

Question :- Milton's pen was the mind of an ardent Puritan.

Answer :- Milton was an ardent Puritan. Since his boyhood, he had a Puritan bent of mind. Consequently his entire poetic range is ringed with the spirit of Puritanism. It was due to this Puritanic character of his literary works that Dr. Johnson, an arch-enemy of Puritanism, shunned him vehemently. Nevertheless, Milton's art, even divorced from the influence of Puritanism, holds its own against that of thousands of Johnsons.

The theology, employed by Milton in his 'Paradise Lost' is purely Puritanic in essence as well as in theory. The hero of this poem is man, the villain of the poem is Satan. The subject of the poem is the Fall of man and the promise of his redemption. Those who maintain that Satan the rebel, is the real hero, fail to under-

Stand that the adversary of God and man must be presented in majesty and magnitude, if he is to be worthy of his place in the story that he must have, all the fascination of evil. In the story Milton's Satan is a failure, and Milton draws him as a failure, treats him, indeed with the contempt, due to colossal folly. And though few of us believe in a material hell and a personal Devil, the essential doctrine of the poem is eternal. The temptations of man, his conflicts with evil, his aspirations, his failures, and his repentances these abide whatever the current fashion in theology may be. Milton, in 'Paradise Lost' as well as in 'Paradise Regained' has exhibited the doctrine of Puritanism. Satan - the devil and enemy of God has been painted in the poem as "Purita-

mic devil" and not as an ordinary type of devil. 'Paradise Lost' is an inspired poem, coming from a blind Puritan poet who sings alone, not to cheer his own loneliness, but to justify the ways of God to man. The life of every man according to the Puritan poet is the story of 'Paradise Lost' and 'Paradise Regained'. Reasonable existence is only possible as long as man aspires beyond himself and believes in the validity of the great Puritanic ideals - Justice, goodness and mercy. According to Puritan principles, sorrow is far more inspiring and soothing than pleasure. Milton, in his actual life, was dived in darkness and gloom like the pensive man in the poem.

Again, in his famous sonnet 'on his Blindness' we can see the exact spirit of a 'Puritanic' character. Being blind-

ed, the poet does not murmur or grumble against God. He thinks that his blindness is a test, God by making him blind, wants to test his faith in Him. Such is the doctrine of 'Puritanism'. In his famous elegy 'Lycidas', Milton appears, directly and unmarkedly as a staunch enemy of the Anglican Church. In this poem, he introduces St. Peter to make lashing hits upon the opponent of the Puritan Church. ~~That~~ "That the poem tells us more about Milton - the staunch Puritan the Edward King, is purely our gain. St. Peter, coming among other symbolic figures to bewail the dead, is made to deliver a tremendous denunciation of the corrupt clergy of the time. The year of 'Lycidas' is the year of the attempt to force the 'Indian Prayer Book' on Scottish Church!"

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The criticism of 'Paradise Lost' by Dr. Johnson because of its puritanism is one of the major instances to prove how ardently Puritanic Milton was.

The end.

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