Rhode Island College

Digital Commons @ RIC

Master's Theses, Dissertations, Graduate Research and Major Papers Overview

Master's Theses, Dissertations, Graduate Research and Major Papers

2020

"Sufficient to Have Stood, Though Free to Fall": Free Will in John Milton's Paradise Lost

David Matineau

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/etd

Part of the Literature in English, British Isles Commons

“SUFFICIENT TO HAVE STOOD, THOUGH FREE TO FALL”:

FREE WILL IN JOHN MILTON’S

PARADISE LOST

By

David Martineau

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Master of Arts in English Literature

in

The Department of English

School of Graduate Studies

Rhode Island College

2020

Introduction

In Book I of *Paradise Lost*, John Milton (1608-1674) asserts his intent to "justifie the wayes of God to men" (*Paradise Lost*[1] I 26), paving the way for a revolutionary discussion of human nature, divinity, and the problem of evil, all couched in an epic retelling of Satan's fall from grace, his temptation of Adam and Eve, and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, as recounted in the Book of Genesis. In his treatment of the biblical account, Milton necessarily broaches a variety of subjects which were both relevant during his time and remain relevant in ours. Among these topics, and certainly one of the most compelling, is the matter of human free will.

The debate over free will, one of the most philosophically fraught issues in all of human discourse, often centers around the seeming paradox of the human experience—our understanding that life presents us daily with numerous choices, decisions that can guide our actions from the minute to the momentous, which we seemingly possess the complete power to choose between. However, when we consider free will in tandem with human religious beliefs—particularly the Judeo-Christian tradition, which forms much of the foundation of the philosophical discourse behind the free will debate itself—we are presented with an almost insoluble problem. If we accept, as Milton does in *Paradise Lost*, that there is an omnipotent and omniscient God Who knows past, present, and future, including all of the acts a person will commit in life, it seems, then, that humans cannot be truly free, for God not only knows what we will do, but structures His plans and revelations around our foreknown choices. This has led many philosophers to argue that God, if He exists, must not be truly omniscient, or that we do, in fact, dwell in a deterministic universe, in which free will is an illusion that we believe we possess, but do not possess in actuality.

[1] Hereafter cited as *PL*.

Numerous attempts, however, have been made to reconcile the idea of free will with the omniscience of God, such as the compatibilistic view, which holds that free will exists because God, though He does foreknow our choices, does not *coerce* us into making them. Though He is aware of what we will choose, we still make the choice ourselves, in essence making God an expert predicter of our behavior. Another, somewhat more popular view is the argument that God does not truly "foresee" our choices because He is eternal, dwelling outside the realms of time and space. What is past, present, and future for us is, in fact, eternally present for God, so when we make a choice in the future, God views it as the present, seeing all things at once. This view has proven to be one of the more theologically accepted perspectives on free will. Nevertheless, even with these potential resolutions to the paradox, the debate over free will rages on, and much of its resulting discourse can be found in the greatest works of human literature, among them Milton's epic.

Paradise Lost is an invaluable text for an examination of the problem of free will, both for its theological implications and, even more importantly, for the variety of perspectives on free will which it reflects, ideas which were in constant discussion during Milton's life. Firstly, the poem necessarily incorporates a discussion of free will through its subject matter: all of the major characters in the poem face a multiplicity of choices, from God Himself, to Satan, to Adam and Eve. Not only are these characters, and their story, among the foundational figures in the free will debate, they themselves reflect multiple sides of the discussion. Secondly, Milton writes himself into his epic and incorporates a number of perspectives on free will into it, perspectives drawn from his own constantly changing religious beliefs and the tumultuous political and religious debates over free will that circulated before and during his career.

In this examination of free will in *Paradise Lost*, I aim to treat the issue of human freedom through a historical lens, considering the wide variety of religious beliefs on the nature of the human will which circulated in Milton's day, along with their political contexts. As a Christian, Milton's beliefs on free will were largely drawn from sources common to mainstream Catholic theology, such as appear in the writings of Augustine and Aquinas. However, the Protestant Reformation, led in part by Martin Luther's schism from the Catholic Church, resulted in the creation of dozens of new Christian sects, each with similar, but unique beliefs on the issue of free will. To begin, I will provide an in-depth examination of the theology behind numerous Christian sects' conceptions of free will, focusing on four central movements that influenced Milton's work: Lutheranism, Calvinism, Puritanism, and Radical Puritanism. In doing so, I will consider not only the beliefs themselves, but also the historical and political context in which they developed, in order to present a fuller understanding of the nature of the debate Milton encountered and reflected in his works. Finally, I will turn to a detailed analysis of *Paradise Lost*, with relevant context from Milton's life and other works, in order to ascertain the various instances in which these myriad perspectives on free will emerge in the text. In doing so, I will argue that the major characters of *Paradise Lost*—particularly God, Satan, Adam, and Eve—reflect many sides of the tumultuous and intense debate concerning free will which occurred during Milton's life, and consider what beliefs Milton himself may have held regarding the concept of human freedom.

PART I

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE FREE WILL DEBATE

1. Free Will in Lutheranism

Lutheranism developed in the sixteenth century, originating from the thoughts and reforms of Martin Luther (1483-1546), a German priest and theologian whose rejection of certain Catholic practices sparked a radical reformation of Christian thought that eventually led to the emergence of several Protestant sects, including many which influenced Milton. Luther's central objections to the Catholic practices of his day were less theological than they often seem, having largely to do with Luther's circumspection towards the Church's practice of selling indulgences—so-called "remissions" for the punishment some sinners would be forced to endure in purgatory before entering heaven—which Luther considered highly corrupt. Luther's objections—which were voiced in his *Ninety-five Theses*, alongside his three major principles of salvation by faith alone, teachings based on Scripture alone, and the equality of all members of the Church with an absence of priests—as well as his refusal to retract them at the Diet of Worms (1521)—resulted in his excommunication from the Church by Pope Leo X, his being branded a heretic, and his formation of the Lutheran sect. Luther responded to the call for retraction, and his subsequent excommunication, by saying, "If I were to revoke what I have written on that subject, what should I do but strengthen this tyranny, and open a wider door to so many and flagrant impieties?" (Martin Luther's Speech at the Imperial Diet in Worms (18 April 1521), Paragraph 5).

The central beliefs of Lutheran theology have much to do with the freedom of the will. They distinctly and boldly reject many of the traditional Catholic beliefs on free will, for Luther's central tenet of his own Christian faith was that salvation and eternal life could not be earned by human actions, but rather only by the free gift of God's grace, which enabled human beings to profess faith in Jesus Christ and achieve salvation. Luther drew this belief from Sacred Scripture, which he viewed as the only source of divinely-revealed knowledge and authority,

eschewing such earthly representatives of God as the Catholic pope. Luther's beliefs about free will were developed in the earliest works of Christian theology, among them St. Augustine's (354-430) book *De libero arbitrio* (387-395), which concerns the freedom of the will, and his "Treatise on Grace and Free Will." *De libero arbitrio* outlines Augustine's beliefs on free will in dialogic form, as a conversation between Augustine and a pupil named Evodius. The main points which Augustine raises in his dialogue with Evodius concern the freedom of the human will to pursue good and evil alike, a freedom which cannot be influenced by any other spirit. For Augustine, free will is a necessary aspect of the human condition, one given by God for the simple fact that, if it were not given, humanity could not correctly pursue goodness, having no knowledge of it *or* of evil. Augustine also contends that God's foreknowledge does not exclude humanity's freedom in committing sins, because those things which God foreknows occur by necessity, rather than by His will, and therefore do not fall under the scope of what humans can control with their wills. The will, therefore, is the cause of all evil, the cause of the first, angelic fall, the Fall of Man, and the persistence of human sinfulness.

Augustine also discusses free will in his "Treatise on Grace and Free will," delivered to Valentinus and the Monks of Adrumetum in 426-427 C.E. In the treatise, Augustine argues that "God's precepts themselves would be of no use to a man unless he had free choice of will" (Augustine Chapter 2). He cites John 15:22, which recounts Jesus' proclamation concerning the Jews, that "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin; but as it is they have no excuse for their sin." This, Augustine states, boldly and irrevocably proves the freedom of human choice. Augustine asserts in Chapter 3 of his treatise that all who blame God for their sin, as if they had no free will, are convicted, for passages such as James 1:13-15 prove that God cannot be tempted, that He does not tempt humans, and that humans are "lured and enticed by

[their] own desire." Finally, in Chapter 4, Augustine claims that those divine commands which are most suited to the will, in fact, illustrate its freedom, for all of God's commands relate to actions which man cannot perform unless he possesses free will, and can therefore choose to ignore. Luther drew upon and manipulated Augustine's understanding of free will by accepting his arguments that man cannot perform good works without freedom, while adding the rejoinder that such freedom is only possible through God's grace working upon the human heart.

A more comprehensive elucidation of Lutheran beliefs, particularly those concerning free will, can be found in *The Augsburg Confession* of 1530. *The Augsburg Confession* originated in a command by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, to all the territories of Germany, in which he ordered them to explain their religious convictions so that the Empire might gain political and religious unity before resisting an impending Turkish invasion. The *Confession* enumerates the various doctrines of Lutheranism, including that on the freedom of the will. Specifically, it states:

> Of Free Will they teach that man's will has some liberty to choose civil righteousness, and to work things subject to reason. But it has no power, without the Holy Ghost, to work the righteousness of God, that is, spiritual righteousness; since the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2:14; but this righteousness is wrought in the heart when the Holy Ghost is received through the Word (*The Augsburg Confession* Article XVIII).

This distinction between the different freedoms of the will is key. Lutherans profess a freedom of the individual will only in the form of *civil* righteousness, in the practice of secular justice and societal equity. Divine justice and freedom, however, are impossible for the human will, as its

sinful state is too corrupted to freely choose to follow God. It is God Himself who must bestow grace upon the will in order to ensure the salvation of an individual soul.

The *Confession* cites Book III of Augustine's *Hypognosticon* for its description of the civil goods and evils humans are free to choose: goods such as "[being] willing to labor in the field, to eat and drink, to have a friend, to clothe oneself, to build a house, to marry a wife, to raise cattle, to learn diverse useful arts, or whatsoever good pertains to this life," and evils such as "[being] willing to worship an idol, to commit murder, etc." (*Hypognosticon*, Book III). Lutherans rejected any belief system which taught that, above and beyond these goods which Augustine cited, the human will is capable of loving God freely, and thus the *Confession* "condemn[s] the Pelagians and others, who teach that without the Holy Ghost, by the power of nature alone, we are able to love God above all things; also to do the commandments of God as touching 'the substance of the act.' For, although nature is able in a manner to do the outward work, (for it is able to keep the hands from theft and murder,) yet it cannot produce the inward motions, such as the fear of God, trust in God, chastity, patience, etc." Thus, the central tenet of Lutheranism concerning free will is that humans are capable of freely choosing good actions in a *secular* context, but incapable of choosing the ultimate good, which is love for and obedience to God, which He must bestow upon them through grace.

Luther's beliefs, particularly those which were later expressed in the *Confession*, were disputed by the Catholic authorities of the day, particularly Pope Clement VII, who encouraged the Catholic philosopher and humanist Desiderius Erasmus to write a tract refuting Luther's beliefs. Erasmus' work—titled *De libero arbitrio* (1524), much like Augustine's—offers a Catholic rejection of Luther's doctrines on free will, and a defense of the traditional, Catholic interpretation of the matter. Erasmus decries Luther's teachings as completely unsuitable,

asking, "How many weak ones would continue in their perpetual and laborious battle against their own flesh" (Erasmus 12) if Luther's statement that all things happen out of necessity is true? He then continues his tract by citing numerous passages from Scripture that support the traditional description of free will, such as Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 15:14-18, which states that "When God, in the beginning, created man, he made him subject to his own free choice…to whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand. Before man are life and death, whichever he chooses shall be given him." Erasmus uses this passage to defend the Catholic doctrine that Adam and Eve were created with uncorrupted reason and the ability to discern good from evil.

After further proofs from the Old Testament, Erasmus cites New Testament passages which support freedom of the will, such as Christ's lamentation that Jerusalem "wouldst not" allow Him to gather her children together (Matthew 23:37). Erasmus contends that this statement of Christ's would have been impossible if Christ—being God—knew that Jerusalem's failure was a matter of necessity, therefore implying that the sinfulness of man is, indeed, willed. Erasmus contends with apparent Scriptural proofs against free will, including many cited by Luther, such as the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 9:12, 16), Isaiah's lament against man's hardened hearts (Isaiah 63:17), and Paul's claim that God hardens the will (Romans 9:18), refuting them all from Catholic viewpoints. He then systematically refutes Luther's proofs against free will. Overall, Erasmus argues that—while some perspectives of the Reformers are admirable, as they "agree with Holy Scripture" (Erasmus 80)—a middle perspective on free will is needed, one which admits that Scripture is vague, and thus interpretable, and which acknowledges that without total freedom of the will, the world cannot be adequately explained.

Luther, in turn, offered a response to Erasmus' tract on free will in a work of his own, *De servo arbitrio*, which dealt with the bondage of the will, and was published the year after

Erasmus' work, in 1525. In *De servo arbitrio*, Luther argues against Erasmus' contention that the human will is passively free, and cannot be effective without the mercy of God, stating, "Thus you keep us in ignorance as to how far the mercy of God extends, and how far our own will extends; what man's will and God's mercy really *do* effect" (Luther 105). Luther reasserts his claim that free will is completely destroyed by God's necessary foreknowledge, and that the reality of those who will therefore abuse the doctrine of election in order to sin with impunity must be endured. Luther argues that Erasmus makes free will a miniscule power compared to God's grace, and that therefore, free will without God's grace is bound to sinfulness, not freedom. He then refutes Erasmus' Old and New Testament proofs of free will. To conclude, Luther asserts that every man lives and survives solely through God's providence, and that humanity can only cooperate with His predetermined will. Luther rejects Erasmus' middle way, asserting that any attempt to reconcile predestination with Scriptural vagueness only complicates the issue, rather than resolving it, therefore necessitating the extreme position of "deny[ing] free will altogether and ascrib[ing] everything to God" (Luther 133).

2. Free Will in Calvinism

Calvinism, another Protestant system of belief that emerged concurrently with Luther's rebellion against Catholicism, originated in the year 1536, and was based largely in the theology and writings of the French reformer John Calvin (1509-1564). Though Calvinism and Lutheranism are similar in many ways, they differ in a number of key respects, notably relating to issues such as the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, theories of worship, and the use of God's laws for believers. While the definition of free will in both sects appears outwardly similar, it, too, contains many subtle differences which speak to the nuances of the beliefs held by both Luther and Calvin.

While Luther's belief system retained some of the individualistic and personal aspects of its Catholic roots—some of which are evident in Lutheranism's views on free will—Michael Walzer notes in his book, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*, that "Calvinism was the product of an extraordinarily successful effort to resist the religious compulsions of the personal and the emotional" (Walzer 22). Unlike Lutheranism, Calvin's faith was extremely esoteric, with Calvin himself being a "master of equivocation" (Walzer 23). Calvin argued that human speculation on the mystery of God's being and grace was sinful and self-indulgent, establishing an almost "anti-theological theology," which encouraged complete, unquestioning devotion and no curiosity on behalf of the believer. Calvin's worldview was often marked by an austere bluntness: men tortured by the problem of salvation should not be, because they were probably damned to begin with. Like Luther, Calvin held firmly to the notion of predestination, and considered it impossible for anyone to avoid their predetermined fate of salvation or damnation. To Calvin, mankind was permanently,

inescapably estranged from God (Walzer 27), and reconciliation was impossible but by the workings of grace.

Much like Luther, Calvin considered the human will to be completely enslaved to sin, a subject he expounded upon at length in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536). Though Calvin thought it true that "God has provided the soul of man with intellect, by which he might discern good from evil, just from unjust" (Calvin 1.15.8), he believed that "those who, while they profess to be the disciples of Christ, still seek for free-will in man, notwithstanding of his being lost and drowned in spiritual destruction, labour under manifold delusion, making a heterogeneous mixture of inspired doctrine and philosophical opinions, and so erring as to both" (1.15.8). According to Calvin, "man has no remaining good in himself, and is beset on every side by the most miserable destitution; and then teach him to aspire to the goodness of which he is devoid, and the liberty of which he has been deprived: thus giving him a stronger stimulus to exertion than he could have if he imagined himself possessed of the highest virtue" (2.2.1). Like Luther, Calvin considered the human being completely incapable of willing good works on his own, and believed that God's grace was the necessary factor in causing men to perform good works. For Calvin, the central question of free will was not about humanity's instinctual desires, but rather their actual choices. Calvin conceded that some remnant of the unfallen man's desire for goodness remained within the human conscience; however, he asserted boldly that a man could never act on those desires of his own accord, as he would inevitably choose evil.

This unique facet of Calvinistic free will was also noted earlier in the *Thirty-Nine Articles* (1571), the central articles of faith adopted by the Church of England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, which were later edited and revised by the Westminster Assembly of 1643-1653. The tenth of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* notes that

> [t]he condition of Man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will (*The Thirty-Nine Articles*, Article X),

while Article XIII furthermore states,

> Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of the Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ; neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the School-authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin (*The Thirty-Nine Articles*, Article XIII).

Unlike Lutheranism, Calvinism asserts that not even secular acts can truly be good apart from God's grace, for the will is corrupted to the point that the only motivation for pursuing charity apart from grace is pride, a sinful vanity that diminishes the character of the work to a sinful level. Calvin's *Institutes* further support this when they state,

> But the Spirit is not from nature, but from regeneration. That the apostle [Paul] is speaking of the regenerate is apparent from this, that after saying, 'in me dwells no good thing,' he immediately adds the explanation, 'in my flesh.' Accordingly, he declares, 'It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.' What is the meaning of the correction, 'in me (that is, in my flesh?)' It is just as if he had spoken in this way, No good thing dwells in me, of myself, for in my flesh nothing good can be found. Hence follows the species of excuse, It is not I myself that do evil, but sin that dwelleth in me. This applies to none but the regenerate, who, with the leading powers of the soul, tend towards what is

> good. The whole is made plain by the conclusion, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind,' (Rom. 7:22, 23) (2.2.27).

In Calvin's doctrine, human free will cannot choose good because free will is a trait of the *physical body*, which can only do evil, whereas the redeemed Spirit—which desires good—is not physical, and can only desire and perform good acts through God's grace.

