

Contents

Preface	xi
Introduction	xiii

I

“Labouring thy mind”: *Samson Agonistes* and Milton’s Dialectic

Introduction	3
1. “ <i>As may stand best with verisimilitude</i> ”: THE IMITATION OF THOUGHT	8
2. “ <i>My self, my Sepulchre, a moving Grave</i> ”: THE DIVIDED MIND	15
The Dialectical Structure of Act I	15
Self-Definition and Other Persons in Act II	32
The Fit Conversation of Marriage in Act III	36
Debate and Integration in Act IV	50
3. “ <i>My self? my conscience and internal peace</i> ”: THE TEMPERED PASSIONS	55
The Mind in Sickness and Health	55
Therapeutic Effect upon the Bystanders in Act V	62

II

“Each his own Deliverer”: *Samson Agonistes* and Milton’s Conception of History

Introduction	69
4. “ <i>So mutable are all the ways of men</i> ”: GOD’S DESIGN IN HUMAN HISTORY, THE RECORD OF THE PAST	71
History and Church Reformation	71
History and Revolution	75
History and the Saving Remnant	78
History and the Individual	83
5. “ <i>Warn’d by oft experience</i> ”: GOD’S PROMISE, THE PROPHECY OF COMMUNITY	87
Scripture as History	88
Scripture as Prophecy	91

CONTENTS

6. " <i>The rarer thy example stands</i> ": GOD'S CHAMPION AND THE STATE'S DELIVERER	102
The Ethics of Power Politics	102
The Politics of the Chastened Nation	106

III

"Lay hold on this occasion": *Samson Agonistes* and Milton's Politics

Introduction	111
The Representative Hero and His Nation	113
7. " <i>That by occasion hence I might begin Israel's Deliverance</i> ": POLITICAL INTENTION IN MILTON'S SHORTER POEMS	119
<i>Lycidas</i> : The Autobiographical Swain and the Perfected Community	119
The Sonnets: The Exemplary Poet and His Evolving Politics	128
8. " <i>Occasions drew me</i> ": POLITICAL INTENTION IN MILTON'S PROSE	145
Consistency and Process in Milton's Politics: The Free Individual and His People	145
The Post-Restoration Revisions in <i>De Doctrina Christiana</i> : The Fallen Man and the Lapsed Nation	151
The Last Tracts: The Rehabilitated Hero and the Prophesied Community	162
9. " <i>To what can I be useful, wherein serve My Nation</i> ": THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF <i>Samson Agonistes</i>	167

IV

"Thou hast fulfill'd the work": *Samson Agonistes* and Milton's Ethics

Introduction	183
10. " <i>Apt words have power to swage</i> ": BIBLICAL POETRY AND MEDICINAL TRUTH	188
The Psalms and the 1645 Poems	189
The Psalm Translations of 1648 and 1653	198
<i>Samson Agonistes</i> and the Psalms of Lament, Wisdom, Trust, and Thanksgiving	208

CONTENTS

11. "Be calm, and healing words . . . admit": BIBLICAL POETRY AND MORAL EXAMPLE	227
The Ethics of the Companion Poems, <i>Paradise Regained</i> , and <i>Samson Agonistes</i>	227
Wrestling with Temptation	232
Standing and Serving	243
Knowing and Teaching	251
12. "Samson <i>bath quit himself like Samson</i> ": THE ETHICS OF GOOD WORKS AND THE TRAGEDY OF EDUCATIVE SUFFERING	261

V

"Th' unsearchable dispose" and "New acquist of true experience": *Samson Agonistes* and Milton's Theology and Poetics

Introduction	269
13. "At least vain reasonings down": RATIONAL THEOLOGY AND PROGRESSIVE REVELATION	273
Scripture and the Knowledge of God by Precept and Parable	273
Dogma and the Analogy of Faith	279
Drama and the Paradigms of God's Behavior	282
Exemplary Scriptural Characters in <i>Paradise Lost</i>	284
The Interpretation of Parable	290
Enoch	295
Nimrod	302
Moses and the Messiah	306
14. "I was . . . a person rais'd": ORTHODOXY AND THE INDIVIDUAL CONSCIENCE	313
Milton's "Heresies" and Their Dramatic Implications	313
Antitrinitarianism: <i>De Doctrina Christiana</i> and <i>Paradise Lost</i>	315
Antitrinitarianism: <i>Paradise Regained</i> and <i>Samson Agonistes</i>	324
Arminianism and <i>Samson Agonistes</i>	339
Mortalism and Materialism: The Discarding of Orthodoxy from the 1645 Poems to <i>Samson Agonistes</i>	347

CONTENTS

15. "Perswaded that This was from God":	350
THE ROLE OF THE POET	350
The Process of Self-Definition	350
The Inspired Teacher	355
Tragic Effect as Therapeutic: Harmony and Energy	359

Appendixes

A. A TABLE OF SUGGESTED SONNET DATINGS AND THE SUBGROUPS INTO WHICH THEY FALL	366
B. PSALM CITATIONS IN <i>Samson Agonistes</i>	368
C. A SCHEMATIC OUTLINE OF <i>De Doctrina Christiana</i> , BOOK II	383
D. A TOPICAL SYNOPSIS OF <i>De Doctrina Christiana</i> , BOOK I	386
E. THE DATE OF COMPOSITION OF <i>Samson Agonistes</i>	387
Arguments from Milton's Stylistic Practices and Intentions	392
Arguments from Milton's Thematic and Intellectual Concerns	401
Arguments from Autobiographical and Historical References	403
Bibliography	409
Index	427