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THE SYNTHESIS OF HEBRAISM AND HELLENISM IN MILTON'S SAMSON AGONISTES

by

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Approved
G. W. C.

Houston, Texas
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TO

DR. GEORGE W. WHITING

What thanks sufficient, or what recompence
Equal have I to render thee?
PREFACE

My introduction to Samson Agonistes was a memorable afternoon in 1952 when I first read the play and then heard Sir John Sheppard lecture on "Why We Should Study Greek Poetry." Through the study of Paradise Lost in Dr. Whiting's English 370, I had already become interested in Milton's combination of the Christian and classical traditions. This combination in Milton's poetry I have continued to study and have attempted to point out to students—-not with entire success, as I discovered from a freshman who wrote, "Milton combined the Christian and classical traditions for the purpose of confusion."

This dissertation began as a colloquium paper on "Hebraism and Hellenism in Milton's Samson Agonistes." With some trepidation I applied these comfortable labels, which have occasioned, I realize, some critical skepticism. I will admit that I, too, became skeptical when I read that "Shaw in spirit is Hebraism; Murray is Hellenist"; for I had supposed that in spite of Shaw's avowed religious inspiration, his dear wit and gay rhetoric would make him much more at home in post-Peloponnesian-War Athens than in a certain other City. It seems, though, that the critic simply meant "bellicose" as opposed to "urbane." ¹ Needless to say, these substituted words did not suffice in the colloquium paper, which began with, but departed from, Arnold's use of the terms. ²

After the paper had been read aloud, the definitions
remained unchallenged, but the question was raised, "Well, just how much Hellenism and how much Hebraism did you find in Samson Agonistes?" The answer (which I dared not make) would have been the same answer that Beethoven made to the question of what his sonata meant—which answer was simply to let the questioner hear the whole thing once more. If the question were to arise concerning this dissertation, that would still have to be the answer; for Milton's poetry is a seamless garment which cannot be rent. To apply the ledger style of scholarship, to attempt to weigh out poetry like so much cheese, to ask, "How much...?" is to approach the play with the wrong question.

The question for Milton, when he wished to write a drama about Samson as one of the Saints of the Holiest of Holies, were first, What form of drama would best realize his great idea, and then, How far was it possible to adapt Greek structure to Christian theme and spirit. Milton found, as Ker has observed, "in the form of Greek tragedy exactly the right measure and mode for something not yet accomplished in his epic poems." Yet the assertion that Milton used primarily Hellenic form for the Hebraic (or Judaic—Christian) spirit, is not sufficient. For the reader, other questions arise. How far did Milton use the Greek form, and what did he create that was analogous to it? What artistic effect resulted? Is the spirit predominantly Christian or predominantly tragic? How are spirit and form, Christianity and tragedy, Hebraism and Hellenism, modified by one another and reconciled?
Thus it is the purpose of the dissertation to analyze the quality and manner of Milton's synthesis of the Hebraic and Hellenic traditions in *Samson Agonistes*. Although in many respects Coleridge is right in saying that *Samson Agonistes* is "the finest imitation of the ancient Greek drama that ever had been or," he characteristically adds, "ever would be written," 4 it must be remembered that "the pattern or example of everything is the perfectest in that kind, whereof we still come short, though we transcend or go beyond it...For even in things alike there is diversity; and those that do seem to accord do manifestly disagree." 5 Milton wrote the finest imitation of Greek tragedy for the very reason that he transcended mere imitation by vitally re-creating the Greek form to express those elements of the Hebraic spirit most analogous to the Hellenic spirit and compatible with a modified Hellenic form.

In submitting this dissertation, I should like to acknowledge my gratitude to the three people who have helped me most: to Dr. Whiting, who with surpassing kindness has "taught the way that might direct our knowledge"; to Dr. William Baker, who in many friendly conversations has been of Milton's "great authentic will Interpreter"; and to my mother, who has been "favouring and assisting to the end."
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CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTORY SURVEY OF CRITICISM DEALING WITH THE HEBRAISM AND HELLENISM OF SAMSON AGONISTES

The work some praise
And some the Architect ... (P.L. I, 731.2)

Although Samson Agonistes has received less study than Milton's other major poems, it cannot be the purpose of this chapter of the dissertation to survey all of the criticism of Samson Agonistes, or even to comment in detail upon all of the criticism of it that has dealt with Milton's Hebraism or Hellenism or both. Criticism of the "Milton Agonistes" kind is obviously to be excluded;¹ for although the study of the psychology of genius and the relation of a poet's experience to his art is frequently a valuable and valid starting point for the study of poetry, it is not relevant here, and too much of what the critics have written about Milton-Samson, Mary-Dalila, and so forth is the sort of conjecture that would no doubt move Milton's laughter at their quaint opinions wide. Milton's prosody no less

The great Architect
Did wisely to conceal, and not divulge
His secrets to be scann'd by them who ought
Rather admire . . .

Therefore it has seemed unnecessary to survey here the elaborate attempts to scan the poem and otherwise explain its metrical subtleties,² although some reference to this type of criticism is made in a subsequent chapter on the style and structure of the choruses.
What this chapter attempts to do is provide a résumé of, and comment upon, the major critical analyses of Hellenic and Hebraic qualities in Samson Agonistes. Several analyses of the theme of Christian regeneration in the play will be merely cited, because these accounts summarize the play and would thus entail too much repetition if included here.

In this chapter and in subsequent chapters of this dissertation, "Hebraism" refers to the Judaic-Christian tradition and is applied to those elements of subject matter, style, and spirit which are derived not only from the Old Testament but also from patristic, mediaeval, Renaissance, or Puritan expressions of Christianity. The term "Hellenism" is applied to elements of subject matter, style, and spirit which are derived from the Greek and Latin classics. Thus the terms, although borrowed from Arnold, are not used entirely as he used them to differentiate the two spirits which he describes: strict conscience, awed sense of sin, self-sacrifice, right conduct, and obedience to God's will as the spirit of Hebraism, and spontaneous intellectual searching, free play of thought, perception of beauty, and "sweetness and light" as the spirit of Hellenism. Arnold formulated the contrast but hoped for that reconciliation which should exist. Milton's reconciliation of the two in Samson Agonistes is the subject of this dissertation.

Dr. Johnson is the starting point for this survey of criticism as he has been the starting point for much of the criticism itself; for subsequent detractors from Samson Agonistes and subsequent admirers of it alike have found
Johnson an indispensable ally or an inevitable opponent. Despite his apparent moderation and somewhat conventional praise of Milton, Johnson betrays toward the play a certain unfortunate animosity in both the Life of Milton and the criticism in The Rambler -- animosity which mars his borrowed visage . . . For heavenly minds from such distempers foul are ever clear.

In the Life he rather curiously calls it "long prejudice and the bigotry of learning" on Milton's part to prefer the ancient model, and he censures the drama because of structural weaknesses: "neither cause nor consequence in the intermediary parts." Further, he blames Milton for lack of knowledge from experience of the subtleties or particular shades of character. Milton, according to Johnson, knew human nature "only in the gross" and therefore "would not have excelled in dramatic writing." 3 Samson Agonistes is left, apparently, with no special merit except that of "particular beauties."

This criticism is the germ of that in two numbers of The Rambler. In it Johnson elaborates on his most quoted complaint of the lack of a middle in Samson Agonistes. Starting with the assumption that Aristotle's criticism constitutes "indispensable laws" for the drama, he cites the explanation that the middle should be "connected on one side to something that naturally goes before, and on the other to something that naturally follows it." This precept he makes even more rigorous:
The intermediate passages must join the last effect to the first cause, by a regular and unbroken concatenation; nothing must be therefore inserted which does not apparently arise from something foregoing, and properly make way for something that succeeds it.

The additional statements of Aristotle that may have led him to this extension are as follows: that a structural union of the parts demands that "if one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed," a different principle from Johnson's inevitable causal chain; that episodic plots, in which events follow without necessary sequence, are to be avoided; and that in the best tragedies, the terrible and pitiable events "follow as cause and effect."

In applying his precept in detail to the poem, Johnson asserts that the causal chain is weak, and he refuses to interpret the events of the poem as a logical and inevitable sequence. His simply states, for instance, that by the end of the "first act," he finds no "design laid ... nor any disposition formed toward the subsequent event." In the "second act" he faintly praises the dialogue with Manoa as "not superfluous" if it tends to "animate or exasperate" Samson, although he finds it chiefly valuable "for its own beauties" -- in other words, as superfluous ornament. The visit of Dalila, likewise, has no effect but "that of raising the character of Samson," a statement that indicates that Johnson finds Samson's character merely set off to advantage beside hers rather than strengthened as he overcomes the temptation which she represents. The coming of Harapha, he thinks, is poorly motivated and has "no consequence good or bad." Even the
irreproachable "fifth act," with its "just and regular catastrophe" does not deter him from denouncing the drama as "the tragedy which ignorance has admired, and bigotry applauded." As Ellis Fermor observes, Manoa and Dr. Johnson both err in interpreting "Samson's story in terms of events and not of inner experience." In the professed discussion of the "sentiments" that follows, Johnson does not analyze the spirit and ideas of the drama, but chiefly catalogues breaches of "propriety," supposedly in order to "strengthen the shoots" of Milton's laurels by "lopping their luxuriance"—although the professedly prudent gardener may seem rather to tread on Milton's laurels with his clouted shoon.

To Cumberland this "lopping" seemed a dangerous precedent, since it might make future critics fear to be thought ignorant or bigoted if they simply admired the laurels instead. Having no objection to a drama composed in the manner of the Greeks, Cumberland proceeds to judge more or less according to Aristotle and the example of Greek tragedy. The only exception is his dislike of the dialogue part of the chorus, a chilling convention which might have been omitted, he thinks; but his main objection to Milton's use of the chorus is that it is not sufficiently modeled on the Greek stanza pattern and lyric style. More important is Cumberland's answer to Johnson's failure to perceive the middle of the tragedy. Treating as an "incident" whatever helps to strengthen Samson's spirit, determine his will, or fore-shadow the catastrophe, he finds many "incidents" and a
skilled use of prophecy -- the essential concept and verdict in all subsequent answers to Johnson. Yet Cumberland only partly develops his idea. For instance, he justifies Dalila's presence by saying that she increases the interest in Samson, and that as the original cause of Samson's distress, she is logically brought before the audience; but he does not relate her visit to the character of Samson or the catastrophe. He explains Harapha's antagonistic departure after his visit to Samson as the cause of the Philistine lords' displeasure and consequent summons to Samson to appear at Dagon's temple; and he concludes that a sufficient number of incidents "conduce to the catastrophe ... but for which it could not have come to pass." Furthermore Cumberland makes another telling point about Johnson's use of Aristotle: that one rule from the Poetics (into which Johnson read some of his own critical assumptions at that) is "too short a measure" for a drama of such great "majesty and terreur." 7

The next major critic (for Masson, who finds that *Samson Agonistes* is essentially classic but faithful to that part of the Hebrew legend that was suitable for artistic treatment, gives no extended, detailed, formal criticism 8) is Jebb. His is the earliest important statement of the Hebraism of *Samson Agonistes*. First he briefly gives Hellenism its due: the play is "classical both in language and structure," except that the irregularity of the choruses, free from the lyric symmetry and restraint of strophe and antistrophe, achieves the sublimity of the Hebrew prophets rather than
"the grandeur proper to tragedy on the Greek model."
Demonstrating five "acts" (not very different from Parker's subsequent and more technical divisions), Jebb sees progress of action in the resolution of Samson's will and purpose: Samson longs to die, refuses the ransom proposed by Manoah, rejects the release offered by Dalila, defies Harapha, and prepares for "some crowning ignominy at the hands of his captors," and yet, when no escape seems possible, he goes to a glorious death. Of Samson's inner victory, Jebb says nothing.

He then explains in what sense he calls Milton Hebraic. He does not use "Hebraic" and "Hellenic" in precisely Arnold's sense, which he explains as energetic action under control of conscience as opposed to flexible intelligence, light, temperate action in obedience to thought. Rather, he points out that Milton believed in God as personal head and King of His people, whom He has chosen as His servants and whom He directly grants special inspiration, and that Milton frequently spoke of the English people in language that suggested the Hebrew Covenant. In the drama, Samson champions the Israelites and Jehovah against the Philistines and their idol. Humiliated through disloyalty to Jehovah, Samson, who has never lost confidence in his God, is permitted at last to vindicate God and His people by a catastrophe "which punishes the weakness, as it closes the penance" of the hero, God's minister. The issue of the drama is that
"Jehovah has prevailed over Dagon; Israel is avenged on Philistia."11

To illustrate the differences between Hellenism and Milton's Hebraism, Jebb takes Herakles as a comparable hero; both he and Samson were strong champions; deliverers of their people; capable (at least in some versions of their stories) of rough humor; thralls through misguided love; and victims, finally, of agonizing death. Yet the Hellenic tragedy depends on "an ideal grandeur of agony" based on "a real grandeur of contrast ... between man and fate -- a superhuman controlling power even greater than the gods," whereas Hebraism contrasts God and His servants with idols and their worshippers. And the emphasis in the Trachiniae is on a great man finally overcome by cruel destiny, whereas the emphasis in Samson Agonistes is on the abasement and final victory of a national champion whose chief concern is to atone for betraying God and Israel.12 Jebb's study thus asserts some essential truths about Milton's Hebraism in order to counteract that earlier critical trend of judging the drama almost entirely by classical standards. Much of what he said is still valid, although parts of it (e.g. excessive emphasis on nationalism) must be modified in the light of the Christian tradition; and it is a mistake to let the humanistic trend in Milton criticism of the twenties and thirties obliterare Jebb's contribution.

Of the critics in the twenties, Tupper does little more than to restate Johnson's criticism against Cumberland,
Masson, and Jebb. Acknowledging that Milton's invented incidents would be justifiable if they pointed toward "the spiritual significance of the tragedy," Tupper shows himself blind toward it in the episodes of Dalila (who was subtle enough, by the way, to deceive Tupper, if not Samson) and Harapha, which he does not deem "the stuff of poetry," but rather "a contest with a woman who will not fight, and another with a miles gloriösus who dares not." Surely none but the most sensation-hungry spectator could want Samson to tear Dalila joint from joint or to expend his divine strength in a prize fight with Harapha. These two spiritual and verbal conflicts are mercifully not translated into physical action, although the conclusion avoids that prolonged suffering that finds no vent in action which Arnold calls painful rather than tragic. Tupper's objection is simply not relevant to a discussion of spiritual significance; but Tupper need not be expected to see beyond Johnson, to whom he owes whatever he does see in Samson Agonistes.

In a more interesting if superficial essay, Baum rates Milton as adequate or better when judged by Aristotle's essential rules. Dalila, he thinks, rouses Samson "by the bitter memories of past failure," and Harapha is the "adequate" means of stirring Samson to action. Baum also observes (without discussing) the irony and foreshadowing that Milton uses in the interview between Samson and Manoa. Since the action is spiritual, the sequence is necessary and the actions relevant. And if each scene follows "after not from" the
one before it, the plot is still, in the words of Baum's rather lefthanded compliment, "not inferior to that of Prometheus Bound." 16

Baum then surprisingly abandons his defense of the drama to pronounce that Samson is too ignoble -- "too flabby-hearted" -- for a truly tragic hero; that man's conflict with the evil within his otherwise noble nature is less poignant than the conflict of man against fate; that whereas conflict with the gods gives rise to pity and terror, conflict against God is mere folly; and that the play is no true tragedy if all is best and if the ending is a "foregone conclusion" rather than a reconciliation of the tragic struggle. Most of these comments show that Baum failed to share imaginatively the great spiritual struggle which he perceived to be the soul of Samson Agonistes. To read Samson's struggles in the play as Samson's conflict with God rather than with himself is to misread them. And to assert, as Baum does, that Milton wrote the tragedy from God's point of view is to overlook the great doubting choruses and the poignance of the hero's suffering. The reader is left with a series of dogmatic pronouncements and a reticent tribute to the "serene and severe dignity" of Samson Agonistes. 17

Even this qualified tribute seemed excessive to Knoultón, whose arguments do not merit serious refutation. He has an "easy solution" for rewriting the drama in order to forge the causal chain properly: he would introduce a
Philistine council at which Manoa pleads for Samson but is frustrated by the complaints first of Dalila and then of Harapha. Useless the forgery indeed if "plot" in the worst sense (not as the soul of the play, for the soul could not survive such tampering) is to be supreme over the now almost absent character of Samson.18

A really significant study is Hanford's "Samson Agonistes and Milton in Old Age," in which Hanford treats the drama as a study of sin and regeneration, compares Samson with Adam and Job, and gives a brief but illuminating discussion of catharsis. Since it will be more valuable to cite Hanford later in Chapters II and IX, no summary is included here.19

Curry provides a good statement of the spiritual logic of the play and offers a useful corrective to the attempt to judge by narrowly Hellenic standards. He begins with the assumptions that "spiritual integrity" is the unity of great drama, that tragedy, a "fusion of the aesthetic with the ethical," uses material that "bears the stamp of good and evil" and relates the problem of human suffering to "some order ... felt to be essentially just and stable."20 He considers the search for causal connections between episodes, fruitless; for Milton has showed how his protagonist achieves regeneration to the point where he will sacrifice his own life to win the spiritual victory over his former weakness. Samson at first illustrates the pathetic discrepancy between what man might be and what, through his
own defeat, he is; but he keeps his faith in God -- "the Puritan God as well as the Jehovah of the Old Testament," a severe God, whose justice is "not less sombre than Greek fate." Having overcome the temptation of Dalila and asserted the might of His God against Harapha, Samson goes to a death that atones for his sin and fulfils God's purpose. Curry finds the outcome an assertion of human dignity since man can thus learn wisdom through suffering. If Greek drama deals with crime and punishment, catastrophe imposed arbitrarily from without by the gods, who are not much concerned with motivation or character, and the conflict is thus external, as Curry states it in an oversimplification, then Samson Agonistes "has no relation with Greek tragedy in either spirit or structure, except for a superficial resemblance in form." This conclusion is somewhat overstated, but one may agree that Milton is more concerned with the problem of man's potential nobility, his freedom, his sin, and his regeneration, than in formally "vindicating the ways of God to man."21

Brewer offers a number of specific parallels to demonstrate Milton's debt to Hellenic plot structure, especially that of Prometheus Bound, but he minimizes the equally striking differences between the two plays. In addition to oversimplifications (he treats Greek tragedy as man's vain struggle against malignant fate) Brewer makes several unsound assumptions (e.g. that Milton "in sympathy with the purpose of Aeschylus" considered Prometheus a heroic villain).
Both Prometheus and Samson, he finds, champion an unfortunate race and suffer in despair until roused to defiance; ultimately each triumphs. Each hero, at first alone, laments what he suffers because of his betrayal of a divine secret in trying to achieve philanthropic ends by the wrong method -- surely an overstrained parallel at the expense of character. Each refuses intercession (from Oceanus, from Manoa). Each chorus moralizes on the ephemeral nature of man. The appearance of a woman changes the attitude of each hero (the difference in the women causes Brewer no uneasiness, apparently). The interview of Prometheus with Hermes and the dialogues between Samson and Harapha and Samson and the Public Officer leave each hero defiant in spite of warnings. At last, each departs from his static position to complete "his part in general destruction." Brewer finds similar but fewer parallels between Samson Agonistes and Oedipus at Colonus. If his parallels seem external, superficial, and sometimes farfetched, it should be noted that he does not pretend to see similarities deeper than in structure and a few outward circumstances.

Clark again stresses the Hebraism of Samson Agonistes and defends the character of the hero, not just Milton's hero, but the Biblical Samson, whom he kindly views as "no lustful lover and foolish riddler," (since even the riddle was prophetic) but the Nazarite (faithful except for brief prodigality), superman, lover, "avenger, deliverer, judge, ... vindicator of Jehovah." Yet he has to admit that Milton could not use all the traditional material, including Samson's sportiveness, self-centered vanity, lies, and
cunning. What Milton adds, he thinks, is "humility and comeliness," intellect, severe self-blame, skill in argument, friendship, true love, delight in nature — "gifts and graces" many of which are "peculiarly Miltonic." More important, he finds that Milton has added religious repentance, genuine despair, larger faith and hope, and submission, finally, to God's command. Although Clark seems to feel that Milton added all these traits independently of any tradition, he says in effect that Milton has spiritualized as well as "beautified and humanized" a hero basically Hebraic but also "conspicuously modern, Christian, and Miltonic."  

To Tillyard, the drama is grimly depressing. Like Hanford, he feels that the consolation at the end does not entirely mitigate the strong sense of tragedy, but Tillyard goes beyond Hanford in his emphasis on the tragic waste and Samson's "tedious butcheries." This grimness (or "settled ferocity") he finds more austere than Milton's Greek models because it is not offset by the romantic and lyric strain of Aeschylus or the subtlety of Sophocles. Although Tillyard also regards the play as a drama of temptation, an affirmation of somewhat Stoic Christian faith, and a political manifesto (he reads into it Milton's belief in "the right of the individual to rebel" — a rather dangerously unqualified statement), his most valuable contribution is his application of the Aristotelian principle of peripeteia. This reversal occurs not as a mere change of fortune but as an action which turns out to be the opposite
of what was intended. Thus Samson chooses the way of misery but ends in triumph, and the Philistines in calling for sport call in their destroyer. 28

The most complete statement (and in some respects overstatement) of the Hellenism of Samson Agonistes is Parker's Milton's Debt to Greek Tragedy in Samson Agonistes. Parker shows how the structure of the drama is unified, symmetrical, and (according to the practice of the best Greek models) amenable to division into prologue, parados, five episodes and stasima, exodos, and kommos. 29 The method of characterization, he finds, is also Greek rather than Shakespearean—that is, "something between a type and a person"—universalized, but subtly drawn. 30 Parker notes that Milton was careful to explain that his hero is of exalted station, not through birth or fortune, but through divine calling, and hence a worthy tragic hero. Since Samson is very human though idealized, Parker believes that "the technique of his characterization is chiefly Sophoclean," although his inner strife is Euripidean and his singleness of purpose, Aeschylean. 31 Both the subtle and sophistical Dalila and the "Tongue-doubt" Harapha owe something to the rhetoric of Euripides. (Parker convincingly compares Dalila to the Helen of the Troades.) 32 The Chorus is more or less Sophoclean: chiefly a sympathetic witness, less important than the choruses in Aeschylus, less an encumbrance than those of Euripides. 33 Parker cites a number of examples of that tragic irony generally deemed Sophoclean. 34
He then proceeds to compare Samson Agonistes first with Oedipus at Colonus and then with Prometheus Bound in a much sounder analysis than Brewer's: Oedipus and Samson, both old, blind, and weary, yet mysteriously called to a high destiny, bewail present miseries and recount the past to a Chorus; each spurns certain offers from visitors; each is divinely summoned to a noble ending recounted by a messenger. Prometheus and Samson are alike chiefly in their anguish and in their refusal of assistance. In summing up the relative debts, Parker sensibly concludes that the influence of Sophocles is strongest, that of Aeschylus chiefly evident in the simplicity and fervor and the lengthy conversations between Chorus and hero, and that of Euripides restricted to the prologue (a soliloquy as in Euripides) and some parts of the characterization. Parker has wisely avoided tedious and inconclusive verbal parallels, and his assessments are extremely useful so long as he does not attempt to balance the ledger too mathematically -- as when he calls Samson's death Sophoclean because a higher percentage of Sophoclean than Aeschylean or Euripidean protagonists die.

The weakest section of this otherwise useful book is the section on spirit, in which Parker does some injustice to the complexity of both the Greek religion and Milton by calling Samson Agonistes Hellenic in spirit. (Part of the difficulty no doubt arises from Parker's two kinds of "spirit," which, like the two Florimels, wander in and out, to the reader's perplexity.) No one would deny that the drama is sublime, serious, didactic, reflective, and religious as
Parker says it is; but the difference between the Greek religion and Milton's is more important than Parker acknowledges. Undeterred by the absence of the word "fate" in Samson Agonistes, Parker concludes that if the law of God is a divine decree and fate is a divine decree, the two must be equal to each other. Without specifically denying Samson the free will in which Samson believes, Parker insists that in Milton as in the Greek conception, "fate is unalterable," and that God simply uses Samson's free will in order to bring about what He has decreed. This oversimplification is close to Saurat's statement that the Great Architect uses the free wills of men as materials whose interplay He organizes so as to bring about the results He has planned. Such statements diminish man's free will considerably. As Kelley says of Saurat, this is one solution of the dilemma of God's plan and man's will; "It is not, however, the solution of Milton." Milton's solution will be discussed later in Chapter V. Parker and Saurat are partly right, but they blur Milton's distinctions.

Feeling that the tragedy is not overbalanced by religious consolation, Parker goes a step further to proclaim in italics the discovery that "The Chorus nowhere says that God's treatment of Samson as an individual is just!" "All is best" only for man in general and Israel in particular, and God has borne witness to His champion only "gloriously." Not even Samson's acknowledgment of God's justice and his own guilt -- an acknowledgment made, be it noted, even before
the end -- convinces Parker, who prefers to take the word of the Chorus (11.210-213) that Samson was not to blame for being deceived by Dalila. Although Parker wisely minimizes the "misogyny" of the Chorus at one point because the passage has an artistic and dramatic function in context, and says, "The Chorus, let us not forget, is talking to Samson," he seems to forget that it is likewise talking to Samson in the attempt to save him from utter despair when it tells him not to blame himself excessively. If the sense of tragic misery is stronger than the sense of justice and certainly stronger than any sense of God's mercy (and most readers feel that it is), it is nevertheless a solution unworthy of Milton's conception of human reason to insist that Samson has so limited a view that his only means of regeneration is an abject and erroneous assumption of the whole burden of guilt. That such a situation (if it were true) should be compared to that of the Greek hero overcome by Zeus or Fate (Parker equates the two, forgetting that sometimes Zeus is only the President of the Immortals) shows that Parker has carried his evidence of Hellenism too far, although he is right in asserting that the play follows the ancients with a difference, with no sense that Milton is ever false to his own religion or any of his opinions:

There is no reason for believing that his opinions on this point /artistic liberalism/ever changed. When he speaks, therefore, of "following" the ancients ... we must remember that Samson himself"... thus cryed aloud":

Hitherto, Lords, what your commands impos'd
I have perform'd, as reason was, obeying.
But then the temple fell.
One rather peripheral article which treats part of the Hellenic criticism as excessive may be cited -- that of Boughner, who considers Harapha more like such Renaissance milites gloriosi as Braggadocchio than the blusterers of Euripides. Similarities between the Renaissance braggarts and Harapha include boasting, rationalized unwillingness to fight an adversary below the rank of gentleman, and the charge that the opponent uses magic spells; but Boughner exaggerates the similarities and distorts the emphasis; for the Renaissance writers were satirizing punctilious codes of honor as well as cowardice, and they treated the subject usually as farce.\textsuperscript{41} Since farcical comedy and satirical commentary on duelling codes can scarcely be thought comparable to an essentially serious rousing of Samson, who, of course, is bitterly ironic toward Harapha, a mere foil, and through true religious zeal puts to shame false honor and glory, it is erroneous to conclude that Milton has here contradicted his assertion that he includes no "comic stuff."

Another of Milton's declared purposes is disregarded by Una Ellis-Fermor,\textsuperscript{42} who believes that a religious tragedy is a contradiction in terms. Since her objections will be discussed elsewhere in Chapter IX, which deals with religion and tragedy, they will not be summed up here. Her refusal to accept \textit{Samson Agonistes} as a tragedy does not prevent her from giving an admirable short summary and commentary on the spiritual movement of the drama and analyzing the prosody as an expression of the emotions of the drama.
Neither of these accounts, as has been explained, falls within the scope of this chapter.

The first attempt to apply to Samson Agonistes in particular the recent trend of reevaluating Milton in the light of the mediaeval and Renaissance Christian tradition is Krouse's Milton's Samson and the Christian Tradition. Tracing the Samson tradition from the time of the Biblical Samson through Milton's day, Krouse offers significant answers to the questions of how and why Milton elevated the folk-hero of Judges and what overtones the drama had for Milton's contemporary audience. Thereby Milton's originality is in no wise lessened -- simply made more comprehensible. The Samson of tradition had already developed away from the sensational champion in the direction of tragedy, and his fall had been viewed as the result not just of Dalila's wiles but of Samson's mentis caecitas or spiritual blindness. The political overtones in the story, the serious treatment of Samson as Israel's deliverer and a divinely inspired warrior, and the conception of him as a saint (which goes back to Paul's inclusion of him among the elect) are likewise traditional.

Precedents exist for treating Dalila as Samson's wife and for her attempted self-justification; and Milton follows many of the commentators in justifying Samson from the charge of suicide. Krouse demonstrates that Agonistes means more than "champion"; it had been used before Milton to signify the spiritual struggle of the Christian. In spite of a lack of tangible evidence that
the hero is treated allegorically as a type of Christ, and not simply and literally as a historical figure whose actions can all be rationally explained, Krouse demonstrates that the old identification of Samson and Christ provides deep spiritual overtones in the drama. 48

Most interesting is Krouse's analysis of the play according to the three types of temptation as defined by seventeenth century theology. Here he draws on Elizabeth Pope's account of the catholic three: concupiscencia carnis: gluttony or the flesh; concupiscencia oculorum: vainglory or the world; and superstia vitae, which may include lust for power; and pride — or avarice, the devil; and of the Protestant substitutions of necessity, fraud, and violence or fear. (Pope shows how Milton, in accord with Protestant tradition, worked out the "triple equation" of Adam and Eve's fall and Christ's rejection of the three temptations in the wilderness, and she shows Paradise Regained to be a companion-piece to Paradise Lost. 49)

Krouse proceeds to an excellent succinct account of the temptations in Samson Agonistes and the conclusion that Milton in demonstrating "victory on the human level" here "brings to full circle the immense story" of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. Manoë, though not a conscious tempter, offers ease (a necessity); but to yield would be to accept human aid and doubt divine aid. Dalila fraudulently tries to persuade Samson to forget his divine calling and yield to weakness common to all humans. Krouse
is most interesting in his convincing interpretation of Harapha, whose "temptation by violence is rather subtle": he tempts Samson to fall back on brute force alone against him, or to fear that God has abandoned him. Harapha is a necessary character as the third instrument of temptation and as the antagonist. His faith tried and "tempered," Samson goes to a catastrophe in God's service that is really a victory.\textsuperscript{50}

As a strong-siding champion of Jebb and Krouse against Parker on the question of spirit in \underline{Samson Agonistes}, Whiting demonstrates that \underline{Samson Agonistes} is Puritan in its emphasis on the individual's need of working out his salvation with fear and trembling. Denying that Samson is Hebrew "only by accident" (the phrase is Parker's), he nevertheless emphasizes nationalism in the drama less than Jebb does. In the light of an impressive number of parallels between Milton's interpretation of the Biblical story and the commentary in the Geneva Bible, Samson emerges as a "hero of Geneva print." According to this interpretation, Samson is a dedicated saint who acts in faith and true zeal and obeys God's promptings even when he marries the woman of Timnath. Although Samson is a morally better than average hero, his punishment is deemed strictly just according to Old Testament and Puritan standards because Samson's sin, committed through lust and blindness, lay in revealing to Dalila (and thereby profaning it) a sacred mystery of God. Finding the in-
sistence on a "prevailing Greek spirit" in the drama false, Whiting regards it as "an expression of Milton's deeply religious nature -- a strikingly individual and imaginative synthesis of Hebrew legend and Christian tradition by a poet who was both a true humanist and a genuine if independent Puritan."\textsuperscript{52} This is the most accurate and sensitive account of the spirit of the drama.

A subsequent defense of the athlete of the Lord and the drama as a whole from Tillyard's charge of Hebraic ferocity occurs in an article by Fell. He discusses the "vengeance" as Whiting does: a spiritual victory for Samson, who achieves religious regeneration. Fell explains how Samson follows the traditional Protestant pattern of atonement through pain, shame, and isolation; realization of his sin; spiritual recovery. Samson ends his life in God's grace, and the Philistines, Fell thinks, receive not the excessively violent vengeance of a jealous God, but their just deserts. Fell proceeds to compare Samson Agonistes with Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral as studies in martyrdom.\textsuperscript{53}

Another discussion of the religious significance is Allen's chapter "The Idea as Pattern," which provides some analysis of Samson's conquest of despair, but which has less insight than the three foregoing. The pattern -- despair and regeneration from it -- Allen emphasizes to the point where he is "not completely convinced" of the validity of studies of the other characters and choruses "as goads to Samson's progress and as hindrances, too,"
nor by Krouse's study of temptation in the drama. A truly harmonious vision of Milton, one might suppose, would be sufficient to comprehend all of these patterns as they are united in the drama. What Allen does is to draw upon a wide reading of theology to relate despair to the other sins to which Krouse thinks that Samson was tempted. Allen shows, for example, how St. Paschasius's relation of accedia and tristitia (whereby the sinner despairs because sloth prompts him to believe that God's commands are impossibly rigorous and that he might as well yield to sloth and lust) explains how Belial happens to be among the rebel angels. Then he shows how prideful courage grounded on despair motivates Satan. Likewise he shows very clearly that Adam and Eve after the Fall consider the only two ways open to them in their despair -- submission to God's will -- the way to regeneration -- and death, suicide, damnation. These materials of a good analysis of Samson Agonistes, however, Allen does not proceed to apply. He simply makes the statement that "the drama includes in its circular scope all of the theological dicta on the genesis and cure of despair."

The rest of the chapter has too many hasty and random generalizations about Samson Agonistes; that "Milton's self-identification with the young judge of Israel" raised Samson's character, for example, and that the pattern may be thought to be "Samson's slow-witted realization of the fact that he is God's man against the Philistine's Dagon."
Such statements as these are an injustice to Milton and his hero, whose reason is magnificently regenerated and strengthened to the recognition of far greater and subtler truths than the simple statement above, and they are a decidedly narrow view of the "circular scope" of the play, whatever that may be.

Comments on the characters and the action are sometimes puzzling. In what sense, for example, is Manoa a "pre-Stoic Stoic"? He seems rather to go from a self-pitying pessimism to a facile and worldly optimism. Allen does admit Krouse's analysis by the back door when he says that "if there is a temptation" in this scene, it would plunge Samson "deeper in the slough of sloth." Next comes Allen's plea for Dalila, whom he pities as "a spurned beauty, a wife rejected," (just as in an earlier chapter he sympathizes more with the spurned Comus than with the chaste Lady) and whom he credits with "her kind" of contrition and remorse -- shallow but genuine. His apology is pushed to extremes when he seeks to argue that we forgive Eve, who "betrayed her husband on the fair say so of a beast of the fields and Eve was the nearest thing to femin-perfection that God ever created," and thus why not forgive Dalila? The self-styled "advocatus Dalilae" makes a plea more than "a little tender" or "a little chivalrous" in view of the fact that Eve's adversary was the adversary of God and man, a creature whose angelic intelligence was tarnished and perverted but still for-
midable, and that Dalila's intelligence, fragile compared with Samson's strengthened reason, is capable in that episode of extremely skilful sophistry.

Next Allen states that the encounter with Harapha enables Samson to overcome his apathy just as the previous encounter has enabled him to overcome his lust -- a true statement as far as it goes. But Allen would also be advocate Haraphae, it seems; for in rejecting Boughner's theory, he offers the curious non sequitur that if we accept Milton's preface as sincere, "as a consequence, we shall want Harapha to be as sincere as his inventor." One might as well demand that Satan be either comic or sincere -- sincerely heroic, that is -- a demand not unheard in Milton criticism, at that! It is surely naive, though, to find Harapha's first speech "that of a genuinely valorous man"; for in spite of the long and honorable tradition of the champion's boast, what can we think of a hero who would challenge or taunt a blind man? Allen wants a miracle: "Before our eyes a brave and knightly man will change into a coward and a blusterer... Lancelot "May Malory forgive him!" becomes Braggadocchio."61 Such an amazing change in character may be good mediaeval theology, but it is difficult to see how it could be good dramaturgy or even preferable to comic relief, if one had to choose.

Finally, it may be noted that Allen finds it possible to speak of the "happy catastrophe" and of a tragedy that
includes "passionate purgation of the chorus, of Manoa, and of Samson," because "Aristotle may have laid down the rules and the poet Milton may have obeyed them, but behind them both was a greater critic and a greater poet who made the rules in eternity and supplied the tragic fabula for his own glory."62 This declaration of faith is Allen's contribution toward a reconciliation of Hebraism and Hellenism in Samson Agonistes.

Two more criticisms stressing the Hellenic aspects of Samson Agonistes will be discussed. Bowra finds no serious departures from the Greek standards for tragedy, and "differences more of degree than kind."63 The tragic flaw, he believes, is simpler in Samson than in Shakespeare's heroes, who are ruined not by their whole nature but by some one quality turned, through the malice of circumstances, to their ruin; Samson's one flaw -- pride -- like that of the Sophoclean heroes is a pre-eminent quality, close to the center of his being.64 The generalization here is dangerous, and so is the oversimplification of Samson's character. Aristotelian "recognition" Bowra finds exemplified in Samson's knowledge, gained through the humility which results from suffering, that he is destined to a high end as God's champion.65 Although he considers the treatment of the hero's character Hellenic (an assumption that needs to be qualified, as a later chapter will seek to establish), Bowra cannot regard Samson Agonistes as a true tragedy for several reasons. One is the harsh
judgment that the flaw of the hero is emphasized so much that we hardly pity him. Next, our fear (if any) is said to be reserved for the Philistines! Finally, the sense of "catastrophe and waste" which Bowra calls the essence of tragic experience (and which most readers have found the source of the tragedy especially in the first part of the drama) is said to be lacking. Nevertheless, Bowra does not doubt that "All is best" or that Samson Agonistes is great, for it expresses what Milton had to say -- a statement that echoes some of the older emphasis on the drama as a great expression of personal, but not universal, tragedy and recovery. 66

Grenander returns to the use of Aristotle's Poetics to refute Dr. Johnson's complaint about the lack of a middle in Samson Agonistes. First he works out the play in terms of four sets of relationships: Dagon and the Philistines, Samson and the Philistines, Samson and God, and God and Dagon -- although he agrees with Hughes that it is primarily a contest between God and Dagon. This analysis distorts the emphasis of Samson Agonistes even though it is possible to see these four sets of relationships. For the relation of Dagon to his worshippers is reflected only in the attendant circumstances that enable Samson to achieve his great delivery of his people from the Philistines, and even that great catastrophic act is less important than the spiritual victory whereby Samson is restored to God's favor -- a process in which the Philistines figure
as unwitting instruments. Dagon as the symbol of the vices of his worshippers serves chiefly to define the negative moral standard of the drama, and is unimportant except when Samson conceives of his sin as dishonor to God and honor to Dagon. If one is to consider all the possible "planes" or sets of relationships, the relation of Samson to the other Hebrews, and of the Hebrews to the Philistines should be added. The essential relationship (the subject of most of Samson's speeches and much of the commentary) is Samson's relationship to God.

Grenander then differentiates "action" and "plot" so as to claim a beginning, middle, and end for the action: Samson's prosperity, his downfall, and his recovery.67 Ingenious as this theory is, it may be questioned whether Aristotle did not expect the work of art, the drama (and its plot or soul) to have a beginning, middle, and end, even though he did think that the scope of the subject was important. Grenander also defends the episodes of the drama inasmuch as they develop the hero spiritually and strengthen his character. He agrees with Ellis-Fermor in refusing to regard Samson's death as the tragic incident of the play (which would be the betrayal of the secret, according to his analysis) and in calling the death release, physical but not spiritual suffering. Whereas for Ellis-Fermor, there was no real tragedy, for Grenander the drama moves from tragedy to release.68 Discussion of the drama as tragedy and the attempted answer to this
minimization of the tragic ending will be reserved for Chapter IX.

