Raleigh. Soherer's central thesis is that the theological elements of the poem are alien to art, that Milton saves the epic from oblivion only by his superb lines. If Soherer had more appreciation for the philosophical implications of *Paradise Lost,* he would not object to its theology as he does. Nevertheless, he thinks that the epic is definitely outmoded, that it lives only because of its art: "As for 'Paradise Lost' it lives still, but it is none the less true that its fundamental conceptions have become strange to us, and that if the work survives, it is in spite of the subject which it celebrates." Soherer states further that it is quite wearisome for him to read *Paradise Lost.* Quite obviously, he is not interested in its subject matter. He argues, "There

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60 "A French Critic on Milton," *Quarterly Review,* CXLIII (1877), 186-204.
61 "Milton and 'Paradise Lost,'" in *Essays on English Literature,* pp. 111-149.
62 Ibid., p. 139.
is not one reader in a hundred who can read Books Nine and Ten without a smile, or Books Eleven and Twelve without a yawn. The thing does not hold together: it is a pyramid balanced on its apex, the most terrible of problems solved by the most childish of means."

Matthew Arnold agrees with practically everything which Scherer says concerning Paradise Lost. In his essay, "A French Critic on Milton," he quotes Scherer in lengthy passages and adds that he too looks upon Paradise Lost as a theological blunder:

A theological poem is a mistake, says M. Scherer; but to call 'Paradise Lost' a theological poem is to call it by too large a name. It is really a commentary on a biblical text—the first two or three chapters of Genesis. Its subject is a story, taken literally, which many of even the most religious people nowadays hesitate to take literally; while yet, upon our being able to take it literally, the whole real interest of the poem for us depends. Merely as matter for poetry, the story of the Fall has no special force or effectiveness; its effectiveness for us comes from our taking it all as the literal narrative of what positively happened.

Arnold, like Scherer, insists that the epic lives only in spite of the subject treated in it. It seems rather strange for a critic of Arnold's abilities to conclude that one must interpret the fable of Paradise Lost literally before he can appreciate the philosophical import of the poem.

Even the usually conservative and cautious David Masson became an adherent to the idea that Milton's long epic has declined in philosophical value. In one of his editions of Milton's Poetical Works, he expresses

63 Ibid., p. 146.
a concern as to the value of *Paradise Lost* for the nineteenth-century reader. Masson notes that ideas have changed, that theology has changed, that Milton's cosmology is outmoded. Then he declares, "What a portrait, what a study, of a great English mind of the seventeenth century it brings before us!" In making such a statement, Masson is really hinting that the epic is mostly of historical significance.

Stopford Brooke expresses an attitude toward the modernity of *Paradise Lost* which is similar to Soherer's and Arnold's. He too believes that the subject matter of the poem is no longer of much interest to the average reader. We are not much interested in Adam and Eve, he says; nevertheless, Brooke insists, "But in proportion to the loss of that interest is the gain of our interest in the work of the artist." He lists four reasons why people read *Paradise Lost*, and every reason pertains to the art of the poem. In other words, it is not read for its "message."

Mark Pattison adopts the position that as a treasury of poetic speech, *Paradise Lost* has gained by time, but that it has lost much as a storehouse of divine truth. He lists six reasons for such a phenomenon:

(1) The Jewish Scriptures have weakened their hold over the English mind.

(2) Milton's demonology has passed from fact to fiction.

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65*(London: Macmillan, 1874), I, 47-49.*
(3) The poet's angelology with most readers is no more than epic machinery.

(4) People disbelieve in the anthropomorphic theology of *Paradise Lost*.

(5) Milton failed to take into account the inconsistencies of the theological system on which *Paradise Lost* is based.

(6) The poem is not based on the Aristotelian formula that an epic should relate the deeds of men.

In another passage Pattison argues further along the same lines: "In a realistic age constantly fed with fiction which dwells among the realities of domestic life, it becomes difficult to assimilate the deities and devils of *Paradise Lost*, and the heaven and hell, their respective dwelling-places."\(^{70}\) He adds, however, that the defects of the plot and fable are redeemed by poetic ornament, language, and harmony.

As we have seen,\(^{71}\) Walter Raleigh was not the first to suggest that *Paradise Lost* is outmoded as a philosophical poem. His statement on the subject, however, has become almost classic, one of the reasons being the boldness with which he sets forth his opinion. Although Raleigh's remark has been mentioned several times previously in this study, we might do well here to consider it in its context. Raleigh feels, first of all, that the stamp of Milton himself is imprinted in almost every line of *Paradise Lost*. The poet's Satan is none other than the poet himself, he insists. Also, the entire theological system presented in the poem is Milton's own. For

\(^{69}\) Ibid., p. 200.

\(^{70}\) *The English Poets*, II, 302.

\(^{71}\) *Milton*, pp. 82-88.
example, Raleigh points out that Milton did not find his interpretation of creation in the Fathers. The entire exposition, Raleigh maintains, is a conglomeration of many philosophies which often oppose each other. He notes that Milton did not foist his system off on his own age, that Dryden objected to the "machining persons" of the poem and that "At almost the same date Dr. Thomas Burnet was causing a mild sensation in the theological world by expounding the earlier chapters of the Book of Genesis in an allegorical sense, and denying to them the significance of a literal history."72 Paradise Lost, therefore, is not so much a monument to the ideas of the seventeenth century as it is to Milton's genius:

We are deceived by names; the more closely Paradise Lost is studied, the more does the hand of the author appear in every part. The epic poem, which in its natural form is a kind of cathedral for the ideas of a nation, is by him transformed into a chapel-of-ease for his own mind, a monument to his own genius and his own habits of thought. The Paradise Lost is like the sculptured tombs of the Medici in Florence; it is not of Night and Morning, nor of Lorenzo and Giuliano, that we think as we look at them, but solely of the great creator, Michael Angelo. The same dull convention that calls the Paradise Lost a religious poem might call these Christian statues. Each is primarily a great work of art; in each the traditions of two eras are blended in a unity that is indicative of nothing but the character and powers of the artist. The Paradise Lost is not the less an eternal monument because it is a monument to dead ideas.

Raleigh has often been misunderstood because his statement on the monumental nature of Paradise Lost is usually quoted out of context.

Raleigh is aware of the scepticism of his age, but he does not think that

72 Ibid., p. 84.
73 Ibid., p. 88.
this scepticism in itself is responsible for what he interprets as a
decline of the influence of Milton's epic. To him, the epic was a monu-
ment to dead ideas the moment it was finished; nobody would accept a
system of ideas that was entirely Milton's. Raleigh fails to perceive
that Paradise Lost is in the direct tradition of Christian humanism, and
that its relevance has declined no more than the Christian tradition has
declined. Likewise, Raleigh is at fault in not realizing that the trappings
of the poem, such as the means by which Satan learns of the existence of
the forbidden tree, are only surface devices. He cannot see the forest for
the trees. Like Arnold, Pattison, Soherer, and the others, he makes no
attempt to evaluate the underlying philosophical meaning of the poem. Most
probably, he does not realize that it exists.

Some of the other late Victorians were of the opinion that the new
science would not necessarily impair the value of Paradise Lost. As early
as 1876, Bickersteth realized that scientific speculation was drawing many
away from God. He believed, however, that works like Paradise Lost would
bring them back, and argued that the epic would never be outmoded because it
treats of things of the utmost importance to the everyday life of man:

In this way I doubt not that Milton's poem has been used of
God to prepare the entrance of many souls upon a devout life.
But for those of you, men and brethren, who have long ere this
entered the wicket-gate and set your faces Zionward, this epic
will never lose its interest and its power, for it treats of
those things among which you daily walk by faith; it often
awakens in your heart the sublime prayer of Moses...; it helps
you to realize many conceptions which but for this would have
been only cloud-shadows in your soul, and as you turn with fond
regret from the closed gates of "Paradise Lost," it points you
onward to that Paradise city which shines in undeclineing day,
for the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light
thereof.

