ABSTRACT

This work is destined to show and analyze the life and works of the Third Giant of English Literature, John Milton.

The first chapter will focus on Milton's life and education. Milton's works mirror his life, since he wrote poems and sonnets on his own personal experiences and losses. His education is the best he could receive, first by private tutors at home, followed by entrance into St. Paul's School, and later Christ College, Cambridge.

In the second chapter, some of Milton's most important works will be analyzed. He not only wrote poetry but also important prose works addressing many kinds of themes, which greatly influenced his time, and they continue doing so.

The third chapter is destined to analyze, Milton's best masterpiece, Paradise Lost, a work which is agreed to be the greatest epic, perhaps even the greatest work of literature written in the English language. Milton wrote this epic in spite of being totally blind.

This poem tells us the biblical story of the fall of Adam and Eve, and the story of Satan's rebellion against God. Milton took these stories from the Bible; however, he expanded them into a very long, detailed, and narrative poem full of imagery and details.

Finally, in the last chapter, some differences and similarities between Milton's and the Bible's version of the fall of man will be analyzed. Paradise Lost differs in some aspects and details from the Bible account; however, these small differences do not affect the Bible's main purpose and teaching.

KEYWORDS: English literature, English epic, Paradise Lost, Milton's life, Milton's works

THE THIRD "GIANT" OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, JOHN MILTON AND THE ENGLISH EPIC "PARADISE LOST"

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UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA, LITERATURA Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN

ESCUELA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA

THE THIRD "GIANT" OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, JOHN MILTON AND THE ENGLISH EPIC "PARADISE LOST"

TESIS PREVIA A LA OBTENCIÓN DEL TÍTULO DE LICENCIADA EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN, ESPECIALIDAD DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA.

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2010

THE THIRD "GIANT" OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, JOHN MILTON AND THE ENGLISH EPIC "PARADISE LOST"

INTRODUCTION

John Milton is the third "Giant" of English Literature, after Chaucer and Shakespeare. His life and his works are famous and have contributed greatly to English literature. Milton had one of the most brilliant minds of England, shown in his famous English epic Paradise Lost. His life and his works are extremely interesting and important subjects to be studied, analyzed, and admired. That is why it is necessary to contribute this work to confirm and reveal John Milton's importance as a writer and as one of the major authors of English Literature.

John Milton was brought up in a prosperous family which allowed him to have the best education. As a teenager he had written sonnets in Italian and mastered Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French, and other modern European languages. His knowledge of these languages was immense and thorough. In addition, in his twenties he wrote five long masterful poems which were really influential and important in their own separate way.

Aside from his poetic successes, Milton also wrote essays and pamphlets. He was married three times, which also influenced some of his works. After his first unhappy marriage, he wrote a series of pamphlets calling for more leniencies in the church's position on divorce. Milton was a pioneer for the right of divorce in a time when it was prohibited by almost all denominations. Also, he wrote a poem about his second deceased wife.

Milton was a valiant man who wrote in spite of being totally blind at the age of forty two; he continued writing and was able to contribute the English Epic to the English language, an epic worthy to be studied and analyzed.

I consider it important that people know about John Milton -who he was and why he is so important in English Literature. There were many interesting events in his life as well as contributions which are not widely known. I have seen the necessity of showing them through this research.

First of all, John Milton wrote five masterful long poems: "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," "Comus," "Lycidas," "Il Penseroso," and L´Allegro." Through these poems, Milton showed his skill at writing narrative, drama, elegies, and political and philosophical treatises. He revealed an amazing sense of command of English. Even in these early poems, Milton's literary output was guided by his faith in God. Milton believed that all poetry served a social, philosophical, and religious purpose. He thought that poetry should glorify God, promote religious values, enlighten readers, and help people to become better Christians.

In addition, many events that occurred in Milton's life prompted him to write about many different themes such as divorce, blindness, and his personal losses.

Finally, as early as the age of sixteen, as Milton read the classical epics in school, he began to fantasize about writing an English Epic. He had different topics in mind until he decided to write about the story of Adam and Eve. Thus, Paradise Lost was brought into English literature.

This Epic is the greatest poem ever written in English. The poem contains many characters, quotations, themes, motifs, and symbols worthy to be analyzed. Milton's account of man's creation and fall is the same account narrated in the Bible. However, using his amazing talent, Milton creates a very thorough and detailed epic, using many passages and characters not only from the Bible but also from other sources such as later Christian and rabbinic traditions, as well as Greek and Roman mythology and literature.

Throughout this work Paradise Lost will be analyzed, focusing on its literature, purpose, characters, symbols, motifs, and themes, and finalizing with a contrast and comparison with the Bible account, which will give us a deep knowledge of what the importance of this epic for English literature is.

CHAPTER I

JOHN MILTON'S BIOGRAPHY

"He sacrificed his sight, and then he remembered his first desire, that of being a poet," [1] *"Jorge Luis Borges"*

Is it possible to be a genius and a great poet in spite of being blind? Some people would say it is not; however, John Milton proved it was possible to achieve, being able to write lots of important works and moreover to contribute with an English epic to English Literature.

It is common to think that the life of a middle-class, well-educated, religious poet born four hundred years ago would be monotonous and boring, but this is not John Milton's case. Milton is an interesting subject since he was an unusual writer for the time he lived. He wrote a fair amount about his poetic intentions in his poems, prose, and notebooks. Around his time he was contemplating the subject matter for a great English work; an English epic…

Milton's works mirror his life and many difficult and interesting happenings he had to undergo. Aside from the academic and literary benefits of understanding the context of his works, his life is an interesting and inspiring tale; a tale of the frustration and rebellion of a genius…

[1] Jorge Luis Borges, Argentinean poet. (1899-1986)

2. Early Years and Education

The story started on December 9, 1620, when our genius, John Milton, was born in London as the second child of John Milton and Sara Jeffrey. Milton was brought up in a prosperous family on Bread Street in Cheapside, near St. Paul's Cathedral. Milton's mother was a very religious person, daughter of a merchant sailor, while his father was a scrivener whose duties included preparation and notarization of documents, as well as real estate transactions and money lending. He also was a composer of church music so Milton inherited from him love for art and music. John Milton had a "delicate, tunable voice" and he often played a small organ. The family was wealthy enough to afford another house in the country and to teach Milton classical languages, first by private tutors at home, like the writer Thomas Young, a graduate of St Andrews University, and followed by entrance into St. Paul's School at age twelve, in 1632.

At an early age, in 1625, Milton was admitted to Christ's College, Cambridge. Here he began to write poetry in Latin, Italian, and English. As a teenager, he had already mastered Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, as well as a number of modern European languages. In spite of being a brilliant and hardworking student, Milton did not adjust to university life. He was called, half in scorn and half because of his facial beauty, long hair, and quiet, studious attitude, "The Lady of Christ's". In addition, He was also argumentative to the extent that only one year later, in 1926, he was expelled for a term after starting a fist fight with his tutor, William Chappell.