It is evident that much criticism has established that the spiritual action of Samson Agonistes has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and that the drama exhibits Aristotelian "reversal" and even "recognition." Other analogies between Samson Agonistes and the Greek drama are discussed in Parker's book, which is a much more useful account of the structure than of the spirit of the drama. The Hebraic spirit (in a modified version of Jebb's interpretation) receives excellent analysis by Krouse and Whiting in addition to some valuable suggestions on the part of Curry, Ellis-Fermor, Fell, and Bush (whose short account of Samson Agonistes was not summarized here\(^69\)). Yet except for brief if extremely worthwhile suggestions (such as Hanford's, for example), no extended attempt has been made to study the reconciliation of Hebraism and Hellenism in Samson Agonistes.
CHAPTER II
THE HEBRAIC SPIRIT OF SAMSON, JOB, AND THE PSALMIST

But patience is more oft the exercise
Of Saints ... \(\text{S.A.}, 1287-1288\)

Although few critics would urge too far the parallel between Aeschylus, who built the "small myths and ridiculous diction" into "lofty towers of words and an ordered universe of thought," and Milton, who made a mature tragic hero of the only intermittently glorified folk hero of Judges, most critics have been aware of the originality of Milton in elevating the Biblical Samson to tragic status. It will not be necessary to elaborate here the comparisons and contrasts between Milton's Samson and the Samson of Judges because Parker and Clark have already discussed the subject adequately,\(^1\) and Krouse has further demonstrated comparisons between Milton's Samson and the Biblical Samson as interpreted in the Christian tradition.\(^2\) Milton's relation to the emphasis in the Geneva Bible on Samson's being called as one of the elect of God and on God's justice toward Samson is clearly brought out in Whiting's article.\(^3\)

Of the relation of Samson to the Samson of Judges it will be sufficient to say here that Milton uses only the material worthy of the high seriousness of tragedy or necessary to clarify that part of the hero's past life that has a definite bearing on the situation of Samson from the beginning of the drama through the catastrophe.
Milton thus is selective and concentrated in the manner of the Greek dramatists. He alludes to the angelic prophecy of Samson's birth and the consecration of Samson as a Nazarite, to Samson's unhappy marriage to the woman of Timnath, and to the riddle, but very briefly. He mentions the episode of the lion: whereas the Biblical account is "...behold, a young lion roared against him ... and he rent him as he would have rent a kid," Milton improves the comparison:

Who tore the Lion, as the Lion tears the kid. (S.A., 128)

He refers briefly to the Israelites' surrender of Samson to the Philistines, the slaughter at Hamath-lechi, the miracle of the spring of water that quenched Samson's thirst, and the carrying away of the gates of Gaza, but not to the harlot of Gaza nor to the bizarre episode of the foxes and the firebrands.

Of Dalila (Samson's wife, according to the tradition but not the Bible) Milton's Samson says, "Thrice I deluded her," but does not mention either the quaint answers that the Biblical Samson first gave or the evidence, so obvious in Judges, of Dalila's intended treachery. Milton uses the account of Samson's captivity and death as given in Judges but adds the visits that prepare Samson for his death. Milton uses the details of "fetters of brass" ("brazen fetters") and the Philistines' blindness "when their hearts were merry" ("While their hearts were jocund and sublime ...") for the heart of fools is indeed in the
house of mirth here. He omits the revenge motive and the prayer, "Let me die with the Philistines," but adds the rich spiritual implications of martyrdom.

Part of the elevation and the pathos of Milton's Samson may well have been derived from the Book of Job and the Psalms. This chapter will discuss the relation of Milton's Samson first to Job and then to the Psalmist. Although Krouse wisely warns that to seize upon the Book of Job or any other "principal source" for Samson Agonistes is "as pointless as trying to find the very grain of sand which held Blake's world," it is still desirable to explore the Book of Job and the Psalms as part of the rich tradition behind Samson Agonistes. For Milton and his audience, Job and Samson were almost inevitably associated. Among the modern readers whose appreciation of Samson Agonistes has been enhanced by memories of Job, only Hanford has done more than name Job with honor, and even this honor is briefly bestowed. Stating that the characteristics common to the Book of Job and Samson Agonistes include mistaken comfort that sharpens agony, a protagonist passionately steadfast in his convictions about his experience, and God's approval of this steadfastness, Hanford intimates that there are verbal parallels but leaves the subject on a conditional note: "If Milton is indebted to Job for the most essential elements in Samson's character ..."
Before discussing that wise "if" further, we can notice some of the evidence of Milton's interest in the Book of Job as a work of art and as a valuable theodicy. Since Job was tempted by Satan, he might logically be associated with Christ, just as for other reasons he might be associated with Adam or Samson. The Christ of Paradise Regained praises Socrates and Job together as sufferers for the sake of truth and asks,

Who names not now with honour patient Job? (III, 95)

The Satan of the same poem is permitted to speak truthfully about the time when God, as he says,

Gave up into my hands Uzzean Job
To prove him, and illustrate his high
worth.

(I, 369-370)

Christ also refers to Job's fame in heaven as an example of true glory. In Paradise Lost Adam's likeness to Job is evident in the bitter soliloquy in which Adam curses his creation and longs for death.

In his prose writings Milton alludes many times to Job and his comforters. In the Christian Doctrine he cites Job frequently as an illustration of virtue. For the opposite of virtue in a wife, Milton cites Job's wife, who counseled Job to curse God, whereas wives should be discreet, chaste, good, and obedient, "that the word of God be not blasphemed."

For pretended friendship, he cites Job's comforters. Job himself exemplifies integrity and a good conscience; proper sense of his own dignity, because when he was restored he did not
disdain his friends' congratulatory offerings; true fortitude; and preeminent patience. He avoided the opposites of true patience -- hypocritical patience and "Stoical apathy; for sensibility to pain, and even lamentations, are not inconsistent with true patience; as may be seen in Job and the other saints" under the pressure of affliction. Even "Let the day perish wherein I was born" is a pardonable example of impatience, to which even saints are liable, and it is pardonable because Job did not charge God foolishly and because he avoided despair of God's mercy: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."

In a very important passage, Milton seeks to justify Job's temptation:

A good temptation is that whereby God tempts even the righteous for the purpose of proving them, not as though he were ignorant of the disposition of their hearts, but for the purpose of exercising or manifesting their faith or patience, as in the case of Abraham and Job.

In addition to valuing the Book of Job for its theme, Milton considered it a distinguished work of art, as he indicates in The Reason of Church Government: "The two poems of Homer, and those other two of Virgil and Tasso, are a diffuse, and the book of Job a brief model" of the epic. Although Milton there associates Hebraic and Hellenic authors of epics in a seemingly democratic and companionable manner, he did not confuse the two. It will not do to attempt a facile reconciliation of them by calling the Book of Job a kind of modified Greek
tragedy -- much less, to assert as Kallen does that it was influenced by Euripides.\textsuperscript{14} The Book of Job consists of a prologue and epilogue, written in the manner of a patriarchal folktale, and in the middle, a unified poem similar to the "wisdom literature" such as the less unified Proverbs or Ecclesiastes.\textsuperscript{15} It is now conjectured to belong to the sixth century before Christ.\textsuperscript{16} Although much of the book may be termed dialogue, and although it contains a series of visits and an "epiphany" of God, it obviously differs from Greek tragedy and, for that matter, from true dialogue form: Job's "conversion" is almost instantaneous and does not result from a real progression of thought and action; Job and his friends debate in long formal poetic discourses spoken in turn, not in closely linked progressive question-and-answer dialectics; and the God who speaks from the whirlwind is no \textit{deus ex machina}. Thus Milton, who would have declared that if any borrowing occurred, it was the Greek who had borrowed from the Hebrew, was perhaps more nearly accurate in calling the Book of Job an epic than the scholars who have regarded it as a drama.

Nevertheless it may be admitted that the Book of Job has some apparent affinities with Greek drama: a hero who suffers greatly and protests in lyric speech against injustice, for example, in somewhat similar manner to Prometheus. For this reason, as well as for the similarities between the characters of Samson and Job, Milton
may have found the Book of Job a suitable model for parts of his *Samson Agonistes*. For he chose the Hellenic structure as the best means of presenting the spiritual truth of the Hebraic-Christian tradition because he was aware of analogies in style and spirit between Hebraic and Hellenic poetry. In style, however, he is closer to Greek poetry than to the luxuriant, concrete, much-paralleled Hebrew poetry of the Book of Job, although he echoes an occasional phrase from Job, as was always his manner of quoting the Bible.

In drawing upon the likenesses between Samson and Job, Milton avoided carrying the parallel too far or even exhausting all the valid likenesses that might be perceived. Obviously, he was aware of the essential difference between the two: Job, who unceasingly protests that he is innocent, is acknowledged righteous in the sight of the Lord after he has humbled himself in the dust before Him, whereas Samson, having sinned, repents and is restored to God's grace only after punishments which he himself comes to regard as just. It may be added that Milton's exemplification of God's justice does not contradict but philosophically surpasses the words of the cosmic power and personal deity who appears in a whirlwind to Job.

One general likeness of Samson to Job might be seen in their Christ-like qualities. Patristic commentary, most notably that of Gregory, read Job as a prefiguration of Christ. This commentary was familiar to Milton, whose
frequent use of the Fathers to support his arguments and even more frequent refutations of them when he disagreed show to what extent he knew them. Likewise, Krouse demonstrates, the Samson of patristic and mediaeval tradition also prefigures Christ, and Milton's Samson has enough overtones of Christ for his fit audience to be well able to perceive them. Mention has already been made of the similarity that Milton saw between Job, the patient man overcoming temptation, and Christ in the wilderness. Since Milton considerably modifies patristic allegorization, and since he would not have sought to apply outside mathematics the axiom that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other, perhaps it will be best not to go beyond the statement that Milton, like the Genevan commentary, treats both Samson and Job as upright men approved as saints of God.

God's approval of both Samson and Job, however, comes only after their abject misery. Both Milton and the poet of Job well knew how to evoke pity for the hero's crowning sorrow, the contrast of his former glory with his present wretchedness. Both Samson and Job suffer degradation and scorn: Job declares of his scorners,

They were the children of fools and now I am their by-word.

Samson asks,

Am I not sung and proverbd for a Fool
In every street...?

(S.A., 203-204)
Using the traditional image of vulgarity, Job says that the worm has become sister and mother to him; and so is Samson

Inferior to the vilest now become
Of man or worm. \(\text{S.A.}, 73-74\)

The pathos of Job could scarcely be surpassed:

Let the day perish wherein I was born...
Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark:
let it look for light, but have none; neither
let it see the dawning of the day... \(\text{III,iv,ix}\)

Oh that I were as in months past, as in the
days when God preserved me.
When his candle shined upon my head, and when
by his light I walked through darkness;
As I was in the days of my youth, when the
secret of God was upon my tabernacle. \(\text{XXIX,ii-iv}\)

Terrors are turned upon me; they pursue my
soul as the wind...
He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become
like dust and ashes.
I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me:
I stand up, and thou regardest me not.\(\text{XXX,xv,xix-xv}\)

Yet with Samson, the suffering and the alienation from
God are more tragic in the light of Samson's self-knowledge
and repentance.

Just as Job longs for the days "when my glory was
fresh upon me," and laments, "He hath stripped me of my
crown of glory," Samson mourns for

My Vessel trusted to me from above,
Gloriously rigg'd... \(\text{S.A.}, 199-200\)

What begins as a lament for the lost glory of strength
and achievement:

0 glorious strength
Put to the labour of a Beast, debas't
Lower then bondslave! \(\text{S.A.}, 36-38\)
becomes a recognition that the false sense of glory in being "Proudly secure, yet liable to fall," great in exploits "like a petty god," has led Samson to forget the true glory of a singlehearted dedication to God's service. In his longing for death, Samson believes his "race of glory run, and race of shame."

The contrast between Samson and Job, apart from Job's innocence, is evident in their conceptions of God. Job conceives of Him in highly personal and anthropomorphic terms; always it is His hand that has touched Job. Because of Milton's theory of accommodation, that in the Bible God has revealed Himself in terms that man can comprehend even though He cannot be thought of as absolutely possessing those human attributes, Samson's God is still the personal Hebrew deity; but Milton's account of the relationship of God and man is on a higher plane, and his God does not appear, however sublimely, from a whirlwind. Milton interprets Job's true glory as fame in heaven and Samson's as election to some great work which will show the glory of God -- again a more elevated conception than the Book of Job affords.

At first Samson's greatest misery is physical blindness:

Light the prime work of God to me is extinct,

O dark, dark, dark amid the blaze of noon.
Irrecoverably dark, total Eclipse
Without all hope of day!  (S.A., 70, 80-82)
and his greatest hope, death rather than this living death:

Buried, yet not exempt
By privilege of death and burial
From worst of other evils, pains, and wrongs,
But made hereby obnoxious more
To all the miseries of life,
Life in captivity
Among inhuman foes. (S.A., 103-109)

Although he longs for God's pardon and hopes that he may expiate through suffering, he is resolved to labor on

Till vermin or the druff of servil food
Consume me, and oft-invocated death
Hast'n the welcom end of all my pains. (S.A., 574-576)

Then the sense of the loss of God's favor becomes more bitter than physical wretchedness:

I was his nursling once and choice delight,
His destin'd from the womb,
Promis'd by Heavenly message twice descend-ing. (S.A., 633-635)

Harder to endure than physical suffering and even blindness, which in his shame he accepts as fitting, are the sense of Heaven's desertion and the realization of his own spiritual blindness in bringing dishonor to God.

In their misery both Samson and Job are led to raise many questions. Job begins by asking, "Why died I not from the womb?" and proceeds to generalize from his own experience:

Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul;
Which long for death, but it cometh not...
Why is light given to a man whose way is hid...? (III, xx-xxi, xxiii)
If Job had died from the womb, he would be at rest where

the wicked cease from troubling; and
there the weary be at rest.
There the prisoners rest together; they hear
not the voice of the oppressor.
The small and the great are there; and the
servant is free from his master. (III, xvii-xix)

Samson's questions about life and light are even more
poignant. He asks why the light of eyesight, most precious
and necessary to life, should be confined to the eye, and
not, like the light of the soul, diffused throughout every
part. And he asks, not why he was born, but why he was
given every sign of God's promise and favor, and why his
birth was foretold by an angel, if he was to come to this
end. The description that Job gives of the rest to be found
in death may remind the reader of Samson's fate, especially
if the passage is read in the Geneva version:

The wicked have there ceased from their tyrannie,
and there they that laboured valiantly, are
at rest.
The prisoners rest together, & heare not the
voyce of the oppressour.

These words imply that there is no life hereafter and that
death is simply cessation of miseries, but the commentary
hastens to assure us that Job here "speaketh not as though
it were so, but the infirmities of his flesh caused him
to brast out into this errour of the wicked." Nevertheless
Samson appears to expect what Job expected:

And I shall shortly be with them that rest. (S.A., 598)

This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,
No long petition, speedy death,
The close of all my miseries, and the

balm. (S.A., 649-651)
Part of the meaning of his death is that he is released from misery and Philistine tyranny after his labor -- not only after servile toil at the mill, but after valiant labor as God's champion. The specifically Christian meaning of his death, that Samson as a saint of God dies having attained salvation, although it is part of Milton's theological interpretation of Samson, is largely implied rather than stated.

This way of regarding death leads to the question of despair. For the Christian, final despair of God's mercy is sinful: the sin against the Holy Ghost, and the sin to which the Christian who has already fallen into temptation is most liable. Thus the Giant Despair is the most formidable figure in Pilgrim's Progress. Spenser's Despair likewise is a formidable adversary when he tempts the Redcross Knight to commit suicide, for Spenser well understood the psychology of the good man who has sinned. Somewhat inconsistently urging Redcross both to remember "the Day of Wrath" and to regard death as eternal rest, Despair bids him escape the woes of life, "Feare, sickness, age, losse, labour, sorrow, strife..." and to recognize that

Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre, death after life does greatly please.

So overwhelmed is Redcross with the sense of his own iniquity that he is saved only when Una snatches the knife from his hand and leads him instead to arduous spiritual regeneration at the House of Holiness.
Suicide is implied in the words of Job's wife, "Curse God and die," for deliberately to incur the penalty inflicted on blasphemers would have been virtual suicide. It is the blasphemy rather than the suicide that Job explicitly rejects, although he simply prays for death without considering suicide, and still more he prays that God will answer him. Samson's death, Milton is careful to indicate (S.A., 1584-1589), is not suicide but heroic martyrdom. For part of Samson's temptation is to despair suicidally in the belief that God has forsaken him. That result is not the purpose of Manoa or Dalila, who do not regard their persuasions as temptations. Not even Harapha, whose purpose is to taunt and bully Samson, understands the temptation that he represents. But Samson withstands them with increased understanding and secure faith:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{these evils I deserve and more,} \\
\text{Acknowledge them from God inflicted on me} \\
\text{Justly, yet despair not of his final} \\
\text{pardon.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(S.A., 1168-1170)

Neither has Job but one intentional tempter, the Satan of the Prologue. Job's wife, who induces him to despair, does not deliberately tempt him, but speaks from her own despair. (Likewise Eve, in suggesting suicide in Book X of Paradise Lost, is not tempting Adam.) Nevertheless Gregory equates Job's wife ("most ungallantly," Rand observes) with the temptations of the flesh. And the Geneva Bible abandons the allegorical reading but follows Augustine and other patristic commentators in observing
succinctly, "Satan useth the same instrument against Job, as he did against Adam." That Samson should undergo, and this time reject, yet one more temptation at the hands of Eve's far more sinful daughter, Dalila, makes Samson and Job further akin.

Job's friends are condemned by Gregory as types of the heretics, and they receive scarcely kinder treatment in the Genevan commentary: "Friendes...by thir vehement words, and subtil disputations brought him almost to despair...Under a pretense of consolation...they tormented him...His adversaries have an euill matter but they defende it craftily...Yet their intention is euill; for they labour to bring Job into despare, and so they mainteine an euill cause." The modern Interpreter's Bible (which almost seems a conscious rival of Gregory with its labyrinthine exposition and exegesis, its store of profitable sermons, and its extended citation of other commentary and pious verse) regards the friends not as sophists or tempters, but as well-meaning men who, in their considerably limited insight, express a number of truths and partial truths, but who show more kindness and compassion than the Prodigal Son's Elder Brother, whom they resemble. This point of view seems the most accurate. Yet Job rightly perceives that the people most removed from righteousness are the false advocates for God. The friends cannot rise above a primitive insistence that the sure index of God's pronouncement upon a man's deserts is physical and material
prosperity or adversity. Obstinate in telling Job that he is a sinner because he is afflicted, they persist equally in assuring him that he will prosper if he repents. Although his repentance is different from what they had in mind, Job's material restoration in the epilogue seems to prove that their index is correct, unless the folk-tale ending is taken as simply a symbol of Job's spiritual restoration to God's favor.

Milton's Manoa, unlike Job's comforters, does question God's justice, as Samson himself does not. It is Samson, indeed, who tells Manoa to "appoint not Heavenly disposition." Feeling that God has wrongly overwhelmed his former servant with punishments, Manoa hopes that Samson's repentance will result in a miracle; surely God can

Cause light again within thy eyes to spring, 
Wherewith to serve him better than thou hast; 
His might continues in thee not for naught, 
Nor shall his wondrous gifts be frustrate thus. 

(S.A., 584-585, 588-589)

In this kind of facile optimism, Manoa shows limitations like those of Job's friends. Although he is by no means the crass and selfish materialist, as Dalila is, he cannot get beyond the material and prudential outlook:

Be penitent and for thy fault contrite, 
But act not in thy own affliction, Son, 
Repent the sin, but if the punishment 
Thou canst avoid, self-preservation bids. 

(S.A., 502-505)

Apparently Manoa also believes that God is too prudent to allow His handiwork to be wasted.
That consideration, with different emphasis, is likewise Job's:

Is it good unto thee that thou shouldst oppress, that thou shouldst despise the work of thy hands...? (X,iii)

Adam, persuaded by Eve to sin, argues in a similar way: surely for so slight a trespass God will not destroy His handiwork or allow His purpose to be frustrated. Yet Job's comforters declare, Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? Or is it any gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect? With this orthodox point of view, Milton would not disagree expressly; for he, too, declares that

God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts...

At the same time, Milton shows that God is pleased when man accepts His grace and is righteous, and that He will allow His servants to fulfil His purpose for mankind. The reward of Samson's faith is that he is restored to favor and allowed to end his days in vindicating God against the Philistines' idol. Not God's handiwork, but the Philistines, are frustrated, in their pride:

While thir hearts were jocund and sublime... (S.A.,1669)

just as the wicked in The Book of Job are described:

They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ;
They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. (XXI, xii)

The question of man's faith and God's justice occurs in both the Book of Job and Samson Agonistes, although
differently formulated and differently answered in the two. Job asks one central question: How can God let the righteous suffer and still be just? As a subordinate question, he asks: "What is man, that Thou shouldst magnify him?" Here commentators usually see a reflection of Psalm VIII: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him...And hast crowned him with glory and honor?" with certain differences. Gregory amplifies the passage in the Book of Job according to the Psalm: God created man in His image and crowned him with reason. The Interpreter's Bible takes Job's words as the poet's deliberate and ironic echo of the Psalm to a different purpose: Job is asking what man has done to be worth God's attention; why is man so important as to be submitted daily to such terrible trials?

At last Job receives his answer, though in an unexpected form. God, instead of answering his questions, asks him questions in sublime and terrifying words about His marvelous governance of the universe. Humbled, yet satisfied, Job repents -- not, of course, for the supposed sins that Job's smug comforters thought he must have committed, but for his presumption in seeking to judge the justice of God. Here the Hebraist and the Hellenist are obliged to part company. The Hebraist, accepting the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom, and devoted obedience to Him, crowned by the blessed vision of Him, as the end of wisdom, will be assured that Job has found his answer. The Hellenist, on the other hand, will be equally sure that Job has not truly been answered. In a
strong statement of the Hebraic point of view, *The Interpreter's Bible* finds that Job repents not of "horizontal ethical crimes" or moral crimes, but of the "monstrous vertical sin" of accusing God or setting himself up as judge in His place. He is re-instated when he abandons his "egocentric attitude," his claim of personal righteousness, and appreciates the majesty "and friendliness," the love, sadness, irony, and "half-compassion" expressed in the Creator's personal appearance to Job.\(^{23}\)

At the other extreme, Murray compares the Almighty's permission that Satan try Job to "torturing your favorite dog to see if you can make him bite you," and adds that had Plato and Aristotle heard the voice from the whirlwind, they would still have protested that God's omnipotence does not prove His justice. Although Murray concedes that the conception of a God who is beyond and above human standards "can be defended as a real and profound answer," he does not undertake the defense but adds that Plato and Aristotle would still have thought it simply another shocking refusal to answer the question.\(^{24}\) Bernard Shaw's Black Girl, who denounces Job's God even more forthrightly, and finally "refutes" him even more effectively than Dr. Johnson refuted Berkeley, calls the answer of this "real Nailer" simply a sneer.\(^{25}\) In a considerably less drastic expression of the philosophical inadequacy of the answer, Tsanoff calls it a mystery in the face of something "that Jewish theism could not comprehend." Of the Prologue he
asks, "In view of the Omniscience of God...for whose information are such tragic experiments conducted, and at whose expense?" 26

Milton, as we have seen, believed the trial of Job compatible with God's justice, and he treats Job as the noble exemplar of that patience which is

oft the exercise
Of Saints, the trial of thir fortitude,
Making them each his own deliverer. (S.A., 1287-1289)

Trial is the means for the saints to manifest their virtue. Through noble endurance of suffering, they attain the self-knowledge necessary for virtue. We know from Areopagita that Milton had no use for virtue "unexercis'd & unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortall garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat." 27 Likewise, as a subsequent chapter entitled "Samson's Purification by Trial" will point out, Samson undergoes a series of trials whereby his reason and virtue and faith are strengthened and manifested.

Yet Milton would not oversimplify the problem of evil in the manner of Job's comforters. Even though he found some of their doctrine acceptable, Milton exonerates Job for his impatient questions and condemns the comforters' attitude. Although it is his purpose in Samson Agonistes to illustrate God's justice to man, he never minimizes the poignance of the hero's suffering even when the hero, unlike Job, is admittedly guilty. In contrast to Job's
comforters, he presents a Chorus of sympathetic friends of Samson, limited in their comprehension, but filled with compassion. Far from offering a glib and axiomatic defense of God’s justice in the manner of the comforters or the Elder Brother, the Chorus seeks to exonerate Samson from guilt so that he will not die of despair. In sympathetic bewilderment, it raises questions as heretical (from the Elder Brotherly point of view) as those of Job, for it will not deny reason, only vain reasonings. Indeed, Milton seems to be deliberately differentiating his Chorus at one point from Job’s comforters:

Many are the sayings of the wise
In antient and in modern books enroll’d;
Extolling Patience as the truest fortitude:

Consolatories writ
With studied argument, and much perswasion sought
Lenient of grief and anxious thought,
But with th’afflicted in his pangs thir sound
Little prevails. (S.A., 652-663)

The comforters and Stoics alike in their exhortations to patience are "Harsh, and of dissonant mood from the sufferer’s complaint."

True consolation can come only from God. When God seems to offer none to Samson, the Chorus is led, in its honest search for greater comprehension and stronger faith, to raise questions that are nearer than Samson’s to the questions raised by Job:

God of our Fathers, what is man!
That thou towards him with hand so various,
Or might I say contrarious,
Temperest thy providence through his short course
Not evenly... (S.A., 667-671)
Not just the common rout suffer seemingly unequal fortune,

But such as thou hast solemnly elected,
With gifts and graces eminently adorned
To some great work, thy glory . . . (S.A., 678-680)

And the Chorus proceeds to accuse God more directly because
He not only remits such men "to life obscur'd, which were
a fair dismissal," but degrades them lower than formerly
He had exalted them, in

Unseemly falls in human eie,
so that the conclusion seems inescapable:

Just or unjust, alike seem miserable. (S.A., 703)

Yet not even this passage ends entirely darkly, for
the Chorus prays for Samson:

So deal not with this once thy glorious
Champion,
The Image of thy strength and mighty
minister. (S.A., 705-706)

With the prayer, however, is the old doubt still unresolved,
"How hast thou dealt already?" before the final prayer
that Samson may be granted a peaceful death. Throughout
the rest of the play the solution is worked out. Samson
himself does not question, as the Chorus questions, how
God could let the divine gift be frustrated; for he knows
that he himself profaned it, just as the explanation in
Paradise Lost is that man defaces the image of God through
vice--the answer to Adam's question of why man should not

Retaining still Divine similitude
In part, from such deformities be free,
And for his Makers Image sake exempt? (P.L., XI, 508-511)

It is a much nobler and more humane solution to allow the
friends in all sympathy to question justice and the hero to accept full responsibility than it would have been for Milton to allow his hero (who had not Job's innocence) to cry out against injustice and be smugly rebuked by a didactic Chorus.

Yet the solution to the question of justice, as later chapters will point out, is not so grim, after all, as the pathos of the hero would make it appear, for mercy ultimately unites with justice, and Samson is restored to divine favor although he dies a martyr's death. In this restoration of Samson, Milton transcends the Book of Job. For there, when Job declares that he has uttered "things too wonderful for \(_{Him}\) which \(_{he}\) knew not," and repents, God approves him for his right attitude and rebukes the friends for denying the suffering of the innocent. When Job is given double prosperity, one can still ask whether the six thousand camels and thousand she asses and so on compensated for what Job suffered -- as if there were any way of applying the material measure. Job is content with God's mysterious and majestic appearance and His approval. Samson's suffering leads not only to faith and wisdom but to active service of God, as one of the saints of the Holiest of Holies.

Since Milton has Christ express a decided preference for

\[\text{Sion's songs, to all true tastes excelling,}\
\text{Where God's praise'd aright, and Godlike men,}\
\text{The Holiest of Holies, and his Saints, (P.R.IV, 347-9)}\]

it might be expected that when Milton himself wrote of one of these saints of God, he would be influenced by "Hebrew
Songs and Harps in Babylon." In fact, it has been suggested that Milton's prosody owes much to the Psalms, but their influence on the versification of Samson Agonistes is not extensive. In exploring this possible influence, Kermode suggests that Milton was deliberately imitating some aspects of the Psalms in place of the Greek choruses, but wisely leaving the full study of Milton's debt to Hebrew and Greek poetry to someone versed in both languages, he contents himself with seeking to establish a parallel between the imperfect rhymes of Milton's choruses and those of the Hebrew Psalms. Although even greater prudence than Kermode displayed is necessary in this dissertation, which must depend on translations and secondary sources for the Greek and Hebrew, some analysis of the style of the choruses is given in the following chapter. Kermode's suggestion that Milton's choruses may have been meant as somehow an equivalent to the Psalms is at least possible, although it has to be qualified; that Milton valued them highly as poetry is certain.

It is readily apparent that the correspondence between Samson Agonistes and the Psalms is much more likely to be one of spirit and theme than one of metrics. The Psalms are, to begin with, far less regular than even the most irregular passages in Samson Agonistes. Their most evident poetic characteristic is parallelism. They consist of lines divided into two parts, each of which has two,
three, or four stresses and an irregular number of un-
stressed syllables -- no consistent meter. The second part
or stich may repeat the thought of the first, or provide an
antithesis, or in some manner answer or complete it.29

Simple repetition occurs in Psalm 27:1:

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the strength of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

Antithesis in parallel construction may be illustrated by
Psalm 63:11:

Every one that sweareth by him shall glory,
But the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

An example of the sort of verse that simply completes the
statement or else adds something new to it occurs in
Psalm 51:14:

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, 0 God,
thou God of my salvation: and my tongue
shall sing aloud of thy righteousness,

and in Psalm 122:1:

I was glad when they said unto me, Let us
go into the house of the Lord.

Parallelism may be based on three similar statements, as
in Psalm 146:8:

The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind:
The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down:
The Lord loveth the righteous.

Some, though by no means all, of the Psalms contain
highly irregular divisions which might be regarded as
stanzas. By contrast, Samson Agonistes includes verse
paragraphs of uneven length, usually, but is composed
chiefly in iambic pentameter, as the following chapter will show, with variations in trimeter, tetrameter, and hexameter, and extremely flexible lines. Parallelism is so rare that only one example is really noteworthy:

The sun to me is dark
And silent is the moon:

Verbal parallels between the Dram and the Psalms are also slighter than might be expected. For Milton had a lifelong interest in the Psalms. At the age of fifteen, he wrote metrical paraphrases of Psalms 114 and 136. Later he put into verse Psalms 1 through 8 and Psalms 80 through 88. He included numerous quotations from them in his prose works, particularly in the Christian Doctrine. For Satan's rebellion, he drew extensively upon two major sources: the vision of the War in Heaven in the Revelation, and Psalm 2. In other parts of Paradise Lost the words of the Father and especially the dialogues between the Father and the Son are drawn in great part from the Psalms and echo the King James version of them, e.g.

Thou wilt not leave me in the loathsom grave
His prey, nor suffer my unspotted Soule
For ever with corruption there to dwell. (III, 247-9)

What other language could be sufficiently beautiful and decorous for the Father and the Son? And even apart from the traditional acceptance of the Psalms as the prefiguration of the events in the life of Christ, it was inevitable, since the Tempter misuses a verse from the Psalms in the Biblical account of Christ in the wilderness, that
Milton should make some reference to the Psalms when he composed *Paradise Regained*.

In *Samson Agonistes* there are only three or four obvious parallels with the Psalms. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," (Psalm 53:1) is echoed in

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Unless there be who think not God at all,
If any be, they walk obscure;
For of such Doctrine never was there School,
But in the heart of the Fool,
And no man therein Doctor but himself. (S.A., 295-9)
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Psalm 22: 6-7: "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn..." is recalled in

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Inferiour to the vilest now become
Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me,
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just as Psalm 69: 11-12: "...and I became a proverb to them. They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards" is recalled in "Am I not sung and proverbld for a Fool?". "God of our fathers, what is man..." is very close, as has been demonstrated, to a passage in Job but also has affinities with both Psalm 8:4: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him...for thou hast made him a little lower than the angels..." and even more affinities with Psalm 144:3: "Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him...Man is like to vanity."

Nevertheless, there are many passages in the Psalms that could serve, for several good reasons, as a commentary upon *Samson Agonistes*. The Psalms record the ways of man to God and many of His ways to man, and their many moods
include humility, despair, hope, triumph, thanksgiving, and eagerness for revenge against the enemy. (Some, far more typical of the Old Testament than the New, plead indignantly for revenge not just against personal enemies but against evil doers as enemies of God.) Like the Book of Job and certain passages in Samson Agonistes, many of the Psalms are anguished cries of the soul, or lyric prayers for deliverance uttered by an introspective man. And one of the major themes of the Psalms is the emphatic contrast between the true worship by the Israelites of the one "living God" and the false worship of vain idols.

Another point of likeness between the Psalms and Samson Agonistes lies in the characters of David and Samson. Although the likeness between the two is slight in the Bible, tradition associated them as men especially endowed by God, figures who foreshadowed Christ, and heroes outstanding for physical prowess. Sandys illustrates this point:

A Lion of huge proportion...was encountered and strangled by Hercules...This may be no fable, since the like was performed by Sampson (supposed by some of the same man) and after by little David.31

Little David also distinguished himself by killing Goliath, an episode that Milton evidently had in mind when he wrote of Harapha. The evidence may best be cited from the Geneva Bible, where Harapha appears by name, whereas in the King James Bible he is simply "the giant."
Againe the Philistims had warre with Israel: and David went downe and his servants with him, and they fought against the Philistims, and David fainted.

Then /Ishbi-benob/ which was of the sonnes of Haraphah /According to the gloss, "That is, of the race of Giants, 7(th the head of whose speare weyed three hundredth shakels of brasse)...thought to have slaine David..."

And there was yet another battell in Gob with the Philistims, where Elhanan the sonne of Jaare-oregim, a Bethlehemite slew Goliath the Gittite /According to the gloss, the brother of the Goliath whom David slew/: the staffe of whose speare was like a weavers beame. (II Samuel, 21:15-16,19)

Hence Milton's Harapa obtained his spear, which Samson calls "A weaver's beam," (S.A., 1122). Yet Samson has no fear of Harapha and his "giant brood,"

Though fame divulge him father of five sons,
All of gigantic size, Goliath chief. (S.A., 1248-9)

In the account in II Samuel just cited, David proceeds to compose a psalm, included there as well as later as Psalm 18...a Psalm that has much affinity in spirit with Samson Agonistes. It seems probable that this and other Psalms, the two giants, and the weapon were thus logically associated in Milton's mind. And at least one of the causes of David's penitential mood shows another similarity to Samson: although the act is allegorized away by the Church Fathers and minimized by the Protestants, David lost the Lord's favor for a while because he had committed adultery with Bathsheba.32 Yet David remains a glorious and human character, one who is well worthy to be one of the prototypes, along with Milton himself and the ennobled Samson of tradition, of Milton's mature and noble tragic hero.
Deliverance from the enemy and revenge upon the enemy are usually associated in the Psalms. Yet verses that emphasize revenge may be singled out. One in particular, "He made a pit, and digged it, And is fallen into the ditch which he made," (Psalm 7:15) and still more, the following verse: "His mischief shall return upon his own head, And his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate," (v.16) could certainly serve as a commentary upon the Philistines, who indeed "draw their own ruin" down upon their heads literally when they command Samson to display his strength. The verses from the Psalm illustrate the Hebraic spirit capable of Hellenic treatment, for they illustrate one type of reversal which can be presented with dramatic irony as an acceptable form of poetic justice. Other verses reflecting God's method of punishing sinners show the enemy guilty of something comparable to the Greek hybris but more accurately described as the mood of the sinner whose heart has been hardened:

Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; And make their loins continually to shake... Add iniquity unto their iniquity; And let them not come into thy righteousness. (Psalm 69:23, 27)

The effects of sinful pride upon the enemy are even more vividly described:

Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; Violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: They have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: They speak loftily. (Psalm 73:6-8)
God's abandonment of the sinner is seen in Psalm 81:12:
"So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust..." and the result of God's abandonment, in Psalm 94:23:

And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; Yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off.

Part of the sinner's punishment is further sin.

Milton carefully differentiates "the punishment of hardening the heart" from "the decree of reprobation" in the Christian Doctrine. The first he accepts and substantiates with many Biblical references; the second, he wholly denies. God freely offers His grace to all and punishes only those who reject it. Aware of the analogy between sin and hybris, Milton cites Homer:

They perish self-destroyed
By their own fault.33

In stating that "God's providence finds its exercise, not only in impelling sinners to the commission of sin, in hardening their hearts, and in blinding their understandings," he refers to the verse cited from Psalm 81.34 Thus the Philistines are blinded:

While thir hearts were jocund and sublime,
Drunk with Idolatry, drunk with Wine,
And fat regorg'd of Bulls and Goats,

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Among them he a spirit of phrenzie sent
Who hurt thir minds,
And urg'd them on with mad desire,

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

So fond are mortal men

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Insensate left, or to sense reprobate,
And with blindness internal struck. (S.A., 1669-1686)

The Chorus is both awed and exultant over the downfall of the wicked in this "dearly bought revenge, yet
glorious." For it is revenge, although it is much more—the triumph of God and His righteous servant. The inner spiritual victory is central, and revenge is not even here one of the dominant moods of the drama. In Judges, Samson prays in the temple,

0 Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, 0 God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. (Judges: 16:28)

Milton's Samson utters no such prayer. Those who have found *Samson Agonistes* grim, depressing, marked by "a settled ferocity," might do well to consider how much grimmer Milton might have made it had he wished. For only those who concentrate upon the outward action (which is awe-inspiring and terrible) could find revenge predominant. Manoa is prepared to exult over the enemy before he fully knows what has happened, and afterwards he refers to the action as Samson's revenge. Before that, no emphasis has been put on revenge; no word of revenge has come from Samson, who merely predicts that God will cause dishonor to Dagon, "And with confusion blank his worshippers." Righteous anger, such as the anger of Samson against Harapha, Milton never blamed, although that is not revenge; yet Milton minimizes even that in order to emphasize Samson's genuine repentance, his humility, and his tragic grandeur.

The anguish of the persecuted man, his prayers for deliverance, and his penitence are more in keeping with the spirit of Milton's Samson. Many Psalms of this type could
be cited. Psalm 6 illustrates the physical suffering of remorse:

0 Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure...
0 Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed.
My soul is also sore vexed:
But thou, 0 Lord, how long?
Return, 0 Lord, deliver my soul...
Mine eye is consumed because of grief... (Verses 1-7)

David's fear that God has abandoned him is close to the mood of Samson:

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?...(22:1)

The sense of God's desertion is one of the worst punishments Samson has to endure:

He led me on to mightiest deeds
Above the nerve of mortal arm...
... . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
But now hath cast me off as never known,
And to those cruel enemies,
Whom I by his appointment had provoked,
Left me all helpless... (3.A., 638–644)

The recollection of God's former favor heightens the misery:

But thou art he that took me out of the womb:
Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.

The loss of strength described in the later verses of Psalm 22 seems applicable to Samson, too:

Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help...
I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.
My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. (11-15)

Psalm 31 continues this complaint along with the desolation
of loneliness:

Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed. I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel. For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. (9-13)

Here and in Psalm 32 David acknowledges his own wickedness:

I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord...

(32:5)

On hearing the approach of the Chorus, Samson first supposes that his enemies have come, according to their custom, to insult him, but he also thinks it is true of most people (not the Chorus):

How counterfeit a coin they are who friends Bear in their Superscription... in prosperous days They swarm, but in adverse withdraw their head.

