A comparison of Milton's Paradise Lost and Regained with Dante's Divine Comedy

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

THESIS

A Comparison of
MILTON'S PARADISE LOST AND REGAINED
with
DANTE'S DIVINE COMEDY

By
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(A.A., Radcliffe, 1926)

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MASTER OF ARTS

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A Comparison of Paradise Lost and Regained with Dante's Divine Comedy

As epic poetry of which the fame will always endure, the Divine Comedy of Dante and the Paradise Lost of Milton are well worth careful study. What similarity exists between the two is based perhaps on similarity of subject matter; but what describes one can be truthfully said of the other. They are learned, philosophical, autobiographic, filled with individuality, experience, and personal philosophy of the authors. Moved by a religious nature, each author felt the urge of using poetry to present his views on man's ultimate acceptance of God's will for salvation.

Influence of Life Upon the Poems of Dante and Milton.

"In both these great poets, more than in any others, the character of the men makes part of the singular impressiveness of what they wrote and its vitality."¹

According to the superstitions of the day, Dante, born under the Gemini, was destined to a distinguished career

¹Lowell, J. R. "Literary Essays" Vol. IV, p. 78
and endowed with extraordinary literary gifts. It is even said that his birth was accompanied with omens.

Milton has said of himself that he was born "an age to late." This because he felt that he had to struggle with overwhelmingly unfavorable circumstances. His poetical genius could not thrive under the troubled times about him as it could if life were simpler and perhaps more barbarous.

Yet the resultant of each life was the effect of those years and conditions under which each grew up. As a child Dante had but the meager education of a lad in Florence of the thirteenth century. Born of a family of good fortune he was able to obtain such instruction as was to be found; he certainly studied rhetoric, poetry, some mathematics, painting, music, Ovid, Lucan, Virgil, Statius, but his theological and philosophical studies belong to a later period of life.

The early education of Milton shows the greatest contrast, and Milton himself resembled the youthful prodigy of the moral fiction of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. He writes, "From twelve years of age I seldom went to bed before midnight." The ruling passion of his boyhood was study. At sixteen he entered Cambridge, avoiding because of his Puritan father the High Church movement of Oxford. His knowledge of Greek was more profound and varied than Dante's, who was never a master of the language; his classical learning was complete. To this may be
added that he was a learned Hebrew scholar and knew every modern language.

But one must always consider the difference of the three hundred years that separated the two great men. In Dante's day printing did not exist; all books were found only in script, which limited greatly the number obtainable by the ordinary person. So it must be granted that Dante must also have had a desire to be scholarly with the chances greatly against him.

Dante as a youth had a passion for poetry, and struggling with composition found the art of composing in rhyme. His masters whom he acknowledges in the Purgatorio were Arnaut Daniel, skilled in technique, and Guido Guincelli, who used the spiritual symbolistic treatment of love. The early poetical writing of Milton took the form of odes and sonnets, as were many of Dante's poems, and as he had as models the medieval Italians and Petrarch, they are finely executed. But he became involved soon in the political and religious struggle of his day and poetry was laid aside till a time more fitting to the muse.

As early as the age of nine the controlling force of Dante's finest poetry entered his life, the love for Beatrice. She seems never to have been sought but always loved, and after her death, when he was in early manhood, he recorded all his love in the canzoni of the Vita Nuova. He shows that lyrical strain, pervading the Commedia, his love of classification, arrangement,
and precise order. Here, too, that mystical sense is awakened in his perceiving that everything connected with Beatrice was founded on the figure nine, a multiple of three, the Trinity. He gives proof also of a profound attention to small details, a basis for the much elaborated plan of the Comedy.

That we have a striking contrast in the life of Milton is typical of the two great works. Milton's love was early and always placed on God the Father and on civil and religious freedom. Whatever he experienced of earthly love was of short duration for, though he married three times, only the last wife lived long enough to be a companion to him.

At the age of thirty, Dante's fame had gone abroad and Milton had won notice in England.

Milton lived through the days of the Puritan revolutionary movement. This period was more than a protest against the evil-doing of Charles I. It was a period when the conscience of England was awakened to judge deliberately for itself and not accept simply what was given to it. It was a struggle for liberty, both civil and religious. John Milton became in reality its high priest. He believed in civil liberty and obedience to the will of God, as an individual, not as a member of a dogmatic faith. Liberty and obedience are the key notes of both his prose and poetry. He it was who defended the execution of Charles and the establishment of a republic. As Secretary of the Common-
wealth it devolved upon him to write and publish political and ethical documents, many of them written in Latin, refuting the deadening effects of the conservative movements in the Church and the still lingering ideas of the divine right of kings. He was one of those who apply to politics one or two intense convictions. He desired liberty, not opposing severity but inefficiency; the establishment of a free commonwealth, no king or protector, no house of Peers; but he was not a modern democrat. Burke has used the expression, "a natural aristocracy" (not of Milton's idea) which would labor for public welfare; a strong central government above risks and accidents, and popular passions. This, according to Milton, was nearest to the precepts of Christ. Dante thought to obtain this happy state by dogmatism of the Church and control by emperors.

The strenuous labors of Milton brought on that most terrible disaster, his blindness. Being warned that if he should continue in the study and composition of his last political pamphlet, blindness would come upon him, he still persisted. With the fall of the Cromwellian republic and the Restoration the ardently hoped-for civil liberty was a thing of the past. Blindness and failure, unhappiness in private life, drove him to solitude, to mental absorption in the things of the spirit from which came the Paradise Lost. "No life was more tragical in some of its aspects except Dante's." 1

1 Lowell, J. R. "Literary Essays". Vol. IV, p. 150
In the thirteenth century Florence and many towns were torn by factional strife, the root of which was a private feud occasioned by rather stupid causes. These feuds widening drew in first the whole town, then nearby towns, and finally the Church and the Empire. Of such were the wars and struggles of the Guelfs and the Ghibellines, the Blacks and the Whites. Dante, well-born and of good fortune, took his place as a Guelf in the struggle against the neighboring Ghibelline cities. At that time the Guelfs were of the Church party, having opposed the interference of the Empire in republican Florence. But the feuds of the Blacks and Whites caused other complications and Dante became nominally a White, now opposed to the Church. Finally the struggle of the Church, Guelf, and the Empire, Ghibelline, was universal and Florence was a center of the struggle. Both the papacy and the Empire claimed temporal control. In time to support its claim the Pope called in Charles of Valois, brother of the French king, as an aid, who entered Florence and put the Ghibellines to flight. Dante believed strongly in a division of spiritual and temporal power, each in its perfect state a means of attaining perfect order and highest spirituality. He bitterly opposed the summoning of a foreign power to gain control in Italy. A born politician, active as a prior in the city, he became a Ghibelline, suffering, as a result, exile which lasted throughout his life, as he refused to return to Florence under the humiliating conditions offered him after peace had returned
with the defeat of Charles. As an exile he sided with other banished Ghibellines; but because of their quarrels, he formed as he says a party of himself. Milton, too, like Dante became a one-man party. Dante, politically, arrived at the opposite conclusion of Milton. He saw in a great emperor a power to establish beneficial rule under which all arts, sciences and civil conditions might attain a most perfect state. It seems to me that both Milton and Dante desired the same result, but starting from conditions equally harmful and exactly opposed they naturally arrived at opposite conclusions. And these resulting opinions tinged the great works of each man. Liberty of action under the will of God in Paradise Lost and the strong presentation by Dante of a perfect spiritual kingdom and a desired condition of control like the golden age of Augustus are important parts of both poems. With exile eternal from his beloved Florence, outwardly Dante's life seems to have been an utter and disastrous failure.

"Tu lascerai ogni diletta
Più caramente, e questo è quello strale
Che l'arco dello esilio pria saëtta.
Tu proverai si come sa di sale."

Paradiso, XVII, 55–60.

One great hope came to Dante in 1310. The greatest political event of his life was about to take place. The Emperor Henry of Luxembourg, an idealist, was in Italy to assume control.
The text in the image is not legible due to the quality of the scan. It appears to be a page of text, but the content cannot be accurately transcribed or interpreted.
Dante poured forth his soul in an epistle to the princes and people of Italy and put forth his treatise on the Universal Monarchy, De Monarchia. But Henry, although crowned at Rome, never entered Florence and died at Siena in 1313. Dante fled for solitude to the convent of Santa Croce di Fonte Avellana, where most of the Divine Comedy is said to have been written.

Milton was a man of absolute purity, who strove all his life for knowledge and religious faith. He had in him by nature or bred in him by fate something of the haughty and defiant self-assertion of Dante. This audacity of self-reliance goes far toward making the sublime in both poets. All his life he was much inclined to solitude and was familiar with few. He was austere, not cold. His tenderness which he shows in depicting Adam and Eve was held in check by his Puritanism. The latter showed its strength in leaving, besides a mark in politics and religion, one of its greatest movements, the verse of Milton. Yet one wonders how a man of his austerity, with his character, nature and relation to the Puritan age in which he lived, could have been so remarkable a poet. Poetry especially of the type of Paradise Lost does not seem consistent with the writing of scurrilous political documents and with the justification of regicide. His interest, however, lay in a sublime philosophical conception of life rather than in the particular and intimate lives of men and women. In his writing he is so large a part of it that his necessity becomes that of the whole
human race for the moment. His absorption into his own absolute personality caused a uniform self-consciousness. Everything was transformed into himself. Dante was individual and cast iron, but this quality melted in tenderness for Beatrice. Milton's theme was John Milton's duty as interpreter between his thought and the world. Lowell says he "makes God a mouthpiece for his theology of the time of writing" and "since Dante no one had stood on these visiting terms with Heaven."  

But he himself writes that if he found them speaking unworthy things of themselves or unchaste: "From that time forward their art I still applauded but the men I deplored; and above them all preferred the two famous renovormers of Beatrice and Laura, who never wrote but honor of them to whom they devote their verse, displaying sublime and pure thoughts without transgression."  