3. Early Works

Milton's suspension ended. At his return to Cambridge, he was assigned a new tutor, Nathaniel Tovey; however, life at the university was still not easy for him. He felt unsatisfied with the curriculum and moreover was disliked by his

classmates. It was at Cambridge that he composed "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" on December 25, 1629.
Milton decided to leave Cambridge in 1632. Thus, he had given up his original plan to become a priest. He adopted no profession but spent six years at leisure in his family's homes in London and Horton, Buckinghamshire- years of private study and literary composition.

Unlike Shakespeare, John Milton was fortunate at never having to work for a living; however, he spent his time writing and creating great works such as L'ALLEGRO and IL PENSEROSO (1632), COMUS (1634), and LYCIDAS (1637), about the meaning of death, which was composed after the death of his friend Edward King. Milton wrote in Latin, as was usual for the time. His first published poem was the sonnet An Epitaph on the Admirable Dramatic Poet, W. Shakespeare, which was printed anonymously in the Second Folio of Shakespeare's works (1632). Works such as L'ALLEGRO and IL PENSEROSO (1632), the masque now known as COMUS (1634), and LYCIDAS (1637), about the meaning of death, were also created during this time.

In 1635 Milton and his family moved to Horton, Buckinghamshire, where John pursued his studies in Greek and Italian. During the late 1630s Milton had the opportunity to travel around Europe. These travels supplemented Milton's study with a new and direct experience of artistic and religious traditions, especially Roman Catholicism. He met famous theorists and intellectuals of the time, and was able to display his poetic skills.

John traveled in France and Italy, meeting in Paris the jurist and theologian Hugo Grotius and the astronomer Galileo Galilei in Florence. Milton's conversation with this famous scientist is recorded in his celebrated plea for a free discussion, AREOPAGITICA (1644), in which he stated that books "preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect

bred in them." Areopagitica, A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing is his best work of this prose period written with calm reasoning and smooth words, which is a defense of freedom of the press.

When Milton was in Rome, he was a guest of Cardinal Barberini, the Pope's nephew, and he also visited the Vatican Library. In Naples, Milton met Giovanni Batista Manso, biographer of Torquato Tasso. Manso became Milton's guide through Naples. He gave Milton books, and works based on Gregory the Great's pun on "Angle" and "angel" when describing the English. The work Mansus was written in Manso's honor which was a response to his claiming that Manso was his patron, and he was very grateful with him for his gesture of goodwill.

Milton received news that his childhood friend *Diodati* had died. Shortly after, Milton composed Epitaphium Damonis, a Latin poem to the memory of his dearest friend. He stayed another seven months on the continent, and spent time at Rome, Florence, and other places like Lucca, Bologna, and Ferrera before coming to Venice. In Venice, Milton was exposed to a model of Republicanism, but he soon found another model when he traveled to Geneva. From Switzerland, Milton traveled to Paris and then to Calais before finally arriving back in England during the summer of 1639.

When Milton returned to London, he set up a school with his nephews and a few others as his pupils. By this time he had already planned to write an epic work based on the Arthurian legends, but then he gave up partly because of the Civil War which divided the country as Oliver Cromwell fought against the king, Charles I.

4. **Politics and Religion**

Besides being best known for his famous epic poem Paradise Lost, Milton was also an accomplished and influential political writer who was active during the tumultuous period of the English Civil War. He got involved in politics, as he addressed particular themes at different periods. His political thoughts are shown in works concerning the right to divorce, religious freedom, the right to overthrow a tyrannical king, freedom of speech, and the nature of freedom under a Commonwealth.

During the years of 1641 and 1642, John was dedicated to church politics and the struggle against episcopacy in the service of the Puritan and Parliamentary cause. In the years from 1654 to 1659, he wrote during the period of the execution of Charles I, and in polemic justification of the regicide and the existing Parliamentarian regime.

Milton's beliefs show that he was claimed as an early apostle of liberalism. His beliefs were in certain cases unpopular and dangerous, as shown in his commitments to republicanism. An instance of this can be found in some particular remarks from James Tully, an important Canadian philosopher:

> *"…with Locke as with Milton, republican and contraction conceptions of political freedom join hands in common opposition to the disengaged and passive subjection offered by absolutists such as Hobbes and Robert Filmer "*[2]

[2] James Tully, *an Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts* (1993), p. 301.

❖ The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce

Concerning the right to divorce, Milton wrote the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce in the year 1643. This doctrine was created beginning from Milton's first unhappy marriage. He strongly believed that marriage required the happiness and consent of both parties, and since he did not experience it, this made his theoretical defense of the right to divorce quite personal.

> *"Restor'd to the good of both SEXES, from the bondage of CANON LAW, and other mistakes, to the true meaning of Scripture in the Law and Gospel compar'd."*[3]

Milton's demand went very much further. It was for the recognition of divorce link with the right of remarriage for both parties, the liberalization of grounds, particularly to include incompatibility; and the removal of divorce from public jurisdiction, whether ecclesiastical or civil, to private.

His thoughts on divorce caused him to have many troubles with the authorities and the church. Milton's ideas on divorce constituted a one-man heresy according to an orthodox Presbyterian of the time.

In addition, Milton believed that what the church did was restoring the dignity and liberties men once enjoyed but had lost to the tyrannies of prelacy, custom, and ignorance.

One year later, Milton addressed the topic of freedom of speech in his work named Areopagitica, published November 23, 1644, at the height of the English Civil War. This work was a protest against Parliament's law restricting

[3] Milton John, the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, London (1644),

the freedom of printing. Milton had no intention to deliver his speech orally, but the other way around. It was intentionally distributed via pamphlet, defying the same publication censorship he argued against. This work contains a lot of biblical and classical references which Milton used to strengthen his argument. The issue was also personal for Milton, since he had suffered censorship himself when he tried to publish several ideas defending divorce. On the cover of this book Milton put his own name but not that of his printer, since he published and created the work in an unlicensed way. There are several important quotations published in this work:

> *"For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them".*

> *"As good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye."*

> *"Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, and many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making".*

> *"Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties."*

- **Of Education**

The same year Milton created a work *Of Education* as a rather informal looking, eight-page pamphlet without a title page, date, or publisher's name drawing upon his reading of Renaissance humanism and his personal experience as a tutor to formulate his own ideas about education. In this work, Milton outlined a curriculum emphasizing that Latin and Greek were the means to learn directly the wisdom of Classical antiquity in literature, philosophy, and politics. This curriculum mirrored Milton's own education at St. Paul's, and it is intended to equip a gentleman to perform "all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war.

Of Education was Milton's contribution to contemporary debate about methods of education, which in turn was part of a larger discussion about how the Church should be organized and how the State should be governed. The work was reprinted in 1673 as part of the second edition of Milton's collected early poems in a volume called *Poems, etc. upon several occasions… With a small tractate of Education.* Milton believed that education should move from experiences of the senses to the corresponding abstract concepts, that the educational process should be rigorous but also delightful, and that the young should study a wide variety of languages, ancient and modern, and read a wide variety of texts. He also agreed with the Moravian scholar that the current methods of learning Latin and Greek were a waste of time.