Calvin's doctrine of free will and predestination invited many challengers who were opposed to the inherent strictness in his claims. Among these more liberal rivals were the Arminians, a Protestant sect which emerged from the writings of the Dutch Reformed theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609). Arminianism emerged as a rival to Calvinism mainly because, while Arminius did hold to Calvin's belief that man could not freely choose to do good without grace, it tempered Calvin's doctrine of the predestined elect—those select few who were irreversibly saved, whilst the rest of humanity was incontrovertibly doomed to damnation—by asserting that salvation through the Atonement of Christ was available to all. Like Lutherans, Arminians believed in justification by faith, a faith which entails trust in Christ, and which can only be professed through the grace of God. However, Arminians went even further in this profession, believing that God took the initiative in the salvation of all people, offering *everyone* grace (a doctrine called "prevenient grace"), whereas stricter Calvinists stressed that only the elect were offered grace (otherwise known as "limited atonement"). For Arminians, predestination existed in the form of the *destiny* of the conditional elect: those who faithfully chose to follow Christ were, by virtue of that profession, predestined for eternal life, whereas those who explicitly rejected Christ—called "apostates"—were irredeemably damned. Arminius

himself was admittedly uncertain about whether a professed believer could become an apostate, claiming that this required further study of Scripture.

Calvinism conflicted with Arminianism in England beginning around 1590, when its emergence at Cambridge through professors such as Peter Baro, who was ordained by Calvin himself, heralded its arrival into contention with the Calvinistic Church of England and its role in the English politics of the day. Calvinism was distinguishable from Arminianism largely due to its five main tenets, conveniently summed up in the anagram TULIP: Total Depravity (the belief that human will was completely alienated from God and bent towards evil), Unconditional Election (the belief that salvation was unconditional, determined only by God's freely given grace), Limited Atonement (the belief that Christ's death only atoned for the sins of the elect), Irresistible Grace (the belief that the elect cannot turn away from God's grace by any means), and the Perseverance of the Saints (the belief that once a person experiences salvation, they cannot lose it). While Calvinists believed in unconditional election, asserting that God's grace was the sole source of salvation, Arminians held the belief that election was conditional, and could be earned, at least in part, by good works.

It is therefore important, in addition to identifying the specific theology of Calvinism regarding the doctrine of free will, to situate the development of Calvinism within political and religious history, which was particularly tumultuous in Milton's England. A brief digression might, therefore, be useful. Calvin's *Institutes* were published during the reign of King Henry VIII, who assumed the throne of England in 1509, the year of Calvin's birth. Henry VIII's dispute with the Roman Catholic pope and subsequent excommunication from the Catholic Church itself, occurring in the year 1534, is widely known, and set the stage for a wholly Protestant England. In particular, the 1536 Act of Supremacy—decreed in the same year as the

publication of the *Institutes*—forbade Catholics from worshiping publicly and holding civic offices, and named the monarch of England the supreme head of the Anglican Church. This historical revolution in English religious practice gave Calvin's newly-crafted doctrine ample room to flourish in England, and though the ostensibly-Catholic rituals and trappings of the Anglican Church remained, England had adopted Calvinist theology as its mainstay by the year 1571, when the *Thirty-Nine Articles* were formally published.

The brief Catholic resurgence in England in the year 1553 is also worth mentioning, occurring after the deaths of Henry VIII in 1547 and the short reign of his son, Edward VI, from 1547 to 1553. Edward's successor, his half-sister Mary I, was a staunch Catholic, and her savage persecutions of Protestants throughout England during her reign led to the creation of her famous epithet, "Bloody Mary." It was only in 1558, the year of Mary's death, that Protestant persecutions ceased with the ascent of Mary's sister, Elizabeth I, to power. Elizabeth's immediate religious act upon her ascent was a call for a Religious Settlement, a *via media* between England's population of Catholic Recusants and the still-rising power of Calvinists in England. A second Act of Supremacy in 1559 reinstated the monarch of England as supreme governor of the Church of England, preventing Catholic influence upon the faith, while the Act of Uniformity reintroduced the *Book of Common Prayer*, which was originally published in 1549 under the auspices of Elizabeth's half-brother, Edward VI, but had been banned during the reign of Mary I.

Though Elizabeth's Religious Settlement was law for a decade, it soon faced public challenges. In particular, the 1570 firing of Thomas Cartwright—a prominent Puritan professor of divinity from Cambridge—highlighted the shifting religious stances in England, and was regarded by some as the beginning of Puritanism in England. Cartwright was fired for making a

speech in which he encouraged the Anglican Church to adopt Presbyterianism, a practice in which the church would be governed by local presbyters, elders, rather than by bishops. This position, a clear threat to the sovereignty of the English monarch over the Church of England, was in part the reason for Cartwright's removal from his post by John Whitgift, Cambridge's vice-chancellor, and later the archbishop of Canterbury. Cartwright's removal in 1570 was followed in 1571 by the publication of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, which were mildly Calvinistic, and explicitly supported the monarch's power, as stated in Article XXXVII:

> The King's Majesty hath the chief power in this Realm of England, and other his Dominions, unto whom the chief Government of all Estates of this Realm, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Civil, in all causes doth appertain, and is not, nor ought to be, subject to any foreign Jurisdiction. Where we attribute to the King's Majesty the chief government, by which Titles we understand the minds of some slanderous folks to be offended; we give not our Princes the ministering either of God's Word, or of the Sacraments, the which thing the Injunctions also lately set forth by Elizabeth our Queen do most plainly testify; but that only prerogative, which we see to have been given always to all godly Princes in holy Scriptures by God himself; that is, that they should rule all estates and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Temporal, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil-doers.

The *Thirty-Nine Articles* were followed in 1595 by the *Lambeth Articles*, which were more explicitly Calvinistic, receiving approval from John Whitgift, but were rejected by Elizabeth with great fury, as they threatened her own Religious Settlement, which reflected her own mildly-Calvinistic approach. Elizabeth ordered Whitgift to suppress the *Lambeth Articles*, and though

they were put forth once again in 1604 during the reign of Elizabeth's successor, James I, they were never formally adopted by the Church of England.

The death of Elizabeth I in 1603 did not mean the end of Calvinism in England, as both of her immediate successors, James I and Charles I, maintained her mildly Calvinistic system throughout their reigns. However, the slow rise of both Puritanism and Arminianism in England soon coincided with the political chaos at the end of Charles I's reign. Crowned in 1625, Charles I was king when William Laud (1643-1675), the current archbishop of Canterbury, advocated for Arminianism. When Charles I summoned what was later known as "the Long Parliament" in 1640—in response to the last stages of the Bishops' Wars of 1639 and 1640—he found himself greatly opposed by his own subjects. Charles attempted to disperse the Long Parliament many times, to no avail, and its sitting led to numerous reforms throughout England, including many religious decrees. Among these was the failed "Root and Branch Petition" of 1640, which—in accordance with the views espoused by Cartwright nearly seventy years earlier—demanded that the Anglican episcopacy, or rule by bishops, be removed. A few years later, Milton published a series of anti-prelatical texts himself. This aligned with the ongoing debate between Anglicans, Calvinists, and other sects, such as Arminians and Puritans, over whether the Church of England should adopt a system of Presbyterianism, where local elders governed individual parishes. Though the Root and Branch Bill was defeated in 1641, the petition marked the continued rise of Calvinism in England, an ascent which was reflected in the debates of the Westminster Assembly.

The Assembly, called for by the "Long Parliament," met from 1643 to 1653, debating, in particular, the legitimacy of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, asserting that—for their use to continue—they must be solely derived from Scripture. The Assembly, which was directly opposed to

Charles I and William Laud, subsequently decided that some of the Articles were *not* Scripturally-derived, a decision which led to their rejection in total, and the Assembly's decision to focus on polity, or church government. A number of options were considered, among them Presbyterianism, which had proved successful in Scotland, but was objected to by King James I on the grounds that it would threaten his control over the Anglican Church; Congregationalism, which desired that individual churches govern themselves as their own bodies (a position held by Milton himself); and Erastianism, a belief system based in the supposedly misapplied teachings of the Swiss theologian Thomas Erastus (1524-1583) that the state should have the power to punish both civil *and* ecclesiastical crimes. The fierce debate at the Assembly resulted in what was, essentially, the complete disintegration of religious unity in England, a religious chaos which coincided with the equally violent political turmoil of the decade, including the trial and execution of Charles I in 1649 and the establishment of the English Protectorate, which named Oliver Cromwell Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England in 1653, the same year the Westminster Assembly ended.

The explicitly Puritan Protectorate did not end until 1659, followed shortly afterwards by the restoration of the monarchy and the crowning of Charles II in 1660, but by that time, the strictly Calvinist Puritans had taken over England, ensuring the strength of Calvin's doctrines throughout the nation for years to come, and summarily situating John Milton in a thoroughly Calvinist, but nonetheless extremely tumultuous religious period.

3. Free Will in Puritanism

The tumultuous political and religious debates that erupted in England throughout the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I, detailed above, eventually gave rise to a new, radical sect of Calvinist Christianity that came to dominate England around the time of the Westminster Assembly of 1643-1653—the Puritans. A more radical, severe strain of Calvinism, Puritanism sought to purge the Church of England of all vestiges of Roman Catholicism, considering the Anglican Church of the day too Catholic, and not Protestant enough. Puritan sects of particular prominence began to take power around the time of the Westminster Assembly, advocating for a new English church that would be governed by local elders, or "presbyters," without any influence from the English government.

The origins of Puritanism were as much political as they were theological. In *The Revolution of the Saints*, Walzer notes that "Puritanism…was from its beginning a clerical and evangelical movement" (Walzer 115) that rested upon stricter Protestant views and bishops' disapproval of the 1559 Religious Settlement of Elizabeth I, which effectively stifled religious conflict as a means of appeasing all variations of Christianity within England, from the ostensibly Catholic to the radically Calvinist. This policy all but ensured that the Church of England would never be free of intrusive foreign influences, even those that had brought to it such beliefs as Calvinism and Arminianism, which had grown to become wildly popular. Thus, these radically Puritan clergymen were, for the most part, "an isolated group" (Walzer 116), and many formed their core ideas whilst in exile to the more radically Protestant countries of Continental Europe, such as Germany and Switzerland, after they had been ejected from their homeland due to their allegedly heretical beliefs.

The death of Elizabeth I in 1603, however, marked the first real opportunity for the Puritans to seek power in England. In that same year, after the ascent of King James I, Puritan ministers drafted the "Millenary Petition," a document calling for the removal of visibly Catholic practices from the Church of England, such as the use of the sign of the cross in baptism, the sacrament of confirmation, the requirement that the clergy wear surplices, and the custom of clergy living in the church building, among others. Furthermore, the petition called for a number of wholly Puritan reforms: assigning one minister to each parish, commanding said ministers to subscribe only to the *Thirty-Nine Articles* and the royal supremacy, and the ending of episcopacy in favor of a system of church government by presbyters. James I permitted a debate on these issues at the Hampton Court Conference of 1604, where four Puritan ministers—John Rainolds (1549-1607), Laurence Chaderton (1536-1640), Thomas Sparke (1548-1616), and John Knewstubs (1544-1624)—faced off against a large episcopal delegation led by Archbishop John Whitgift (1530-1604), the same bishop who had fired Thomas Cartwright in 1571, and who died a month after the conference. The conference went poorly for the Puritans, who unnerved the king with their advocacy for a presbyterian system, causing James I to believe that the Puritans desired the end of his royal power over the Church of England. James dismissed the Puritans with the maxim, "No bishop, no king!" and ended their meeting early. However, he did make some concessions to the Puritans in his final verdict, including his support for their project to create a new, authorized translation of the Bible, which would be published in 1611 as the famous King James Bible.

Puritanism persisted largely as a fringe movement throughout James's reign, though they rarely referred to themselves as "Puritans," preferring descriptors such as "godly saints" or "God's children." In James's time, the Puritans could be separated into two factions: the

"Separatists," or "Dissenters," who desired a complete divorce from the Church of England, denouncing it as irredeemably corrupt and often creating churches that lay outside the established order, and the "Non-separating" Puritans, who remained ostensibly loyal to the Church of England, promoting some reforms, but often disagreeing among themselves on how radical such reforms should be. Over time, the Puritans became increasingly important to English life, due to their association with the middle class, which led to a growing presence of their members in Parliament, including a notable surge in the virulently anti-Catholic aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. The appointment of the devoutly Calvinist George Abbott (1562-1633) as archbishop of Canterbury in 1610 led some to believe that the Puritans were, indeed, gaining power—even resulting in Abbott being nicknamed "the Puritan Archbishop"—but the Catholic vestiges of Anglicanism continued to persist, and the passage of the 1618 *Five Articles of Perth* established even more visibly Catholic practices in the Church of Scotland, irritating Puritans further. The Puritans' place at the edges of English society led to a great deal of persecution and suffering, and they were often the subject of satire in popular entertainment, such as the plays of famous dramatists like Ben Jonson, who consistently lampooned the strict Calvinist sects—some of whom desired and caused the closure of local theatres—with stock characters such as "Tribulation Wholesome" and "Zeal-of-the-Land Busy," whose names and corrupt, worldly attitudes were directly disparaging towards Puritans. The sustained persecution ultimately caused some Puritans to flee England, among them a band of separatists led by William Bradford (1590-1657), who departed England in 1620 aboard the *Mayflower*, settling in the New World, where they formed the Plymouth Colony, where Puritanism began its rise to power in America.

The eruption of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) also helped lay the foundation for the eventual rise of Puritanism to power in England. In particular, the king's refusal to marry his son, Prince Charles, to a Protestant—choosing instead to have him court Princess Maria Anna of Spain, a Catholic, in what was known as the "Spanish Match"—caused many English Protestants to agree with Puritan conspiracies, which implied that James was attempting to restore England to Catholicism. The Spanish Match ultimately fell through, causing great relief, and allowing the Puritans to assume control of the majority of Parliament. Thereon, the Puritans had to contend with the rise of Arminianism in England, which finally allowed them to be acknowledged as a growing sect in English theology.

Puritan beliefs regarding free will bore great similarity to those of Calvinism, specifically in terms of their acceptance of the Doctrine of the Elect, by which a certain number of people are predestined for salvation, and all others damnation—also known as Unconditional Election. Therefore, Puritans, like Calvinists, believed that the human will is only free insofar as God permits them to choose salvation through grace. Aside from God's grace, human beings cannot choose goodness, and as radical Calvinists, the Puritans believed in the total depravity of the human person, as emphasized in Calvin's *Institutes*, which stated that

> the mind of man is so entirely alienated from the righteousness of God that he cannot conceive, desire, or design any thing but what is wicked, distorted, foul, impure, and iniquitous; that his heart is so thoroughly envenomed by sin that it can breathe out nothing but corruption and rottenness; that if some men occasionally make a show of goodness, their mind is ever interwoven with hypocrisy and deceit, their soul inwardly bound with the fetters of wickedness (Calvin 2.5.19).

Puritan beliefs also included “Covenant Theology,” a system of principles which views God’s history of interaction with humanity as a framework of three overarching theological covenants: the covenant of works (formed in the Garden of Eden), the covenant of grace (formed between Christ and those who believe in Him), and the covenant of redemption (formed between God and Christ over the matter of His salvific death and resurrection). According to Covenentalists, sin made humans incapable of fulfilling the covenant of works, necessitating Christ’s institution of the covenants of grace and redemption. Adherents of covenant theology also accepted the existence of other, biblical covenants, and believed in a process of conversion known as “Puritan Conversion.” Puritan Conversion was a long process of three distinct phases (contrition, humiliation, and justification), which involved a person’s transition from sinfulness and potential condemnation to regeneration, with the result of the person being “born again” into a sinless state. Puritan conversion was an excessively introspective process, in which personal religious experience and self-introspection were ideal, though many critics of the process felt it hewed too closely to antinomianism, the rejection of all secular and religious morals or laws.

A major text which elucidates Puritan beliefs about free will is John Downame’s *The Christian Warfare*, a series of volumes published between 1604 and 1634, which discuss the beliefs of Downame (1571-1652)—a Puritan theologian who contributed to the work of the Westminster Assembly—concerning the spiritual war between God and Satan, and the manner in which Christians are tempted, corrupted, and redeemed. Though a Puritan, Downame’s theology in *The Christian Warfare* contains many fascinating appendages which seem to add nuance to the strictly Calvinist beliefs of the Puritans. Though Downame acknowledges and accepts the Calvinist theology of election, he does assert that the faithful elect can sin and, potentially, be corrupted. Therefore, it is vital that “if we would withstand and defeat [Satan], we are as

carefully to observe our own nature and disposition, that we may find to what vices we are most prone, and so with greater watchfulness we may avoid them" (Downame 77). Downame also indicates that Satan can prey on the ignorance of the Christian elect, "[taking] advantage of their simplicity, by enticing them to commit sins of ignorance. For example, he will tell them that it is lawful, nay expedient to use their Christian liberty, when he tempteth them to licentiousness…he will…seek to justify them by God's word, appareling vices in the habit of those virtues which most resemble them" (Downame 85). Downame asserts that a Christian who is beset by temptation can withstand Satan's wiles by "continually [having] in memory the commandment of our chief captain Christ Jesus…[and,] Secondly…[being] encouraged to withstand our spiritual enemies with assured hope of victory" (Downame 106).

Even more interestingly, Downame indicates that it is possible for a member of the elect to fall into sin and be redeemed, rather than being counted among the wicked. He states that "the means whereby being fallen he may rise again, is by unfeigned repentance, when as he is heartily sorry for his sin, because thereby he hath displeased his loving and gracious father, and steadfastly purposeth for the time to come to leave and forsake those sins" (Downame 118). Downame also discusses

> the way we may note a difference between the state of God's children and the wicked: both fall into sin very often, both also commit heinous and grievous sins; yet sometimes the child of God falleth into more fearful and horrible sins, than a mere worldling; but herein the chief difference between them consisteth, that the child of God after his fall is vexed and grieved, and laboreth to rise again by leaving and forsaking the sin which is odious unto him; but the wicked man his fall never sorroweth nor grieveth, but rather

> resolveth to live still in his sin, and to commit it again and again with greediness and delight when he hath any occasion offered (Downame 118-119).

Though he agrees with the Calvinist belief that "our election is not grounded on our worthiness, but on God's grace and good will" (Downame 150), Downame does argue that a sinful Christian can both be forgiven for their sins *and* be forgiven if they sin again after repenting. Downame notes that

> [Satan] is ready to suggest, that the children of God do not commit any sin after they have truly repented of it; and if any do, either he never truly repented, of if he did, yet after his fall there is no place to a second repentance, nor hope of God's mercy. For answering whereof we are to know, that however the state of those who thus sin is somewhat dangerous, and they more hardly recovered than others…yet this is incident to the children of God who have truly repented, and notwithstanding this grievous kind of falling they are not debarred of God's mercy in Christ Jesus (Downame 645).

Downame's theology presents an interesting facet of Puritan doctrine, one which retains its Calvinistic roots, but offers some hope for Christians who attempt to live good lives, but fear that they are too sinful to be counted among the elect. This reflects the rise of processes such as Puritan Conversion, and the general shift away from predestination and election that occurred between Calvinism and Puritanism.

