



The Incredible Story of the Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained

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Abstract— John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* are among the most profound epic poems in the English literary canon. *Paradise Lost* recounts the dramatic and compelling story of humanity's fall from grace a narrative filled with rebellion, betrayal, and the battle between innocence and corruption. This epic depicts an intense struggle between God and Satan for control over humanity's fate, spanning the realms of Heaven, Hell, and Earth. Central to this conflict are Adam and Eve, whose susceptibility to temptation lies at the heart of mankind's downfall, orchestrated by Satan and his band of rebel angels. Published in 1667, *Paradise Lost* vividly portrays Satan's defiance, his expulsion from Heaven, and his cunning role in leading Adam and Eve into sin, thereby causing their exile from Eden. Its sequel, *Paradise Regained* (1671), shifts focus to Christ's unwavering resolve during Satan's efforts to tempt Him in the wilderness. Where the former epic depicts humanity's fall through disobedience, the latter celebrates redemption by highlighting Christ's triumphant resistance. Together, the two works present a striking contrast while *Paradise Lost* illustrates the origin of sin; *Paradise Regained* reveals the victory over it through steadfast faith and moral fortitude in the face of temptations like lust, pride, and power. These epics aim to assert "Eternal Providence" and illuminate the divine purpose by justifying "the ways of God to men." In *Paradise Lost*, Milton narrates the descent of Satan and his followers into Hell's inferno, Satan's subsequent escape to Eden's untainted beauty, and his insidious manipulation of Eve, which ultimately leads to Adam's choice to share in her fate. Yet even amid humanity's tragic fall, there remains a promise of redemption. In *Paradise Regained*, Milton explores Satan's attempts to undermine Jesus' mission by tempting Him with worldly power, culminating in a greater triumph as Christ emerges victorious. Together, these epics celebrate the Son as a resplendent hero the ultimate conqueror over sin and death, who reconciles mankind with God. Read as a cohesive narrative, these masterpieces not only exalt the Son's glory but also provide profound reflections on faith, temptation, and salvation.



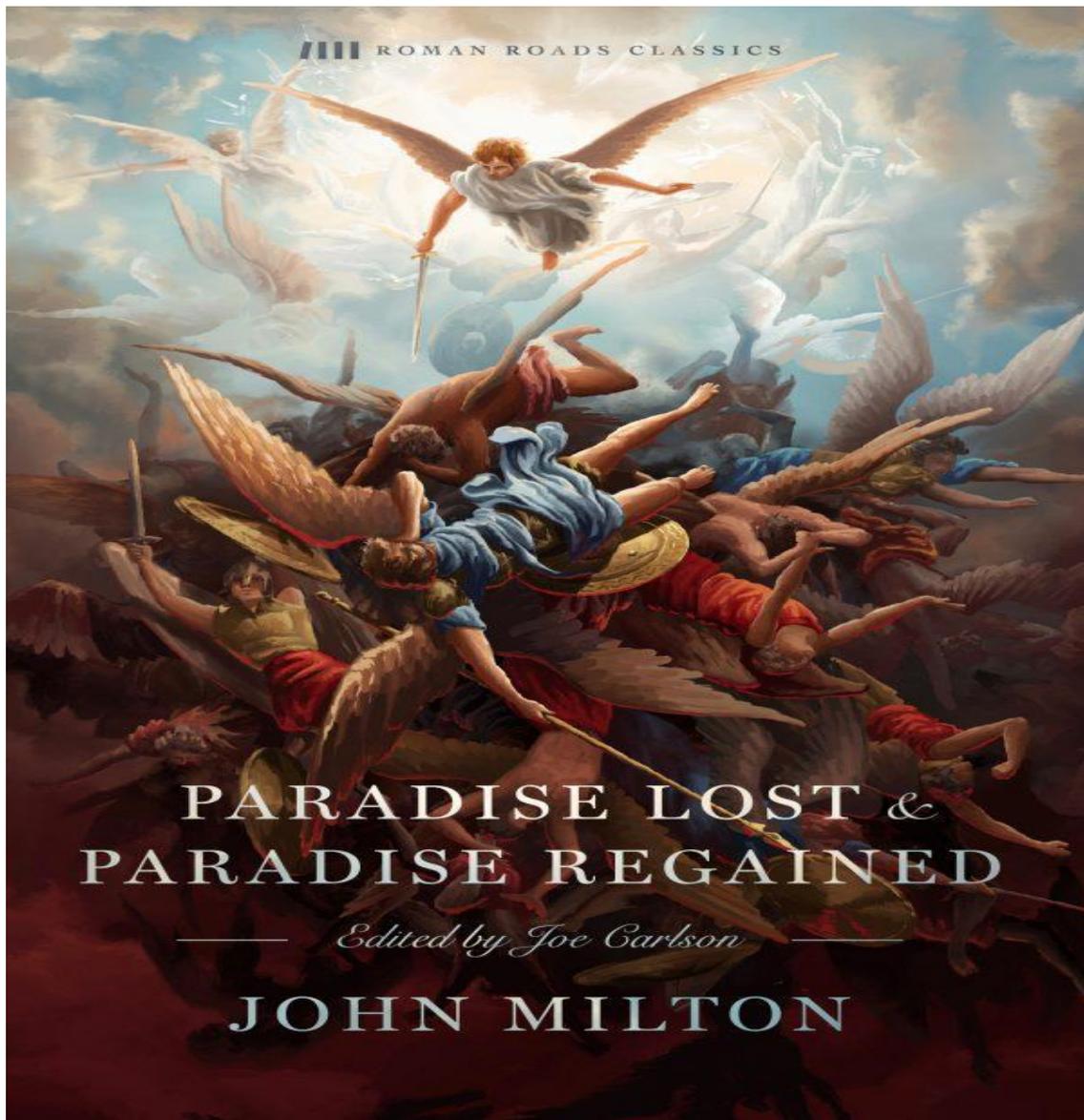
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"Paradise was made for tender hearts; hell, for loveless hearts".

Voltaire

"Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste Brought death into the World, and all our woe, With loss of Eden, till one greater Man Restore us, and regain the blissful seat".

John Milton



In the early eighteenth century, John Milton emerged as a cornerstone of English classicism. Before the Restoration, however, he was primarily regarded as a polemicist rather than a poet. The elements that aligned his work with classical tradition its authoritative tone, unrhymed verse, and intricate poetic diction stood apart from the prevailing notions of classicism at the time.

Paradise Lost, Milton's renowned epic, was completed by 1665, first published in 1667, and later revised for a second edition in 1674. The original edition, published as a quarto, comprised ten books. In the second octavo edition, the number of books expanded to twelve by dividing Books VII and X into Books VII-VIII and XI-XII, respectively. Over nearly four centuries, Paradise Lost has wielded profound influence over English literary criticism and poetry, a legacy that remains vibrant to this day. Through both Paradise Lost and its companion piece,

Paradise Regained, readers are introduced to Milton's distinctive approach to poetic artistry. Both epics are written in blank verse unrhymed iambic pentameter a metrical form popularized by William Shakespeare and widely regarded as capturing the natural rhythms of English speech. This meter consists of ten-syllable lines with alternating unstressed and stressed syllables arranged in five pairs. While Paradise Lost chronicles the fall of Lucifer and the subsequent expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, Paradise Regained shifts focus to the temptation of Christ, inspired by the Gospel of Luke.

