

Milton, by E, M, W, Tillyard. Rev. ed. (Barnes and Noble: New York) 1967

p.206 Johnson is beside the mark: he does not realize that Milton might have had very definite reasons for putting prologues to these particular books rather than to others; that they may be organic as well as beautiful in themselves.¹ In point of fact they are a most valuable guide to the way the poem is constructed.

Seeing then that the construction of Paradise Lost has been so misunderstood or has been so little treated, I may be permitted to give some account of it. Let me repeat that in my account I shall have two matters in view: the evidence for Milton's professed subject and the constructional unity.

Footnote 1. Verity in his edition of Paradise Lost (Cambridge) has a note at the beginning of Book Seven saying that these passages mark each a significant stage in the development of the story. But he is very brief and goes into no detail.

p. 211 This arrangement makes it most improbable that Greenlaw and Saurat are right in thinking that Paradise Lost is composed round two equipollent themes.

p. 302 Epilogue Milton Today

For two hundred years Milton has been allowed, in spite of suppressed murmurs, a secure position on an exalted pedestal. It is extremely salutary that the present age should have begun questioning his right to such an eminence. If this ^{right} ~~right~~ is allowed, it will be based henceforth on a more reasonable and less superstitious appreciation; if it is disallowed, the sooner Milton is put on his proper level the better.

p. 309 The idea that Milton's theology is outworn and that his views on life have no modern relevance is still very widespread. It is particularly insidious too, because most of those who hold it praise Milton on other grounds, professing to be his admirers. They believe that the sweetness of Comus, the descriptions in the early books of Paradise Lost, the grandeur of Satan as an isolated figure, more than make up for the fault of theological staleness. But there is no need for this kind of argument: the theology itself may have a sufficient function. The fact is that one cannot separate Milton's theology from his general philosophy and from his attitude to life. If either of these has a modern relevance, the theology as their vehicle has its modern relevance too.