(190-2)

Nor can he forget that Israel, not recognizing her deliverer, weakly surrendered him to the Philistines.

Psalm 38, another penitential psalm, dwells upon the physical miseries that symbolize spiritual alienation from God. Although not all are applicable directly (loss of the light of his eyes meaning lack of luster, not sight) they suggest Samson; or they suggest the human miseries
which he recites.

For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy
hand presseth me sore...
My wounds stink are are corrupt because of my
foolishness...
For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease:
and there is no soundness in my flesh...
My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as
for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone
from me.  (38:2-10)

In stressing mental anguish Samson enumerates physical mis-
fortunes thus:

O that torment should not be confin'd
To the bodies wounds and sores
With maladies innumerable
In heart, head, brest, and reins,
But must secret passage find
To th' inmost mind,

... As on entrails, joints, and limbs.

Thoughts my Tormenters arm'd with deadly stings
Mangle my apprehensive tenderest parts.  
(S.A., 605-624)

And the Chorus likewise laments that man should suffer
violent catastrophe, or

With sickness and disease thou bow'st them down,
Painful diseases and deform'd
In crude old age.  
(S.A., 698-700)

The thirty-ninth psalm is reminiscent of Samson for
other reasons:

I said, I will take heed to my ways that I
sin not with my tongue;
I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while
the wicked is before me.  
(V. I)

Taken out of context, these lines can be applied to precisely
the fault for which Samson rebukes himself.

When thou with rebukes dost correct man for
iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume
away like a moth; surely every man is vanity,  
(11)
corresponds with Manoa’s lament for Samson’s loss of angelic strength:

\[
\text{O ever failing trust} \\
\text{In mortal strength! and oh what not in man} \\
\text{Deceivable and vain!} \quad (S.A., 348-50)
\]

And the concluding verse (13) although not uttered by Samson might have been:

\[
\text{O spare me, that I may recover strength, before} \\
\text{I go hence, and be no more.}
\]

Humility, penitence, and mental anguish characterize many other Psalms. In 51 David laments:

\[
\text{Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight,} \quad (V. 4)
\]

and he prays for restoration. The language (which also suggests P. L. X, 930 ff) bears the repeated stress of emotion, as does S. A., 375-7:

\[
\text{I myself have brought them on,} \\
\text{Sole Author I, sole cause: if aught seem vile,} \\
\text{As vile hath been my folly ....}
\]

Even more despairing is Psalm 88:

\[
\text{O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day} \\
\text{and night before thee.} \\
\text{Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry;} \\
\text{For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.} \\
\text{I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength...} \\
\text{Lord, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?} \quad (1-4, 14)
\]

Psalm 102 begins in a similar mood: (Verses 1, 4, 10, and 11)

\[
\text{Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come} \\
\text{unto thee...} \\
\text{My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread...}
\]
Because of thine indignation and wraith: for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down. My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.

The continuation, however, is full of promise:

So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory... For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death. (15, 19-20)

Again one recalls Samson at the reference to the prisoner, as in Psalm 142:

Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low; deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name... (6-7)

and at the reference to captivity in 143:

For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. (v.3)

Yet the darkness and poignant despair of these Psalms is mitigated by many affirmations of trust in the Lord.

Three examples will suffice: Psalm 37:

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand... For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. (23.4,5)

One recalls the beautiful prayer, possibly anticipated
in the first line:

A little onward lend thy guiding hand
To these dark steps ... (S.A., 1-2)

Go, and the Holy One
Of Israel be thy guide
To what may serve his glory best, & spread his
... name
Great among the Heathen round... (S.A., 1427-30)

The catastrophe is suggested by Psalm 18:

In my distress I called upon the Lord, and
cried unto my God...
Then the earth shook and trembled; the
foundations also of the hills moved and
were shaken, because he was wroth... (18:6-7)

Closest of all to Samson Agonistes is Psalm 7:

O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust:
save me from all them that persecute me,
and deliver me:...
O Lord my God, if I have done this; if there
be iniquity in my hands...
Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it;
yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth,
and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah...
My defence is of God, which saveth the upright
in heart. ... (1, 3, 5, 10)

Samson acknowledges that he has sinned, yet he trusts in
God's mercy:

All these indignities, for such they are
From thine, these evils I deserve and more,
Acknowledge them from God inflicted on me
Justly, yet despair not of his final pardon
Whose ear is ever open; and his eye
Gracious to re-admit the suppliant. (S.A., 1168-73)

His enemies have persecuted him, and he has almost de-
spaired, his "race of glory run, and race of shame," but
by the time Harapha challenges him, he has begun to revive,
and he can assert:

My trust is in the living God. (S.A., 1140)
Yet the parallels illuminate one surprising omission: nowhere in *Samson Agonistes* does Samson pray directly to God. There was certainly no lack of precedent in the Greek dramas for the hero's prayer to the gods; nor can we suppose, even so, that Milton would have been bound by any such lack of precedent. Certainly Milton was not reluctant to compose prayers; for he gave Adam and Eve a most beautiful morning prayer or canticle, somewhat inspired by Psalm 148, and he also composed prayers for himself and for the angels. And his method in such passages was very often to echo the words of the Psalms. The Chorus, to be sure, does speak directly to God. The reason for such an omission must remain, like the song the Sirens sung or the name Achilles took among the women, a matter for conjecture; but it may be that Milton felt that the Psalms and the Book of Job had expressed all that might be said in certain moods, and that to attempt to rival them in poetry, unless the drama or epic absolutely required it, would be presumptuous. It may be, too, that whereas in the epic Milton could achieve a certain aesthetic distance from his subject, he considered the sort of prayers that he might have written for Samson too intimately the words of the soul to God, for formal presentation in the drama.

On the whole, although *Samson Agonistes* transcends and minimizes the revenge which characterizes much of the Old Testament and finds expression in the Psalms, and
although it is formalized and universalized beyond the private and intimate prayers of David, **Samson Agonistes** reflects much of the Hebraic spirit of the Psalms. The descriptions of intense physical suffering, the sense of sin, and the denunciation of profane and idolatrous enemies are common to both. More important, the Psalms may have helped Milton to express the most tragic of Samson's moods, his sense of alienation from God, and the most important source of his regeneration, trust in the living God. Finally, in his treatment of a great tragic hero who sins, undergoes tragic despair, and through faith and moral strength is restored to God's favor, Milton owed something to the mighty David, who sinned but repented and conquered sin, as well as to the great long-suffering Job, who raised important questions of God's justice but manifested faith and patience.
CHAPTER III
THE MODIFIED HELLENISM OF MILTON'S CHORUSES

Escentric, intervolv'd, yet regular
Then most, when most irregular they seem. (P.L.V, 623-4)

Milton explicitly declares that he patterned his choruses "after the Greek manner, not antient only but modern, and still in use among the Italians." ¹ Evidently he was concerned with creating poetry analogous to the Greek but not precisely derivative from it in every respect: he rejected the formal division into strophe, antistrophe, and epode, and he considered the Italians comparable to the Greeks in the effect of their verse, and hence in authority.

Christ's praise of "Sions songs, to all true tastes excelling" in Paradise Regained has led some critics, notably Kermode, to suppose that there could be little or no real Hellenic influence on Milton's choruses in Samson Agonistes, which for the sake of consistency ought to be modelled on the Psalms. Arguing that Milton in his Preface merely made a concession to the classical precedent when he pointed out a parallel to the Greek, Kermode concludes that Milton not only rejected the Greek model but intended his choruses as a parallel to Hebrew poetry. ² In support of his theory, Kermode surveys sixteenth- and seventeenth-century theories of Hebrew poetry; that its best equivalent was English poetry; that the Psalmist and the poet of Job used occasional rhymes
or imperfect rhymes; that the lines of Hebrew poetry were irregular and free in accent. The evidence he offers of Milton's deliberate imitation of the Psalms is Milton's use of imperfectly rhymed lines in passages comparatively rich in rhymes. Both the evidence and the theory Kermode offers modestly; obviously, neither his article nor this dissertation can presume to say much about a subject which must be left for a scholar who knows Greek and Hebrew. Yet approaching the subject through translations and secondary sources, one can still see that affinities with the Psalms would not preclude the Hellenic influence which Milton acknowledges.

Since in abandoning Greek metrics, Milton would not have had to abandon all Greek metrical effects or poetic qualities, this chapter will first briefly survey some of the applicable effects of Greek tragic poetry and then proceed to an analysis of the style and content of Milton's choruses in *Samson Agonistes*.

Greek tragedy uses unrhymed quantitative iambic hexameter, for which, in English translations, accentual unrhymed iambic pentameter is usually felt to be somehow equivalent. (So are the grave trimeters, which Milton sometimes uses.) In the choruses a great variety of meters is used. Transitions are made from the spoken passages to the sung passages through a kind of recitative, often written in marching rhythm, chiefly anapastic. The interchange of lyric and blank verse, even within an episode, marks a change of tone
or mood.4

In his lectures, Sir John Sheppard frequently spoke of Greek poetry as analogous to music. For instance, the choruses and some of the speeches develop this pattern: theme A, theme B, theme A. Headlam likewise compares choric poetry and music. Even the line divisions of the choruses and the feet themselves he considers less important than what in music would be called phrasing, and in verse, units marked by a caesura. Metrical patterns(comparable to musical figures) had definite associations with character, nation, subject, or emotions. Hence a kind of leit-motiv in verse could mark a character, a situation, an idea. The "Handelian" tetrameter is rigorous, energetic, masculine, for instance, and the enhypolion meter was customarily used for the Dioscuri.5 Certain meters might be used for transition, or an extra syllable might provide the link, or two meters with a middle part in common might be made to overlap with a result somewhat like counterpoint.6

In summing up the metrical effects and qualities of the great Greek dramatists, Haigh praises Sophocles for masculine strength, beauty of form, subtlety, and conciseness. Less luxuriant than Aeschylus, Sophocles is occasionally redundant deliberately, richly allusive, skilled in using one word to evoke a whole sequence of ideas, and original in using words in their first literal sense, in changing the structure of well known idioms, and in coining new words or changing words from one part of speech to
another. He uses a highly artificial form with the appearance of naturalness. Euripides is more irregular, closer to the freedom of prose, more spontaneous, and less inclined in his lyrical dialogues to use strophe and antistrophe. Although these last remarks about Euripides may suggest Milton's approach to prose in some passages of his drama, and his occasional colloquialisms (blab, e.g.), most of the comments about Sophocles also suggest Milton, with his use of "capital secret," forswear, and "secular bird," for example.

But perhaps the best witness for the stylistic affinity between Milton and Sophocles is Edith Hamilton, who writes that Milton at times becomes so limpid, simple, clear, direct, that he is classic, and for one who cannot read Greek easily, the surest way to catch a glimpse of that flawless perfection of utterance which is Sophocles, is to read Milton.

Of Manoa's "Come, come, no time for lamentations now," Hamilton writes that it is "hard to believe that Sophocles did not write that." Likewise Bush praises the rugged strength of style that well expresses the spiritual strife in the drama and is "the massive and sinewy dramatic idiom ... the instrument not merely of thought but of thinking." This style, which also has subtlety and counterpoint, he praises because it provides, even with a certain Greek stiffness, a "full yet bare statement of a noble theme." Like Hamilton, Bush declares that it "gives the non-Grecian reader a truer feeling for Greek tragedy than most English
translations of Greek plays." ¹⁰

For Milton's use of the Italian imitation or equivalent of Greek verse, the best authority is Prince, whose perceptive explanations of particular effects will be cited throughout this chapter. Prince demonstrates similarities between Samson Agonistes and the imitation of the Greek in Andreini's L'Adamo, for example, with its monostrophic choruses, intermittent rhyme, and movement from semi-lyric dialogue verse to emphatically lyric. Likewise, he finds, Milton moves from speech to chant. In deliberation and skill in suiting structure to mood, Milton surpasses the Italians, Prince observes, although he had opportunity to learn from them techniques which become in him "disciplined improvisation," or "legal freedom," which is often "ironic captivity." For Prince feels that the choruses "disport themselves" lawfully even though he will not presume to codify the laws.¹¹

Of the other points of comparison between Milton's choruses and those in Greek tragedy, little will be said in this chapter. Parker has analyzed the mathematics of the structure—comparative lengths of choral odes and speeches—and concludes that here "the problem of a specific debt seems insoluble." Of the role of the Chorus, he rightly says that it is chiefly Sophoclean; for it plays a less active part than it usually does in Aeschylus without being reduced to the extent that it is in Euripides where it may even seem an encumbrance at times. Rather, it is a
sympathetic witness and actor, pious if limited in its point of view, and not always—indeed, almost never—the spokesman of the omniscient or Miltonic point of view. It has no real share in the action. Although reference is made in this chapter to the spirit and content of the choral passages, certain aspects of the spirit of the choruses are left for more extended treatment in subsequent chapters.

In the opening choral passage even though formal division is lacking, the development of the themes is as follows: misery, former glory, misery. First, when the Chorus describes Samson's present misery, it speaks quietly, in broken rhythms, with several of the most important lines in solemn trimeter, expressive of tragedy:

As one past hope, abandon'd,
And by himself given over. (S. A., 120-121)

The meter follows the mood and the meaning with such variations as

See how he lies at random, carelessly diffus'd. (S. A., 118)

With even greater freedom, in longer lines, the second theme is vigorously stated, the former glory of Samson:

Or do my eyes misrepresent? Can this be hee,
That Heroic, that Renown'd,
Irresistible Samson? (S. A., 124-126)

The very word irresistible almost defies the meter, and with the greater freedom in line length and meter goes greater elaboration of language: longer and richer words, such as Adamantine, embattled, and forgery, used in its
literal sense; rhymed words, such as proof and alcof, in the midst of assonance—tools, troope; metaphor ("Fled from his Lion ramp"); and allusion ("Like whom the Gentiles feign to bear up Heav’n")—all of these devices, except for the rhyme, reminiscent of the style of Sophocles. The rhymed words at the ends of unequal lines are evidence of Italian influence, and they provide, Prince notes, a kind of link and renewed impetus. 13

Finally, the verse returns to trimeter with variations, in a lament not only for Samson’s present misery but for the fragile and transitory good fortune of man—a universal application of the sort found in Sophocles and other Greek dramatists. With the heightened emotion, the chorus uses more rhymes, ending with a regular pattern that reinforces the Hellenic sense of axiomatic wisdom. The pattern is a b c a b c, and the lines vary in length between pentameter and trimeter:

For him I reckon not in high estate
Whom long descent of birth
Or the sphere of fortune raises;
But thee whose strength, while vertue was her mate
Might have subdu’d the Earth,
Universally crown’d with highest praises. (S.A., 170-176)

The language here and in earlier lines is simple and moving, especially in such lines as

Prison within Prison
Inseparably dark. (S.A., 158-159)

Of the significance of the reference to fortune and
the estate of the hero, something will be said in later chapters. Here it may be noted that the Chorus has served several important functions. It has described Samson as he now appears, it has summed up his nobler former deeds, and it proceeds to interpret his situation and comment upon it. What is more pathetic than a great man whom fortune has cast down? This mediaeval conception of tragedy is not the real interpretation of Samson's fall, which we learn gradually. A clue to something more important than fortune lies in the idea that Samson was great only while virtue was the mate of his strength.

This passage is followed by a dialogue between Samson and the Chorus, chiefly in iambic pentameter, in which the Chorus offers sympathy. Moderately it urges Samson not to blame either "divine disposal" of his gifts, or himself excessively—advice given in much the spirit of the sympathetic, moderate, by no means omniscient Elders of Sophocles. Discreetly, it asks a few leading questions about Samson's marriages. Then it refers to the political situation. It does not blame Samson but ruefully observes,

Yet Israel still serves with all his Sons. (S.A., 240)

Thereupon Samson has the opportunity to describe his former achievements against the Philistines and to comment on liberty, servitude, and his desertion by his country. The Chorus in a stirring short passage then compares Samson with other brave heroes who met with ingratitude. This passage is written chiefly in tetrameter, with a few lines in iambic pentameter which serve to vary the verse
ant to connect it with the iambic pentameter passage
that has gone before. The verse is strong, masculine, and
military in tone. It moves from unrhymed lines or imper-
fectly rhymed lines (bring, kings) to concluding lines
rhymed a a b b. The lines are stirring:

Thir great deliverer contemn'd,
The matchless Gideon in pursuit
Had not his prowess quell'd thir pride
In that sore battel when so many dy'd
Without Reprieve adjudget to death,
For want of well pronouncing Shibboleth. (J.A., 279-289)

After Samson's mention of "Gods propos'd deliverance,"
the Chorus begins the first 

the Chorus begins the first 

the Chorus begins the first 

the Chorus begins the first 

the Chorus begins the first atasimon, the choral ode before
the entrance of Manoa, who is introduced in a few transitional
lines. The choral ode itself is divided into five stanza-
like sections, or verse paragraphs, of seven or eight lines
each, the lines varying from trimeter to tetrameter to pen-
tameter to dimeter, with a fairly heavy concentration of
rhymes in the middle of the atasimon. The theme is God's
imponderable but just ways.

One hesitates to theorize about the pattern here;
but it might be possible to regard the verse as deliberative-
ly so created as to give the effect of pattern, but to
defy analysis according to any arbitrary law of versifi-
cation, just as God acts according to Law, but not ac-
cording to such laws as men are bound by. The short
verse paragraphs may be marked as follows with numbers
to indicate the number of feet in the line: 3 4 5 4 5 4 5;
5 5 4 5 5 4 5; 5 4 3 4 5 3 5; 5 5 3 5 5 5 2; 5 3 5 5 4 4 3 5
(if the introduction of Manoa, which is actually marked by a separate indentation, may be so included). Even though no two groups are identical, all five are felt to be somehow equivalent. The relatively few rhymes, as Prince notes, give the effect of far more rhymes, and enrich the passage out of proportion to their number.¹⁴ Weighty monosyllables that do not rhyme are as effective here as rhyme in maintaining suspense and marking a pause. Sometimes assonance or consonance takes the place of rhyme. The fool-school rhyme, Prince suggests, provides rhetorical emphasis.¹⁵

In the next group the words diminution, involved, resolved, and solution form a rhyme of a b b a and possibly suggest the pat solution which is sought but not found satisfactory for long. The next group, or verse paragraph, which declares that God "can best dispense" with His own laws, has no rhyme at all. Instead of rhyme, there is a kind of suggested rhyme or near-rhyme in prescript, exempt, and even debt and taint, with the emphasis on t and other consonants. It may have been an unintentional effect, but it is extremely appropriate, and since it is a device of Italian prosody, it seems reasonable to suppose that Milton knew about it and intended it. Slight rhyme (free-purity) and assonance (Nazarite, bride) mark the next group; but in the final group of lines, only the possible unintentional use of down and doune could be called rhyme, or rime riche.
The use of down at both the beginning and the end of line 322 is deliberate, even though it has nothing to do with the rhyme scheme, but is rather that skilled and subtle repetition of a word that characterizes such Miltonic lines as "There rest, if any rest can harbor there."

Thus the verse develops the theme: first, God's justice is affirmed; and next the way of the doubter is rejected. In the center is the great assertion that God transcends the laws He made for man; but doubt has possibly entered when the Chorus declares that surely He, who never wanted means, must have chosen the best means of deliverance through Samson's marriage to the "fallacious Bride." The Chorus and the audience, nevertheless, remember well that earlier line, "Yet Israel still serves with all his sons." And at last, as it begins to appear that something might be said even for that unfortunate woman of Timna, the Chorus must faintly trust the larger hope. However faintly, the Chorus does trust, neither doubting God (although it approaches skepticism about His ways) nor achieving final faith at the cost of reason, for in that superb and subtly varied line the Chorus makes an essential distinction:

Down Reason then, at least vain reasonings down.
The pattern is as follows: faith almost too emphatically asserted, with the rhyme evident; the transcending truth about God and law, with a harmony not perceived precisely as rhyme; and diminishing confidence (followed by a transi-
tion), with diminishing rhyme, if any.

The next choral passage is a dialogue with Samson, who has admitted to Manoa that he has no hope left about his ruined life, for he has sacrificed his strength and divine instinct, through pride, in submission to Dalila. At this point the Chorus speaks of his temperance. The dialogue with Samson, in iambic pentameter like the rest of the passage, consists of a six-line passage by the Chorus, a six-line reply by Samson, another five lines by the Chorus, and a longer speech by Samson, almost five lines of which are an answer to the Chorus, the rest being addressed to Manoa. No rhyme or other stylistic device differentiates the chorus from the rest of the passage. The symmetry of the division of lines between Samson and the Chorus is beautiful. It has been objected, however, that the theme is irrelevant.

Desire of wine and all delicious drinks,
Which many a famous warrior overthrows,
Thou couldst repress...,

(S.A., 541-543)

the Chorus reminds him. Samson acknowledges that the Chorus is right:

I drank, from the clear milky juice allaying
Thirst, and refreshed; nor envied them the grape...

(S.A., 550-551)

The Chorus proceeds to contrast the unwise who have recourse to strong drink with the strong champion, whom God commended to drink "only from the liquid brook." But Samson denounces his own intemperance, incomplete
Against another object more enticing. (S. A., 559)
Suppose Milton had omitted lines 541-562 and had
had Samson's answer to Manoa continue from
Shaven, and disarmed among my enemies, (S. A., 540)
to

Now blind, disheartened, sham'd, dishonour'd,
quell'd... (S. A., 563)

what would have been lost? For one thing, respite to
Samson. Just as "The breath of heav'n fresh-blowing,
pure, and sweet" offers him some refreshment at the be-
ginning, and suggests to the audience some hope to alle-
viate the darkness of his misery, so here in one short
speech Samson interrupts his self-blame to recall how
he drank from fountains

Against the eastern ray, translucent, pure
With touch ethereal of Heav'n's fiery rod.
(S. A., 548-549)

The beauty and brightness and implicit promise last only
a moment, for Samson cannot be consoled for long.

For the audience, the stark self-blame of Samson is
mitigated somewhat, although the pathos is if anything
increased. As the Chorus had earlier praised Samson's
former glory, which illuminated more strongly his present
misery, so now it praises his temperance as a Nazarite:
a dedicated man, in contrast to his sin. Lest Samson has
emphasized his sin to the exclusion of his virtue, the
Chorus reminds the audience that here was a very good
man. And it is seeking to remind Samson also of that
fact. Perhaps the Chorus does not wholly comprehend
the significance of what Samson has been saying any more than it fully comprehended the relation of God to law earlier; but it is surely no more limited in this respect than that Sophoclean Chorus that failed to know the terrible truth that was dawning in the mind of Oedipus, and paused to speculate about that hero's possible divine origin. Furthermore, this section gives Samson an opportunity to reveal what suffering has taught him, that temperance must apply to a man's whole being, that virtue must be practiced for a man's entire life.

After Samson's great despairing soliloquy about human misery in general and his own longing for death as the "close of all misery and the balm," the Chorus meditates on the problem of suffering and God's ways to man, especially His ways to Samson. The section composed of lines 652-709 is divided into three long verse paragraphs followed by a short prayer. Then comes a transitional introduction of Dalila. In the main section a few rhymes occur in each paragraph, most of which are recurrences of idea as well as sound: sought-thought, mute-brute, rout-about, various-contrarious, dismissal-omission, high-eye, and possibly a few assonances or consonances (e.g., within, tune). For the most part, Milton's "use of rhyme in these choruses is an enrichment of their music beyond all proportion to the number of words which actually rhyme."16

The meter varies so much that although more of the
lines are in iambic pentameter than in other meters, lines are interspersed in hexameter, tetrameter, trimeter, and even dimeter. This variation causes the rhymed lines usually to be of unequal length—a device also used in other parts of Samson Agonistes, Lycidas, and the Nativity Ode. (It is the effect that Prince calls "a link and renewed impetus" and which he attributes to Italian prosody.) Some lines here exceed pentameter. They may be considered hexameter or iambic pentameter with two extra short syllables trailing after, so that the lines

Extolling Patience as the truest fortitude;
And to the bearing well of all calamities,  
(S.A., 654-655)

combined with the irregularity of the section, seem to echo the irresolution of the Chorus, the faltering of its faith. One might suggest that the even less evidently patterned verse, tempered "not evenly," suggests God's providence, here perceived but dimly by the Chorus.

The three paragraphs are a commentary on Samson's utterances of pain and sense of God's desertion, and on the fragile estate of man. In the first paragraph, the Chorus recognizes the inadequacy of human consolation—especially Stoic counsels of patience—which the sufferer finds "a tune...of dissonant mood from his complaint..." (S.A., 562), just as the Nurse in Medea had found music inadequate to assuage human grief. There is no help

Unless he feel within
Some source of consolation from above;
Secret refreshings, that repair his strength
And fainting spirits uphold.  
(S.A., 664-667)
Here once more is that faint hope of Heaven which lightens
the despair of the darkest passages.

The next paragraph is open protest against God's
ways to man. Samson himself has never so protested; nor
does the Chorus speak for Milton. It presents a limited
and very human point of view— the dark night which many
of the faithful experience temporarily— the mood over
which spiritual victory and consolation must be
achieved.

God of our Fathers, what is man!
That thou towards him with hand so various
Temper thy providence through his short course,
Not evenly. . . .

Not just average fallen men who "Grow up and perish, as
the summer fies," (a mournful reflection on the human lot—
less bitter, however, than "As flies to wanton boys are we
to the gods," ) but God's elect, "With gifts and graces emi-
nently adorn'd," lose all favor in the sight of God.

Not just the loss of favor or even the degradation
is so terrible as the fate of such men as Samson,

Unseemly falls in human see,
Too grievous for the trespass or omission...

When God is said to throw such men "lower than He did
exalt them high," the image of Fortune and her wheel(spe-
cifically mentioned earlier in the play) recalls the medi-
aeval sense of tragedy and suggests blind indifference
to individual human worth. After the catalogue of pain
and suffering comes the despairing conclusion:
Just or unjust, alike seem miserable,
For oft alike, both come to evil end. (S.A., 703-704)

Judging as it does by the consequences to Samson, the Chorus, in the act of praying that he may be better favored, doubts when it thinks how God has dealt with Samson already, although it does not abandon all hope:

Behold him in this state calamitous and turn
His labours, for thou canst, to peaceful end.

This is the answer to the "evil end" described above, an echo of the word with wholly changed significance. And at the word turn, the turn in thought and mood occurs. The development of themes A, B, A does not exactly occur here. The movement is rather from A: despair of consolation other than divine, through B; reflection on God's change of favor toward man, to C: sense of total human misery—followed by prayer. Yet at the center, where one might expect to find hope, lies the ironic foreshadowing of Samson's return to divine favor:

Yet toward these thus dignifi'd, thou oft
Amid thir highth of noon
Changest thy countenance. . . (S.A., 682-684)

for at the "highth of noon" God will. we know, by His divine impulsion, lead Samson to victorious death. Obviously Milton did not write his great choruses by any formula, and yet it cannot be said that there is no pattern.

The short transitional passage that introduces Dalila is by contrast to the despairing choral stasimon, light and charming, especially in its use of the famous ship metaphor. It gives the effect of rhyme without actually
rhyming (unless gay-play, seven short lines apart, may be counted as a rhyme) but rather using assonance and consonance (waving, playing; trim, perfume, seem), and it ends with a strong, emphatic, unrhymed monosyllable:

And now at nearer view, no other certain
Then Dalila thy wife. (S.A., 723-724)

After a brief exchange between Samson and the Chorus on the subject of Dalila—a few lines each in iambic pentameter given to Samson and the Chorus for four speeches—the Chorus consoles Samson with a commentary on the fickleness or inadequacy of woman’s love, and the rightful supremacy of the man. The five-verse paragraphs develop the themes as follows: feminine triviality; ruinous enslavement to woman; man’s rightful authority over woman. The first paragraph is vivacious, somewhat satirical. Its eight lines vary in rhythm: 5 5 5 4 2 5 4, with a rhyme scheme a b b c a b c a, with such animated rhymes as merit-inherit-refer it. Since virtue, valor, or "amplest merit" does not win a woman’s love, what does?

But what it is, hard is to say,
Harder to hit,
(Which way soever men refer it)
Much like thy riddle, Samson, in one day
Or seven, though one should musing sit. (S.A., 1013-1017)

Here, of course, is one of the two oblique references in the play to Samson’s riddle, and the question of woman’s sense of values is posed in the manner of a riddle.

The tone and theme are continued in the next verse paragraph, in which the Timnian bride and Dalila are both
blamed for typical feminine inconstancy. The verse varies thus through the sixteen lines: 5 3 5 3 4 5 5 5 5 5 3
5 4 4 5, and the rhymes or almost-rhymes (non-rhymes being indicated by a blank) are bride, preferr'd, compar'd, bed, disally'd, ----, head, ornament, ----, scant, ----, ----, wrong, mixt, infixt, long. In the concluding four lines of the passage,

... but oftest to affect the wrong?
Or was too much of self-love mixt,
Of constancy no root infixt,
That either they love nothing, or not long. (S. A., 1030-33)

the satiric, animated quality of the first verse paragraph is maintained, the rhyme adding a kind of sharpness; but in the middle part, the treachery of Dalila has demanded and received a more serious treatment: greater concentration of pentameter lines; use of unrhymed or less perfectly rhymed lines; and more serious, mildly richer diction:

Had shorn the fatal harvest of thy head. (S. A., 1024)

The twelve lines that follow are all in iambic pentameter except four, which are in hexameter, trimeter, and tetrameter; and the only rhymes are charma-arms and en-slaved-depraved. The wisest and best men, the Chorus re-assures Samson, have been mistaken in a seemingly modest woman, actually a "thorn intestine" and a "cleaving mischief." Such a woman can draw a man

To folly and shameful deeds, which ruin ends.
What Pilot so expert but needs must wreck
Embarqu'd with such a Stears-mate at the Helm?
(S. A., 1043-1045)

The verse has moved thus from asperity of a somewhat more serious kind than that of the first two verse paragraphs
to a discreet generalized description of what has happened
to Samson. The Chorus echoes Samson's earlier image:

Who, like a foolish Pilot, have shipwrack'd
My Vessel trusted to me from above,
Gloriously rigg'd... (S.A., 198-200)

It is interesting that the Chorus, judging by Dalila's
appearance at first, describes her "...this way sailing
Like a stately ship..." but then comes to recognize her
as the cause of Samson's shipwreck. In a drama austerely
restricted in imagery, these passages stand out; as Shep-
pard observes of the variations on the ship-Satan image
in *Paradise Lost*, "That use of a sustained, repeated image
is Aeschylean." 18

Obviously, the more the Chorus denounces Dalila (and
the rest of her sex, as Samson himself does not denounce
the rest), the more reassurance it can offer Samson. As
Parker puts it, "The more 'misogynistic' it becomes, the
greater is its implied praise of Samson." 19 It may be
added that the generalization(instead of particular,per-
sonal comment) is a form of tact. The Chorus is a kind
of sympathetic witness, a "character" who comments from
limited understanding, and not the voice of the poet,
however much the language may have in common with that of
the divorce pamphlets.

The last two short verse paragraphs offer the solution:
occasionally a good woman, "One vertuous rarely found,"
makes a happy home, for virtue is best; but in general
the best solution is for the man to rule the household.
These two paragraphs have the following pattern:
The first paragraph has no rhyme, unless remove and above may be considered a rhyme, but assonance and consonance occur: finds, combines; smooth, remove, above; and yet the whole paragraph appears rhymed. The second is closely rhymed and conclusive: a b a b a c c. This is the passage that has drawn the greatest criticism for its "misogyny!

Therefore Gods universal Law
Gave to the man despotic power
Over his female in due awe,
Nor from that right to part an hour,
Smile she or lowres;
So shall he least confusion draw
On his whole life, not sway'd
By female usurpation, nor dismay'd.(3.A.,1053-60)

"Female usurpation," lust for power over Samson on Dalila's part, combined with Samson's uxorious yielding, had caused his fall. That is why the right relation of husband and wife is asserted with undue harshness, exaggerated. In this "Law," according to Parker, "Greeks, Hebrews, and seventeenth-century Englishmen could have found nothing unusual"; but it is stated with an emphasis not found in St. Paul and certainly not found in Paradise Lost, in which the hierarchy, the right system of order and degree, demands that Adam and Eve be "Not equal as thir sex not equal seemd," but as the sun is to the moon, or even, with less difference, as God is to man. Adam must be the head of the woman, although she is

worthy well
Thy cherishing, thy honouring, and thy love
Not thy subjection. (P.L.VIII,568-70)
That is a reasonable rule, compatible with freedom—not "despotic power." It may, of course, be argued that tyranny naturally results from the loss of right reason after the Fall. It is also possible that the short lines and profuse rhymes are meant to give the whole paragraph an appearance of too facile a solution—the only way to manage such a woman as Dalila, no doubt, but scarcely the answer to the whole complex problem of human relations.

The next passage is the introduction of Harapha. Several lines of stichomythia occur until Samson says, Be less abstruse, my riddling days are past. (S.A., 1064)

(That is the reason, incidentally, that there is little stichomythia in the tragedy as a whole; Milton felt, usually, that it was unworthy of the theme, as were certain episodes of the hero's earlier days.) The ensuing description of Harapha is in unrhymed iambic pentameter. After his departure, the Chorus, according to its custom, discusses him with Samson.

In the choral passage that follows, Samson's evident renewed vigor (which he has revealed in his answers to Harapha) and his resignation to death (when he is threatened with further affliction) prompt the Chorus to comment in two paragraphs on heroic valor and on patience. These paragraphs are unrhymed, stately, and vigorous; the first is almost entirely in iambic pentameter with a few lines in trimeter for added strength and emphasis ("Puts invincible might," e.g.); the second paragraph is mostly
in iambic pentameter with some lines in trimeter or tetrameter, and the tone is grave, calm, and strong.

The Chorus believes that Samson must experience one of these two alternatives: valor,

> With plain Heroic magnitude of mind
> And celestial vigour arm'd
> . . . . . . . . . .
> With winged expedition
> Swift as the lightning glance he executes
> His errand on the wicked, who surpris'd,
> Lose thir defence distracted and amaz'd,
> (S.A., 1279-1286)

or the patience of the saints, that which makes a man victor over all
That tyranny or fortune can inflict; (S.A., 1290-1)

and it concludes that through his blindness Samson will more likely be one of those "Whom Patience finally must crown." This magnificent passage is followed by a short transition and the introduction of the officer.

The Chorus discusses the officer's message with Samson in unrhymed iambic pentameter (as usual), and after he has resolved to go to the feast of Dagon, the Chorus prays:

> Go, and the Holy One
> Of Israel be thy guide... (S.A., 1427-1428)

This passage is lyric; its pattern is 3 3 6 4 5 5 5 5 3 5 4 5 5, followed by a few iambic pentameter lines introducing Manoah; and it has a few rhymes (field-shield, seed-need) as well as consonance (stand-round) and assonance (thee, seed, seen). The passage is serious and exalted:

> . . . that Spirit...
> Be efficacious in thee now at need.
> For never was from Heaven imparted
> Measure of strength so great to mortal seed. (S.A., 1435-9)
The Chorus is still the limited, sympathetic witness in the prayer as in the passage on heroism or patience, both of which Samson will display; for here the Chorus not only prays that God will guide Samson (as we know that He will) but that the angel of his birth will assist him. But in giving this exalted and right account of the significance of Samson's act--heroic, saintly, and God-guided--it prepares for the consolation, although at first the pain of Samson's death is contrasted with this exalted mood. This is Milton's way of commenting on the inner significance of Samson's act in advance so as to illuminate Samson's mood as he goes to his death--his preparation for the ordeal; and it is effective here as it could not be later, where tragedy overshadows for a time the spiritual victory.

At the news of Samson's death, the Chorus comments on its significance as victory over the Philistines, fulfillment of God's work, and a glorious deed. The inner significance has been foretold and is not mentioned here. In its human and Hebrew character, the Chorus now celebrates the immediate outward triumph, the personal and national victory, although with universal implications and richer allegorical significance than the Chorus can know. First comes Old Testament Hebraic vengeance satisfied (plus the recognition, so necessary to the Christian, that in no sense was Samson's act suicide). One might expect Hebraic style in the verse (something like the
Song of Deborah), but the first paragraph is grave and explicit in meter and diction, with the rhymes adding spirit and force:

O dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious!
Living or dying thou hast fulfill'd
The work for which thou wast foretold
To Israel, and now ly'st victorious
Among thy slain self-kill'd.

... ... ... ... ... ... (S.A., 1660-1664)

The pattern is 5 4 4 5 3 5 6 5 4, rhymed a b c a b c — d d.
The serious emphasis falls on the brief but weighty line (for the Chorus is not blind to that fact): "Among thy slain self-kill'd." The explanation of the necessity for Samson's death requires longer lines, but a shorter, emphatically rhymed line, "Then all thy life had slain before," returns the mood to vengeance. Yet the vengeance has somehow been elevated both by the verse and by the acknowledgment that Samson has fulfilled his true calling.

The next verse paragraph (the first Semi-Chorus) is more elate. The verse is freer in meter, the mood more animated and exultant. The Hebrew Chorus exults, but the mood created is actually that of the Philistines, whose hybris is thus described and evoked. The verse varies from pentameter to dimeter, but most of the eighteen lines are in tetrameter--iambic, with a few more anapests and inverted feet and additional short syllables than usual. It is surprising to discover that there are no rhymes, so strongly is their effect suggested. Rather there is consonance (inviti-reprobate, men-divine); and the pattern
of sound emphasizes long i, possibly, in the context of these lines, to suggest the Philistines' wildness and blindness. (One recalls a brilliant passage of Paradise Lost, Book II, in which a heavy concentration of long i's at the ends of the lines may be seen to underscore Belial's guile and alyness.) Here the words emphatically placed at the ends of lines are sublime, wine, minds, divine, and invite, reinforced by Idol and Idolatry within the lines:

While thir hearts were jocund and sublime,  
Drunk with Idolatry, drunk with Wine,  
And fat regorg'd of Bulls and Goats 
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . (S.A., 1569-71)

The bluntness and harshness of the third line has an effect of contempt, as the pace is slowed down:

Before our living Dread who dwells  
In Silo his bright Sanctuary. (S.A., 1573-1571)

In contrast to the mad Philistines is this quiet and beautiful description of the true God, enhanced by the unobtrusive alliteration, metrical smoothness, and moderate pace of the lines. Plain and vigorous (though not exultant) the verse continues:

Among them he a spirit of phrenzie sent,  
Who hurt thir minds. (S.A., 1575-6)

What follows is clear and universalized, somewhat axiomatic, more Greek than Hebrew in manner:

So fond are mortal men  
Fall'n into wrath divine  
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .  
And with blindness internal struck. (S.A., 1582-1686)

Prince shows how struck, emphatically not rhymed, causes a most effective shock. The inversion emphasizes the key word. Here the blindness of sin, a Hebraic-Christian conception,
is expressed in terms that suggest also the Greek hybris and the avenging spirit--another instance of Milton's suitable adaptation of the Hellenic manner and the Hebraic matter when the spirits of the two are compatible. The second verse paragraph has thus emphasized God's victory as the first emphasized the Hebrew victory. The third verse paragraph, as the third victory, must be Samson's.

In a swift, elated movement, the Chorus describes the rousing of Samson's "fierie vertue." The twenty-one lines are mostly in trimeter and tetrameter with a few lines of pentameter, and they have a number of rhymes: eight-quite; flame-came; lost-emboast-holocaust (the last group being in consonance with most); bird-third; seem'd-tem'd; survives-lives. The pattern is 3 4 4 3 5 4 4 3 5 5 3 4 4 4 4 4 4 5 3 5 4 in meter and a a — — c c — — — — d e f d f d e g g in rhyme. The verse is swift and sure in meter and rhyme and more ornate in diction and imagery than the preceding verse paragraphs. The formality of the "tame villatic fowl" and the dignity of assailant, holocaust, refulgences, emboast, and the rich word secular (literally "of the ages"), as well as the strange Phoenix image, enhance the verse as the subject, the miracle of the divine gift, requires. The language here is set far apart from prose and differentiated from the massive and undecorated lines that characterize the drama as a whole--although here, too, a Greek precedent exists for this kind of metaphor. Samson is compared to
the Phoenix because his "fierie vertue" seemed, like his sight, totally extinguished but was miraculously renewed.