Paradise Regained recounts Jesus' journey following his baptism by John the Baptist. During his forty-day fast in the desert, Satan tempts him repeatedly first targeting Jesus' physical hunger with food, then appealing to his pride, and finally tempting him with wealth and dominion over earthly kingdoms. These tests embody the

threefold temptations often described as lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Despite Satan's efforts to corrupt Jesus' body, heart, and mind, he steadfastly resists every temptation. Though both works are imbued with an epic character, *Paradise Regained* is markedly shorter than *Paradise Lost*, earning it the label of a "brief epic." Despite its conciseness, it incorporates many traditional elements of epic poetry: it begins in medias res, traverses vast symbolic terrain, and features divine interventions that shape human fate. It also utilizes familiar epic techniques such as epithets, extended speeches, and catalogues, while addressing universal themes through a central hero who embodies societal virtues.

Understanding the interplay between these two works is crucial to appreciating their individual significance. *Paradise Lost* employs an elevated style with elaborate poetic devices and an abundance of similes, reflecting its intricate exploration of humanity's fall from grace. In contrast, *Paradise Regained* adopts a simpler and more direct tone with fewer rhetorical flourishes, emphasizing moral and spiritual redemption as a counterbalance to the tragic themes of its predecessor. Together, these masterpieces form a rich dialogue of contrasts and reversals, showcasing Milton's profound literary achievements.

Literature Review: The scholarly discourse surrounding Milton's epics oscillates between interpreting them as expressions of poetic independence surpassing theological orthodoxy and viewing them as elaborate, imaginative interpretations of Scripture. Foundational analyses feature C.S. Lewis's argument that *Paradise Lost* exalts obedience within the framework of classical epic tradition; Stanley Fish's assertion that the poem implicates readers in Satan's persuasive rhetoric to educate them; Barbara K. Lewalski's exploration of Milton's Protestant poetics and biblical typology; John Carey's investigation of Milton's radicalism; and Alastair Fowler's editorial work on the sources and structures underlying the poems. Subsequent research has shifted focus to themes such as Eve's agency, the interplay of regicide and republican politics, and the reimagining of the epic form through the "brief epic," which emphasizes spiritual rather than martial triumph.

Methodology: This study employs close textual analysis and intersexual comparison, with primary texts including *Paradise Lost* (1674 edition containing twelve books), *Paradise Regained* (1671), and the Bible (King James Version). Occasional references to patristic and Reformation sources known to Milton are also incorporated. The analysis is structured around three key focal areas: (a) narrative parallels and divergences, (b) theological emphases such as free will, Christology, and

soteriology, and (c) poetic elements including meter, epic conventions, and rhetorical style. All citations adhere to APA 7th edition guidelines, with biblical references specified by book, chapter, and verse.

The central narrative of *Paradise Lost* recounts Satan's rebellion against God, his subsequent expulsion from Heaven alongside his fallen angels, and his temptation of Adam and Eve, leading to their fall from grace. Its companion piece, *Paradise Regained*, outlines Jesus' steadfast resistance to Satan's temptations in the wilderness, symbolizing humanity's spiritual triumph where Adam and Eve falter. *Paradise Lost* epitomizes the epic genre grand in scope, eloquent in language, emotionally resonant, and vividly descriptive, charting the fall of humanity from divine bliss to tragic loss. Milton's portrayal of Satan stands out as an extraordinarily nuanced character, among the most complex in literary history. As a fictional masterpiece, the work excels. Despite its epic form, Milton originally conceived his biblical narrative centered on Creation and the Fall as a tragedy. This intent is highlighted by Edward Phillips in his *Life* (1694), where he notes that certain lines from Book IV of *Paradise Lost* (ll.32–41) were initially penned years earlier as part of a planned dramatic tragedy.

During the eighteenth century, critical focus on *Paradise Lost* emphasized its theological underpinnings. The poem was revered as a cornerstone of orthodox Christian doctrine, attracting Anglicans, Dissenters, Roman Catholics, and Deists alike. In 1792, one critic asserted that *Paradise Lost* had done more to bolster orthodox belief "than all the books of divinity ever written." Eighteenth-century critics largely merged their admiration for Milton's artistic and theological merits without seeking to separate form from content. This approach shifted with Romantic-era critics who began examining Milton as a deliberate craftsman of language and narrative. While some critics such as Jeffrey, Gifford, Croker, and Lockhart offered limited commentary on Milton's artistry, figures like Coleridge, Hazlitt, and Keats drew attention to his technical excellence. It was within this period that Milton's literary identity underwent a transformation, with his characters Satan, Adam, Eve, and even his depiction of God becoming dynamic and multidimensional. The possibility of alternative outcomes to the plotline of *Paradise Lost* fascinated poets and novelists alike.

Satan emerged as an especially compelling figure during Romantic interpretations. Writers frequently grappled with his dual role as oppressor and tragic victim. Evil itself came to be viewed as a condition of profound psychological conflict whereby tyrants project their suffering outward to encompass others. *Paradise Lost* evolved into a rich psychological allegory reflecting

complex social, spiritual, and existential motivations that shape human identity and religious thought. The Milton of religious and political debate, and perhaps even of his personal life, is often marked by a lack of warmth and a sharpness in tone. In contrast, the Milton of poetry emerges as one of those rare, great figures known for their humility. To many, Milton was revered almost as a saint, with his poems cherished and preserved as if offering a glimpse into an eternal life. Elizabeth Barrett Browning expressed immense awe, feeling nearly overwhelmed to the point of wanting to "run her head against the wall" upon encountering the first edition of *Paradise Lost* adorned with Milton's signature and seal.

In *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* though more liberally in the latter, which shows his artistic progression Milton makes use of counterpoint throughout. However, in *Samson Agonists*, particularly within the choruses, the application of counterpoint is, in my view, entirely pervasive. Here, each line is constructed with two distinct yet coexisting rhythmic measures.

SECTION – I

Paradise Lost

Book I: The narrative delves into the Fall of Man, tracing the roots of humanity's disobedience toward God to Satan's relentless quest for vengeance following his banishment from Heaven. The story begins with Satan and his fallen angels lying in torment upon the fiery lake of Hell. Rising from this despair, Satan rallies his followers, organizes them into an army, and informs them of a newly created world hidden in the shadows of Chaos. He then convenes a council and constructs the grand Palace of Pandemonium as their base of operations. The poem opens with John Milton, the author, invoking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, referred to as the "Heavenly Muse," to inspire his work. He seeks to "assert Eternal Providence and justify the ways of God to men." After establishing this purpose, Milton embarks on the telling of his epic tale.

True to classical tradition, *Paradise Lost* begins in medias res plunging readers into the middle of the action. The opening unfolds with Satan and his defeated army of rebel angels lying unconscious in the searing expanse of Hell, overwhelmed by the divine might that cast them out of Heaven. Gradually regaining consciousness, Satan stirs his followers, and they mourn their downfall and the grim reality of their new existence. Refusing to submit, however, they resolve to make the best of their internal exile. As Satan proclaims, "The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven." Milton proceeds to name several prominent rebels: Moloch, Astarte, Thammuz, Baal, Osiris, Isis, and others. These identities are

deliberate; Milton aligns these figures with humanity's historical gods, portraying them as devils deceiving humankind. Rallying his enormous legions with a rousing speech, Satan commands the rapid construction of a massive palace, Pandemonium, where they gather to plot their next moves. This initial section also offers Milton's interpretation of divine providence. He asserts that God permitted Satan's rebellion to unfold, explaining that otherwise, Satan would have been unable to rise again from his defeat upon the burning lake.