- **The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates**

As the secretary for Foreign Tongues after the parliamentary victory in the Civil War, Milton used his pen in defense of the republican principles represented by the Commonwealth. In the year 1648, Milton published his first edition of *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, and later a second one in February 1649 concerning the right of the people to overthrow and execute a

guilty sovereign. This pamphlet was written during the English Revolution, giving a theory of how people come into commonwealths and come to elect kings. He explains what the role of a king should be, and conversely what a tyrant is. He also argued that there was a voluntary contract between free men and their rulers, and that if a ruler becomes a tyrant then the people have the right to take him away, if the ordinary magistrates have not done so. This work immediately influenced the political works and theories of many others, including Bulstrode Whitelocke, John Canne, John Lilburne, John Twyn, and various anonymous works. The amount of attention that the work received prompted John Shawcross to declare that the work, itself, allowed Milton to be viewed as a "great writer."

- **His Defense of the People of England**

Later, in 1651, John wrote *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano*, a Latin polemic which in English is *John Milton, an Englishman: His Defense of the People of England,* which addressed the right to resist the monarchy. This prose work can be considered a piece of propaganda in a good sense, since it made a political argument in support of what was at the time the government of England. This work was a reaction to Parliament´s execution of Charles I and an answer to Salmasius´s *Defensio Regia pro Carolo I* (*Royal Defense on behalf of Charles I).* Salmasius argued that the rebels led by Cromwell were guilty of regicide for executing King Charles. Milton responded with a detailed justification of the parliamentary party.

- **A Treatise on Civil Power and Hirelings**

In 1659 a pair of important pamphlets addressing topics of church and state affairs were published by John Milton. They were *A Treatise on Civil*

Power, Milton´s most significant work on the idea of religious liberty, and *Considerations touching The likeliest means to remove Hirelings out of the church*. Both works included addresses to Parliament, with the difference that the first was to Richard Cromwell's first parliament and the second to the restored Purged Parliament. In the pamphlet *On Civil Power* Milton argued against the use of civil power to enforce orthodoxy in religious belief, while in *Hirelings* he argued against state funding for the clergy. These works were written in a politically fragile period, since Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector, died in 1658, and after his son Richard had succeeded him as Lord Protector, this parliament was dissolved under direct pressure from an unsatisfied army occupying London. By May Richard Cromwell had resigned, and the reins of state power came to the General Council of the Army and the Purged Parliament from Oliver's days. Milton probably regarded these as promising developments because he always was suspicious of power in the hands of an individual.

❖ *The Ready and Easy way to Establish a Free* Commonwealth

Later, at the end of February 1660, *The Ready and Easy way to Establish a Free* Commonwealth appeared, defending the Republic, written on the eve of the restoration of the monarchy. There was also a second edition of this work published in March 1660 which stepped up the prophetic rhetoric against a monarchy. Milton began his work with a message of hope believing that the premise of it would be accepted by his fellows: "I doubt not but all ingenuous and knowing men will easily agree with me, that a free Commonwealth without a single person or house of lords, is by far the best

government"[4] Throughout the work, Milton put forth his Republican ideas; however, he occasionally allowed other forms of government to slip into consideration. At one moment, for instance, he talked about a monarchy that may satisfy the needs of the people, but he is quick to dismiss such a monarchy as being what England needed.

And, finally, Milton addressed the topic of liberty in Heaven and Hell in his epic poem Paradise Lost (1667).This is a long work, but there are many passages which deal with the power of the king-like God, the rebellion of Satan, and the freedoms enjoyed by Adam and Eve. This epic poem will be later analyzed in a deeper way.

5. **Women and Marriages**

Milton had many relationships during his life which influenced and prompted him in a great way to create different kinds of works where references to his married life can be found.

Milton was married three times. At the age of thirty four, in 1642, Milton had his first marriage with Mary Powell, a very young girl; seventeen years old, and the oldest daughter of an Oxfordshire gentleman whose family was an unintellectual, royalist family. The Powells were the Miltons' neighbors and had with them both friendship and business relations. This marriage started well, but Mary soon became bored and left him after a short time, returning to live with her mother for three years. For all these reasons and even more in order to marry another woman, Milton wanted to divorce Mary; however, the legal statutes of England did not allow him to apply for a divorce. It is impossible to know Powell's specific reasons for leaving Milton; however, they cannot be so

[4] Milton, John. "*Complete Prose Works of John Milton"* Vol.VII Ed. Don Wolfe. New Haven: Yale University Press 1974, pp. 364-365

difficult to guess at. One of Mary's reasons to leave her husband could have been the difference of their ages, and especially Milton's attitude towards women, which was peculiar and not wholly pleasant, since he used to scorn them. Things did not improve when Mary's family, a strong royalist family, caused a political difference that was exacerbated by the English Civil War.

All these matters prompted Milton to write in 1643 his work speaking for divorce on the grounds of incompatibility called *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,* which had its second and longer edition in early 1644. In the same year, Milton also published *The Judgment of Martin Bucer Concerning Divorce.* Although Milton was motivated by a very high and pure ideal of marriage as an intellectual union, he was publicly attacked on all sides for libertinism. He was strictly criticized by the church and the law, since divorce was considered a sin in those times. His "Divorce Tracts" caused great arguments both in parliament and among the clergy, as well as among the people of England who gave him the nickname of "Milton the Divorcer."

Between 1642 and 1645, Milton had the opportunity to pursue another woman, known only as Miss Davis. During his involvement with her, he attempted to convince her that his marriage should have resulted in a divorce and that it would be appropriate for her to marry him although he was already legally married; this resulted in failure. However, this did not dissuade him from his campaign to reform the divorce laws, and he continued to pursue the topic until his wife returned to him.

Milton had had plans to remarry Mary Powell when she returned home. They seemed to have reconciled, since their first daughter, Anne, was born in 1646. All Mary's family moved in with the Miltons because Royalists had been forced out of Oxford. This situation, of course, was not pleasant at all, since a noisy

atmosphere was created, and it was not particularly conducive to study or writing.

In 1647, both Milton's father and his father-in-law passed away. Then the Powells eventually moved out and the Miltons moved to the neighborhood of High Holborn, where their second daughter Mary was born in 1648. The year 1652 was not an easy one for Milton, since he had to undergo several personal losses. In February, Milton who had a weak sight since he was a child lost it completely, becoming totally blind at 44 years old. This event prompted him to write the sonnet *"When I Consider How My Light is spent."*

In May of the same year, Mary gave birth to their third daughter, Deborah, and died a few days later. In addition, Milton's one-year-old only son, John, died too. These events, of course, were very difficult for Milton to bear, but his incomparable strength helped him to withstand all these struggles which were not an obstacle to fulfill his goals and continue to create great masterpieces.

On November 12, 1656, Milton got married again, this time to Katherine Woodcock, a daughter of a captain. This marriage was far more successful than his previous one, but unfortunately the happiness was short-lived. Katherine delivered a daughter in 1657, who died six months after her birth. Even worse for Milton, his dear wife Katherine Woodcock herself died the next year. To her memory John wrote the sonnet *"Methought I saw my late espoused saint."*

Blind, having lost two wives and two children, and having to raise his three daughters by himself, Milton never gave up. He married his third and final wife Elizabeth Minshull three years later. Elizabeth was a very young woman of twenty four, and the marriage was a happy one in spite of the difference in their ages. However, this match was not well accepted by Milton's daughters, who opposed him and demonstrated lack of obligations to Milton. They were not

academic and resented the schooling their father put them to. They stole from him and sold off portions of his library. There is not much information about Milton's third wife, though it is generally agreed that she cared for him until he died, and that Milton had no fault to find with her.