I find great fitness in him for his poem as a pure man a great scholar, the chief intellectual champion of political

2 Masson, David. "Three Devils: Luther's, Milton's, Goethe's."
and religious freedom and a man versed in the sorrows and disillusions of life.

Dante also preferred solitude, was conservative, familiar with but few. He was not averse to social intercourse, but incessant study from the time of the death of Beatrice naturally separated him from society. His face indicates a strong, intelligent, refined, self-contained, thoughtful nature. His writings also are a self-revelation, laying bare a personality of which the dominant trait seems to be intensity. He thought harder, felt more keenly, observed more closely, applied himself more unreservedly than all others. His poem shows clear-cut reasoning, distinct conceptions, curiosity "la perpetua e concreta satus," egotistical pride, righteous indignation against all sin, hatred of the sinner, gratitude, sympathy toward excessive love between man and woman. His strongest gratitude was toward God the Redeemer, to Virgil, Brunetto Latini, to literary models, Guinicelli and Daniel, to those who befriended him in exile, the Politani, Can Grande. His relations towards friends seems illustrated by those towards Virgil and Statius. The Francesca episode in the Inferno and his reluctance to pass through the purging fire in the Purgatorio represent his sympathy toward excessive love. As with Milton, it is true that without the emotions, trials, hardships, changes, his genius would not have reached full development.

- 10 -
Ed ella me: "Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria; ciò sa il tuo dottore."

Inf. V, 121-123.

Characteristic of the two men are scholarly attainments, austerity, egotism, self-assertion, intensity, desire for civil and religious order, more or less self-absorption; all of which have aided in producing the Divina Commedia and the Paradise Lost.

Motive of the Poets for Writing.—

Both Milton and Dante believed themselves divinely inspired with what they had to utter and each invokes divine guidance in what he should do or leave undone. They were proudly conscious of unique powers, with, as we now see, a rather small amount of egotism. Consciousness of their force and dignity as poets made Milton wish to place his name on his door to ensure that the returning royalist army would leave him unharmed, and Dante to say that he "would drive the one and the other Guido from the nest" (Purg. XI, 97-99), that he was "endowed with literary power" (Par. XXII, 112-117), that "the water which I take was never coursed before" (Par. II, 7), and to place himself sixth among the immortal poets (Inf. IV, 100-102). Milton's genius was not to be expended for himself; he had a mission to fulfill, a purpose to accomplish. The means whereby this end is to be attained are devotion to religion, devotion to learning and ascetic purity of life.

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The end to be won by both, whether consciously or unconsciously, was fame. Milton writes in a letter to Diodati, his Italian friend, "You ask, 'What I am thinking of?' Why, immortality with God's help. I am pluming my wings for a flight." Writing of his reasons for using the native tongue, he adds, "... not caring to be once named abroad though perhaps I could attain to that, but content with these British Islands as my world."⁷

Dante was determined also to rise above the common herd. Ambition for the achievement of a fame which would return him to Florence through the renown and love of his poem was a driving force. It seems to me that his melancholy and bitterness arose from the stupidity of his countrymen and his native city in not recognizing and crowning his great genius. He writes of fame:

"Senza la qual chi sua vita consuma,
Cotal vestigio in terra di sè lascia,
Qual fummo in aere, od in acqua la schiuma."

Inf. XXIV, 49-51.

"Con altra voce omai, con altro velo
Ritornerò poeta, ed in sul fonte
D'al mio battezzno prenderò il cappello."

Par. XXV, 7-9.

Preparation for Writing Compared.

In the Via Nuova, Dante has a sonnet in which his thought soars through the skies, enters Paradise beholding there Beatrice in glory. After writing this sonnet there appeared to him a vision in which he saw things determining him to say no more of the blessed one until he could be able to speak of her more fitly. So he set himself to study, to say of her what never yet was said of woman. His tribute was to be a vision of Heaven with her as a guiding spirit; hence, a journey which became a spiritual biography. His experience was to be typical of mankind. It was also to be a storehouse of information, a banquet of philosophy, and lastly a guide to heavenly and earthly happiness. He was about twenty-eight when the vision appeared; he died at fifty-six, having just completed the Paradiso. Those intervening years passed in preparatory study, in wandering as an exile over Europe, and nineteen years were spent in composing the first Christian epic, the Divine Comedy.

To Milton at nineteen came the purpose to write a great and enduring poem. His common-place book shows a variety of possible subjects which finally narrowed to two, the Arthurian legend and the Paradise Lost. When one reads of the spirit in which this purpose was undertaken, it seems only logical that the final choice fall upon that subject which became the most learned English poem ever written. To realise his calling as
a poet he set himself to the necessary preliminary training. He purposed to be no idle singer. To sing high praises of heroic men he must have in himself experience and practice of all that is praiseworthy. He wrote to Diodati that it was "a work not to be raised from the heat of youth ... but by devout prayer to the Eternal Spirit. To this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into arts and affairs." At forty-three Milton became totally blind, after which time he set about composing Paradise Lost. The last seven years of his life saw the accomplishment of the poem.

"Since first this subject for heroic song
Pleased me long choosing, and beginning late."

Paradise Lost, Bk. IX, 25.

With Milton as with Dante the greatest work came last after years of delay; the life's work of each marked the life's close. Years had passed between the conception and completion, and the end of the labors was death.

Those intervening years saw the intensive study of Dante. He mastered the philosophers and theologians of the Middle Ages, all classic Latin literature accessible, grammar, logic, rhetoric, astronomy, mathematics, such history and geography as he could get; he made some investigation in physics, music, painting; read in the vernacular literature of France and Italy. Dante knew the Christian scriptures in the Vulgate better than Milton, who was more learned in the Hebrew and Greek
testaments. Dante was unquestionably superior to Milton in the mastery of medieval Scholastic learning. In Milton only the passages or allusions borrowed from Dante show any trace of medieval scholastic thought, whereas the Scholastic theology of the age forms the atmosphere of the allegory.

Milton's study and research had been constant and intensive, a necessity for the acquisition of all that had been added to the store of knowledge in the three hundred years between his day and Dante's. When he became blind, his mind was stored with various and exact learning. But, after blindness he had works on hand requiring reading and research: the Body of Divinity, a History of England, Thesaurus of the Latin language, a geography of eastern travel, rabbinical, early Christian, and medieval commentators on the Paradise, Fall, and Angels. These were read to him. From this mind full of miscellaneous lore wherewith his great imagination might work came the Paradise Lost.

To the erudition of Dante acquired with more difficulty, through the lack of printing and at a later period of his life, and to the erudition of Milton acquired more easily but greater in amount and practically ceasing with his blindness, were added the experiences and observations of the world as men active in the affairs of their day. Dante was a keen observer of the material world while Milton's whole thought was centered on man in relation to God and the state. Lowell has
said of Milton that he combined the fierce mental preoccupation of a scholar with the stern moral zeal of a reformer.  

Scope of Each Poem.

Literally the Divine Comedy is the narrative of a journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven about five thousand years after the Fall of Man. The movement is continuous from the limbus of Hell to its depths, up the mountain of Purgatory, and on through the spheres to the Empyrean. The larger part of the action takes place in or on the earth.

The Paradise Lost is a narrative of the final happiness of Adam and Eve who lost Paradise through evil which was a resultant of the rebellion of Satan against God. The scenes are laid in Eternal Infinity and our World universe of pre-human existence. The Paradise Regained is the narrative of the rejection of all the temptations of man by a perfect being who does not reveal his Divine Nature. This scene is laid in a desert.

Dante's story being a journey, must, of necessity, have a more exact setting so the three divisions are imaginatively placed but with a definiteness that does not verge too much upon the supernatural. In the epic of Milton the opening scene is in infinity previous to the creation of the World, at whose formation we are present in the six days recorded in Genesis. The universe

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1 Lowell, J. R. "Literary Essays." Vol. IV
of Milton therefore is more supersensual and ideal than Dante's.

Only the Paradiso takes us into infinite space and there, there is no supersensual universe as Dante follows the Ptolemaic system, the one known in his day, and the successive spheres are the spheres of the planets. This system is also used by Milton, but the Earth and its surrounding spheres are enclosed in a shell, the whole then suspended in the immensity of Chaos, with the infinity of the Empyrean above. The physical universe of Dante would go into a nutshell, as compared with that to which the imagination must stretch itself out in Paradise Lost. Carlyle says, "Inferno, Purgatory, and Paradise look out on one another like compartments of a great edifice; a great supernatural world cathedral piled up stern, column, awful."¹

No poem can surpass in clearness and accuracy the extent of the physical configuration.

In both poems we find the Empyrean, but of quite different structure. This, in Dante, is the outermost sphere of those surrounding the earth, therefore infinite, but restricted by him in our view to the cup or rose of the saints of the Church and the three-part rainbow of light of God, the Son, and the Holy Ghost above. Milton's Heaven, indefinite as being unvisited by man, is the upper half of a sphere of infinite radius where dwell God, the Son, the Archangels, surrounded by a vast population;

¹ Carlyle, Thomas. "Lecture on Dante."
companies, orders, hierarchies of angels. It consists of tracts of celestial earth, invisibly vague, with directions as far to the north lies the country over which Lucifer rules his palace "from diamond quarries hewn and rocks of gold;" a place of light, freedom, happiness, glory. A crystal floor separates it from an unformed mass below. Milton writes that what is said of Heaven is said symbolically to make conceivable by human imagination what in its own nature is inconceivable. So he uses terrestrial analogies

"and what surmounts the reach
Of human sense I shall delineate so,
By likening spiritual to corporal forms,
As may express them best."

Book V, 571-574.