"...but that the will And high permission of all-ruling Heaven Left him at large to his own dark designs, That with reiterated crimes he might Heap on himself damnation, while he sought Evil to others, and enraged might see How all his malice served but to bring forth Infinite goodness, grace, and mercy, shewn On Man by him seduced, but on himself Treble confusion, wrath, and vengeance poured."

The explanation offered for the existence of evil remains deeply unsatisfactory. Firstly, in the Christian framework, Satan was already condemned to Hell there exists no greater punishment within this system. Allowing him the freedom to continue his malevolent deeds does nothing to intensify his suffering. Secondly, if this was part of God's divine plan, then by Christianity's own account, it failed catastrophically. Rather than merely serving as a means to display goodness and mercy, Satan's actions produced vast and unfathomable suffering across the world, leading to countless innocents perishing and, ultimately, the majority of humanity being condemned to Hell for eternity. If Satan was already doomed, what purpose does it serve to permit him to drag so many others into damnation alongside him?

Book II: Within Hell, Satan and his followers deliberate whether to resume their rebellion against Heaven. A council in Pandemonium concludes that repentance is not an option, and therefore their struggle must continue. Various schemes are proposed but discarded, until Satan himself suggests targeting Earth, the newly created realm prophesied in Heaven. By either corrupting or destroying humanity, they might strike a meaningful blow against God. Though the hazardous nature of the mission causes hesitation among his allies, Satan, as their leader, volunteers for the task, earning widespread admiration from his cohorts.

Satan ventures to the fortified gates of Hell, guarded by Sin a grotesque half-woman, half-serpent who perpetually births hellhounds that tear her apart and Death, a formidable shadow carrying a spear. When confronted by Death and ordered to return to punishment, Satan boldly rejects the command. Before violence ensues, Sin intervenes and reveals her identity as Satan's daughter, born

of his rebellion, with Death as her offspring. Both were cast out along with the rebel angels, and though God instructed her to guard Hell's gates, Sin feels no loyalty toward him. She pledges allegiance instead to Satan, who promises rewards if she opens the way to Earth. She complies, unlocking the gates and granting access to Chaos beyond. Navigating the chaotic void, Satan eventually glimpses Heaven's radiant walls and Earth suspended below, connected by a golden chain. Fuelled by vengeance and malice, he flies toward his target.

This sequence exacerbates the inadequacies of the theological justification for evil. As highlighted elsewhere, if God intended Hell as eternal punishment for the rebel angels, why was no measure taken to ensure they remained confined? Making Sin the offspring of rebellion a gatekeeper effectively allowed the prisoners to operate at will outside their prescribed torment. Even more perplexing is that after Satan's departure from Hell, Sin and Death follow and establish a pathway through Chaos that permanently connects Hell to the Earth. This "bridge" facilitates easy transit between realms for the purpose of corrupting and punishing mortals "except whom God and good Angels guard by special grace." The troubling implication is that this deity actively enabled such an outcome. If God could easily have secured Hell and prevented such chaos but chose not to, how can this being be called good? Rather than thwarting Satan's schemes or preventing harm outright, this theology suggests that God not only permitted evil but ensured its efficient proliferation.

Christians may point to "special grace" as evidence of divine goodness arguing that some individuals are protected from harm but this raises further contradictions. If grace cannot be earned and is entirely at God's discretion, why is such protection limited? Shouldn't omnipotent goodness demand universal safeguarding from atrocities it unleashed or enabled? Praising a selective grace seems as illogical as commending a law enforcement officer who deliberately releases dangerous criminals yet decides to shield a chosen few from their rampage. If such selective intervention is considered praiseworthy, it ignores the underlying culpability for creating the situation in the first place.

Book III: God observes Satan's journey and predicts the forthcoming Fall of Man, foreseeing humanity's succumbing to temptation and the consequent divine punishment. He acknowledges the Son of God's self-offering as a ransom for humanity, setting the incarnation in motion for a future time. Meanwhile, Satan reaches the universe's edge, navigating through the Limbo of Vanity and arriving at Heaven's Gate. Here, he disguises himself to

deceive Uriel, Guardian of the Sun, and gains knowledge about Earth and humanity.

At this point in Milton's narrative, the logical inconsistencies in his theological defence become evident. The chapter opens within Heaven, where God observes Satan's approach to Earth and attempts to rationalize why humanity's fall which He knows will happen and does nothing to prevent is not ultimately His responsibility. God even absolves Himself of responsibility for Satan's escape from Hell, claiming, "whom no bounds; Prescribed, no bars of Hell, nor all the chains; Heaped on him there, nor yet the main Abyss; Wide interrupt, can hold." However, Satan's escape was only possible because God allowed it. Similarly, God foretells humanity's fall and attributes their failure to their own choices, declaring that Adam and Eve had enough strength to resist but chose to give in: "Whose fault?; Whose but his own? Ingrate, he had of me; All he could have; I made him just and right, Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall." This reasoning falters under scrutiny. For an omniscient deity, suggesting that Adam and Eve "could have" acted differently is paradoxical a being with perfect foresight would know their eventual choice and must have created circumstances ensuring such an outcome. To argue that they possessed sufficient traits to resist temptation contradicts the reality of their failure. Similar to a collapsing bridge deemed "strong enough" to withstand wind but nonetheless failing in a storm, it makes no sense to claim resistance when failure has already occurred. The event itself negates the supposed adequacy of resistance.

God further argues that free will underpins the fall of humanity and the rebellious angels. He asserts that creating beings with predetermined obedience would render their love and loyalty meaningless: "Not free, what proof could they have given sincere; Of true allegiance, constant faith, or love, Where only what they needs must do appeared, Not what they would? What praise could they receive, What pleasure I, from such obedience paid." Yet this justification struggles under its own weight. If God is omnipotent, there is no reason why He couldn't have created beings who possessed free will yet consistently chose good without rebellion an ideal state Milton himself envisions for Heaven. Even Jesus, as a human with free will during His time on Earth, chose not to sin. What higher attributes did He possess that humanity lacks? Milton also omits numerous biblical references that emphasize salvation through predestination rather than free will.

In response to this reasoning, God the Son the second person of the Trinity objects to humanity being abandoned due to their inevitable failure: "That far be from thee, Father, who art judge; Of all things made, and judges only right!" God reassures Him that salvation will be

available to those who seek it, framing dependence on Him as essential: "...that he may know how frail; His fallen condition is, and to me owe; All his deliverance, and to none but me." Yet in a seemingly contradictory statement, God further explains that He has selected specific individuals for salvation by grace alone: "Some I have chosen of peculiar grace, Elect above the rest; so is my will." Despite this apparent inconsistency regarding free will and predestination, God declares that humanity's sin justly warrants death as punishment. The Son volunteers to pay the penalty on behalf of humankind. This act elicits widespread praise from the heavenly choir. Importantly, God distinguishes human sin from angelic rebellion; while man yielded to temptation and can be redeemed, Satan and his followers fell entirely by choice and will receive no mercy.

Meanwhile, Satan's journey continues as he nears Earth. He traverses a realm dubbed the Limbo of Vanity a sphere near the Moon inhabited by those committed to empty pursuits. This realm acts surprisingly as neither Heaven nor Hell. Milton even speculates that saints or spirits may dwell on the Moon itself: "Translated Saints, or middle Spirits...Betwixt the angelical and human kind." Using this otherworldly plane as a platform for critique, Milton delivers a scathing commentary on the Catholic priesthood. Satan descends upon the Sun, which Milton envisioned as a world much like Earth, yet radiating with unparalleled brilliance, as one might imagine. There, he encounters Uriel, the Archangel who serves as the Sun's guardian. Disguising himself as a lesser angel, Satan feigns curiosity about God's newest creation and asks for guidance to observe the beings known as humans. Uriel obliges and points the way, leading Satan to journey down to Earth, where he ultimately lands atop Mt. Niphates a peak that later, in *Paradise Regained*, becomes the very mountain from which Satan shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world.