Yet the Phoenix had another meaning which could not escape the Christian reader. From the earliest days of Christianity through the Middle Ages, the Phoenix legend (part of that great fund of unnatural natural history inherited from Pliny and others) was taken as a symbol of resurrection and immortality, specifically the resurrection of Christ. Here Milton uses it to create Christian overtones which must lie beyond the comprehension of the Chorus though not of the audience. By this method, the audience is indirectly invited to remember that Samson is not just the Hebrew champion but the elected saint as well, the type of Christ; and we are also thus reassured not only that Samson is like the Phoenix, whose

fame survives
A secular bird, ages of lives, (S.A.,1706-7)
but that he has inherited immortal fame and glory, saeculum saeculorum.

The final chorus concludes the tragedy calmly and quietly in strong, concise words. To call it a sonnet in rhyme scheme is irrelevant except that the term suggests that this part of the verse, along with much of the rest, shows Italian influence. The firm clear rhymes (the pattern is a b a b c d c d e f g e f g), along with the unaltering verse, suggest finality, reconciliation:

All is best, though we oft doubt,
What th' unsearchable dispose
Of highest wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close. (S.A.,1745-48)
It is unadorned, axiomatic, almost too resigned, were it not for the doubt and the struggle that have gone before, with the irregular measures still remembered.

The trochaic tetrameter here is vigorous and untroubled at last. It marches forward with assurance:

Oft he seems to hide his face,
But unexpectedly returns.  (S.A., 1749-50)

The last line is transitional. Lest the verse become monotonous, it rises to calm concise eloquence in iambic pentameter to speak of the reconciliation and victory:

And to his faithful champion hath in place
Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza mourns
(S.A., 1751-2)

before it returns to tetrameter (iambic, like l. 1750, another modulation or transition) for three lines, of which the third runs over into the next line, in iambic pentameter. After one more iambic pentameter line, the verse ends calmly in iambic tetrameter:

His servants he with new acquist
Of true experience from this great event
With peace and consolation hath dismist,
And calm of mind all passion spent.  (S.A., 1755-8)
CHAPTER IV
MILTON'S CANONS OF TRAGEDY AND USE OF CATHARSIS

"Just measure with a kind of delight..." (Preface to S.A.)

In writing tragedy Milton was not limited to the choice between Greek and Shakespearean. Even apart from the mysteries, there were other musical and dramatic forms, such as those in Italian Renaissance literature, and it is worth mentioning that he considered the Revelation a kind of pastoral drama. Nevertheless, Milton did perceive a sharp contrast between Greek and Shakespearean, or ancient and modern, tragedy -- a contrast well formulated by Coleridge:

The Greeks reared a structure, which, in its parts, and as a whole, filled the mind with the calm and elevated impression of perfect beauty, and symmetrical proportion. The moderns also produced a whole...but it was by blending materials...a multitude of interlaced materials, great and little, magnificent and mean...so promising...that we would not, if we could, exchange it for that repose of mind which dwells on the forms of symmetry in the acquiescent admiration of grace.

Even though Milton admitted the possibility of following nature as well as Aristotle and taking the Italians as well as the Greeks for a model, he was by no means blending a multitude of interlaced materials. Since Milton chose the ancient and rejected the modern, the question that arises is not What is tragedy, or What is the universal idea of tragedy, but What did Milton think tragedy is, and How far did he agree with Aristotle, with what modifications?
One quality that he deemed essential to tragedy was sublimity. This sublimity, along with the even more essential moral purpose, he emphasizes in *Paradise Regained*:

Thence what the lofty grave Tragoedians taught
In Chorus or Lambic, teachers best
Of moral prudence, with delight receiv'd
In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
Of fate, and chance, and change in human life;
High actions, and high passions best describing.
(IV,261-266)

For her sublimity "Gorgeous Tragedy In Scepter'd Hall" is invoked; but even there not the outward pageantry but the inner nobility makes tragedy sublime. Likewise it is the majesty and dignity, the high seriousness, of tragedy that Milton defends in his Preface to *Samson Agonistes*, where he calls tragedy the "gravest" as well as the most morally profitable kind of poetry. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides are the three sublime models, but the sublimity of the Revelation makes it tragedy or the image of tragedy:

The Apocalyps of Saint John is the majestick image of a high and stately Tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn Scenes and Acts with a seven-fold Chorus of halleluja's and harping symphonies.²

What gives tragedy its small esteem is the "Poets error of intermixing Comic stuff with Tragic sadness and gravity; or introducing trivial and vulgar persons."³ By reason of their detraction from the sublimity of tragedy such persons must be excluded, not that Milton was concerned with their outward appearances. As Hamilton observes: "The surface of life is comedy's concern; tragedy is indifferent to it."⁴ Only the inner sordidness of characters precludes
tragedy. Hence Milton does not spare to describe Samson's physical wretchedness any more than Euripides felt that he had to glamorize a beggar—even though Athenian audiences were accustomed to seeing a man all tattered and torn only in a highly symbolical manner.

In excluding comedy and low characters, Milton makes no specific reference to Shakespeare, whom he greatly admired. Even so, he objected to any sort of catering to the groundlings, and he disliked a principle that might be judged artistic error in the light of its consequences; for admitting comedy in a serious or tragid play furnished an excuse for the irrelevant, vulgar characters and superfluous, trivial sub-plots of some plays by Milton's contemporaries, for instance, Davenant's Love and Honour. Such vulgarity was an offense against tone and spirit as much as against any formal precepts of decorum.

In his defense of the sublimity of tragedy, Milton is following Aristotle, or Aristotle re-interpreted and correlated with Horace by Renaissance standards, and he also seems to exemplify the precepts of Longinus, who believed that a truly excellent style results from vigorous ideas, lofty emotion, well-chosen and figurative language, and appropriate form or structure to secure unity. Bombast, cheap ornamentation, anticlimax, ignoble emotions, and puerility (which apparently includes overstrained attempts at originality, the style of what Milton calls "our late fantasticks") Longinus rejects because they detract from the sublime. Such a quest for perfection in art, which was Milton's, Santayana
perceptively describes:

If energy and actuality are all that we care for, chaos is as good as order, and barbarism as good as discipline—better, perhaps, since impulse is not then restrained within any bounds of reason or beauty. But if the powers of the human mind are at any time adequate to the task of digesting experience, clearness and order inevitably supervene.  

Milton chose to express the quest for perfection in the Renaissance terms "verisimilitude" and "decorum"—terms which are difficult to define precisely. Langdon explains their relation to Aristotelian precept as follows: a precise use of the terms would have been possible if critics had been content to restrict "decorum" to characterization and to subsume under it the necessary qualifications for a tragic hero; "verisimilitude," in turn, could have referred to Aristotle's discussion of the probable and the possible. Renaissance critics, though, spoke of "verisimilitude in character," for instance, and otherwise interchanged the terms freely. To Milton, Langdon suggests, "verisimilitude," since he applied it to plot, apparently meant proper construction of probable events in a logical sequence, and not (as in some Renaissance criticism) realism. "Decorum" signified to many Renaissance critics not only avoidance of inconsistency and anachronism, but also proper characterization according to Aristotle's precepts for the tragic hero. It also included the suiting of speech to character, and any type of probability. Milton, who called it elsewhere "the grand master-piece to observe," considered it the composition of speech appropriate to character when he praised Shakespeare's decorum in attributing words of dissembled piety to the tyrant Richard III.
Milton's "using decorum" almost as a synonym for "verisimilitude" when he speaks in the Preface of the "disposition of the fable" shows that he did not restrict it to the meaning explained above. If he kept the unities more strictly than Aristotle advocates, he was not simply observing the rules but employing the artistic concentration and order that he considered appropriate to the theme and purpose of Samson Agonistes. And it is probable that Milton included under the demands of "verisimilitude and decorum" the expression of poetic truth. For what in Horace was "dulce et utile" and in Paradise Regained is called "moral prudence with delight receiv'd," what in its most prosaic and unpalatable formulation was the "rhubarb and sugarcandie" school of writing illustrates the Renaissance principle that aesthetic and ethical effect must be related; for as Lewis said of Sidney's assumption, "The ethical is the aesthetic par excellence,"7 and whoever would write tragedy must concern himself with the ethical implications of the action.

Further discussion of the moral character of Milton's hero and of the religious and ethical purpose of his tragedy is reserved for other chapters. Here an account will be given of Milton's understanding of catharsis, as far as it is possible to consider that doctrine apart from character and ethical purpose. Some overlapping is inevitable. It will also be necessary here to take into account other theories of catharsis that may have influenced Milton, and even some of the theories known to the critics who have sought to explain Milton's understanding of catharsis.
No other statement from Aristotle's *Poetics* has been so sicklied o'er with the pale cast of commentary as his statement about catharsis. After reading numerous solemnly intoned (and often mutually contradictory) explanations of Aristotelian catharsis or tributes to it, one can almost sympathize with Lucas's weary dismissal of it as a piece of special pleading:

Aristotle's insistence on...an insignificant feature of tragedy...without being an adequate account of the moral effect of tragedy, is a far too moral account of its effect...largely because Aristotle is answering Plato, but partly also because Aristotle himself...suffers from the excessive preoccupation of all ancient criticism with morality.  

Yet Lucas also assures us that "the definitely medical metaphor" of purgation, not "purification," is meant, and that tragedy is "simply a means for getting rid of repressions."

Fortunately, the reader need not be troubled excessively by the seeming contradiction; for Lucas will not accept the obligation to clarify: "It is necessary to dogmatise about this, because it is a matter...which cannot be argued in detail here." Instead, Lucas feels free to laugh at the prospect of a man standing in line two and a half hours to see the "Garden of Allah" in order to have a good cry and purge his emotions. And he is likewise free to leave Aristotle and "perhaps Milton" in the grand, isolated, absurd position of actually believing in catharsis.

The qualified addition of Milton (for Lucas adds that the fact that Milton translated Aristotle's doctrine does
not prove it true) justifies further explanation. For Aristotle's concise statement, so cryptic to the modern mind, has borne fruits intriguing in themselves, even if we cannot thereby know the tree. Yet it will be necessary to make use of them if they help to clarify what sort of catharsis was true for Milton in theory and in practice.

In Butcher's translation of Aristotle, tragedy is described as "through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions." According to Cooper's expanded version, "The proper function...is to arouse the emotions of pity and fear in the audience...in such a way as to effect that special purging off and relief (catharsis) of these two emotions which is the characteristic of Tragedy." Cooper adds that pity and fear are two of the many disturbing elements that art relieves. This section of the Poetics is incomplete, of course, without the further comments in a later section on what sort of characters and situations give rise to pity and fear in the spectator; for the arousing and the catharsis of pity and fear are the obverse and reverse of the coin.

In his Preface to Samson Agonistes Milton states that tragedy "as it was antiently composed" was the gravest and most morally profitable type of poetry

therefore said by Aristotle to be of power by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such like passions, that is to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirr'd up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated.

Milton then uses an analogy from medicine, the treatment of
melancholy with "things of melancholic hue and quality," but returns to the philosophic use of tragic poetry in the "gravest Writers, as Cicero." In commenting on this passage Gilbert infers that pity and fear are "imitated by the actors rather than felt by the audience," an inference not warranted by the text, which nowhere denies that the imitation raises the emotions in the audience. Gilbert explains the medical analogy much better when he shows that Milton wanted an adjustment or harmony of the emotions, similar to the proper tempering of bodily humors, and not a Stoic repression of the emotions. We know from other sources that Milton had no use for Stoic apathy, not only because it was often a vain boast or a Stoic indifference to others' misery, but because it was part of a self-centered, rather than God-centered, morality.

That Milton well understood not only medical purgation but also moral purification by catharsis is evident from his statement that tragedy has a moral effect and is therefore said to produce catharsis, and his reference to the use of tragedy by the moral philosophers. His acceptance of the meaning "purification" is also evidenced by his choice of the Latin motto for Samson Agonistes:

\[ \text{Trageadia est imitatio actionis seriae, &c. Per misericordiam & metum perficiens talium affectuum lustrationem.} \]

In her brief summary of Milton's doctrine of catharsis, Langdon warns that Milton found no uniform body of Aristotelian
criticism in the Italian Renaissance authors, but "was forced to choose among their varied and often conflicting interpretations."\(^{14}\) The critics whom Milton considered authorities on poetic theory are included in the following passage in his *Of Education*:

\begin{quote}
I mean...that sublime Art which in Aristotle's Poetics, in Horace, and the Italian Commentaries, Tasso, Mazzoni, and others teaches what the laws are of a true Epic Poem, what of a Dramatic, what of a Lyric, what Decorum is, which is the grand masterpiece to observe.\(^{15}\)
\end{quote}

It has therefore seemed appropriate to survey enough of this Renaissance criticism to give some idea of the background of Milton's Preface.

Giraldi Cinthio states that tragedy "by means of the pitiable and the terrible purges the minds of the hearers from their vices and influences them to adopt good morals."\(^{16}\) Tragedy may either end in sorrow or end happily, but if it ends happily it still does not "therefore desert the terrible and compassionate, for without these there cannot be a good tragedy." The spectators, Cinthio notes, prefer to see those whom they have pitied and for whom they have feared, rescued from misery to happiness. In deference to their taste, Cinthio goes so far as to relegate to the closet plays with unhappy endings if they displease the spectators.\(^{17}\) Happy or unhappy in its ending, tragedy is moral.

Minturno combines the mediaeval concept of Fortune with the doctrine of catharsis: tragedy teaches us that Fortune may cast any mortal down, and it thus fortifies us against evil in our own lives. The spectator, though ideally a Stoic
in life, is "much moved" by the representation of sudden and terrible events.\textsuperscript{18} By feeling pity and fear for the unhappy subjects of tragedy, the spectator is purged of the passions that cause such unhappiness. Presumably Minturno would allow Hercules, Hippolytus, and Oedipus to serve as horrible examples even though they did not deserve their misfortunes. He then uses an analogy from medicine that suggests fighting fire with fire, or Milton's use of "sowr against sowr": "A physician will not have greater capacity to expel with poisonous medicine the fiery poison of an illness..." Moreover, the more horror a man witnesses, the less he is affected by it. And he is further armed with the knowledge --- though Minturno does not suggest that he learned it from tragedy --- that nothing except sin is evil.\textsuperscript{19}

Castelvetro most emphatically states the case for Stoic apathy as the desired effect of tragedy. Tragedy changes the spectator "From fearful to firm and from over-pitying to strict." The spectator's pity and fear, instead of being fervently exercised in a few pitiable situations, are diffused over a wide number of similar (and fictitious) situations. Castelvetro draws the analogy between such a spectator and the soldier who gradually comes to be unaffected by death, but he is just enough to admit that many misfortunes may just as well confirm the weak in their weakness as the strong in their strength. Nevertheless, he returns to his original point and adds the curious argument for Stoicism that we either become more secure in our belief that God will continue
to guard us or come to find misfortune less terrifying even if we conclude that if so many have suffered, we too much suffer. 20

Tasso distinguishes the tragedy from the epic with regard to pity and fear as follows: these emotions must be excited in a tragedy because tragedy deals with characters neither wholly good nor wholly bad who suffer great and unexpected changes of fortune, whereas poetic justice is usually found instead in a heroic poem. There "we take pleasure in the victory of friends and the overthrow of enemies, but for enemies, since they are barbarians and infidels, we should not have the same pity." 21 Later he states the moral purpose of tragedy, "that of frightening us from evil with a punishment." No wonder he considers the epic more beneficial, for it positively incites men to valor by showing them the reward. The epic he finds more delightful also, "For man is not of so fierce and wicked a nature as to put his greatest pleasure in sorrow and in the unhappiness of those who through some human error have fallen into misery." 22 There appears no trace of the Stoic conception of catharsis here, although there is a rather naive trace of the question that has perplexed many subsequent critics: whether our pleasure in tragedy lends support to La Rochefoucauld's acidulous surmise that in the misfortunes of our friends we find something not wholly dis-

pleasing.

Guarini offers a sensible rejoinder to Castelvetro:
How can terrible things purge fear? Habitual scenes of horror
produce, rather, greater fear or else callousness. Callous indifference to death or even the "courage" that comes from seeing many dead bodies is not true ethical courage. Besides, the violence in tragedy occurs off-stage. Moreover, to be purged of pity is to lose humanity. Therefore catharsis must be a purification, cleansing, or perfecting. Here Guarini uses the medical analogy in much the same way Milton does: a physician purges bile not to blot it out but to remove the excess which would "corrupt the symmetry of life." So tragedy, far from removing emotions, moderates or reduces them "to that proper consistency which can contribute to a virtuous habit." Bad fear must be driven out so that only "beneficial fear of infamy and of internal death," that is, fear conducive to virtue, may remain. This beneficial type of fear is not only the desired end but also the agent since it is the kind that tragedy produces, and it acts as a kind of rhubarb. Oedipus illustrates good fear—fear of infamy—to the extent that he undergoes physical misery without complaint. The spectator with true compassion pities the internal more than the external blindness.  

Guarini goes on to say that the imitation of terrible and pitiable actions is not enough to constitute true tragedy, for the admixture of other elements may prevent the catharsis from operating. A tragi-comedy has a different effect from that of a tragedy. And indeed, even though great delight accompanies the great sadness of a tragedy, not everybody
"needs" the catharsis of tragedy. Now that "we have the
precepts of our most holy religion," tragedy has no reason
for being except to furnish delight.24 Thus Guarini effectively
answers Castelvetro and comments on the emotional and moral
effect of tragedy even though he uses the medical analogy.
He shows some good insights but a rather naive conception
of the possible ethical effect of tragedy.

According to Robertelli, tragedy shows men the rightful
occasions for pity and grief and makes misfortune more end-
durable through the consoling evidence that others have
suffered similar misfortunes.25 Maggi treats catharsis as a
liberation through pity and fear of passions similar to these,
and so does Varchi.26 In a recent article, Lane, it may be
noted, argues that in "the purgation of pity and fear," the
genitive is subjective, not objective; that is, purgation
occurs by means of pity and fear.27 Scaliger is so committed
to the moral purpose of tragedy that he upholds poetic justice.
Sperone Speroni denies that Aristotle meant Stoic eradication
of the passions and argues in favor of their regulation in-
stead.28

This chiefly moral interpretation of catharsis, with
some reference to the emotional effect, and some analogies
from medicine, is in keeping with Herrick's account of the
tradition of ancient and mediaeval commentary on tragedy.
Tracing this commentary from the Alexandrian, Byzantine, and
Roman grammarians, who apparently either did not know the
Poetics directly or took no interest in catharsis as mentioned
there, Herrick finds that tragedy was thought to furnish a
warning against wrong-doing. Finding the supposedly mediaeval conception of tragedy as a type of literature that deals with the fall of a great man (usually a king) from prosperity to adversity much the same as the Peripatetic theory, Herrick adds that the theory "satisfied Greek and Roman antiquity" and people who knew the classics and the Poetics, and that it "has also seemed until the nineteenth century to state more concisely than the Poetics" the essence of tragedy. To find, as Spingarn does, a theory not of moral but of emotional effect in Aristotle, Minturno, and Milton, Herrick observes, is to read into all three "Something that did not occur to many minds until several centuries later" -- that is, the nineteenth century.29

For comparison, a few of these nineteenth century theories of emotional effect will be cited. Butcher notes that Weil and Bernays (independently, in 1848 and 1857 respectively) expounded the theory of the pathological effect of tragedy, which becomes a harmless outlet for, and vicarious expression of, certain instincts, followed by relief and quiet. Butcher himself is inclined to see further meaning beyond "the fact of psychology or pathology" -- aesthetic meaning. Through art, emotions with a morbid or potentially morbid element are clarified. Since pity "derives its meaning" from fear, whose basis is "a self-regarding instinct," the "tacit reference to self" differentiates pity from pure compassion. Identifying himself with the tragic hero, the spectator becomes aware of a universal meaning in human
suffering and undergoes a "sympathetic ecstasy." Yet Butcher will not claim any more for Aristotle than that he meant expulsion of the painful aspects of pity and fear. Purification of the emotions, he thinks, may simply be the natural outcome of Aristotle's theory of their relief, and even this purification "is far distant from moral improvement." In fact, Butcher asserts definitely that we may be sure that Aristotle was not thinking of any such remote results, "but of the aesthetic function." Thus the moral effect of tragedy is ruled out.

It is even more emphatically ruled out by Bywater, who decidedly prefers the definition "clearing away" to purification." He cites Aristotle's Politics (8:6, 1341 a 21) for the distinction between ethical music and orgiastic or exciting flute music cathartically used to cure the unduly enthusiastic. Pity and fear when present in a "disquieting degree," he argues, must be removed pleasurably if medicinally by tragedy. For the type of pleasure that it provides, Bywater refers to the Ethics to classify it as a lesser, remedial pleasure, not pleasurable in itself. He even takes into consideration the infrequency of the "dose" of Greek tragedy.

Finally, he restates arguments for the moral purpose of tragedy in order to refute them, for instance, Brandes' suggestion that the emotions are made altruistic, and Lessing's ethical conception of moderate and virtuous passions. When he objects that Lessing seems to confuse "pure" and "moderate,"
it appears that he does not recall that Aristotle associated them in his *Ethics*. Bywater adds that he cannot see how "habitual indulgence of a strong emotion will weaken its force," and that one must not read too much into Aristotle, "as though the theatre were a school, and the tragic poem a teacher, of morality." Disregarding the "cleansing" or "ridding," he would have the aim of tragedy "pleasurable excitement of emotion," for only elsewhere (in the *Politics*) does Aristotle even justify the usefulness of such pleasure for mental health.\(^{32}\) Such a point of view is arbitrarily narrow.

Small wonder, then, that the twentieth century, for the most part even more emphatic than the nineteenth in rejecting the didactic theory of tragedy, should welcome the psychological interpretation and welcome in Aristotelian catharsis what even Murray, following Cornford, rashly hails as "exactly the Freudian theory of repressions and release." Even if there is a similarity between Aristotelian and Freudian catharsis, the "exactly" is an obvious mistake. To push such an identification to absurdity, one must suppose that every man (presumably a potential Freudian Oedipus) would find release in witnessing *Oedipus Rex*, the drama of a hero strikingly free from the "Oedipus complex." No doubt Murray (who gives no evidence anywhere else of sympathy with the everyman-his-own-Oedipus school of thought) would reject any such absurdity. His analogy of small boys satisfying bloodthirsty instincts by playing pirates and his reference to the twentieth-century findings about the therapeutic value of music are by no means
absurd, but they do not go far toward explaining a problem in aesthetics. The use Murray makes of his account of repressions is to explain the primitive instincts from which tragedy began. Very soon he leaves this problem behind to talk about self-sacrifice, the problem of justice that accompanies pity and fear, and the sense that "man himself has here no abiding city." This is the most valuable part of his discussion, for as Lewis reminds us, attempts to find the unchanging human heart, stripped of the accretions of various cultures, generally leave it nakedly de-humanized into "something capable only of medical treatment, not of poetical."34

Of numerous other twentieth-century accounts of catharsis, only a few will be discussed here. Some represent a genuine attempt to re-create through historical understanding what Aristotle meant; others are a conscious departure from Aristotle in search of a universally applicable theory of catharsis. Whether or not the doctrine of the unchangeable human heart is true, and despite the fact that the greatest tragedy is universal, the attempts to make the catharsis of tragedy universally explicable in one set of terms—to find the "universal critical solvent"—are usually disappointing. It is, of course, possible that a modern critic's insight not intended by either Milton or Aristotle may illuminate Aristotle's doctrine or Milton's poetry for the modern reader, for a poet or even a critic may achieve a truth that he himself cannot explain.
An example of the over-universalized explanation is found in Noyes, who consciously amplifies Aristotle. Starting with the constructive function of catharsis, to make the emotions altruistic, he says that great tragedy is not directed at the aesthetic sense alone, and that "with the education of taste there goes hand in hand an unconscious education of the very nature of the man." With this statement, one feels, Aristotle could have agreed. The difficulty occurs when Noyes democratically and beneficently expands his conception of the inner renewal of aesthetic satisfaction and altruistic emotion to include catharsis in "the bloom of the peach," in Fuji in Japan, and (Gad save the mark!) in the Harvard-Yale football game—not in these things directly, but as they are recollected in tranquility. The young man who exclaimed "That's Greek poetry!" about everything he liked was scarcely more exclusive or less precise in the use of a term.

On the other hand, DeWitt, who rejects the pathological and therapeutic interpretations because the cure by medicine or music implies noxious affections in the spectator, suggests instead a not very convincing metaphor from viticulture to explain catharsis, and offers in support some historical instances of the use of "purge" in the sense of "prune" in both English and Greek. He lacks sufficient evidence from Aristotle to be convincing. When he proceeds to suggest that the "pruning of the vine may have furnished a formative conception in the development of Greek ethical theory in general and of the tragedy in particular," he may almost seem to be
confusing the Daughter of the Vine with Reason. Fortunately, he does admit that the worship of Dionysus lends no support to his theory, and he does not seek to substitute *ne quid nimis* for *Io, Iacchos*. He is right in his statement that Aristotle was aiming at encouragement of wholesome reactions and the elimination of unwholesome stimulation and response, and that the drama to Aristotle is a school for emotions.36

Two more philosophical and two more historical accounts of catharsis will be cited. Chaudhury is interested chiefly in the philosophical question of "what human good tragedy can possibly effect" rather than the historical question of Aristotle's meaning. Actually he tries to answer both questions by a rather unlikely method: the application of Indian aesthetics. Some of the results, however, are excellent. Chaudhury distinguishes, for example, between emotions blindly and passively undergone in life, and emotions symbolically felt, clarified, and contemplated in the drama. Drama liberates man from his own emotions, or from involvement in them through necessity or pressure. Catharsis is a balance or harmony, a source of mental freedom and proportion. Aristotle would agree, he points out, because proportion was the ruling idea of Greek medicine, ethics, and aesthetics. Even if Aristotle meant religious purification plus medical purgation, Chaudhury sees no incongruity between Aristotle's account and the view of tragedy which makes it the revelation of the essential idea of some form of human "doing or undergoing,"
intellectual apprehension through an aesthetic experience of emotional exaltation.\textsuperscript{37} Nothing in such a view of tragedy, it may be added, makes it incompatible with Milton's use of tragedy in \textit{Samson Agonistes}.

Cassirer's point of view is very similar. By tragic poetry, the soul acquires a new attitude toward its emotions: "We live through all our passions feeling their full range," but we escape their compulsion. The calm that follows is not static, nor Stoic, but dynamic. The spectator "experiences process," living through (but not enduring) passion, and winning inner freedom. Psychological theories of art that begin with pleasure and pain, Cassirer rejects; for to think that "the great artists ... Dante or Milton wrote their poems for the sake of entertainment, is impossible," nor will he separate the context of a poem and its form. Rather, he believes that art transubstantiates life.\textsuperscript{38}

Both of these accounts provide a comprehensive point of view by which to measure Else's assertion that the "crux of the matter is that poetic catharsis is primarily an artistic rather than a psychological process," which occurs essentially in the tragedy rather than in the spectator's mind." This is an overstatement of the case against the pathological, or (in Else's words) "cathartic" interpretation of catharsis. Nevertheless, Else is right in saying that Aristotle is discussing the objective end of tragedy rather than the subjective point of view of the spectator. The spectator, to be sure, is the "fixed point of reference toward which
the work is aimed." When Else adds, "It is assumed implicitly that...the psychological effect will follow as a matter of course," however, it is open to question that Aristotle has the spectator in mind only implicitly even though he is not very explicit about the catharsis. 39 Greek tragedy contains within itself the justification for its own being, the reason why it so and not otherwise, granted; but Else does not sufficiently make it clear that man -- the ideal, universal spectator, that is -- is the measure of it. It does not follow thereby that any concessions need be made to what Horace calls the sort of people who buy roasted peas and chestnuts at the theater, since they are not patrons of sufficient taste and judgment to give the drama's laws.

Else does take the ideal spectator into account when he explains Aristotle's refutation of Plato. Aristotle and Plato both accept the premise, he observes, that "pity and fear are the characteristic tragic emotions, and that the excitation of them in the theatre is pleasurable to the audience." 40 Since the emotional raw material of the drama is impure, the pleasure that arises from it would also be impure unless, as Aristotle believes, it can be purified. Hence Else re-translates the difficult passage from the Poetics:

Tragedy is...a representation which, working through the medium of pathetic and fearful scenes, accomplishes the purification of such emotional material. 41

Not pity and fear, but the mimesis of pity and fear, can effect the catharsis. Not the spectator but the artistic materials are purified through the art of tragedy, then; but
the spectator's pleasure is also thought to be purified.

The means of purification is the use of artistic proportion or symmetry in the drama. Drawing upon the Philebus and the Gorgias of Plato, Else states the Platonic theory of beauty: beauty resides in the soul; the Cosmos is beautiful through the application of Limit in the form of proportion; and by "measure, truth, and beauty," pleasure can be purified. Thus Aristotle's concern with plot as the soul of tragedy, his discussion of the proper order of events and the proper magnitude, and his insistence that pity and fear must be intrinsic -- that is, produced under appropriate circumstances-- are all part of his answer to Plato. What Aristotle does is to justify, in Plato's own terms, tragedy as a source of pleasure purified through beauty.42 "Tragedy," Else sums it up, "strives to attain a symmetry or due proportion of the passions which are impregnated with the measure and beauty of the drama as a whole."43

So far, Else's statement and his insight into aesthetics from the historical point of view are excellent. What he does not need to do is to deny, as he does, that pity and fear are thereby given moderation, or to assert that "This is not an ethical concept."44 What Else intends is to differentiate his interpretation not only from the "cathartic theory of catharsis," but also from the didactic. The purification of aesthetic materials, of course, is not a problem in ethics, but the presence of the spectator whose soul perceives and presumably is led to duplicate the harmony
of passions would imply ethics for Aristotle as surely as it implies psychology, as Else acknowledges that it does. If Aristotle is indeed refuting Plato, surely he would not rest content with defending the drama aesthetically. If Plato finds tragedy demoralizing because it yields the impure pleasure of impure materials, Aristotle in showing how the materials and pleasure are purified is demonstrating that the drama is, at the very least, not demoralizing.

An even more positive statement can be formulated by means of reference to the *Ethics*. In this work, as elsewhere, Aristotle is aware of an analogy between aesthetics and ethics. Just as the standard praise of an artistic masterpiece is that nothing could be added to it or subtracted from it, so goodness, which "like nature is more exact and of a higher character than any art," attains to the mean. And what are the materials of goodness? "Moral goodness...deals with feelings and actions, and it is in them that we find excess, deficiency, and a mean." One can experience fear, boldness, anger, desire, pity, and all kinds of pleasure and pain "too much, too little, or to the right amount." What characterizes goodness is "to have these feelings at the right times on the right occasions toward the right people for the right motive in the right way," which is to have them "in the right measure." The right measure, then, is not only quantitative but also qualitative. Thus tragedy, since it has as its raw materials some of those very feelings and actions which are the raw materials of goodness, would be relevant to ethics.
And the aesthetic measure which art achieves is the counterpart of the ethical doctrine of the mean or measure.

Bate makes this point admirably: Aristotle shared, he points out, "the Greek confidence in the power of art as psychogogia, the leading out of the soul, and as a moulder and developer of human character." In refuting Plato's somewhat stepmotherly treatment of the poet, Aristotle first had to rescue the poet from the lowly place beside the painter (conceived of in narrowly representational sense), who provides but the shadow of a shadow. To oppose Plato's theory of imitation, Bate notes, Aristotle treats poetry not as an imitation of the concrete alone, but the counterpart of a process: "form shaping, guiding, and developing the concrete into a unified meaning." Form, then, is not a technique, but "the direction which something would take if it were permitted to carry itself out to its final culmination...in such a way as to reveal its distinctive nature." 46

To Plato's charge that poetry "feeds and waters the passions instead of drying them up...although they ought to be controlled," Aristotle also found an answer. Tragedy does arouse pity through our sympathetic identification of ourselves with the tragic character, but it also provides the proper purgation of pity and fear. Bate again offers a most valuable short explanation. He explains that this cathartic process is not just emotional outlet: for tragic catharsis "first excites then tranquilizes emotion." Emotion, thus, is "purified and lifted, as it were, to a harmonious serenity."
He adds, "This enlarging of the soul through sympathy...operates to the advantage of one's psychological and moral health." Having witnessed the clarity and harmonious development of tragedy, the spectator achieves something of the same harmony in his own state of being.\textsuperscript{47}

Of the Greek correlation of aesthetic and ethical value, Jaeger has some valuable discussions. "The greatest work of art \textit{the Greeks} had to create was \textsl{Man.}" Their conception of education was the building of character according to an ideal, an ideal felt to be in accord with the natural principles governing human life. Their religion, philosophy, art, poetry, and government, all centering about man, were "separate rays from one great light," and all related to "the process of educating man into his true form, the real and genuine human nature."\textsuperscript{48} Tragedy was especially valuable, for it "restored to Greek poetry its power of embracing all human interests."\textsuperscript{49} Yet through concentrating the essence of human life into the short span of a tragedy, and through dealing with characters of superhuman majesty, it achieved a powerful emotional effect and elevated the spectator to "a strange world heavy with religious awe."\textsuperscript{50} Acknowledging that each of the three great Greek tragedians expressed a different idea of tragedy, he shows that in Aeschylus the central question is "Why does God send suffering into the life of man?" The spectators share the agony of the characters, and through exercising their highest spiritual energies and feeling pity and fear, they attain to a "faith in the ultimate meaning of life itself."\textsuperscript{51}
If this insight into Aeschylean tragedy goes beyond Aristotle, who does not take the religious aspect of tragedy—or, for that matter, Aeschylus—greatly into account, it is nevertheless applicable to Milton, in whose writings the religious and ethical purpose are evident. "The calm of mind produced by the tragic 'katharsis,'" Daiches says of Milton, "is at the same time the mood which accepts God's dealings with men as just."52 Such an attitude is in keeping with the Renaissance acceptance of Aristotle plus Horace. Poetry "Thin sown with aught of profit or delight," was to Milton's way of thinking, as we have seen, unworthy of the name.

The Preface to Samson Agonistes is better understood in the light of some of Milton's other prose statements about the nature of poetry. In The Reason of Church Government he is explicit about the function of the poet, whose abilities have the power, since they are the "inspired gift of God," to

inbreds and cherish in a great people the seeds of vertu, and publick civility, to alay the perturbations of the mind /an account of the emotional catharsis/, and set the affections in the right tune, to celebrate in glorious and lofty Hymns the throne and equipage of Gods Almightyness, ...to sing the victorious gagonies of Martyrs and saints...53

The subjects of poetry include the triumphs of noble nations and

whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in vertu amiable, or grave, whatsoever hath passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is call'd fortune from without, or the wily sutteties and reflexes of mans thoughts from within...54
In the last phrase quoted, it is evident that Milton is going beyond those "ayrie Burgomasters" of Plato's Republic who would admit only poetry in praise of the gods and good men, but would crown the clever mimetic poet with a garland and send him on his way -- even though such a poet would doubtless be very skilled at representing those "wily suttleties" of men's thoughts. Milton is closer to Sidney, who called the function of poetry "both to delight and teach, and delight to move men to take...goodness in hand." The end of learning is to "draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls...can be capable of." The poet not only gives an image or idea of perfection, both abstract truth and example, but presents "so sweet a prospect" that the reader will be moved to follow the right way. His specific account of tragedy owes much to Horace and to Aristotle and has much in common with Milton's, even to the insistence upon the unities and the condemnation of "mongrel tragi-comedy." The emotions raised by tragedy include admiration.

The greatest similarity between Milton and Sidney is their conception of poetry as a means of learning the truth (truth not abstractly formulated but carried alive into the heart) and desiring to use the knowledge and imagination it provides as a guide to virtuous action. For Milton, as for Sidney, the poet teaches

over the whole book of sanctity and vertu through all the instances of example with such delight to those especially...who will not so much as look upon Truth herself, unless they see her elegantly drest...

and to make the good life appear as truly pleasant as Milton
believes that it really is. The converse is the suffering that results from sin. And Milton's catharsis in tragedy is a kind of enlightenment and serenity (ethical and emotional) which comes through sympathetic vicarious suffering, and which educates the soul to virtuous action.
CHAPTER V

THE PROBLEM OF JUSTICE AND MILTON'S PROVIDENCE,
FOREKNOWLEDGE, WILL, AND FATE

Just are the ways of God
And justifiable to Men.  (S.A., 393-4)

Inevitably, whoever undertakes to reason high "Of
Providence, Foreknowledge, Will, and Fate..." will fear, like
the fallen angels, to find no end in wandering mazes lost ... and will just as inevitably say so. Yet it would be difficult
to discuss the Hebraic and Hellenic elements in Samson
Agonistes without entering these mazes; for the question
of justice involves responsibility, the responsibility of
the hero as a moral agent, and the role of fate or providence.
In another chapter, which deals with the tragic hero, Samson's
moral responsibility and his sin are analyzed and his moral
freedom (the necessary condition of responsibility) pre-
supposed. Here the problem of justice in Samson Agonistes
will be studied in comparison with classic precept and ex-
ample and Renaissance theory about justice and poetic justice.

Of justice outside the sphere of poetry, of fate
specifically, or of the religious questions raised by tragedy,
Aristotle's Poetics has nothing to say. Of the correspondence
between the drama and life (except for the requirement of
ture-to-life characters) it says little. When Aristotle
differentiates universal from historical truth, he is talk-
ing about what a certain character will probably do or say
in a given situation; obviously the situation is at least
partly "given," since only part of any sequence of events
can be attributed to the behavior of any one character. Historical truth is suitable for poetry only if it possesses ideal probability and necessary sequence.

Of justice and poetic justice in tragedy, Aristotle has several important things to say. The double plot and double retribution: a happy outcome for the better characters and an unhappy outcome for the worse, has only secondary merit. Spectators in general, he comments, are unable to endure "the highest tragic tension" and prefer a play of this kind even though it does not provide "the distinctive pleasure of tragedy." The outcome of a tragedy must be probable: it must follow logically from the preceding action. Although Aristotle sets rather high requirements for the hero morally, he makes this concession to the popular preference for unhappy endings for worse characters: some heroes of late Greek tragedy who combine intelligence and courage with villainy or injustice and suffer a downfall may come within the scope of tragedy. The concession is grudgingly made. And throughout the Poetics Aristotle specifies that the characterization must exhibit universal human truth, that the sympathy must be of the right kind, and that sympathy must be aroused the right way, not adventitiously or sensationally through spectacle. The right kind of sympathy seems to require cosmic injustice to the hero—suffering disproportionate to his faults.

In the dramas of Aeschylus (with whom Aristotle was not especially concerned) an awed sense of inevitability is felt which is nevertheless not fatalism. Many of his charac-
ters appear to be confronted with a choice of almost equally terrible alternatives; yet they do make the choice and in their motives reveal what manner of men they are. What we should call the dilemma of fate and free will, Jepsen reminds us, did not occur in just that form to Aeschylus. Rather, human choice operates in a narrow scope within the larger sphere of action of the gods. Even the gods are capable, within limits, of choice and change. And even the idea of justice, as dramatically conceived, evolves.