Below the crystal floor of Heaven is the infinite space of Chaos, coexistent with it an abyss of universal darkness; all the elements are there of light, earth, water, air, fire, but in the pulp of unformed matter. In this region, not found in the Comedy, Hell is a concave at the lower part and the Earth is placed just below the crystal floor, having at its first inception a golden stairway connecting it with the Empyrean above and at the close of the poem a "causey" at its opposite pole binding it with Hell. Here chaos rules, eternal battle of the elements wages, and Chance governs all.

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One-third of the action in Dante's journey takes place in Hell. According to the poet Satan formed a chasm in the Earth as he fell and has remained wedged in ice in the center. The Inferno of Dante, very definite in every detail is in the form of a cone with its circumference at the base just below the earth's crust at Jerusalem. The base is four thousand miles in breadth with the apex of the cone lying at the earth's center four thousand miles deep. This chasm he divides into three main parts by precipices. The slope downward is broken by nine steps; the last three, separated from those above by a high wall, forms lower Hell. Each step is peopled by sinners both Christian and pagan who are suffering punishments inflicted for their particular crimes and suitable to them. Dante's journey takes place thirteen hundred years after Christ's birth, so Hell is already peopled and the curse on the Serpent, the result of which is our last sight of Satan in Paradise Lost, has been pronounced. This Hell of Dante's is pure realism, a torture house.

Milton didn't profess to have been in either Heaven or Hell so he confined himself to generalities where Dante brings all his images into the range of our vision. Hell was not formed as Satan was repulsed from Heaven, but was already a concave portion in lower Chaos which was fated to receive the rebel angels.
"Hell, their fit habitation, fraught with fire
Unquenchable, the house of woe and pain."

Book VI, 876.

No more sublime poetry can be found than the description of
this vague shadowy region replete with suffering, but whose
terrors we do not feel as Milton did not. Our pleasure is
intellectual.

"The dismal situation vast and wild;
A dungeon horrible on all sides round
As one great furnace flam'd, yet from the flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Serv'd only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell; hope never comes
That comes to all."

Book I, 60-67.

Milton knew Italian literature and there are evident borrowings
from Dante.

"Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'istrate."

Inf. III, 9.

The Hell of Paradise Lost is not a torture house; darkness,
heat, and ice are symbolic of suffering. Even in pain the fallen
angels, after the first council in Pandemonium, pass the irk-
some hours, some contend in Olympic games, others in rage tear
up rocks and hills in wild uproar; still others of milder natures
sing with angelic notes (were they not Spirits immortal?); others hold philosophical discussions on providence, foreknowledge, will, fate. Milton's Hell is modern, traditional, and has little in common with Dante's medieval and philosophical Inferno. There is no doubt that both believed in an actual hell but hardly would it conform to their poetical conceptions.

Purgatory is wholly Dante's. He represents it as an island shaped like a conical mountain whose apex is in the sphere of the Moon and whose base is at the opposite pole of the inverted cone of Hell. Its top reached by a series of circular shelves, on which the penitent sinners atone for the different classified transgressions and up which the repentant Dante will pass is the plateau of the Garden of Eden. This Eden, except by inference was not such a wonderfully beautiful spot as we find it in Paradise Lost. The Eden of Milton is not a garden set apart and differing from the rest of the Earth in beauty, but a grove, a garden of the terrestrial sphere. It was only different in that in it was planted the tree of knowledge. The description of the Creation (Book VII) is all that which went to form Eden. Milton is a master of description and of blank verse in this book. In Dante's garden we see only the figures of Matilda and Beatrice followed by the allegorical pageant of the medieval Catholic church. Presumably it is just as Adam and Eve left it, while Milton changes its character absolutely.
after the judgment of expulsion. By a change in the sun’s path or a movement of the earth from its former position, the ecliptic became oblique to the equator bringing seasons of cold, heat, spring, autumn; the planets are to be sometimes benign sometimes malignant, storms arise, beast wages war on beast, no longer are they subservient to man and his friend but glare on him passing or flee him. When Adam and Eve depart looking back they see “the gate with dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms, a fit abode for Evil, Sin, and Death” who have built an adamantine causey to the Earth that they may the more easily pass through Chaos.

Milton, hating every dogma of Catholicism, could not have believed in a Purgatory, yet he has the Eternal Father say,

“Another world; out of one man a race
Of men innumerable, there to dwell,
Not here, till by degree of merit rais’d
They open to themselves at length the way
Up hither, under long obedience try’d
And earth be chang’d to Heav’n and
Heav’n to Earth
One kingdom, joy and union without end.”

Book VII, 155-161.

The Starry Universe of the epic is the Ptolemaic system employed by both Dante and Milton but with some differences.
The Earth's relation to the planets is exactly the same in each, but in the Comedy the spheres form a series of Heavens through which the soul of Dante (his body is made as little a necessity as possible) passes, perceiving as visions of light those who have reached the blessed abode and who dwell largely in that sphere whose capacity for divine love is indicated by its nearness to the Empyrean where sinless angels and the Trinity abide. Dante, of course, does not bother about the relation of this system to infinity except that the Empyrean represents infinity. Milton, on the contrary, conceives of the Starry Universe as a system surrounded by a covering in the shape of a ball suspended in Chaos by a golden chain attached to the crystal floor of Heaven. Below it and about it is Chaos at whose lower edge is the concave of Hell. When all is innocence and obedience a golden stair connects the Empyrean with the Starry Universe and it is through this passage Satan must pass. He looks within the outer shell and sees the whole universe with the Earth at the centre surrounded by the spheres of the planets. Before he passes within the broad path through the stars to the sun, where he first alights, he sees a place, since called the Limbo of Vanity, named by Milton the Paradise of Fools. It is an interesting digression. He passes all the starry abodes, but seeks not to find if they are inhabited, finally alighting on the Sun, where he finds the archangel Uriel. It would seem then that the angels and
archangels used the great planets. There is little doubt that Milton knew of and probably accepted the Copernican system which Raphael carefully explains to Adam in Book VIII, 15-178, but the Ptolemaic system suited his poetic imagination and was the accepted belief of his youth.

The conception of the Creation varies greatly in the two poems. In Dante the six days are taken figuratively, in Milton literally. According to the former, God always was; the angels, heavens, meaning the Starry Universe, the mass of brute matter burst into being in one moment. The heavens directed by angels operated on matter, separating earth, water, air, fire, shaped the globe, drawing forth minerals, plants, and beasts.

Man was created by direct order of God. Angels and man were endowed with free-will, which implies possibility of sin. Angels were offered grace, but some, about one-tenth, expecting to equal God, rejected the proffer before one could count twenty and were cast out of Heaven to dwell as devils in Hell, which shaped itself in the forming earth as they fell. Then God created man to eventually fill the places of the fallen angels. Before seven hours had passed, Adam and Eve through evil choice forfeited grace and lost the way to Heaven. They, too, in their pride had exalted themselves above divine law. In the trial of free-will most angels had met the responsibility with success, but man had failed.
In Milton's poem God, the Angels, the Empyrean, Chaos, even Hell were eternal and infinite. After the rebellious angels were driven from Heaven they fell nine days and nine nights, and on the "horrid pool" lay nine days and nights; during which time God orders His Son to create the Starry Universe for a beloved being Man who was to have possibilities of a greater divinity than the Angels. The Son goes forth with Cherubim and Seraphim, Potentates and Thrones to Chaos where with golden compasses he sets the bounds of "Heav'n and Earth, matter unformed and void."
This beautiful line precedes the creation:

"Silence, ye troubled waves and thou
deep, peace.

Book VII, 216.

With the literal consumption of the six days according to Genesis, the Son created the Starry Universe, all land formations and waters, birds, beasts, plants; on the sixth day God with the Son created Adam.

The hero of the Divine Comedy finds himself astray at night in a wood. A mountain whose top is alight seems a way out, but three beasts, a lion, leopard, wolf drive him back. Virgil appears sent by Beatrice to guide him, but they must pass through the earth from side to side to escape the wild beasts. Their journey leads down the deep concave of Hell, where Dante sees, converses with, and questions kings, popes, ancient Greeks and Romans, Christian martyrs, neighbors, friends, mythological beings and Lucifer in the apex of the abyss. All these have com-
mitted crimes of greater or less sinfulness for which all are enduring degrees and differences of punishment. The account is exciting, even thrilling. The difficulties of the descent the sudden appearance of horrible monsters, the narrow escapes from dangers unknown but rumored cloud the mind to all but the vivid recital of the trip. From the center of the earth by a dark winding passage they emerge at the opposite side on an island, on which rises a lofty mountain. Virgil and Dante struggle up the steep side to the ledges which encircle the mountain to the very top. Cato, the guardian of the island, directs them, and later Statius joins them. On the ledges are souls, repentant before death, now preparing themselves by discipline for the heavenly life. Here, too, the penance undergone is commensurate with and befitting the sin of which they were guilty. In this part of the journey, the music, the sculpture, the visions, the discussions on sin and penance, demanded by the Church, are added to the accounts of great deeds of princes, kings, popes, and men of Dante's day. The journey is on earth but in the air having the atmosphere of the approaching celestial end. At the summit of the mountain to which the three mount is the Garden of Eden, where they find Matilda. Here they witness an elaborate pageant, Beatrice appears, Virgil disappears miraculously and soon Statius is no longer one of the group. Dante, led by Beatrice mounts through the spheres, stopping at each to see its dwellers, into the real Paradise of Love.
where the vision of God is seen. As a narrative it moves rapidly is spirited, is filled with realism, surprise, suspense. Theological digressions and philosophical discussions retard it at times and a multiplicity of characters is wearying.