Book IV: Satan descends to Earth, discovering the Garden of Eden, where he observes Adam and Eve. Fixated on corrupting them, he decides to direct his efforts toward the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. During the night, Gabriel finds him near Eve's resting place, attempting to tempt her through a dream. He is promptly cast out. Later, perched on the summit of Mount Niphates, Satan grapples with deep internal conflict. He feels doubt about his purpose, despair over his fall from grace, and grief as he comes to terms with the magnitude of his loss and the inevitability of his eternal suffering. Milton emphasizes an important concept here: Hell is not merely a physical location but something Satan now carries within himself a torment inseparable from his being. While this internalized suffering could suggest a reason why God allowed him to

escape Hell for his own reckoning, it fails to justify why God permitted him to extend his destructive influence to others. Despite this fleeting introspection, Satan ultimately doubles down on his resolve and accepts his fate with chilling determination, proclaiming that all good is now lost to him and that evil will be his sole pursuit.

Making his way into the Garden of Eden a lush paradise of cedar, pine, fir, and palm trees enclosed by a tall wall Satan effortlessly scales the barrier, leading one to question its purpose as a form of protection. Once inside, he alights upon the Tree of Life, surveying the exquisite beauty of the garden and noticing its first inhabitants. Adam and Eve are described as majestic and godlike, yet from the outset, it is made abundantly clear that they are not equals. According to Milton's narrative, Eve is depicted as Adam's inferior, created for submission: "He for God only, she for God in him." This unmistakable bias forms a recurring theme throughout the work, underscoring a blatant thread of sexism. Eavesdropping on their conversation, Satan learns that although Adam and Eve seemingly live in perfect happiness, they are bound by one divine command to abstain from eating the fruit of a specific tree in Paradise. His reaction to this discovery is particularly noteworthy:

*"From their own mouths; all is not theirs it seems: One fatal Tree there stands of Knowledge call'd, Forbidden them to taste: Knowledge forbidden? Suspicious, reasonless. Why should their Lord Envy them that? can it be sin to know, Can it be death? and do they only stand By Ignorance, is that their happy state, The proof of their obedience and their faith?
O fair foundation laid whereon to build Their ruin! Hence I will excite their minds
With more desire to know, and to reject Envious commands, invented with design
To keep them low whom knowledge might exalt..."*

This passage highlights the anti-intellectual tendencies embedded within the framework of Milton's interpretation of Christianity. The symbolism is clear: doubt, intellectual curiosity, and the pursuit of knowledge are embodied by a figure portrayed as the essence of evil. It suggests that what God values is ignorance and unquestioning submission. As a humanist, I find this perspective deeply troubling and wholly reject it. The pursuit of understanding and knowledge about the world is inherently virtuous, not malevolent. A faith that is genuine will endure scrutiny and critical thought; only those advocating for a flawed or deceptive belief system would fear inquiry. It is the champions of lies and manipulation who promote passive compliance while threatening dissenters with eternal damnation if they refuse to accept doctrine without question. This kind of anti-intellectualism

has been a catalyst for immense suffering and wrongdoing throughout history. Ironically, it is Satan's argument that appears more rational, though Milton cunningly attempts to dissuade readers from acknowledging its validity. Instead, he pre-emptively biases audiences against Satan by portraying him as unequivocally evil, rendering his words unacceptable regardless of their logic or coherence.

As the story continues, Uriel, realizing he has been deceived, hurriedly informs Gabriel, another archangel, to remain vigilant against malevolent intrusions. In Paradise, evening falls as Adam and Eve conclude their labor in the garden. In a scene laden with overtly patriarchal overtones, Eve defers to Adam with unsettling submission: "My Author and Disposer, what thou bidst; Unargu'd I obey; so God ordains, God is thy Law, thou mine: to know no more; Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise." After praying together, the pair withdraws to their bower for rest. Shortly thereafter, a group of angels on patrol discovers Satan in Paradise, transformed into the shape of a toad. They find him whispering into Eve's ear and apprehend him, presenting him to Gabriel. Despite his capture, Satan remains unyielding and even defiant, remarking with pointed irony that God should "surer bar; His Iron Gates" if He hopes to contain them in their prison of darkness. The encounter teeters on the brink of violence, but divine decree forbids such conflict in Paradise, forcing Satan to retreat once again.

Book V: Eve awakens, unsettled by a troubling dream, and finds solace in Adam's comforting presence. Her dream, the first of its kind, was filled with strange and disconcerting imagery about consuming the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge. Despite her unease, they come together to sing their morning hymn of praise to God. However, one might question the sincerity of their devotion, considering their plea for divine provision of only "good" seems to have been left unanswered.

Meanwhile, in Heaven, God observes the unfolding events with concern. He wishes to avoid appearing culpable if Satan succeeds in tempting humankind. To this end, God sends the angel Raphael to warn Adam and Eve about their adversary and to reiterate the importance of obedience. Raphael dutifully descends to Earth without hesitation a descent described in a passage that reflects the era in which Milton wrote. Here, the angel's extraordinary eyesight is contrasted with Galileo's telescope, which "observes imagined lands and regions in the Moon" with less certainty than Raphael's divine clarity. Upon reaching Eden, Raphael is warmly welcomed by Adam and Eve. Taking a seat among them, he begins to recount the events that led to Satan's fall from grace. According to Raphael's story, Satan had once been among

Heaven's most powerful angels but was consumed by jealousy when God appointed His Son as regent and commanded all angels to bow before Him. Refusing to submit, Satan rallied a third of the heavenly host with a fiery speech urging them to "cast off this yoke" and join his rebellion. However, one angel, the seraph Abdiel, rejected the treachery and returned to God's side a decisive act of loyalty that closes this part of Raphael's tale.

One notable aspect of Raphael's discourse is his insistence on the value of voluntary devotion, asserting that God accepts only service freely given. He states that coerced hearts cannot truly prove their willingness to serve, as obedience born of necessity or destiny undermines genuine choice. This assertion invites questions, however. If true voluntary service is paramount, why does God demand unwavering obedience under the looming threat of eternal damnation? Isn't such servitude essentially coerced? Moreover, as an omnipotent creator, did God not foresee and ultimately intend how men and angels would behave? These philosophical dilemmas echo broader questions raised in discussions like "Divine Blackmail," which critiques the seeming paradox between free will and divine omniscience intertwined with punishment.

Book VI: Raphael carries on with his narration, detailing the celestial war and the eventual defeat of Satan and his followers. The segment where the Son launches his decisive assault on the rebels forms both the literal and thematic crux of the poem, as humanity's impending downfall becomes an indirect consequence of these events. The story delves into the aftermath of Satan's rebellion. In response, God commands His armies to confront the insurgent angels, and the two factions engage in a fierce battle. Angels, it turns out, can sustain injuries much like humans, though their wounds heal almost instantaneously due to their ethereal nature. Strengthened by God's will, the loyal angels dominate on the first day, easily overpowering and driving back their foes.