6. **Last Years**

After 1660, with the restored monarchy, Milton's political dreams were destroyed under the double blow of the collapse of the Puritan Republic and the failure of it to support freedom while it lasted. Because of the restoration in this year, Milton went into hiding for life, while an authorization was issued for his arrest and his writings burnt. He re-emerged after a general pardon was declared; however, he was arrested and shortly imprisoned before influential friends, such as Marvel, intervened. After these events, Milton retired to private life in a cottage at Chalfont St. Giles, in London, and returned to his real vocation, the writing of poetry.

In the year 1663, Milton spent much of his time tutoring students and finishing his life's work, the epic *"Paradise Lost."* It can be affirmed that despite Milton's unfortunate political reputation and the lack of serious interest in his previous poetic efforts, this work was instantly recognized as a work of outstanding merit. This is the greatest work ever written in English and the most remarkable achievement for Milton during his blindness. He composed verse upon verse at night in his head and then he dictated them from memory to his daughters and aides in the morning. Andrew Marvell began working for John as a secretary by the time he was starting to work an Epic, around 1650.

The Epic was published in 1667, and its second edition in 1674. During this time he also published several minor prose works, such as a grammar textbook, *Art of Logic*, and a *History of Britain.* *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* were published in 1671, and Milton spent most of the rest of his life creating as many manuscripts for publication as possible. Instance of this are his only

explicitly political tracts- *True Religion,* arguing for toleration, except for Catholics, and a translation of a Polish tract advocating an elective monarchy, published in 1672.

Milton suffered greatly from gout; a disease causing swollen joints which produces painful swelling, especially in the toes and feet, though his third wife Elizabeth Minshull helped him a lot in his work. In spite of the pains he had to suffer because of this disease and his blindness, there is evidence that Milton was a reasonably sociable and agreeable man, kindly receiving visitors. Milton had a strange schedule. He used to wake up at four every morning and listen to his assistant read the Bible to him, in the original Hebrew, of course. Then there was some time for contemplation, followed at 7 a.m. by equal portions of writing and reading with his assistant. After dinner he used to walk in his garden for a few hours, and at 8 p.m. he spent time either reading poetry or playing the organ. He was in bed by nine and ready for it to start all over again.

The life and the interesting and inspiring tale of our "Third Giant of English Literature" came to an end on November 8, 1674. Milton died very peacefully of gout and kidney failure at the age of 65. He was buried beside his father in the church of St. Giles, Cripplegate, in London. According to an early biographer, our genius' funeral was attended by "his learned and great Friends in London, not without a friendly concourse of the Vulgar."[5] It has been said that Milton's grave was desecrated when the church was undergoing repairs. All his teeth and "a large quantity of his hair" were taken as souvenirs by grave robbers.

[5] Toland, John."Life of Milton in the Early Lives of Milton."Ed.Helen Darbishere, 1932.p.193.

Milton would have liked to know that both his poems and his political treatises would eventually achieve great popularity, as of course they did. Milton left behind some of the greatest works of the English language, and the memory of a man devoted to moral goodness and to liberty, with the strength to stand firm and continue fighting where others fell.

CHAPTER II

MILTON'S MAIN WORKS

1. MILTON'S MASTERFUL POEMS

After having a discussion with his tutor and being expelled from Cambridge for a term, Milton went back home, where he had plenty of time to write poetry. During these six years of leisure, Milton wrote many works, such as his five masterful poems: L'ALLEGRO and IL PENSEROSO (1632), COMUS, LYCIDAS (1637) and 'An Epitaph on the Admirable Dramatic Poet, W. Shakespeare (1630).

Through all his writing, Milton showed his skill at writing narrative, drama, elegies, and political and philosophical treatises. He revealed an amazing command of English. Even in his early poems, Milton's literary output was guided by his faith in God. Milton believed that all poetry served a social, philosophical, and religious purpose. He thought that poetry should glorify God, promote religious values, enlighten readers, and help people to become better Christians.

❖ L'ALLEGRO and IL PENSEROSO

These Milton's twin pastoral poems L'ALLEGRO and IL PENSEROSO, published in 1645, are related to the tradition of classical literature. It is not certain when *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* were composed exactly because they do not appear in Milton's Trinity College manuscript of poetry. However, according to the settings found in the poems it is possible that they were composed shortly after Milton left Cambridge. The two poems were first published in Milton's 1645 collection of poems. In the collection, they served as

a balance to each other and to his Latin poems, including "Elegia 1" and "Elegia 6".

These poems contrast and complement one another, and it is impossible trying to understand and appreciate the first one without also having read the second one. In this concept, the merits or values of two opposing ideas or things are debated. Milton used the contrasting settings of day and night to present readers with two men: the cheerful, amiable man of L'ALLEGRO, and the contemplative, melancholy man of IL PENSEROSO.

Whereas L'allegro is the happy person, light and melodic, who spends an idealized day in the country and a festive evening in the city, Il Penseroso is the thoughtful person whose night is filled with meditative walking in the woods and hours of study in a "lonely Tower." L'allegro creates a happy pastoral world, while Il Penseroso paints a darker picture, with a slower pace and shadowy images to evoke a melancholy mood.

In 1983, Gerard H. Cox wrote that "it is obvious that *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* are companion poems, but precisely how and why they are related remains an open question." Over the years, scholars and many people have suggested a wide range of connections between the two. To some people, the poems represent a battle between Day and Night, Mirth and Melancholy; to others, these works reflect opposing paths: of pleasure and wisdom toward complete union with God; and to still others, Milton's own struggle to become a "whole" man and a truly great poet. Roy Flannagan even suggests that *L'Allegro* is the light-hearted Charles Diodati and *Il Penseroso* is the studious Milton. Certainly, there is evidence of this in Milton's letter to his dear friend when he writes:

> "It is in my favor that your habit of studying permits you to pause frequently, visit friends, write much, and sometimes make a journey. But my temperament allows no delay, no rest, no anxiety — or at least

thought — about scarcely anything to distract me, until I attain my object and complete some great period, as it were, of my studies."

Since these companion pieces were written very early in Milton's career, it is interesting to attempt to interpret the influence of those authors with whom Milton was clearly familiar, as well as the reappearance of certain images and conventions in Milton's later writings, specifically, Paradise Lost.

It seemed that Milton was influenced especially by certain previous authors' works, such as:

- **William Shakespeare:** A Midsummer's Night's Dream
- **Edmund Spenser:** The Faerie Queene
- **Geoffrey Chaucer:** The Canterbury Tales
- **Christopher Marlowe:** The Passionate Shepherd to His Love

Both *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* end with passages about divine music....the poet is asking for nothing other than the return of the human soul, asking for an end to 'Earthy grossness,' and for the ability to enjoy the harmonious structure of the universe reflected in the human soul as Adam and Eve did before the fall.

The contrast between Mirth and Melancholy is clearly shown in the poems. Notice the end of these poems:

L'Allegro

"…These delights, if thou canst give,
Mirth with thee, I mean to live."