The Paradise Lost opens with the ejected angels lying on the burning crust of Hell, from which Satan summons them to council. A decision must be reached as to their future action. Satan skillfully leads the discussion to the great project of seeking the Earth, whose creation he had heard predicted in Heaven, and there to hurt God by gaining control through guile to ruin man. Some one must find this Earth, report on its position and how to work their will. Satan sets out on this quest. This whole scene is dramatic, majestic, powerful. The story changes to Heaven where in council the Father tells the Son that Satan will find the Earth and pervert mankind because he has created man free and able to withstand the tempter. To bring man back to his happiness, he must placate divine justice by an offering sufficient unto God. The Son offers himself, God accepts, and the Council disbands to its employments which seem to be hymning the praises of God. Satan, in the meanwhile, alights on the Earth, having passed Sin and Death guarding the Gates of Hell and deceives Uriel, who points out to the enemy the Garden of Eden. There the arch Fiend makes his way, leaps the wall, sits as a cormorant on the Tree of Life and sees the great beauty of Adam, Eve and their Paradise. Listening to
their words, he learns that he might seduce them but not how.

Uriel, having observed Satan on Mount Niphates and recognizing him as evil warns Gabriel, in charge of the gate of Paradise, that a harmful Spirit has entered there. Gabriel guards the gate, but as night approaches he sends two angels to Adam's bower who discover Satan at the ear of Eve in the form of a toad, tempting her. They take Satan to Gabriel who enemies the Fiend by his scorn. They are about to attack each other when God hangs in the sky the scales showing Satan's sure defeat. He flies, remaining in shadow seven days. Eve, awakening, relates her evil dream to Adam who comforts her. Raphael is sent by God to warn Adam of his need of obedience, of his free condition, of the presence of the enemy. To enforce his warning, he tells for the first time of the war in Heaven, of the fall of the angels and the creation of the world. The story of the War required imagination, equalled only by Dante's in literature. Adam relates his own remembrance of creation, his meeting with Eve, his love for her, all artfully simple and pathetic in our knowledge of the coming disaster. Everything has been cleverly motivated for the disaster long prepared for and long expected. Satan again enters Paradise as a black mist, passes into a serpent, awaiting his chance. Adam, fearing the tempter, does not wish to separate from Eve in a division of labor, but is overpersuaded by her, who leaves him. Satan
approaches Eve and the struggle between Satan's intellect and Eve's intelligence ends in Eve's surrender to her vanity by eating of the Tree of Knowledge. Returning to Adam, she takes the apple inducing him to share her fate through love. The guardian angels leave Paradise as the Son of God sentences Adam and Eve. Satan returns to Pandemonium finding that Sin and Death, his children, have built the bridge to Earth. He relates his success to the council to receive its applause but is rewarded by a hiss from his hearers who, as he, have become serpents according to the doom pronounced in Paradise by the Son of God.

This is his last and complete fall. A change takes place in Nature which Adam perceives. He bitterly laments, assails Eve, but she appeases him, and, repentant, each in turn begs that the curse pronounced on the race of man fall only on the one. Their purification has begun with the spirit of sacrifice. Penitence, the acceptance of God's justice, the vision of God, have brought peace to Adam. Michael appears to lead Adam to the Mount of Vision. The Vision is a series of pictures of future events resulting from their sin: Cain, Abel and the murder, the lazarpouse, corrupt civilization, war and injustice, evil peace, the flood. The Angel tells of further results of the fall through the history of man, but adds that in the seed of woman, the coming of the perfect man, whose death will overthrow sin, will restore the lost Paradise. At the Judgment Day Satan's power will be overcome and all that
was lost will be regained. Adam comforted, awakens Eve and they pass from Eden.

Paradise Regained is an extension rather than a sequel to Paradise Lost, yet a unity in itself. It harmonizes with the general design, but it possesses special grace and dignity of its own. It enforces by a great example the lesson which Adam had been taught in Eden. Paradise Lost is the disobedience of man in temptation with its consequences while Paradise Regained is the reversal, the obedience of man in temptation and the recovery of Paradise. Christ, the ideal man, ardent in his passion for humanity, is exposed to the temptation of greatness offered by Satan, in disguise, but remains victor through meekness, patience, fortitude, and obedience, by which Paradise is regained. It begins with three pictures: John the Baptist and Christ at the Jordan; Satan holding council in mid-air and going forth to tempt Christ; the Father in Heaven foretelling to Gabriel the Son’s victory.

The first temptation is offered and rejected. This temptation is obscure but seems to be the same as the second. Between the two there are also three pictures: the disciples in a cottage are praying for Christ’s return; Mary, his mother, is anxiously awaiting him; and Satan is again in council. Christ, hungry, awakens and is tempted with a vision of a feast and nymphs. He refuses, implying that gratification of appetite did not
appeal to him. Then follows the temptation of winning his kingdom by using evil means to attain it; then the temptation of fame, where Milton, self-conscious, paints with some scorn and wrath the conquerors who have left ruin behind them; then the appeal is to free his own country, to fulfill the prophets, to which he answers: "All things are best fulfilled in their due time. Who best can suffer, best can do, best reign who first well hath obeyed." The next is of the same nature, but this time Rome, David's throne, is the reward, always offered on the condition of worshipping evil. The kingdom of the mind is next proffered with Athens as the prototype, a magnificent description. In wrath at failure again, Satan brings on a terrible storm, the trial of fear of suffering, a presage of Christ's fate he tells him, and bearing him away to the highest pinnacle of the temple bids him prove his Sonship with God. Christ warns

"'Tempt not the Lord thy God.' He said

and stood:

But Satan, smitten with amazement

fell."

Angels bear the Saviour away and feed him from the Tree of Life.

The poem closes with the simple line,

"Home to his mother's house private returned."

The Divine Comedy is the grandest and most profound religious allegory of which Europe can boast. "È da sapere
Dante was the first poet whose whole system of thought is colored by a purely Christian theology. His plan was if not to "justify" at least to illustrate for warning and example "the ways of God to man." His subject is man "as by merit and demerit through freedom of the will, he renders himself liable to the regard or punishment of justice." The whole range and compass of man's spiritual being, the process and philosophy of man's fall and restoration are delineated by means of sensible types and images.

*Cosi parlar convien al vostro ingegno,
Però che solo da sensato apprende
Ciò che fa possa d'intelletto degno.*

Paradiso IV, 40-42.

His theme is purely subjective, modern, romantic, but his treatment is objective, at times realistic, with the form of classical severity.

Dante was bound by the tradition and fashion of his day that poetry must exist primarily in the sense of allegory.

1 Fraticelli, P. Quoted from "Della prima e principale," etc.
2 Armstrong, A. H. "The Great Poets and their Theology."
conveying religious and moral truths. He said "All worthy and noble poetry is allegorical." In this he did not originate a style as he found allegory in Homer and the Old and New Testaments. But Dante's allegory is so tremendous that many allegories exist within its compass. The chief one is the journey of mankind from sin to salvation, but also there is a political allegory condemning the factions of his day and showing the way as he conceived it toward an ideal state accompanied by a spiritual faith. Dante Gabriel Rossetti sees in it an antipapal spirit, so religious reform is its object; Carducci has said that Dante is claimed as a monarchist and a republican, as a Catholic and a Protestant; as a Virgilian and a Romanticist, as the upholder of a German Empire and one who has done more than any one to found the Italian nationality.\(^1\)

Dante's idea of a perfect state was one in which the balancing of temporal and spiritual powers would bring to the world an outward state of goodness and an inward state of happiness. His want of faith in freedom parallels Milton's refusal to confound license with liberty. He lived in a republic whose peace was constantly disturbed by struggles between the Guelfs and Ghibellines. These he desired to unite for the peace and growth of all Italy. So against the Guelfs he wreaked vengeance in the Comedy: the Guelf party; the Church

\(^1\) Schuyler, E. "Carducci and Dante."
(Boniface VIII a Guelf and a Black), the head of the Guelfs and opposed to the loss of temporal power; and the French under Charles of Valois, in league with the Guelfs. Fraticelli sees in the lion, haughty France, in the panther, envious Florence and in the wolf avaricious Rome, the personification of these three Guelfic divisions. The obscure wood is the political and moral disorder of Italy, produced by the division and vices of the people; the delectable mountain is the political and moral order on which gleams the sun of rectitude and justice. Besides wreaking vengeance Dante has a noble aim to lead the Italians to the order resulting from exercising moral virtue; to lead Italy to peace, and concord; to unite all Italy to become the head and center of the Roman empire. To bring these about was to make human society strong and upright. We certainly find in the great work an historical, political, and moral picture of the thirteenth century. He represents himself the hero, and the men of his age typical of mankind, thus embracing the whole world; he discusses human actions and puts the acts of his contemporaries to show the heart of man. He has been called the civil poet par excellence.

Dante's allegory, the drama of his life, and of the soul of man, opens some five thousand years after the fall of man. The Divine Comedy is the epic of Man considered as a moral being exercising free-will under the eye of an inexorable judge who punishes and rewards according to fixed laws, the
medieval creeds. Man in a state of sin in the world (worldly life) desires to seek righteousness (the sunlit mountain) but is impeded by three beasts (evil habits). He needs aid which Mercy and Grace direct Revelation (the Virgin, Lucia and Beatrice) to offer. Man is not fit for direct redemption until through the understanding of sin and its penance, complete revelation draws him to the real Paradise in the presence of God. Virgil (Reason or Understanding) shows in the Inferno the nature of sin and its punishment. The free-will of man involving responsibility is dominant throughout the poem. In the Inferno the free-will of the sinners was in harmony with wrongdoing. Although Dante believed without doubt in a real Hell, the Inferno represents symbolically the states of mind under the influence of the passion for which the sinner is being punished. Sins are classified according to the current scholastic and philosophical thought and punished in accordance with the sin; that is, the torments represent the sins. What little the Catholic faith told of Hell is enriched by the imagination on Grecian and Roman creations, by scraps of current Italian history, and fantastic tales of North and East. Dante's punishments are proportioned to the effect of each sin on society at large. In Milton's Pandemonium there are no degrees of guilt; he only professes to describe the ultimate fate of Satan and the rebellious angels. Dante's conception of sin and wrong-
doing is more logical, more thinkable, more spiritual and philosophical. It probably represented the Catholic view of life. Hell, in Dante, is an absolute reality filled with loathsome images; this condition of the soul expressing moral deformity demanded revolting types which were also demanded by medieval art. Having passed through the knowledge of sin, man must cleanse his soul in Purgatory which is under the control of the exponent of free-will, Cato, who gave his life to assert his independence. Here Reason (Virgil, a pagan) must be assisted by understanding informed by Christianity (Statius) whom Dante portrays as having been converted. Also the sinner having repented at the moment of death must endure torments. This division shows the free-will in recoil from wrong-doing. Purgatory is the place of self-discipline, yet it is a mountain of light which a celestial atmosphere surrounds, a place of joy and hopefulness. Purgatory was real, definitely fixed by tradition but vaguely located. The soul of man, discarding reason and made penitent and innocent, enters the Garden of Eden where the Glories of the Church are revealed in a pageant, a fitting introduction to the mysticism of Paradise.