Bickersteth's statement alone refutes Raleigh's idea that nobody has ever taken seriously the ideas of *Paradise Lost* because they represent Milton's unique interpretation of the universe. Quite obviously, Bickersteth has taken *Paradise Lost* to heart; and if his opinions sound too pious to the modern reader, they nevertheless stand as an expression of the nineteenth-century mind toward the relevance of Milton's epic to the needs of his age.

Augustine Birrell testifies to the limited influence of Arnold and Scherer. After reading his essay on Milton, one can only conclude that the thesis that *Paradise Lost* declined in influence is at best a debatable subject. Birrell has read Arnold's "A French Critic on Milton" and he likes neither Scherer's nor Arnold's pronouncements on the philosophical value of the epic. He declares, "All the world has a right to be interested in it and to find fault with it. But the fact that the people for whom it was written have taken it to their hearts and have it on their lips ought to have prevented it being called tiresome by a senator of France." Birrell calls Scherer's comment that he cannot read Books XI and XII without yawning an insult. He reminds the French critic that "Coleridge has singled out Adam's vision of future events contained in these books as especially deserving of attention. But to read them is to repel the charge." Finally, Birrell sharply questions Arnold's opinion that the fable of *Paradise*

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75 Collected Essays and Addresses, pp. 1-34.
76 Ibid., p. 30.
77 Ibid., p. 33.
Lost must be interpreted literally before one can accept Milton's philosophical position. 78

Shadworth Hodgson is not so outspoken as Bickersteth and Birrell in his defense of Paradise Lost, but he does believe that Pattison is in error in concluding that the epic is outmoded. He accepts the philosophy of the poem as truth. At the same time, Hodgson does not especially care for the machinery Milton employs to set forth his conception of man's relation to God. He realizes, however, that the surface devices are not all there is to the poem.

It was stated in a previous chapter that Richard Garnett interprets Milton's portrayal of Satan as a basic flaw in Paradise Lost. Nor does Garnett believe that Milton entirely succeeds in justifying the ways of God to man. However, he is alarmed over pronouncements pertaining to the decline of the poem. Like Birrell, he questions statements that the epic must be interpreted literally. To Garnett, the thing that matters is Milton's own belief in his ideas:

It is easy to represent "Paradise Lost" as obsolete by pointing out that its demonology and angelology have for us become mere mythology. This criticism is more formidable in appearance than in reality. The vital question for the poet is his own belief, not the belief of his readers. If the Iliad has survived not merely the decay of faith in the Olympian divinities, but the criticism which has pulverized Achilles as a historical personage, "Paradise Lost" need not be much affected by general disbelief in the personality of Satan, and universal disbelief in that of Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel. 79


Garnett insists further that a far more vulnerable point of criticism is Milton's handling of his theme. He implies that the philosophy of *Paradise Lost* can be appreciated even though we no longer believe in the devices which Milton uses to set it forth.

80 H. Rawlings is another critic who discusses the problem of the value of *Paradise Lost* to the Victorian reader. He himself is sceptical of its value as a religious poem. Rawlings maintains that from his own point of view, "this age of science and Biblical criticism" has caused the poem to depreciate." *Paradise Lost*, Rawlings declares, must be read as Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Shakespeare are read— as a poem and not as a theology. Rawlings is interested in proving that Milton's story of the fall is more plausible than the Genesis account. He concludes his essay by stating that Milton's ideas concerning the fall and its consequences still have force because so many people continue to accept Milton's interpretation. Such a conclusion is significant, for critics like Arnold and Pattison take it for granted that nobody believes in Milton's theology any longer.

81 James Weller's comments on *Paradise Lost* are worth mentioning because he does not question the validity of Milton's theology. Although he deplores Milton's inclusion of Satan in heaven because he regards it as unscriptural, he accepts the poet's interpretation of the fall of man and its consequences. In Weller, then, we find another critic who disagrees.


with Scherer, Arnold, Pattison, and Raleigh.

The last critic to be discussed in connection with the relevance of *Paradise Lost* to the Victorian reader is Sir Leslie Stephen.  

Although his article was published in 1901, Stephen is of course usually considered as a Victorian critic. He discusses the value of several late nineteenth-century studies of Milton and notes the tendency of some of the critics to minimize the importance of *Paradise Lost* as a book of instruction for the modern age. Stephen himself does not agree with Raleigh that it is a monument to dead ideas. However, he cannot go along with Garnett, Rawlings, and the other critics who argue that the poem should be read as Homer, Virgil, and Dante are read. Stephen insists, "If, therefore, we are to accept the book as a theodicy, our interest must depend upon our belief in the facts. Milton's poem, says M. Scherer, is intended to support a thesis. We cannot separate the form from the contents in a didactic work. If the thesis collapses, the poem will cease to interest, except, of course in its parentheses."  

Stephen, however, is one important late Victorian figure who has no fear whatsoever of a decline in Milton's reputation. He feels that Milton has a permanent place in English letters: "Political economists in former days puzzled themselves over the attempt to find a constant standard of value. Literary critics may congratulate themselves upon possessing such a standard for their own purposes in Milton's poetry. Many reputations have risen and set, and sometimes

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risen again, while he has been shining as a fixed star."84

I suspect that Stephen is correct in insisting that we must appreciate the philosophy of *Paradise Lost* or not accept the poem at all. Artistic skill alone will not sustain a writer as a permanent figure of any national literature. Raleigh was mistaken in giving Milton such a high place as an artist and at the same time debasing the poet's philosophy. Other critics, notably Arnold and Seeherer, were as equally mistaken in regarding Christianity as a thing of the past. Of course *Paradise Lost* as a body of ideas was on trial during the late nineteenth century. But it was no more on trial than the entire tradition of Christian humanism was. It was inevitable that the scepticism of the age would put Christianity on the defensive and force religion in general to form new lines of defense. Fortunately, I think, Christianity once again demonstrated its potency and flexibility and, as a result, survived. Raleigh and his school were only being fashionable in questioning the relevance of Milton's ideas. If we may anticipate the twentieth century here, Balachandra Rajan declares, "For the nineteenth century Milton's achievement was primarily one of music and feeling; in the twentieth the interest has shifted to ideas."85

In 1826 a few factor was introduced into the stream of Milton criticism. Charles Sumner published his translation of *De Doctrina Christiana*. As we know, the manuscript of the work had been placed in the State Papers Office shortly after Milton's death. It had practically been forgotten, until it

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84 Ibid., p. 103.

was re-discovered by Robert Lemon, the Keeper of the office, in 1824. George IV commissioned his chaplain, Charles Sumner, to translate the work from the Latin into English. Thomas Babington Macaulay used the publication of the work as the occasion for his "Essay on Milton." He scarcely mentions the treatise, but he does state that after a short time De Doctrina Christiana will be consigned to oblivion and will be placed on the upper shelves of libraries to gather dust, along with Milton's other prose works. Macaulay definitely was wrong. The work was not consigned to oblivion; it was a topic of lively discussion throughout the nineteenth century. Since the work was originally written in Latin and since it does not involve English politics at all, it was never discussed in the same manner the other prose works were. Almost invariably, De Doctrina Christiana was mentioned by the Victorians from the point of view of Milton's thought. Consequently, the evaluations of the work have been reserved for this last chapter of the present study.