Ill Penseroso

"…These pleasures *Melancholy* give,

And I with thee will choose to live."

- **ANALYSIS OF L'ALLEGRO**

In the poem, Milton follows the traditional classical hymn model, when the narrator appeals to Mirth/Euphrosyne and her divine parentage:[6]

"In Heav'n yclept Euphrosyne,
And by men, heart-easing Mirth,
Whom lovely Venus at a birth
With two sister Graces more
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore (lines 13–16)"

The narrator continues by requesting Mirth to appear with:[7]

"Jest and youthful Jollity,
Quips and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,
Nods, and Becks, and wreathed Smiles,
...
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides." (Lines 26–28, 31–32)

Later, the narrator describes how Mirth is connected to pastoral environments: [8]

"Whilst the landscape round it measures,
Russet lawns and fallows gray,

[6] Revard, Stella. "Milton and the Tangles of Neaera's Hair". Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997. p. 96

[7] Revard, Stella.op.cit.p.101

[8] Revard, Stella.ibid.102

Where the nibbling flocks do stray
...
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks and rivers wide...” (Lines 70–72, 75–76)

Near the end of the poem, the narrator requests from Mirth to be immersed in the poetry and the pleasures that Mirth is able to produce:[9]

“And ever against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse
Such as the meeting soul may pierce...” (Lines 135–138)

The final lines of the poem are a response to questions found within Elizabethan poetry, including Christopher Marlowe's "Come live with me and be my love":[10]

“These delights, if thou canst give,
Mirth with thee, I mean to live.” (Lines 151–152)

- **Themes:**

According to an author named Barbara Lewalski, L'Allegro, along with Il Penseroso, "explore and contrast in generic terms the ideal pleasures appropriate to contrasting lifestyles... that a poet might choose, or might choose at different times, or in sequence."[11] In particular, L’Allegro celebrates the Grace Euphrosone

[9] Revard, Stella.ibid.p.99

[10] Lewalski, Barbara. "Genre" in “A Companion to Milton.” Ed. Thomas Corns. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.p.5

[11] Lewalski, Barbara. idid.p.5

through the traditional Theocritan pastoral model. The poem is playful and is set within a pastoral scene that allows the main character to connect with folk stories and fairy tales in addition to various comedic plays and performances. There is a kind of progression from the pleasures found in L'Allegro with the pleasures found within IL Penseroso. Besides being set in a traditional form, there is no poetic antecedent for Milton's combination.

"The poem invokes Mirth and other allegorical figures of joy and merriment, and praises the active and cheerful life, while showing a day in the countryside according to this philosophy. Mirth, as one of the Graces, is connected with poetry within Renaissance literature, and the poem, in its form and content, is similar to dithyrambs to Bacchus or hymns to Venus. However, the pleasure that Mirth brings is moderated, and there is a delicate balance between the influence of Venus or Bacchus achieved by relying on their daughter."[12]

- **ANALYSIS OF IL PENSEROSO**

Il Penseroso as well as *L'allegro* is a pastoral poem published in 1645. The poem invokes "divine Melancholy, being a praise of the contemplative, withdrawn life of study, philosophy, thought, and meditation."

As was mentioned, it is impossible to understand and appreciate John Milton's Il Penseroso without also having read its companion piece, *L'allegro.* Many critics have speculated that Milton prefers the pensive melancholy celebrated in *Il Penseroso* because it represents the ascetic life of study, as opposed to *L'Allegro's* emphasis on a Dionysian, pleasure-seeking lifestyle. Milton appears to make this preference explicit in his sixth Elegy, written to Charles Diodati, when he tells his friend that Apollo, "Bacchus, Ceres, and Venus all approve" of "light Elegy" and assist poets in such compositions, but poets whose ambitions reach higher, to the

[12] Revard, Stella.op.cit.p.105

epic and heroic modes, must avoid the Dionysian lifestyle for a more austere practice:

> “But they who Demigods and Heroes praise
> And feats perform'd in Jove's more youthful days,
> Who now the counsels of high heav'n explore,
> Now shades, that echo the Cerberean roar,
> Simply let these, like him of Samos live
> Let herbs to them a bloodless banquet give;
> In beechen goblets let their bev'rage shine,
> Cool from the chrystal spring, their sober wine!
> Their youth should pass, in innocence, secure
> From stain licentious, and in manners pure,
> Pure as the priest's, when robed in white he stands
> The fresh lustration ready in his hands.”("Elegy 6" 55-66)

It is said that the poet who wants to accomplish the highest level of creative expression must take in the divine, which can only be done by following the path set out in *IL Penseroso.*

According to some studies of *Il Penseroso,* there are two forms of melancholy present in this work: “black” and “golden tinged with purple”. The black melancholy was responsible for severe depression, while the gold melancholy was the concern of poets whose products were not sad in the course of madness, but the highest of man’s artistic achievements.

In the case that *Il Penseroso* is autobiographical in nature, Milton may have consciously adopted part of Spenser’s theory of friendship in writing the poem- namely, the idea that friends "express different aspects of the same principle, shown by the frequent citing of one of them to prove the other." *Il Penseroso's*

initial banishment of Mirth--as well as *L'allegro* exile of Melancholy--demonstrates this principle at work.

Miller believes that the superiority of *Il Penseroso's* accomplishment is delicately asserted by the relative security of the poem's closing couplet. "There is no doubt that Melancholy can give such pleasures; there is some question of Mirth's power."

- **Themes**

Il Penseroso celebrates Melancholy through the traditional Theocritan pastoral model. The setting focuses on a Gothic scene and emphasizes a solitary scholarly life. The main character wanders through an urban environment, and the descriptions resemble medieval settings. The main character of this masterpiece dedicates his time to philosophy, to allegory, to tragedy, to Classical hymns, and, finally, to Christian hymns rather than pleasures, which causes him to be filled with a vision.

Melancholy, in *Il Penseroso,* does not have the same background as Mirth does in *L'Allegro; "*Melancholy comes from Saturn and Vesta, who are connected to science and a focus on the heavens."[13] Melancholy is connected in the poem with the "heavenly" muse Urania, the goddess of inspiring epics, through her focus and through her relationship with Saturn.[14] In addition, she is related to prophecy, and the prophetic account within the final lines of *Il Penseroso* does not suggest that isolation is ideal, but they do emphasize the importance of experience and an

[13] Revard, Stella. op.cit.pp.110-111

[14] Revard, Stella.ibid.p.97

understanding of nature. The higher life found within the poem, as opposed to the one within *L'Allegro*, allows an individual to experience such a vision.[15]

The writer Stella Revard believes that the poems follow the classical hymn model which discusses goddesses that are connected to poetry and uses these females to replace Apollo completely. [16]

As can be appreciated, *Il Penseroso* along with *L'Allegro* explore and contrast different life styles people can be mirrored with. Many of us would rather be the cheerful and happy person of *L'allegro,* who likes to spend time enjoying the pleasures of living in the country and also have joyful and merry evenings in the city, while others would rather be the contemplative and thoughtful person of *Il Penseroso* who likes to spend time in meditative walks in the woods and hours of study. Or, perhaps, characteristics from both L'allegro and Il Penseroso are present in certain moments in our lives...