Puritan beliefs concerning free will also comprise a portion of the Savoy Declaration, a Congregationalist confession of faith drafted in 1658 by a group of English Independents and Congregationalists meeting at the Savoy Palace in London. Meeting over the course of twelve days in October of 1658, this group of representatives—led by prominent Puritans such as Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) and John Owen (1616-1683)—used the confession of faith drawn

up by the Westminster Assembly as a model for their own doctrine. The Savoy Declaration discusses free will explicitly in its third chapter, entitled “Of God’s Eternal Decree,” the first part of which states, “God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin. Nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established” (Savoy Declaration 3.1). This first point evidences that, like Calvinists, the Puritans believed in God’s immutable predestination of all things, which was considered an irrevocable aspect of His foreknowledge. However, the Puritans, much like Calvin, contended that God’s explicit foreknowledge in no way impacts the will of His creatures, but in fact enables free will to exist necessarily. The Declaration defends this by asserting that God, even though He foreknows all things, “hath…not decreed any thing, because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions” (Savoy Declaration 3.2).

The Savoy Declaration also discusses Puritanism’s belief in unconditional election, but adds a crucial point of difference from Calvin’s doctrine in delineating the ways in which a person can be made aware of their election. Chapter Three of the Declaration states that “[t]he doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending the will of God revealed in his Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election” (Savoy Declaration 3.8), indicating that a person can be reasonably assured of their election by virtue of a persistent faith in Christ and attendance to God’s will. While Calvin was dogmatic about the indeterminate nature of election, the Puritan declarations of faith were more concrete in their description of election. Chapter Eight of the Declaration also discusses the concept of election in

terms of Christ's sacrifice, depicting him in a way that reflects the Puritanical concept of free will. Christ is described as saving humankind through "his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of God" (Savoy Declaration 8.5). Christ, the perfect mediator between God and humanity, represents the ideal exercising of human free will, which is characterized by complete obedience to God.

Finally, the Savoy Declaration discusses free will most explicitly in Chapter Nine, "Of Free-Will," which states that "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty and power of acting upon choice that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to do good or evil" (Savoy Declaration 9.1). This description of free will is more generous than the rigid Calvinistic appraisal of freedom, which starkly paints the human will as completely depraved and enslaved to sin. However, the Puritan beliefs expressed in the Savoy Declaration do state that, after the Fall, humans "hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation" (Savoy Declaration 9.3) and that God's grace must be bestowed upon a sinner to "[free] him from his natural bondage under sin, and by…grace alone [enable] him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good" (Savoy Declaration 9.4). Therefore, "the will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to do good alone in the state of glory only" (Savoy Declaration 9.5), a view which aligns Puritanism with the general vein of Calvinist thought. The strictly Calvinist beliefs of Puritans like John Downame and the writers of the Savoy Declaration paved the way for many of the radical reforms and ideas that circulated during the life of Milton, and Milton's literary career—which was enabled in part by the approval of literary censors like Downame himself—was in great part a result of the sudden, violent, and long-lasting Puritan revolution in England.

4. Free Will in Radical Puritan Sects

In addition to the immense social, political, and theological revolutions brought about by the rise of Puritanism, numerous doctrinal shifts occurred within the ranks of Puritans themselves, resulting in the formation of many unique sects which can be broadly referred to by the title of "Radical Puritans," or "Inner Light Sects." The number and names of these sects are voluminous, to say the least (including groups such as, but not limited to: Anabaptists, Barrowists, Behmenists, Brownists, Diggers, Enthusiasts, Familists, Fifth Monarchists, Grindletonians, Levellers, Muggletonians, Philadelphians, Quakers, Ranters, Sabbatarians, Seekers, and Socinians), and the veritable panoply of unique systems of belief suggests how quickly the orthodox center of the Anglican Church (and even Puritanism itself) was collapsing in on itself, as I have previously mentioned.

In general, radical Puritan sects were notable for their association with the middle class, and were particularly forceful in their adoption of the printing press as a means of sermonizing, allowing their ideas to spread rapidly and with great force throughout England. Though many of them never gained true dominance over the mainstream churches in England, their ideas, nonetheless, had tremendous influence over discourse at the time, and had an obvious impact on Milton's writings. At their core, radical Puritan sects held the general belief that the Holy Spirit was immanently present within all people, and could be drawn upon by them, as expressed in Proverbs 20:27, which states that "A lamp from the LORD is the breath of man," an idea that earns itself expression in Book XII of *Paradise Lost*, where Michael tells Adam that he and Eve "wilt thou not be loath / To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess / A Paradise within thee, happier farr" (*PL* XII 585-587).

One of the many radical Puritan sects, the Familist sect, also known as the *Familia Caritatis* (Latin for "Family of Love"), was founded by the German mystic Hendrik Nicholis (c. 1501-c. 1580) around the year 1539. The beliefs of the Familists were fundamentally derived from the Anabaptist sect, which believed that Christian baptism was considered valid only if a candidate could freely confess their faith and truly desire baptism, as opposed to the common practice of baptizing infants, who could neither profess their faith of their own accord or truly desire baptism. Like these Anabaptists, Familists rejected infant baptism. However, they also rejected the dogma of the Holy Trinity—the belief that God was one being realized in three distinct Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and asserted that all things were ruled by nature, and not directly by God Himself. This was considered a heresy related to Arianism, the belief that the Son of God was neither coequal nor coeternal to the Father, a belief which Milton, notably, flirted with in both *De Doctrina Christiana* (I, v) and *PL*, such as in the Son's description in III, 383 and VII, 168. In fact, in a tract published a year before his death, *Of True Religion, Haeresie, Schism, Toleration* (1673), Michael Lieb notes that a very latitudinarian Milton "considers Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Arminians, Arians, and Socinians," and says, "all these may have some errors but are not Hereticks" (Lieb 205).

The rejection of the Son's godhood was a heresy also related to Pelagianism, which held that the world was "ruled by nature," and that mankind could achieve salvation on its own merits, a belief that strongly resonated with sects like the Familists. Familists also rejected the notion that anyone should be executed for his opinions, and objected to the bearing of arms and the taking of oaths. Familism was particularly popular among the educated elite, such as musicians, artists, and scholars, though these members often were visibly practitioners of a more mainstream faith, keeping their Familist beliefs secret. In England, the chief disciple of

Familism was Christopher Vitell (fl. 1543-1579), who led a group of Familists in Balsham, Cambridgeshire.

The Ranters emerged around the time of the English Commonwealth (1649-1660), and were distinguishable by their large presence among the common people, their rejection of scriptural, church, and ministerial authority, and their adoption of a pantheistic worldview that encouraged men to listen to the divine spirit within themselves. Many Ranters rejected the idea of individual immortality and a personal God, and embraced antinomianism—the belief that there are no lawful and moral norms—in order to reject the belief that Christians must follow the Mosaic Law. Ranters also advocated a collectivist, communal ideology that strongly resembles modern Communism, stressing that private ownership of property was wrong, and declaring that sin was merely a figment of the human imagination, allowing believers to surpass the human condition and become godlike, freeing them from all restraints. The Ranters' ideas were often viewed as dangerously heretical by mainstream churches, containing both blasphemies and obvious appeals to anarchy. In analyzing the writings of prominent Ranters such as Abiezer Coppe (1619-1672) and Laurence Clarkson (1615-1667), David Lowenstein notes that:

> To the more mainstream godly, Coppe's blasphemous text boldly proclaiming that "Sin and Transgression is finished and ended," like the Ranter Laurence Clarkson's text asserting that "sin hath its conception only in the imagination," seemed to countenance amoral behavior and social anarchy as it unsettled and overturned customary notions of good and evil, sin and holiness, the moral law, and the Protestant ethic itself (Loewenstein 93).

Many Ranters were also known for practicing public nudity as a form of social protest, a symbol of their transcendence of earthly goods, and their advocation for "Adamite" forms of sexual

intercourse. The Ranters were largely disparaged by both mainstream churches and even their fellow Radical Puritans (such as the Quakers, with whom they were occasionally associated), and prominent Puritan writers like Gerrard Winstanley (1609-1676)—a Digger, who believed that the Ranters were inherently immoral—and John Bunyan (1628-1688)—a Baptist—often wrote tracts condemning their beliefs.

The Levellers were another prominent, yet more political, Puritan sect, which arose during the English Civil War (1642-1651). Levellers were committed to beliefs such as popular sovereignty rather than monarchy, extended suffrage, equality before the law, and religious tolerance. The Levellers "were famous for exploiting techniques of agitation promoted by petition, pamphlet, journalism, party organization, and public demonstration" (Loewenstein 23), and their writings often contained harsh and nearly seditious language, which led many to suspect them of intentionally fomenting anarchy and turmoil. As Loewenstein states, "their opponents feared that they were in fact out to 'Levell all mens estates' and 'would have no distinction of Orders and Dignities amongst men,' thereby leading to 'Popular confusion' and 'a Chaos'" (Loewenstein 20). However, though the Levellers advocated for many radical changes, they were less militant than other sects, such as Gerrard Winstanley's Diggers, when it came to matters such as property ownership, which they did not believe should be communal, save when two owners mutually agreed to share their property. One of the most prominent Levellers, John Lilburne (1614-1657), was particularly virulent in his attacks on the English state, writing:

> heated polemics attacking the bishops, the Presbyterians and their state church, the mystique of kingship and Charles I, the New Model Army command, both houses of the Long Parliament and their committees, the House of Commons Speaker, the government of the City of London, and the English legal system (Loewenstein 20-21).

Lilburne, in particular, was arrested and imprisoned seven times for his writings, though he continued to produce works in prison. The Levellers were a constant presence in English discourse between the years 1645 and 1649, particularly in the English New Model Army, which was formed after the fall of the monarchy, but their influence was effectively crushed by the deaths of many of their prominent leaders, as well as the efforts of Oliver Cromwell.

The Quakers, formally known as the Religious Society of Friends, are among the more well known radical Puritan sects, particularly due to their influence in North America. In England, the Quakers had their beginnings in the experiences of George Fox (1624-1691), who was dissatisfied with the teachings of both the Church of England and other nonconformists. Fox allegedly had a revelation in the form of a vision, through which he came to believe that all people could have a personal, direct encounter with Christ, outside of the ministry of clergymen. Fox's declarations caused him to be brought up on charges of blasphemy, during which the name "Quaker" was first applied to his sect as a derogatory term, coined in response to Fox's admonition that his accusers "tremble at the word of the Lord." Response to the Quakers, like that of the response to other radical Puritan sects, was widespread. Loewenstein, commenting on the Quakers' unique social culture, notes that they:

> demonstrated the mighty power of the Lord and his Word to shake the foundations of ordered society as they created a martyrology out of their persecutions, represented themselves as fearless warriors of the Lamb, confronted temporal and ecclesiastical authorities, and appealed to the indwelling light above all else. Their unorthodox sense of inward power, which caused orthodox contemporaries to consider them rebellious and fanatical, found expression in linguistic and aesthetic ways: the plainness of their discourse (their insistence on using "thee" and "thou") and the general plainness of their

> culture, including architecture, dress, and so on. Their interruptions of church services, refusal to pay tithes, and rejection of oaths and hat honor only contributed to the perception that they were deeply subversive of order and established religion. The early Quaker notion of inward spiritual power was aggressively political, affecting every aspect of their culture and behavior (Loewenstein 126).

Quakers became popular in both England and Wales, but were persecuted heavily for their perceived blasphemy, leading many to emigrate to the American colonies, where they settled in territories such as the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the Delaware Valley, West Jersey, Pennsylvania (which was established by William Penn, a Quaker), and Rhode Island (which was known, of course, for its practice of religious tolerance founded upon the philosophy of Roger Williams). Quaker theology believes primarily in "continuing revelation," the belief that God continuously reveals truth directly to individuals, and in the believer continuously "testifying" to their faith.

A final prominent radical Puritan sect, the Diggers, emerged in 1649 under the leadership of Gerrard Winstanley (1609-1676). The Diggers were known for their belief in economic equality and their desire to reform society with an agrarian lifestyle that would create small, egalitarian, rural communities. The initial ideas of the Diggers were published in a 1649 pamphlet (entitled *THE MYSTERIE OF GOD, Concerning the whole Creation,* Mankinde. *TO BE Made known to every man and woman, after seven Dispensations and Seasons of Time are passed over. According to the Counsell of God, Revealed to his* Servants.), which was co-written by Winstanley and fourteen others, and which referred to the Diggers as "True Levellers," in order to distinguish itself from the already extant Levellers, such as Lilburne. The title

“Diggers” was created after the members of the sect began to practice their beliefs by farming common land. According to Loewenstein:

> Winstanley believed that even after the Civil Wars…and the dramatic republican revolution, “kingly power,” as he called it, continued to exist in various Antichristian forms in the newly erected and free Commonwealth: the professional clergy, state rulers, the Army, lawyers, and landlords were all contributing to an elaborate system of institutional powers which oppress the poor of the earth and keep England under a curse of kingly power (Loewenstein 47).

The Diggers “became the unique movement of the poor during the Revolution, establishing ten communities in 1649-50” (Loewenstein 49) and attempted to advance the idea that the Earth should be communally owned. Like the Quakers, the Diggers experienced severe religious persecution, and were derided, beaten, and imprisoned constantly by other religious sects. It is important to note that, though sects such as the Diggers and the Ranters supported forms of what modern scholars would call Communism, their ideas of communal ownership should not be confused with those of later philosophers, such as Marx or Engels, for, as Lowenstein states, the Diggers’ “daring social ideas, agrarian communism, and radical theology are…deeply interconnected” (Lowenstein 49), and do not represent the thoroughly secular form of Communism that emerged in later centuries.

These radical Puritan sects contributed somewhat to the discourse surrounding free will in Renaissance England, but their influence was felt in the ways in which their beliefs intersected with, supported, and contradicted those which, as we will see, Milton espouses in *Paradise Lost*. Concepts of consent and desire among sects like the Familists and Anabaptists seem to support some manner of free will that exceeds the unconditionality of election in Calvinism, supporting

the idea that humans can freely choose to be baptized. The Ranters' assertions that sin was imaginary seem to eliminate the problem of free will altogether, establishing a completely unrestricted ethos of morality. Leveller theology's insistence on populism and religious tolerance suggests some sort of human will that can be manipulated, and the Quaker concept of personal revelation is inherently individualistic, leading to an unforeseen level of tolerance and theological interpretation that has significant bearing on ideas about free will. Finally, the ideas of Winstanley's Diggers promote a form of egalitarian congregationalism which, like Milton's own beliefs on polity, seem to align strongly with a more independent and malleable human will than that suggested by Lutheranism and Calvinism.

It is relevant and important, thus, to recall Milton's line in his poem "On the New Forcers of Consciousness Under the Long Parliament," "New *Presbyter* is but old Priest, writ large" (Line 20), and how it reflects Milton's own radical, yet wavering leanings towards Puritanism. On a personal level, Milton was thematically preoccupied by the idea of the one just man conflicting with an erring multitude, a role he sometimes considered himself to play, as we see in the case of Abdiel, especially after the failure of the English Revolution. It is this ethos of Milton's that many critics recall when arguing for *Paradise Lost* as a poem that sympathizes with Satan, who indeed sees himself as the lone catalyst behind an uprising against God's supposed tyranny. However, echoes of Dissenter theology and politics can also be found in the epic on the side of the unfallen angels. Sharon Achinstein, in *Literature and Dissent in Milton's England*, argues that "[t]he term 'dissent' in the text of *Paradise Lost* turns up three times, linking three different characters: a fallen angel [Beelzebub, Satan's lieutenant], a repentant angel [the seraph Abdiel], and a fallen man [Adam]" (Achinstein 120). Achinstein notes that, of the three characters, Abdiel is a clear symbol for Dissenters as they have been described above.

Like Milton, who saw himself as one man standing against many, Abdiel "stands up to resist the rebellion…[resonating] with Restoration Dissent" (Achinstein 120). Through Abdiel, Achinstein claims, "Milton models the Restoration Dissenter who must say 'no' to the most difficult temptations of social, political, and psychological surrender" (Achinstein 122). Characters like Abdiel, present in the literature of the Restoration period, prove that, though the theories of these radical Puritan sects may not have overtaken England as forcefully as mainstream Calvinism, they nonetheless contributed remarkably to the discourse of the day, and to the eventual poetry of Milton himself.

5. Milton and the Historical Debate on Free Will

As we turn from the historical context of the free will debate to an examination of *Paradise Lost*, it will be beneficial to look more closely at the ways in which Milton's life intersected with the groups and events that have been described above. To do so, however, some brief context on Milton's life as a whole will be worth providing.

John Milton was born in London on 9 December 1608, the son of a scrivener and composer—also named John Milton—and his wife, Sarah Jeffrey. Raised Protestant, Milton was the son of a father who had been exiled from his devoutly Catholic family by his own father, Richard Milton, for his unorthodox views. The young Milton's encounters with radicalism may have begun early on, for his father's success had made the family wealthy enough to afford the services of a private tutor for Milton, and their choice, a Scottish Presbyterian named Thomas Young (who was, notably, a member of the Westminster Assembly of 1643-1653), may have offered Milton his first insights into radical religious ideologies (Lewalski 5-6). After attending St. Paul's School in London, Milton went on to obtain both a B.A. degree and an M.A. degree from Christ's College, Cambridge (a hotbed of Puritanism), in 1629 and 1632, respectively. It was at university that Milton began to write poetry more seriously, and he made some friends there—including the future Puritan founder of Rhode Island, Roger Williams—but, on the whole, felt constantly alienated from his peers. Though he graduated near the top of his class, Milton was known, somewhat mockingly, as the "Lady of Christ's College" due to his fair complexion (Aubrey, *Brief Lives*). Milton himself refers to this mockery in his Sixth Prolusion, one of many exercises in rhetoric partaken of by students during the summer months:

> For from some of you I have recently been getting the title of Lady. And why do I seem to them to be so little of a man? Is there no respect for Priscian? Do these

> grammaticasters attribute the marks of the masculine to the feminine gender? It is because I have never been able to swallow mighty potations like the all-round athletes; or doubtless because my hand has not been hardened by holding the plough; or because I have never showed myself to be a man in the way that those debauchees do. How I wish that their asininity could be shed as easily as my femininity. (Prolusion VI, ii)

Milton's feelings of isolation and alienation are evident despite the light-heartedness of his words, and his educational career reflects his separation from even his superiors at the college, such as when, in his first year, he was "rusticated," or suspended, for having a quarrel with one of his tutors, the Anglican bishop William Chappell. Milton's conflict with Chappell seems to have survived somewhat in Milton's Seventh Prolusion, where Milton reacts against the educational and scholastic system of his time. He would later, in 1644, write a tract that expanded upon his frustrations with Christ's College, *Of Education*, promoting wide-scale university reforms.