Beatrice (Revelation) guides the soul into the knowledge of blessedness, with its varying states in the different spheres, and into the understanding of the nature of God's love. The Paradiso is mysticism made conceivable by
the spheres of the Ptolemaic system. Here the free-will appears in opposition to wrong-doing and the result of the harmony of the free-will of the human being with right-doing or universal order is depicted. This part is the climax of the poem, in which the poet reaches the grandest flight of phantasy. The Milton subjectivity of happiness is a glimpse compared with the delineation in the Paradiso.

"... then wilt thou not be loth
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
A Paradise within thee, happier far."

Book XII, 585-587.

The Paradiso is full of abstruse problems of philosophy, ethics and theology; its predominant note is predestination.

The recognition of evil, self-discipline when acknowledged, the way of redemption to be followed with no delay, diversions, or waste of time gives us a poem of universal scope directed to the gain of entire humanity not less than to the peace and happiness of the individual man. Dante's recognition of sin, penitence and the uplifting of the soul is truth under fiction. The Paradise Lost chronicles the fall of man brought about by the fall of Lucifer, which was the result of the struggle of the spiritual forces of good and evil in Heaven. Evil enters through the freedom of the will. Obedience from choice to the will
of God brings happiness. In the poem Milton elaborated a theory of evil and its relation to God's plan for the government of the universe. Not Adam's fall, but his redemption through humility, suffering, and the sacrifice of Christ is the underlying motive. Adam to Milton was not individual man hated and entrapped by Satan, but the human race loved and favored of God; falling through evil but lifted by divine strength. Obedience to God is the true condition of freedom; the most eventful act in the world's history was an inward decision of the will. The argument was a passionate conviction of Milton "to justify the ways of God to man" to scourge tyranny, to exalt heroism. This is not an allegory and contains two figures only that are allegorical, Sin and Death, the children of Satan. In the last book there is a vision, shown Adam, typifying the seven deadly sins. The poem is a poetical representation on hints of the Book of Genesis of the historical connection between Human Time and Eternal Infinity, between a world-universe of pre-human existence and the fortunes of a world newly created. Satan, or Lucifer, sometimes, but wrongly, considered the hero, established this connection. It is original in its entire conception and filled with bits from all that is great in preceding literature, ancient and modern. There are citations from the Bible, Homer, Euripides, Plato, Lucretius, Cicero, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Juvenal, Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso, Spenser, and Shakespeare. He was
not guilty of plagiarism. He writes, "Such kind of borrowing if it be not bettered by the borrower, is accounted plagiarism." And again, "It is not hard for any man who hath a Bible to borrow good words and holy sayings in abundance but to make them his own is a work of grace only from above."

Milton had to represent a supernatural condition of being and to construct a story. A difficult thing it is to exhibit angels as thinking, scheming, blundering, to produce a series of events. His course of events had to correspond with the reputation of the objects, Satan, Raphael, Gabriel, Son of God. Literally this is an impossible feat. One cannot conceive what would occur amongst them though the mind can conceive them together. Milton didn't struggle in this as did Dante in the Paradiso. The former merely made them act as they would amongst us but they are infinitely more powerful agents. They are objects not personalities. He had to make motives, reasonings, misconceptions, human to determine the succession of events. His characters have no higher degree of knowledge, than humans. If they had been credited with a greater degree of insight or a strong conviction of the Divine omnipotence (seemingly necessary) then Milton's story would be impossible. Satan would not have rebelled, would not have struggled further. Yet the poet is consistent; there is nothing mystic or hazy in the events. He carries on a sublime, stately, narrative only slightly discursive. As this is not an allegory,
Milton had to give spiritual conceptions an imaginative reality. Divinity is not easily imagined, so in modern thought it is a question of eliminating the supernatural from art. The problem of clothing such conceptions is so difficult that it is no wonder that Milton failed to a certain degree as that he achieved so great a measure of success. It is not probable that any poet will ever again attempt to present the personality of God. Every idea of importance, lying within Milton's poetry, was not merely serviceable for his art but was warranted by reason on scriptural authority.

In composing Paradise Lost, Milton did not merely handle imaginatively an accepted body of thought on religious questions; he daringly constructed his own theology on a scriptural basis. It is related to Puritanism but original and extraordinary in that he compiled a complete faith and translated it into art.

The God of Dante is the source of all knowledge and love, never presented in sensible form but a vision of light surrounded by heavenly music. Milton's God according to the exigences of the tale was a person who, although supreme in knowledge and power, seems lacking in spirituality. He converses too much like a human, but we feel his sublimity even when his righteous anger becomes a little scurrilous. He is the God of sacred writings.
According to Milton, God decreed nothing absolutely which could be left in the power of free agents. He foreknew that Adam would fall of his own free-will; therefore, his fall was certain but not necessary.

All men are predestined to eternal life on condition of faith in Christ. There is no such thing as eternal reprobation. Predestination is by grace but also by the will and belief of men. Here lies a difference in Dante's belief in that he believed strictly in the revealed word of God as interpreted by the Church to whom obedience in matters of religion was a necessity.

The Son of God existed before the world was created but was not co-eternal, nor co-essential, nor co-equal. He is not the Supreme God and though his nature and power are divine his nature was given him by the Father and the power delegated. Milton then was an Arian as passage after passage makes clear. Dante was a Trinitarian believing in the unity and universality of God, the union of two natures in Christ, creation, original sin and redemption.

Milton saw in Christ two natures, but the divine nature was not of the same essence as the Father and was in partial abeyance during His life on earth. Being man, this divine person was capable of temptation and fall. This is the theme of Paradise Regained.
Sin which is common to all men is that which Adam and Eve committed, the sin of disobedience to God.

Matter is produced out of God, intrinsically good and all things were made of it, the form and the matter being the thing. Souls are not pre-existent as in Dante; the soul and the body are not two distinct things. The whole man is soul and the soul is man. In each man, the soul is born and produced by matter but a divine virtue is inspired from God. Dante believed that the soul was infused in man by God but the body and soul were different in nature.

Death according to Milton had divisions: first, it was guiltiness; Adam's shame is death; then it is the loss of reason by which man discerns good; thirdly, the death of the body, meaning soul, spirit, and body; fourth, by eternal death, the punishment of the lost. Dante, I should say, believed in the third and fourth deaths as the sinners in Inferno speak of a second death. He also believed that the body which had been separated from the soul at death would be united to it to form the perfect whole on Judgment Day. In both poems Christ satisfied God's justice by fulfilling the law and paying the required price for mankind.

The angels of Milton are rather interesting although we realize that the demands of the narrative and the art of poetry determined their representation. They were
immortal, of a purely spiritual nature, of greater prowess than human. Their form and actions transcended those of man. Satan found as a toad at Eve's ear shows that they could contract and dilate. They could move with incredible swiftness in any direction or assume any mass form, hence, Satan's army existed as a cube not a square. Not affected by gravitation they did not fall from Heaven but were driven out. They could alight on a round surface and bound off. Lofty in stature, of great strength, they act as physical agents. Their words and actions must show power as superhuman as their stature. In the rebellion they tear up mountains and fling them on one another, and invent great canons in a night. These are some of the grotesque pictures in Paradise Lost which are also found in the Inferno. They illustrate the difficulties of portraying philosophical and theological ideas by means of elaborate description and action.

Milton connects the mysteries of the inconceivable universe with the traditions and experiences of our planet Earth by means of one great being, Lucifer, the rebel of Heaven, or Satan, the evil of Earth. The Lucifer of Dante is colossal, powerless, speechless, hopeless, a symbol of degradation and important hate. He is embedded in ice, only visible from his waist upward, but his dimensions are so carefully given that his entire size may be computed. He is three-faced, holding in his jaws the three traitors to church,
state, and friendship, Judas, Iscariot, hate; Cassius, weakness and Brutus, ignorance. In the Paradise Lost, Lucifer is a knight, ruling in oriental splendor, by force of intellect, over all those who later were worshipped as false gods when Hell had easy access to Earth. Satan, the fallen archangel, prince of devils, presides at the council of the infernal peers, defies the Almighty, devises schemes of warfare and revenge against the supreme authority of God. He and all his followers are free in limb although they suffer the tortures of fire and ice.

Lucifer is the most individualized being in the poem. Satan's life, consistent with his immensity and powers, being higher than all archangels, and not lower than the Son of God was one of action not adoration. Since Milton placed the Son inferior to God, Lucifer had cause for jealousy, and, equal in council with intellect as great as any below God, he refused to accept the Son as his ruler. As a being of action and not adoration, Satan is justified in his opinion.

"To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:

Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven."

Book I, 262-263.

Here Milton expresses his subjectivity of punishment in Satan's speech.
"Hail, horrors, hail
Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell
Receive thy new possessor: one who brings
A mind not to be changed by place or time.
The mind is its own place; and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven."

Book I, 250-255.