One of the first discussions of the work appeared anonymously in 1825. That critic writes an exposition of some parts of the work and stresses mainly the heterodox doctrines which Milton propounds. It is not surprising to him that Milton proves himself an Arian; he notes that previous commentators, mainly Bishop Newton and Joseph Warton, have suspected him of adhering to such a heresy. Yet, this particular writer does not condemn the poet for not being orthodox. Instead, he attempts

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to evaluate the philosophical import of the work:

The book throughout bears marks of intense knowledge of the Scriptures, and profound and mature consideration of every question of theology. It is defaced by an anxiety to show scholastic accuracy of refinement, by occasional quibbling and special pleading, and a dogmatic resolution of all questions which come before him, as if ex cathedra, with little regard for the opinions of those who had before treated on the subject.... Yet we are sure that he did seek the truth; but his confident and proud disposition, grounded, no doubt, on an unavoidable knowledge of his great powers and unrivalled genius, has here, as in many instances, led him to mistake the path by which it was to be found, and the temper in which it was to be sought.

The unnamed critic makes a further suggestion which was not to be accepted until the latter part of the century. He feels that De Doctrina Christiana should become an indispensable tool for a more accurate theological interpretation of Paradise Lost.

William Ellery Channing differs from the anonymous critic of the Monthly Review when he writes of De Doctrina Christiana. He is quite pleased to find that Milton is definitely on the side of the Unitarians on the question of the nature of the godhead. He thanks God for having "raised up this illustrious advocate of the long obscured doctrine of the Divine Unity." However, Channing makes no claim that Milton belongs to the Unitarians. He realizes that Milton cannot be identified with any one particular sect. Furthermore, Channing is disappointed in the treatise in one respect. To him, Milton is in error in his ideas pertaining to the transmutation of sin, the depravity of mankind, and redemption. Such

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88 Ibid., p. 294.
89 Remarks on the Character and Writings of John Milton, pp. 31-51.
90 Ibid., p. 35.
errors, the commentator argues, stem from Milton's supposing that the primitive church was meant to be the model for all ages. Channing himself, though, is at fault here. Evidently he has not read Milton's works closely enough, for the poet never felt that the primitive church had the right to place the strictures on the interpretation of the Scriptures. But considering Channing's remarks as a whole, he is satisfied to know that Milton was a liberal Christian.

Henry John Todd makes a few remarks on Milton's treatise on Christian doctrine in his life of the poet which he prefixes to his edition of The Poetical Works. Like the other critics who have discussed the treatise before him, Todd emphasizes its heterodox views, but he looks upon Milton's Arianism with regret. He only wishes that Milton could have lived to read the refutations of Arianism written since his death by "Bishop Bull and Dr. Waterland." Todd has very little to say concerning the many orthodox doctrines held by Milton.

During the years between 1825 and 1900, there were several writers who questioned the authenticity of De Doctrina Christiana. The first of these was Thomas Burgess, the Bishop of Salisbury. Burgess' argument is that Milton could not have written the treatise. To prove his contention, he discusses works which Milton wrote throughout his career and shows that in


all of them Trinitarian views can be found. Burgess notes that in his
last prose pamphlet, Of True Religion, Milton refers to the Arians,
Arminians, and Socinians as heretics. He insists that Milton was sincere
throughout his life and that it was against his nature to pen a treatise
for posthumous publication. Milton, Burgess argues, was always very open
in his views on politics and religion.

Besides arguing that Milton's sincerity would have prevented his
writing an heterodox posthumous treatise, Burgess uses external evidence
to prove that Milton did not write De Doctrina Christiana. Since he
employs a method of proof that was to be used throughout the nineteenth
and into the twentieth century by critics like Arthur Sewell and Maurice
Kelley, it is worth our while to quote his comments in detail. Most of
the later critics, however, use this method to prove that Milton was
indeed the author of the treatise on Christian doctrine:

I have read Mr. Todd's recently-published Life of Milton
with attention and pleasure. But I find in his account
of the Treatise De Doctrina Christiana nothing of that
indisputable evidence which is, I think, indispensably
necessary to justify the ascription of it to Milton. On
the contrary, there is a considerable diminution of the
external probabilities which at first appeared almost to
supercede inquiry. For in the first report of the MS, it
was thought probable, that the first part of the MS was
written by Mary Milton, and the latter part by Edward
Philipps, with interlineations and corrections by Mary and

93 Ibid., pp. xxxivf.

94 A Study In Milton's 'Christian Doctrine' (London: Oxford
University Press, 1939), passim.

95 This Great Argument, A Study of Milton's 'De Doctrina Christiana'
as a Gloss Upon 'Paradise Lost' (Princeton: Princeton University Press,
1941), passim.
Deborah Milton from the dictation of their Father. It has since been discovered by Mr. Lemon, that the first part was not written by Mary Milton, but by a Daniel Skinner, who was a junior Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, "a wild young man," who had absented himself from College without leave, and refused to return on pain of expulsion. It is now conjectured that the second part was not written by Edward Philipps, but by Deborah Milton. The conjecture is founded on the resemblance which it bears to the handwriting of the Sonnet on the death of Milton's second wife, which has been supposed to be written by Deborah Milton. But for this supposition there is nothing but the most vague tradition. That she had any share in the writing of the present MS is in the highest degree improbable. If the work was commenced in 1655, as was conjectured by the learned Editor and Translator on the authority of A. Wood, Deborah Milton was at that time an infant of three years old. If it was "completed in his latest years," as Mr. Todd thinks, it could not be written by her; for she had left her Father three or four years before his death, having gone to Ireland, as a companion to a Lady, before which time she had been released, probably, for a year or two, from her literary employment with her Father, that she might learn embroidery and other works suited to her sex.96

Some of Burgess' comments are striking, but subsequent investigators of the authenticity of the work have proved, almost beyond doubt, that Milton is its author. Later critics have been able to recognize the handwriting of Milton's various amanuenses more accurately than Burgess. Nevertheless, a few of the Milton commentators were long in accepting the work as his.

Burgess represents a point of view of which the significance can hardly be over-estimated. The truth of the matter is that he is in the eighteenth-century tradition of Milton idolatry, like so many of the early

96op. cit., pp. xlvii-xlvi.
Victorian critics. Therefore, he feels that Milton is one of orthodox Christianity's staunchest defenders. It is quite natural that he be shocked to know that anyone would as much as suppose that the poet would compose a treatise on Christian doctrines which contained statements that the Son is inferior to the Father, that God did not create the earth out of nothing, and so on. However, most of the other die-hards were not to be so outspoken against the authenticity of the work of Burgess; they were to try to excuse Milton on other grounds.

It was inevitable that the Tory Quarterly Review would use the publication of De Doctrina Christiana as a means of attacking Milton. In a review of Todd's edition of Milton, an anonymous writer remarks that the treatise proves only that Milton is a visionary when he writes of divine matters. As I remarked in the chapter on Milton the man, it is strange that to this critic the treatise reveals the Puritan side of Milton: "In him we now possess, filled up with all the accuracy of detail, a magnificent specimen of the Puritan in his least offensive form; the fervour, the devotion, the honest indignation, the moral fearlessness, the uncompromising impetuosity, the fantastic imagination of the party, all conspicuous; unalloyed, however, by the hypocrisy, the vularity, the cant, the cunning, and bad taste, which have so generally made the name to stink in the nostrils of men." As far as the editors of the Quarterly Review are concerned, however, De Doctrina Christiana could not possibly enhance

98 Ibid., p. 30.
Milton's reputation in any respect. The work only offered their critics another point of attack.

Joseph Ivimey's evaluation of De Doctrina Christiana is interesting. The reader will recall that one of Ivimey's purposes in writing this study is to prove that Milton is a Baptist. However, he is not evasive when he discusses the treatise. He admits that in the work Milton openly disavows any belief in the Trinity. Nevertheless, Ivimey feels that Milton would have arrived at a different conclusion had he followed the Scriptures exclusively. To Ivimey, reason cannot enter into the interpretation of Scriptures. Having quoted Milton's remarks on the Holy Spirit, Ivimey insists, "The serious reader will, it is hoped, not be led away by the influence of even Milton's name upon this all-important subject; but be induced to search the Scriptures as the only authoritative tribunal."