As night descends, Satan regroups his forces and devises a fresh strategy. Under his guidance, they labour through the night, extracting minerals and ore from Heaven's soil to craft new weapons. With dawn comes the unveiling of this sinister innovation: cannon batteries that catch the loyal angels off guard, inflicting devastating damage with fiery barrages. But their momentary triumph is short-lived. The loyal angels recover swiftly, retaliating by uprooting entire mountains and hurling them down upon the rebels, crushing them along with their weapons. Day two ends as another victory for God's army. By the third day, God decides there is no merit in allowing the conflict to continue endlessly. (One might wonder why this conclusion wasn't reached sooner.) He commissions His

Son to end the battle single-handedly. The Son enters the fray with unmatched might, utterly obliterates the rebel forces, and casts them down from Heaven into a deep abyss. Concluding his account, Raphael warns Adam that this very same Satan now roams within Paradise. He cautions Adam against placing trust in anything Satan might say, offering a final note of forewarning as humanity's trial begins.

Book VII: The Archangel conveys to Adam that, following Satan's defeat, God chose to initiate the creation of a new world where humanity could aspire to Heaven. To accomplish this, He sent His Son to complete the task over the course of six days. Eager to deepen his understanding, Adam asks Raphael to share the story of creation so he might praise God through this knowledge. Raphael agrees, but with caution, advising Adam that seeking too much knowledge can lead to harm. Knowledge, he explains, is like food it requires moderation, for indulging beyond limits can overwhelm the mind and turn wisdom into folly. The angel then recounts how, after Satan's fall, God resolved to compensate for the loss of numbers by creating a new world and a new race. Curiously, instead of forming them in Heaven directly, God decided they would begin outside Heaven and work their way upward through obedience and merit. In doing so, the eventual union of Earth and Heaven would create a harmonious, everlasting Kingdom of joy. However, the narrative sidesteps any mention of the inevitable reality that many from this new race would be lost and condemned.

The Son, acting as the agent of creation, ventures into Chaos to execute His task. Milton then weaves his interpretation of the biblical Genesis story, particularly aiming to reconcile the two accounts found in Genesis 1 and 2. His retelling aligns more closely with Genesis 1, depicting plants being created on the third day, birds and sea creatures on the fifth, and humanity on the sixth. This contrasts with Genesis 2, where man's creation precedes that of other living things.

Book VIII: Adam, seeking understanding of the heavens, is guided by Raphael to first focus on the knowledge of his immediate world. When Adam shifts the conversation to Eve and the deep passion she ignites in him, the Archangel cautions him to balance his earthly love with his higher spiritual inclinations, warning against letting his devotion to Eve cloud his judgment. Following this exchange, Raphael prepares to leave.

Still eager for enlightenment and wishing to extend the angel's company, Adam poses a cosmic question: why would God create countless stars in an immense universe seemingly to revolve around the Earth, a small and seemingly insignificant place? Raphael promptly advises against such inquiries, explaining that God's purposes in

creating the vast cosmos are beyond human comprehension. He suggests that rather than unraveling divine mysteries, humans should marvel at God's creativity and maintain their faith. Knowledge of whether Earth is stationary or moving, he adds, holds no relevance to human life. Raphael further muses that perhaps the magnitude of creation serves either to humble human attempts at understanding or to emphasize God's grandeur and humanity's relative insignificance. Nonetheless, he concludes, such matters should not preoccupy mortal minds. Instead, he urges Adam to embrace humility, remain focused on what pertains to his existence, and avoid overreaching into the unknown. In his advice, Raphael says, "Be lowly wise; think only what concerns thee and thy being; dream not to other worlds, what creatures there live, in what state, condition, or degree; contented that thus far hath been revealed."

Accepting Raphael's counsel, Adam shifts the subject, offering to share the story of his own beginning. With Raphael's encouragement, Adam recounts the day of his creation. He recalls awakening in Eden with an awareness of himself but no understanding of how he came to exist. Exploring the lush surroundings of the garden, he soon encounters God, who reveals Himself as the Creator of everything. God brings forth the animals for Adam to name them and grants him the Garden of Eden, with one condition that he must not eat from the tree of knowledge. Overwhelmed by solitude among the creatures, Adam confesses his need for companionship. Responding to this longing, God causes Adam to fall into a deep sleep and creates Eve from one of his ribs. Upon seeing Eve for the first time, Adam is immediately captivated by her beauty and perfection. He acknowledges her as his companion but notes her apparent inferiority in certain faculties and resemblance to God's image compared to his own. Despite this hierarchical observation, his love for her is profound. However, Raphael reminds Adam of his role as leader in their relationship, advising him not to allow Eve's physical allure to cloud his judgment or lead him astray from God's commandments. After reiterating his warning for Adam to remain obedient to their Creator, Raphael departs.

Book IX: Satan stealthily returns to Eden under the cover of night, taking on the form of a mist before inhabiting a sleeping serpent. As the new day unfolds, he finds Eve alone and begins to lavish praise upon her beauty. He deceives her by claiming that his ability to speak came from consuming fruit from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge. Gradually, his words erode her resolve, leading her to take a bite of the fruit. Having accomplished his goal, Satan departs from the Garden. Eve, now altered in awareness, carries the forbidden fruit to Adam. Realizing what has transpired, Adam instantly perceives her fall from grace. Unable to part from her even in transgression, he consumes the fruit as

well, resulting in the loss of their innocence. With this act marking humanity's irrevocable downfall, Milton delves deeper into the consequences of their choices. Paradise is plunged into night once again, and Satan enters through the underground waters of the Tigris River. The waters emerge as a fountain at the Tree of Life's base, and Satan rises in mist-like form from within. He prowls Eden searching for an animal to disguise himself, ultimately choosing the serpent's sleeping body. It is noteworthy that in the Genesis narrative itself, the serpent is not attributed to Satan's possession nor framed as a demonic entity. The text simply portrays the serpent as one of God's creations, albeit the subtlest of all. Milton's interpretation introduces Satan as the orchestrator behind this deception.

As dawn touches Eden, Eve voices an unusual request she wishes to work apart from Adam during their daily gardening duties. Worried about distractions hindering their productivity if they work side by side, she proposes separating their tasks. Adam hesitates and reminds her of Raphael's warning about Satan prowling Paradise, intent on causing their ruin. He insists they would be stronger in resisting such an adversary if they stayed united rather than alone. Eve counters that Satan holds no physical power to harm them; he can only mislead their minds. She laments Adam's apparent lack of trust in her ability to withstand temptation and defends her stance with poignant logic. Her argument emphasizes that if God's creation, Eden, requires them to remain perpetually vigilant against harm, then the perfection and joy promised by their sanctuary would be undermined: "How are we happy, still in fear of harm?" Eve also expresses her unwavering faith in God's wise design, dismissing the idea that Paradise could be flawed or unsafe whether alone or together. Despite his lingering doubts and belief that Satan might deceive one of them individually, Adam eventually yields, allowing Eve to go off on her own.

Meanwhile, Satan slithers through Eden in serpent form, eagerly hoping to find Eve alone believing her easier to manipulate than Adam. His wish is granted; he discovers her unaccompanied and approaches with calculated charm. He greets her with reverence while praising her beauty and grace. Eve marvels at the serpent's ability to speak and asks how such a thing could be possible. Satan slyly responds that he gained speech and reason by eating a fruit from a wondrous tree. Intrigued by this miraculous transformation, Eve desires to see this remarkable source for herself. Without hesitation, Satan leads her directly to the forbidden Tree of Knowledge. Upon seeing it, Eve immediately recognizes its significance it is the one tree God explicitly forbade them from eating under penalty of death. Seizing

the moment, Satan delivers a persuasive and eloquent argument aimed at disarming Eve's fears and challenging God's prohibition. He claims that consuming the fruit brought him greater vitality and intelligence rather than harm or punishment. Furthermore, he refutes the notion that eating from the tree is inherently sinful or offensive to God. Instead, Satan suggests that God's ban stems from selfish motives wanting to prevent humankind from rising above ignorance and attaining divinity itself. He plants doubt in Eve's mind with questions about envy and divine intention: "Or is it envy? and can envy dwell; In Heavenly breasts?" According to his reasoning, God's true purpose is to keep them subservient rather than allow them to reach their full potential as beings possessing divine wisdom.