The fact of the fall of the Archangel did not necessitate his being a devil. Satan's idea was to forget suffering in revengeful action, so marking out his future life, he began to fall to the idea of badness. At first, he feels remorse, exhibits a sympathetic knowledge of good; then he adopts evil as a career but has sublime moral conceptions. In his first council in Pandemonium, we read

"...... cruel his eye but cast
Signs of remorse and passion to behold
The fellows of his crime ......
Millions of Spirits ......
...... yet faithful how they stood
Their glory withered;
...............
Thrice he assayed, and thrice in spite of scorn
Tears, such as angels weep burst forth."

Book I, 604-620.

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Although evil has been decided upon as the work of the fallen angels, Satan, as he alights on Mt. Nephates is yet capable of nobility.

"...Now Conscience wakes Despair
That slumbered, wakes the bitter memory
Of what he was,—what is, and what must be."

Book IV, 23-25.

Satan in a fine soliloquy argues as to why or what excuse he had for revolt.

"Hadst thou the same free-will and power to stand?
Thou hadst. Thou hast thou then, or what to accuse
But Heaven's free love dealt equally to all?"

Book IV, 66-68.

At the end of the soliloquy, he says

"So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear,
Farewell remorse; all good to me is lost;
Evil be thou my good."

Book IV, 108-110.

When touched by Ithuriel's spear to assume his own form a squat toad

"Abashed the Devil stood
And felt how awful goodness is, and saw
Virtue in her shape how lovely; saw and pined

His loss."

Book IV, 846-849.
And when he is about to make his attempt to seduce Eve

"... for the time remained
Stupidly good: of enmity disarmed,
Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge."

Book IX, 464-466.

Recollection returns of his condition and now he becomes a devil never more to show or have pity.

"... but all pleasure to destroy
Save what is in destroying: other joy
To me is lost."

Book IX, 477-479.

The success of the Paradise Lost lay in the characterization of Satan and Eve. In both he certainly achieved a triumph. In the presentation of Adam and Eve were the difficulties of making them prototypes: they must seem all mankind not man and woman. They are to show how evil entered the world. Dante shirked this problem. Milton was convinced that a sinless pair could not suddenly fall into error without some tendency to deterioration in their hearts. They are not to be bad but at most erring man and woman. Eve had to be nobler, more lovable, with higher tastes, greater intelligence, more universal than woman. The material for the dream is in Eve's thoughts as a result of her defect and she falls through vain-glory. Adam also had some responsibility: his love was idolatry, not built
on truth as perfect love should be. These defects are very human so they both appeal to our sympathy.

Sources of Each Poem.

Dante had precedents which can be traced in the great work. In the Confessions of St. Augustine he had an example of the portrayal of the depravity of the world and the way to social regeneration; in the sixth book of the Aeneid, Virgil's visit to Hell; in medieval legend there was St. Patrick's Purgatory; and in the Greek Apocalypse of St. Paul, St. Paul was guided by an angel through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. Also ancient and medieval encyclopedias, such as the Tesoretto of Brunetto Latini, a confession, a fantastic journey, a compilation of learning, a vision, allegorical in form, in verse, a quest for happiness, told in the first person were at hand. But the result in the Comedy was wholly a work of his own imagination and experience.

As with all great works, there has been much searching for the sources of Paradise Lost with consequent discussions. There are three generally accepted as having inspired the epic of Milton: one, a Latin tragedy, "Adamus Exul" by Hugo Grotius, to which the second source is said to owe something; a play, "Adamo" of the Italian poet Giovanni Andreini; lastly, the so-called Caedmon Paraphrase, "The Fall of Man," probably the work of many hands. The latter was perhaps nearest in its plot, the groundwork of which was the Hebrew story of the treason and fall of the great Archangel who determines to drag down the terrestrial
beings beloved of God. But the brilliant imagination and erudition of Milton have incorporated such imagery and invention that one seems the skeleton of the other.

Comparison of Poetical Form.—

It was Shelley's verdict that "Homer was the first and Dante the second epic poet; that is, the second poet, the series of whose creations bore a definite and intelligible relation to the knowledge and sentiment and religion of the age in which he lived and of the ages which followed it." ¹

This excludes all so-called epic poets except Milton. It also contradicts the ordinary definition by which an epic is said to be a national poem, reciting deeds of a national hero. The epic takes for its theme no less than a problem of importance to a nation or to the human race. The end of the epic is usually the triumph of the hero; at all events the issue heralds the success of the principles for which he has striven. "The scope of the epic has no limits; it may aim at nothing less than a flash of the whole background of life's mystery for it moves in the universe and does not confine itself to the actualities known to the senses."² Both Dante and Milton can certainly sub-

¹Symonds, J. A. "The Study of Dante."
²Woodhull, W. "The Epic of Paradise Lost."
scribe to these precepts but the commentators on Dante, making a study of Aristotle's theory of poetry, gave a rigid classification of legitimate styles which led to a controversy on the Comedy. Then opinion varied so that it was epic, didactic, comedy, satire, and finally, a medley of all styles, tragic, comic, satirical, lyric, elegiac. All this seems a bit beside the question. The subject is certainly lyrical but is epic in the handling. I feel that he strove for poetry in human passions, in morality, in theology, making the latter poetical by art. Dante did not, as Homer and Milton, set forth the subject of his epic in the first lines of the poem. He plunged immediately into his theme, but he does as both the others do, invoke the heavenly muses as an artistic aid. This invocation makes it reasonable for the author to relate what he could not be supposed to know without divine help, and promotes stately elevation of style. The two poets had to treat of philosophical problems such as man's free-will, the nature of matter, and still write poetry. They both present these as discussions and dogma and therein lose the vividness of suggested pictures which an epic needs.

Milton had resolved that his poem was to be in English and an epic, not a national epic, not one after any known types, but an epic of the human species of our entire planet or rather of our entire astronomical universe. It is the vast comprehension of the story in space and time that makes it unique, and as he says, it involves "things unattempted yet
in prose or rhyme." His poem is epic in subject and dramatic in treatment. Paradise Lost has been called the meeting point of the Renaissance and the Reformation. If one reads with this in mind, it is remarkable how mythology is woven into Puritanism; one easily sees the influence of the Bible, the classics, the Italian poets and English literature. And herein are the poem and the man inseparable that when he writes, his ideas are said, are discussed. In the Comedy, Dante's personality is with us all the time - what he feels, what he thinks.

Milton chose for his verse form the English heroic verse, but he gave to it a variety of pause and majestic harmony as to make it unapproachably his own. It is imbued with a classicism that sets him apart from, if not above, all other English poets. Carlyle says Milton's blank verse is like a "fugue upon an organ,"¹ and De Quincey speaks of the "solemn planetary wheelings of the verse of Milton."² His verse swings on with no short cadence but broad harmonious movement at times resounding, at times martial. In reading Paradise Lost, one has a feeling of vastness. Lowell writes, "You float under an illimitable sky brimmed with sunshine or hung with constellations; the abysses of space are about you; you hear the cadenced surges of an unseen ocean; thunders mutter around the

¹ Carlyle, T. "Lectures on Dante."
² Drinkwater, J. "The Outline of Literature." Vol. II.

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horizon; and if the scene changes, it is with an elemental movement like the shifting of mighty winds.\(^1\) This feeling of spaciousness is unique with him. The verse possesses unfailing dignity, never becomes incoherent; there is always reason controlling his lyrical impulses.

Milton cast aside rhyme though owing much to Dante, who employed it as did Tasso and Ariosto. But to get variety it would seem rhyme is found and even the rhymed couplet, a "vain and fond thing" with which "a sage and serious poet need have no commerce." Milton was the first to neglect rhyme in an iambic pentameter verse. The distinguishing characteristic of his blank verse is the verse-paragraph. He took blank verse as Shakespeare left it and gave it the highest pitch of perfection as a narrative form. The thought is not conveyed in a single line but in a combination of verses which built up his meaning. These paragraphs imbued with ideas and rhythm are held together by a harmonious swing. It is a free method of versifying and needs a writer very sensitive to sound because of long involved passages of metaphor which otherwise would bring confusion. He has freedom but also form: freedom that admits variety, otherwise making monotonous a long narrative; form that prevents unrhymed verse from degenerating into bad prose. The blank verse was in need of form as it had become slipshod

in the writers of the Restoration drama. Milton gave it order, proportion, and finish, establishing it, first, as non-dramatic poetry. To obtain internal balance much depends on the pause or caesura. Milton's favorite pause is at the end of the third foot.

"Till I provided death; / so death
His final remedy"/

Book XI, 61-62.

Next in frequency comes the pause at the end of the second foot.

"Made one with me / as I with thee
am one."

Book XI, 44.

In writing of his verse, he says "one of the elements of true musical delight is fit quantity of syllables." Critics differ somewhat, some considering that this means that every word should bear its natural accent, not be forced by the demand of meter, or stress, to have an accent alien to it. Milton does this quite marvellously. Another interpretation is that fit quantity of syllables indicates an extension beyond ten syllables when sense and feeling require. We do find one or two extra syllables at the close of the line at times. Even in these proportionally few examples, if the accent is readjusted, the line is still decasyllabic in length. The following line is generally considered too long, but placing the accent as indicated, we have the required ten syllables.

- 53 -
"Rocks, caves-lakes, fens-bog, dens- and shapes of death."

His lines run on as units, uniting in groups of units to form the verse-paragraph. He uses, of course, the accepted modifications of the foot, the spondee, and trochee. He composed according to quantity as far as is possible to English. Those, (Masson, Bridges, Saintsbury), who have written in regard to the elision, that is, the dropping of a vowel or slurring to make it coalesce with a preceding or following sound, find difficulty in agreeing. It would seem that the speech of the day was responsible for some elisions and others are a matter of scansion, the pronunciation really being different. Open-vowelled assonances often seem to give rhyme and meter.

"O prince, O chief of many throned powers."

This verse is slower, statlier, appropriate to a narrative poem that deals with a lofty theme in an elevated solemn style.

Milton is an adept in the use of words to imitate natural sounds and thus to intensify the sense.

"Brushed with the hiss of rustling wings.