After a brief period of private studying, Milton toured France and Italy from May of 1638 until the summer of 1639, a time during which he learned more of the various religious sects that populated the Continent, particularly Roman Catholicism. He returned to England in midst of the Bishops' Wars of 1639 and 1640, and it is during this time that his pattern of vociferous radicalism and dissent began to emerge. Milton began to write tracts disparaging episcopacy, many of which were explicitly Puritan and Parliamentarian in nature (many members of Parliament were Puritans, or sympathetic to the Puritan cause), and he was a vicious critic of William Laud, the archbishop of Canterbury who advocated for Arminianism. During this time, Milton married Mary Powell, nineteen years his junior, and their marriage began tumultuously, with Mary finding Milton's severity difficult to bear, returning to her family after only a month

of marriage in 1642, just before the outbreak of the English Civil War, though she would return to Milton in 1645. His wife's departure from him prompted Milton to write a number of tracts arguing for the legality and morality of divorce, which are important for understanding the relationship between Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*. The hostile response to these tracts led to the writing of one of Milton's greatest prose essays, *Areopagitica; A speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicenc'd Printing, to the Parlament of England*, published in 1644 as an attack on the censorship of works prior to printing. It is in *Areopagitica* that Milton first begins to equate Christian liberty with neo-Roman liberty, taking a parliamentary stance.

The success of Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentarian faction in the English Civil War, and the subsequent dissolution of the monarchy, allowed Milton greater freedom to express his increasingly radical views. In 1649, he published *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, a tract supporting the peoples' right to depose and execute a tyrannical monarch, and *Eikonoklastes*, a defense of Charles I's execution in response to the popular *Eikon Basilike*, a best-selling text popularly attributed to Charles I himself, which portrayed the king as an innocent Christian martyr. Milton wrote other tracts defending the English people, praising Oliver Cromwell, and responding to critics of his writings.

By 1652, Milton had gone completely blind, possibly due to glaucoma, retinal detachment, or some other medical cause. Soon afterwards, Oliver Cromwell's death caused the English Republic to collapse, but Milton remained staunch in his radical populist beliefs, publishing an attack on Erastianism (the belief that the church should be empowered to punish both ecclesiastical *and* secular crimes), *A Treatise of Civil Power*, in 1659. He maintained his anti-monarchical positions for the rest of his life, going into hiding upon the Restoration of the English Monarchy in 1660, whereupon his writings were burnt and a warrant was issued for his

arrest. Despite a general pardon issued soon afterwards, Milton was briefly arrested and imprisoned, but was released quickly due to the intervention of his friends, including the poet Andrew Marvell. For the remaining decade of his life, Milton lived in London, dying on 8 November 1674, of kidney failure.

It was during this last period of his life, from 1658 to 1664, that Milton composed and published his greatest work: *Paradise Lost*, widely regarded as the greatest epic poem in the English language. As with all of his works, Milton is profoundly present in his epic, which not only reflects his own feelings of alienation and isolation, but also the convoluted political environment of his surroundings. As previously stated, Milton was concerned with the theme of the lone just man conflicting with a multitude. This preoccupation intertwines and coincides with the historical background of *Paradise Lost* throughout the epic. Many have noted that the poem seems to arouse a great deal of sympathy for Satan on the reader's part, and such sympathy is understandable when we consider Milton's motives. Satan does, in many cases, represent the lone rebel standing against an unjust oppressor, such as in Book I, where, when surveying Hell for the first time, and asking whether it must be the place from whence he contends with God, he states:

> …Be it so, since he
>
> Who now is Sovran can dispose and bid
>
> What shall be right: fardest from him is best
>
> Whom reason hath equald, force hath made supream
>
> Above his equals. Farewel happy Fields
>
> Where Joy for ever dwells: Hail horrours, hail.
>
> Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell

Receive thy new Possessor: One who brings
A mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time.
The mind is its own place, and in it self
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n. (*PL* I 245-255)

Satan's welcoming of Hell's horrors, and his profession of boasting "A mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time" suggest his opposition to God, Who arguably represents a form of oppression that imposes its will upon Satan and his fellow angels. In his notable work, *Milton's God*, William Empson compares Satan's language to God's, noting that while Satan speaks with impressive eloquence, bravado, and passion, God's speech comes off as tepid and flat, akin to the droning homogeny of the very ideological multitude Milton seems to rebel against. Yet Empson also notes a strange parallel between Satan and God, namely their shared use of asyndeton, a rhetorical technique that eliminates conjunctions. This style is notably used by God in Book III of *Paradise Lost*, where He addresses His Son:

Onely begotten Son, seest thou what rage
Transports our adversarie, whom no bounds
Prescrib'd, no barrs of Hell, nor all the chains
Heapt on him there, nor yet the main Abyss
Wide interrupt can hold; so bent he seems
On desparate reveng, that shall redound
Upon his own rebellious head. (*PL* III 80-86)

God's speech not only represents a similar rhetorical style as Satan's, but also aligns with the subject of the fallen angel's speech in Book I, reflecting Satan's unflinching determination to

resist against God's punishment of him. Milton's history of rebelliousness, isolation, and alienation clearly emerges throughout these passages, and intertwines further with the problem of free will later in the epic.

Just as Milton's personal feelings of alienation emerge in *Paradise Lost*, so too do the political and religious shifts of his time, which we see represented in many of the major characters in the poem. Satan is a clear representative of a revolutionary, and it is hard not to see the connection Milton may have made between the fallen angel revolting against God, the heavenly king, and with the English revolutionaries who deposed and executed Charles I. As I have also previously noted, Sharon Achinstein considers Abdiel a clear symbol for radical Puritan Dissenters, who "stands up to resist the rebellion…[resonating] with Restoration Dissent" (Achinstein 120) and "who must say 'no' to the most difficult temptations of social, political, and psychological surrender" (Achinstein 122). Abdiel's representation of Dissenters—and, more broadly, Milton's own rebelliousness—can be seen at the end of Book V, where, after he defies Satan, Milton states:

> So spake the Seraph *Abdiel* faithful found,
> Among the faithless, faithful only hee;
> Among innumerable false, unmov'd,
> Unshak'n, unseduc'd, unterrifi'd
> His Loyaltie he kept, his Love, his Zeale;
> Nor number, nor example with him wrought
> To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind
> Though single. From amidst them forth he passd,
> Long way through hostile scorn, which he susteind

Superior, nor of violence fear'd aught;

And with retorted scorn his back he turn'd

On those proud Towrs to swift destruction doom'd. (*PL* V 896-907)

Abdiel's association with Dissenters is clear through the use of the quadruple negative "unmov'd / Unshak'n, unseduc'd, unterrifi'd," a phraseology which reflects the staunch commitment of the theological and political revolutionaries of Milton's time. *Paradise Lost* thus not only resonates clearly as a poem of Milton's own personal philosophy, but as a poem of dissent, rebellion, and social change, matters which are all tied up in the notion of free will.

As we have seen from the above sections, the times in which Milton lived were tumultuous and chaotic, both politically and religiously. The very foundations of secular and theological orthodoxy were challenged before, during, and after Milton's life. Monarchy collapsed alongside the unified faith of the Catholic Church, giving way to the rise of Parliamentary procedures, Presbyterianism, and new religious sects, each more radical than the last. Surely, events even half as numerous and revolutionary as these would engender an ongoing debate on subjects central to the human experience, such as free will, but for times such as Milton's, that debate was both fierce and central to the very core of society. *Paradise Lost* is not merely a recounting of an already charged story of good and evil, as told in the Book of Genesis (in fact, it deviates significantly for the biblical account). Rather, it is a reflection of the political and religious upheaval that encompassed Milton throughout his life, bestowing radical ideas about humanity and religion upon him, and giving him a unique and multifaceted perspective on the concept of free will that can elucidate the greatest depths of the human condition, and truly "justifie the wayes of God to men."

PART II

FREE WILL IN *PARADISE LOST*

1. God the Father and Free Will in *Paradise Lost*

While *Paradise Lost* can accurately be said to foreground both Satan and his human victims, Adam and Eve, as its protagonists, the presence of God undoubtedly commands the attention of the reader throughout the poem. God's essential role in the story of *Paradise Lost* is one that Milton is clearly and keenly aware of, and thus it is fitting that Milton begins his epic with a direct invocation to God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, while also mentioning both the Father and the Son:

> Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
> Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
> Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
> With loss of *Eden*, till one greater Man
> Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
> Sing Heav'nly Muse (*PL* I 1-6)

Milton's mention of the Son of God, "one greater Man," in the fourth line of the poem immediately sets forth God's integral role in the forthcoming verse, establishing His overarching presence as the true center around which the action of the poem flows. Milton enhances this further at the end of his invocation, where he pleads:

> And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
> Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure,
> Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
> Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
> Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss
> And mad'st it pregnant: What in me is dark

Illumin, what is low raise and support;

That to the highth of this great Argument

I may assert Eternal Providence,

And justifie the wayes of God to men. (*PL* I 17-26)

Here, Milton not only asserts that his intent in writing *Paradise Lost* is to "justifie the ways of God to men," but invokes the third person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit, as his muse, adapting the epic convention of the classical poets. Milton's implications here are important, and they have great bearing upon his treatment of free will in the remainder of the poem. By asking the Holy Spirit to be his muse, and by asserting that the central mission of his epic is to justify God's plan to his readers, Milton is framing himself as a divinely inspired poet—a *vates*, or prophet—not unlike the biblical authors upon whom his traditional understanding of the Fall and free will rests. Milton, at the very beginning of his poem, makes the bold choice to ascribe his every word in *Paradise Lost* to the inspiration of God, the creator of the universe—and, thus, the creator of free will as well. Milton's invocation seemingly, then, commands his readers to take his words as God's words, not only connecting him to the vast history of Christian scripture and theology, but to the very person of God Himself, as reflected in the Logos, the Word made Flesh that is referenced at the beginning of the Gospel of John.

Despite the obvious evidence of God's central role in *Paradise Lost*, and His necessary influence upon all of its events and theological implications, Milton makes the surprising choice to omit God's direct presence in the epic until Book III, and this decision—as well as God's eventual characterization—has proven to be among the poem's most hotly debated facets. In fact, Milton's intent in his original concept for *Paradise Lost*—to be found in his undergraduate *Commonplace Book*—was to not have God speak at all, and many who consider Milton's

characterization of God lacking highlight his ultimate choice to have God speak as a sign of Milton's arrogance as a fallen man attempting to capture the personality and mannerisms of an unfallen entity. Some, however, argue that Milton succeeds in his depiction of God and the unfallen state of man because he describes both primarily through negation, describing what they are *not* rather than what they are, such as in Book IV, where Milton describes Eden primarily through negative language, such as:

> …Not that fair field
>
> Of *Enna*, where *Proserpin* gathring flowrs,
>
> Her self a fairer Flowr by gloomie *Dis*
>
> Was gatherd, which cost *Ceres* all that pain
>
> To seek her through the world; nor that sweet Grove
>
> Of *Daphne* by *Orontes*, and th' inspir'd
>
> *Castalian* Spring, might with this Paradise
>
> Of *Eden* strive; nor that *Nyseian* Ile
>
> Girt with the River *Triton*, where old *Cham*,
>
> Whom Gentiles *Ammon* call and *Libyan Jove*,
>
> Hid *Amalthea*, and her Florid Son
>
> Young *Bacchus* from his Stepdame *Rhea's* eye;
>
> Nor where *Abassin* Kings thir issue Guard,
>
> Mount *Amara*, though this by some suppos'd
>
> True Paradise under the *Ethiop* Line
>
> By *Nilus* head, enclos'd with shining Rock,
>
> A whole dayes journey high… (*PL* IV 266-282)

Like this description of Eden, Milton describes God primarily through negation, and thus allows the epic to ascribe character to Him by eliminating all references to what He *is*, which is ultimately unknowable, in favor of what He is *not*, which can be known. This approach, known as negative or "apophatic" theology, is a form of theological thinking that attempts to speak only in terms of what *cannot* be said about the nature of God, rather than what *can* be said about it.

In a selection from the book *Derrida and Negative Theology*, edited by Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, Jacques Derrida himself discusses the concept of negative theology in an illuminating way, one which can lend clarity to Milton's use of negative language to describe God. God's name, Derrida suggests, becomes in apophatic theology "everything that may not be broached, approached, or designated, except in an indirect and negative manner. Every negative sentence would already be haunted by God or by the name of God, the distinction between God and God's name opening up the very space of this enigma" (Derrida 76). Therefore, God's presence exists in negativity, in that which cannot be described, and can be known "by effects without cause, by the *without cause*…'God' would name *that without which* one would not know how to account for any negativity: grammatical or logical negation, illness, evil, and finally neurosis which, far from permitting psychoanalysis to reduce religion to a symptom, would obligate it to recognize in the symptom the negative manifestation to God" (Derrida 76-77). This concept which Derrida elucidates supports what Milton does in describing Eden negatively. By avoiding comparisons to other earthly and mythical gardens, Milton necessarily invokes the presence of God in Eden, and thus marks it as a place that is overshadowed by God. Thus, in a similar way, we can see how God overshadows the idea of free will in *Paradise Lost*. In describing free will primarily through the prohibitions God makes *against* sin, Milton inevitably proves the inverse—that humans have a choice to pursue goodness freely—by describing what

free will is not. God thus plays a fundamental role in establishing the idea of free will in the epic.

God's first appearance as a character in *Paradise Lost* is marked by elevated language that clearly establishes His power and presence, and which also introduces one of Milton's vital justifications for the existence of free will:

> Now had th' Almighty Father from above,
> From the pure Empyrean where he sits
> High Thron'd above all highth, bent down his eye,
> His own works and their works at once to view:
> About him all the Sanctities of Heav'n
> Stood thick as Starrs, and from his sight receiv'd
> Beatitude past utterance; (*PL* III 56-62)

Not only does Milton's first description of God's heavenly person capture His traditional majesty—He sits enthroned high above all else, looking down upon His creation with angels thronging about Him—it also subtly recalls a traditional argument for the reconciliation of His omniscience with the problem of free will. Milton describes God as viewing "His own works and their works at once," and also states a mere sixteen lines later that God "past, present, future…beholds" (*PL* III 78). Milton's description of God in this passage recalls the solution to free will and foreknowledge developed by the sixth-century philosopher Boethius in his pivotal work, *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Boethius holds that God inherently possesses no temporal qualities; as an eternal being, He exists beyond the material constructs of time and space, which He created (Boethius V, vi). Therefore, God does not see the events of the material universe unfold temporally, as human beings do, but rather—as Milton states—sees past, present, and

future at once, all as the present moment. Milton's subtle reference to Boethius in lines 59 and 78 of Book III clearly establishes the nature of free will presented in his epic. Free will irrevocably exists in *Paradise Lost*, because God—being eternal—has foreknowledge of a person's actions due to their being eternally present before Him. However, as we will see in later pages, the *nature* of the free will which Milton accepts in *Paradise Lost* is far more debatable and variable, and his characters both represent and champion various interpretations of freedom that reflect Milton's own historical and theological influences.

The characterization of God in *Paradise Lost* prompted numerous criticisms regarding Milton's portrayal of the deity, many from his contemporaries, and these criticisms can provide additional illumination on the poet's use of free will in his epic. John Clarke (1687-1734), a schoolmaster and classical scholar, discusses God's character as one of the defects of *Paradise Lost* in an extract from *An Essay Upon Study* (1731). Clarke states:

> The Introducing of God, and of the Son of God, as Actors in his [Milton's] Poem, and delivering themselves in long Speeches, is, in my Mind, an unpardonable Boldness. A Poet may contrive Scenes of Action, and find Speeches for his Fellow-Mortals of the highest Degree, because if he trips in his Judgment, and does not well suit their Characters, no Harm is done. But shall a man, a poor short-sighted Creature, dare to bring down the most High into a Scene of Diversion, and assign him his Part of Acting and Speaking, as if he was a proper Judge of what is fit for him to do, and to say…? (Clarke 263)

Clarke argues that Milton, as a fallen creature, cannot adequately or justifiably deign to capture the thoughts and actions of God, Who is beyond all understanding, a position that recalls Derrida's much later description of apophatic theology. Milton's use of God as a direct actor is

bold indeed, but when considering the great lengths he goes to in order to capture the personality of a divine being, and how he does, in fact, employ negative theology in his description of God and God's works, it seems evident that Milton is well aware of the risk he takes in portraying God, and deems it necessary to include Him. Interestingly, while Clarke highlights God's speaking in *Paradise Lost* as a defect, Milton's use of different rhetorical styles reflects his desire to separate God from the more turbulent, fallen characters of the epic.

To this point, in his notable and more modern work, *Milton's God*, William Empson notes that while Satan speaks with impressive eloquence, bravado, and passion, God's speech comes off as tepid and flat (Empson 97-98). Satan, as seen in Books I and II, rouses his fallen compatriots with intense, evocative language, such as in his famous speech defying God and Heaven in Book I:

> …Be it so, since he
> Who now is Sovran can dispose and bid
> What shall be right: fardest from him is best
> Whom reason hath equald, force hath made supream
> Above his equals. Farewel happy Fields
> Where Joy for ever dwells: Hail horrours, hail
> Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell
> Receive thy new Possessor: One who brings
> A mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time.
> The mind is its own place, and in it self
> Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.
> What matter where, if I be still the same,

And what I should be, all but less then he
Whom Thunder hath made greater? Here at least
We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
Here we may reign secure, and in my choyce
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n. (*PL* I 245-263)

While Satan's speech above is charged with passion and rousing language, God's speech is much more formal and logical. Among a variety of reasons, this effect may be due to Satan's use of enjambment, in which the line endings of his speeches break off in the middle of his sentences, carrying his thoughts over multiple lines, which gives them a charged rapidity that contributes to his passion. Satan also speaks in verse with lines that have numerous feminine endings, where the line ends on an unstressed syllable (see lines 254, 255, and 263 above). All of this contrasts with God's measured, often masculine lines. Additionally, God's lines, as seen below, are more metrically consistent than Satan's, with the placement of the caesura occurring almost invariably near the center of each of His lines, in contrast to other characters, such as Satan. God the Father speechifies; Satan implores. All of this contributes to the effect of God and Satan's rhetorical styles appearing distinct in many ways, although despite their many differences, it is far more fascinating to examine their similarities.

Another major aspect of God's speech is the use of asyndeton, a rhetorical technique which eliminates or reduces conjunctions. This style notably occurs in God's first speech, where He addresses His Son, saying:

> Onely begotten Son, seest thou what rage
> Transports our adversarie, whom no bounds
> Prescrib'd, no barrs of Hell, nor all the chains
> Heapt on him there, nor yet the main Abyss
> Wide interrupt can hold; so bent he seems
> On desparat revenge, that shall redound
> Upon his own rebellious head. (*PL* III 80-86)

The extended statement "whom no bounds / Prescrib'd, no barrs of Hell, nor all the chains / Heapt on him there, nor yet the main Abyss / Wide interrupt can hold" represents God's use of asyndeton, where He enumerates all of the methods by which Satan has been forcefully subjugated after his fall. The ever-expanding cadence of the language captures in lyrical form the immense burden placed upon Satan by God Himself, Who has caged Satan with chains on the boiling lake, trapped him within the barred boundaries of Hell, and surrounded him with the chaotic abyss which Satan perilously traverses in Book II. God's enumeration of these prisons serves only to highlight the sheer force of Satan's will, which God describes as "rage" which "transports" him. Despite the dull, flat effect of God's speech, there is a subtle indication of surprise which Milton seems to impart into the dialogue, which inspires a sense of perverse admiration in the readers of the poem when they consider the depths from which Satan has risen in his quest to defy God. Satan's indomitable willpower seems to represent the very force of free will, a will which God granted him, and which at times seems almost matched to the power of God Himself.