Eve is captivated by Satan's words and finds herself convinced that God's command must be baseless and unjustifiable: "In plain, then, what forbids him but to know?; For bids us good, forbids us to be wise!" Believing wholeheartedly that eating the fruit will elevate her rather than condemn her and trusting the serpent's apparent testimony that he ate without consequence Eve succumbs to temptation. She picks a fruit from the forbidden tree and eats, crossing a boundary that cannot be undone. Overcome by newfound knowledge, Eve exalts the tree for opening her eyes. For the first time, she becomes conscious of her previous subjugation and questions, "For, if inferior, who is truly free?" She begins to ponder Adam's possible reaction and debates whether to reveal the transformation she has experienced. Eventually, she returns to him and recounts the events, extolling the virtues of the tree and urging him to partake. Adam, though horrified by her deed, is unable to abandon her to face the consequences alone. His love for her compels him to act, as he declares, "The bond of nature pulls me: flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone you are, and from your fate I will never part, whether in bliss or woe." Trusting the serpent's claim and hoping that God would not destroy humanity for a single act of defiance, Adam eats as well. Overwhelmed with passion and desire, the two come together intimately before falling asleep.

Upon waking, however, their exhilaration is replaced by shame and fear as they fully grasp the gravity of their actions. Overcome with embarrassment, they hastily fashion coverings from leaves to hide their bodies. Confronting each other in this altered state stirs up an outpouring of guilt and anger. Adam denounces Eve for disobeying him and straying from his side; Eve retorts that she had no reason to doubt the serpent's words and insists that Adam would have succumbed just as easily had he been in her place. Shifting blame, she accuses Adam of failing to forbid her from venturing off alone. Adam counters vehemently, reminding her of his repeated warnings and asserting that her actions are the root cause of their downfall

his only fault being his misplaced trust in her.

Book X: The Son descends to Eden to deliver judgment upon Adam and Eve. Before departing, he clothes them, moved by pity for the shame they feel in their nakedness. Meanwhile, Satan returns triumphantly to Hell, unknowingly creating an open pathway for Sin and Death to enter the human world. Adam and Eve, filled with remorse, approach the Son to seek understanding and plead for mercy concerning the doom pronounced on their descendants. With the fall of humanity sealed, the angelic guards of Paradise sorrowfully ascend back to Heaven. God absolves them of blame, acknowledging that the events were beyond their power to prevent. This raises a puzzling question: Why establish a defence that was destined to fail? Nonetheless, God sends the Son to Earth to confront Adam and Eve. Upon his arrival in Eden, the guilty pair initially hide but are brought forth at his command to account for their actions. Adam admits his fault but shifts some blame to Eve, stating that he could suspect no harm from her hand. The Son reprimands him for obeying her, asserting that her role was to follow him and not the reverse, reinforcing the view that Adam's "perfection far excelled hers in all real dignity." When questioned, Eve confesses that she was deceived by the serpent. Strangely, God opts to direct punishment at the serpent itself.

Milton clarifies this by suggesting the serpent, being an animal without speech, cannot explain Satan's possession of its form. However, one might wonder why an omniscient deity would punish a creature incapable of defending itself. Oddly, this seems inconsistent with God's earlier remark that conviction did not belong to the serpent. Nevertheless, the serpent is cursed to slither on its belly and eat dust. Following the Genesis narrative, Eve is cursed with suffering in childbirth, Adam is condemned to toilsome labour, and both are sentenced to eventual death. The Son then clothes them in animal skins before returning to Heaven. Elsewhere, Sin and Death sense a change and traverse their newly opened path from Hell to Earth, bringing corruption everywhere they go. Meanwhile, Satan returns to Hell's Pandemonium fortress to announce his apparent victory. Yet his anticipated celebration turns into humiliation as all present are transformed into serpents. An illusory tree of knowledge appears before them, and in a cruel twist, its fruit disintegrates into ashes as they try to consume it. Milton notes that this punishment recurs annually, a reminder of their rebellion.

Sin and Death unleash their influence upon the Earth with devastating effects. Why the entirety of creation must suffer for the transgression of one human pair is left unexplained. God observes the destruction they cause but inexplicably chooses not to intervene; instead, he furthers it

by commanding his angels to alter the natural world. They introduce natural disasters scorching heat, bitter cold, storms, disease-ridden swamps and even tilt the Earth's axis to end its perpetual spring, initiating seasons. The harmonious balance among animals is shattered; they begin preying on one another in endless cycles of violence.

Witnessing these changes, Adam grieves deeply over humanity's fate and questions God's justice: Why must all humanity bear guilt for the sin of one individual? Neither God nor Milton provides a definitive answer. Overwhelmed by despair, Adam wishes for death to end his suffering. When Eve approaches him later in the night, he initially casts her off in anger, holding her responsible for his misery. She collapses at his feet in tears, expressing her desire to endure all punishment herself if it would spare him. Her profound anguish softens Adam's heart, and he forgives her. Eve proposes that they abstain from having children to spare future generations from suffering. Yet Adam argues that such an act would surely provoke greater wrath from God. Resigned to their fate, they agree not to defy divine will, even if it means perpetuating humanity's suffering. United in their pain and newfound acceptance, they return together to the spot where they were first judged by God, bowing in humble supplication as they seek forgiveness.

Book XI: The Son mediates with the Father on behalf of humanity, yet God decides that Adam and Eve must be banished from Paradise. Michael descends to the Garden and informs them that they will be sent out into the world. To prepare Adam, he shows him a vision from the summit of a hill, revealing the destiny of humanity up to the time of the Flood. In Heaven, God listens to Adam and Eve's prayers, which are said to please Him more than all the bounty of Paradise itself. This suggests, perhaps, that contrition following sin holds greater value to Him than unerring righteousness. Nonetheless, God rules that they can no longer remain in Paradise. He resolves to expel them and their offspring, though they have done nothing wrong for fear that they might eat from the Tree of Life and invalidate the mortality He decreed as punishment. To carry out this command, He dispatches angels led by the archangel Michael.

On Earth, Adam begins to witness the consequences of his defiance: he sees predatory animals like eagles attacking smaller birds and lions pursuing prey. However, there is little explanation as to why his sin catalyzed such changes in nature. Soon after, Michael and the other angels appear. Despite deep sorrow, both Adam and Eve accept their fate. Adam laments that he will not have the chance to show his descendants the sacred places in Eden where God once revealed Himself to him but this raises the question of why their children must suffer for their

parents' failings. Before their departure, Eve is gently placed into a deep sleep while Michael leads Adam to the tallest hill in Paradise. From this vantage point, Adam is shown visions of future hardships that result from their transgression. He witnesses Cain murdering Abel and death brought about by disease and affliction, showcasing the many cruel ways human life will come to an end. Moving forward in time, Michael reveals several key events from the Old Testament, including Enoch's ascension into Heaven and Noah's flood that punishes a world overwhelmed by sin.

