

Page - (01) B.A. Part I (English Honours)
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The Period of the Great Poems of Milton:

The twenty years of the second period of Milton's life ~~had~~ have been spoken of as years of political strife. yet amid the turmoil of these years he had not forgotten the lofty aim he had set to himself in his youth. 'The life aim' as has been well said by a critic, 'was in abeyance, not relinquished'. The resolve to achieve something great in poetry, something that should vindicate the ways of God to man, finds repeated expression in his prose works. In fact he had begun his 'magnum opus' in 1658, and when two years later at the age of fifty-two he was left free to pursue his poetical ambition, he soon set himself to discharge his self-imposed obligation by completing it. His poetical powers too had suffered no decline, what he had lost in the freshness and grace of lyrical

inspiration, he had made up for by the larger experience of life and greater insight into human motives which he had gained by his participation in the public life of the country. 'Paradise Lost' was finished in 1663, two years were given to revision, and when it was published in 1667, Milton could feel that his great dream of "leaving something so written to aftertime as they should not willingly let die" had been realised.

The poem was immediately hailed as 'one of the most noble, and most sublime poems which either this age or nation has produced'. 'Paradise Lost' was followed by its sequel 'Paradise Regained' and the classical tragedy 'Samson Agonistes'. These works have stamped him as one of the greatest poets of the world. These last years of Milton's life were uneventful, except for the production of his

great poems. They discover him to us in the solitary grandeur of his old age, when 'blind, destitute and friendless, he testified of righteousness, and judgment to come, alone before a fallen world'. But this period though of the greatest importance to literature does not concern us much here in his book. It is quite sufficient for us to know that he married for a third time in 1664 for the very practical consideration of having somebody to look after him, that the marriage proved as happy as could be expected and that towards the end he enjoyed something of the renown and admiration which were his due. He died in 1674 on November 8th, and was buried in St. Giles' Church Cripplegate by the side of his father who had done so much to help him to shape his life and powers.

The end.

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