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**Analysis of John Milton's "How I Consider How My Light Is Spent"**

**Using Biographical/Historical Criticism**

Written in 1652, John Milton's "How I Consider How My Light Is Spent" was written in the same year as he lost his vision permanently and describes how his blindness could prevent him from worshipping God. The first hint of Milton's struggle with his blindness appears in the poem's title and first line. Milton substitutes the word "life" (the word readers may expect to see in this context) with "light," a word that represents the poet's vision. The word "light," which appears a few lines below, also contrasts the word "dark," which appears in the second line of the poem: "Ere half my days in this dark world and wide" (2). Realizing that the remainder of his days will be spent in darkness now that he is blind, Milton considers how his condition will affect his writing and, in addition, his ability to worship God in his writing. Since his "talent" (i.e., his ability to write poetry) is seemingly "lodged with [him] useless," he fears he cannot "serve...[his] Maker" (3-5). With this in mind, Milton asks, "'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?'" (7). In other words, will God expect him to worship Him even though he has lost his vision and, by extension, his ability to use his talent? The personified figure of patience provides the answer to Milton's question: God, who has "'thousands at His bidding speed'" (12), does not require Milton's "gifts" (10). Instead, patience urges Milton to serve God through quiet devotion: "'Who best/ Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best'" (10-11). Faced with a crisis of faith, Milton finds his solution in patience: "'They also serve who only stand and wait'" (14). Ironically, these words seem prophetic in retrospect, as 15 years after composing the poem, Milton published his ambitious epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, in which Milton attempts to "justify the ways of God to man." Milton's patience in real life allowed him to use his talent to worship God.