Book XII: Michael continues his account, recounting Abraham's story and the promise of the Messiah through the intercession of the Son. Adam finds solace in these revelations; he then wakes the sleeping Eve, and Michael guides them out of the Garden. Michael goes on to reveal to Adam a sequence of future events: pivotal moments in biblical history, including the Old Testament narrative, the birth, life, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, and the foundation of the Christian church. Once again, Milton critiques Catholicism by having Michael prophesy the eventual corruption of Christianity under their influence, until the day Jesus returns in a fiery purge to cleanse and renew the sinful Earth as Paradise. (It raises the question: if God had simply prevented Satan from entering Eden initially, all this intricate sequence of events might have been unnecessary. Why not preserve Paradise from the start?) The vision concludes, and Adam acknowledges his error in acting on his own judgment, resolving instead to follow divine will "henceforth I learn that to obey is best." He awakens Eve, and together they leave Paradise. Behind them, the angel's flaming sword seals off the gates, and they step into the wider, unknown world.

The poem's greatness lies not only in its remarkable scope and sustained intensity but also in its evocative and vivid imagery. Adam and Eve are universal archetypes, characters through whom readers can see reflections of themselves. Despite the intricate web of influences surrounding their pivotal sin, their fundamental human qualities remain strikingly clear. Meanwhile, Satan stands out as a vivid personification of cunning malevolence a dramatic figure who feels unsettlingly tangible. Criticisms have been levelled at Milton for overlooking contemporary advancements in science and philosophy for instance, the ambiguous depictions of astronomy in Book VIII but the poem operates within the framework of myth. Its power stems from its faithfulness to the structure of Christian belief rather than to historical or empirical precision. Ultimately, *Paradise Lost* is an extraordinary achievement. It combines intellectual richness with immense poetic depth, all executed with a command of classical traditions that make it unparalleled in

its scope and impact.

SECTION – II

Paradise Regained

Paradise Regained, an epic poem by John Milton, was first published in 1671 alongside his closet drama, *Samson Agonistes*. This work serves as a thematic continuation of his earlier and more renowned poem, *Paradise Lost*. Both poems share theological underpinnings, with *Paradise Regained* using blank verse and progressing through Christian history, much like its predecessor. However, this piece narrows its focus on the temptation of Christ, as outlined in the Gospel of Luke.

Book I: The narrative opens with Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist. Witnessing this, Satan conspires with his demons to plot against Jesus. Meanwhile, in Heaven, God speaks to the angels about Satan's arrogance, receiving their praises in response. Following the baptism, Jesus spends forty days fasting in the wilderness. During this time, Satan tries to tempt him with the prospect of bread but is met with steadfast resistance. Jesus allows the devil to remain nearby, albeit under strict limitations, while keeping his guard up as night approaches.

Milton begins the poem by reflecting on the story of humanity's Fall and then presents his purpose: recounting Jesus' ordeal during his wilderness temptation. After being baptised by John, Jesus feels compelled by the Holy Spirit to journey into the desert. Through a brief recollection of his life thus far, he embarks on a forty-day fast where he surprisingly neither eats nor feels hunger. Near the end of this period, Jesus encounters an elderly man gathering sticks, who questions his presence in such a desolate place. In response, Jesus expresses faith that the one who led him there will guide him out as well. Soon, the old man suggests that if Jesus is indeed the Son of God, he should transform stones into bread for nourishment. Recognizing Satan behind the disguise, Jesus confronts him. Exposing his identity, Satan remarks that humanity views him as their adversary despite having suffered no actual harm from him. He bitterly acknowledges that humans will ultimately be saved, while he remains condemned.

In response, Jesus rebukes Satan, asserting that his fall was deserved and that his fleeting access to Heaven only serves to highlight what he has permanently lost. Reflecting on Job's steadfastness during trials induced by Satan's interference, Jesus maintains that divine patience triumphed over temptation. Furthermore, he accuses Satan of deceiving people with false prophecies and declares that the age of oracles has ended. He emphasizes God's intent sending a living embodiment of divine truth to impart

wisdom and establish guidance through the Spirit dwelling within pious hearts. The dialogue within Paradise Regained reinforces some of Milton's recurring themes from Paradise Lost. It critiques intellectual pursuits beyond spiritual matters, suggesting mankind's knowledge should primarily serve their devotion to God while leaving other truths unexamined.

Book II: Simon the Zealot and Andrew the Apostle witness Jesus' baptism and recognize Him as the Messiah. However, they soon lose sight of Him, sparking a frantic search. Sharing their concern, Mother Mary recalls a moment from Jesus' childhood when she, too, lost Him at the age of twelve. Meanwhile, in the spiritual realm, Satan informs his demons about the impending challenge of tempting Jesus. He dismisses Belial's suggestion of using a honey trap, arguing that pride is a much more effective tool than seduction.

Jesus dreams of Elijah being fed by ravens before facing Satan's temptations in the wilderness. Satan first presents an opulent banquet, which Jesus resolutely rejects. When tempted with wealth and promises of power, Jesus counters by recounting the stories of King David's humble beginnings and his trust in God over material gains. Returning to his assembly of fallen angels, Satan acknowledges how much harder Jesus will be to deceive compared to Adam. Belial proposes using women to tempt Him, as was done with Solomon, but Satan dismisses this plan. He asserts that such tactics only work on weaker minds, suggesting that more potent enticements like promises of glory and fame must be used for someone like Jesus.

After forty days of fasting in the desert, Jesus begins to feel the strain of hunger but remains resolute in His obedience to God. One evening, He awakens to find Satan, now disguised as a man arrayed in rich garments. With a gesture, Satan conjures a table overflowing with every kind of food and tempts Jesus to satisfy His hunger, saying He has every right to partake of creation's abundance. Jesus calmly rebuffs him, explaining that if He chose, angels could provide for Him but He would not act outside God's will. The table vanishes. Satan then tempts Jesus with wealth and resources to build an army and secure power. But again, Jesus refuses, citing examples of historical and biblical figures who achieved greatness through humility and discipline. He concludes that true kingship lies in mastering one's own passions, not in ruling others.

Book III: Satan admires Christ's wisdom but mocks his lack of worldly accomplishments, drawing comparisons to the legendary feats of Alexander the Great by the age of thirty. Jesus, however, dismisses such notions, rejecting violence

and emphasizing that his path lies in suffering and sacrifice. Satan then attempts to tempt Christ by suggesting alliances and the liberation of the Ten Tribes, but Jesus remains steadfast, placing his trust in divine providence. Regrouping, Satan presents a new challenge: the allure of power. He questions why Jesus isolates himself in the wilderness while others, at even younger ages, have already achieved fame and influence over nations. Shouldn't crowds be heeding his teachings and seeking his wisdom? Jesus dismisses this suggestion with disdain, critiquing the nature of public admiration. Human approval, he argues, is shallow and meaningless. He poses, what satisfaction could possibly come from being celebrated by a "herd confused," a mass of people who praise without understanding or discernment? While this view paints a rather dim image of human nature, there is some truth to the observation that many are predisposed to follow rather than question or seek deeper knowledge a perspective that sheds light on the widespread adoption of Christianity throughout history.

Jesus further rejects the glorification of conquest and violence, asserting that those who pursue power through domination leave only destruction in their wake. He challenges the merit in celebrating acts that bring suffering to peaceful nations, robbing them of freedom and obliterating the fruits of peace. His assertion carries a profound moral truth that resonates even today. Yet it is worth noting the contradiction within the Bible itself, which frequently honours violent conquests, as seen in accounts like the Book of Joshua. In response to Jesus' statement against seeking glory, Satan counters with a compelling argument designed to provoke deeper reflection.