Aeschylus inherited a tradition which included several attitudes toward fate and different explanations of a hero's suffering. One is simply the primitive acceptance of the incontrovertible fact—a concept based, as Murray and others have demonstrated, on the ritual of the dying year-god, annually torn to pieces. Other attitudes, according to Greene, include belief in personal, primitive, jealous gods who begrudge men prosperity; belief in the hereditary curse; and the attribution of the evil consequences to the pollution that automatically occurs when a tabu is violated. Finally the action came to have moral significance according to the agent's motives. This attitude alone had meaning for Aeschylus, although he was willing to draw upon the more primitive views for overtones in his tragedies; for he saw that the consequences of an act did not always accord with the agent's moral motives.

The fullest and most mature exploration of the problem of justice is the Oresteia, which, as Murray says, can show
the reader a great deal about the nature of poetry and religion and the human heart. Its myth involves a family curse and a chain of horrifying choices, conflicting obligations. In the Agamemnon the heir of an ill-fated house is brought to a terrible catastrophe, not because of the curse on the house, but much more because of ἕγρις, which in this play is very like sinful pride. He is doomed in that he can expect some treachery from his hereditary enemy Aegisthus, and he has to choose between failing to perform his duty to his brother and sacrificing Iphigenia. Yet he makes the considerably worse choice of sacrificing the girl. We see him as the ruthless conqueror, an impressively outlined figure of a man who cares little for the gods and who accepts as his due, honors reserved for them. Such a man is bound to suffer dreadful consequences. Not without justice, the moral order dooms this type of sinner, although the catastrophe shocks us.

The shock—or the injustice—lies in the means by which he falls. For Clytemnestra, the instrument of his death, commits an even greater injustice than he had committed: she kills him and along with him the pitiable Cassandra. Here is Aeschylus' use of the demand for vengeance. Clytemnestra seeks to identify herself with Alastor, the spirit of vengeance, and she has one extenuating motive, the moral obligation to avenge Iphigenia. The primitive code of vengeance did not differentiate murder, killing by accident, and divinely instigated execution. (Even so, the problem
of divine instigation is made ambiguous by the difficulty of interpreting the divine will and by the counsel of priests."

The difficulty is that Clytemnestra had other motives. Had avenging Iphigenia been her sole motive, we could not have regarded her as wholly justified except, perhaps, by the primitive code. But is Clytemnestra worthy to undertake to fulfil the curse on the House of Atreus? Most certainly she resents the injury Agamemnon has done in bringing Cassandra to the palace. Her relationship with Aegisthus likewise prevents her from being sufficiently pure in heart to serve as the divine instrument of vengeance. Essentially, she kills Agamemnon with calculated hatred and rationalizes the deed according to one or more primitive codes. When she sees to it that Agamemnon shall incur nemesis for treading the purple, she is identifying herself with the gods to bring about his downfall.

Orestes, who is innocent, has a more terrible choice to make than his father had: obliged to avenge his father (and, incidentally, further justified because he has been cut off from his patrimony), he must commit a naturally abhorrent act: he must kill his mother. Even though she has been an unnatural mother and has forfeited sympathy, he has no human vengeful spirit. He performs his duty because Apollo decreed:


His high commandment; if this thing I dare,
He lays on me no sin; if I forbear...  
I cannot speak his judgment; none can know.  

He hates his victory; yet the Furies come to drive him mad.
The Eumenides provides the solution. The primitive law, Dike, the mechanical principle of Be done by as you did, is superseded by a law that combines justice and mercy, a law of retribution according to motives. From suffering comes wisdom, and that truth is valid beyond the human level. In this drama, the conflict is not in the soul of the hero, and not just a question of the outcome for him. It is a moral and intellectual conflict between Apollo and the Furies, incited by Clytemnestra. By itself, the play is not a tragedy, but the eventually calm resolution of a tragic trilogy; but it has its share of dramatic conflict. In the opening clash of opposing arguments, not everything that is said is logical or relevant, but dramatic. The Furies cannot see beyond the literal action: Did this man, or did he not, slay his mother? If she sinned, she, at least, did not kill a blood relative. They add the ad hominem argument: Why should Zeus, binder of Kronos, defend so avidly the rights of the father? But Apollo, who believes in mercy for a suppliant, is only partially right: Clytemnestra was wrong—because it is wrong for a woman to kill a king; and the father is biologically more important to the baby than the mother!

The Athenian jury decides that Orestes should be acquitted because he obeyed the will of Zeus. Yet it is really Athena, who best understands the will of Zeus, who casts the decisive vote, in so complicated a case, for mercy. The Eumenides have the comfort that the old rule of right
will remain, and that they may enforce it not as Furies
but as Apportioners, true assigners:

Justice is theirs: though many a one
May meet their wrath in innocence,
Not knowing why the wound nor whence,
That striketh. Some great evil done

Aforetime, with no payment just,
Casts him to these. Strange wrath and hate
Are round him, and he cries; but Fate,
Unanswering, grindeth him to dust. 7

It is easy to criticize the debate that precedes the
solution as poor debate but magnificent conflict. Kitto is
witty at the expense of the debate: doubtless a god is al-
ways at a disadvantage in the witness box. Apollo "rides
off on irrelevancies" in making a difference for Agamemnon
as king; it is incongruous to use current medical theory and
back it with a myth (Athene's lack of any need for a mother. ) 8
Obviously, Apollo could have made a better case. Here he is
spokesman for only one side of what was, in part, the con-
flict between despotism and anarchy. It does not admit of
any easy solution. It is not irrelevant, moreover, that
Agamemnon was king, guardian of law and order. According to
the principle of equals to equals, his due, it may be added,
depended not only on his actions but on who he was and what
position he occupied. Still, the case for the father is
overstated to balance the Furies' overstatement of the case
for the mother.

The hard-won justice of heaven is reflected in the
evolving social order: the duty of personal vengeance is
replaced by determination of justice by the priests of the gods
and finally by the institution of justice among men. And the ending of the drama gives insight into the real solution:

Come with the Law that can pardon, the
Judgement that knoweth,
O Semnal, Semnal, watchers o'er people and land;

Outpour ye the Chalice of Peace where the torches are blending;
In Pallas the place it is found and the Task it is done.
The Law that is Fate and the Father the All Comprehending Are here met together as one.

As Murray explains, by the old code vengeance was necessary, and failure to execute it was lack of pity and charity toward the victim and failure to secure justice—not true pity and charity. Yet "when indignation against wickedness becomes a passion, we all know what a wicked passion it can be." Whereas this form of the Law is ultimately futile, an anthropomorphic god who can forgive and who can correct, though not abrogate, the Law is the supreme contribution of the Greek religion.9

The essentially non-dogmatic character of Greek religion made possible the dramatic treatment of this sort of evolution and the even more daring solution of the problem of Prometheus -- the perfectibility, the evolving wisdom, of Zeus. Thus cosmic ideas or supernatural beings may be brought into a harmony. Zeus himself is not always Fate, and not always in control of Fate. As Greene observes, Zeus is not subject to mere mechanical necessity, but limited by the moral nature which he must assume.10 In the light of Aeschylus' other writings, Murray shows that it is prob-
able that the reconciliation involved greater change in Zeus than in Prometheus: wisdom through suffering, evolution into a more spiritual ruler. Although Prometheus may underestimate Zeus, and Io may be prepared by her ordeal for a blissful future, still "the world power that he calls Zeus learns and grows," in a manner that cannot be measured by standards "built up to suit the finite and narrow experience of man."\textsuperscript{11}

When power and knowledge are reconciled (as they would be in this reconciliation of Zeus and Prometheus), then mercy and justice are one, and suffering the result of sin. Yet, as Greene reminds us, Aeschylus was aware of the element of unexplained chance and amoral balance of nature which could still cause undeserved suffering, inexplicable and painful to bear though it might lead to wisdom. This wisdom is not only that of prudence, courage, or resolution, but that of forgiveness, of sympathy.\textsuperscript{12} Perfection, complete reconciliation, is not achieved, and yet "Despite all attacks, order constantly re-establishes itself against chaos. That is the meaning of suffering, even when we cannot understand it."\textsuperscript{13}

A consideration of justice on such a grand scale makes it dangerous to pronounce upon "poetic justice" for the characters. Jepsen has a point in saying that Orestes and Prometheus, both ultimately released, receive poetic justice because Aeschylus believes that a just god rules, but she is oversimplifying the perfectible and incomplete principle
of cosmic justice outlined above. Although we cannot be positive what the opposite catastrophes for good and bad characters signified for Aristotle, he probably had a conventional formula in mind, and he was almost certainly not thinking of Orestes or Prometheus. By employing the trilogy instead of the single tragedy Aeschylus could reconcile the excessive suffering of a noble hero with due retribution and reward or at least release. The reward may be new wisdom; who can say if the hero receives "compensation"? The less rational, less restricted spectator than Aristotle's ideal audience will experience pity and fear for these men, however much nobler than himself, and he will find calm and contemplation at the ending.

Sophocles is more concerned with human character than with the larger philosophical questions. In Oedipus Rex he does not raise as comprehensive a moral question as he does in Antigone. Using the tradition of a primitive family curse and an accidental offense that involves pollution, he shows Oedipus, as Kitto emphatically puts it, "blasted as a man may be who inadvertently interferes with the natural flow of electricity"; for piety and purity are only a part, however important, of the "mysterious pattern of life" that Sophocles reveals.

His assumptions about the pattern go deeper, to be sure, than the rather sententious piety of certain speeches of the Chorus would indicate. The gods seem to lead men into inevitable doom; yet men have some scope for choice,
he shows, or for manifesting their greatness. Thus self-
knowledge shows man that he is powerless compared with the
gods, and that his happiness is ephemeral, but it also
enables him to be noble in adversity.\textsuperscript{16} There is no poetic
justice here. Jepsen finds some compensations: Antigone
does not deserve to die, but she is allowed to vindicate
the moral order and even to look forward to some sort of
vindication in the next world.\textsuperscript{17} Oedipus neither sins nor
repents but ends his life in a sort of apotheosis. No god
repents or learns mercy or is reconciled with him. As
Kitto notes, there is not even peace through submission, but
a progress from misery to greatness and the formal recognition
of human dignity and greatness in Oedipus.\textsuperscript{18} This is no
trilogy, but \textit{Oedipus at Colonus} reveals a certain justice.

Yet Dike is not precisely justice. Kitto explains
it as "a kind of rhythm or recoil ... ruling in the physical
world and in human affairs alike."\textsuperscript{19} Whether a just or an
unjust person violates it, the balance is upset, and only a
violent recoil can right it. Inaction is no solution, for
when Polyneices is left unburied or Laius unavenged, the
lack of balance is revealed and symbolized by a plague or
physical pollution.\textsuperscript{20} Thus a chain of vindications can be
demanded. And not all actions have a moral evaluation. In
some of the plays, the action controlled or chosen by the
characters parallels the activity of the gods, who right
Dike in the universe. Orestes, for instance, is autonomous,
but he moves parallel to the gods.\textsuperscript{21} At other times, there
is a discrepancy or conflict between the intention of a character and the universal significance of his action. Hence Sophocles achieves the pity and tragic irony which characterize many of his dramas. Hence occurs "that residuum of evil ... inherent in an otherwise orderly universe ... a tragically ironic fact of life."²²

Several examples will show how closely the character's choices and some form of fate or the will of the gods are interrelated. Often the characters in Oedipus Rex speak as though Apollo had willed all the events from the beginning. Oedipus comes to think that he has been deliberately saved from death in infancy only to be reserved for this more terrible doom. In blinding himself, however, "he acts blindly like the victim of ate," but the blindness and suffering in exile are "his self-inflicted nemesis." As Greene sums it up, "Fate has indeed contrived all, but has contrived the revelation through the character and acts of Oedipus himself."²³

In the Trachiniae fate and character are so balanced that Greene calls it a tragedy of fate for Hercules (who nevertheless has a tragic flaw) and a tragedy of character for Deianira, the instrument of his death (although her error is intellectual, not moral).²⁴ She is not motivated by jealousy but the wish to regain his love, and her grief at the tragic results which she never intended causes her to kill herself. In Antigone, there is not much sense of fate but a strong feeling of the injustice of the heroine's
suffering. There is a kind of poetic justice in the punishment of Creon.

Poetic justice rarely occurs in the dramas of Euripides, nor does the demonstration of cosmic justice. Whereas Aeschylus attempts solutions and Sophocles studies character within a framework of assumptions, Euripides raises questions. Since his questions frequently result in ambiguities in the dramas, he has got himself as many names as the fallen angels among the sons of men: Euripides the irrationalist, the rationalist, the skeptic, the mystic, the modern, the sensationalist, the most tragic of poets, the most pathetic. All of these names have some truth. Bold and revolutionary within the conservative form of mythical drama, he reflects an era of what Carlyle terms "disintegrating metaphysics." As Jaeger points out, bourgeois ideals, rhetoric, intellectual detachment, psychological realism, subjective evaluations, and a Protean ability to argue like a Sophist, characterize his writing.25

Not even *The Bacchae* -- the Euripidean drama closest to a mystery play -- can be said to represent a final escape from rational questioning, or a conversion to faith. Although narrow rationalism is condemned, and religious ecstasy is praised in part, it is clear that Euripides considered the excesses of Dionysiac worship as horrifying as the repression of it altogether was stultifying. In Pentheus we find something like the Aristotelian hero except that he is less sympathetic. In fact, the shift of sympathy often found
in Euripides is if anything more drastic here. Dionysus, the new god who symbolizes wine, poetry, ecstasy -- a great irrational force potentially beautiful but potentially cruel or careless of human life and human deserts -- conflicts with Pentheus, narrow rationalism, a sincere man with many public virtues. Pentheus dies more terribly than he deserved -- for hybris in rejecting a god, perhaps, or for his lack of imagination. Yet only at his death do we sympathize with him, for he has hitherto cruelly persecuted Dionysus, whom we have seen and pitied in human form. Possibly Euripides himself is divided in his sympathies. He "cannot be said to have found any reconciliation between cosmic and moral laws" and is therefore free both to criticize the gods and to use them to suit his purpose.

It is thus dangerous to seek a general formula for Euripides' idea of tragedy. Kitto, who seeks to justify as well as explain, warns the reader especially against Aristotelian assumptions about tragedy and character. Kitto seeks to explain in the light of Euripides' "tragic way of thinking about life" and to show that Euripides found powerful expression for "what he wanted to say." The means of expression may be pathetic New Tragedy, melodrama, propaganda play, or tragikomedy. If Euripides was inconsistent, artificial, excessively satirical, disunified, or episodic, still he knew what he was doing.

Thus Medea is improbable, sensational, revolting in its picture of the undeserved suffering of the innocent. It has
a villainous hero and a heroine who scarcely deserves the name, but who is both agent and victim, and who is rescued by the Sun after she has murdered her children. Yet it will not matter that she is not "likely" if she is "true," and Kitto asks, "Could anything be finer, more imaginative?" Although he is afraid to "be silly and call the Medea an illustration of a theme," he explains that the tragic hero is mankind and that the constituent aspects of character are split up "prismatically" among a group of figures who suffer from tragic forces. Although one may wish that Kitto would explain his explanation and justify the term "tragedy," his reference to the great amoral tragic force that victimizes the characters is helpful, and his whole account is of service, especially when he is content to explain without trying to justify. For granted the variety of Euripides' objectives and the artistic blunders, he is great and must be recognized for what Murray terms "the combination of two extremes: in matter, a full facing of tragic facts, and in form, a resolute transfiguration of them by poetry." Greene's account is helpful: Medea does arouse a good deal of sympathy although she is passionate, jealous, barbarian, vengeful; for Jason's hybris is so evident that his punishment is "hardly more than just nemesis." For the innocent characters this vengeance is pathetic and revolting. As for Medea, Kitto is probably right in calling the outcome for her, immaterial; poetic justice, after we have come to understand her objectively, could not satisfy us. Medea is
a blind, irrational force of nature. Fate, chance, and the gods figure little here.

Alcestis contains a number of references to fate, to the death which Admetus is fated to die; but there is a happy ending rather than a tragic catharsis. Alcestis reveals pathetic nobility but through providence or Olympian intervention she is saved in a conclusion that "looks like poetic justice." It also appears to be poetic justice for Admetus to lose and then regain his wife. What makes the drama at all profound instead of commonplace is the brilliant if merciless characterization of the "hero" in a scene that Murray calls "a great grief to the purely romantic reader." The emphasis is certainly not on fate or providence or the characters' just deserts.

Hecuba deals with the brutalizing effects of war upon humanity. Hecuba herself commands our sympathy until she betrays her own better nature and takes a terrible vengeance. Polyxena demonstrates noble resignation in going to the death that society has decreed for her, and neither she nor Hecuba deserved to suffer. Hecuba blames Tyche, accursed Fortune, or circumstance; but it is society that has brutalized her, and it is society that she defies. She commits, as well as suffers, terrible injustice. Yet "Euripides has not...cried out against fate or the gods or chance." In Hippolytus he uses goddesses to personify cosmic forces. Just as Aphrodite or passion overmasters Phaedra, Artemis or chastity inspires worship in Hippolytus. If
these are goddesses, one of them (Artemis) is strangely powerless. As forces of life, they are within man, yet human beings are treated as their pathetic victims. One may blame Hippolytus, the passive victim, for negative virtue, a one-sided view of life instead of a reconciliation of love and chastity, or even for pride in his own virtuous character. His is not the Christian chastity, but his is a fugitive and cloistered virtue. He is a pathetic victim, and the only "fruit of his suffering" is his humane forgiveness of his father. 37 Phaedra is pathetic -- until she unjustly lies against Hippolytus. Here again the emphasis is not on either fate or justice.

In contrast to this freedom of speculation about the large questions of fate, freedom, and justice, a characteristic of Greek thought, is the need, in Renaissance and post-Renaissance theory, to be certain that the drama in no way derogates from God's justice. In addition to the sanction of religion, poetic justice acquired the sanction of custom; for as Corneille observes, the fashion of ending a drama with punishments for the wicked and rewards for the virtuous "is not a precept of art, but a custom we have adopted and which we depart from at our peril." Such a representation of justice, he felt, was valuable in leading people to embrace virtue and shun vice. 38

Earlier, Cinthio had attempted to reconcile such an idea with artistic precept: the spectator, Cinthio hoped, would reason that if Oedipus suffered so much for an in-
voluntary error, how much more would the spectator himself suffer for committing the same act as voluntary sin. At the same time, Cinthio emends the definition of tragedy to admit the double plot and argues that Greek tragedy does not inevitably end in misfortune or death, nor is the central character inevitably good -- witness Medea.

Minturno likewise illustrates the Renaissance shift in emphasis from pity and terror to wonder or astonishment, for which there is this much basis in Aristotle, that he discusses surprise as not always incompatible with probability or expectation. Part of the wonder is owing to religion; for Minturno believes that events which would not seem especially wonderful as the result of fortune may be able to "excite us to wonder when we think they come about through the divine will or as the result of a plan." Furthermore, the central character may be good or evil; the important requirement is that he suffer "a marvelous thing." Christ himself might be a tragic subject; even an enemy, on the other hand, might be thought worthy of compassion though deserving of pain.

Tragi-comedy, according to most Renaissance thought, was the equivalent of what Aristotle discusses as the drama with double plot and double outcome. Clearly its effects were different from those of tragedy. Guarini carries the Renaissance theory to its logical conclusion: we no longer need the effects of tragedy unless it happens that they delight us, for we have instead "the precepts of our most
holy religion." (This conclusion, of course, is part of a
discussion of the tragic catharsis.) If tragedy is not the
best means of exhibiting poetic justice, such as the triumph
of Christian over infidel, then the epic, which can exhibit
such a subject with such a result, is better. 42

The answer can take several forms. If art is to be so
submitted to religious teaching, as Fra Lippo Lippi inquires,

Why, for this
What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's 
    best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well. 43

Yet it is one thing to expect the author of a tragedy to be
didactic in the manner of a sermon, to sacrifice speculation
on large philosophical questions to the necessity of creating
within the narrow framework of dogma an attitude conducive
to piety, and another to recognize that since tragedy ex-
oplores the religious and ethical implications of character
in action, the mature tragic artist seeks to offer his most
profound religious and ethical insights, mindful of the
ethical value for the reader or spectator.

Religious and ethical principle may determine the way
a poem is constructed as well as the way the poet interprets
human nature and experience. The Christian system of eternal
rewards and punishments may be the subject of a great poem;
it is, in fact, the subject of Dante's Divine Comedy, which
does not derive its greatness, however, from that fact
alone. Santayana offers some comments of value here on the
morally mature implications of what he calls "the spirited
fable" of Christian eschatology; it was formulated not only to satisfy men that injustice on earth will be afterwards redressed, but to image moral truth, a hierarchy of values, the importance of making the right choice involved in every action. In such a view hell is necessary because a heaven of bliss without a hell would imply that on earth "Moral differences would have existed merely to be forgotten." 44 To be sure, Santayana believes the doctrine that men can be "eternally damned for the glory of God" disgraceful evidence of "the folly of an egocentric or anthropocentric philosophy." Yet granting Dante this assumption, Santayana gives him credit for seeing beyond it sometimes with "an esoteric view of rewards and punishments that makes them simply symbols for the intrinsic qualities of good and evil ways." Thus the soul that thwarts its right fulfillment and spends itself in passion is imprisoned unfulfilled in that passion, e.g. Paolo and Francesca. "Only an inspired poet could be so subtle a moralist. Only a sound moralist could be so tragic a poet." 45

Likewise a dramatist communicates his insights about man, or about man in relation to God, in a distinctively artistic, dramatic way. He may draw upon his beliefs about justice, fate, morality; but not all of his beliefs can be brought into artistic unity, and the artistic form may determine how they are used and emphasized. It is not necessary to canonize Aristotle as the only arbiter of artistic usage, of course, or to exclude ipso facto the conception of rewards
to the just and punishments to the wicked. It is only necessary to recognize that poetic justice must be justifi-
able artistically within the framework of the drama, not superimposed upon it to accord with religious teaching, and not the inartistic oversimplification that produces true blue heroes and black-hearted villains. Such oversimpli-
fication is of no credit to a mature faith, and of no ser-
vice to a mature conception of either justice or poetry.

Of the reconciliation of religion and tragedy, or justice and poetry, that Milton achieves in Samson Agonistes, something further will be said in Chapter IX. Here Milton's religious assumptions, his conceptions of providence, fore-
knowledge, will, and fate, will be analyzed as the back-
ground for the problem of justice in Samson Agonistes. These ideas in the drama will be correlated with statements in some of Milton's other works, including Paradise Lost and Milton's mature statement of his theology, the Christian Doctrine. Reference will also be made to his treatise on logic, which deals with causation. All of these works can sometimes clarify Samson Agonistes, which differs from them in emphasis rather than in doctrine; for instance, Paradise Lost contains more direct statements about God's providence than the drama because the epic permits the expression of the omniscient point of view, which is excluded in the drama, even from the speeches of the Chorus.

Providence, according to the Christian Doctrine, either includes or replaces such conceptions as fate and fortune.
God, the primary, absolute, sole cause of all things, embraces "efficient, material, formal, and final causes." Yet His providence does not extend equally to all things. It operates differently upon "contingent" and "fortuitous" events, and upon the natural and the supernatural. Likewise the treatise on the art of logic makes it clear that the internal principles are will or thought, and nature; the external, necessity or coercion, and fortune. Ordinary providence preserves and upholds an immutable order of causes ordained from the beginning -- that is, nature, "the efficacy of the divine voice that went forth." A miracle, an event outside this usual order of nature, may occur when God's providence either produces or permits some agent to produce an extraordinary event in order to manifest divine power and confirm man's faith.

God is not bound by necessity; He alone is necessary as the cause of all things. One may speak of His immutable necessity of acting rightly, but that necessity is internal, not external, and it may coexist with perfect liberty, so that all of God's acts are free, not necessary of themselves. Apart from His providence there exists no form of fate, which Milton defines as "providence joined with necessity." Milton uses the terms "physical necessity" (which occurs when a cause produces a determinate and uniform effect by its own propensity) and "compulsory necessity" (which occurs when an outside force compels a cause to produce such an effect), but never "divine necessity" of God's acting...
upon man; for God allowed man to be a free agent, as he would not be if effected by these external causes. This fundamental point Milton makes parenthetically in the Logic even, where he is careful to state that "fate" by no means implies that God compels a man to do evil.

The definition of fate as "providence joined with necessity" is thus a wiser definition to cite than Milton's other definition of fate: "nothing but a divine decree emanating from some almighty power," for this last definition occurs in a passage in which Milton seeks to demonstrate the existence of God. Rejecting nature, or "chance with nature as a joint divinity," and also fate as substitutes for God, Milton argues that they imply God, or at least that they imply some prior deity or agent as their cause. Far from meaning that every divine decree is fate, Milton means that fate depends on God. Thus in Paradise Lost God means that His goodness is not necessitated when He declares:

Necessitie and Chance Approach not mee, and what I will is Fate. (VII, 172-173)

"Fate" is sometimes used in Paradise Lost to mean simply "lot or portion," sometimes "doom," and many times to mean "providence joined with necessity," as when nature in the Garden of Eden is changed according to unalterable fate. Only in the speeches of the fallen angels is the term ambiguous, sometimes meaning, without specifically naming, God's providence, and sometimes meaning fate as a separate power not subordinate to God. Sin tells how fate ordained her duties in hell (using the word in the first of these
senses), but Satan is or tries to be a fatalist, preferring to attribute his defeat to fate, rather than to God. He and his followers treat God's victory as the triumph of force, upheld by fate, over virtue or injured merit, and they declare that God has conquered.

Whether upheld by strength, or Chance,
or Fate.                     (P.L. I, 133)

"Fate inevitable" and "omnipotent decree" are both mentioned. The fallen angels persevere in spite of fate, although they know that they can regain heaven only in the unlikely event that fate should "yield to chance and chaos." On one occasion Adam says, "Not God Omnipotent, nor Fate...," with the two distinctly separate, and it is perhaps significant that on that occasion he is on the verge of falling. For throughout the epic, man knows clearly (and even Satan when alone acknowledges) that there is no such force as fate a-part from God and His providence.

In Paradise Regained Milton speaks of "Fate, and chance, and change in human life" as the subject of Greek tragedy. In this poem, as in Paradise Lost, Satan continues to speak of fate: he reads what the stars have written of fate, and he tries to persuade Christ to take power into His own hands instead of waiting for the "push of fate." More important than this use is Christ's rejection of Stoic philosophy because of the Stoic claim of merit, which is self-centered:

\[
\text{to themselves}
\]

All glory arrogate, to God give none,
Rather accuse him under usual names,
Fortune and Fate, as one regardless quite
Of mortal things.                 (P.R.IV, 314-318)
This difference between "fate" as part of the providence of a wise God who cares personally for the individual man, and who exempts free agents from the compulsion of fate, and the pagan "fate," the impersonal force, is fundamental.

Milton nowhere speaks of fate in *Samson Agonistes*. If he had borrowed much more than structural or stylistic elements from the Greeks, it might be expected that his Chorus would allude at least occasionally to fate, for the Greek dramatists refer to forms of it often, whatever the role of fate in each drama. Hence it seems a conscious omission. "Necessity" is used once: the Messenger explains that Samson did not will his own death; he performed the great deed foretold of him and died. The Chorus comments:

> tangl'd in the fold  
> Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoin'd  
> Thee with thy slaughter'd foes... (S.A., 1665-67)

There is little reason to suppose, as Parker does, that Milton meant the Greek Necessity, or Fate, or Destiny; for Milton will not so much as speculate whether the day of a man's death is appointed. The use of "necessity" in *Samson Agonistes* is perfectly compatible with his idea of physical necessity according to God's laws. Not even God's "un-controllable intent" need be explained as necessity or fate, for that line simply means that God's purpose for mankind is not frustrated or hampered even by the consequences of man's free will, but that God always achieves His ultimate purpose of bringing good out of evil. 54
Fortune (which Milton does mention in *Samson Agonistes*)
is more difficult to define. It cannot be called a cause.
Rather, Milton says that an efficient cause that works
"through fortune," i.e. fortuitously, is the "cause through
accident of fortuitous things." The terms "chance" and
"fortune" are interchangeable, unless one wishes to make
the distinction that "chance" is the broader term, whereas
"fortune" is applicable only to reasoning beings. Actually,
Milton mistrusts the term "fortune," which, as he says,
man's ignorance of causes has led him to use whenever some-
thing happens contrary to human expectations. Alluding, no
doubt, to the Goddess Fortuna, he observes that fortune has
been deified. "Certainly fortune should be placed in
heaven," he acknowledges, "but should be called by the
different name of 'divine providence.'" 55 Likewise in the
Christian Doctrine Milton admits that one may speak of
"fortune" or "chance" but that all that is meant thereby is
that human causation is excluded. 56

Except for a definitely literary use of "crowned
Fortune proud" in Sonnet 16, Milton rarely uses "fortune"
in his poetry, although he does have a number of references
to chance, sometimes allied with change, sometimes with fate.
Sometimes "chance" is neutral and simply means "lot." In
*Paradise Lost* the allegorical figure of Chance is found in
chaos as the "high arbiter" next to the old anarch, Chaos,
himself, along with Demogorgon, Rumor, Night, Orcus, and
Ades. None of these shadowy figures should be thought to
have any real existence or any sway over man's life; they simply represent the condition of the boundless deep which God in His Omnipresence fills, and part of which He wills to order actively in creating the universe. Sometimes the fallen angels refer to chance in the sense of luck, a force or principle which they dissociate from God's providence. Two senses of "chance" are evident in Satan's hope that there is

A chance but chance may lead where I may meet

Some wand'ring Spirit... (P.L. IV, 530-531)

He hopes that it may somehow happen that luck (or a lucky accident) will help him.

"Chance," a rather neutral word here, occurs several times in Samson Agonistes. Chance, in the sense of an occasional unexpected happening, relieves Samson from his servile task. In the same sense, he would be "Exempt from many a care and chance..." (1.918) if he went home with Manoa. Likewise "lot" is used neutrally for portion in life, e.g. "lot unfortunate in nuptial choice" (1.1743). When Harapha comes with no view of condoling Samson's "chance" (1.1076), he simply means Samson's lot. Likewise it is only a figure of speech, and the equivalent of "chance," when Harapha wishes that "fortune" had permitted him to encounter Samson when Samson had his full strength -- not that the Philistine's philosophy would be particularly important anyway.

The important reference to fortune is made by the Chorus. When it questions the ways of God to men and speaks of man's
fickle estate, it addresses Samson thus sympathetically:

To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou
art fall'n. (S.A., 169)

This reference might mean no more than Samson's unhappy lot
if it were not for a more specific reference to the personi-

fied figure of Fortune:

Or the sphere of fortune raises. (S.A., 171)

In complaining of the "contrarious" ways toward man of a God
who unevenly tempers His providence through man's short
course and abandons even such solemnly elected heroes as
Samson, the Chorus uses words that strongly suggest Fortune:
God is said to throw such men lower than formerly he had
exalted them high.

The image suggested by these passages is the late
classical and mediaeval Fortuna, usually depicted with a
sphere or wheel. Her history may be briefly summarized
here, as no doubt it was well known to Milton. Patch calls
her the "one pagan deity [who] seems to have survived the
decline and fall of ancient Rome," and who has been subject
to interpretations as various as her proverbial nature.57
In classical times she was not just a personification of one
aspect of fate, but (like the Greek Tyche) at first bringer
of destiny, and then Chance, whom skeptics took to be the
universal ruler.58 Not content to marshal fortitude and
other virtues against her, the Church sought to relegate her
to the realm of illusion. Augustine and Aquinas modified
"the Aristotelian argument that chance is necessary in order
to make room for free will" but called Fortune a mere name for the *causa per accidens* and asserted that what seems the result of chance has a proper cause. This mediaeval interpretation, not the Aristotelian defense of chance, Milton largely followed in his prose explanation.

Philosophically, poetically, and pictorially treated in many ways in the Middle Ages, Fortune appears at various times as a type, a symbol, an abstraction, a goddess, an evil force, and (in Dante) a minister of God. Patch conjectures that her wheel, symbol of mutability, was first associated with her in classical art as a ball or sphere on which the goddess stood, and that this sphere was represented in art (two-dimensionally) as a circle. Classical literature then associated the circle or wheel with human affairs. Boethius put man on the wheel and intimated that Fortune turned it. Thus Milton uses the sphere, the classical symbol, but has it raise man in the mediaeval manner. In *Samson Agonistes* this semi-pagan figure of Fortune is a literary symbol of man's fickle estate and is used when the Chorus approaches skepticism.

In the only other reference to fortune in the drama, the Chorus has regained full faith and rejoices that Samson's faith in God and confidence in himself as God's champion are fully restored. The Chorus declares that God will vindicate Himself and confute the enemy. Likewise it hopes that God will give Samson invincible might against the Philistines. If not, He may well allow him victory through
patience, the Chorus predicts, a triumph over all.

That tyranny for fortune can inflict...

(S.A., 1290-1)

Here there is no need to take "fortune" as anything but the permissible name for the fortuitous cause beyond human understanding. The Chorus concludes with an obviously neutral word for the outcome for Samson:

Either of these is in thy lot. (S.A., 1292)

Milton makes it clear that none of the apparently all-inclusive system of causation described in Christian Doctrine infringes human free will; otherwise man would have no power of choosing the right, the wrong, or that which is indifferent, and no way of manifesting his moral bent. If man's actions are to possess any moral value, man must be a free and responsible agent, and his freedom must include freedom to choose evil. Hence God permits evil. Moreover, He also hardens the hearts of sinners or blinds their understandings, even though He is never the author of sin. If He "gives the sinner over to his reprobate mind," He does so either to punish him or to bring good results to others. What the sinner intends is "generally something evil or unjust, from which God uniformly educes a good and just result, thus as it were creating light out of darkness." In compelling a man to display the arrogance or wickedness in his heart, God either makes the man's nature evident to others or opens the sinner's own eyes to his sin. With so much
evidence in the Old Testament about God's hardening men's hearts, Milton has to explain frequently that God does not compel or even abet sin to effect His purpose, and that even in confirming the sinner in his sin, God is really just withdrawing "the grace of His enlightenment." "A man's heart deviseth his way, but God guideth his steps." Even the methods God uses to harden hearts, Milton is careful to explain, are so good and kind that they should rather soften hearts. Actually, the sinners harden their own hearts. God may tempt men—that is, He may permit the devil or his agents to tempt men. A so-called "evil temptation" is equitable on God's part but has a bad result for the sinner; a "good temptation" proves or illustrates the goodness of the righteous.

None of this evil is necessitated, even though it is foreknown. Foreknowledge is "nothing but the wisdom of God, under another name," or the idea He had in mind (to use human terms) before He made His decrees. His decrees cannot be separated from His wisdom. Yet not everything is decreed absolutely, willed from eternity; since divine necessity cannot act on free agents without impairing their freedom, God has made some contingent or conditional decrees. Divine counsels depend on the wisdom whereby God foreknew the nature and outcome of all future occurrences. He is free to act or not to act, and no less a universal cause if He leaves some things to human will than if He were de-
termining everything necessarily. Thus all future events are certain and foreknown to God, but not necessary.

God does not predestine individual men to either salvation or damnation. His "predestination" is conditional; He predestines that all believers (for that is what is meant by the "elect") shall be saved on the condition of their persevering faith in Christ. God has foreknown who these believers would be. If He is said to call men, He calls those whom He has foreknown as believers. And all men, though they may be given different degrees of grace, have sufficient grace to believe and be saved if they will. This universal grace is further explained. If faith in Christ is the condition necessary for salvation, can those who have not known Him have grace? Milton declares that Christ is the ransom sufficient to redeem even those who have never heard of Him, to save them if they believe in God and persevere in this faith. This salvation of men excluded from the knowledge of Christ extends to the righteous before His coming, for "Peter testifies that eternal salvation was through Christ alone under the Law."70

Some of these doctrines will be illustrated here by quotations from Paradise Lost, for which almost all of them are fundamental. God declares therein that He made man good,

Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall. (III, 99)

Likewise He created the angels good but free to stand or
fall, for only freely given allegiance would be worth having:

What pleasure I from such obedience paid
When Will and Reason (Reason also is choice)
Useless and vain, of freedom both despoyld,
Made passive both, had servd necessitie,
Not mee. (III, 107-11)

If they fall, then, neither men nor angels can justly accuse

Thir maker, or thir making, or thir Fate;
As if Predestination over-rul'd
Thir will, dispos'd by absolute Decree
Or high foreknowledge. (III, 113-6)

God's foreknowledge does not necessitate or predestine their action. Their freedom had to include the freedom to fall, but their fall occurs "without least impulse or shadow of Fate." They cease to be free only when they voluntarily misuse and sacrifice their freedom. This condition of man is the result of the eternal high decree which ordained man's freedom. 72

Through another eternal decree, God gave man the grace to accept salvation willingly. Only those who reject God's offered grace are to be excluded finally from mercy: the hard will be hardened, the blind, blinded more. All may be saved, God declares, but

Some I have chosen of peculiar grace
Elect above the rest. (III, 183-4)

That is, some have more grace than others, but God calls those whom He has foreknown as believers, as the Christian Doctrine explains. The rest, although they will "oft be warn'd," will reject grace. In Book XII Michael speaks of
The Spirit of God, promisd alike and giv'n
To all Beleevers; (XII, 519-20)

and Adam learns to observe God's providence and to trust
to His mercy alone.

In Samson Agonistes there is much discussion of the
hero's birth "from Heav'n foretold." Even in his present
misery, Samson is unwilling to question the divine pre-
diction:

what if all foretold
Had been fulfilld but through mine own default,
Whom have I to complain of but my self? (S.A., 44-46)

Perhaps, in other words, the great act that Samson was to
perform was conditionally foretold. If not, then God may
still bring His purpose to pass. Samson will not speculate:

But peace, I must not quarrel with the will
Of highest dispensation, which herein
Happ'ly had ends above my reach to know. (S.A., 60-62)

When Samson regrets that he did not have wisdom
commensurate with his strength, the Chorus seeks to comfort
him:

Tax not divine disposal... (S.A., 210)

The Chorus would have him blame neither heaven nor himself
but Dalila, the sort of woman who can ensnare the wisest
of men; but Samson rightly does blame himself as well as
her, and he does not tax divine disposal. His recognition
that he was to blame is essential for his regeneration.
Later, in speaking to Harapha of God's gift, Samson says
that he was raised

With strength sufficient and command from
Heav'n
to free Israel, and that God did not enjoin a task that was beyond Samson or fail him in any way:

I was to do my part from Heav'n assign'd
And had perform'd it if my known offence
Had not disabl'd me. (S.A., 1217-19)

Formerly Samson knew God's will intimately when he was called upon to deliver Israel. He had a kind of special communion with God (a positive signal, rather than a negative sign like that which Socrates received), and this was a mark that Samson was one whom God had chosen of peculiar grace. Likewise his strength betokened special calling or grace. Yet when God prompted Samson, through this sign or "intimate impulse," to marry, He was not thereby setting a snare for Samson, who was himself the prime cause of his being ensnared. Dalila was only the instrumental cause. It must be noted also that God did not prompt this marriage, only the marriage to the Timnian bride. Samson merely inferred that his second marriage would be equally acceptable.

All through the drama there is the problem of "destiny" or "election." For Manoa and the Chorus are alike inclined to blame God for dark and "contrarious" ways to man. They accuse God: Thou

Temperst thy providence through man's short course Not evenly... (S.A., 670-1)

Manoa does not think that God should cast off a "solemnly elected" favorite; Samson will not blame God, but he laments that God, however justly, has cast off his destined servant. These terms "destined" and "elect" do not refer to pre-
destination, but to another kind of election which Milton separately defines in the Christian Doctrine:

That in which a particular individual is said to be selected for the performance of some office, as I Sam. X: 24, "see ye him whom the Lord hath chosen," and is thus eminent for any particular excellence.73

The great deed which God, in His wisdom, foretold through a Messenger or angel was the first step in the deliverance of Israel from Philistine yoke. Some deeds against the Philistines Samson had already performed before his blindness, and on one occasion, God had performed a miracle in causing a spring of water to flow for him. The miraculous restoration of Samson's strength is a sign of God's renewed favor, granted only when Samson is spiritually ready to receive it.