Ivimey concludes his discussion of the tenets of the treatise by stating that it shows Milton to be a Baptist. As evidence, he cites Milton's advocacy of immersion and his abhorrence of infant baptism. He ignores the fact that, in addition to the doctrine of immersion, the Baptists have always held the doctrine of the Trinity as one of their cardinal articles of faith.

Like Burgess, Ivimey hesitates to give up the idea of the orthodox Milton. He does not attempt to prove that Milton is not the author of the treatise, but he would like to believe that Milton did not write it: "I

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100 Ibid., p. 334.
certainly should be pleased, could any one furnish irrefragable evidence that the manuscript entitled, 'Treatise of Christian Doctrine,' was not written by the eminent man whose 'superscription,' but not whose 'image,' is stamped upon it.  

For the time being, though, Ivimey is content to rationalize that in the course of history, there are many men, useful to God, who live long enough to exhibit imbecility in their old age. 

Sir Egerton Brydges devotes the sum of two paragraphs to De Doctrina Christiana. He gives a factual account of the discovery and publication of the treatise and concludes, "This extraordinary treatise contains many singular opinions, which none but theologists will take the trouble to discuss." To him, then, the work does not enhance or detract from Milton's reputation. Quite obviously, the discussions of the work which precede his study contradict his statement that none except the theologians are interested in Milton's doctrinal opinions. 

Robert Bell exhibits the growing tendency to be less bemused at the discovery of unorthodox doctrines in the works of Milton. He is fully aware of the heresies which the treatise contains, but he feels that the work should be used by Miltonists to account for the evolution of the poet's opinions. Bell declares, "The history of Milton's religious impressions exhibits the struggles of a great mind in search after truth. Commencing with puritanism, he deviated into Calvinism, next embraced the doctrines of Arminius, and finally, after passing through the tenets of the

101 Ibid., p. 340.
independents and anabaptists, he relinquished all the churches, and adopted a code of divinity for himself.... He did not belong to any church—his religion was the Bible interpreted by himself." To Bell, De Doctrina Christiana represents the culmination of the opinions of a great man who constantly searched for the truth. The existence of the work certainly adds to and does not detract from his opinion of Milton the thinker.

In his Life of Milton, Thomas De Quincey makes the first critical comment on the style of De Doctrina Christiana that had been made since the publication of the treatise. He maintains that it is inferior in elegance of style to the other prose works. No denomination, he insists, would bestow much more than a sparing praise upon Milton's system of divinity. Yet this critic believes that the work "is well worth the notice of those students who are qualified to weigh the opinions, and profit by the errors of such a writer, as being composed with Milton's usual originality of thought and inquiry, and as being remarkable for the boldness with which he follows up his arguments to their legitimate conclusion, however startling these conclusions may be." Although De Quincey is not always in agreement with Milton's opinions, he nevertheless has a deep respect for Milton the thinker. It is doubtful whether the existence of the treatise causes De Quincey to think more highly of the poet than he

103 Eminent Literary and Scientific Men, I, 230.
104 In Distinguished Men of Modern Times, II, 228-305.
105 Ibid., p. 304.
does already, however. From what we know of De Quinoey, he would welcome more liberalism in Christian dogma.

Henry Hallam makes a provocative statement in the section of his study which deals with Milton's major poems. He declares that the discovery of Milton's Arianism in his generation has already impaired the sale of Paradise Lost. This statement will be echoed again during the course of the century. However, one can hardly agree that Hallam is correct in making such an assertion when one considers the number of editions of Paradise Lost which came from the English printing houses throughout the century. Aside from this one comment, Hallam has nothing to say concerning De Doctrina Christiana.

In 1840, fourteen years after the publication of Burgess' denial that De Doctrina Christiana came from Milton's pen, an anonymous critic came forth to support Burgess. He adds nothing new, but his comments do indicate that a section of the English public did not readily accept the authenticity of the treatise. The anonymous writer quotes a letter from Lord Grenville to Burgess, and he is in full agreement with its contents:

"We may, I think, pronounce with much confidence, from the evidence which you have adduced, that Milton's tenets can at no period of his life have been those of an Arian. No presumption, therefore, nor anything short of the most positive and indisputable evidence, should incline us to attribute

\[\text{Introduction to the Literature of Europe, II, 224-233.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., p. 225.}\]
\[\text{"Lord Grenville's Letter to Dr. Burgess," Gentleman's Magazine, XIV (1840), 352-353.}\]
to him an elaborate treatise in favour of doctrines, which, to the very close of his life, he continued so openly to disavow, &c. 109

Another anonymous article, however, answered the unknown supporter of Burgess. It is almost entirely a reprint of certain preserved letters relating to Daniel Skinner's dealings with the manuscript of *De Doctrina Christiana*. Milton is specifically mentioned in the letters as the author of the work. The publication of these letters should have settled the question for all time. Nevertheless, there remained a few critics who would argue that someone else, not Milton, wrote the treatise on religion. It is significant that the authenticity of the letters printed in the article has never been questioned. They have been used by subsequent investigators, including some of the twentieth-century critics.

In 1849, a new approach to the interpretation of *De Doctrina Christiana* was taken by the anonymous critic 111 of the *British Quarterly Review* who has been previously discussed in this chapter in connection with his defense of Milton the political theorist. This critic strongly denies that Milton can be classified as an Arian. The evidence in the treatise which supports Milton's Arianism is invalidated by the five following reasons:

1. In some passages of the work Milton speaks like an Arian, while in others he uses language entirely incompatible with the Arian system.


111 X (1849), 224-254.
(2) There is no evidence that the treatise is a continuous work.

(3) There is no proof that De Doctrina Christiana was a product of Milton's maturer years.

(4) The treatise may be merely a compilation of opinions which Milton may have cited for various reasons.

(5) The manuscript of the work is obviously incomplete. "What it would have become, had Milton prepared it for the press, we cannot say."

Therefore, to this critic it seems foolish to use the treatise to prove that Milton was unorthodox. Like Burgess, he states that Milton's orthodoxy is proved by the works which the poet published during his lifetime.

Subsequent discussions of De Doctrina Christiana have contradicted all five points made by the anonymous critic of the British Quarterly Review. Only a cursory reading of the treatise will show that he is in error in at least four of the statements. Milton definitely establishes himself as an Arian in the work. Furthermore, there is an easily discernible continuity in the treatise. The manner in which Milton follows the Renaissance pattern in developing a system of doctrine indicates that De Doctrina Christiana is not merely a compilation of opinions. And although there is no hint anywhere in the treatise concerning its date, external evidence supports a late date of composition.

However, our purpose here is not to contradict the Victorian critics. The important thing to note in connection with the article is its defense of Milton's orthodoxy. The critic of the British Quarterly Review really

\footnote{Ibid., p. 253.}
reflects once more how long Milton idolatry lingered in England. He has a high regard for Milton's ideas not because he feels that Milton is an original thinker but because he looks upon the poet as a proponent of what the critic believes is true Christianity. He thus falls into the group of writers whose estimation of the thinker would diminish were they convinced that Milton is unorthodox.