Satan's willpower is not the only way in which he seems to reflect God, for Empson notes that Satan's speech also reflects God's on numerous occasions (Empson 97-99), including

in the fallen angel's use of asyndeton. One of the most notable instances of Satan's asyndeton occurs the speech from Book I examined above, where he asks of the hellish landscape around him, "Is this the Region, this the Soil, the Clime, / … this the seat / That we must change for Heav'n, this mournful gloom / For that celestial light" (*PL* I 242-245)? Like God, Satan enumerates the horrors of the Hell he inhabits, his speech closely mirroring God's later list of the same boundaries which enclose him. The clear parallel between Satan's speech and God's reflects the fallen angel's desire to supplant Him, his interest in exalting himself above God, and thus to reflect Him. While God's dialogue is cold and logical—as many critics of Milton's depiction of Him declare—it is also, notably, free of pretense and deception. God has no need to utilize rousing language or rhetorical charisma to make His point, because His conclusions are easily demonstrable through logic and reason. While God is wholly rational, Satan requires rhetorical skill and passion to emulate Him, to disguise his own fallen perspective and irrational logic between seductive and persuasive rhetoric (Fish 74-80).

Milton's use of asyndeton in both God and Satan's speeches, therefore, may, in fact, be a method of warning his readers about the superficial similarities which can blur the line between good and evil, reflecting the oft-repeated phrase that the devil can often appear as Lucifer, the angel of light. This concept, fascinatingly, has roots in a number of ancient, apocryphal texts, such as the Gnostic gospels, in which Satan is sometimes conflated with Yahweh, the Hebrew God. In *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth*, Neil Forsyth notes an interesting parallel between God and an angelic spirit in the Old Testament, who is later identified as Satan. Forsyth notes that "a key member of [God's] court was a spirit who was usually given the name *mal'āḵ Yahweh*, herald or messenger of god…[in] some Old Testament passages, this spirit is simply an aspect of Yahweh himself" (Forsyth 111). This same spirit later becomes the Satan of the Book

of Job, evolving into the rebellious fallen angel of modern tradition. However, the connection Forsyth notes between Satan and God is illuminating in consideration of Milton's subtle link between their styles of rhetoric, which may reflect Milton's own knowledge of their original connection.

Satan's mirroring of God's speech not only reflects his theological history of being juxtaposed with Him, nor simply his unflinching determination to resist God's punishment of him. Satan's rhetoric, in fact, connects fascinatingly with Milton's own history of rebellion, isolation, and alienation, and this connection clearly emerges later in the epic, where it is intertwined with the problem of free will. Just as Milton's personal feelings of alienation emerge in *Paradise Lost*, so too do the political and religious shifts of his time, which we see represented in many of the major characters in the poem. Satan is a clear representative of a revolutionary, and it is hard not to see the connection Milton may have made between the fallen angel revolting against God—the heavenly king who speaks in lofty language—and with the English revolutionaries who deposed and executed Charles I. This connection is notable because it potentially aligns Milton—a staunch detractor of Charles I—with Satan's rebellion. This connection was noted by none other than the famed poet William Blake (1757-1827), who, in his work *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (ca. 1790-93), stated that "[t]he reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it." Similarly, Percy Bysshe Shelley found that:

> Milton's Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge

> upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments. (Shelley 9)

The framing of Satan as a revolutionary, not unlike Milton himself, allows for an interesting interpretation of the connection between his rhetoric and God's, a connection that indicates Satan's desire to supplant the Almighty and replace Him, but also his inability to extricate himself from God's presence.

Yet another instance of God's asyndeton intertwines with the issue of free will in Book III. When God discusses with His Son and His angels the manner in which Satan will tempt and corrupt humanity, He states:

> Some I have chosen of peculiar grace
> Elect above the rest; so is my will:
> The rest shall hear me call, and oft be warnd
> Thir sinful state, and to appease betimes
> Th' incensed Deitie while offerd grace
> Invites; for I will cleer thir senses dark,
> What may suffice, and soft'n stonie hearts
> To pray, repent, and bring obedience due. (*PL* III 183-190)

Here, God makes explicit reference to the doctrine of election, a belief which—as I have previously mentioned on page 14—formed the nucleus of many Protestant sects after the Reformation, most notably Calvinism, though it was also a doctrine accepted by Arminians, a sect of which Milton was often accused to being a member. Interestingly, Milton's language in this passage seems to hew more closely to the Calvinist concept of election, for God refers to

those "elect above the rest" as possessing "peculiar grace," a phrase which directly contrasts the Arminian concept of "prevenient grace," in which God offered grace to all people. The Calvinist theory of election, meanwhile, promoted the concept of "limited atonement," by which only the elect were offered grace.

However, it is interesting to note that while Milton's God refers to the elect as having "peculiar grace," He refers merely four lines later to "offerd grace," which He states is the impetus behind humanity offering sacrifices to appease His righteous wrath. God thus seems to be taking a middle way between limited atonement and prevenient grace here, asserting that while some men and women are specially chosen to receive grace, all will be exposed to His freely offered grace.

A few lines later, God repeats this promise is greater detail when He states:

And I will place within them as a guide,

My Umpire *Conscience*, whom if they will hear,

Light after light well us'd they shall attain,

And to the end persisting, safe arrive.

This my long sufferance and my day of grace

They who neglect and scorn, shall never taste;

But hard be hard'n'd, blind be blinded more,

That they may stumble on, and deeper fall;

And none but such from mercy I exclude. (*PL* III 194-202)

God's words in this passage recall doctrines espoused by a number of the Christian sects which emerged in the aftermath of the Reformation. The Father states that He will place within humanity a guide to lead them to salvation, described as His own "Umpire *Conscience*." This

conscience—interpreted by many as the Holy Spirit—is said to have the power to lead humans to reclamation on the "day of grace" a turn of phrase which reflects Martin Luther's conception of salvation as being freely chosen by humans, but only through the miraculous workings of God's grace upon their hearts. As we have seen, Calvin took Luther's doctrine even further, suggesting that grace was the force behind the entirety of salvation, rather than simply the free choice to be saved. Calvin's doctrine of predestination, we have seen, emerges in *Paradise Lost* through God's use of phrases such as "peculiar grace," which is applied to those "Elect" above the rest. It seems then, that Milton wavers here between a wholly Lutheran and a wholly Calvinist view on the matter of freedom, and the role it plays in the human's choice to be saved. While Milton, through God, seems to suggest that humans do possess remarkable freedom—as evidenced in God's claim that his "offerd grace" and "Umpire *Conscience*" can be either heard or "neglect[ed] and scorn[ed]"—he also provides an interesting contraposition to the idea that the choice to neglect salvation can be reversed. God specifically states in the above passage that those who refuse His call "shall never taste" His grace, "But hard be hard'n'd, blind be blinded more, / That they may stumble on, and deeper fall." Just as Satan laments later in the poem that:

> Which way I flie is Hell; my self am Hell;
>
> And in the lowest deep a lower deep
>
> Still threatning to devour me opens wide,
>
> To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n. (*PL* IV 75-78)

God indicates through His own words that those who refuse His grace are destined to fall even further, their hearts hardened in a way reflective of the Pharaoh in the Book of Exodus, whom God deliberately manipulated into stubbornly refusing to release the Israelites from his grasp. Thus, it seems that Milton considers humanity capable of choosing freely, but also believes that

their ultimate choice is irrevocable, and will determine the course of their life, for good or ill. This aligns Milton less with Luther and Calvin explicitly, and more with Arminius, whose belief in prevenient grace—grace offered to all, but which can be denied—is closest to what God expresses in Book III.

Perhaps God's most clear discussion of free will in Book III, however, comes soon after His first address to His Son, where He asks, wondering where responsibility lies for humanity's eventual fall:

> …whose fault?
>
> Whose but his own? ingrate, he had of mee
>
> All he could have; I made him just and right,
>
> Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.
>
> Such I created all th' Ethereal Powers
>
> And Spirits, both them who stood and them who faild;
>
> Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.
>
> Not free, what proof could they have givn sincere
>
> Of true allegiance, constant Faith or Love…? (*PL* III 96-104)

God clearly indicates in this passage that He has endowed humanity with free will. The famous line "Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" enumerates the abilities God has given to His creations. Humanity is made "just and right," with reason enough to make the right decisions, morally speaking, and yet simultaneously the freedom to defy their innermost knowledge of right and wrong, provided to them by the conscience of God Himself. These qualities are not unique to humans, but to all intelligent creatures, for God notes immediately afterwards that "Such I created all th' Ethereal Powers / And Spirits, both them who stood, and them who faild." Just as

Adam and Eve—and, by extension, all humanity—are given the power of choice, so too are the heavenly spirits God created before them, most importantly Satan. In these passages, Milton demonstrates his awareness not only of the theological debate surrounding human free will, but that of angelic beings as well. Though transcendent, ethereal, and equipped with greater knowledge than humans like Adam and Eve, Satan is no less free to choose his own demise, and no less immune from the consequences of his choice. God's proclamation that even those spirits who "stood" and "fell" did so "Freely" indemnifies none of His creations from blame in the coming events of the poem. Just as Adam and Eve can be said to freely choose their fate, so too can Satan—held by many to be the poem's most fascinating character—bear the full weight of his own decisions. Satan's own character and responsibility for the events of *Paradise Lost*, however, are an even more complex issue than the poem's portrayal of God, and require insight of their own in order to fully elucidate Milton's depiction of free will in his epic. However, before turning to Satan, it is equally important that we consider another of the epic's major figures, the Son of God.

2. The Son of God and Free Will in *Paradise Lost*

Just as God the Father is a vital source of interpretation regarding Milton's attitudes towards free will, so, too, is the character of His Son, Who appears as an equally important figure in *Paradise Lost*, rendering many of the epic's judgments against Satan, Adam and Eve, and humanity. The Son, much like His Father, offers up His own unique expressions of the idea of free will, many of which intertwine with and parallel the Father's comments on obedience and grace. Some of the Son's responses to the Father's words, however, complicate—and potentially contradict—the way free will is described by the Father in *Paradise Lost*, highlighting Milton's complex thoughts and interpretations of the idea of human freedom.

After the Father declares His intention to offer His grace to the fallen human race in Book III, the Son answers with a clear affirmation of what seems to be the Lutheran interpretation of grace as freely offered by God, stating:

> Father, thy word is past, man shall find grace;
> And shall grace not find means, that finds her way,
> The speediest of thy winged messengers,
> To visit all thy creatures, and to all
> Comes unprevented, unimplor'd, unsought?
> Happie for man, so coming; he her aid
> Can never seek, once dead in sins and lost;
> Attonement for himself, or offering meet,
> Indebted and undon, hath none to bring (*PL* III 227-235)

As I have noted previously, the Son's words indicate Milton's clear agreement with an understanding of grace that is shared by most of the Protestant sects of his day—that grace is freely offered by God ("unprevented, unimplor'd, unsought"), and is not motivated by any human offering or supplication towards God. Indeed, the Son affirms the Lutheran and Calvinist doctrine that grace cannot be sought out by humans, as the corruption of sin irredeemably damns them to Hell, until God's grace is bestowed upon them. Free will, it seems, is essentially irrelevant in Milton's perception of the workings of grace, because grace—as Luther and Calvin note—*directs* free will. According to the Son, humanity "[c]an never seek" the aid of grace "once dead in sins and lost," and neither can any acts on their part atone for their sins, for the Son states that humanity "hath none to bring," no acts or sacrifices which can successfully exculpate them for their sins.

It is directly after this pronouncement that the Son offers Himself as the sacrifice to mediate God's wrath, the one atoning act that can liberate humanity from damnation, saying:

> …I for his sake will leave
>
> Thy bosom, and this glorie next to thee
>
> Freely put off, and for him lastly die
>
> Well pleas'd; on me let Death wreck all his rage;
>
> …
>
> Then with the multitude of my redeemd,
>
> Shall enter Heav'n long absent, and return,
>
> Father, to see thy face, wherein no cloud
>
> Of anger shall remain, but peace assur'd
>
> And reconcilement: wrauth shall be no more

Thenceforth, but in thy presence Joy entire. (*PL* III 238-241; 260-265)

It is here that Milton establishes a central crux of his reflections on free will by asserting that the essential act of freedom which results in humanity's redemption is not an act made by humans themselves, but rather by the Son of God. In *Paradise Lost*, it is the Son Who possesses the most obvious and crucial choice, the choice that makes the entire angelic host who surround the Throne of God fall silent in fear when God presents it to them. This decision—the decision to assume human form and suffer death as expiation for the sins of the human race—is the choice around which the entire poem truly turns. Though Milton invokes the choice of Adam and Eve in the Garden at the beginning of *Paradise Lost*, framing it as the central conflict of the poem, and though Adam and Eve's fall from grace acts as the climactic moment of the poem, it is the sacrifice of the Son which qualifies the epic's entire narrative. Milton himself indicates this when, after proposing to speak "Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit / Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast / Brought Death into the World, and all our woe" (*PL* I 1-3), he adds "till one greater Man / Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat" (*PL* I 4-5). It is not Adam and Eve's choice which matters most in *Paradise Lost*, but the redemption secured by the Son, a redemption that is impossible without freedom of the will, by which the Son chooses to face death in order to save humankind.

The Son furthermore affirms His role as the central chooser of the epic, and the agent of redemption, by stating that—after His Resurrection—He will:

…with the multitude of my redeemd,

…enter Heav'n long absent, and return,

Father, to see thy face, wherein no cloud

Of anger shall remain, but peace assur'd

And reconcilement (*PL* III 260-264).

Here, Milton firmly establishes that the Son is the agent of redemption for humanity, as indicated by His reference to "my redeemd." While it is evident that Milton believes in human free will—God Himself admits and explains its necessity, as we have seen above—he also asserts that the human will, corrupted by Adam and Eve, is incapable of choosing goodness of its own accord. Much like Calvin, Milton attributes the entire source of redemption to the free choice of the Son of God, asserting that the human will is only capable of choosing evil. In Book V, when the angel Raphael describes to Adam the anointing of the Son as God's regent—which occurred before Satan's Fall—Milton reasserts the dominance of the Son through the words of the Father Himself, Who states:

…him who disobeys,

Mee disobeys, breaks union, and that day,

Cast out from God and blessed vision, falls

Into utter darkness, deep ingulft, his place

Ordaind without redemption, without end (*PL* V 611-615)

God Himself declares in this scene that it is His Son through whom the judgments He renders are realized, and through the Son that they must be resolved, if humanity is to be saved.

Milton echoes this transferral of God's power to his Son in Book X when, after Adam and Eve have eaten of the forbidden fruit, God declares to the angelic host that humanity has fallen, and chooses who shall deliver the heavenly judgment against them:

…But fall'n he is; and now

What rests, but that the mortal Sentence pass

On his transgression, death denounc't that day?

> Which he presumes already vain and void,
>
> Because not yet inflicted, as he fear'd,
>
> By some immediate stroak; but soon shall find
>
> Forbearance no acquittance, ere day end.
>
> Justice shall not return as bounty scorn'd.
>
> But whom send I to judge them? whom but thee,
>
> Vicegerent Son? To thee I have transferr'd
>
> All Judgement, whether in Heav'n, or Earth, or Hell (*PL* X 47-57).

Here, God not only reaffirms that His Son has been "transferr'd / All Judgement, whether in Heav'n, or Earth, or Hell," but also implies yet again that no act of human freedom after the Fall can acquit a human being of sin. God notes that Adam and Eve, in their fallen hubris, believe that God's promise of death to them is specious because their punishment is "not yet inflicted, as he fear'd, / By some immediate stroak." However, God notes that humanity will "find / Forbearance no acquittance"—though Adam and Eve are foolishly undaunted by the prospect of a far-off death, God's judgment against them is not an acquittal. Just as God's "forbearance" in killing Adam and Eve does not indemnify them, nor will any forbearance on their part, in resisting sin or enduring their justly deserved punishments, be enough to acquit them. Milton's use of double meaning in the word "forbearance" makes it abundantly clear that free will is not a factor in human salvation—only the Son can reconcile humanity to God.

A final, lengthy passage from Book XI, in the Son's own voice, both affirms God's transferral of divine authority to Him, and also complicates the implication of a useless human free will by asserting that—while free will cannot lead to salvation—it can incline a person's heart to God, and mollify God's anger through expressions of contrition. The Son states:

See Father, what first fruits on Earth are sprung

From thy implanted Grace in Man; these Sighs

And Prayers, which in this Golden Censer mixt

With Incense, I thy Priest before thee bring;

Fruits of more pleasing savour, from thy seed

Sow'n with contrition in his heart, then those

Which, his own hand manuring, all the Trees

Of Paradise could have produc't, ere fall'n

From innocence. Now therefore bend thine ear

To supplication, hear his sighs though mute;

Unskilful with what words to pray, let mee

Interpret for him; mee his Advocate

And propitiation, all his works on mee

Good or not good ingraft, my Merit those

Shall perfet, and for these my Death shall pay.

Accept me, and in mee from these receave

The smell of peace toward Mankind, let him live

Before thee reconcil'd, at least his days

Numberd, though sad; till Death, his doom (which I

To mitigate thus plead, not to reverse)

To better life shall yeeld him, where with mee

All my redeemd may dwell in joy and bliss,

Made one with me as I with thee am one (*PL* XI 22-71).

The Son does not in this passage yield His authority over to the free will of humanity. He inserts Himself as the mediator between humanity and God multiple times in this passage, saying things such as, "these Sighs / And Prayers, which in this Golden Censer mixt / With Incense, I thy Priest before thee bring," "let mee / Interpret for him, mee his Advocate / And propitiation, all his works on mee / Good or not good ingraft, my Merit those / Shall perfet, and for these my Death shall pay," and "I / To mitigate thus plead, not to reverse." The Son is still very much the agent of human salvation. However, it is clear that—through His intercession—the Son imparts some power to acts of human free will, namely "these Sighs / And Prayers … Sow'n with contrition in his heart." Adam's sighs, "though mute," inspire the Son with their contrition, and convince Him to exhort the Father to "bend thine ear / To supplication," hearing the prayers and pleas humanity sends to Him in order to bestow blessings upon their lives. These acts of prayer, freely chosen by humans, may not secure salvation, but Milton nonetheless permits the Son to grant them power, exemplifying Milton's belief that free will is not entirely devoid of purpose.