The punishment inflicted on the Philistines is the logical consequence of their blasphemous pride and their cruel exulting over Samson.

While thir hearts were jocund and sublime,
Drunk with Idolatry, drunk with Wine,
And fat regorg'd of Bulls and Goats,
Chaunting thir Idol, and preferring
Before our living Dread who dwells
In _Silo_ his bright Sanctuary. (S.A., 1669-74)

God sent a spirit of "phrenzie" that caused them unwittingly to summon their own destruction, for foolish men always unknowingly call down upon themselves divine wrath:

Insensate left, or to sense reprobate
And with blindness internal struck. (S.A., 1685-6)

Here is an example of the way in which Milton reconciled Hellenic and Hebraic. The _peripeteia_ occurs as
in Greek tragedy—the sort of reversal that brings about just the opposite of what the victim intended. The insensate pride of the Philistines is like the hybris of the Greeks, and the spirit of frenzy, comparable to Ate or Nemesis. It would be difficult to see, though, how the identification of this spirit with the Furies is "almost complete." God's ways may be described in terms that emphasize the similarity of this spirit to the Greek, but what is almost complete is the identification of the spirit of frenzy and God's spiritual blinding of the sinner and hardening his hard heart, as the Christian Doctrine explains it. Nor can the Philistines' mad folly and sin be explained simply as that excess which the Greeks dreaded: the Philistines are guilty of cruelty, gluttony, idolatry, blasphemy, and pride—sins from the Hebraic-Christian point of view.

Thus for all the similarities between this part of Samson Agonistes and comparable aspects of Greek drama, the outcome is clearly Hebraic: sin is punished, and as far as the Philistines are concerned, the divine justice is also poetic justice. For Samson himself, the outcome is too complicated to be called poetic justice, but it includes the satisfaction of justice: the martyrdom and spiritual victory of Samson's death marks the consummation of divine justice and mercy. Thus God has permitted Samson to use his free will and to suffer the consequences of misusing it, but in His mercy He has offered Samson the grace to be re-
generated and the opportunity of serving Him again. In accepting, Samson achieves the work which God had predicted in His foreknowledge that Samson would ultimately choose right, but which He did not predestine or compel Samson to achieve. The outcome is in keeping with God's great purpose of bringing forth good out of evil.
CHAPTER VI

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE MORALITY: THE GROUNDS OF OBLIGATION IN SAMSON AGONISTES

"For with his own Laws he can best dispence." ... (S.A., 314)

The last chapter dealt with the broad philosophical and theological implications of the problem of justice: with God's justice toward man, and with man's free will and responsibility. This chapter will consider another aspect of the problem of justice: man's obligations to God and neighbor in Samson Agonistes. Is Milton's conception of these obligations, of law, Hebraic, or Hellenic, or the result of a synthesis of the two?

According to Whitehead, the "early naive trend of Semitic monotheism...is toward the notion of Law imposed by the fiat of One God."¹ Western doctrine, especially the doctrine of Grace, inclines toward the concept of a transcendent God, an arbitrary God, especially in the Calvinistic re-interpretation of Augustine's thought. Yet the concept of a transcendent God modifies, and is modified by, the conception of an immanent God—a conception which, carried to its extreme, would result in pantheism. Beings that share in the nature of an immanent God would thus exhibit immanent law.² Most Christian theology combines the idea of immanent law exhibited in the individual with the idea of law imposed by a transcendent God. With this solution, Milton, as the last chapter demonstrated, agreed;
for he undertook to reconcile the individual's free will
and right reason (immanent law) with the Divine providence
which governs all things but refrains from necessitating the
moral actions of men.

Hellenic thought was less systematized, freer, more
speculative...and more elusive. (This character of Hellenic
thought was illustrated in the last chapter by different
concepts of fate in the tragedies.) As Whitehead observes,
"'Canst thou by searching out find God?' is good Hebrew,
but it is bad Greek." Yet there is a comparable reconcili-
ation of immanent and imposed law which Plato at least
suggests. Both of these are types of natural law, law
grounded in the nature of things, derived from "Nature" or
divine revelation to man, or Right Reason; and both are
classified by general value judgments.

The antithesis to this type of law is positive law:
specific "rules or guides to a definite conduct," law that
is historically and traditionally developed for practical
application to specific human problems. The conflict be-
tween natural law and this positive law has taken three
major historical forms, as Chroust demonstrates. For the
Greeks the conflict was between the cosmic order and the
decrees of men. In the Middle Ages, it lay between a divine
order, which was revealed by God but sustained by reason,
and man-made law. From the sixteenth century on, it might
take the form of right reason of the ideal individual (natural
law) versus "positive legal compulsion."
The problem of the individual versus the state may be argued either as private interest versus law inherent in "the social nature of man," or as public interest versus the law inherent in "the moral individuality of man." That is, either as state or the individual may invoke the "natural law." Natural law can also be invoked to sanction positive law—either the current positive law or the new positive law proposed as its substitute. Thus even when the superior sanctioning power of natural law over positive law is recognized, and no matter which kind of natural law has been intelligently formulated, it has always been possible to differ over interpreting the relation of natural law to the multiple positive law.

Homer's law consisted in positive ordinances (themistae) derived from tradition and custom, but sanctioned by Zeus, who was the source of the general principle of justice: *dike*, due portion or right. Later custom was written down and codified as law—*nomos*. Justice came to mean more than obedience to this law, though; for without discarding the divine sanction and protection of justice, Solon regarded justice as an inherent social principle, "the health of the community." The Milesian natural philosophers conceived of *dike* as an order or balance in nature, by which they meant the cosmos or world of phenomena. In so doing, the Greeks were not transferring man-made law to the cosmos, Jaeger reminds us, but rather deriving human law from the nature of things as the Greeks conceived of nature.
Even Protagoras, who did not derive law from nature this way, made man the maker and measure of law, but preserved the divine sanction through a myth whereby Zeus implanted in man the seed of justice—not that Protagoras would have thought it necessary or desirable to prove "Zeus" or "justice" objectively or absolutely. Protagoras' great conception of law as the center and source of culture, Jaeger believes, was of use to Sophocles when he composed the great choral ode in Antigone, in which the tragic conflict involves the opposition between the positive authority of the state (the man-made edict) and the unwritten law of a venerable religious tradition. 7

Laws became increasingly pragmatic, rationalistic, and arbitrary. Even the conception of law as merely of social use, rather than objectively in harmony with nature, seemed to be dissolving before the cynical conclusion that law is not only wholly relative, but exclusively the will of the stronger interest. 8 To combat such a decline in the meaning of law and justice, Plato wrote the Republic, a justification of the standard of absolute justice. For him, justice was part of virtue, a real principle in the universe, an idea reflected however imperfectly in man and his counterpart the state. It was a harmony guided by the highest element and shared by all the elements (in man or in the state), each element performing its own best function. In the Laws Plato was obliged to attempt to correlate the positive law with ideal justice, the natural law. The sanction he called logos
elethes, right reason, "the golden chord by which God moves the human soul." This divine sanction, Jaeger reminds us, was not given man through revelation, but through highest god-given human reason.9

In Antigone some of the ideas of law and justice discussed above can be illustrated. Ismene, well-meaning but timid, dares not defy the rule of the stronger, the edict of Creon. Creon, who supposes that he is a good law-giver, believes that his edict safeguards the state, and that he is preventing anyone from putting a private interest (a friend or a relative) ahead of the state. The Sophoclean irony is clearly expressed in the lines in which Creon declares that the spirit of man is most truly expressed in law-giving, and that whoever fails to give law according to the best counsels is most base. Later, when he has committed himself to his edict and his conception of law, he persists in it even to the point of calling the greatest evil, disobedience, and the greatest good, obedience to law and order. This order, maintained by positive law, is so important to him that he even declares that it is the citizen's duty to obey the man in charge of the city in things just and unjust.

Haemon, tactful at first, argues with his father that although the gods have implanted wisdom in all men, no man is all wise. The city does not belong exclusively to one man, and it is wrong to disregard the gods. The Chorus at first sympathizes with Creon and assents that order must be maintained, but it recognizes the merits of Haemon's speech,
and it comes to sympathize later with Antigone. It clearly recognizes man's two-fold obligation:

When man honours the laws of the land and
that justice which he hath sworn by the gods
to uphold, proudly stands his city;
No city hath he who, for his rashness, dwells
with sin.

These words are most effective dramatically, for as they are chanted, the guard leads in the captive Antigone. It may at first seem that she has broken those very laws that the Chorus has praised, but actually it is she, not Creon, who upholds the justice sanctioned by the gods.

For her appeal is to the "unfailing statutes of heaven." Neither Zeus nor "Justice who dwells with the gods below" sanctioned the edict of Creon. The law that Antigone obeys is the eternal divine law, which she willingly accepts because of that love for her family which is so much a part of her nature that she herself says, "My nature is to join in loving, not in hating." Antigone, finally, is vindicated. As in many Sophoclean plays, the moral evil of disobeying divine law is symbolically punished by a plague, as Creon comes slowly to understand. The Leader gives the final commentary:

Wisdom is the supreme part of happiness;
and reverence towards the gods must be
inviolate.
Great words of proudf ul men are ever punished
with great blows, and, in old age, teach
the chastened to be wise.

In the Christian Doctrine Milton discusses the written and unwritten Law of God. The unwritten law, "that law of nature given originally to Adam," is still not wholly over-
clouded with sin, but through the Spirit of God is written in men's hearts and renewed. Likewise the "light of Nature not in all quite lost" (P.R. IV, 352) is mentioned in the epics. Adam, who has both right reason and true liberty, forfeits both when his reason is enslaved by passion; yet God through grace will clear man's "senses dark," and He declares:

And I will place within them as a guide
My Umpire Conscience, whom if they will hear,
Light after light well us'd they shall attain
And to the end persisting, safe arrive. (P.L.III,194.7)

"The Law" may refer to written or unwritten law of God, either to "heavenly doctrine in the abstract" or to God's will according to the covenants. The Mosaic Law was "a written code...intended for the Israelites alone." It foreshadowed the new covenant of grace through Christ whereby the entire Mosaic Law, not just the ceremonial law, was abrogated. In Samson Agonistes political obligation is given a very minor place. In this respect the poem is typically Hebraic rather than Hellenic; for the Greek ethics, even the ethical systems of Plato and Aristotle, as Jaeger observes, were specifically relevant to the city-state, and based on the assumption that man is a political animal. The Hebrew "state" is actually a tribe with varying degrees of divine sanction and divinely ordained purpose. The Christians later on, however, had "no state in the ancient Greek sense of the word, and no ethics except the purely individual ethics of religion." They thought first of man's duty to
God and second of his duty to his neighbor. At the time of Plato, as Whitehead reminds us, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's" could not have been said.\(^{15}\) Relatively indifferent to the state, the early Christians could achieve an idealism in social ethics freed from the practical concern of saving at whatever cost a "state" so soon to perish at Judgment Day.\(^{16}\)

Milton treats the Hebrews according to Bible history as God's chosen people, but he provides strong overtones of Christianity. In *Samson Agonistes* he shows tribal feeling rather than citizenship because the drama is set in that turbulent time before there was a king in Israel. Samson is praised for attacking the Philistines on behalf of his country, to be sure,

Yet *Israel* still serves with all his Sons.
The blame rests, then, with the governors and heads of tribes, Samson replies to the Chorus; for they refused to protect him for his individual God-inspired acts of heroism. Rather, they surrendered him to the enemy instead of joining in the fight for their country. Hence the condemnation of

*Nations grown corrupt
And by thir vices brought to servitude (S.A., 268-9)*

because they preferred

*Bondage with ease / to / strenuous liberty. (S.A., 271)*

The use of physical bondage as a symbol of moral servitude and the treatment of tyranny as the punishment of
sloth in a nation reflects a very important idea in Milton's writings. Here he is in agreement with the mediaeval idea of man-made law (as opposed to natural law) as one of the unfortunate necessities arising from Adam's fall. To forsake the service of God, which is perfect freedom, is to become spiritually enslaved in Paradise Lost as in Samson Agonistes. The angel Michael explains this servitude to Adam; and he explains tyranny and enslavement on earth as the consequence:

Since thy original lapse, true Libertie
Is lost, which always with right Reason dwells.

Reason in man obscur'd, or not obeyd,
Immediately inordinate desires
And upstart passions catch the Government
From Reason, and to servitude reduce.
Man till then free. Therefore since hee permits
Within himselfe unworthie Powers to reign
Over free Reason, God in Judgement just
Subjects him from without to violent Lords;
Who oft as undeservedly enthrall
His outward freedom: Tyrannie must be,
Though to the Tyrant thereby no excuse. (P.L.XII, 83-96)

Whole nations, he adds, will sometimes fall so low as to become enslaved this way. Such implications in Samson Agonistes, then, are typically Miltonic, but they are also traditionally Christian; for Krouse notes that interpreters before Milton had seen in Samson's story much these same political overtones.17

Political and religious obligations compelled Dalila to betray Samson--so she alleges as her last resort after all other arguments have failed her. "The bonds of civil duty" obliged her to "entrap a common enemy," just as her
religious obligation, so the priests told her, was to ensnare "an irreligious Dishonor of Dagon." She acquiesced, so she says, because to the public good. (S.A., 867-868) Samson well knows (as a later chapter on his regeneration will show) that these among other too numerous reasons are false and that Dalila's patriotism and religion are false rationalizations and afterthoughts. What if they had been genuine? Samson is willing to answer her on that assumption. She has also professed love for him. That love, if genuine, would have taught her

Far other reasonings, brought forth other deeds. (S.A., 875)

If she had loved him and recognized his love for her, she could not have regarded him as an enemy. If his being an "enemy" was so important, she should have thought of that before she married him. For a wife is supposed to put her obligation to her husband ahead of her political obligations. Indeed, a country that asks a wife to betray her husband is acting

Against the law of nature, law of nations. (S.A., 890)

We may recall Antigone at this point, for it was her nature to love her family and put duty to them, duty with a religious sanction, ahead of the man-made edict. Or we may even think of Agamemnon, who was persuaded that public good (helping his brother and winning the war) demanded and justified the sacrifice of his daughter, an act abhorrent
to the gods and contrary to nature. So Samson perceives that the law of nature must be put ahead of the positive political law and that any country that would demand such a violation of the law of nature has forfeited its right to be obeyed by its subjects or even valued as a true country.

Likewise "gods" who urge ungodly deeds "gods cannot be" and therefore must not be obeyed. (To attribute unlawful deeds to the instigation of the gods likewise seemed blasphemous to Euripides.) Satan uses much the same argument to Eve: if God would harm her for taking what justly ought to be hers, then He could not be just, and

Not just, not God; not feared then,

nor obeis. (P.L. IX, 701)

It is good reasoning—except that it is based on the assumption that God is unjust if He punishes disobedience. What is sophistry in Satan, however, is good argument on Samson's part. Instead of merely denouncing the Philistines and their gods as wicked and therefore unworthy of obedience, Samson explains wherein they were wicked, and his explanation goes beyond the warfare of one nation with another. Thus he progresses intellectually and spiritually.

Samson's principle of obeying a country when it is worthy of obedience and worshipping God because He is just illustrates Milton's own type of political and religious allegiance. The question involved in it is at least as old as Plato's Euthyphro and it is implicit in much Greek drama: Are good deeds "good" because they are pleasing to the gods, or are they pleasing to the gods because they are "good"?
The question, formulated somewhat differently, is also vital in Christian theology: Is God's righteousness or justice dependent upon His will, or is His will dependent upon (if not limited by) His righteousness or justice? The traditional Catholic answer (through Aquinas, at least) is that God through His goodness refrains from some things which He is free to do and that He voluntarily imposes limits upon His own free will. God Himself is the highest good, the supreme value. Occam made values dependent on God's will, which could just as well have created an inverse scale of values in which "sins" were accounted virtues and vice versa, as indeed Occam put will above reason in man. Likewise the Calvinists derived law from God's will rather than from His goodness.¹⁸ The best Anglican answer, on the other hand, may be cited from Hooker:

"The therefore, who think that of the Will of God to do this or that, there is no Reason besides his Will...the World is ruled by so good a Guide, as transgresseth not his own Law: than which, nothing can be more absolute, perfect, and just...Nor is the freedom of the Will of God, any whit abated...by means of this; because the Imposition of this Law upon himself, is his own free and voluntary act."¹⁹

The eternal law by which God works is Nature's Law in the physical universe, Divine Law as revealed in the Bible, and the Law of Reason in the mind of man.

Milton's treatment of God's will, like his treatment of man's will, is much more in accord with the Anglican than with the Calvinistic explanation. Even the line in
which God declares. "What I will is fate," does not mean that God's will is omnipotent and supreme but that there is no "fate" apart from His providence, as the previous chapter explained. Of the great amount of evidence to show Milton's affinity with Hooker on this point, a few lines must suffice:

(Reason also is choice). (P.L.III, 108)

O goodness infinite, goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce. (P.L. XII, 469-70)

By Merit more then Birthright Son of God,
Found worthiest to be so by being good. (P.L. III, 309-310)

Back on thy foes more glorious to return
Then scornd thou didst depart, and to subdue
By force, who reason for thir Law refuse,
Right reason for thir Law, and for thir King
Messiah, who by right of merit
Weigns. (P.L. VI, 39-43)

Right reason, immanent law, also rules Adam and Eve before the Fall, except for the one command imposed upon them, the sole pledge of their obedience to God.

After the Fall and before the coming of Christ, man is subject not only to man-made and often tyrannic laws but also to those laws given to the chosen people of Israel. These laws reflect man's imperfection. Michael explains that these laws as a divine foreshadowing of the new covenant and the sacrifice of Christ. This passage reflects St. Paul:

Law can discover sin, but not remove,
Save by those shadowie expiations weak,
The bloud of Bulls and Goats, they may conclude
Some bloud more precious must be paid for Man,
Just for unjust, that in such righteousness
To them by Faith imputed, they may finde
Justification towards God, and peace
Of Conscience, which the Law by Ceremonies
Cannot appease, nor Man the moral part
Perform, and not performing cannot live.
So Law appears imperfet, and but giv'n
With purpose to resign them in full time
Up to a better Cov'nant, disciplin'd
From shadowe Types to Truth, from Flesh to Spirit,
From imposition of strict Laws, to free
Acceptance of large Grace.......(P.L.XII, 290-305)

Although Milton goes beyond the Jewish conception of
moral obligation in Samson Agonistes, the Christian attitude
toward God's laws cannot be so explicitly formulated there
as in the passage cited above. Yet even in the drama Milton
allows his Hebrew Chorus to express the inadequacies of
Hebrew law and to recognize its arbitrary character:

As if they would confine th'interminable,
And tie him to his own prescript,
Who made our Laws to bind us, not himself,
And hath full right to exempt
Whom so it pleases him by choice
From National obstruction, without taint
Of sin or legal debt;
For with his own Laws he can best
dispence.  (S.A., 307-314)

In context, the passage justifies God's setting aside for
Samson a tribal law concerning marriage. It also prepares
for the catastrophe of the drama, as will be demonstrated
later. But to the Christian reader, the last line conveys
overtones of the breaking of the old covenant and the gift
of grace through the new covenant.

The question of political and religious obligation
also arises in Samson's dialogue with Harapha. Harapha
calls Samson

A Murtherer, a Revolter, and a Robber. (S. A., 1180)

Only the term revolter, which the giant explains, concerns us here. Since Israel was subject to Philistine sway, as evidenced by the magistrates' willingness to deliver Samson into the hands of the Philistines, Samson was guilty, from the Philistine point of view, of "breaking the league" between the Hebrews and the Philistines. Samson retorts that a nation conquered by force owes no allegiance to the conqueror but has the right to rebel:

It was the force of Conquest; force with force
Is well ejected when the Conquer'd can. (S. A., 1206-7)

Furthermore, Samson became hostile only after their hostilities toward him. Yet Samson knows that there must be some justification other than Philistine force and hostility, some higher motive. This he explains as a special religious obligation to obey God's command to him (a command not given to the rest of the Israelites) to begin the deliverance of Israel. The Israelites, he explains here as he had explained earlier to the Chorus, did wrong in failing to recognize him as their God-given champion.

Now that Samson is the captive of the Philistines, though, there are new questions of obligation. Manoa comes to ransom him from the Philistines. It is possible that in writing the dialogue in which Manoa and Samson discuss this problem, Milton had in mind another man awaiting death in prison, another man who refused a well-meant offer to buy
his freedom because he felt it to be his duty to remain and submit to justice—the Socrates of Plato's Crito. The circumstances of Socrates and Samson are strikingly different and the essential characters and issues scarcely at first glance comparable. Yet Milton's additions to the Biblical story often involve parallels with classical literature, parallels that invite the reader to draw more contrasts than comparisons. "Yet what compare?"

Crito, offering to give a sum of money to release Socrates and enable him to go into exile, wishes to save Socrates partly for Socrates' own sake, and partly for the sake of himself and the others who would lose an irreplaceable friend and teacher if Socrates were to die. Knowing that Socrates is always motivated by a sense of moral obligation, Crito attempts to rationalize the escape as Socrates' duty. First he urges obligation to a friend, for Crito "would otherwise be thought to value money more than the life of a friend." Socrates rejects the reputation of his friend in the eyes of the many as an adequate motive, for both he and Crito contemn the opinion of the many. Then Crito urges obligation to family and argues from the "sad and discreditable" consequences of Socrates' proposed death that Socrates is wrong to waste and neglect the life that might be valued and protected elsewhere, and wrong to accept a death that would simply gratify his enemies.

In the words of Manoa we hear some of these very same protests: "Self-preservation bids" is a more explicit state-
ment of the argument that Crito felt that he had to put in subtler, more sophisticated words. It is better, Manoa urges, to be cared for at home and possibly to be allowed to serve God again, or at least to be restored to His favor, than to die in the service of the Philistines. It is also better to accept the help of a father, who would far rather care for his son than be rich—who would, indeed, gladly be the poorest in his tribe if he might have his son—than to persist in the "self-rigorous" course that Samson has chosen.

The answer which Socrates gives Crito takes several forms. The lesser obligations that Crito urges are pre-eminent only in the opinion of the multitude, not in the only opinion worth considering, that of the wise. Not life in and for itself, but the good and just life, is to be valued. A man with the proper sense of values will do the right thing, will put justice first, and then he will give consideration to the lesser obligations. What is right, not the consequences, must determine action; but, indeed, the consequences of doing right are usually better from every point of view than the consequences of putting secondary matters first. (The consequences of Socrates' going into exile to teach might be the reverse of what Crito intended, for example.)

The right thing for Socrates is to obey the law. For him, the grounds of obedience are the debt of gratitude that he owes to the state (similar to the gratitude that one owes to a parent), his own freely given consent to obey the laws
of Athens, and his loyalty to the eternal principle of law as reflected and embodied in the particular laws of Athens. "Think of justice first, that you may be justified before the princes of the world below," the Laws tell Socrates, for the laws of Athens are akin to the law of the other world, and no law is invalidated simply because particular men have erred in its application. Essentially, the test of conduct is whether a particular action constitutes loyalty or disloyalty to the ideal principle of justice. Socrates does not believe that the unjust sentence is sufficient justification for him to betray justice. Therefore he remains in prison and awaits his death.

So much the more Samson, who is guilty as Socrates was not, is willing to remain in the prison at work until death releases him, for he believes that his punishment is just—the symbol, indeed, of his spiritual blindness and real servitude to Dalila—the sort of "servitude" applied above to erring nations and men, as described in Paradise Lost, and also the servitude that Socrates speaks of in Phaedo when he tells how souls become imprisoned in bodies for being too subservient to bodily desires. To what end should Samson seek life, since he has abused and wasted his life? The political captivity is really irrelevant. Samson knows that whether or not God has deserted him, God is just, and he must continue to obey God, seek to atone, and measure whatever is offered him by the spiritual standard of value.
Yet Samson in his captivity is offered another choice more important than the alternatives suggested by Manoa, Delila, and Harapha. He is ordered to appear and perform at the feast of Dagon. At first he refuses because religious law (the law imposed by God upon the Hebrews) forbids. Samson is certain, moreover, that he must not err again by misusing the divine gift of strength, now renewed in him. The Chorus fears for Samson's physical safety (as Manoa had feared earlier) and urges him for that reason to obey the Philistines. It believes, as Ismene had believed also, that civil power may be too strong to be disobeyed. The Chorus cannot see the distinction between serving the Philistines at the mill and obeying this command. It urges further that the outward act could not defile him since his heart is pure and devoted to God, not Dagon.

With this last statement Samson agrees only thus far, that if he is physically constrained to appear, the act forced by physical constraint will not defile him; but he has a choice of obeying force or not obeying. This kind of obedience differs from the daily servitude. To the civil power or nation that has him in its power, even if it is an enemy nation, he owes work in return for his food. But obedience to God's law must come first. This is a much better answer than his earlier reply that God in His jealousy would demand that His law be kept unless He should, as He might, dispense with it.
Only when Samson has evinced his mature understanding of the problem of obligation to God and to nation, does God's direct command dispense with the religious prohibition against being present at the Idol's temple as it had earlier dispensed with the tribal marriage laws. Before the second summons is given to Samson, it is clear to him through intimate impulse or divine revelation that God has given him a new summons to perform a great act in His service. And when Samson goes forth to perform it he satisfies the outward conformity to the nation that has physical power over him (incidentally) and at the same time goes in inner, spiritual obedience to God. At the temple,

Hitherto, Lords, what your commands impos'd
I have perform'd, as reason was, (S.A., 1640-41)

he declares; and then, as greater reason is, he obeys God's command.

In his treatment of the problem of religious and political obligation in Samson Agonistes, Milton agrees with most of Christian theology in general (and with Hooker in many particulars) in conceiving of a transcendent God who manifests and imposes law and who acts according to law Himself, and of an immanent law of right reason within the individual souls of men. Yet, with the difference that Milton's God reveals law and imposes specific laws on the Jewish people in particular, this conception of law is similar to Plato's. And Milton's Samson is comparable both to Antigone and to Socrates in prison: like Antigone he is
loyal to a religious law higher than any positive political precept, and like Socrates he puts loyalty to eternal justice above self-preservation or practical advantage. Samson obeys the Jewish tribal laws and even within limits obeys his captors but will set both lesser kinds of obedience aside when God gives him a direct command; and his answers to Dalila show that he obeys country only when it rightly demands his obedience, and that he obeys God because He is righteous.
CHAPTER VII

MILTON'S CONCEPTION OF THE TRAGIC HERO

"Proudly secure, yet liable to fall."—(S.A., 1.55)

How far was it possible for Milton to reconcile the Christian conception of a hero, a good man who repents of his sins and achieves through martyrdom a spiritual victory, with classical precept for, and example of, the characterization of the tragic hero? Here, again, it is difficult to separate one element of the drama from the rest, to treat character apart from the problem of justice or the spirit of regeneration; but this chapter will concentrate particularly on the hero's tragic flaw, which is a form of sin.

Aristotle's two accounts—apparently not altogether consistent—of the character of the tragic hero and the nature of the tragic flaw (hamartia) have occasioned a great deal of commentary. Actually, it is no wonder that any sharp distinction between "verisimilitude" and "decorum" broke down in Renaissance criticism, for even the separation of plot and character is difficult. To the modern reader, of course, the difference between the two is more distinct than it was in Aristotle's Poetics. Hence Aristotle's statement that plot is more important than character has proved a misleading critical dictum to many modern critics, whether they believe that Aristotle ought to have put character first or whether they rejoice to find support for their own preference for a good yarn or
even sensational action over Ibsen-esque character study.

Here Cooper's extended translation and commentary on the Poetics is helpful. Ethos, he points out, is not equivalent precisely to character, and not to be identified with the agents in a drama, but rather the moral or ethical bent of what we call a character, just as dianoia is the intellectual element in a character's speeches.\textsuperscript{1} Plot is the form or guiding principle of the development of tragedy, the soul of tragedy, the revelation of character in action. According to this way of thinking, kindness and cruelty, happiness and misery, are not so much attributes of character as ways to acting and reacting or consequences of action. These qualities are related to the agent's tendency to choose, but not solely dependent upon his choice.

The men in action represented in a drama may be higher than we are, Aristotle tells us, or lower, or like ourselves. The lower type belongs to comedy; the nobler, to tragedy. In the words of Cooper's translation, "the nobility of the agents is what distinguishes Tragedy from Comedy."\textsuperscript{2} This translation makes it clear (as it is also clear from the context) that Aristotle intends a value judgment. Later definitions from Theophrastus through the Middle Ages and Renaissance differentiated the heroic fate of great kings and leaders who suffer adverse fortunes from the lot of private men of average fortune. This distinction McMahon attributes to a lost piece of writing
by Aristotle, "On Poets," and not to the Poetics itself. Its influence is found in the mediaeval conception of tragedy as the downfall of a great prince from happiness to misery and in the Renaissance differentiation between comedy and tragedy on the basis of the rank of the characters. Such a distinction is not really vital for the inner significance of tragedy:

There is no reason inherent in the house itself why Babbitt's house in Zenith should not be the scene of a tragedy quite as well as the Castle of Elsinore. The only reason it is not is Babbitt himself.

Yet it has this much truth, that it takes into account the necessary scope for the action of a tragedy as opposed to small, pathetic incidents.

In the thirteenth section of the Poetics Aristotle discusses what sort of hero can arouse pity and fear in us. The conclusion is that the hero must be "not superlatively good and just, nor yet one whose misfortune comes about through vice and depravity; but a man who is brought low through some error of judgment or shortcoming." When a superlatively good and just man falls into misery, we are simply shocked, and when a wicked man falls, we can feel little sympathy, since his wickedness alienates him from us. We fear, rather, for one more or less like ourselves, and we pity one who suffers disproportionately for his faults.

What sort of faults are these, or what is the tragic flaw? Hamartia was literally and originally a bad shot,
as Livingstone explains, "a miss, an error, a false note struck in the harmony of the universe." He further differentiates Greek wrong-doing from Hebraic sin:

But a miss or an error can be corrected, and the false notes are silent when their waves of air ebb away. The prophets felt differently. Jehovah is absolute goodness. A wrong act is a permanent insult to him. God will not forget it, because he cannot...Clearly evil will vanish more quickly from a world to which wrong-doing is an offense against God than from one which regards it as missing the mark.6

Even among the Greeks, though, hamartia was extended to apply to moral and intellectual failure of insight, and the man who committed it was regarded as responsible at least in some instances, and not just unfortunate. Cooper equates hamartia with "blindness of heart." This failure he illustrates by the wrath of Achilles, the disobedience of Adam and Eve, the ambition of Macbeth, and so on.7 It is possible to construct a widely applicable and very respectable theory of tragedy based on this conception of the tragic flaw. It is also possible to support such a theory, as Phillips has done, with examples to show that even in Homer occasionally hamartia is more than a blunder -- positive moral guilt.8

Yet to make the meaning "blindness of heart" the universally valid explanation of the tragic flaw would be to extend the theory too far; for the discussion of hamartia is not intended even in the Poetics as an absolute rule, and it clearly cannot be applied to all Greek tragedy. In Aristotle's discussion of the best kind of tragedy,
Sophocles is evidently taken as the model, and Oedipus Rex is the chief example cited. Even so, when Aristotle talks about the kind of situation likeliest to arouse pity and terror (and not about the effect of the whole tragedy), Oedipus Rex comes out second best because it involves a deed of horror done in ignorance and comprehended afterwards. Aristotle's assertion that the deed of horror, almost committed in ignorance, but just barely averted, is better, appears to contradict his assertion that the unhappy ending is typical of tragedy. What is superlative of its kind in one part of a tragedy, however, may be unsuitable in the work as a whole; and a situation richer in pathos and terror than that of Oedipus might nevertheless not achieve the proper tragic effect.

Thus it is not to be expected that the Poetics (probably a set of notes rather than a finished treatise in spite of its pre-eminent critical significance) will be explicit and consistent on every point. Nor is there sufficient evidence that Aristotle always meant by hamartia the combination of mental and spiritual blindness or even a failure of either intellect or moral will by itself. Sometimes, as in the instance of Oedipus, he may have thought of it as an error that neither implied any intellectual weakness in the hero nor involved him in moral guilt. Such a statement does not contradict the assumption that Aristotle believed that tragedy has a moral or ethical purpose; it simply means that in practice, dramatists may
involve their heroes in pitiable and terrible situations as the result of their unintentional violation of the moral order.

Greene goes too far, no doubt, in the direction of purely aesthetic interpretation when he calls **hamartia** "the artistic device by which the action is brought to a crisis," but he and Kitto are both eager to rescue Greek drama as it exists from the excessive Aristotelianism of the critics—and even from Aristotle. What is the relation of Aristotle's **Poetics** to Aeschylus? "The answer is," Kitto contends, "roughly, None whatever." For Kitto finds the Aeschylean characters incompletely characterized, more like aspects of character. Agamemnon, for example, although not wholly wicked or evil, is essentially the victim of **hybris**. He does not possess **hamartia**; he himself is "a typical **hamartia** of mankind writ large" instead of a noble hero whose flaw is pride. Prometheus, though perhaps not perfect, has no **hamartia**. Antigone likewise has no **hamartia**. She dies, Greene declares, simply because Sophocles chooses to kill her.

Yet Greene, if not Kitto, would admit that such statements are a rather rough answer to the **Poetics**. Calling **hamartia** a device used by the dramatist does not entirely explain it, any more than Nick Bottom's assurance that the Lion is only Nick Bottom, entirely explains the Lion. The moral bent of the characters is important whether or not the tragic flaw is a sin, and whether or not
poetic justice takes place. Most of the great tragic figures are morally nobler than average; most of them are not saints so perfect as to preclude our kinship or sympathy.

By no means all spectators and readers will agree even about the pity and fear aroused in them, much less about the moral status of the tragic characters. Murray, for example, does not regard his emotions as pity and fear, but he does not hesitate to admit that both Clytemnestra and Milton's Satan are greater than he, and that he would feel "small and respectful" beside them. According to Huxley,

Indeed, you can't be really bad unless you do have most of the virtues. Look at Milton's Satan for example. Brave, strong, generous, loyal, prudent, temperate, self-sacrificing. And let's give the dictators the credit that's due to them; some of them are nearly as virtuous as Satan.13

Most critics stress the fact that the hero is better than average, not so much the fact that he is "not superlatively good and just." Jepsen, for instance, says that the hero is a good person who does not succeed in maintaining the perilous balance of the mean. She cites Aristotle's Ethics:

We do not blame one who diverges a little from the right course...for in fact no object of perception is easy to define.

She continues:

No one can identify himself with either saint or sinner...The Greek tragedians...generally conceive of a universe in which some standards of morality are absolute (albeit a universe in which the principle of hamartia, or missing the mark, has ample room to operate).14
Pitcher states even more emphatically the case for the better-than-average hero and urges the reader not to expect to find a warning through horrible example, but rather a vindication of the good and just man in adversity. "In some sense," though, he adds, these great-souled heroes are not wholly innocent, and thus *hamartia* is not wholly devoid of moral connotations.\(^{15}\) Hamilton also rejects any definition of tragedy that rules out the suffering of the innocent. Although such suffering may not be tragic, the tragedy depends on the greatness of the sufferer's soul rather than on his innocence or guilt. Antigone and Prometheus, both innocent, and "Macbeth, the ambition-mad, the murderer of his king and guest," she thus finds tragic.\(^{16}\)

Since Aeschylus, who is chiefly concerned with the problem of justifying evil, and Euripides, who provides few heroes and few good characters who possess a tragic flaw, have already been discussed in Chapter V, reference will be made here chiefly to Sophocles, with the exception of two characters from Aeschylus' tragedies. *Agamemnon* provides the closest parallel to the Hebrew sense of sin. Agamemnon, who commits *hybris* when he treads the purple, is wrong in exalting himself more than a man should be exalted, in proudly disregarding due moderation. Pride is an essential part of his character and is largely responsible for his terrible death. Prometheus, on the other hand, is innocent—by no means morally odious, as is the Zeus of *Prometheus Bound*. For his magnanimous gift
to humanity, for his calm heroic magnitude of mind, Prometheus is cast into Tantalus—although we know from the legend that the rest of the trilogy must have concerned his reconciliation with Zeus. Aeschylus believes that the moral order provides for the punishment of sin, but he does not limit the problem of evil to this conception of suffering as punishment.

Sophocles may be considered here at greater length because his chief contribution to tragedy was his study of the tragic hero, the outstanding figure in a complicated pattern of action. In some of his tragedies, Aristotle's conception of the tragic hero, the great man who through one tragic flaw suffers far beyond his deserts, obtains. In other Sophoclean tragedies, the heroes and heroines, lacking the tragic flaw, belong (in Hamilton's words) "to the only true aristocracy, that of all passionate souls" that are capable of great suffering and of the dignity that attends the suffering soul.\(^{17}\) Whether or not the suffering can be explained, it is attended with the sense of human significance, "pity and awe" and also "reconciliation and exaltation."\(^{18}\) Conservative, clear-sighted, and detached, Sophocles, according to Hamilton, deserves the praise given Milton:

Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart. Yet even though he "saw life hard," he reveals a tenderness toward his characters and a beauty of expression that alleviate the darkness of their suffering.\(^{19}\)
In so concerning himself with character, Sophocles was fulfilling that high Greek purpose described by Protagoras: forming the soul into true harmony or rhythm or concord. This is true humanism. The scope of the separate play, rather than that of the trilogy, Jaeger thinks, was more in keeping with this purpose than the trilogy, the form that enabled Aeschylus to work out his great clashes of cosmic principle.20

Antigone, which does embody the moral conflict between obedience to the law of the state (man-made edict) and allegiance to the religious laws concerning the sacred duty to family, nevertheless emphasizes the representatives of these laws — Creon and Antigone. That Antigone freely chooses her loyalty and accepts the consequences elevates her morally. If she falls short of perfection (and some have called her too determined, too incisive, too eager for martyrdom), she is all the more human as a character; but she has no imperfection that leads to her doom. Her suicide, as the alternative to the far more painful death decreed, is simply an assertion that she is still in command of her destiny. To make that the tragic flaw is preposterous. That she need not have died, that she narrowly misses being rescued, should be considered as part of the irony and the pathos of the drama. Yet she manifests such moral greatness in her death that "we would not have her choose otherwise."21
Antigone's lack of *hamartia* is possibly one reason that Kitto would emphasize the other major figure to the point of calling the play the tragedy of Creon instead of Antigone. To elevate Creon to the center, Kitto has to defend him (and rightly) from the charge of "folly and wilfulness" in his original stand. Creon is "more than the stupid fool who kills her." He is sensible and sincere. His faults are over-confidence, narrowness, lack of reason, and obstinacy—although he ultimately does yield. Even Kitto has to admit that Creon is at least "like a tyrant." 22 Still, it may be doubted that Creon should overshadow Antigone, or that he has the greatness of soul to do so. The punishment for his impiety is terrible and arouses a certain pity, but his many faults have only his sincerity (wrong-headed, at that) to balance them. Because he can by no means rival Antigone's claim to our sympathy, and because he was responsible for her death, his punishment does not seem unmerited. He attains at last through suffering to wisdom, but we are not allowed to witness any really significant fruits of that wisdom.