- **COMUS**

Comus, written by Milton in 1634, is a masque in honor of chastity. It is colloquially known as Comus, but its actual full title is *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle 1634: on Michelmas night, before the right honorable John, Earl of Bridgewater, Viscount Brackley, Lord President of Wales, and one of His Majesty's most honorable privy council.* This work was printed anonymously in 1637, and later used as a highly successful masque by the musician Thomas Arne in 1738, which then ran for more than seventy years in London.

Very few poems have been more variously designated than Comus. Milton himself described it simply as "A Mask". On the other hand, the work has been criticized and estimated as a lyrical drama, a drama in the epic style, a lyric poem

[15] Lewalski, Barbara.op.cit.p.7

[16] Revard, Stella.ibid.p.95

in the form of a play, a fantasy, an allegory, a philosophical poem, a suite of speeches or majestic soliloquies, and even a didactic poem by others. That variety in the description of the poem is partly because of its complex charm and multifaceted interest, and partly because of the desire to describe it from that point of view which should best merge its literary form with the genius and powers of its author.

Other critics, like Dr. Johnson, have called this work a drama, or a lyric. It has been stated that the characters in the poem are nothing, its sentiments are tedious and its story uninteresting; however, it has been doubted whether there will ever be any similar poem which gives so true a conception of the capacity and the dignity of the mind by which it was produced.

On the other hand, people who have praised *Comus* have seen it as an allegory with a satire on the evils both of the Church and of the State, while others have regarded it as alluding to the vices of the Court alone.

Be that as it may, no one can refuse to admit that, more than any other of Milton's shorter poems, it gives us an insight into the peculiar genius and character of its author.

- **Plot:**

The poem is about two brothers and their sister, called the Lady. She is lost in a journey through the woods. The Lady becomes exhausted, and her brothers wander off in search of food.

While the Lady is alone, she meets the depraved Comus, who is disguised as a villager and affirms he will lead her to her brothers. The Lady is deceived by Comus' friendly face, and she follows him, but she is not helped by him. She is only captured, brought to his pleasure palace and victimized by Comus'

necromancy. The Lady is seated on an enchanted chair, with "gums of glutinous heat", she is immobilized, and Comus accosts her while with one hand he holds a necromancer's wand and with the other offers a container with a drink that would overpower her. Comus urges the Lady to "be not coy" and drink from his magical cup (representing sexual pleasure and intemperance), but she always denies his proposals, arguing for the virtuousness of temperance and chastity. Within view at his palace is a display of food intended to arouse the Lady's appetites and desires.

Despite being restrained against her will, she continues to exercise right reason in her disputation with Comus, and thus she manifests her freedom of mind. Whereas the would-be seducer argues appetites and desires issuing from one's nature are "natural" and therefore licit, the Lady states that only rational self-control is enlightened and virtuous. In this debate the

Lady and Comus signify, respectively, soul and body, ratio and libido, sublimation and sensualism, virtue and vice, moral rectitude and immoral depravity.

Meanwhile her brothers, searching for her, come across the Attendant Spirit, an angelic figure sent to help them, who takes the form of a shepherd and tells them how to defeat Comus. As the Lady continues to assert her freedom of mind and to exercise her free will by resistance, even defiance, she is rescued by the Attendant Spirit and her brothers, who chase off Comus. The Lady remains magically bound to her chair. With a song, the Spirit conjures the water nymph Sabrina, who frees the Lady on account of her firm virtue. She and her brothers are together again with their parents in a triumphal celebration.

The music, in a baroque style, was composed by Henry Lawes, who also played the part of The Attendant Spirit. Generally, masques were not dramas; they could be viewed as pre-figuring the recitative of opera.

We can find in Comus abundant reminiscences of Milton's study of the literature of antiquity. It is true that in the early poems we do not find the whole of Milton, for he still had to pass through many years of trouble and controversy; but Comus, in a special degree, reveals or foreshadows much of the Milton of Paradise Lost. Whether we regard its place in Milton's life, in the series of his works, or in English literature as a whole, the poem is full of significance: it is worthwhile, therefore, to consider how its form was determined by the external circumstances and previous training of the poet; by his favorite studies in poetry, philosophy, history, and music; and by his noble theory of life in general, and of a poet's life in particular.

- **LYCIDAS**

Lycidas is a pastoral elegy in which John Milton laments the drowning of his friend and schoolmate, Edward King. *Lycidas* first appeared in a 1638 collection of elegies entitled *Justa Edouardo King Naufrago.* This collection commemorated the death of Edward King, a college mate of Milton's at Cambridge who drowned when his ship sank off the coast of Wales in August, 1637. Milton volunteered or was asked to make a contribution to the collection. The present edition follows the copy of *Poems of Mr. John Milton* (1645) in the Rauner Collection at Dartmouth College known as Hickmott 172.

The poem is mainly iambic pentameter, with irregularly appearing short lines of six syllables. Its 193 lines are divided into verse paragraphs of irregular length and changing rhyme schemes. While many of the other poems in the compilation are in Greek and Latin, "Lycidas" is one of the poems written in English.

Milton made a few significant revisions to *Lycidas* after 1638. These revisions are noted as they occur.

❖ ***Form and Structure**:*

The structure of *Lycidas* remains somewhat mysterious. J. Martin Evans argues that there are two movements with six sections each that seem to mirror each other. Arthur Barker believes that the body of *Lycidas* is composed of three movements that run parallel in pattern. That is, each movement begins with an invocation, then explores the conventions of the pastoral, and ends with a conclusion to Milton's "emotional problem" (quoted in Womack).

❖ ***Voice**:*

Milton's epigram labels *Lycidas* a "monody": a lyrical lament for one voice. But the poem has several voices or personae, including the "uncouth swain" (the main narrator), who is "interrupted" first by Phoebus (Apollo), then Camus (the river Cam, and thus Cambridge University personified), and the "Pilot of the Galilean lake" (St. Peter). Finally, a second narrator appears for only the last eight lines to bring a conclusion in ottava rima (see F. T. Prince). Before the second narrator enters, the poem contains the irregular rhyme and meter characteristic of the Italian canzone form. Canzone is essentially a polyphonic lyrical form, hence creating a serious conflict with the "monody." Milton may have meant "monody" in the sense that the poem should be regarded more as a story told completely by one person, as opposed to a chorus. This person would presumably be the final narrator, who seemingly masks himself as the "uncouth swain." This concept of story-telling ties *Lycidas* closer to the genre of pastoral elegy.