*“Think not so slight of glory, therein least Resembling thy
great Father. He seeks glory,
And for his glory all things made, all things Orders and
governs; nor content in
Heaven, By all his Angels glorified, requires Glory from
men, from all men,
good or bad, Wise or unwise, no difference, no exemption.
Above all
sacrifice, or hallowed gift, Glory he requires, and glory he
receives,
Promiscuous from all nations, Jew, or Greek, Or
Barbarous,
nor exception hath declared; From us, his foes
pronounced, glory he exacts.”*

This argument presents a significant critique, countering Jesus' response, which essentially asserts that while seeking glory is inappropriate for humans, it is justified for God because He is deemed deserving of it. However, this reasoning raises certain philosophical and

theological dilemmas. If Jesus is considered God, then shouldn't He, by the same logic, legitimately demand glory just as Satan provocatively suggested? While John Milton portrays Satan as rendered speechless by this reasoning, in reality, the argument appears flawed and open to challenge. This prompts further questions: What specific deeds make God deserving of glory in this theological context? Should glory be attributed to Him for allowing Satan to escape Hell and corrupt other souls? For permitting humanity to fall when such a catastrophe could have been easily averted? For cursing generations with suffering and death as punishment for the transgressions of their ancestors? And for consigning countless souls to eternal torment for momentary offenses?

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Book IV: Satan tempts Christ by offering Him dominion over all the kingdoms of the world, symbolized by the glory of Ancient Rome, in exchange for His loyalty. Christ refuses, rejecting the offer with words rooted in Scripture, specifically the Book of Exodus. Undeterred, Satan attempts anew, presenting the wisdom of Ancient Greece; however, Christ remains steadfast, valuing instead the truths found in the Psalms. In an act of resistance fortified by faith, Jesus continues to deny each temptation, countering every

proposition with divine scripture. After these failures, Satan subjects Him to a night filled with harrowing visions and storms. When this too proves futile, Satan brings Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem, challenging Him to prove His divine origins by casting Himself down and summoning angelic aid. Once more, Jesus refuses. Ultimately defeated, Satan falls, retreating back to his council of demons. Angels come to Jesus, offering Him sustenance, and He returns triumphant to His mother, where this poetic narrative concludes.

In a mountaintop, Satan presents Jesus with a vivid view of imperial Rome's capital city and questions whether He will overthrow the tyrant Emperor Tiberius Caesar and seize the throne for Himself. Jesus firmly dismisses this suggestion, asserting that His mission does not align with such earthly ambitions. He argues that the Roman citizens' suffering reflects their own deserts and declares that His kingdom will transcend and replace all earthly monarchies when it comes. As a final gesture of temptation, Satan offers all the world's kingdoms if Jesus will bow before him. This too is met with resolute rejection. Satan grows increasingly desperate, piling on temptations in rapid succession. He offers the intellectual treasures of Greek philosophy and wisdom, which Jesus dismisses as insubstantial and empty. Satan then turns to the beauty of art and music, only to be rebuffed again; Jesus praises Hebrew music as superior. Exhausted and exasperated by failure, Satan finally demands to know why Jesus rejects wealth, honour, power, art, thought, and fame features of both contemplative and active life asking what purpose He serves in this world at all. Frustrated, Satan returns Jesus to the desolate wilderness but plagues Him that night with tormented dreams and turbulent visions. Undaunted, Jesus resists once more. In a final gambit, Satan leads Christ to Jerusalem's temple and tempts Him to perform an impossible miracle leaping from the temple's pinnacle so angels will intercept Him. Jesus declines again, holding fast to His unwavering obedience to God. With that final defeat, Satan loses his footing and flees in despair.

Following Satan's retreat, angels minister to Jesus in celebration of His victory and provide Him a heavenly feast. Comforted and victorious over evil, He returns peacefully to His mother's home. Viewed together as two parts of a grand theological vision, *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* seem to deliver a unified message: doubt is portrayed as inherently sinful. Critical thinking and questioning are painted as dangerous activities leading only to despair or destruction. The works elevate blind faith and unyielding obedience as the ultimate virtues. Darkness surrounds intellectual inquiry or debate, metaphorically aligning it with moral transgression. This dichotomy between faith and reason underscores John Milton's

theological framework one where ignorance serves as “proof” of faith and obedience. Curiously, Milton allows Satan’s arguments throughout these works to hold a certain logic that strains against this overarching theme. Why would an omnipotent God release fallen angels from Hell merely to allow them to create chaos and damn others? Why does God seemingly prize ignorance so highly while discouraging wisdom and understanding? Yet the expectation throughout Milton’s narrative is for readers to reject these questions outright without contemplation or argumentation. In his vision of morality, wrestling with such doubts or seeking clarity is considered dangerous folly.

For those who cherish intellectual exploration and reason as core human attributes, these themes appear deeply unsettling. Our capacity for rational thought has led humanity to unparalleled advancements in understanding our universe through science—a development that stands firmly opposed to the kind of anti-intellectualism presented in these poems. The story Milton weaves serves as an implicit warning against such progress but also raises troubling questions about its own premises. Even within Milton’s work lies evidence contradicting his own message about knowledge versus ignorance. For instance, in *Paradise Lost*, the angel Raphael provides Adam with detailed warnings about Satan’s nature and intentions warnings that do not exist in the biblical account of Genesis. This inclusion subtly suggests that Adam and Eve’s lack of knowledge was a key factor in their susceptibility to sin. Could this addition be Milton tacitly acknowledging a theological paradox? If Adam and Eve were not adequately equipped with understanding or forewarning about the perils of disobedience, does responsibility for their fall not trace back to their Creator? The enforced ignorance of Eden may well have been their greatest vulnerability a provocative point at odds with the rigid.

Conclusion: Milton, in dialogue with the Bible, ingeniously transforms the epic form into a theological exploration. In *Paradise Lost*, he justifies God’s justice by illustrating the dual nature of freedom, both dignified and perilous. Conversely, *Paradise Regained* highlights God’s mercy through its depiction of wisdom in obedience. Both works honour their scriptural foundation while expanding it into a rich poetic vision of redemption. Milton does not aim to surpass Scripture; rather, his accomplishment lies in making its grace accessible and imaginatively comprehensible to readers navigating a world marked by the consequences of humanity’s fall. Nonetheless, even within a literary framework that affords Milton ample space for theological defence and personal justification, logical inconsistencies in this theology remain evident. God’s attempts to justify his actions often fall short, and Jesus’ rebuttals to Satan’s arguments can be notably weak or

flawed. Yet Milton consistently portrays Satan as defeated, silenced, and overcome by these exchanges. In reality, Christian apologetics, faced with informed and critical opposition outside controlled narratives, rarely achieve such definitive triumphs.

It is worth noting that not all Christians share Milton’s theological stance. Many reject doctrines of female subordination, the condemnation of scepticism, and the strict literal interpretation of Genesis. Such divergence demonstrates courage in confronting problematic teachings, yet one cannot ignore the fact that many such ideas are unequivocally present within the Bible itself. Addressing these issues requires more than selectively abandoning troubling passages while clinging to the rest of the Bible it demands questioning its authority and moving beyond its constraints entirely. There was no idyllic Paradise lost through a desire to understand the truths of the world, nor is there an eternal Hell awaiting those who dare to think critically. Fear has no place in honest inquiry. Humanity is not fallen, sinful, or inherently wretched; we are simply human beings equal, capable, and resilient. When we finally awaken from the mythological constructs of our past, we will embrace the clearer light of reality as it truly is. In that awakening lies the genuine pathway toward an earthly paradise, guided by knowledge and understanding unhindered by ancient shadows.

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