If Oedipus learns wisdom through suffering, it is in *Oedipus at Colonus*, not in *Oedipus Rex*. Nor has he a tragic flaw. It would have been easy, had Sophocles wished to do so, to construct a drama in which Oedipus was made responsible through some tragic flaw, such as ambition to be king, or a violent temper, or failure to achieve
sophrosyne, for all of which possible types of hamartia he has been blamed. Yet Sophocles makes it clear that even though Oedipus is impetuous and conscious of his greatness, he killed Laius in self-defense only after considerable provocation, and he came to Thebes to avoid the doom of which the oracle had warned him. It is all very well to say that if Oedipus had never raised a hand against any man his senior or married any woman, his tragedy would never have occurred. It is equally true that if he had been less great or had had less intellect, he would not have been in a situation where this tragedy could have occurred. And it is erroneous to suppose that a man like Stevenson's overcautious little chemist who took "his morality on the principle of tin shoes and tepid milk" would serve to illustrate that sophrosyne which Aristotle and Sophocles valued. Sheppard, denying that Oedipus has a tragic flaw, writes:

No, Sophocles has chosen to depict a hero, brave and generous and sensitive, endowed with high intelligence, stalwart in service, eager at all costs to help his fellows and to face the truth. He is entangled, not by sin, but circumstance, and even his virtues, in a maze of error; and he presses on, unflinching, gallant, desperate, only to find...his whole life ruined.\textsuperscript{23}

In Ajax, on the other hand, the tragic flaw is evident: hybris, or sense of injured merit, which leads the hero to attempt a mass murder. Here Odysseus, his opposite and the foil for him, illustrates precisely the sophrosyne which Ajax so evidently lacks. Yet Athene's
intervention, although it causes him to slaughter cattle
in his mad blindness instead of murdering the Greek
leaders, leaves him so humiliated that he kills himself.
In this play, unlike _Oedipus Rex_, the greater part of
destiny does seem to be character. Greene explains:

> Athene therefore plays the part of fate, not
> in willing his death, but in diverting his actions
> in such a way that the outcome, his character
> being what it is, will inevitably be his death.

And in the _Trachiniae_ although Deianira errs intellectually,
she has no tragic flaw; but the hero, Hercules, has: his
infatuation with Iole. Both of them suffer far beyond their
deserts.

That Milton was aware of the requirements of classical
and post-classical criticism is evident from the drama
itself. He even takes into account the requirement about
the hero's rank—to refute it. According to Parker, Milton
perhaps thought that "even a Judge of Israel could not be
considered a ruler in the sense that Oedipus and Agamemnon
were rulers" because, for one thing, Israel was then under
Philistine sway. But the Genevan commentary on the Book
of Judges offers a more profound explanation of the term
Judge:

> So... he raised up from time to time...such as
> should deliver them...And these deliverers the
> Scripture calleth Judges, because they were
> executors of Gods judgements, not chosen of the
> people nor by succession, but raised up as it
> seemed best to God for the governance of his
> people.

Samson was not, properly speaking, Israel's judge, but her
deliverer. And the kind of rule that Milton was concerned
with had nothing to do with earthly kingdoms; it was the inner rule of virtuous reason over the passions. Hence the Chorus explains:

By how much from the top of wondrous glory,  
Strongest of mortal men,  
To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fall'n.  
For him I reckon not in high estate  
Whom long descent of birth  
Or the spehr of fortune raises;  
But thee whose strength, while vertue was  
her mate,  
Might have subdued the Earth,  
Universally crown'd with highest praises. (S. A., 167-174)

Into this definition of "high estate" Milton also assimilates the mediaeval conception of the subject of tragedy.

If spiritual blindness was not the hamartia of Oedipus, it was surely the flaw of Samson. Here although the aesthetic principle could govern the choice of a noble hero with a tragic failing, the nature of the failing would have to be defined according to Milton's Christian ethics. It could not be the result of failure to attain the mean in conduct in Aristotelian terms, even though Milton frequently uses a kind of Christianized Aristotelianism in defining ethical virtues in his Christian Doctrine. It surely could not be mere error.

For Milton's hero the tragic flaw was failure in the quest for spiritual perfection, failure to give the highest loyalty to the supreme value. For Milton, this was God. Since Milton consistently treats sin as the failure of right reason, of intellect and of will, Samson's
flaw can be termed both intellectual and ethical. Likewise it is an oversimplification of the Fall of Adam and Eve to say that Eve fell because her reason was deceived, whereas Adam, though informed by his reason that he was choosing wrong, nevertheless fell also, by his own erring will. Eve was deceived by Satan's false appearances and by his sophistries, it is true; yet it was in part her willingness to be deceived, her will for power, that caused her to forget that she had the knowledge of good. And Adam reasoned falsely when he valued Eve more than God, for he did not think about God at all when he sinned. Probably Milton is closer to Aquinas and to Plato than he is to Augustine when he stresses reason more than will:

But God left free the Will, for what obeys
Reason is free, and Reason he made right
But bid her well beware, and still erect,
Least by some faire appeareing good surpris'd
She dictate false, and misinforme the Will
To do what God expressly hath forbid.

(P.L. IX, 351-356)

Of this "right reason" Douglas Bush gives the clearest and best explanation:

Right reason is not merely reason in our sense of the word. It is not a dry light, a nonmoral instrument of inquiry. Neither is it simply the religious conscience which distinguishes man from the beasts and which links man with man and with God. This faculty was implanted by God in all men, Christian and heathen alike, as a guide to truth and conduct. Though its effectual workings may be obscured by sin, it makes man, in his degree, like God; it enables him, within limits, to understand the purposes of God. 26
In Samson the lack of wisdom is emphasized as well as weakness:

O impotence of mind, in body strong!
But what is strength without a double share
Of wisdom, vast, unwieldy, burdensom,
Proudly secure, yet liable to fall. (S.A., 52-55)

For this weakness Samson blames only himself, for as he tells Dalila, weakness is no excuse: "All wickedness is weakness." Samson recognizes that he had an obligation not to profane

The mystery of God giv'n /Him/ under pledge
Of vow,                                       (S.A., 378-9)

and he knows that he had sufficient knowledge to be on guard against the treachery of a Philistine woman. This knowledge, indeed, he had gained from experience:

did not she
Of Timna first betray me, and reveal
The Secret wrested from me...? (S.A., 382-4)

Milton is at some pains, however, to dignify what in the Bible does not seem a very lofty failing in a hero who does not seem there, for that matter, especially noble. What he is doing in Samson Agonistes, as in Paradise Lost, is relating one type of sin to another and relating all the sins involved to a false sense of values. In the Fall of Adam and Eve, an act that seems in itself too trivial to be blamed as sin, the plucking of an apple, is invested with significance through the command of God, and attended with a number of complicated sins through the attitudes of Adam and Eve that accompany their eating the apple. Not the act itself, but the agent's
state of mind, marks the act as sinful.

So Samson is likewise guilty of more than one sin. Pride is involved in his fault, for he admits that he was too proudly secure in his own strength to be sufficiently humble before God or sufficiently alert to keep His slight prohibition:

But I Gods counsel have not kept, his holy secret Presumptuously have publish'd, impiously, Weakly at least, and shamefully. (S.A.,497-499)

Here the qualification "weakly at least" seems a truer explanation than the idea of pride or hybris. Yet Milton has him explain why he was weak or blind, why he did not use his intelligence to see through Dalila's "weakest subtleties" and specious charm to her real duplicity. It was not, as Samson once almost protests, that God had withheld from him the wisdom that He ought to have bestowed in proportion to Samson's strength, but that Samson had become too proud:

Fearless of danger, like a petty God I walk'd about admir'd of all and dreaded On hostile ground, none daring my affront. Then swoll'n with pride into the snare I fell Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains, Softn'd with pleasure and voluptuous life. (S.A.. 529-534)

This is the failure that Hanford calls "classical hybris" and compares with the fault of Marc Antony, who "struts to his destruction." Yet the Aristotelian mean between excessive pride or conceit and the deficiency, being too poor in spirit, was magnanimity in the special sense of justifiable pride--claiming one's due of honor.
The Christian, on the other hand, was expected to renounce more than excessive pride. In Taylor's words,

Self-control, measure, limit...were principles of the antique... The Christian spirit broke through them all...Its profound spirituality...had not the clarity of classic limitation...Classic self-control meant measure, nothing in excess. Christian self-control...knew no measure; of what it condemned it could not have too little, of what it approved it could not have enough...It had its own universal principle of proportionment...love of God.29

When Milton defines pride and magnanimity and humility, it is clear that the Christian ethical values have transformed the Aristotelian ethical system, but Milton still uses the Aristotelian ethical framework to secure the clarity of the classical structure. When he discusses man's duty to his neighbor, he defines magnanimity as accepting or refusing honors and the like according to "a regard for our own dignity, rightly understood." Likewise the angel Raphael, defining Adam's proper attitude toward Eve, advises him to show "self-esteem, grounded on just and right." Yet this quality is, and is not, the Aristotelian quality. In Milton's ethical scheme, the excess is ambition, seeking one's own glory, or pride, which is over-evaluation of oneself, and the deficiency, pusillanimity, for instance, Saul's reluctance to be king.30 The extremes certainly sound Aristotelian.

Yet man's own dignity, rightly understood, cannot be defined apart from man's relation to God. Adam himself had
dignity because he was created in the image of God. And Milton's comments on pride and humility in the section of Christian Doctrine defining man's duties to God are considerably less Aristotelian. There the virtue to be sought is humility, "that whereby we acknowledge our unworthiness in the sight of God." Absolute humility before God characterizes the "poor in spirit" who will be blessed. Nor can man arrogate any merit to himself. Of this humility man cannot have too much; for when Milton tells us what is opposed to it, he abandons the Aristotelian scheme. There is no excess, but only "false or superstitious humility," by which he seems in his illustration to imply Roman Catholic mortification of the flesh. The deficiency, or rather, the quality which is the exact opposite, is pride—pride towards God. One is condemned for that, "because he [gives] not God the glory." 31

Samson failed not in being too arrogant toward his neighbors (he ought, indeed, to have had more honor in Israel, and he should have asserted his rightful authority over Dalila, as a matter of fact) but in arrogance before God, instead of absolute humility. This failure is allied with lust and sloth, which in his regeneration he must overcome, just as he must manifest humility, faith, and proper sense of his own dignity—as God's chosen servant. The regeneration, then, must be the counterpart of his sin, which was more complex than classical hybris. Because Samson had come to glory in his strength as his
own when he should have dedicated it to God, because he was slothful when he should have been perpetually alert as God's champion, because passion had enslaved his manhood and blinded his reason, Samson made the wrong choice: in a casual, negligent act of weakness, he betrayed his God. Here, although Milton draws a parallel between Samson and similar offenders condemned by the "Gentiles in thir Parables," betrayal of God goes beyond Greek hamartia. It is betrayal of that loyalty to God which the Hebrews made intensely personal, and which Samson compares to betraying a friend's secret; and it is also betrayal of an ethical principle, of the moral order.

Thus Samson's fault of pride differs from classical hybris and his sin is more drastic than the Greek hamartia; but there is a sufficient parallel between sin and hamartia, pride and hybris, that Samson, who is an essentially noble man, and who remains magnificent if pathetic in his misery, is worthy of comparison with the Greek heroes. Here Milton has used the classical model for treating the hero's character, the classical technique, but has transformed it through the Christian ethical evaluation.
CHAPTER VIII
SAMSON'S PURIFICATION BY TRIAL

"That which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary." -- Areopagitica, C.E. IV, 311.

The Hebrew spirit of Samson Agonistes is nowhere more evident than in Milton's treatment of Samson's sense of sin, repentance, and regeneration. No really comparable spiritual pattern exists in Greek drama, where crime and vengeance occur more often than sin. Samson, like some of the Greek heroes, learns wisdom through suffering, but he also learns it through overcoming temptation; and he sins, repents, and atones, as they do not. The Hebraic and Hellenic attitudes are as different as the two styles of such passages as these, which are ostensibly on the same subject:

But where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding? It cannot be gotten for gold; neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof...Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding. ---The Book of Job.

God's law is that he who learns must suffer. And even in our sleep pain that cannot forget falls upon the heart...and in our own despite comes wisdom by the awful grace of God.1

In the Agamemnon of Aeschylus, the hero, as we have seen, commits hybris in exalting himself unduly, but he does not commit a sin in precisely the Hebraic sense, in spite of the apparent similarity between hybris and sin: Agamemnon does not alienate himself from God by deifying himself or by substituting a self-centered code of values for a God-centered morality. In dying unregenerate, he is nevertheless
not spiritually damned. In *Prometheus Bound* the innocent hero is certainly alienated from a tyrannic god, but not through the hero's sin. If the seemingly powerless wisdom of Prometheus and the seemingly blind power of Zeus are ultimately to be reconciled, it will not be through Prometheus' saying, "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee?" or admitting that the wisdom of Zeus transcends his understanding. The most plausible speculation about the unbounding of Prometheus is Murray's theory that just as the mechanical law of "justice" for the consequences of an act gives way to a more merciful consideration of the agent's motives, so there will be an evolution in the ideas of a perfectible Zeus. The "compromise" indicated by the myth will not compromise Prometheus.²

It is true that there have been other interpretations: fallible mankind is called an insufficiently disinterested judge to be allowed to acquit Prometheus, who is thus condemned as a kind of Faustian rebel who deserved his fate for defying Zeus and betraying the divine secret in giving man fire. Perhaps the most extreme exponent of that point of view is Werblowsky, who would gloriously damn Prometheus and Satan alike for the same sin because they are the same "archetype."³

Possibly Milton alludes to Prometheus as well as Tantalus when he has Samson blame himself:

But I Gods counsel have not kept, his holy secret
Presumptuously have publish'd, impiously,
Weakly at least, and shamefully: A sin
That Gentiles in thir Parables condemn
To thir abyss and horrid pains confin'd. (*S.A.*, 497-501)
Yet one allusion to Prometheus...none too specific at
that...scarcely gives us any clue to Milton's interpretation
of Prometheus, who was known to patristic and mediaeval
commentators (whom Milton well knew) not as a Satanic
rebel but as the type of Christ. Milton could just as
well have drawn upon some details of Prometheus' courage
for Satan or his suffering for Samson without equating him
with either. And even if both Samson and Prometheus are
betrayers of divine secrets, the parallels between
Prometheus Bound and Samson Agonistes are chiefly structural,
for the motivation of the two heroes is so different as
to rule out a reading of either play that requires identi-
fication of the heroes. 4

Neither are Oedipus and Samson, though comparable in
some externals, comparable in spirit, or in their relations
to God. Oedipus, it is true, blames himself, and he curses
his mental blindness about himself. But he regrets the
fact that he is a man accursed, a man who unwittingly
has done an abhorrent deed. If there is any "expiation,"
if, indeed, there is any of the wisdom that comes through
suffering, it is found not in Oedipus Rex but in Oedipus
at Colonus. Even there, Oedipus dies in calm and sanctity,
not in spiritual or physical agony; and throughout that
play he has been able to affirm his innocence. Chapter VII
has already dealt with the problem of sin or of tragic
flaw. This summary has been included here only to sub-
stantiate the statement that the idea of sin and atonement is non-Hellenic.

For an understanding of Milton's treatment of this spiritual pattern, the best commentary is his Christian Doctrine, in which he treats temptation as part of God's providence. Men may be tempted. Milton explains, either for evil or for good. God may withdraw His grace, or present occasions for sin, or harden the heart and blind the understanding of the sinner in a temptation called evil from the standpoint of the sinner, not because it is unjust. Or he may tempt even the righteous to prove them, not for His own information, but to manifest their faith or patience. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life."\(^5\)

Although it is the second kind of temptation that confronts Samson, he cannot be sure that it is not the first: he believes, for instance, that God has sent Delila but for the purpose of aggravating his shame.

Temptation is a means of causing Samson to assert and manifest his virtue and intelligence, to be regenerated. Regeneration Milton calls the restoration of man not only to the use of his natural faculties of right judgment and free will but the making anew of the inner man, re-created in God's image and endowed with new supernatural faculties of understanding, so that "the whole man is sanctified both in body and soul, for the service of God, and the performance of good works."\(^6\) The regenerate man must first
repent. When he perceives with sorrow that he has offended God by sin, and so detests and wishes to avoid sin, he must humbly turn to God, trust in divine mercy, and strive to follow righteousness. Through conviction of sin (which may result from chastisement), contrition, confession, willing departure from evil, and positive conversion to good, man finds his way back to God. 7

This redemption is possible only through Christ. To the Christian reader, the word "ransom" (which is very important in Samson Agonistes) inevitably suggests Christ's redemption of mankind:

Death over him no power
Shall long usurp; ere the third dawning light
Returne, the Starres of Morn shall see him rise
Out of his grave, fresh as the dawning light,
Thy ransom paid, which Man from death redeems. (P.L. XII, 420-424)

In the Old Testament, ransom is seldom mentioned, and in the Biblical account of Samson, not at all. It occurs in the Book of Job, when God is described as calling man to repentance:

Then he is gracious unto him, and saith,
Deliver him from going down to the pit;
I have found a ransom.

Considering these words and Job's declaration of faith, "I know that my redeemer liveth," the modern reader can understand how the mediaeval mind could perceive here an anticipation of Christ.

This Christian significance of "ransom" would have existed for the readers of Samson Agonistes (even though
the Christ-Samson correspondences are only implicit); and
it is clear from the Christian Doctrine that Milton believed
that Christ's sacrifice was sufficient to redeem all of the
faithful, even those who were unable to know Christ. (See
Chapter V of this dissertation.) And it is this spiritual
ransom or redemption which Samson is allowed to earn through
patience and fortitude, whereby, like other saints, he is
"his own Deliverer." The physical ransom which Manoa offers
is the inadequate physical substitute for it and is, as we
shall see, rejected. Samson, instead, is redeemed by God
and allowed, moreover, to redeem his people.

Through the visits of Manoa, Dalila, and Harapha,
Samson is tried and purified, made ready for his last
triumphant ordeal. It is possible and valid to regard these
visits as the three traditional Protestant temptations
which Samson must overcome, or as three stages whereby he
is restored to active virtue. It is also possible to con-
sider them as Samson's spiritual education, whereby his
reason along with his virtue is not just schooled through
suffering but manifested and confirmed. Although the dia-
logues with the three visitors do not constitute all of
Samson's regeneration, it will be convenient to treat them
separately here, with little or no reference in this chapter
to the Chorus. The three visits also reveal Milton's
classic economy, for each not only makes evident the visitor's
class and develops Samson's, but also illuminates some
part of the past.
Manoa first laments the tragic reversal from glory to misery. In exclaiming, "O ever failing trust In mortal strength!" he unwittingly touches on one of the main causes of Samson's fall, just as his comment that Samson could not now save himself from "a coward arm'd At one spear's length" is a dramatically ironic foreshadowing of the cowardly giant who eventually does arrive. But his skepticism about mortal strength is part of his present mistrust of man and of God, and his pity for Samson is somewhat overclouded with self-pity. If Samson had shared Manoa's mood, he could have fallen into self-pitying apathy or even final despair of God's mercy, but instead he recognizes the error of doubting divine providence and rejects both the pity and the skepticism. In confessing that he himself is to blame, he recounts the story of his fall at greater length than he had in his confession to the Chorus.

Manoa unintentionally aggravates Samson's misery in his next speech. Accepting Samson's guilt, he proceeds to question the "divine impulsion" that prompted the first marriage at least, according to Samson; but granted that Samson was wholly to blame, his punishment is still excessive and unjust, and it will include something worse: the knowledge of a feast at which

Dagon shall be magnifi'd, and God
Besides whom is no God, compar'd with Idols,
Disglorifi'd, blasphem'd, and had in scorn.

(S.A., 440.442)

Manoa thus foretells the feast but does not know the worst:
that Samson himself will have to be present at the idolatrous feast. Manoa's self-pity then leads him to reproach Samson for the worst shame that Could have befall'n thee and thy Fathers house.
The anguished thought that he has dishonored God is surely the strongest inducement to abandon all hope of God's mercy; but Samson has strong enough faith to submerge his own misery in the selfless confidence that God will assert His power against Dagon—although he cannot know that he will be the instrument of God's power.

Manoa shows a flash of the superficial optimism which he will so pathetically reveal later when at once he receives Samson's words "as a Prophecy" (as indeed they are) and turns to the practical matter of ransoming his son. It is as though Manoa, not God, were forgiving Samson and receiving him back into favor; but Manoa means only kindness. Samson does not believe he deserves to be rescued. In reply, Manoa is most human and plausible, practical and "reasonable" as the world judges. Repentance, humility, and "filial submission" (to him as well as to God, perhaps?) are right and admirable, but self-preservation imposes a limit on religious rigorism. (We remember Milton's condemnation of excessive asceticism, but there is a difference.) "Spiritual cloth" would perhaps be too harsh a condemnation of the ransom that Manoa offers, but the clue to Samson's rejection of it lies in Manoa's words:

Repent the sin, but if the punishment Thou canst avoid, self-preservation bids.  
(S.A., 504-505)
Sincere contrition does not seek to escape the punishment. But if the punishment is wretched death? Manoa then rationalizes Samson's penance as chosen death (almost voluntary suicide) and his refusal, as rejection of perhaps God-given rescue through pride or selfish perfectionism "more than for God offended." More tempting even than physical comfort and care to one who has been brutally mistreated, neglected, and begrudged rest, is Manoa's suggestion that what he offers may be the means that God has provided for Samson to go home, make offerings, and be reconciled with God. The offer is not from God, but Samson has not the energy to refute that claim. He wants God's pardon above everything but knows that this is not the way to gain it. Death, which Manoa's speech has deprecated, is more desirable than the offer of rescue—so much more desirable to Samson in his guilt that here he is closest to final despair.

Yet there is spiritual promise in his reason for rejecting the ransom:

To what can I be useful, wherein serve
My Nation, and the work from Heav'n
impos'd.  

(S.A., 565-566)

His preference for earning his bread even among the Philistines is honorable, as is made even clearer in 11.1365-6. (It is his obligation to those who have him in their political power—an obligation set aside in higher interests, of course.) Manoa rationalizes this honest work as unpatriotic service of the enemy but quickly seizes upon the hope of service for a new argument: if Samson will only come home,
perhaps God will give him an opportunity for service with renewed strength—-even with renewed eyesight. Here again Manoa is unconsciously prophetic in part, but his groundless optimism serves only to increase Samson's despair. Finally Manoa, not comprehending the spiritual despair of the saint, puts it down to melancholia and hastens off to carry out his cherished idea.

Samson's reason has been proof against the temptation to rationalize the broad way and the green as a surer means than the hill to heavenly truth; that Manoa's offer attracted him we cannot infer so much from his answers as from the catalogue of miseries that follows. Yet the victory of Samson over this attractive offer and the promise of renewed virtue and reason are almost overshadowed by the darkness of his anguish. Since it is anguish spiritualized, pure in motive, concentrated upon Samson as God's servant, however, it will lead not to the fruitless fulfilment of the death-wish, but to the death of the old Adam, which must precede regeneration.

Even more complex is the interview with Dalila, which serves several dramatic functions. When we meet the instrumental cause of Samson's fall, we believe in that episode which seemed, in the Bible, so implausible; and we find that her motivation was complicated if inexcusable. Samson's reason is thus bombarded with a profusion of protested reasons. The temptations that she represents are likewise so complex that it is small wonder that the scene is variously
interpreted as an anticlimax to the temptation offered by Manoa, and a costlier victory.\textsuperscript{10} Although the main emphasis is on fraudulent persuasion,\textsuperscript{11} there are other temptations involved, just as yielding to alleged necessity was not the only danger in Manoa's offer.

She comes as a penitent, in tears. Although her alleged reasons rather than her physical attractions constitute the real trial and major emphasis of the scene, she does seek to appeal to the lust and weakness which were part of his undoing before. Although her beauty is not visible to Samson, it is described by the Chorus and no doubt well remembered, and she is deliciously perfumed. At one moment, she tries at least to touch his hand. So desirable does she appear to the Chorus that it does not doubt that Samson could not repulse her.

\begin{quote}
without much inward passion felt
And secret sting of amorous remorse. (S.A., 1006-1007)
\end{quote}

Samson minimizes Dalila's attractiveness, for wedlock treachery is scarcely comparable to a lovers' quarrel. Had she been able to make her fault seem less than wedlock treachery, she would have been more desirable, and a submissive and solicitous wife might have been appealing to one who had uxoriously submitted.

The submissiveness does not deceive Samson, though, who recognizes it as artifice to beguile him into further submission. It is therefore unnecessary to be, with Allen, "a little chivalrous to this hyena."\textsuperscript{12} Admitting that her
lust is thinly veiled, Allen gives her credit for at least her rather shallow brand of remorse. But is there any remorse? She may be superficially sorry for Samson; she may well be telling the truth when she says that she never bargained for this much cruelty to Samson; she may even experience a touch of remorse as well as shocked curiosity to see Samson. (Even Clytemnestra had a moment of motherly sentiment on learning that Orestes was dead.) But whoever wishes to know real remorse that rightly wins forgiveness has only to read Eve's beautiful plea:

Forsake me not thus, Adam, witness Heav'n
What love sincere, and reverence in my heart
I beare thee, and unweeting have offended...

(F.L. X, 914-916)

and her offer to pray God that His sentence may fall

On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe,
Mee mee onely just object of his ire.(

(F.L. X, 935-936)

She weeps at his feet with her "tresses all disorder";
Dalila delicately declines her head "Like a fair flower surcharged with dew" and weeps only enough to moisten the edge of her silken veil.

Her penitence vanishes almost at once. All women, she trivially protests, are eager to learn secrets but no good at keeping them. Moreover, he is really to blame; it was weakness in him to have told her. This outrageous attempt to evade the blame may be, as it has been called, both inhuman and extraordinarily tactless, but it is followed by a somewhat more persuasive appeal, that Samson should forgive her weakness in the hope that his own may be pardoned,
for she has heard Samson acknowledge that goodness is
"principl'd not to reject The penitent, but ever to forgive."
Even though Milton declares elsewhere that hatred of God's
enemies is not only an exception but a positive duty, he has
Samson dismiss her with nominal forgiveness later. She
concludes this speech by protesting that she told the
Philistines the secret not suspecting cruelty but hoping to
keep him hers "and Loves prisoner." It may well be true
that not just desire for the gold but also lust and lust for
power over the once powerful warrior motivated her, for it
is chiefly lust and desire for superior power over a captive
lover that motivate her return and apology.

Samson is proof against this sort of reasoning. As he
does not pardon himself or expect pardon, he will not over-
look her wicked weakness. He is not persuaded to forget
the real motivation, the bribe. And he denies to her actions
the name of love, which rightly seeks love in return. She
was guilty of lust and betrayal of loyalty.

Accused thus of betrayal and criminal weakness, Dalila
next seeks to prove her loyalty, if not to Samson, to church
and state, and her strength in withstanding such convincing
appeals as they made, as long as she did withstand. No
doubt the Philistine priests and statesmen did use these
appeals, as well as gold to induce Dalila, and possibly they
had some influence on her. Just as Clytemnestra murdered
her husband not only because she loved Aegisthus, hated
Agamemnon, and was jealous of Cassandra, but also to avenge
Iphigenia, and then claimed a religious sanction, so Dalila betrayed her husband for several reasons, most of them wicked and selfish, some of them only misguided; but unlike Clytemnestra, she fails to perceive at once which of her alleged reasons is strongest, and is therefore less plausible than Clytemnestra. A motive urged so late, and one that contradicts what she said earlier, can scarcely have counted for much with her. For she contradicts her earlier attitude toward love:

Only my love of thee held long debate;
And combated in silence all these reasons
With hard contest. (S.A., 853-865)

Samson rightly remains unconvinced by "feign'd religion, smooth hypocrisy." He shows in his reply a sensitive understanding of the right religious and political obligations and their true grounds. (The substance of her alleged reasons and his refutation has already been discussed in Chapter VI and need not be cited or analyzed here in detail.) It is proof of his recovery that he can formulate a sound sense of values so lucidly and be unmoved by Dalila's fallacious arguments.

Dalila admits—not that she is guilty, for she has never reproached herself with anything worse than meriting his "displeasure"—but that he has won the argument. Her admission is a kind of flattery: what can a mere woman do against the male argumentative mind? And when Samson in a very human retort reminds her of what she was able to do on one occasion, she abandons sophistry in favor of a practical
offer. She will procure his release and take care of him at home. This offer, ostensibly like Manoa's, differs from it in one important respect; it represents sensual ease. To yield to it would have been to yield to sloth and lust. Thus no one simple scheme of temptations will entirely do justice to the complex persuasions of Dalila. But Samson, knowing better than to trust her, rejects her as Circe, the Sirens, and Acrasia must ever be rejected by the man who would be morally free. Better the prison of Gaza! Although the emphasis has remained on the intellectual contest between Samson and Dalila, with their emotions involved but in check, the potential violent action is vivid, for instance when she would touch his hand:

Not for thy life, lest fierce remembrance wake
My sudden rage to tear thee joint by joint.
At distance I forgive thee, go with that. (S.A., 952.4)

These lines perhaps explain why some critics have found Samson painfully roused and sorely tempted in this scene, and others have called him superbly detached. It might be more accurate to say that Samson is strongly moved rather than tempted, and that he avoids the extremes of excessive violence and excessive weakness alike, neither excusing her weakness (and with it, perhaps his own) nor hating her to the point of blaming her more than himself. His distant "forgiveness" of Dalila is simply the setting aside of any thought of vengeance and ironically leaving her if not to Heaven, to the illustrious name her alleged piety will win her.
Samson is controlled now and Dalila imperturbable. In the calm moment that follows, Milton allows her some beautiful lines on the reconciliation that might have been:

I see thou art implacable, more deaf
To prayers, then winds and seas, yet winds to seas
Are reconciled at length, and sea
to shore. (S.A., 960-962)

(Does she still hope, fleetingly, that he may wearily yield?
Sleep after toil, port after stormy seas,
Ease after war, death after life does greatly please,
and he had once been wearied out by her importunities. Are these the last few notes of the Siren-song that "in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense"?) But since she really knows she has lost, she has the superficial cleverness to catch up his last words, as usual, and twist them, this time to save face. Does he mock her illustrious name? Fame is relative, and so is piety. The Philistines, who judged her to be pious and patriotic, will honor her among "the famousest of women."

Samson's evaluation of the whole scene is

So let her go, God sent her to debase me. (S.A., 999)

Now he understands more clearly than ever his previous folly in trusting her. He had admitted and understood his fault before, but he knows now how to overcome it. Although his reason did not falter during the interview, we have seen it elicited and strengthened as it had to meet new tests. God sent her, surely—but to try Samson: not to tempt him nor to debase him, but to educate him spiritually. Yet
these good purposes and results of the encounter, Samson cannot yet know.

That Samson is greatly revived and strengthened is clear even at the beginning of his next encounter, with Harapha. Harapha comes with ignoble purpose from the start, to insult a fallen enemy. There is even less reason to see him as Allen does—a really brave man who will miraculously change into a blustering coward in a few short minutes—than there is to find him comic. His retorts and Samson's are like the acridly witty exchanges between Gabriel and the Satan of Book IV of *Paradise Lost*, but the serious purpose makes the scene an essentially serious trial of reason and will. What interests us right away is that Samson has forgotten his loss of strength when he answers the initial challenge. Harapha can explain such courage only through magic arts—a charge that elicits the most positive declaration of faith that Samson has made so far:

I know no Spells, use no forbidden Arts;
My trust is in the living God who gave me
At my Nativity this strength. (S.A., 1139–41)

Not like a petty god, but like God's champion, he offers battle. Whereas at the time he had confidently told Manoa that God would assert His power against Dagon, Samson had had no thought of being God's instrument, here he truly returns to his role of God's elect hero, without seeming to be conscious of himself at all, or of his lamentable condition.
Harapha reminds him:

Presume not on thy God, what e're he be,
Thee he regards not, owns not, hath cut off
Quite from his people. (S.A., 1156.8)

This is the temptation to despair finally of God's mercy, as Krouse points out. Yet it is less important as a temptation than Manoa's unintentionally cruel reminders that God has abandoned His champion. Here, of course, is dramatic irony, that Manoa, who wanted so pathetically to help Samson, should have brought him nearest despair, whereas Harapha, hoping to make Samson despair (for selfish reasons, not as an intentional blow to Samson's faith), should so strengthen his confidence as Samson's reply proves; for Samson will bear whatever evils have befallen him and

Acknowledge them from God inflicted on me
Justly, yet despair not of his final pardon
Whose ear is ever open; and his eye
Gracious to re-admit the suppliant. (S.A., 1170-73)

Even as he makes this assertion, Samson's hope and faith are greatly strengthened; the encounter elicits his conscious knowledge that he is being regenerated. We know how ready he is for the final service of God.

Yet he must understand his past life clearly, his former pattern of service of God. And he must know clearly the grounds of his obligations to God and the state. His understanding of these things is manifested in his answer to Harapha's charge that he is "A Murtherer, a Revolter, and a Robber." (The import of this speech and the com-
parable dialogue with Dalila have already been discussed in Chapter VI.) The answer serves, then, to justify the hero's past actions and to prepare for and justify the final act. It is also clear that Samson will understand fully the significance of what he will be called upon to do.

The interchange between Samson and Harapha becomes shorter, more emotional. It must surely have ended in violent action if Harapha had been willing to risk violent action. But he would not fight. Thus only a bully and a coward could have brought Samson to the right sort of readiness for his last act without also causing an unworthy expense of his necessary energy. A vain boaster may be the material of comedy, but the comic treatment demands more space than the few lines in which he is so characterized, and even here Milton has centered our interest on the blind hero whose courage so transcends his pathetic situation. Even if we compare his giantship to Braggadocchio (who is accorded the comic treatment) especially when Harapha is called "baffled coward" we can still see that the contrast between Samson and Harapha is not only a conflict between two well-drawn characters but a contrast of true strength with specious strength. Brute strength by itself, so-called courage, even, apart from wisdom and righteousness, Plato would be the first to tell us, and Spenser the second before Milton, can be called only cowardice.
Samson has no further fears when Harapha has left. Yet he still thinks that his only hope is death. He needs action in which to display his newly won strength and virtue, and he is realistic enough to have no such facile hopes as Manoa had. The real catastrophe is necessarily beyond his foreseeing. Here he thinks of death only as a release from physical suffering and no longer names alienation from God among his miseries. The threat of further affliction does not move him, for he is sure that any such attempt, because wrongly motivated,

may with mine
Draw thir own ruin who attempt the deed. (S.A., 1266-7)

It is this resolution of Samson's as well as the fortitude he displayed against Harapha that prompts the Chorus to rejoice,

Oh how comely it is and how reviving
To the Spirits of just men long opprest!
When God into the hands of thir deliverer
Puts invincible might. (S.A., 1268-1271)

Yet recognizing no clear opportunity for his valor, and remembering his blindness, the Chorus concludes that patience must rather make Samson his own deliverer. Samson has already redeemed himself in their sight, evidently, as at least potential victor and saint.

Only one step remains before Samson is called to his victorious martyrdom. He is given a summons which he must first reject and then accept. Without special dispensation, he could not appear at the religious rites of Dagon. In refusing, he is willing to obey his conscience even though the result may be martyrdom. Since the Chorus cannot compe-
hend his ethical motivation, he explains that he must use his consecrated gift of strength only in the service of God. It is now clear that Samson knows his strength, its purpose, and its significance: that it is God's "Favour renew'd."

His next speech is a third clear commentary on political obligation. (This subject has already been discussed in Chapter VI.)

At this point Samson recognizes his opportunity with the help of divine prompting. First he tells the Chorus that God may dispense with the prohibition against participating in the celebration "For some important cause." Next he begins to feel the "rouzing motions" of a divine command to perform an extraordinary and honorable act, although at this moment he knows only that he goes to some great act or his death. Thus when the Officer returns with a repeated summons, Samson declares,

I am content to go,
Masters commands come with a power resistless
To such as owe them absolute subjection;
And for a life who will not change his
purpose?  

(S.A., 1403-6)

These lines are an excellent illustration of Milton's dramatic irony, for the audience recognizes that Samson's life is at stake in his new purpose, and it does not doubt what Master it is to whom Samson now gives absolute obedience. But lest the Chorus should have any lingering doubts that he is merely doing the expedient thing, Samson assures his friends that he will do nothing "Scandalous or forbidden in our Law," and at the same time takes care that
they shall not be present. Without knowing the particular
details, he knows the significance of what he is about to do:

Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy
Our God, our Law, my Nation, or my self
The last of me or no I cannot warrant. (S.A., 1424-6)

As Samson thus sums up his duty to God, his neighbor, and
himself (to use the three categories of Milton's ethics as
expressed in the Christian Doctrine) the Chorus with new
understanding, though no knowledge of what is to follow,
prays that he may serve the greater glory of God, and the
audience knows that he will do so through both patient
martyrdom and active service.
CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION: THE RECONCILIATION OF OPPOSITES
IN SAMSON AGONISTES

And calm of mind all passion spent. (S.A., 1758)

In seeking to reconcile Hebraism and Hellenism,
Milton was the heir to the tradition of Christian humanism,
which had long sought to reconcile the two. There was
never any doubt, of course, that if a choice should be
required, Hebraism would have to take precedence, or that the
Christian test of value would have to be "Will this help
to save my soul?" Phrased, "What shall I do to be saved?"
the question sounds ineluctably Hebraic. For if the wisdom
of the Greeks was simply part of that wisdom of the world
which is but foolishness, then, as Rand observes, the
Christian could scarcely be expected to want "an elaborate
course in such foolishness."1 If, on the other hand, the
Greek wisdom foreshadowed Christian truth even darkly, as
the Church generally believed it did, and if the classical
legends and literature could be sanctified and allegorized,
then pagan culture might have a substantial if handmaidenly
role in Christian thought and feeling. And so it did, even
before Aquinas and Dante, with much of the wisdom of Plato
incorporated in the writings of Paul and Augustine, and Greek
philosophical terms used to formulate Christian dogma. It
was understood, of course, that if an angel of light should
hale a Jerome before the Judgment Seat to be beaten and
denounced, "Thou art a Ciceronian, not a Christian," the
saint would have to forswear secular reading--at least for a time.

For Milton, as for many earlier Renaissance men, classical learning was a means, as Bush points out, not an end in itself:

They looked back "to the fountains," pagan and Christian, to find a working ideal for the civilization of the present and future.²

Of the many examples that show how much of the Hellenic Milton was able to reconcile with the Hebraic in all of his writings, one or two have to serve. In Areopagitica he alludes to St. Jerome's warning dream with one significant change: "...the Divell whipt St. Jerom in a lenten dream, for reading Cicero."³ Not even Christ's austere answer to Satan in Paradise Regained makes vain all Doric discipline, nor all Platonic tolerance vain. Even when the tolerance may appear to vanish, the panegyric of Athens, Sheppard remarks, "is unfortunately spoken by the Tempter, but it is none the less eloquent for that."⁴ Christ, it is true, dismisses avid readers of Greek philosophy

As Children gathering pibles on the shore, (P.R. IV, 330)

and asserts that the Greeks not only derived their arts from the Hebrews but imitated them ill at that. Yet Christ, who is speaking in context, must reject whatever the Devil offers; and as a pattern for all mankind, he must choose the highest value first, even before things valuable in themselves. He asserts the ethical superiority of the Bible
over the spirit, theme, and subject of Greek letters. Even so, He gives the "pible-gatherers" some loophole when He admits that sometimes in Greek literature

moral vertue is express't
By light of Nature not in all quite
lost. (P.R. IV, 352-353)

In doctrine the Bible is supreme and sufficient; much of it (the Psalms, for example) is also written in beautiful poetry. Yet poetry, for Milton, has a place as well: its purpose (as was noted in Chapter IV) is to carry the truth, the ideals of virtue, through example, alive into the heart, and to move the soul of the reader to delight in virtue. Since poetry is the counterpart of a process, it creates harmony of discordant elements, and it should help the reader to achieve a harmony within his soul. Because it does not simply present abstract and formal truths, as philosophy and theology do, and because it does not simply accommodate the truth to the reader by exempla, poetry can be a subtle and profound means of exploring man's experience. The value of Greek poetry for Milton was that it demonstrated a skilled and beautiful use of these methods in accord with a purpose similar to his own, as he acknowledges in many references to the Greeks.

