

Richard Bentley

3.95-16

Sampson, George. The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature (Cambridge, England: At the University Press), 1941.

p. 496 Bentley settled the controversy finally in his Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris (1699), which not only disposed of Phalaris and his defenders, but made readers aware of the "higher criticism" by which a competent scholar can distinguish between ancient authors of different dates as readily as an ordinary reader can distinguish between Chaucer and Masfield. In 1699 Bentley became Master of Trinity, and at once was involved in a conflict with the Fellows which lasted for nearly forty years. . . . Two books, however, call for mention, his Remarks upon a Late Discourse of Freethinking (1713), in which he ridiculed the pretensions of Anthony Collins, and his edition of Paradise Lost (1732), in which he amended Milton's text, as if it were a corrupt ancient manuscript. The book is a curiosity of literature and is almost a parody of the "higher criticism."

See Article on Milton in Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 18, Eleventh Edition, 1911.

p. 491 In 1732 Richard Bentley put forward a curious edition of Paradise Lost in which long passages were rejected and placed in the margin on the ground that they were interpolations made possible by Milton's blindness.