❖ ***Genre:***

Lycidas is a pastoral elegy, a genre initiated by Theocritus, also put to famous use by Virgil and Spenser. Christopher Kendrick asserts that one's reading of *Lycidas* would be improved by treating the poem anachronistically, that is, as if it was one of the most original pastoral elegies. Also, as already stated, it employs

the irregular rhyme and meter of an Italian canzone. Stella Revard suggests that *Lycidas* also exhibits the influence of Pindaric odes, especially in its allusions to Orpheus, Alpheus, and Arethusa. The poem's arrangement in verse paragraphs and its introduction of various voices and personae are also features that anticipate epic structures. Like the form, structure, and voice of *Lycidas,* its genre is deeply complex. *James Sitar.*

- ***Lycidas as a Pastoral Elegy***

The name "Lycidas" comes from Theocritus' Idylls, where Lycidas is most prominently a poet-goatherd encountered on the trip of Idyll vii. A century or more earlier than Theocritus, Herodotus in his Book IX mentions an Athenian councilor in Salamis, " a man named Lycidas" who, in proposing to the much put upon Greeks as a whole (put upon by the Persian king Xerxes), that they should entertain a compromise of their freedoms as suggested by the king and his ambassadors, who at that time had all Hellas in their grip, or so they thought, that the king's proposals should be 'submitted for approval to the general assembly of the people'. Suspected of collusion with the enemy for even suggesting such a thing, "those in the council and those outside, were so enraged when they heard it that they surrounded Lycidas and stoned him to death...with all the uproar in Salamis over Lycidas, the Athenian women soon found out what had happened; whereupon, without a word from the men, they got together, and, each one urging on her neighbor and taking her along with the crowd, flocked to Lycidas' house and stoned his wife and children." John Marincola, Penguin Classics - "The story became famous and is told by later writers, where the man's name, however, is Cyrsilus, not Lycidas." The name later occurs in Virgil and is a typically Doric shepherd's name, appropriate for the Pastoral mode.

By choosing to call the deceased King by the name of Lycidas, Milton follows “the tradition of memorializing a loved one through Pastoral poetry, a practice that may be traced from ancient Greek Sicily through Roman culture and

into the Christian Middle Ages and early Renaissance." Milton describes King as "selfless," even though he was of the clergy – a statement both bold and, at the time, controversial among lay people: "Through allegory, the speaker accuses God of unjustly punishing the young, selfless King, whose premature death ended a career that would have unfolded in stark contrast to the majority of the ministers and bishops of the Church of England, whom the speaker condemns as depraved, materialistic, and selfish."

It may be difficult for the modern reader to understand the Pastoral tradition that informs "Lycidas." Many authors and poets in the Renaissance used the pastoral mode in order to represent an ideal of life in a simple, rural landscape, as it purported to be more of an everyday man's form. However, literary critics have also emphasized the artificial character of pastoral nature: "The pastoral was in its very origin a sort of toy, a literature of make-believe." Milton himself, "recognized the pastoral as one of the natural modes of literary expression," employing it throughout "Lycidas" in order to achieve a strange juxtaposition between death and the remembrance of a loved one.

The poem itself begins with a pastoral image of laurels and myrtles, "symbols of poetic fame; as their berries are not yet ripe, the poet is not yet ready to take up his pen. However, the speaker is so filled with sorrow for the death of Lycidas that he finally begins to write an elegy. "Yet the untimely death of young Lycidas requires equally untimely verses from the poet.

Invoking the muses of poetic inspiration, the shepherd-poet takes up the task, partly, he says, in the hope that his own death will not go unlamented." The speaker continues by recalling the life of the young shepherds together "in the 'pastures' of Cambridge." This evokes Milton's relationship with the perished King as well as their schooling together. The poet also notes the "'heavy change' suffered by nature now that Lycidas is gone—a 'pathetic fallacy' in which the willows, hazel groves, woods, and caves lament Lycidas's death." In the following

section of the poem, “The shepherd-poet reflects… that thoughts of how Lycidas might have been saved are futile… turning from lamenting Lycidas’s death to lamenting the futility of all human labor.” The next section is followed by that of the voice of Phoebus, “the sun-god, an image drawn out of the mythology of classical Roman poetry, [who] replies that fame is not mortal but eternal, witnessed by Jove (God) himself on judgment day.” At the end of the poem, King/Lycidas appears as a resurrected figure, being delivered by the waters that lead to his death: “Burnished by the sun's rays at dawn, King resplendently ascends heavenward to his eternal reward.”

Although on the surface “Lycidas” reads as a pastoral elegy, a closer reading of the poem shows that the work itself is more complicated than it appears to be. "Lycidas" has been called “‘probably the most perfect piece of pure literature in existence…’ Employing patterns of structure, prosody, and imagery to maintain a dynamic coherence. The syntax of the poem is full of ‘impertinent auxiliary assertions’ that contribute valuably to the experience of the poem.” The piece itself is incredibly dynamic, enabling many different styles and patterns that overlap, “the loose ends of any one pattern disappear into the interweaving of the others.”

- **Influence**

The poem was exceedingly popular. It was hailed as Milton's best poem, and by some as the greatest lyrical poem in the English language. Yet it was detested for its artificiality by Samuel Johnson, who found "the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers unpleasing" and complained that "in this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new.”

It is from a line in "Lycidas" that Thomas Wolfe took the name of his novel Look Homeward, Angel:

Look homeward Angel now, and melt with Ruth:

And, O ye Dolphins waft the hapless youth. (163-164)

The title The Sheep Look Up by John Brunner is also taken from this poem (line 125).

2. MILTON'S DIVORCE TRACTS

"Milton the Divorcer" was the nickname Milton obtained in England due to the numerous divorce tracts he wrote.

❖ The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce

Background

Milton married in spring 1642, and shortly after, his wife, Marie Powell, left him and returned to live with her mother. The legal statutes of England did not allow for Milton to apply for a divorce, and he resorted to promoting the lawfulness of divorce. Although the laws did not change, he wrote four tracts on the topic of divorce, with *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* as his first tract. The first tract was created during a time of humiliation, and Milton was motivated towards writing on the topic after reading the work of Martin Bucer on divorce. Although it is impossible to know exactly why Powell separated from Milton, it is possible that Powell's family, a strong royalist family, caused a political difference that was exacerbated by the English Civil War.

The first edition of The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce was published on 1 August 1643, and a revised edition followed on 2 February 1644. The work was, according to his nephew Edward Phillips, started from a collection of arguments supporting divorce that would reinforce him emotionally and psychologically while separated from his wife. Although he originally sought only a legal separation from his wife, his research convinced him that he could convince the government to legalize divorce.

Tracts

Milton's divorce tracts refer to the four interlinked polemical pamphlets he wrote from 1643 to 1645: *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, *The Judgment of Martin Bucer*, *Tetrachordon*, and *Colasterion*. Through these works, Milton argued for the legitimacy for divorce on grounds of spousal incompatibility. As he argued for divorce, he introduced a version of no-fault divorce which was extremely controversial at that time. This led Milton to be publicly attacked by religious figures who sought to ban his tracts.

Milton's desertion of his newly married wife, Mary Powel, prompted him to write these tracts. In addition, Milton's personal psychosexual situation was detected in passages of The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce by early critics.