It is useful here to consider, in an analysis of the Son, one of the many charges leveled against both Milton and *Paradise Lost* in regards to their portrayal of Him, the charge of Arianism. Arianism, an early Christian belief denounced as heresy by the Church, asserted that the person of Christ, though considered the Son of God, was not Himself God, in contrast to the accepted belief in the Holy Trinity, which considered God one being of three distinct Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). In his article "Milton and 'Arianism,'" Michael Lieb defines the heresy as:

> "the affirmation of the absolute uniqueness and transcendence of God, the unoriginate source (*agennetos arkhe*) of all reality." This absolute uniqueness is consistent with the so called Arian declaration that "We acknowledge one God, who alone is ingenerate

> (*agenneton*), alone eternal, alone without beginning (*anarkhon*), alone true, alone possessing immortality, alone wise, alone good, alone sovereign, alone judge of all." Because the being or essence (*ousia*) of God is unique, transcendent, and indivisible, it cannot be shared or communicated. To suggest that God would impart His *ousia* to some other being, however exalted, is a logical impossibility: it would imply that He is divisible (*diairetos*) and mutable (*treptos*), which is inconceivable. If any other being would participate in the divine nature, this would, moreover, result in a duality of divine beings. Therefore, whatever else exists must have come into being not as the result of the communication of God's *ousia* but by an act of creation on God's part. Because of the incommunicability of God's being to the beings He creates, His creations must perforce have been called into existence out of nothing. (Lieb, citing Kelly, 200)

This belief, condemned by the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E., experienced a resurgence in Milton's time, though espousing it was dangerous, as Lieb notes that "[i]n Milton's own time, those who held heterodox beliefs (especially antitrinitarian beliefs) faced the real possibility of imprisonment and death" (Lieb 197). Milton, in particular, was often charged with heresy, particularly Arianism, especially by a man named Ephraim Pagitt, author of the work *Heresiography*, which details numerous Christian heresies. Pagitt, Lieb notes, "branded Milton himself a heretic" (Lieb 198), and lauded the burning of many heretics, including Arians, at the stake. Milton's charge of Arianism largely originated, however, from the posthumous, 1825 publication of *De Doctrina Christiana*, the doctrinal tract ascribed to Milton, in which the chapter on the Son of God notably distinguishes between "God's 'Internal Efficiency' and His 'External Efficiency"' (I.iii). Whereas 'Internal Efficiency' is that which resides with God Himself, indeed, within His own mind, as it were (*YP*6.153), 'External Efficiency' is the means

by which His decree is executed (*YP*6.205)" (Lieb 210). This distinction on Milton's part between God's mind, seemingly implied to be the Father, and His means or tool of executing judgment, here implied to be the *Logos*—"the Word," or Christ—could potentially indicate Milton's belief that the Son is not of one being with the Father, but is instead separate from Him.

Hints of this interpretation can certainly be found in *Paradise Lost*, where the Son and the Father are treated separately, interacting with each other and possessing what seem to be distinct personalities. However, Lieb notes that—even when considering *De Doctrina Christiana*—the evidence for Milton being a true Arian is tenuous. In particular, Lieb notes that in "the author's [of *De Doctrina*] attempt to distinguish between Father and Son on the metaphysical grounds of *essentia* [essence] and *substantia* [substance], he is performing an act that is about as 'contra Arianos' as any act can be, for in the theology attributed to Arius *there is no such distinction*" (Lieb 212). Arians were known for asserting that God and the Son were of two essences entirely, completely different creatures unlinked in any way. Milton, even in *De Doctrina Christiana*, asserts that the Father and the Son share a being—it is merely their unique properties and functions that diverge. *Paradise Lost* presents a similar interpretation. Milton frequently refers to God and the Son collectively via the trinitarian term "Godhead," and both Father and Son describe themselves as "coequal," along with frequent references to their shared being, indicating that, for all intents and purposes, Milton considers the Son to be a vital part of the Holy Trinity. It is the *role* of the Son which matters most, a role which places Him as the agent of salvation for humanity, the governor of their freedom and mediator between them and the Father.

Satan and Free Will in *Paradise Lost*

It cannot be disputed that, of all the biblical and theological figures whom Milton employs as characters in *Paradise Lost*, Satan is by far the most compelling and fascinating. Scholars spanning both centuries and continents have considered his character through a variety of lenses, some interpreting him as an expertly wrought archetype of evil, and others as the true hero of Milton's epic, championing a just and noble cause that even Milton could not bury beneath the nefarious titles that are given to him. As the perennial rebel against God, and the proximate cause of humanity's fall from grace, Satan necessarily occupies much of the epic's reflections on freedom of choice and the power of the will, both human and angelic. In many ways, Satan both contradicts many of Milton's theological solutions to the problem of free will—espousing a clearly errant and dangerous perspective on the subject—and also echoes them, affirming them and adding to them with his own strangely alluring rhetoric. This paradigm has been noted by scholars such as Stanley Fish, who—as cited previously—mentions in *Surprised by Sin* that Satan needs to employ rhetoric in his language, whereas God is more logical, reflecting Milton's attempt to lure the audience in with Satan's persuasive language so that they are surprised by the sin of Adam and Eve in Book IX (Fish 75).

Having already analyzed Satan's speech in Book I of *Paradise Lost*, it is important to consider that his words in that passage, bemoaning the loss of Heaven but defying God nonetheless, are as much for himself as they are for the benefit of his fallen comrades. In Book II, Satan begins the demonic council in his new, hellish palace of Pandaemonium with a much more hopeful, measured speech, one which is clearly meant to assuage the fears of his cohorts in the face of their new circumstances. He begins:

Powers and Dominions, Deities of Heav'n,

For since no deep within her gulf can hold
Immortal vigor, though opprest and fall'n,
I give not Heav'n for lost. From this descent
Celestial virtues rising, will appear
More glorious and more dread than from no fall,
And trust themselves to fear no second fate:
Mee though just right, and the fixt Laws of Heav'n,
Did first create your Leader, next, free choice,
With what besides, in Counsel or in Fight,
Hath bin achiev'd of merit, yet this loss
Thus farr at least recover'd, hath much more
Establisht in a safe unenvied Throne
Yeilded with full consent. (*PL* II 11-24)

Satan's wily words in this passage both highlight the free will of his underlings and diminish it intentionally. Satan acknowledges that, while in Heaven, he was named the leader of the angelic hosts by "just right, and the fixt Laws of Heav'n;" the fallen angels explicitly elected him the leader of their rebellion through "free choice," and will, implicitly, maintain that decision in Hell. The free choice of the fallen angels, Satan claims, "Establisht…a safe unenvied Throne" for Satan to rule from, a throne which he expects will be "Yeilded with full consent" to him. Satan props up the free will of his fallen comrades by asserting that it had benefitted them more than it has cursed them, by granting them a free realm in which they can dwell unrestricted by the power of God. However, Satan subtly and cleverly diminishes the free will of his fellow

demons here by subsuming them beneath himself through his meticulous language. Soon after this first address, he appeals to any designs of power the fallen angels might have by asking:

> …who here
>
> Will envy whom the highest place exposes
>
> Formost to stand against the Thunderers aim
>
> Your bulwark, and condemns to greatest share
>
> Of endless pain? (*PL* II 26-30)

Satan seeks to gain sympathy from his followers, and to instill fear within them, by describing his privileged position as the one which brings the most suffering, and the greatest part of God's wrath. Though he speaks eloquently of freedom, and of shaking off the burdens of oppression, Satan skillfully undermines the freedom of his followers in order to maintain his own power, showcasing the way he can easily warp the concept of free will to suit his own needs.

Satan's appeals to freedom are echoed throughout the council by many of his named followers, including Mammon, the demon of greed, who suggests in his own speech:

> …Let us not then pursue,
>
> By force impossible, by leave obtain'd
>
> Unacceptable, though in Heav'n, our state
>
> Of splendid vassalage, but rather seek
>
> Our own good from our selves, and from our own
>
> Live to our selves, though in this vast recess,
>
> Free, and to none accountable, preferring
>
> Hard liberty before the easie yoke
>
> Of servile Pomp. (*PL* II 249-257)

Mammon's words reflect Satan's bold language during the war in Heaven, as recounted by Raphael in Books V and VI, such as when he first addresses his assembled rebels to persuade them of God's tyranny, saying:

> Will ye submit your necks, and chuse to bend
> The supple knee? ye will not, if I trust
> To know ye right, or if ye know your selves
> Natives and Sons of Heav'n possest before
> By none, and if not equal all, yet free,
> Equally free; for Orders and Degrees
> Jarr not with liberty, but well consist.
> Who can in reason then or right assume
> Monarchie over such as live by right
> His equals, if in power and splendor less,
> In freedome equal? or can introduce
> Law and Edict on us, who without law
> Erre not, much less for this to be our Lord,
> And look for adoration to th' abuse
> Of those Imperial Titles which assert
> Our being ordain'd to govern, not to serve? (*PL* V 787-802)

Like Mammon, Satan—then known as Lucifer—equates the free will of theology with service, for though God has given the angelic hosts great power, he states, that power is "to govern, not to serve." To Lucifer, God's elevation of Himself—and, particularly, His Son—over the angelic hosts defies His own stated intent when He orders the angels to govern the cosmos as equal

rulers. Satan believes that true freedom can come only from all being equally free to pursue their desires, even if their "Orders and Degrees" might differ. He echoes this belief to Abdiel in Book VI when he states:

> At first I thought that Libertie and Heav'n
> To heav'nly Soules had bin all one; but now
> I see that most through sloth had rather serve,
> Ministring Spirits, traind up in Feast and Song;
> Such hast thou arm'd, the Minstrelsie of Heav'n,
> Servilitie with freedom to contend,
> As both thir deeds compar'd this day shall prove. (*PL* VI 164-170)

Satan finds the "Feast and Song" of the heavenly angels abhorrent because even though they mirror the freedoms he and his followers desire, they are accepted by the heavenly hosts as gifts of God, which Satan equates to servitude. Above all else, Satan's philosophy is one of complete independence—any good or benefit that he does not see as having come from his own actions and authority is of no value, as it was gained through obeisance to other forces, be they nature, other persons, or God Himself. In this way, Satan truly reveals his arrogance, the root of his desire to supplant God and take on His power, which is nothing more than a perverse desire to be considered the master of everything in his own universe, including himself.

Though Satan himself does not speak Mammon's words in Book II, this philosophy is nonetheless evident within them, as it is within his speeches during the war in Heaven. For the fallen angels, freedom of the will entails not the freedom to accept grace and guidance in order to live a better life, as many of Milton's contemporary theologians considered it. Rather, for the fallen angels, freedom is to "seek / [one's] own good from [oneself], and from [one's] own / Live

to [oneself]" (*PL* II 252-254), to be held to account by no one. More accurately, then, the demonic conception of freedom could be called *license*, the ability to do whatever one wishes with the approval of authority, and to live under no creed or system of morality. Anything else, as Mammon states, is "servile Pomp." The demons themselves, however, do not comprehend that their commitment to license has enslaved them to themselves, a servitude that is far less vindicating than service to God, for its actions are empty.

The "servile Pomp" which Mammon mentions is referenced later in the epic by Abdiel, who eloquently summarizes the fallen angels' fallacious understanding of free will in Books V and VI. In Book V, when first confronting the rebellious Lucifer, who is plotting his heavenly insurrection, Abdiel states:

> …unjust, thou saist,
>
> Flatly unjust, to bind with Laws the free,
>
> And equal over equals to let Reigne,
>
> One over all with unsucceeded power.
>
> Shalt thou give Law to God, shalt thou dispute
>
> With him the points of libertie, who made
>
> Thee what thou art, and formd the Pow'rs of Heav'n
>
> Such as he pleas'd, and circumscrib'd thir being?
>
> Yet by experience taught we know how good,
>
> And of our good, and of our dignitie
>
> How provident he is, how farr from thought
>
> To make us less, bent rather to exalt
>
> Our happie state under one Head more neer

United. But to grant it thee unjust,

That equal over equals Monarch Reigne:

Thy self though great and glorious dost thou count,

Or all Angelic Nature joind in one,

Equal to him begotten Son, by whom

As by his Word the mighty Father made

All things, ev'n thee, and all the Spirits of Heav'n

By him created in thir bright degrees,

Crownd them with Glory, and to thir Glory nam'd

Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Vertues, Powers,

Essential Powers, nor by his Reign obscur'd,

But more illustrious made, since he the Head

One of our number thus reduc't becomes,

His Laws our Laws, all honour to him done

Returns our own. (*PL* V 818-845)

Abdiel wisely points out the fatal flaw in Satan's argument that God—by proclaiming Himself the ruler of equals—is a hypocrite, arguing that because God "made / Thee what thou art, and formd the Pow'rs of Heav'n / Such as he pleas'd, and circumscrib'd thir being," He therefore has full authority over all creation. God is the being who sets down the laws of the universe, and therefore is above and beyond them. Though He *chooses* to make Himself equal to His creations, Abdiel rightly notes that this is an act of providence and humility, an attempt to make His creations "more illustrious…since he the Head / One of our number thus reduc't becomes, / His Laws our Laws." To deny God's power over the laws of creation is to deny the very free

will that God Himself granted his creations, to enslave oneself to the delusion that freedom and obedience to God are somehow separate. Abdiel notes this as well when, shortly before the great battle in Book VI, he tells Lucifer:

> …This is servitude,
>
> To serve th' unwise, or him who hath rebell'd
>
> Against his worthier, as thine now serve thee,
>
> Thy self not free, but to thyself enthrall'd;
>
> Yet leudly dar'st our ministring upbraid. (*PL* VI 178-182)

Abdiel makes it clear that serving God is not vain or pompous, as Mammon implies. In fact, the opposite is true. True vanity is to pledge servitude to a lesser being than God, such as Satan, a being who is so caught up in his own pride and egotism that he can presume to unseat the Almighty. Though Satan and his crew "leudly dar'st" to mock the ministry of the unfallen angels, their mockery only reflects the twisted view of freedom they possess, one which denigrates gracious servitude in favor of empty, platitudinous license.

The warped and vacuous freedom the fallen angels have won, and which Abdiel describes, is expertly portrayed by Milton through the demonic feats of philosophy and athleticism in Book II, feats which are absurd in the context of Hell, and which showcase the fallen angels' complete surrender to empty and vain pleasures that cannot fulfill them. The demons, after resolving to allow Satan to investigate the new world which God has created, endeavor to live out their leader's warped view of freedom in a scene which Milton crafts with comic severity, juxtaposing the horrors of Hell and its environment with the demons' expressions of freedom by stating that:

> Thence more at ease thir minds and somewhat rais'd

By false presumptuous hope, the ranged powers

Disband, and wandring, each his several way

Pursues, as inclination or sad choice

Leads him perplext, where he may likeliest find

Truce to his restless thoughts, and entertain

The irksom hours, till his great Chief return.

Part…

…more mild,

Retreated in a silent valley, sing

With notes Angelical to many a Harp

Thir own Heroic deeds and hapless fall

By doom of Battel; and complain that Fate

Free Vertue should enthrall to Force or Chance…

Others apart sat on a Hill retir'd,

In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high

Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will and Fate,

Fixt Fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,

And found no end, in wandring mazes lost.

Of good and evil much they argu'd then,

Of happiness and final misery,

Passion and Apathie, and glory and shame,

Vain wisdom all, and false Philosophie. (*PL* II 521-528; 546-551; 557-565)

Here, Milton puts on display the extent of the "freedom" which Satan extols to his followers, and which he leaves them to practice whilst he seeks out the destruction of humankind. Not entirely divorced from the paradisiacal practices of Heaven, the fallen angels set about engaging in acts of sport and intellect, among them debating "Providence, Foreknowledge, Will and Fate, / Fixt Fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute." That the fallen angels undertake these sporting games and academic debates in the midst of the flames, smoke, and torment of Hell is Milton's obvious reflection on the futile prize their rebellion has won them. Though they profess themselves as "free" beings, their freedom merely amounts to the ability to pursue empty pleasures which veil the agony they experience regardless of their outward appearance. As Satan states in Book IV, these pleasures are mere pretense, for despite them all:

> Which way I flie is Hell; my self am Hell;
>
> And in the lowest deep a lower deep
>
> Still threatning to devour me opens wide,
>
> To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n. (*PL* IV 75-78)

Satan himself gives credence to this interpretation of the fallen angels' futile "freedom" earlier in his speech in Book IV, where he affirms the traditional, theological concept of freedom by asking himself:

> Hadst thou the same free Will and Power to stand?
>
> Thou hadst: whom hast thou then or what t' accuse,
>
> But Heav'ns free Love dealt equally to all?
>
> Be then his Love accurst, since love or hate,
>
> To me alike, it deals eternal woe.

Nay curs'd be thou; since against his thy will

Chose freely what it now so justly rues. (*PL* IV 66-72)

Satan admits in this passage his own true freedom, the "free Will and Power to stand" which God Himself mentions in Book III, when He comments that He made humankind "Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (*PL* III 99). Though he tries to curse the love of God for burdening him with woe because of his choice, in the end, Satan curses only himself, for he "Chose freely what [he] now so justly rues."

Satan, then, may be the clearest example of freedom in *Paradise Lost*, but he and his cohorts are not only examples of freedom in action, but also of that freedom's dire consequences. Unlike Adam and Eve, Satan and his fellow angels are entirely undeceived in their rejection of God. They hold no illusions about the nature of their actions, and cannot be said to lack comprehension of the consequences they face for their revolution. Though they exercise their free will by rebelling against God, they do so out of the most pernicious form of enslavement, the self-bondage of pride. Truly convinced that it is "Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n," Satan forsakes every pleasure of Heaven in favor of a truly independent existence, an existence separate even from God Himself. Milton, however, makes clear in his epic that this choice of Satan's is neither admirable nor heroic, and his compelling, charismatic speeches—when viewed closely—reveal the true intent of the remarkable poet at hand: to warn his readers that the greatest enemy they face is their own selfishness, a warning which becomes ever clearer when considering *Paradise Lost*'s human protagonists, Adam and Eve.

4. Adam and Free Will in *Paradise Lost*

Though Satan is often justly considered the protagonist of *Paradise Lost* and the poem's most obvious representation of Milton's complex view of free will, the entire conflict of the epic itself revolves around Adam and Eve, the progenitors of the human race, whose choice to defy God's command in the Garden of Eden is the central issue of *Paradise Lost*, the source of "all our woe" (*PL* I 3). This choice of Adam and Eve's is the most vital act of free will in the epic, and Milton devotes a great deal of time to portraying both Adam and Eve as completely free participants in their sin against God, knowing that any illusion of ignorance or an impotence of freedom on the part of his human characters could easily exculpate them from the blame they rightly deserve for exposing their descendants to death.