Thomas Keightley summarizes the entire De Doctrina Christiana in his study of Milton. Although he disagrees with Milton on several points, he makes no attempt to rationalize as some of the previous critics have done. His reading of the treatise has increased his appreciation of Milton the thinker. Keightley declares that De Doctrina "is in every respect a most remarkable work, as exhibiting the unbiased—as far as was possible at the time—opinions of a man of the highest mental powers."

He feels that it is impossible to reconcile foreknowledge and the free will of man, but he insists that Milton has explained the enigma as well as anyone else and that "it is no discredit to Milton to have failed where every one else has failed." It is significant that Keightley questions in no way the authenticity of De Doctrina Christiana. Again, he proves himself to be a transitional critic of Milton.

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\[115\] It is significant that Keightley questions in no way the authenticity of De Doctrina Christiana. Again, he proves himself to be a transitional critic of Milton.
were by no means ready to accept De Doctrina Christiana per se. A. D. Barber\(^{116}\) is one of the die-hards. Like some of the earlier writers, he will not permit his "idol" to believe in heretical ideas. All the critics who had written on De Doctrina Christiana previously had emphasized the unorthodoxy of the treatise, and Barber is no exception. He accepts the treatise as Milton's but attempts to prove that it does not reflect the poet's most mature beliefs. Like Burgess, he argues that it was against Milton's nature to publish a posthumous work and points out that Milton did not hesitate to print the heterodox divorce pamphlets. Barber insists that Milton really had no intention of publishing the treatise on Christian doctrine because it only represents the poet's youthful beliefs: "He compiled Christian Doctrine early in life, before 1641, when he was in the thirty-third year of his age, with the intention of publishing it; but before it was sent to the press--before 1641--possibly before it was finished,—for the work seems to have been left in an unfinished state,—he came to hold views of the Son of God, and the Spirit of God, different from those he advocates in Christian Doctrine."\(^{117}\) Barber submits as evidence of the pre-1641 date Milton's pamphlet Of Reformation, which contains a prayer to the Trinity at its end.

Barber's discussion of De Doctrina Christiana is full of logical fallacies, the most obvious being that Milton must have been unorthodox.

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\(^{117}\)Ibid., XVI, 569.
before he gained his senses and became orthodox. We find in him, though, another critic who thinks well of Milton the philosopher because he believes that Milton finally came to hold Trinitarian views. He does not feel that *Paradise Lost* and the other later works of Milton can possibly contain ideas which he would term as heretical.

Although he does not say why, John Tulloch accepts a late date of composition for *De Doctrina Christiana*. To him, moreover, the treatise is further evidence that Milton was an unusually independent thinker: "He was a thinker in his own behalf; he had a natural largeness and independence of mind, judgment, and something like contempt for mere Catholic tradition, whether in doctrine or church discipline. Such a mind was exactly the one to venture on new paths of theological deduction, and, amid the contemplative quietness of his later years, to elaborate views, which seemed to him to arise from his own free sense of inquiry." Like the other critics, Tulloch emphasizes the anti-Trinitarianism of the treatise, but he uses Milton's doctrine on the unity of God in order to prove once again his thesis that Milton should be looked upon as the arch-Puritan. Tulloch insists:

> It is absurd, as we have already said, to identify Puritanism with any uniform series of doctrinal conclusions. It represents a mode of theological thought, rather than a definite sum of theological results; and Milton's Arianism, so far from being at variance with this mode of thought, might be argued to be only a consistent use of it. The spirit of logical

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119 Ibid., p. 270.
analysis which insists upon definition at every point, and carries its formal argumentativeness into the highest mysteries of spiritual truth, would find nothing uncongenial in Milton's speculations on the nature of the Godhead. 120

One might quarrel with Tulloch concerning his analysis of Puritanism, but his remarks on De Doctrina Christiana indicate progress in the criticism of the work because of their objectivity. Even though he is aware of the poet's unorthodoxy, Tulloch maintains his respect for Milton's powers as a thinker.

J. W. Morris has already been mentioned in this chapter in connection with his defense of the orthodoxy of Paradise Lost. In his *Vindication* of Milton, his chief purpose is to prove that the long epic is quite acceptable, doctrinally speaking, to Trinitarian Christians. 121 Although Morris never states his precise dating of De Doctrina Christiana, he obviously thinks that it is a very early work. Therefore, the treatise detracts in no way from his opinion of Milton the thinker, since it does not reflect the poet's final opinions. It is worth noting, perhaps, that Morris is the last of the Victorians to question the authenticity of De Doctrina Christiana in any way: "For ourselves, we are by no means persuaded that Milton was the author, though there is much of Milton in it, we cannot deny." 122

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120 Ibid.
122 Ibid., p. 114.
John Tomlinson exhibits a naivete throughout his discussion of Milton, but his remarks on *De Doctrina Christiana* deserve notice here. He is the first critic of the era to accept Milton's authorship of the treatise without qualification and at the same time to regret its existence. Evidently, the work has caused Milton the philosopher to decline in the eyes of Tomlinson. He declares, "I think you will agree with me, however, that his late majesty acted very unwisely in commanding Dr. Sumner to translate and edit the work. As a manuscript it might have continued to excite curiosity or provoke disputation, instead of, as now, awakening a feeling of regret in the multitude of Milton's warmest admirers."\(^{124}\)

Stopford Brooke is the first critic after the publication of *De Doctrina Christiana* who uses the treatise to throw more light on the theology of *Paradise Lost*. He insists, "To read it is to know, and with great exactness, the views he held at the time when he was composing *Paradise Lost*.\(^{126}\) He outlines in some detail the doctrines set forth by Milton in the treatise and shows that they coincide with the theology of the epic. Thus Brooke does in miniature form what Maurice Kelley accomplishes in his more extended *This Great Argument*. Brooke, as we

\(^{123}\) Three Household Poets, pp. 39-85.

\(^{124}\) Ibid., p. 78.


\(^{126}\) Ibid., p. 88.
would expect, is unconcerned as to the correctness of Milton's treatise on Christian doctrine. Certainly, however, the existence of heresies in the work does not cause Brooke to become alarmed. His study, published in 1879, is indicative of the degree of objectivity toward the treatise that has been reached by the late Victorian years. No longer will the English critics rationalize away Milton's ideas; no longer will they attempt to prove that Milton did not compose De Doctrina Christiana.

In his study, Mark Pattison includes a short matter-of-fact history of the manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana. He also summarizes the content of the work briefly. Although he, like Brooke, has no desire either to refute or to defend the doctrines propounded in the treatise, he gives Milton credit for being an original thinker in his composition of the work. Pattison is aware of Milton's following of the Renaissance commentaries in his organization of De Doctrina, but he points out that it was impossible for the poet to agree with the prevailing Protestant orthodoxy in all instances:

In a work which had been written as a text-book for the use of learners, there can be little scope for originality. And Milton follows the division of the matter into heads usual in the manuals then current. But it was impossible for Milton to handle the dry bones of a divinity compendium without stirring them into life. And divinity which is made to live, necessarily becomes unorthodox.

Pattison also believes that the prose treatise may certainly be employed to throw light on Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained: "The De Doctrina


128 Ibid., p. 155.
Christiana is the prose counterpart of Paradise Lost and Regained, a caput mortuum of the poems, with every ethereal particle evaporated. David Masson's discussion of De Doctrina Christiana is noteworthy. In the sixth volume of his monumental study of Milton, he draws together all the available information concerning the treatise. For example, he relates the actions of Daniel Skinner in detail and states several plausible reasons why the manuscript was not printed shortly after Milton's death. Masson thinks that De Doctrina would have influenced English theological thought and also the traditional reputation of Milton had it been published while the poet was alive or even during the seventeenth century. "As it is though," Masson argues, "it has been fifty years before the world, it seems to have found few real readers. Our interest in it here is purely biographical; and in that respect, at all events, it is not to be overlooked or dismissed carelessly." He adds that the work throws light on Paradise Lost.