As bees ..."

Book I, 763.

"... so eagerly the Fiend

O'er bog or steep, through strait, rough,

dense or rare

With head, hands, wings, or feet, pursues his way
And swims or sinks or wades or creeps or flies."

- 54 - Book II, 947-950.
"On a sudden open fly
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound
Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder, that the lowest bottom shook
Of Erebus."

Book II, 879-881.

In the last quotation we have movement and sound coinciding.

Milton achieved a style commingled of opulence and severity which has remained without parallel in English verse. As with great poets, the poetry often rises to greater excellence than the thought expressed.

To Dante must be given praise for the invention of the verse he uses in the Divine Comedy. It is called terza rima because it is a succession of three-line groups in which the first and the third lines rhyme, while the middle line rhymes with the first and the third lines of the next group. Carlyle says the terza rima is a prolonged song.1 Dante's rime are definite, restrained, have not the rise and fall of Milton's lines, but have a forceful onward movement. They are elastic yet firm.

The meter is eleven syllables to the line, which Dante chose, probably influenced by Homer, as being the longest Italian line known. There is a fixed accent on the

1 Carlyle, T. "Lectures on Dante."
tenth syllable and there must be a stress on either the fourth or the sixth.

"Nel mezzo di cammin di nostra vita (6-10)
Mi ritroval per una selva oscura." (4-10)


The elision of one of two adjoining vowels is general, but often at the end of the line two vowels are kept if the word is so pronounced in prose. The rhyming is generally feminine as the Italian word has the accent on the penult. There are variations in having the final unaccented syllable dropped thus forming the tronco or masculine line,

"E con Rachele per cui tanto fe',"

Inf. IV, 60.

or the addition of an extra unaccented syllable as in Milton. This line is called adrucciolo:

"A parole formar disconvenevole."

Inf. XXIV, 66.

This meter gives a majestic line with harmony particularly marked in the Paradiso. Dante uses the periodic sentence structure with artistic balance of phrasing and sentiment. There never was a poem more compactly written, almost overladen with thought. His poetry does not transcend the argument, but matches it. His lines also have a harmony of sound and sense, but one power he has which makes for great
beauty. The vowels and consonants in the following lines have a subtle coloring:

"Io venni in loco d'ogni luce muto,
Che mugghia come fa mare per tempesta
Se da contrari venti e combattuto."

Inf. V, 28-30.

The repetition of words of similar sound give tenderness of mood.

"Amor, ché a nullo amato amar perdona,
Mi prese del costui piacer si forte
Che, come vedi, ancor non mi abbandona.
Amor condusse noi ad una morta."

Inf. V, 103-106.

Dante wrote in the days when Latin was naturally the language employed, as he himself did. But whether he felt that in his great work he could not improve or invent any new form in the tongue of such masters as Virgil and Ovid, or whether the Latin of his day was gradually degrading, it is a great thing for the Italian language that he decided to create from the dialects, with the Tuscan idiom as the basis a new language. Truly the form of a poem is the product of the poet's genius; Dante is definite, distinct, clear; Milton's spirit was in harmony with the songs of noble angels. *Just as Dante had weighed the merits of Latin and vernacular and chosen the latter though his choice imposed on him the creation of an ideal Italian out of competing dialects so Milton will use*
his native language." Milton writes, "I applied myself to that resolution which Ariosto followed ... to fix all the industry and art I could unite to the adorning of my native tongue not to make verbal curiosities the end ... but to be an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things among mine own citizens throughout this island in the mother dialect. That what the greatest and choicest wits of Athens, Rome, and modern Italy and those Hebrews of old did for their country, I, in my proportion, with this over and above of being a Christian might do for mine...." The scholars of Milton's day wrote in Latin, which he, too, employed in much of his finest prose. Milton hesitated long between his choice of Latin and the common speech.

That which is most prominent, astounding and compelling in the work of these two great poets, is the power of the imagination. To continue for fifteen hundred lines to place before us pictures, supernatural conditions and being, acts and connected events, inconceivable to an ordinary person is only possible to few; and when all this seems probable, exciting, moving, we have the work of poets whom, in their field, none have surpassed. To say that both have used the ordinary methods of writing but with greater ability does not seem and

1 Verity, A. W. "Introduction to Paradise Lost." page XXX.
2 Milton, J. "The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty."
is not an explanation of their success. A writer might do all that as well, perhaps at times better, but the imagination of these poets was supreme and was sustained and nourished by an erudition which no others have possessed.

Dante saw visions and clothed them in words; his poem is a dream of magic pictures. The kindling spark of his imagination came probably from the classic writers, Virgil, Ovid, Lucan and Statius, whose influence is most apparent in the Inferno and least in the Paradiso. His Garden of Eden is traditional and also his Hell, but they are made vivid by Dante’s power. Some pictures came from his reading and some flashed into his mind. The Noble Castle where he meets the great poets, the beautiful Valley of the Princes, are without doubt drawn from Virgil’s Elysian Fields. But he, like Milton, contributed more than he took. Keen observation of reality is characteristic of the Italian, so Dante used comparisons native to Italy. His comparisons are a necessary part of his thought by which a clearer understanding is gained, whereas Milton’s are digressions which may easily be taken apart from the work without injury. In the Divine Comedy, they are intended to convey the exact shades of grief, fear, anger, giving to the context beauty and receiving it in return. The approach of Francesca and Paolo is likened to the movement of doves.
"Quali colombe dal disio chiamate,
Con l'ali alzate e ferme, al dolce nido
Vegnon per l'aer dal voler portate."

Inf. V, 82-84.

There is never a word more than is necessary to convey just the idea wanted, a contract to Milton, when, comparing the shield of Satan to the orb of the moon, he crowds the imagination with the discovery of the telescope and all the wonders that the telescope reveals. In his conception of things never seen by mortal eyes, Dante goes beyond the usual range of poets. His figures of celestial joy, his symbols of Grace and God pass the bounds of description, which conveys the impression of immaterial infinity through means necessarily finite. He does this by the power of suggestion.

Dante possessed technical skill in the highest degree, using harmony, contrast, suspense, surprise, climax, metaphor and simile always with a right choice of words. These were all astounding, surprising, then, and they are now; then they were unprecedented, now they are still unsurpassed. Before him, there were none nearer than Virgil and Ovid, nearly thirteen hundred years distant, and but few since who have had such power. His similes and metaphors are perhaps the most obvious attraction; in these we find animals, birds, falcons, cranes, doves, ants, frogs, stars, sun, ocean. Interesting examples of surprise are the appearance of Cavalcante, the
father of Guido, when Dante is talking with the Farinate; the
sight of Brunetto Latini and Sordello. For antithesis a
striking example is the contrasted love of Statius for Virgil
with the hatred of the citizens of Italy for one another. There
are many examples of suspense; the tale of Conte Ugolino, the
lifting of the travellers at the edge of the pit into lower
hell by Antenae, the demons at the entrance to the City of Dis,
the appearance of Geryon after the belt has been thrown into
the chasm, the earthquake in Purgatory, the blindness of the
poet in Paradise.

In the Comedy there are two remarkable qualities,
spontaneity and discipline. In the latter there never was
a poet more original. He speaks in Purgatory of the "check
of art."

"Ma perché piene sono tutte le carte
Ordite a questa Cantica seconda
Non mi lascia più ir lo fìrren dell' arte."

Purg. XXXIII, 139-141.

He put upon himself even in a work of such a large scale a
severe restraint according to a preconceived plan. The whole
was carefully plotted out subordinating detail to the whole
effect. This plan has a symmetry little exemplified by other
world masterpieces. Dante was versed in symbolism, in the
mystic relation of numbers, in the secret properties of gems
and in the influences of the stars. He wished to group as
much as possible in threes typifying the Trinity. The Comedy has three canticles, each having thirty-three cantos, a possible reference to the life of Christ. The rhyme is triple; there are three parts, the Inferno, the Purgatorio, the Paradiso, each having about one hundred forty lines. There are three realms of the Dead where the sins of weakness, violence and fraud are punished; Purgatory has three parts, the slope below, the mountain, the garden of Eden. In the narrative there are three beasts; three ladies - St. Lucia, Beatrice, the Virgin Mary. Dante spends three nights on his journey, has three allegorical dreams in Purgatory. There are three steps down the bank to the Valley of the Princes; three stairs, original innocence, sin, and atonement, lead to the gate of Purgatory; Satan has three faces.

Milton, too, possessed great and original imagination, but his was fed by books and not by material observation. The epic written after blindness drew upon his internal reserves which would of necessity lack definiteness. His poem must build a bridge between man's visible life and infinite mystery through poetical and philosophical thought, hence, Paradise Lost possesses only vague outlines. The interest in the plot does not lie in surprise but in expectation. We know, because of tradition, the conclusion, but wait to see how it will be evolved. This was the procedure of the Greek dramatists and Shakespeare, and requires careful motivation. He employs
metaphor and allusion largely. His metaphors are often very long and involved but not confused and show the wonderful erudition of the poet. His thought swings from the classical simile to the Puritan thought of his day, almost like the swing of the pendulum. Milton is not at all classical in his purging of Adam and Eve; here we have no tragic human emotions of the great poets.

Genius Shown by Dante and Milton.

Sublimity in poets generally refers to their pictorial powers. In this respect Dante's sublimity does not consist in the breadth and vastness of his pictures as does Milton's. Two opposite types are they; the one, blind, the other keen-eyed. In Dante there is detail, in Milton breadth. Dante rejoiced in the concrete and was sublime in spite of detail and minuteness; Milton ceases to be sublime when he descends to details. The latter is not sublime in picturing the war in Heaven, nor the happiness of Eden, nor in relating the dialogue of the Eternal Father and Son. In the first he is somewhat grotesque, in the second too sensuous, in the third unpoeitical.