It was possible, then, for Milton to reconcile classical structure, technique, and theory of poetry with Christian theme and purpose, to substitute Christian prayer for classical invocation in an essentially classical formulation.
of the request for divine aid for his

adventurous Song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in Prose or
Rhyme. (P.L. I, 13-16)

It was possible for him to achieve a similar reconciliation of classical technique, for example, many of the Greek methods of writing tragic choruses, with Christian spirit, such as the moods of the Psalms, in drama. Hebraic theme and Hellenic form for drama could be reconciled; but could the spirit of religion as Milton expressed it be compatible with tragedy?

Una Ellis-Fermor has recently expressed the doubt that religious experience, rarely expressed in drama, even, is compatible with tragedy, because tragedy itself is a balance between the shocked awareness of grief and pain and the sense of goodness in the universe, "something that triumphs and illuminates." Religious drama, with its greater illumination, upsets the balance and "leaves no room for tragic ecstasy." She does not define religion but illustrates religious experience by conversion, re-conversion, martyrdom, and beatitude. "Religious tragedy," with one exception, she finds a contradiction in terms, and the one example, a tragedy of damnation, Dr. Faustus, "almost passes out of the category of tragedy in the negative direction." Samson Agonistes she finds religious but not tragic, because it illustrates "the paradox of a reconciliation between the experience whose consummation is the reconciliation of a conflict and a form whose power derives
from tension and balance."5 Here the reader may well remain unreconciled to this much paradox and wish that Ellis-Fermor would explain her explanation. Are the damnation of Faustus and the salvation of Samson the only conclusions final enough to relieve the tension of tragedy? Must tragedy never be resolved at all?

Apparently the evil can never be fully vanquished, for in a later chapter, "The Equilibrium of Tragedy," she states that tragedy must leave a sense of "the lonely suffering imposed upon mankind by life and death." She finds that Aeschylus maintains the equilibrium by balancing evil illustrated in the action with choruses in praise of law and order, and that Sophocles implies "a beneficent order of world good" by the beauty of structure in his plays. A "Satanic" dramatist, one who deliberately protests against what he considers a deliberately malevolent world-order (here she includes Euripides) also fails to give the required "interim reading of life" or to keep "that Manichaean balance from which tragedy springs."6 Yet she does not always make it clear whether she is discussing aesthetic emphasis or the poet's philosophy. Must the author of tragedy be a Manichaean, at least for the interim when he is composing tragedy? May he not balance the darkness and suffering in the play with some final re-interpretation in the light of new knowledge, so long as he does not falsify what has gone before, resort to a deus ex machina ending, or conclude by "uttering platitudes in stained glass attitudes"?
In short, it is unfortunate to deny that there may be more than one way of conceiving of tragedy. Much of Ellis-Fermor's book is stimulating and thoughtful, and the definition of tragedy is good as far as it goes. The difficulty arises from the arbitrary insistence that tragedy and religion must be mutually exclusive categories, e.g. her belief in "an inherent incompatibility between drama and the matter of religious experience." For Ellis-Fermor admits and describes the value of the religious spirit of Samson Agonistes; but accepting the consoling words, "Nothing is here for tears" at face value, she disregards Milton's description of Samson Agonistes as a tragedy and considers the conclusion too illuminating to be tragic. To the reader who is still troubled by the uneasy suspicion that Milton may have meant what he said or said what he meant, this sharp distinction may not seem entirely valid.

The belief that tragedy is a balance or reconciliation between the sense of human suffering and the sense of triumph and illumination is generally held. Dixon expresses a similar idea: "The spirit of inquiry meets the spirit of poetry and tragedy is born."

When religion and poetry part, he adds, great poetry is deprived of its proper subject. Not only pity and awe characterize tragedy for Hamilton but also reconciliation "in the sense of life's temporary dissonance resolved into eternal harmony" and exaltation at the thought of human worth and its transcendence of death. Originally, a religious idea was the soul of tragic
art. How closely this idea was related to the religious mystery cycles is evident in Murray's account: almost every hero or heroine of Greek drama somehow suffers sacrificially for someone else. And the tragic conflict "takes place on a deeper level of reality...in which suffering is not the worst of things nor happiness the best." Tragedy requires fine characters and beauty of form and "the inspiration of some more or less mystical faith or some high artistic illusion" to mitigate the horror and make character triumph over death.\[11\]

For Kitto, "The religious idea is seen as drama, and the drama seen as a religious problem." The human drama reveals its significance only against a background of divine activity, which does not control human activity but presents "a framework of inexorable law" by which we may understand human action.\[12\] According to Henn, even though religion moves on a higher plane than tragedy, the Christian background of faith, redemption, and salvation through grace can make sin and suffering of significance sub specie aeternitatis. Is failure, then, but consummation, and sin nothing but felix culpa? Henn does not believe so; for "only at a certain aesthetico-religious distance" can we respond so, and we attain at the end only to the preparation for grace, not grace itself. Ours is a divided response.\[13\] We share the suffering of the protagonist (and Henn is certain that we prefer an unregenerate protagonist), but we are also led to consider the moral issues and something akin to divine pattern: "Tragedy communicates, through suffering, a supreme sense of harmony
with the universe."14 Aware of the divided response, Eliot does not put even the death of a martyr beyond tragedy; he does not say that only the spectator of limited insight mourns:

Just as we rejoice and mourn at once, in the Birth and in the Passion of Our Lord; so also, in a smaller figure, we both rejoice and mourn in the death of martyrs. We mourn, for the sins of the world that has martyred them; we rejoice, that another soul is numbered among the Saints in Heaven, for the glory of God and for the salvation of men.15

That is Eliot's solution of the problem of religion and tragedy; it cannot be entirely Milton's solution, which is sufficiently complex to have called forth a variety of critical interpretations. Ellis Fermor, as we have seen, finds too much spiritual victory for tragedy. Parker in reconciling the religion and the tragedy of Samson Agonistes, and the Hebraism and Hellenism, finds too little religion and too much Hellenism, as was noted in Chapter I. True, he admits that "there is no denying that Milton did not express strictly Greek opinions," but he believes that Samson's suffering far outweighs God's justice: "Best for whom? Not for Samson, surely!"16 Acknowledging the elements not entirely Greek, Parker nevertheless finds the predominant spirit of Samson Agonistes Greek; but without accepting his emphasis or conclusion, one can still find his parallels with Greek drama evidence that spirit and form are well suited, and his pessimistic view a corrective to an over-optimistic reading.

Hanford finds the final calm Hellenic and the religious consolation inadequately consoling. "Samson should have gone
on from one glad triumph to another." His martyrdom is tragic.

Despite Milton's faith, the ways of Providence at least seem
dark enough. Nor does Hanford believe that Milton entirely
succeeded in rejecting Stoicism;

The antique strain in Milton's experience and
thought stands side by side with the Christian,
and the two alternate or combine in their domination
of his artistic moods.¹⁷

Yet he feels that "the two motives" which Milton drew from
"his twofold inheritance from the Reformation and the Re-
naissance" are subtly and artistically "balanced and as
nearly reconciled" as any poet could reconcile them.¹⁸

It may, of course, be true that Milton's age and Milton
himself had "a tendency toward imperfectly reconciled opposition,
ambivalent feeling."¹⁹ In Samson Agonistes, as in Paradise
Lost, Milton was extraordinarily ambitious in his choice of
opposites to be reconciled. In Paradise Lost he took as his
great theme the justice and wisdom of the divine plan whereby
man, as a moral agent, must be free to choose between good
and evil, even though he should choose evil—that is, should
prefer lesser to greater good, for the evil lies rather in
the choice, and in the motive for it, than in the value chosen.
Man suffers a just punishment (which nevertheless is felt to
be excessive) but is granted redemption through divine mercy.
For Adam as a kind of Everyman, the "perfect, cursed, blessed
man," the Fall is fortunate; yet the overwhelming misery of
the world and the pity for the human pair "unparadised" are
predominant even for the reader who comprehends and accepts
the justice of the divine plan. For it is only Bentley who
(as Santayana said in another context) "rides over with the
juggernaut car of optimism" the real conclusion and has Adam
and Eve depart, cheered, with "social steps." The real con-
clusion as Milton wrote it combines with consummate skill the
poignant and immediate sorrow of leaving with the newly re-
vealed hope:

The World was all before them, where to choose
Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide;
They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow,
Through Eden took thir solitarie
way. (P.L. XII, 646-649)

So in Samson Agonistes the starkness and suffering of the
hero are somehow balanced by illumination, and formalized and
elevated by a style chiefly Grecian in its austere beauty.
The conclusion illustrates (as the ending of Paradise Lost
also illustrates) the process that Coleridge describes:

The poet...brings the whole soul of man into
activity, with the subordination of its faculties
to each other, according to their relative worth
and dignity. He diffuses a spirit and tone of
unity /by imagination, which /reveals itself in
the balance or reconciliation of opposite or dis-
cordant qualities...a more than usual state of
emotion, with more than usual order...judgment...
with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement.20

Samson Agonistes begins in poignant sorrow for the
pitiable condition of the hero, whom not even "The breath of
Heav'n fresh-blowing, pure and sweet" can truly refresh yet.
The emphasis is on the tragic waste of a man chosen by God
but now

Made of /His/ Enemies the scorn and gaze;
To grind in Brazen Fetters under task
With this Heav'n-gifted strength?....

Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves. (S.A., 34-41)
From this grave, concentrated statement the verse moves more intensely into lyric outburst (with the long a's still reinforcing the pathos):

O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrecoverably dark, total Eclipse
Without all hope of day! (S.A., 80–82)

In physical and spiritual anguish Samson is akin, as we have seen, to Job and the Psalmist; like them, he undergoes the many tragic moods of suffering. That he is struggling to overcome sin, that he suffers as the result of sin, by no means lessens the tragedy, but rather increases the moral profundity of the drama.

In witnessing the regeneration of the hero, we witness his renewal of hope, strength, reason, virtue, and abiding faith in God. We see the resulting wisdom that comes from suffering and is purified by trial, so that Samson is prepared for his last ordeal. But Samson knows nothing of the final glory until almost the end, and each new trial is the cause not only of renewal but of profound suffering. Only in the light of the ending is the purpose clear.

Moreover Milton secures further tragic emphasis through the character of Manoa. In the first scene in which he appears, he is pathetic, to be sure, but the pathos is considerably lessened by comparison with Samson, by Manoa's self-pity, and by the obvious inadequacy of the ransom which he offers. Misguided and limited though he is when viewed sub specie aeternitatis, though, Manoa is a character of considerably greater pathos and dignity when he returns with touching
human tenderness to complete the ransom and spare his son
further physical agony. Much of the tragic irony results from
Milton's treatment of Manoa and from his allowing the
audience to learn of Samson's death from Manoa's point of
view. For the triumph, the real spiritual victory occurs
when Samson goes forth, reconciled, to obey God's command,
and the Chorus, dimly understanding, celebrates his going
forth for the greater glory of God. The brief emphasis on
spiritual victory is overshadowed by the catastrophe that
follows; and after the physical horror, it would not be
humanly possible for the sympathetic Chorus to attain to so
exalted a statement as lines 1427ff. But of Samson's re-
solute departure or of the prayer of the Chorus, Manoa knows
nothing.

At the moment when Manoa announces his success in
negotiating with the Philistines for his son's ransom, for
which he will gladly give all that he possesses, his hopes
are frustrated, and he realizes with sorrow

The worst indeed, 0 all my hope's defeated
To free him hence! but death who sets all free
Hath paid his ransom now and full
discharge.  (S.A., 1571-1573)

First consoled by the Hebrew victory, and then spiritually
enlightened through suffering, Manoa comes at last to compre-
hend at least some of the meaning of Samson's death. Just
as Crito (who has interrupted the great final Socratic con-
versation in the Phaedo to convey the guard's warning) is
at the last given one practical injunction—richly symbolic—to
pay Socrates' debt of a cock to Asclepius, so Manoa can now take immediate comfort in the practical thought that he can rescue the body, for "Gaza is not in plight to say ["him"] nay." With his son now beyond the need for ransom, Manoa, a realist at last, can visualize the body as it really is, stained with the blood of the Philistines, and plan to bury it with honor.

Part of the dignity and beauty of this scene may arise from the association with another figure who would likely have occurred to Milton: another aged father of a champion son, Priam, father of Hector. Although Manoa has sought to ransom a living son and has no need now of paying ransom, whereas Priam must ransom a dead son from disgrace and defilement, Manoa and Priam are similar in their pathetic eloquence. Manoa has been to the Philistines

With supplication prone and Fathers tears
To accept of ransom for my Son thir pris'ner,
(S.A., 1459-1460)

and found among many vengeful and mercenary enemies a few magnanimous men. Achilles is at last magnanimous to Priam partly because it is the will of Zeus that he yield and partly because of Priam's valor and eloquence:

Think of your own father, who is the same age as I, and so has nothing but miserable old age ahead of him...Yet he at least has one consolation...he can look forward...to seeing his beloved son come back from Troy; whereas my fortunes are completely broken...It is to get him back from you that I have come to the Achaean ships, bringing this princely ransom...21

In Samson Agonistes as in the Iliad the due burial with honor is part of the quiet ending after violent death.
The calm follows the shock of physical catastrophe, a shock made more emphatic because it, in turn, follows not only the statement of spiritual victory but also the ironically built-up hopes of Manoa and even the Chorus, which no longer fears for Samson when he goes to the feast of Dagon, but prays that the angel who foretold his birth may guide him to deeds of greatness. Obviously, Milton (who wrote gloriously of Ezekiel-like visions of angels in *Paradise Lost*) could not admit a deus (or angelus) ex machina here. Moreover, we know that for Samson to be restored to sight, strength, and earthly glory would be a falsification, a concession to the material measure of value, and the sort of adventitious happy ending that has given a bad name to the principle of poetic justice. Yet assisted by Manoa's over-optimistic and insufficiently spiritual expectations, we submerge or suspend our knowledge that these hopes will be frustrated. We find the death of Samson pitiable and terrible -- the more so because his triumph on earth was so brief.

Because of our sympathy for the suffering of the hero and because of the emphasis throughout the drama on physical and spiritual anguish, human blindness, and the sense of God's desertion, *Samson Agonistes* is tragic. It has achieved its tragedy partly through the use of Greek dramatic structure and essentially Hellenic style and technique and partly through the Old Testament sense of sin and suffering unrelieved by explicitly Christian hope.
From the Greek drama Milton learned to achieve concentration and intensity through unity, through beginning the drama not long before the catastrophe and gradually revealing what has happened earlier. The Hellenic technique was sufficiently subtle to allow Milton to reveal character gradually through dialogue, to explore large questions through a Chorus limited in its point of view, and to mitigate the starkness of the tragedy through imagery and through the skillful development of themes in the choruses. The Hellenic tragedy also furnished the precedent for treating the hero as an essentially noble man made liable to suffering through a tragic failing but elevated through his essential dignity and universal significance. The calm ending, with its almost axiomatic wisdom, is likewise typically Hellenic.

From Job and the Psalms comes part of the way of formulating the problem of evil and the way of conceiving of man's relationship with God. From Job as well as from the Greeks comes the refusal to oversimplify the question of divine justice. Even though Milton does not formulate his theology explicitly here as he does elsewhere (the absence of dogma is in keeping with the Greek spirit, and the absence of Christian theology except by implication is almost essential in a drama about an Old Testament here) he derives Samson's pathos and despair from the Hebraic sense of sin and of alienation from God. Nothing in the treatment of Providence in Samson Agonistes contradicts what Milton says in the Christian Doctrine. And Milton's account of his hero's
repentance and conquest of temptation; and of his spiritual progress back to God after he has fallen, is Hebraic. *Samson Agonistes* is specifically Christian, moreover, in its sublimation of the Old Testament revenge.

Yet Hellenic technique and Hebraic spirit are not to be kept so sharply apart as this summary might indicate. For all along, the reader is aware of analogies in spirit between *Samson Agonistes* and Greek literature and philosophy. In spite of the difference in their solutions of religious questions, Milton and Aeschylus are alike in the scope of their tragedies, in their conception of divine justice mitigated with mercy, and in their treatment of human free will operating within a larger sphere of cosmic order. Milton's Samson is also comparable to Sophocles' Antigone because both Samson and Antigone put allegiance to divine law ahead of narrow political obligation, and obedience of inner spiritual law ahead of compliance with any specific precept. At the same time, Samson is like Socrates in his rejection of mere life, his refusal to judge an action by its consequences, and his allegiance to the highest value.

Yet *Samson Agonistes* has a consolation more positive than the Hellenic affirmation of essential human worth in the face of disaster. There are two kinds of progress in the drama. One is the hero's spiritual progress, his regeneration, his re-creation in God's image as a preparation for active heroism in the service of God. So illuminating is this victory of Samson within his soul as he conquers evil
and turns it to good that only by Hellenic control and emphasis and by the direct appeal to human sympathy for the hero's physical agony can Milton maintain the essential tragic balance. (It is essential not to underrate the tears in mortal things and not to underestimate the problem of evil.) The other kind of progress is not the evolution of cosmic justice and mercy (as in Aeschylus) but the evolution of our comprehension of the justice of God. Through the Hellenic re-interpretation of experience, the hero and the spectator come to see what the suffering symbolized and how positive good is actively brought out of evil according to the providence of a God who is both the supreme value and the basis for moral value in the universe.

This religious consolation is submerged in tragedy and present at times only by implication. It is partly comprehended by the Chorus (and even at the end by Manoa), but fully comprehended gradually by Samson. Just as the choruses of Samson Agonistes develop themes A, B, and A in the manner of the Greek choruses, so the entire drama emphasizes first tragic suffering, then religious illumination, and again tragic catastrophe, followed by calm. At the ending Manoa, now much enlightened through his suffering, perceives that

Samson hath quit himself
Like Samson, and heroically hath finish'd
A life heroic....

(S.A., 1709-1711)

We understand by these words that Samson has quit himself like Samson at his best, the altruistic servant and image of God. Manoa understands that Samson has earned immortal
fame

With God not parted from him, as was feared,
But favouring and assisting to the end.

(S.A., 1719-1720)

Yet Manoa proceeds to take immediate consolation in lesser values, the Hebrew victory and the burial with due honor, and his last line is a final reference to Samson's "captivity and loss of eyes." And with the last words of the Chorus, the audience, having earlier received the religious consolation and enlightenment wherein Milton transcended classical catharsis, is now given a fair dismissal in the Hellenic manner:

With peace and consolation /is/ dismiss,
And calm of mind all passion spent.
NOTES

All quotations from Milton's poetry are taken from *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, edit. H.C. Beeching (London, 1952). Quotations from Milton's prose are taken from his *Works*, edit. Frank A. Patterson (New York) 1931-1938, the Columbia Edition. All quotations from the Bible (unless otherwise specifically identified) are taken from the King James Bible. In the notes and bibliography the following abbreviations have been used:

A. J. Philol. .............. American Journal of Philology

A. Philol. Soc. ............ American Philological Society

C. E. ..................... Columbia Edition (of Milton's Works)

CJ ......................... Classical Journal

CR ......................... Classical Review

ELH ........................ English Literary History

HSCP ........................ Harvard Studies in Classical Philology

JAAC ........................ Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism

JEGP ........................ Journal of English and Germanic Philology

JHS ........................ Journal of Hellenic Studies

J. Philol. ................... Journal of Philology

KR ......................... Kenyon Review

MLN ........................ Modern Language Notes

MP ........................ Modern Philology

MPL ........................ Migne, edit., *Patrologia Latina*

N. & Q. ..................... Notes and Queries

P. L. ....................... Paradise Lost
NOTES TO THE PREFACE


4 The quotation from Coleridge is cited by R.F. Brinkley, Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century (Durham, 1955), p. 506.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I


2 No attempt is made to summarize here the work of Robert Bridges, Milton's Prosody (London, 1881); S.E. Spott, Milton's Art of Prosody (Oxford, 1953); or Keith Rinehart, "The First Fourteen Lines of Milton's 'Lycidas,'" N.& Q., CXVIII (1953), 103. Some of the scholarship on Milton's prosody will be taken into account in Chapter III.


6 The breaches of propriety include an allusion to the Phoenix and to Circe's cup. Johnson also uses Aristotle's discussion as a means of condemning Milton's overelaborate style in some passages and his low style in others, such as the metaphorical use of a shipwreck.


8 Masson, op.cit.

10 Ibid., 343.
11 Ibid., 344.
12 Ibid., 344-346.
14 Ibid., 388.
15 Paul F. Baum, "Samson Agonistes Again," PMLA, XXXVI(1921), 358.
16 Ibid., 362.
17 Ibid., 369-370.
21 Ibid., 351-353.
23 Ibid., 915-920.
25 Ibid., 93-95.
27 Ibid., 352-353.
28 Ibid., 343-344. In a later article, "Milton and the Classics" RSL, XXVI(1953), 71, Tillyard compares Samson with the Hercules of Euripides to show that the excessive strength of the Greek hero leads to evil compensation, whereas the excessive strength of Samson should have evoked corresponding wisdom.
30 Ibid., 111.
31 Ibid., 118.
32 Ibid., 122-125.
33 Ibid., 139-150.
34 Ibid., 157-167.
36 Ibid., 245-250. The statement about the hero's death is on p. 152.
37 Ibid., 189-242. For the two "spirits" see p. 196. This distinction is best refuted by George W. Whiting, "Samson Agonistes and the Geneva Bible," R.I. Pamph., XXVIII (1951), 20-22. For Parker's discussion of Fate, see pp. 211-214.
38 Maurice Kelley, This Great Argument (Princeton, 1941), p. 81.
39 Ibid., op. cit., 285-240. The statement in italics is on p. 225 and the account of "misogyny" is on pp. 129-135.
40 Ibid., xii (Preface).
42 Una Ellis-Permor, op. cit., 17.
44 Ibid., 92-97.
46 Ibid., 107.
47 Ibid., 118.
48 Ibid., 124.
50 Krouse, op. cit., 126-132.

Ibid., 33.


Ibid., 76-77.

Ibid., 81.

Ibid., 83.

Ibid., 82-83.

Ibid., 85-86.

Ibid., 88-89.

Ibid., 91-92.

Ibid., 94.


Ibid., 119.

Ibid., 125.

Ibid., 128-129.


Ibid., 388.

Douglas Bush, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century (Oxford, 1945), 393-396. On p. 395 Bush makes the following just evaluation: "Samson Agonistes could not be purely Greek (if it were it would be only another museum piece), but Milton does not force his material into a theologically Christian mould." He adds that if Samson's "sense of Heaven's desertion and his recovery are Christian, we still feel ourselves in the atmosphere of ancient rather than of modern romantic tragedy."
NOTES TO CHAPTER II


2 F. M. Krouse, Milton's Samson and the Christian Tradition (Princeton, 1949). This book has been briefly summarized and discussed in Chapter I of this dissertation.

3 George W. Whiting, "Samson Agonistes and the Geneva Bible," R.I.Pamph., XXXVIII (1951), 18-35. This article has also been summarized in Chapter I.

4 Krouse, op. cit., 81.


6 C.E., XVII, 353.

7 C.E., XVII, 277.

8 C.E., XVII, 41.

9 C.E., XVII, 241.

10 C.E., XVII, 253.

11 C.E., XVII, 57, 69.

12 C.E., XV, 87.

13 C.E., III, I, 237.


18 Note k in the Geneva Bible marginal commentary on Job, II, 9.

19 The Argument to the Book of Job in the Geneva Bible.

20 *The Interpreter's Bible*, III, 900, 924, 956-958.


22 *The Interpreter's Bible*, III, 965-966.


24 Gilbert Murray, *op. cit.*, 95.


27 William B. Hunter, "The Sources of Milton's Prosody," *PG*, XXVIII (1949), 143, argues that Milton may have derived his use of run-on lines and reversed accents from the metrical versions of the Psalms. The clumsiness of most metrical Psalms weakens his case. Frank Kermode, "Samson Agonistes and Hebrew Prosody," Durham University Journal, XLV (1953), 59-60, suggests that Milton, who preferred the Psalms to Greek poetry, and who knew the theory that the Psalms are written in ascentual and parallel, if irregular, verse, would have drawn upon them for his English poetry.

28 Drawing upon a number of articles by Israel Barlow on Renaissance theories about Hebrew poetry, Kermode establishes the fact that the Psalms and Job were thought to have occasional rhyme or imperfect rhyme. Kermode suggests that the seventeen imperfect rhymes that he finds in *Samson Agonistes* represent a deliberate imitation of the Hebrew, pp. 81-82. Perhaps respect for this Hebrew precedent (or supposed precedent) caused Milton to follow what F.T. Prince shows to be an Italian practice. *The Italian Elements in Milton's Poetry* (Oxford, 1954), pp. 165-166.
29 The Interpreter's Bible (New York, 1954), IV, 11.


31 George Sandys, Ovid's Metamorphosis, Englished, Mythologiz'd, and Represented in Figures (London, 1640), Commentary on Book IX, p. 176.

32 Chauncey B. Tinker, "Samson Agonistes," Tragic Themes in Western Literature, ed. Gleanth Brooks (New Haven, 1955), p. 70, quotes a few lines of Samson Agonistes and adds, "This is more like King David than the strong, self-confident bully of Judges. In his words there is something of the spirit of the penitential psalms." He does not develop the comparison. For the patristic interpretation of David, see Henry O. Taylor, The Medieval Mind (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1949), II, 71, in which Augustine is cited for his admission of the literal facts and his allegorical interpretation: "Let us love that (illum) David, who is so greatly to be loved, who through mercy freed us from the devil; and let us also love that (isatum) David who by the humility of penitence healed in himself so deep a wound of sin."

33 C.E., XIV, 175.

34 C.E., XV, 69, 77.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1 Preface to Samson Agonistes, p.506.
3 Ibid., 60-61.
6 Ibid., 216-220.
8 Ibid., 373.
12 William R.Parker, Milton's Debt to Greek Tragedy in Samson Agonistes (Baltimore, 1937), pp.139-150. There is no need to overemphasize the limitations of the Chorus or to describe it as "Simply chatting in a rustic charrow," as Parker does, p.147.
14 Ibid., 156.
15 Ibid., 158.
16 Ibid., 156.
17 Ibid., 157.
20 Ibid., 133.
21 Prince, op. cit., 167.
NOTES TO CHAPTER IV


2 The Reason of Church Government, C.E., III, 238.

3 Preface to Samson Agonistes, pp. 505-506.


8 F.L. Lucas, Tragedy in Relation to Aristotle's Poetics (London, 1927), pp. 33-34.

9 Ibid., 24-25.

10 Lane Cooper, Aristotle on the Art of Poetry (New York, 1913), p. 17.

11 Preface, p. 505. (The Preface bears the title "Of that sort of Dramatic Poem which is call'd Tragedy.")

12 Allan H. Gilbert, Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden (New York, 1940), p. 593.

13 Lustratio and purgatio were sometimes used interchangeably in the early commentaries, according to Ingram Eywater, "Milton and the Aristotelian Definition of Tragedy," J. Philol., XXVII (1901), 267.

14 Langdon, op. cit., 93.

15 Of Education, C.E., IV, 286.

16 Giraldi Cinthio, On the Composition of Comedies and Tragedies, cited by Allan Gilbert, op. cit., 252. Gilbert gives abridged translations of many Italian Renaissance critics in his anthology. Unless otherwise specified, references to these critics will be documented Literary Criticism, followed by the page or pages.
17. *Literary Criticism*, p. 256.


28. Cited by Spingarn, *op.cit.*, 78-81. Spingarn is sure that Milton clearly perceived that "by Katharsis Aristotle had reference not to a moral but to an emotional effect." For evidence of the pathological theory of purgation of the emotions before Milton, see Bywater, *op.cit.*


40 Ibid., 195.
41 Ibid., 197.
42 Ibid., 179-195.
43 Ibid., 198.
44 Ibid. Other critics have given less convincing discussions of catharsis as just an aesthetic concept. One of these, cited by Gilbert, is Michael, who speaks of catharsis and believes that Aristotle speaks of it "in einem durchaus ästhetischen Sinne." Gilbert himself believes that tragedy effects catharsis "in proportion to the excellence of its soul." A really good dramatist develops tragedy "in the spirit of unity, completeness, and good taste," and his work should be judged by the "serenity of mind to which an auditor attains" at the end. "Aristotelian Catharsis," Philos. R., XXXV (1926), 307, 311, 314. A.H.R. Fairchild distinguishes between pity and fear as we know them in life, and pity and fear in tragedy, "Aristotle's Doctrine of Katharsis and the Positive or Constructive Activity Involved," CJ, XII (1916), 46-47, but he does not distinguish as well as Chaudhury and Cassirer. Both Gilbert and Fairchild discuss the aesthetic aspect of catharsis but have more to say about the emotional effect.
47 Ibid., 18-19.
49 Ibid., 239.
50 Ibid., 247.
51 Ibid., 249.
53 C.E., III, I, 238.
54 Ibid., 238-239.
56 C.E., III, I, 239.
NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1 Lane Cooper, Aristotle on the Art of Poetry (New York, 1913), p. 43.

2 Ibid., 63.

3 Laura Jepsen, Ethical Aspects of Tragedy (Gainesville, 1953), p. 15.

4 William Chase Greene, Moira: Fate, Good, and Evil in Greek Thought (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1944), p. 98.

5 Gilbert Murray, Aeschylus, the Creator of Tragedy (Oxford, 1940), p. 179.

6 Quotations from the Oresteia are taken from Aeschylus, Complete Plays, trans. Gilbert Murray (London, 1952). These lines quoted are on p. 183.

7 Here "innocence" means that the guilty man may be punished later, at a time when he is innocent; he cannot escape. These lines are in Murray's translation, Complete Plays, p. 248.


9 Murray, Aeschylus, the Creator of Tragedy, pp. 196-198, 201. The lines quoted are from his translation, Complete Plays, p. 253.

10 Greene, op. cit., 109.

11 Murray, Aeschylus, the Creator of Tragedy, pp. 100-110. His theory is generally accepted now.


15 Kitto, op. cit., 148-149.

16 Jaeger, op. cit., 281.

17 Jepsen, op. cit., 68.

18 Kitto, op. cit., 421.

19 Ibid., 151.

20 Ibid., 153.
21 Kitto, Greek Tragedy, p.141.
22 Jepsen, Ethical Aspects of Tragedy, p.35.
23 Greene, Moira, p.158.
24 Ibid., 153.
26 Greene, op.cit., 216-217.
27 Kitto, op.cit., 194-195.
28 Ibid., 206-208.
29 Ibid., 209, 204.
31 Greene, op.cit., 178.
32 Kitto, op.cit., 209.
33 Greene, op.cit., 178.
34 Ibid., 196.
35 Murray, Euripides, p.72.
36 Greene, op.cit., 189.
37 Jepsen, op.cit., 84.
40 Ibid., 259.
41 Antonio Minturno, L'Arte Poetica, Literary Criticism, pp.292-293.
43 The case for the moderns against the ancients in Dryden's An Essay on Dramatic Poesy includes the charge of indecorum in the ancient dramas, which "have often shewn a prosperous wickedness, and an unhappy piety."
Cited by Walter J. Bate, *Criticism: The Major Texts* (New York, 1952), p.137. Such a charge is an oversimplification of the problem of evil and is comparable to the attitude of Job's comforters. Art, moreover, is simply given no scope in such a simple reading of experience.


46 *C.E.*, XV, 21.

47 *C.E.*, XI, 43-45.

48 *C.E.*, XIV, 93-95.

49 *Christian Doctrine*, *C.E.*, XIV, 73.

50 *Logic*, *C.E.*, XI, 47-49.

51 *C.E.*, XIV, 73.

52 *C.E.*, XI, 49.

53 *C.E.*, XIV, 27.

54 William R. Parker, whose arguments have been discussed at greater length in Chapter I, regards Milton's omission of the word "fate" as unimportant. Parker seeks to make "dire necessity" and the "uncontrollable intent" of God substitutes for it. He also uses the definition of fate as a divine decree in order to show that Samson's defeat of the Philistines, if divinely decreed, was fated. Milton does not say, however, that all divine decrees constitute fate; and the definition that Parker uses is dangerous out of context. Milton's *Debt to Greek Tragedy in Samson Agonistes* (Baltimore, 1937), pp.212-213.

55 *Logic*, *C.E.*, XI, 43-47.

56 *C.E.*, XV, 65.


59 *Ibid.*, p.16. Boethius is omitted from this short summary. As Patch says, he "only suggests a solution to the difficulty," for he takes some ideas from Aristotle—that chance permits human freedom, for instance—and sometimes makes Fortuna equivalent to fate and sometimes makes fate itself changeable.
Boethius' image of the wheel makes God the center and fate the rim. He makes fate and chance subordinate to providence, as Milton does. P. 19.

Ibid., 148-151.

C. E., XV, 67-77.

C. E., XIV, 87.

C. E., XIV, 65.

C. E., XIV, 73, 75.

C. E., XIV, 81.

C. E., XIV, 87.

C. E., XIV, 121-123.

C. E., XIV, 147.

C. E., XV, 349.

C. E., XVI, 3.

Maurice Kelley demonstrates this close relationship between the Christian Doctrine and Paradise Lost in This Great Argument (Princeton, 1941), especially pp. 70-1.

Raphael likewise describes the freedom of man and angel:

God made thee perfect, not immutable;  
And good he made thee, but to persevere  
He left it in thy power, ordain thy will  
By nature free, not over-rul'd by Fate  
Inextricable, or strict necessity. (P.L.V, 524-8)

C. E., XIV, 99.

This observation about the frenzy and the Furies is made by Parker, op. cit., 220.
NOTES TO CHAPTER VI


11 *Ibid.*, 459. In this discussion of *Antigone* I am indebted to Jaeger's article (see note 6) and to a lecture delivered in English 230 by Sir John Sheppard.

12 *C.E.*, XVI, 101.


15 Whitehead, *op. cit.*, 61.


17 F.M. Krouse, *Milton's Samson and the Christian Tradition*
(Princeton, 1949), p. 92, comments, "And many critics have thought that this theme is evidence that Milton meant the poem in whole or in part as a political preaching addressed to the English nation after the Restoration. One cannot deny that such lines were acutely pertinent to the England of 1671." Even, in the Book of Judges, though, Krouse notes, there are reminders of the "Deuteronomic conception of the book's significance... that it was by their vices that the Israelites were brought to servitude. Krouse adds that these overtones were made much more explicit by later Christian commentators. P. 93.


NOTES TO CHAPTER VII


5 Cooper, *op.cit.*, 40. The translation "superlatively good and just," rather than "virtuous," as in Butcher's translation, shows how the passage may be reconciled with Aristotle's statement that tragedy deals with men better than average. Seymour M. Pitzer, "Aristotle's Good and Just Heroes," *Poetics*, XXIV(1945), 1-11, attempts somewhat too ingeniously to save Aristotle's consistency by urging that wicked people "considered as a group" are not to prosper, nor are the good and just to suffer en masse, although one of these good and just people will fall. P. 10.


7 Cooper, *op.cit.*, 41.


9 William Chase Greene, *Moiras: Fate, Good, and Evil in Greek Thought* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1944), p. 93.


12 Greene, *op.cit.*, 147.


14 Laura Jepsen, *Ethical Aspects of Tragedy* (Gainsville, 1953), pp. 4-5.
15 Seymour M. Pitcher, "Aristotle's Good and Just Heroes," 
Pq. XXIV (1945), 10-11.


17 Ibid., 169.

18 Ibid., 166.

19 Ibid., 193.

20 Werner Jaeger, Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture, trans. 

21 Greene, Moira, p. 147. Lane Cooper, Aristotelian Papers 
(New York, 1939), p. 144, makes suicide Antigone's "flaw."

22 Kitto, Greek Tragedy, pp. 130-134.


24 Greene, op. cit., 148.

25 William R. Parker, Milton's Debt to Greek Tragedy in 
Samson Agonistes (Baltimore, 1937), p. 112.

C. Green, "The Paradox of the Fall in Paradise Lost," MLN 
LIII (1938), pp. 563-4, makes too sharp a distinction in 
treating Adam's fall as an error of will and Eve's as 
an error of reason. As James Street Fulton observes in 
another context, it is a mistake to treat morality as 
the province of the will as separate from the intellect; 
for to do so "would make the will intellectually irre-
responsible and science morally irrelevant." "Knowledge, 

27 James Holly Hanford, "Samson Agonistes and Milton in Old 
Age," Studies in Shakespeare, Milton, and Donne (New 

28 J.A.K. Thomson, trans., The Ethics of Aristotle (London, 
1953), p. 103.

29 Henry Osborn Taylor, The Classical Heritage of the 
Middle Ages (New York, 1903), pp. 5-6.


31 Ibid., 65-67.
NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

1 These quotations from Job and Aeschylus are cited by Edith Hamilton, *The Greek Way to Western Civilization* (New York, 1954), pp. 55-56.

2 Gilbert Murray, *Aeschylus, the Creator of Tragedy* (Oxford, 1940), pp. 82-110.


4 Robert Martin Adams, *Ikon: John Milton and the Modern Critics* (Cornell, 1955), banishes, among other fancies, fond with gaudy shapes in Milton criticism, the belief that Milton identified Satan and Prometheus. Adams shows so many discrepancies between them that the remaining "archetype" is "a faceless, shapeless, characterless shadow." P. 48.


10 The older criticism takes it as anticlimax. As temptation it is, in my opinion, an anticlimax; but Ellis-Fermor, p. 29, calls it "costlier victory" to overcome this temptation.

11 Krouse, *op. cit.*, 127.


14 Krouse, *op. cit.*, 129-131. His analysis is excellent.
NOTES TO CHAPTER IX


4 John T. Sheppard, *Aeschylus and Sophocles* (New York, 1927), p. 152. In a chapter on *Paradise Regained* from his dissertation on Milton and the Elizabethan Tradition of Christian Learning (read at the English Colloquium), Don Ray makes the essential point that Milton's Christ has to emphasize the Bible as the sole and sufficient way for man to obtain salvation.

5 Una Ellis-Fermor, *The Frontiers of Drama* (New York, 1956), pp. 17, 23. She apparently feels that a negative religious drama of damnation may progress "through conflict to the victory of one of the contending forces, the religious or the anti-religious," and that only "the victory of the anti-religious forces could produce tragedy." This suggestion (p. 23) contradicts the requirement of unresolved tension, which she also makes; hence she finds *Faustus* almost too negative for tragedy. Later (p. 139) she finds it "Satanic" for its picture of malevolence in the universe. She does not even consider the interpretation that Faustus is damned only because he chooses damnation instead of the real and pervasive possibility of divine mercy.

6 Ibid., 127-147.

7 Ibid., 18.


9 Ibid., 135.


14 *Ibid.*, 283, 285, 266, 282. Henn makes some valuable points, although he seems to be of a divided mind about religion and tragedy. It is one thing to feel that a tragic flaw makes the hero more sympathetic, and another to insist that "pride is at the core of our sympathy with the hero," p.266, whereas humility in the hero lessens our sympathy. Yet he approves of the ending of *Samson Agonistes*.

15 T.S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral: Interlude, The Complete Poems and Plays* (New York, 1952), p.199. Whether or not the spectator witnesses enough of the spiritual agony in the soul of Becket to regard the hero's character as truly tragic (a problem which cannot be discussed here), Eliot offers an answer to the question of whether martyrdom is beyond tragedy.


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