Masson is aware of the various laments regarding the work. Taking note of those critics who regret the existence of De Doctrina Christiana, he declares, "With various classes of persons on very various grounds, it may be matter for regret that such a treatise as that of which we have thus given a summary was ever written by Milton or has come down with his name attached. That is no concern of ours. The book exists; it is Milton's.

129 Ibid., p. 156.
131 Ibid., p. 817.
and was his solemn and last bequest to all Christendom..."132

It is difficult to determine Masson's opinion of Milton the theological philosopher. As I have stated before, Masson accepts Milton's greatness per se from page one of his study; consequently, he does not find it necessary to comment on Milton's qualities. He is merely telling the story of an eminent man of letters. In view of Masson's avowed liberalism, however, he must have read parts or all of De Doctrina Christiana with some degree of satisfaction. His only point of criticism concerning the treatise is that Milton does not question in any way the credibility of the Scriptures. This biographical critic is aware that "discrepancies, corruptions, and falsifications of the texts of Scriptures is confessed by many."133

Herbert New discusses the effect of the discovery of Milton's Arianism on the poet's reputation.134 Writing in 1881, he takes issue with Hallam, who, I have pointed out, remarks that the discovery of this heresy has impaired the sale of Paradise Lost. New declares, "The variations of popular acceptance are, however, but temporary. The time has come when the charge of Arianism against Milton ceases to carry the weight attributed to it by Hallam. Arianism and Socianism are phases of Christian opinion, unlikely to be revived in any of their historical forms, though the first, as a general term, may be employed to represent a phase of transition from

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132 Ibid., p. 838.
133 Ibid., p. 818.
orthodoxy to free Christianity." If New is correct, and he most likely is, his statement indicates that the reaction against Milton's heresies had spent its force at least twenty years before the end of the century.

Richard Garnett's discussion of De Doctrina Christiana makes it more plainly evident that the late Victorians minimized the heresies of the treatise. In fact, Garnett seems to regret that the work was not published sooner than 1825. He insists,

The 'Treatise on Christian Doctrine' is by far the most remarkable of all Milton's later prose publications, and would have exerted a great influence on opinion if it had appeared when the author designed. Milton's name would have been a tower of strength to the liberal eighteenth-century clergy inside and outside the Establishment. It should indeed have been sufficiently manifest that 'Paradise Lost' could not have been written by a Trinitarian or a Calvinist; but theological partisanship is even slower than secular partisanship to see what it does not choose to see; and Milton's Arianism was not generally admitted until it was here avouched under his own hand.

Garnett mentions the various doctrines propounded by Milton in the treatise. Unlike some of his predecessors in Milton criticism, he emphasizes the orthodox elements as much as he does the unorthodox. He feels that De Doctrina is a late work and that it reflects Milton's most mature opinions. Having read the treatise, he has an increased respect for Milton: "Particular opinions will be diversely judged; but if anything could increase our reverence for Milton it would be that his last years should have been devoted to a labour so manifestly inspired by disinterested benevolence

135Ibid.
and hazardous love of truth."  

Francis E. Mineka has studied the early reception of *De Doctrina Christiana*, and his conclusions may be of use to us here. To him, the nature of the reception of the work indicates four things: A study of these reviews reveals: (1) the continued blindness of most critics and readers, even into the nineteenth century with regard to Milton's heterodoxy in *Paradise Lost*; (2) the strength of his reputation which could survive a conviction for heresy; (3) an altered tone in the criticism of the poet; (4) the disposition of the religious periodicals, like the secular, to follow the "party line." The result is an interesting commentary not only on Milton's reputation at a crucial point but also on early nineteenth-century Protestantism itself.

Concerning his second point, Mineka insists further, "This study of the reviews has shown that Milton's poetical reputation was so firmly established by the early nineteenth century that even published proof of deeply rooted heresies could not shake it."  

Mineka has only the early nineteenth-century reviews in mind, since he is primarily interested in the immediate reaction to the publication of Milton's treatise on religion. But most of the points which he mentions asserted themselves throughout the Victorian era. It has been noted time and again in this study that many of the late Victorian critics looked upon

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137 Ibid., p. 193.


139 Ibid., p. 117.

140 Ibid., p. 146.
Paradise Lost as a devotional poem. Also, judging from the criticism which has been discussed, we must conclude that De Doctrina Christiana had little effect on the reputation of Milton the poet. Concerning Mineka's notation of the "altered tone," we have noted that the critics, especially the critical biographers, had a new element with which they were forced to discuss. Some of them, especially the early ones, were apologetic to their readers for Milton's heresies and tried to find reasons why he became a heretic. Finally, it has been noted that journals like the Quarterly Review were glad to have the opportunity of damning Milton because of his heterodoxy, while periodicals like the Unitarian Review lauded the poet's liberalism.

At this point we might review our remarks concerning Milton's reputation as a thinker. The bulk of the discussions pertaining to the political aspect of the poet's thought was written during the first half of the era. The commentators were interested in upholding his ideas for the sake of nineteenth-century reform. On the other hand, there were those who disparaged Milton's ideas of political import because they were against reform. There were a few critics who believed that the poet had been impractical in the field of politics, but they were in the minority. The century passed, moreover, without an objective, unbiased, and dispassionate analysis of the writer's political theories. Most of the late Victorians were unconcerned with Milton's politics. Their main interest lay in his poetry. It remained for the twentieth-century students of Milton to place him in his proper place, historically, as a political theorist. But at the very end of the century, Edward Dowden came forth
to declare that Milton's ideas of state have a modern quality and that the poet should continue to inspire his countrymen to pass progressive social legislation.

In the religious aspect of his thought, Milton fared well during the Victorian era, especially well in view of the widespread scepticism of the age. *Paradise Lost* was looked upon as a poem of great religious value by many. In 1839, however, Hallam stated that the discovery of Milton's Arianism had already impaired the sale of the poem, but the number of editions of the work which were printed contradicts his statement. The late Victorian critic, Herbert New, remarked that most Englishmen approach the poet's Arianism with an open mind. He felt, quite rightly, that the alleged heresies in the epic are of small importance. The French critic, Edmund Scherer, initiated a craze to deride the relevance of *Paradise Lost* in an age which no longer accepted the book of Genesis as literal fact. Many of the critics, moreover, would not accept Scherer's thesis. Richard Garnett and several others stated that even though the educated world no longer believed in traditional Christian mythology, the poem nevertheless is relevant, that its truths are as eternal as those propounded by the ancient poets. An adequate refutation of Scherer was not forthcoming until the publication of Douglas Bush's *Paradise Lost in Our Time*.

The publication of *De Doctrina Christiana* had little effect on Milton's traditional reputation as a theologian. Even those who abhorred the heresies of the work had to admit it contains a majestic and learned quality. No

oritio could state that Milton had not supported every statement with quotations from the Scriptures. A few critics, notably Brooke, recognized the importance of the treatise as a commentary on \textit{Paradise Lost}. Some of the Victorians, especially Burgess, denied that Milton wrote \textit{De Doctrina Christiana}. They had such a reverence for the poet's orthodoxy that they could not believe that he would write as a heretic. Before the century ended, most Miltonists accepted the work as his. External evidence made his authorship of the treatise conclusive.