Milton makes clear the divine, unfallen, and yet completely independent nature of Adam and Eve from their first introduction in Book IV of *Paradise Lost*, where, while wandering stealthily through the Garden of Eden, Satan sees:

> Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,
> Godlike erect, with native Honour clad
> In naked Majestie seemd Lords of all,
> And worthie seemd, for in thir looks Divine
> The image of thir glorious Maker shon,
> Truth, Wisdom, Sanctitude severe and pure,
> Severe, but in true filial freedom plac't;
> Whence true autoritie in men; though both
> Not equal, as thir sex not equal seemd;
> For contemplation hee and valour formd,

For softness shee and sweet attractive Grace,

Hee for God only, shee for God in him: (*PL* IV 286-297)

This famous description of humanity's unfallen state highlights not only their incredible beauty, nobility, and near-divinity as creations of God, but also their inherent freedom of mind and body. Though Adam and Eve are, by virtue of their Creator, in "Truth, Wisdom, Sanctitude severe and pure," this does not influence or reduce their freedom. Milton makes this clear when he says that, although they are "severe," Adam and Eve are "in true filial freedom plac't." Milton's use of the word "filial" is vital here, for though it implies a certain form of restriction upon their actions, it does not eliminate their freedom. Adam and Eve have a "filial" duty, a freedom reliant upon their obedience to God, Who is their Creator, and thus their father. Though they are free to pursue their own pleasures in Eden, Adam and Eve are bound to obey God's singular command to avoid the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

While some might view this commandment of God's as a restriction placed on Adam and Eve's freedom—among them Satan and his demons, such as Mammon, whom I have previously analyzed—it is, in fact, not a restriction, but rather a prohibition against license, which, as defined on page 76, is the ability to do whatever one wishes. License, however, is not freedom, for license implies approval from a figure of authority to engage in whatever acts one might desire. This is what Satan and his demons truly desire: not merely the ability to do what they wish, which they already possess in the form of free will, but to do so with God's approval. Adam and Eve, conversely, are created with true freedom—they *can* do whatever they wish, and their sin in Book IX proves it—but they are created by that same power which places "true autoritie in men," the power of God. This freedom necessarily implies the restriction of God's commandments, for in a universe created by God, freedom can only extend as far as He decrees

it. Thus, while God imposes rules upon Adam and Eve, this does not diminish their freedom, but rather sets that freedom's boundaries, marking anything outside of those barriers not as freedom—though those things may be freely *chosen*—but as enslavement.

Adam himself comments on this distinction between bounded freedom and license when, shortly after Satan observes him walking with Eve through Eden, he addresses his mate, saying:

> …let us not think hard
> One easie prohibition, who enjoy
> Free leave so large to all things else, and choice
> Unlimited of manifold delights:
> But let us ever praise him, and extoll
> His bountie, following our delightful task
> To prune these growing Plants, and tend these Flowrs,
> Which were it toilsom, yet with thee were sweet. (*PL* IV 432-439)

Adam acknowledges that, because he and Eve "enjoy / Free leave so large to all things else, and choice / Unlimited of manifold delights," they should not consider God's solitary prohibition difficult. Adam's description of God's commandment reflects the words of Christ in the Gospel of Matthew, where He states, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:29-30). The restrictions God places upon Adam and Eve are minimal, impacting their ability to dwell in Eden in few meaningful ways. The solitary prohibition against eating of the Tree of Knowledge is, in fact, far more of a test than it is an actual restriction. As the serpent declares in the Book of Genesis—and, more specifically, as Satan does in Book IX—eating of the forbidden fruit does not itself kill Adam and Eve, but neither does it have the effect

Satan promises, that of bestowing upon Adam and Eve true knowledge of Good and Evil. The fruit itself, and God's prohibition against it, rely upon Adam and Eve already being aware of their freedom, and their knowledge of right and wrong. Adam and Eve's freedom would have been the same had God instructed them against eating of a different tree, or against any action in particular. The key conflict is one of obedience—will Adam and Eve obey God, or will they defy Him, as Satan did? Their ability to do so, and to acknowledge prior to their sin the easiness of their burden, is a clear indication of their freedom.

This issue is further expounded upon in Book V, when God sends the archangel Raphael to instruct Adam on the nature of human existence and on the rebellion of Satan, which preceded the creation of the world. When describing to Adam how God created human beings, Raphael states:

> God made thee perfet, not immutable;
>
> And good he made thee, but to persevere
>
> He left it in thy power; ordaind thy will
>
> By nature free, not over-rul'd by Fate
>
> Inextricable, or strict necessity;
>
> Our voluntarie service he requires,
>
> Not our necessitated, such with him
>
> Finds no acceptance, nor can find, for how
>
> Can hearts, not free, be tri'd whether they serve
>
> Willing or no, who will but what they must
>
> By Destinie, and can no other choose?
>
> My self, and all th' Angelic Host, that stand

> In sight of God enthron'd, our happie state
> Hold, as you yours, while our obedience holds;
> On other surety none; Freely we serve,
> Because wee freely love, as in our will
> To love or not; in this we stand or fall:
> And som are fall'n, to disobedience fall'n,
> And so from Heav'n to deepest Hell; O fall
> From what high state of bliss into what woe! (*PL* V 524-543)

Raphael echoes in this speech one of the most common and clearest defenses of human free will and the problem of evil, which is that God created humankind "perfet, not immutable," because God, omniscient as He is, knew that no creature made immutably, without the ability to choose, can truly love or be loved. As Raphael asks, "Can hearts, not free, be tri'd whether they serve / Willing or no, who will but what they must / By Destinie, and can no other choose?" If God had filled the universe with creatures incapable of defying His will for them, and thus incapable of choosing right from wrong, then His purposes in making them would be entirely frustrated. The world would be filled not with truly loving beings, but with automatons programmed only to do a certain set of actions. God, Raphael claims, cannot accept this, because He desires that all of His creations choose to do good not because they are made to do it, but because they know it is right for them to do: "Freely we serve," Raphael says, "Because wee freely love." This manner of creature requires free will, and Adam and Eve's ability to sin is evidence of that will, despite any objections that might be made on account of God's foreknowledge of events or His ability to stop them from acting wrongly.

Later in his speech, after recounting the story of Satan's fall, Raphael reaffirms Adam and Eve's free will with a similar pronouncement, saying:

> …take heed least Passion sway
>
> Thy Judgement to do aught, which else free Will
>
> Would not admit; thine and of all thy Sons
>
> The weal or woe in thee is plac't; beware.
>
> I in thy persevering shall rejoyce,
>
> And all the Blest: stand fast; to stand or fall
>
> Free in thine own Arbitrement it lies.
>
> Perfet within, no outward aid require;
>
> And all temptation to transgress repel. (*PL* VIII 635-643)

Here, Raphael affirms that Adam and Eve already have adequate judgment within them to exercise their free will rightly—they are "Perfet within, [and] no outward aid require." Though Satan deceives Eve in Book IX by telling her that the forbidden fruit will give her and Adam the ability to discern between good and evil, in truth that discernment already exists within them. Later, in Book IX, when Eve expresses to Adam her desire to strike out into the garden on her own, Adam imparts this instruction to her, as she had also chosen to pursue her own activities while Raphael was speaking with Adam. Adam tells her:

> O Woman, best are all things as the will
>
> Of God ordain'd them, his creating hand
>
> Nothing imperfet or deficient left
>
> Of all that he Created, much less Man,
>
> Or aught that might his happie State secure,

Secure from outward force; within himself

The danger lies, yet lies within his power:

Against his will he can receave no harm.

But God left free the Will, for what obeys

Reason, is free, and Reason he made right,

But bid her well beware, and still erect,

Least by some faire appeering good surpris'd

She dictate false, and misinform the Will

To do what God expresly hath forbid.

Not then mistrust, but tender love enjoyns,

That I should mind thee oft, and mind thou me. (*PL* IX 343-358)

Here, Adam relates to Eve an important distinction between freedom and license, similar to that which Raphael previously taught him. He notes that "what obeys / Reason, is free," reflecting his earlier speech to Eve concerning the lightness of God's burden. Because freedom only extends as far as God ordains it, freedom exists within the realm of human reason, the natural faculty which God created to guide human beings away from evil behavior.

Reason, however, can be deceived, Adam notes, "by some faire appeering good," which can "misinform the Will / To do what God expresly hath forbid." This manner of temptation is exactly what Satan employs in Book IX, such as when he states:

Shall that be shut to Man, which to the Beast

Is open? or will God incense his ire

For such a petty Trespass, and not praise

Rather your dauntless vertue, whom the pain

> Of Death denounc't, whatever thing Death be,
>
> Deterrd not from atchieving what might lead
>
> To happier life, knowledge of Good and Evil;
>
> Of good, how just? of evil, if what is evil
>
> Be real, why not known, since easier shunnd?
>
> God therefore cannot hurt ye, and be just;
>
> Not just, not God; not feard then, nor obeyd:
>
> Your feare it self of Death removes the feare. (*PL* IX 691-702)

Satan's rhetorical skill in this passage reflects the exact form of temptation that Adam warns Eve against when he discusses the limitations of the will's discernment and ability to resist temptation. Satan cleverly plies Eve with a series of questions that make God's commandment seem foolish and arbitrary, though the queries themselves are based in falsehoods and prevarications. He asks why God would forbid the fruit to humans but not beasts, subtly glossing over the fact that creatures do not possess human rationality, a trait which he—as the serpent—attributed only to his accidental eating of the fruit, which was an act of instinct, not a choice of the will, and thus no violation of a commandment. Secondly, Satan appeals to the human ego by asserting that God will not, in fact, punish humanity for disobeying, but rather express admiration for their boldness, deceiving the will into believing that its own power of choice can only be virtuously wielded, rather than irrationally and incorrectly. Thirdly, Satan casts subtle doubt on the very existence of death and evil, blithely mentioning "whatever thing Death be," and "evil, if what is evil / Be real." By dismissing death as an unknown, negligible force, and intimating that evil may, in fact, not even exist, Satan manipulates Eve into believing that the consequences of her actions will be insignificant. Finally, Satan asserts that God, if He

would harm His own creations, would be "Not just, not God; not feard then, nor obeyd." These imprecations are a clear example of the deceptions Adam warns Eve against, deceptions which can pervert the power of free will.

Adam recognizes the power temptation has over the human will when, after he and Eve have both partaken of the forbidden fruit, and she has accused him of being the cause of her fall, he asks:

> And am I now upbraided, as the cause
> Of thy transgressing? not enough severe,
> It seems, in thy restraint: what could I more?
> I warn'd thee, I admonish'd thee, foretold
> The danger, and the lurking Enemie
> That lay in wait; beyond this had bin force,
> And force upon free will hath here no place.
> But confidence then bore thee on, secure
> Either to meet no danger, or to find
> Matter of glorious trial; (*PL* IX 1168-1177)

Here, Adam describes the challenges a free human being faces when exposed to temptation. Most importantly, he acknowledges the truth that "force upon free will hath here no place." Because Eve was "warn'd…admonish'd…[and] foretold / The danger, and the lurking Enemie / That lay in wait," she has no excuse for her actions in violating God's commandment other than being forced to disobey. However, Adam rightly notes that force cannot compel free will, for no choice made under such duress is truly free. Eve, in her willingness to eat the fruit and her susceptibility to Satan's guile, deprives herself of any innocence she might have been able to

claim in her actions. Indeed, her choice is confirmed as a free one because "confidence… / bore [her] on, secure / Either to meet no danger, or to find / Matter of glorious trial." Because Eve was receptive to Adam's warnings, and went off on her own with confidence that she would either not be tempted at all, or would in fact find herself in a position to prove her moral fortitude by resisting temptation, she is entirely at fault for her choice. Free will, though it seems to provide human beings with the comfort of control, can easily be as much of a curse as it is a blessing, for not only is it susceptible to persuasion, it has no recourse to turn to when it fails, except atonement.

It is the atonement that Adam and Eve must endure for their sin—the suffering that God imposes upon them, and all of humanity—that causes Adam the most grief, for it forces him to admit above all else that it was his own moral failing, and Eve's, which necessitated such a punishment. As he states in Book X:

> …Ah, why should all mankind
>
> For one mans fault thus guiltless be condemn'd,
>
> If guiltless? But from mee what can proceed,
>
> But all corrupt, both Mind and Will deprav'd,
>
> Not to do onely, but to will the same
>
> With me? how can they then acquitted stand
>
> In sight of God? Him after all Disputes
>
> Forc't I absolve: all my evasions vain
>
> And reasonings, though through Mazes, lead me still
>
> But to my own conviction: first and last
>
> On mee, mee onely, as the sourse and spring

> Of all corruption, all the blame lights due;
>
> So might the wrauth. (*PL* X 822-834)

Adam rightfully asks why it is that his free choice to disobey God must therefore place all future human beings under God's judgment, only to realize that the only sort of human beings which can now come from him are fallen ones, humans with "both Mind and Will deprav'd, / Not to do onely, but to will the same" as him. Because Adam and Eve sinned, they cannot now instruct their own offspring in anything but sinfulness, having crossed the bridge from perfection into iniquity. Thus, Adam laments, asking "how can they then acquitted stand / In sight of God?" Adam knows that if it is impossible for any humans born in the future to posses an incorrupt will, then all humans will necessarily be condemned to the same prison as Satan's. God, he knows, cannot be blamed for this, for all of Adam's attempts to exculpate himself have "lead [him] still / But to [his] own conviction," his free choice of the will, for which God cannot be blamed as Creator. Only Adam and Eve, the wielders of their own faculties, are responsible for their decisions, and thus, upon them lies the wrath of God. It can, of course, be asked who is more culpable for the sin in the Garden of Eden, and having examined Adam, it now seems appropriate to turn to Eve, who has received much of the critical blame for the events of Book IX, but also much defense. Eve is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating examples of free will in *Paradise Lost*, and as the mother of all humanity, it is only fair that she receives the final analysis of the epic's profound debate over the question of human freedom.

5. Eve and Free Will in *Paradise Lost*

If Satan has proven the most fertile ground for the academic discussion surrounding *Paradise Lost*, Eve always follows closely behind him as the epic's most controversial and fascinating character. Her unique role as the first human being to defy God's commandment has prompted extensive criticism regarding the part she plays in human history, and whether her choice to consume the forbidden fruit was a true fault of her own, or an act of naïve innocence, undeserving of blame. Considering both her place in the original Genesis narrative and *Paradise Lost*, Eve becomes the subtlest yet most important wielder of free will in the story of the Fall, for the crucial turning point of her story marks the most vital event in all of human history, and places her in a special category meriting her own analysis.

Milton, in his interpretation of Eve, adds considerable detail to her story, going beyond the Genesis narrative to establish her as a more complex character, fraught with hints of independence and rebellion from her beginning. While Adam's character is also expanded in the epic, his personality is largely in keeping with the simple, mythical characteristics of his Genesis counterpart. Eve, however, is made entirely more complex through Milton's inclusion of the story of her awakening in Book IV. This tale, related by Eve to Adam, begins with Eve's first awakening in the Garden of Eden, which she describes as:

> That day I oft remember, when from sleep
> I first awak't, and found my self repos'd
> Under a shade on flowrs, much wondring where
> And what I was, whence thither brought, and how.
> Not distant far from thence a murmuring sound
> Of waters issu'd from a Cave and spread

> Into a liquid Plain, then stood unmov'd
>
> Pure as th' expanse of Heav'n; I thither went
>
> With unexperienc't thought, and laid me down
>
> On the green bank, to look into the cleer
>
> Smooth Lake, that to me seemd another Skie.
>
> As I bent down to look, just opposite,
>
> A Shape within the watry gleam appeerd
>
> Bending to look on me, I started back,
>
> It started back, but pleas'd I soon returnd,
>
> Pleas'd it returnd as soon with answering looks
>
> Of sympathie and love; there I had fixt
>
> Mine eyes till now, and pin'd with vain desire,
>
> Had not a voice thus warnd me, What thou seest,
>
> What there thou seest fair Creature is thy self,
>
> With thee it came and goes: but follow me,
>
> And I will bring thee where no shadow staies
>
> Thy coming, and thy soft imbraces, hee
>
> Whose image thou art, him thou shall enjoy
>
> Inseparablie thine, to him shalt bear
>
> Multitudes like thy self, and thence be call'd
>
> Mother of human Race: (*PL* IV 449-475)

Eve's first awakening and encounter with her reflection has fascinated many critics, many of whom interpret her longing look at her own self as a precursor of the vanity which will drive her

ultimate sin in Book IX. The passage also clearly alludes to the Greek myth of Narcissus, a beautiful young hunter who becomes so enamored of his own reflection that he stares at it longingly until he dies (*vide* Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III, 337ff.). It is clear that Milton wishes his readers to make this connection between Narcissus and Eve, to highlight the fact that her chief sin in disobeying God is vanity, a love of herself that motivates her decision to eat the forbidden fruit in order to gain wisdom and knowledge. However, Eve's tale presents an equally fascinating interpretation as her first instance of free choice in the epic. Eve specifically states that "there I had fixt / Mine eyes till now, and pin'd with vain desire, / Had not a voice thus warnd me," directly implying that, had the voice of God (Who is the one directing her in this scene) not called to her in that moment, she would have freely chosen to remain at the pool, gazing at herself for days on end, and perhaps interminably.

This same desire of Eve's is reflected later in her story, when, upon first meeting Adam, she recalls that he appears:

> …fair indeed and tall,
> Under a Platan, yet methought less fair,
> Less winning soft, less amiablie mild,
> Then that smooth watry image; back I turnd,
> Thou following cryd'st aloud, Return faire *Eve*,
> Whom fli'st thou? whom thou fli'st, of him thou art,
> His flesh, his bone; to give thee being I lent
> Out of my side to thee, neerest my heart
> Substantial Life, to have thee by my side
> Henceforth an individual solace dear;

> Part of my Soul I seek thee, and thee claim
>
> My other half: with that thy gentle hand
>
> Seis'd mine, I yeilded, and from that time see
>
> How beauty is excelld by manly grace
>
> And wisdom, which alone is truly fair. (*PL* IV 477-491)

Though Adam appears attractive to her, Eve is far more captivated by her own image, and before Adam calls after her, she briefly turns back, intending to return to the pool where she can behold herself for eternity. Eve receives in this short tale, the story of her first moments of life, three choices, and her responses to them are fascinating both from the perspective of the original Genesis narrative and through an examination of free will.