Dante's definiteness was partly medieval; he lived in an age of subtle questions, of party politics, of intense individuality, of strong passions. Milton was a man of the Renaissance, cultivated, reserved. In some scenes
Dante is sublime and when sublime these scenes are vague. When he crosses the threshold of Hell, his first sight of the City of Dis, showing a broad landscape, an indefinite scene, with the poet on the water under clouds of murky night, seeing for off rise the battlements and turrets gleaming with hidden fire; the description of the thunder of the falls of the Phlegethon; the passage of the angel dryshod over the Styx, are some of Dante's wonderful pictures. Examples from Milton are also numerous. Dante had no figure like Sin and Death formless, shadowy; no figure so majestic as Uriel.

The real sublimity of Dante is moral; in describing human passion and emotion, moral states and qualities, Dante is always human. Milton's moral sublimity is high; he deals in lofty ideas and divine conceptions. Dante excites our feelings of pity or dread; Milton holds us by imposing generalities, leaving our sympathies rather cold. Free-will implying moral responsibility is the central thought of both poets. That we are attracted to sin is not our fault, but if we give way to the attraction it is sin. Temptation may exist for the choice of free-will. Symonds writes, "One kind of sublimity they share in common; the sublimity of lofty and solitary natures stooping to no meanness, incapable of a vile thought; firm, ardent, and imperious in their devotion to the cause of right."

1 Symonds, J. A. "The Study of Dante."
Beauty is perhaps one of the greatest charms of both Dante and Milton. Keats said, "There are two specimens of very extraordinary beauty in Paradise Lost. They are of a nature so far as I have read unexampled elsewhere; they are entirely distinct from the brief pathos of Dante and they are not to be found even in Shakespeare:

'Not that fair field
Of Enna, where Proserpin gathering flowers,
Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis
Was gathered - which cost Ceres all that pain
To seek her through the world.'

Book IV, 268-272.

'But drive far off the barbarous dissonance
Of Bacchus and his revellers, the race
Of that wild rout that tore the Thracian bard
In Rhodope, where woods and rocks had ears
To rapture, till the savage clamour drowned
Both harp and voice; nor could the Muse defend
Her son.'

Book VII, 32-38.

These appear exclusively Miltonic without shadow of other mind ancient or modern." Other passages especially fine are the vision of Athens in Book IV; Paradise Regained; Satan's address to the Sun, Book IV, Paradise Lost. The

1 Drinkwater, J. "The Outline of Literature." Vol. II
following possesses a beauty that lies in the smooth flow of the words in perfect harmony with the approach of evening.

"Now came still Evening on, and Twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad;
Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests,
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;
She all night long her amorous descant sung:
Silence was pleased."

Book IV, 598-609.

Dante's poem is filled with short but beautiful similes.

"Come le pecorelle escono dal chiuso
Ad una, a due, a tre, e l'altre stanno
Timidette attardando l'occhio e il muso,
E ciò che fa la prima e l'altre fanno,
Addossandosi a lei stella s'arresta,
Semplici e quete e lo'iperché non sanno."

Purg. III, 79-84.

"Come l'angello intra l'amate fronde,
Posato al nido dei suoi dolci nati
La notte, che le cose si nasconde,
Che per veder gli aspetti disiati,
E per trovar lo cibo onde li pasca,
In che i gravi labor gli sono aggrati,
Previene il tempo in su l'aperta frasca,
E con ardente affetto il sole aspetta,
Fino guardando pur che l'alba nasca."

Paradiso XXIII, 1-9.

Very beautiful is that impression that Dante had when he endeavored to reduce to words his vision of God.

"Qual è colui che sonniando vede,
E dopo il sogno la passione impressa
Rimane, e l'altro alla mente non riede,
Cotal son io; chè quasi tutta cessa
Mia visione, ed ancor mi distilla
Nel cor lo dolce che nasce da essa.
Così la neve al sol si dissigilla,
Così al vento nelle foglie lievi
Si perdea la sentenza di Sibilla."

Paradiso XXXIII, 53-66.

**Extract of Literary Influence of Each.**

The influence of Dante is strong in Paradise Lost. Milton does not plagiarize or imitate; it is the effect of one strong imagination on another. A most striking example is the effect of the transformation of two fellow-townsmen of Dante, who were robbers, into reptiles, upon Milton's description of the change of Satan to a serpent. (Inf. XXV, 49-74, and Paradise Lost, Book X, 511-515).
The relation of Dante to literature is monumental. His poem marks the era at which modern times began. He was the first Christian poet, not because his poem is pervaded with the doctrinal faith of his day or Christian mythology, but because the poem represents the struggle in the soul of man. His erudition does not appeal to modern writers as it has lost its usefulness, nor his philosophy as it is out of tune with present-day modes of thought. He was a wonderful allegorist, but we have little use for allegory today. In these respects he belongs to his own thirteenth century. But it is his technique, his power of imagination, his vivid pictures and, finally, his faith that have tinctured almost every writer of note since his poem was known. It would be impossible to mention, in English literature alone, those who show in their writings the influence of Dante. Paget Toynbee indicates, on one and a half pages, direct references to Dante in the Paradise Lost and throughout two large volumes he traces Dante's steps in both the great and the mediocre writers. He had a message for every one.

Milton stands for a very important kind of achievement; there are only two others of whom the same thing can be definitely said. His claim to greatness rests on his desire to "justify the ways of God to man." He is the religious epic poet. "[He] was the first to inspire and win fame, to be known

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1 Toynbee, P. "Dante in English Literature."
and to be judged worthy of knowing by continental critics."¹

He was the only English poet to be discussed at length in the biographical lexicons of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This was all due to Paradise Lost which caused a change in the nature and scope of epic poetry. The poem was used as an illustration by those critics who maintained the rights of the imagination over reason as the creative and motive force in poetry. His influence was as strong as Shakespeare's in German literature and equally strong on the minds of the French romanticists. Voltaire's essay on epic poetry in the eighteenth century set the French people talking of Milton. He was the best known of all foreign poets at that time. But Robertson in a short address on Milton says that it was the Italians who were the pioneers of true critical appreciation. They said that Milton had by a plea for the supremacy of the imagination freed epic poetry from lairing materialism and realism.² It was he who more than any other poet gave sober rationalism a tincture of phantasy. Goethe was influenced by Milton in his Faust.³ In the first thirty years of the nineteenth cen-

¹ Robertson, J. G. "Milton's Fame on the Continent."
² Robertson, J. G. "Milton's Fame on the Continent."
tury, Milton's fame reached its highest point. Chateaubriand claimed that the epic form was superior to the dramatic and that Milton was finer than Homer. Victor Hugo and Alfred de Vigny wrote high commendation of Milton's poetry, but after the middle of the century Milton was little read on the continent. His influence was a matter of art, not thought. He left no trace on the thought of his time. He had too intense a personality to view questions in their larger and more universal relations.

**Comparison of the Poems as Works of Art.**

Dante holds a place among the first three writers in the world's history; Milton holds a place among the first three English poets. But if we consider only epic poets, Milton is among the first three. Voltaire considered Paradise Lost as the noblest work which the human imagination has ever attempted. In historical interest, in wonder at such a work and at such a man as author, in classicism, Paradise Lost will continue to hold a place. But future generations will consider it as a work of art rather than a great attempt to define evil and to explain its entrance into this life. Milton was a deeply religious man, possessed of strong moral ideas, but he used literature as an art and not a means. I think that henceforth Milton will be read for his harmonious grand verse; will be studied as an example of noble erudition; will be forgotten by all except the cultured.
In the eighteenth century, it was high praise to liken Dante to Milton, but as the years passed, the cult of Dante increased by leaps and bounds. The Italian knows him better than he does his Bible (even the humble quote him), while the world still searches his works for new interpretations, expounds that which he finds in Dante of art, of beauty, of life. The humanity of Dante appeals to all; his astounding power of imagination, greater, I think, in its extent than Milton’s awes the scholar; but he, too, is and will be read only by the cultured. But their works are masterpieces of literature to know which is to view life with a higher outlook on man’s possibilities as to his material and spiritual welfare.

"Each poem expresses the highest and the deepest in the poet’s philosophy of life; its relation to the past, the present and the hereafter. Each is tempered by the environment of the writer; in Dante there is the Catholic and scholastic bias; in Milton, the classical and Puritan; yet, there are thoughts in both that have disturbed the soul of humanity for ages.

"The works present the poetic answer to one phase of the great question of Man’s relation to the Infinite; Paradise Lost is a poetic expression of an infinite past and the dawn of Evil in the world; the Divine Comedy, pre-
supposing this, is the poetic expression of an infinite Hereafter, an immortality in which the bent which the free-will has given to the character in the present will have its logical issue."

Summary.--

The Divina Commedia and the Paradise Lost are and will remain the two greatest epics of Christian times. The poets were alike in characteristics, in life interests, in erudition. Each used his native language in his poem, thereby producing a new tongue in the one case and enriching the vernacular in the other. Dante invented a new verse for his great work while Milton gave an unrhymed and perfect form of blank verse to posterity. Besides being the result of high technical skill, the poems are unparalleled in the power of the imagination displayed by their writers. But the chief and crowning glory of the epics is their high moral purpose; the one teaching that salvation depends upon the knowledge of sin, the penance for it, and the revelation by grace of God's supreme love; the other that moral responsibility of the free-will should lead to happiness in the choice of obedience to God.

Our feeling when closing these two poems is well expressed by Professor Grandgent's translation in terza rima

1 Gurteen, S. Humphreys. "Epic of the Fall of Man."
of Paradise XXXIII, 58-66.

"E'en as a man who seeth in his sleep,
Whose mood still lingers, when the dream is done,
Tho' nothing else the memory can keep,
E'en so am I; for what my sleep hath spun
Is almost wholly gone, yet still doth ease
My heart a sweetness from the vision won.
Thus snow, unlock't by sunshine, swiftly flees;
Thus Sybil's wisdom, writ on fluttering leaves
Was wafted off forever by the breeze."
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