To me, the remarkable aspect of the entire \textit{De Doctrina} matter is the emphasis which the Victorians placed on the Arianism of the treatise. In many respects, Milton is as orthodox as the staunchest Anglican. It is also amazing that the Victorian evangelicals and low Churchmen did not emphasize the chapters in the work on church government and the payment of ministers. Finally, it is unfortunate that the sceptics of the era did not recognize \textit{De Doctrina Christiana} as a liberal document. The truth of the matter was that they could have used Milton's name to further the cause of modernism in Christianity. But they were so involved in proving that \textit{Paradise Lost} is a monument to dead ideas that they failed to perceive the profound modernism of the poem. If \textit{Paradise Lost} did not convince them of Milton's modernity, then \textit{De Doctrina Christiana} should have.

In conclusion, I remain in disagreement with James E. Thorpe, who in his dissertation, "The Decline of the Miltonic Tradition," tries to prove that Milton's reputation as a philosopher has diminished. Since the poet's death, there have been those who questioned his opinions on all the subjects with which he was concerned. Thorpe has in mind, however, those critics of
the late Victorian era who believed that *Paradise Lost* is a monument to dead ideas. As I have pointed out, such critics did not convince everyone. I firmly contend that the idea was a "fad," and of course a fad is always temporary. The potency of the new scepticism of the late nineteenth century made it necessary that all traditional opinions on philosophy and religion be re-evaluated in the light of the new scientific methods and theories. The late Victorian age, then, was a period during which Milton the thinker would naturally undergo a reinterpretation.
CONCLUSION

In this study, I have attempted to discuss the various phases of the Milton criticism which was produced in England between 1825 and 1900. While the first chapter dealt with the general Victorian achievements in the field of Milton scholarship, the other chapters consisted of the evaluations of Milton the man, the poet, the writer of prose, and the philosopher. Of course, the danger of dividing the criticism of any writer into such clear-cut sections is always one of oversimplification. There are, however, various instances in which a critic's evaluation of one aspect of Milton colored his comments on other phases. Having noted the various points on which Milton was discussed by the Victorians, we might do well to draw these points together and then make a few conclusions concerning Milton's literary reputation during the era.

The bulk of the printed matter on Milton testifies to his reputation in Victorian England. His works were edited and re-edited. Several biographies were written, and the writers of these biographies were, by and large, sympathetic toward both Milton the man and his works. Scores of critical articles appeared in the English journals, and with the exception of those printed in the Quarterly Review, the writers exalted Milton's works, especially his poetry. In late Victorian England, many of the scholars were sufficiently interested in Milton to study his source materials in detail. Several concordances were compiled, and two good Milton bibliographies were published. Critics of clerical bent
systemized Milton's theology, and others extolled his politics. The Tory critics, although they did not concur in the poet's political theories, had enough awe for him to try to refute his ideas of state. Several critics of note made acute analyses of Milton's prosody. And a few writers, mostly women, continued to write romanticized versions of the poet's life.

It is difficult to estimate the most significant contribution of the era to the storehouse of Milton scholarship. To David Masson's seven-volume biography, perhaps, belong first honors. Although Masson never was a perceptive critic, he was a quite competent literary historian. In his study of the poet, he drew together most of the Milton material that had accumulated. However, critics such as Brydges, Keightley, Brooke, Pattison, and Raleigh made significant contributions. Twentieth-century critics, like Hanford, have given Masson credit for creating the idea of the Puritan Milton, but chief credit should go to Tulloch, whose work is often overlooked.

Milton the man underwent a reinterpretation during the Victorian age. At the beginning of the period, Milton idolatry was rampant in England. Macaulay and Channing wrote panegyrics in honor of the man. Conversely, the abuse of the Quarterly Review was most fierce in the early years of the period. At the same time, a Tory of Brydges' bent was able to write a biography of Milton which seemed too sympathetic, even to many of the poet's warmest admirers.

Idolatry toward Milton was the rule until 1855, when Keightley published his study. Although Keightley was deeply sympathetic toward
Milton, he nevertheless discussed the poet's faults with a degree of objectivity that was unusual. After the appearance of Keightley's study, the critics were less apologetic for Milton's alleged shortcomings than they had been previously.

In 1900, Raleigh stated that Milton was almost universally disliked, and twentieth-century students of Milton have accepted this statement too readily. The facts will not support it. Milton was disliked by a few. Writers such as Seeley, Masson, Brooke, and Garnett expressed approval of the man, even though they were not blind to his faults.

The development of the idea that Milton had been a Puritan is a problem in itself. As I have intimated, Tulloch was chiefly responsible. Masson and Pattison popularized the idea. On the other hand, Seeley presented Milton as a man of the Renaissance, a Christian humanist, with only a touch of the Puritan. Actually, the Victorians came to no agreement on the matter. They could not agree on the connotation of the word "Puritan," which had no odiousness whatsoever to many of them. In fact, one critic "thanked God" that Milton had been a Puritan.

Another special problem is Johnson's Life of Milton. The Victorians reacted violently to it, just as their forefathers had done in the eighteenth century. The Victorian critics thought that Johnson had been grossly unfair. The Life was mentioned time and again throughout the era, usually in derision. Brydges wrote the most extended refutation of Johnson that appeared.

In evaluating Milton's personal qualities, some of the commentators were dishonest. They loathed the man's prose pamphlets and sought to
discredit his political ideas by painting the man very darkly, as
Johnson had done. For the most part, such critics hid themselves
behind the cloak of anonymity. In the latter part of the period,
politically inspired attacks became fewer, and this phenomenon cor­
responded roughly in time to the passage of the various reform bills
after 1865.

In fairness, however, I should point out that several of Milton's
staunchest defenders appear to have been his champions only because he,
in turn, was an eminent writer whom they could cite as a proponent of
reform bills. Still, it is well-nigh impossible to establish motives.

In 1900, Milton idolatry no longer existed in any appreciable
measure. Yet the critics, as a whole, had not become Milton detractors.
Most of them realized that Milton had been human and that he had been
subjected to more trials than the average individual. Therefore, they
were able to make allowances for his shortcomings as an individual.
Moreover, the critics were aware of documentary proof, published during
the century, that Milton's wife needed his legacy more than did his
daughters, that the daughters had been cared for by the Powell estate.
Thus an old charge against Milton was dispelled. I firmly disagree with
Thorpe that Milton's reputation as a man reached its lowest point in 1900
or shortly thereafter.

Throughout the Victorian era, Milton's reputation as a poet remained
stable. Here too, however, a re-evaluation took place. The early
Victorians praised Milton because of the content of his poetry, particularly
Paradise Lost, while the late Victorians emphasized his manner of expression,
or poetic technique. Brydges, Ivimey, and De Quincey were conspicuous as early favorable critics, while Arnold and Raleigh were the most adamant of the late Victorians who exalted Milton as a writer of the grand style. Ivimey was, perhaps, the most eloquent of the critics who looked upon *Paradise Lost* as a devotional poem. He was writing in the eighteenth-century tradition of Milton idolatry.

Brydges was the first critic of note to point out the fallacy of Johnson's criticism of the metrics of *Paradise Lost*. He stated that Johnson had applied the wrong yardstick to Milton's poetry. Most subsequent commentators agreed with Brydges. The late Victorian, Robert Bridges, assumed that Milton's lines must be considered as the norm, and no one questioned his judgment.

Satan's function in *Paradise Lost* was debated throughout the era. A number of critics named that character as hero. Hallam was among the earliest. However, a mid-Victorian, Wilson, discussed the problem of hero in the light of the epic tradition and concluded that Adam, not Satan, is the chief personage of *Paradise Lost* because all the action of the entire epic revolves around him. Wilson was ignored by his countrymen, and even Masson intimated that Satan is the hero. When they defended Satan's position as the hero of *Paradise Lost*, many of the critics based their arguments only on Books I and II. One is forced to suspect that they were unacquainted with Books III through XII. Although the era ended, with little agreement on Satan's function, the majority seem to have rejected the idea that he is the prime actor.