While Eve's decision to turn away from Adam and return to her own image clearly foreshadows her sin in Book IX, it also marks one of the first instances of her free choice in the epic. In a short span, Eve chooses to gaze at her own reflection, then to follow God's voice—a choice which is aptly described as almost involuntary, for after God calls upon her, Eve remarks, "what could I doe, / But follow strait, invisibly thus led" (*PL* IV 475-476)?—and finally, upon seeing Adam, to reject him, and choose to return to her own image. Eve's first three free choices amount to a vain loving of herself, a divinely compelled choice to follow God, and a rejection of that which God desires for her. Milton, knowing full well the way in which free will can influence the human person, deliberately introduces Eve as a woman with an unformed will, one which tends easily towards the most superficially appealing path. Some criticisms of Milton's portrayal here have asserted that Eve is an unflattering representation of womanhood, a sign of Milton's excessive and misogynistic desire to blame her for the Fall, as she has often been blamed in the Genesis story. However, putting aside the question of what role Eve's gender

plays in her actions, it seems narratively apt that Eve, the first human to sin in *Paradise Lost*, is presented as infirm in her free will from the beginning.

In a telling way, Eve mirrors Augustine's interpretation of free will—cited previously on pages 6 and 7—being depicted as a force which draws humans away from God only after they are called by Him. As mentioned on page 6, Augustine cites Jesus' words in John 15:22, "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin; but as it is they have no excuse for their sin." Eve, like the proverbial humans in Christ's statement, has no sin before God calls to her, but immediately after He does, she chooses to turn away from what He offers her in the form of Adam. Similarly, Augustine's citation of James 1:13-15 recalls that humans are "lured and enticed by [their] own desire," and it is Eve's lust for herself which draws her away from Adam when God presents him to her. Milton clearly chooses to depict Eve as a representation of the weakness of the human will, whereas Adam might be interpreted as a representation of Eve's conscience. Adam, as analyzed previously, is the only one instructed in the history of creation and the purpose of life by Raphael, and it is he who warns Eve against departing from him in Book IX. Adam acts as Eve's conscience in this scene, availing her of the warnings he was given by Raphael in an attempt to soothe her natural lust for independence. Eve, however, responds as the human will often does, arrogantly ignoring her conscience with the confidence only a person who is self-obsessed can display.

Eve's arrogance emerges when Adam warns her of the danger Satan poses in Book IX, and she, taking offense at his implications, states:

> …that thou shouldst my firmness therfore doubt
>
> To God or thee, because we have a foe
>
> May tempt it, I expected not to hear.

> His violence thou fearst not, being such,
>
> As wee, not capable of death or pain,
>
> Can either not receave, or can repell.
>
> His fraud is then thy fear, which plain inferrs
>
> Thy equal fear that my firm Faith and Love
>
> Can by his fraud be shak'n or seduc't;
>
> Thoughts, which how found they harbour in thy brest,
>
> *Adam*, misthought of her to thee so dear? (*PL* IX 279-289)

In this passage, Eve subtly—and cleverly, on Milton's part—speaks with an almost Satanic rhetoric, employing such tactics as diminishing Adam's fear of their enemy ("His violence thou fearst not, being such, /As wee, not capable of death or pain") and questioning Adam's faith in her ("*Adam*, misthought of her to thee so dear?"), strategies which mirror Satan's own language of diminishment and questioning later in Book IX ("…or will God incense his ire / For such a petty Trespass" and "whatever thing Death be"). It is important to note that, at this point in the poem, Eve has already been exposed to Satan unknowingly, as the fallen angel—having snuck into Adam and Eve's bower in Book IV—spoke to Eve in her dreams, implanting within her his own thoughts and rebelliousness before being discovered and banished by a squadron of angels led by the archangel Gabriel. Eve, thus, has already been infected with Satan's rhetoric when she confronts Adam in Book IX, and her suspicion and hostility towards him in the passage above reflects that, as does her desire to mollify his fears. She cunningly twists Adam's words to assert that—since he cannot naturally fear Satan's violence against them, as they are untouchable—he must therefore fear that she can be beguiled by his "fraud," the artifice of his

rhetoric. Thus, Eve infers that Adam does not trust her, and shames him—her conscience—into accepting her confidence in herself as a reason for permitting her to face temptation in solitude.

Adam attempts one more assay against Eve's logic by replying that he does not think her incapable of resisting Satan, but only that he wishes to keep her from being tempted *at all*, as Satan would not attack them together, an argument to which Eve replies with equal cunning, asking:

> If this be our condition, thus to dwell
> In narrow circuit strait'n'd by a Foe,
> Suttle or violent, we not endu'd
> Single with like defence, wherever met,
> How are we happie, still in fear of harm?
> But harm precedes not sin: onely our Foe
> Tempting affronts us with his foul esteem
> Of our integritie: his foul esteem
> Sticks no dishonor on our Front, but turns
> Foul on himself; then wherfore shund or feard
> By us? who rather double honour gain
> From his surmise prov'd false, find peace within,
> Favour from Heav'n, our witness from th' event.
> And what is Faith, Love, Vertue unassaid
> Alone, without exterior help sustaind?
> Let us not then suspect our happie State
> Left so imperfet by the Maker wise,

As not secure to single or combin'd.

Frail is our happiness, if this be so,

And *Eden* were no *Eden* thus expos'd. (*PL* IX 322-341)

Eve's rhetoric excels in this passage, and perhaps even approaches what Christian theology might call a "near occasion of sin," where one comes close to erring by deliberately exposing oneself to temptation. Indeed, this very exposure is what Eve advocates for in this passage, for she asks "How are we happie, still in fear of harm?" Eve believes that true happiness and true obedience to God lies in the intentional weathering of temptation ("what is Faith, Love, Vertue unassaid / Alone, without exterior help sustaind?"), and that God did not intend humanity to avoid temptation, but to embrace it in order to achieve strength. Eve's rhetoric is convincing, but it errs greatly, because it assumes that God desires human beings to seek out opportunities to sin in order to overcome them, rather than to simply avoid temptation when it approaches uninvited. Eve, unlike Adam, intends to deliberately imperil her own free will, to test its independence and prove her own power over it, but in doing so, she only opens herself up to the persuasive rhetoric Satan will employ against her.

When Satan finally *does* tempt Eve in the form of the serpent, his rhetoric not only appeals to Eve's frail free will, but reflects her own arguments in the passage above, most clearly when he states:

…or will God incense his ire

For such a petty Trespass, and not praise

Rather your dauntless vertue, whom the pain

Of Death denounc't, whatever thing Death be,

Deterrd not from atchieving what might lead

To happier life, knowledge of Good and Evil;

Of good, how just? of evil, if what is evil

Be real, why not known, since easier shunnd? (*PL* IX 692-699)

This passage, which I have already analyzed in the context of Adam on pages 88 and 89, reflects Eve's exact argument for deliberately exposing her free will to temptation, asserting that God will praise her "dauntless virtue" in eating the fruit, displaying her own power of choice. Despite Eve's own confidence in her mastery of freedom, Satan uses her own logic against her in order to persuade her to violate God's commandment.

Eve falls easily to this perversion of her own argument, eating of the forbidden fruit, and afterwards, she justifies her decision much in the same way that Satan does, by appealing not to her own judgment—the conscience Adam supplied to her—but to her own confidence, which she deemed wiser in her choice. She states:

…Experience, next to thee I owe,

Best guide; not following thee, I had remaind

In ignorance, thou op'nst Wisdoms way,

And giv'st access, though secret she retire.

And I perhaps am secret; Heav'n is high,

High and remote to see from thence distinct

Each thing on Earth; and other care perhaps

May have diverted from continual watch

Our great Forbidder, safe with all his Spies (*PL* IX 807-815)

Eve values her experience over all else, for it was her own judgment and observation—uncolored by Adam's warning and Raphael's instruction—that opened "Wisdoms way" for her. Eve, in her

fallen state, does not immediately feel guilt for her actions, but rather extols the erring logic that caused her to sin, implying that her own freedom led her to a better choice than the path which God—whom she now, very Satanically, refers to as "Our great Forbidder"—had set forth for her.

It is at this point, flushed with her own arrogance and misunderstanding of what she has done, that Eve finally considers the consequences of her actions, and her free will, now perverted, chooses to involve Adam in her sin. She asks herself:

> …But to *Adam* in what sort
> Shall I appeer? shall I to him make known
> As yet my change, and give him to partake
> Full happiness with mee, or rather not,
> But keep the odds of Knowledge in my power
> Without Copartner? so to add what wants
> In Femal Sex, the more to draw his Love,
> And render me more equal, and perhaps,
> A thing not undesireable, somtime
> Superior; for inferior who is free?
> This may be well: but what if God have seen
> And Death ensue? then I shall be no more,
> And *Adam* wedded to another *Eve*,
> Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct;
> A death to think. Confirm'd then I resolve,
> *Adam* shall share with me in bliss or woe:

So dear I love him, that with him all deaths

I could endure, without him live no life. (*PL* IX 816-833)

Eve first debates whether or not she should tell Adam of her sin, concluding that, if she does not, she might have the power to "draw his Love, / And render me more equal, and perhaps, / A thing not undesireable." Such power, she argues, would allow her to prove superior to Adam on occasion, for she now considers inferiority servitude, and thus not freedom, just as Satan and his fallen angels do. Then, she considers the possibly that, if left unfallen, Adam may be given a new wife to replace her, while she is left to die. Thus, she concludes that he, too, must fall with her, for "So dear I love him, that with him all deaths / I could endure, without him live no life." Such are the depths of Eve's delusions now, that she considers allowing Adam to sin and die an act of love. Her free will, once in her power, though it was unformed, is now just as enslaved as Satan's, incapable of choosing rightly, because it chooses selfishly. Rather than seeking what atonement she might be able to gain for herself, Eve determines that she must force Adam to sin alongside her, showing how her freedom has been corrupted, and can now serve only to choose a selfish, immoral option, as Luther and Calvin describe.

Eve's final transgression comes in her ultimate display of a perverted will, in which she turns Adam's own warning towards her against him, asking him after he blames her for their fall:

Or here th' attempt, thou couldst not have discernd

Fraud in the Serpent, speaking as he spake;

No ground of enmitie between us known,

Why hee should mean me ill, or seek to harm.

Was I t' have never parted from thy side?

As good have grown there still a liveless Rib.

Being as I am, why didst not thou the Head

Command me absolutely not to go,

Going into such danger as thou saidst?

Too facil then thou didst not much gainsay,

Nay, didst permit, approve, and fair dismiss.

Hadst thou bin firm and fixt in thy dissent,

Neither had I transgress'd, nor thou with mee. (*PL* IX 1149-1161)

Eve's total corruption here is evident, for she blames Adam for the very thing she previously argued against before leaving him, his seeming distrust in her. Eve's decimated freedom causes her to blame Adam's own weakness for not more firmly commanding her to stay by his side. In her blind rage, Eve takes Adam's own initial argument—the argument which *she* previously disputed—and adopts it as her own, childishly blaming Adam for trusting her when she herself demanded his trust not long ago. Milton deftly characterizes the fallen human being here, displaying the ways in which a free person can easily deny their own willpower once they have erred, and showing just how easily that freedom which we value can be twisted to serve our own egotistical defenses of our failures.

Eve's character is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating examples of free will in *Paradise Lost*, and Milton ensures that she is as complex as her role requires. Going beyond the simplistic woman of the Genesis narrative, Milton portrays in his epic an Eve who could be interpreted as lost from the very beginning, disillusioned in her understanding of free will and unwilling to look beyond herself for aid in resisting temptation. Eve's failure is perhaps the most human thing in *Paradise Lost*, and though we as readers can see her sin approaching long before it occurs, that which is most compelling about it is that Milton portrays it in such a subtle way.

Eve's rhetoric, paired with Satan's, presents a truly convincing argument for her actions, and though we know that what Eve chooses is wrong, it is the way in which she chooses that shows us just how fickle and weak our own wills can be.

5. Conclusion

The debate over free will in *Paradise Lost*, like the debate over free will itself, is one that cannot easily be resolved, even despite the consistency of Milton's Christian faith. As we have seen, the historical dialogue on the concept of human freedom has been contentious within Christianity itself, regardless of the myriad answers posed by faiths and philosophies outside the Christian tradition. While it is clear that he intends us to accept the reality of free will, Milton certainly does not provide us an easy answer to the question of how far freedom extends in *Paradise Lost*. While reading the epic, we continually ask ourselves whether Adam, Eve, Satan, and the other angelic characters truly have control over their choices. Does God's foreknowledge not make their decisions predetermined, and even if it does not, can mortal or fallen beings like Adam, Eve, and Satan actually choose goodness if their consciences are mutable or fallen? Milton draws his answers to these questions from many sources, as we have seen, but perhaps his most interesting and hopeful reflections on freedom occur at the end of *Paradise Lost*, in Book XII, when Adam and Eve are finally expelled from the Garden of Eden and forced to move into the fallen world beyond.

Prior to their departure from Eden, Milton has Adam and Eve pay host to the archangel Michael, the angelic warrior who fought and defeated Satan during the angelic war of Book VI. Michael guides Adam through a series of visions that show him the future of humanity, a future of warfare, violence, and fear. Presenting the entirety of the Old Testament narrative to Adam, Michael witnesses the human's despair at the evil that will unfold from the sin he and Eve have committed, but encourages him with the promise of the eventual redemption God will provide humanity through the death of the Son of God, a pivotal free choice made by the Son in Book III. Upon hearing the news of the Son's forthcoming sacrifice, Adam exclaims:

O goodness infinite, goodness immense!

That all this good of evil shall produce,

And evil turn to good; more wonderful

Then that which by creation first brought forth

Light out of darkness! full of doubt I stand,

Whether I should repent me now of sin

By mee done and occasiond, or rejoyce

Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring,

To God more glory, more good will to Men

From God, and over wrauth grace shall abound.

But say, if our deliverer up to Heav'n

Must reascend, what will betide the few

His faithful, left among th' unfaithful herd,

The enemies of truth; who then shall guide

His people, who defend? will they not deal

Wors with his followers then with him they dealt? (*PL* XII 469-484)

Adam's joy in this passage is well-founded, for it recognizes the great promise God gives to human beings in His deliverance of them through Christ, that "all this good of evil shall produce, / And evil turn to good; more wonderful / Then that which by creation first brought forth." Even though humanity chooses to sin through their free acts of disobedience, God turns their failings into joys and their faults into virtues, ensuring that "much more good thereof shall spring, / To God more glory, more good will to Men / From God." Ultimately, Milton decrees that free will, though it can sow terrible suffering, is a necessity, echoing the Christian concept of

the *felix culpa*, the "happy fall." Though Adam and Eve would have remained perfect without their sin, sin does not prevent them from attaining perfection. Indeed, sin could, in many ways, be argued to enhance the ultimate perfection humanity, where God saves His creations from the depths of iniquity and raises them to a height beyond their understanding.

To accomplish this elevation, Michael tells Adam that God will offer His creations vital assistance, a supplement to free will that exceeds and overpowers the frail and fickle comprehension of the human mind:

> …from Heav'n
> Hee to his own a Comforter will send,
> The promise of the Father, who shall dwell
> His Spirit within them, and the Law of Faith
> Working through love, upon thir hearts shall write,
> To guide them in all truth, and also arm
> With spiritual Armour, able to resist
> *Satans* assaults, and quench his fierie darts,
> What Man can do against them, not affraid,
> Though to the death, against such cruelties
> With inward consolations recompenc't,
> And oft supported so as shall amaze
> Thir proudest persecuters: (*PL* XII 485-497)

This "Comforter," the Holy Spirit, is the boon God offers to salve the frailty of the human will. Though Milton concurs with Luther, Calvin, and others on the ultimate insufficiency of our free will to choose goodness, it is here that he finds the solution. The Holy Spirit, freely offered by

God, will "[work] through love, upon thir hearts shall write, / To guide them in all truth, and also arm / With spiritual Armour." This armor, the "Armor of God" referenced in the Scriptures (Ephesians 6:10-18), is God's final blow to Satan, a shield to protect the human being from temptation and bolster their free will. Though it is, in the end, a matter of choices for the human person to accept this armor, Milton sees it not as a burden or a hindrance to freedom, but rather freedom's ultimate manifestation of itself in the human life.

Just so, when a human being chooses to accept the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the sacrifice of the Son of God, Michael claims, they "wilt…not be loath / To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess / A Paradise within [them], happier farr" (*PL* XII 585-587). With the power of freedom in their hands, alongside the assurance of God's providence and sacrifice, a human being will hold within their hearts a far greater joy and comfort than the inherent perfection of Eden. Freedom offers the human being a variety of choices, but none more accessible than the choice of salvation. Whether God can foresee the outcome of one's life, hope and progress is eternally in the human being's hands, waiting only to be grasped, and though forces such as Satan can successfully attempt to sway the will from God, the eternal goal of salvation is merely one choice away. This hopeful thought permeates the entirety of *Paradise Lost*, assuring Milton's readers that, though their hearts are fickle, there exists before them an easily attainable hope, one given to them by a loving and generous Creator, and which they must only *choose* to accept.

Works Cited

Achinstein, Sharon. *Literature and Dissent in Milton's England*. Cambridge UP, 2003.

Benjamin, Anna S. and L. H. Hackstaff, translators. *On Free Choice of the Will*. The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964.

Calvin, John. *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Translated by Henry Beveridge. Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2002.

Coward, Harold and Toby Foshay, editors. *Derrida and Negative Theology*. State University of New York Press, 1992.

Downame, John. *The Christian Warfare*. Walter J. Johnson, Inc., 1974.

Empson, William. *Milton's God*. Greenwood Press, Inc., 1961.

Fish, Stanley E. *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*. University of California Press, 1967.

Forsyth, Neil. *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth*. Princeton UP, 1987.

Lewalski, Barbara. *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography*. Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2000.

Lieb, Michael. "Milton and 'Arianism.'" *Religion & Literature*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2000, pp. 197–220. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40059873.

Loewenstein, David. *Representing Revolution in Milton and his Contemporaries: Religion, Politics, and Polemics in Radical Puritanism*. Cambridge UP, 2001. ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ric-ebooks/detail.action?docID=201432.

"Martin Luther's Speech at the Imperial Diet in Worms (18 April 1521)." San Jose State University. http://www.sjsu.edu/people/james.lindahl/courses/Hum1B/s3/Luther-Speech-Worms-1521.pdf.

Milton, John. *The Complete Poetry of John Milton*, edited by John T. Shawcross, Anchor Books, 1971.

Ovid, and A. D. Melville. *Metamorphoses*. OUP Oxford, 1998. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=363607&site=ehost-live.

Pilgrim. *The Savoy Declaration of 1658*, www.the-highway.com/savoy_declaration.html.

Shawcross, John T, editor. *Milton: The Critical Heritage*, vol. 1. Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1970.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. *Defence of Poetry*. Generic NL Freebook Publisher. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=2008589&site=ehost-live. Accessed 7 Apr. 2020.

"The Augsburg Confession." *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Lutheran Church*, http://bookofconcord.org/augsburgconfession.php.

The New American Bible. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002.

"The Thirty-Nine Articles." *Internet History Sourcebooks*, sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1571-39articles.asp.

Walzer, Michael. *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*. 1st ed., Harvard UP, 1965.

Winter, Ernst F., et al. *Erasmus-Luther Discourse on Free Will*. Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., Inc., 1961.