Milton's reputation as a poet was not especially at stake in the
discussions of Satan's position in *Paradise Lost*. The critics were unanimous in admitting the fiend's magnificence. Even Channing, no Satanist himself, praised Milton's portrait of the author of evil. On the other hand, there were a few critics whose estimation of Milton the theologian would have decreased had they been convinced that Satan is the hero of the epic.

*Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* did not receive much attention. They were always overshadowed by *Paradise Lost*. Some of the commentators felt that Milton's poetic powers had declined when he turned to write these two poems. It is significant that only one critic of the Victorian era, Keightley, came near an interpretation of the central meaning of *Samson Agonistes*. Whenever the critics mentioned *Samson*, they almost invariably classified the poem as autobiography. There were too many parallels between the eyeless Samson and the blind poet for that poem to escape such an erroneous and limited interpretation. The most eminent critics of the age, from Brydges to Garnett, succumbed to the temptation to read autobiography into *Samson Agonistes*.

The Satan of *Paradise Regained* was scarcely commented on by the Victorians. There was no question involving his function in that poem. Milton had followed the Scriptures too closely, in this instance, for conjecture. Nevertheless, those critics who condemned Milton's treatment of the Satan of *Paradise Lost* did not alternately praise the creation of at least one "Scriptural" Satan.

The so-called minor poems were more neglected than *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. Of this group, *Lycidas* was commented on most, and
the reason was that the Victorians were very displeased with Johnson's censure of that pastoral elegy. The other poems, like L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, and Comus were never studied in detail by the nineteenth-century critics. However, Saintsbury thought that Comus is superior to Paradise Lost. Most of the writers praised the minor poems to extravagance whenever they chose to mention them.

It is difficult to estimate Milton's Victorian reputation as a writer of prose. He had written on issues which did not resolve themselves until the latter part of the era. In evaluating his pamphlets, almost every Victorian critic permitted party bias to influence his opinion. The Victorians were simply unable to dissociate their own views from those of Milton. They were unable to criticize the prose works per se, and the result was a dearth of objective criticism of the pamphlets. Tory critics declared that Milton was an inferior prose writer; Whig critics argued that he was among the nation's greatest. Neither group substantiated in any detail its assertions.

By 1900, the original points of conflict between Whigs and Tories had subsided. New political alignments had been made. Edward Dowden was then able to criticize the prose works philosophically. He remarked that the pamphlets would live because in them Milton expressed ideals which are as abiding as the English race itself.

Two of the pamphlets were exceptions to the general rule of party criticism. On Education and the Areopagitica were universally praised. Each treatise appeared in numerous separate editions, and this in itself is indicative of the esteem commanded by the two pamphlets. The
Areopagitica was often mentioned as embodying an ideal not yet achieved in the English nation.

Milton's Victorian reputation as a political theorist is, like his standing as a prose writer, difficult to estimate. Again, party bias was a major factor. Between 1826 and 1860, there were two schools of thought. Carpenter most adequately represented those who looked upon Milton's political ideas with great favor, while Brydges implied his disapproval by ignoring the poet's political theories. The late Victorians achieved a degree of objectivity not attained by their forefathers. Seeley made no attempt to take sides, but he admired Milton for daring to speak his mind on political issues confronting seventeenth-century England. The historian Gardiner remarked that Milton had been a very able theorist, but Gardiner added that Milton had been too impractical for a statesman like Cromwell to follow.

After the publication of De Doctrina Christiana in 1825, there was no longer any doubt concerning Milton's religious doctrines. A few critics ignored that treatise, but most of them were forced to reckon with it. Writers like Channing gloried in Milton's liberalism, while the critics of the Quarterly Review stated that the treatise revealed Milton's depravity, of which they had been aware all along. Subsequent critics who admired Milton apologized for the heresies in the work and remarked that Milton, if he had indeed written the treatise at all, composed it in his dotage. By 1900, it was generally agreed that Milton was the author, that De Doctrina Christiana was a product of Milton's mature years, and that he had intended it as his last bequest to all Christendom.
The remarkable fact about the entire body of criticism that had accumulated in connection with De Doctrina Christiana by the end of the century is that, with the exception of Channing, none of the critics attempted to connect it with the nineteenth-century movement toward more liberalism in Christianity. As far as I can tell, the publication of the work neither enhanced nor detracted from Milton's reputation as a theologian.

The crux of Milton's standing as a thinker lay in the problem of the relevance of Paradise Lost to the issues confronting the philosophical world of the nineteenth century. The early critics took the truths of Paradise Lost for granted and looked upon the work as inspired. But a French critic, Edmund Scherer, concluded that Paradise Lost was of no use as a philosophical poem. Arnold popularized Scherer's idea, and many of the critics, the most outspoken of whom was Raleigh, said, in effect, that Paradise Lost is a monument to dead ideas.

If Englishmen in general had accepted such a thesis, Milton's reputation as a thinker would have reached an all-time low. By and large, however, the writers did not adhere to the followers of Scherer. A few continued to look upon the poem as a guidebook for practical Christian ethics. And Garnett, one of the better critics, stated that the epic was still valuable as a philosophical poem, even though most people could no longer accept Milton's mythology.

There were many problems of Milton criticism which were unsolved in 1900. Moreover, they largely remain as such to this day. When considering Milton and his works, one has a complex array of factors to
take into account. For example, before coming to any conclusion regarding
the nature of Milton the man, we have to evaluate the known facts of
Milton's life against the background of seventeenth-century events.
Then we must decide whether to judge Milton in the light of the seventeenth
century standards of ethics or according to twentieth-century standards.
To be more specific, when we evaluate Milton's conduct toward Salmisius
and Morus, he fares well if we apply the seventeenth-century yardstick
of conduct to his actions. On the other hand, he fares ill if we judge
him according to the ethical standards accepted in our own century.

Another problem of complexity arose when critics like Raleigh
praised *Paradise Lost* as a poem exhibiting a flawless style, and, at the
same time, an outmoded philosophy. Other critics stated that the
philosophy of *Paradise Lost* must be appreciated before the poem would
endure as a work of art, that art alone would not suffice. Although
many of us agree with such critics, the problem remains far from solved
today.

When we consider the many facets of the Victorian criticism of
Milton, we can only conclude that in 1900 he remained an "accepted"
writer. The basis of acceptance was different, though, from what it was
in 1825. The late Victorians were more critical of Milton and his works
than their forefathers had been, but such an attitude was healthier than
the Milton idolatry of 1825. Idolatry promotes sterility in criticism.
The late Victorians, in questioning Milton's eminence on every point,
were setting the stage for the vast number of investigations of scholarly
value that have been made in the twentieth century. Leslie Stephen
evaluated the situation accurately in 1901 when he wrote that reputa-
tions have risen and set but that Milton's has been like a fixed star,
shining apart.
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VITA

Calvin Huckabay was born in Bienville, Louisiana, on October 17, 1928. He received his elementary and high school education in the Bienville public schools. In 1946 he matriculated at Louisiana College and graduated in 1949 from that institution with special distinction. During the academic year 1949-50, he attended Tulane University and received his Master of Arts degree. Then he taught English and Latin at Tallulah High School for two years. While teaching in Tallulah, he married Miss Betty Jane Ammons. In 1952 he enrolled at Louisiana State University, where he remained until January 31, 1955, serving as a graduate teaching assistant in the Department of English. At the present time, he is an instructor at Eastern Kentucky State College.
Candidate: Calvin Huckabay

Major Field: English

Title of Thesis: Milton's Literary Reputation During the Victorian Era

Approved:

[Signature]
Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Names]

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