The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce argues for the ability to have a second chance at marriage. In particular, Milton claims, in Book I, Chapter III, that no one can always know the disposition of their spouse before they enter into marriage. In particular, he argues in a very personal way:

> *"That for all the wariness that can be us'd, it may yet befall a discreet man to be mistak'n in his choice: and we have plenty of examples. The soberest and best govern'd men are lest practiz'd in these affairs; and who knows not that the bashful muteness of a virgin may oft-times hide all the unliveliness & natural sloth which is really unfit for conversation; nor is there that freedom of accesse granted or presum'd, as may suffice to a perfect discerning till too late: and where any indisposition is suspected, what more usual than the perswasion of friends, that acquaintance, as it encreases, will amend all. And lastly, it is not strange though many who have spent their youth chastly, are in some things not so quick-sighted, while they hast too eagerly to light the nuptial torch; nor is it therefore that for a modest error a*

man should forfeit so great a happiness, and no charitable means to release him."[17]

Milton's argument progresses to merging ideas in Genesis and the epistles of Paul to argue, in Chapter IV, that the burning described by Paul was a longing to be united with a spouse:

"That desire which God saw it was not good that men should be left alone to burn in; the desire and longing to put off an unkindly solitariness by uniting another body, but not without a fit Soule to his in the cheerful society of wedlock. Which if it were so needful before the fall, when man was much more perfect in himself, how much more is it needful now against all the sorrows and casualties of this life to have an intimate and speaking help, a ready and reviving associate in marriage."[18]

Milton's argument and stance on divorce continues to the point that he implies that a divorcer could actually be the one who understands and defends marriage the most:

"If that mistake have done injury, it fails not to dismisse with recompense, for to retain still, and not to be able to love, is to heap up more injury... He therefore who lacking his due in the most native and humane end of marriage, thinks it better to part then to live sadly and injuriously to that cheerful covenant... he I say who therefore seeks to part, is one who highly honors the married life, and would not stain it."[19]

[17] Milton, John. Complete Prose Works of John Milton Vol II ed. Don Wolfe. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959. P. 249

[18] Wolfe, ed.op.cit.pp.251-253.

[19] Wolfe, ed.ibid p.253.

In Milton's argument, if divorce was not allowed, polygamy would be an alternative to overcome the problems that Milton thought plagued society, and he quotes 1 Corinthians 7:15 in order to suggest that one may technically be allowed to remarry in situations that do not technically amount to divorce.

Second edition

Milton added an address to Parliament that dismisses the possibility of self-interest as a motivator for the work, but later writes:

> *"When points of difficulty are to be discusst, appertaining to the removal of unreasonable wrong and burden from the perplext life of our brother, it is incredible how cold, how dull, and farre from all fellow feeling we are, without the spurre of self-concernment."*

He also added an explanation that divorce was not just to help wives, and in the XV chapter of Book II writes:

> *"Who can be ignorant that woman was created for man, and not man for woman; and that a husband may be injur'd as insufferably in mariage as a wife? What an injury is it after wedlock not to be belov'd, what to be slighted, what to be contended with a point of house-rule who shall be the head, not for any parity of wisdome, for that were something reasonable, but out of female pride."*[20]

Having inherited Catholic canon law, England, unusually for a Protestant country, had no formal mechanisms for divorce: as in Catholicism, marriages could be annulled on the basis of preexisting impediments, like consanguinity or impotence, or separations could be obtained. However, divorce may have been unofficially condoned in cases of desertion or adultery. On the whole, in the words

[20] Wolfe, ed.op.cit.p 324.

of one historian, England remained "the worst of all worlds, largely lacking either formal controls over marriage or satisfactory legal means of breaking it."

The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce: Restored to the Good of Both Sexes, from the Bondage of Canon Law was published by John Milton on August 1st, 1643 as a tract addressed to both Parliament and the Westminster Assembly of Divines.

The Puritan party in Parliament, with Milton's polemical help (Of Reformation [1641], The Reason of Church Government [1642], An Apology for Smectymnuus [1642]), had succeeded in abolishing episcopacy, the form of church government inherited from the pre-reformation Roman Catholic Church, and challenged Charles I's "personal rule" (rule without calling Parliament). Reform was the watchword of the day. To most Puritans, including Milton, reform meant restoring institutions to the way they were before; they were "corrupted" by the medieval Catholic Church. In large part, Milton offered The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce as a specific proposal for church reform; he recommended that the new church abandon canon law on marriage since marriage was no longer considered a church sacrament.

In Ernest Sirluck's cogent summary, Milton proposed to match and then exceed the reforms typical of most European Protestant states:

"Milton's demand went very much further. It was for the recognition of divorce a link with the right of remarriage for both parties; the liberalization of grounds, particularly to include incompatibility; and the removal of divorce from public jurisdiction, whether ecclesiastical or civil, to private."[21]

[21] Patterson, Annabel. "Milton, Marriage and Divorce" in A Companion to Milton. Ed. Thomas Corns. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Milton believed that the work of church reform was largely a process of restoring the dignity and liberties men (this is gender specific) once enjoyed but had lost to the tyrannies of prelacy, custom, and ignorance.

One might well argue that Milton's entire effort in his political tracts is characterized by his concern for restoring manly dignity to Englishmen. In Tetrahedron (1645) he wrote:

> *"For nothing now-a-days is more degenerately forgotten, than the true dignity of Man, almost in every respect, but especially in this prime institution of Matrimony, wherein his native pre-eminence ought most to shine."*

When he alleges that the "dignity of man" has suffered greater neglect in his day than any other single thing-- including, presumably many of Milton's other favorite things like scripture, learning, reason, and ancient liberties-- he probably did not mean to exaggerate; he meant that all the evil and corruption of medieval religion and politics can be characterized as a general threat to manliness. He had been anxious about the degraded estate of manly dignity for many years before 1644, and in scenes other than marital relations.

According to Milton, prelates are "man-haters"; and here he does not point his finger at particular prelates, he means that prelates are structurally constituted to be man-haters; he means man-hating is integral to being a bishop. Milton personifies prelacy as a whore, "making merchandise" of men's souls and bodies because men's souls and bodies are what literally is signified by the feminine personification of the church prelatical -- that is, the Great Whore.

To Milton, canon law was just another weapon used by the "Great Whore" against men, and since the English church continued to enforce such laws governing marriage and divorce, she was the whore's accomplice. Milton wanted to restore manly dignity to the practice of marriage, first by restoring the power of

divorce exclusively to husbands, and second by insisting that marriage is principally a kind of friendship much like the manly friendships described by Socrates in the Symposium and Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics--a kind of enlightened heteroerotic pederasty. Milton's zeal against canon law was the same as his zeal against bishops--the goal is to restore manliness to English Christianity. This is why he had no patience with the widespread European Protestant notion that divorce should be allowed to wives as a protection from abusive husbands. Milton wanted to liberalize divorce, but for men, not for women.

Milton's personal circumstances only increased his zeal for the restoration of manly dignity. In his address "To Parliament" Milton acknowledges the role played by "self-concernment" in his efforts. Most of the details of Milton's first marriage, to Mary Powell, will always be matter for speculation, but even the limited facts established by biographers and historians indicate that Milton had a strong personal stake in divorce reform. Having settled into a schoolmaster's life at the age of thirty-two, Milton acquired a wife rather suddenly and, to those around him, unexpectedly, in June 1642. He travelled to Forest Hill near Oxford presumably to dun Richard Powell in person for late payment of interest on a £300 obligation Milton had inherited from his father. Whether or not Milton fell in love is unknown, but he returned to London having settled the financial matter and married to Powell's eldest daughter. He was thirty-three; she was seventeen. After six or eight weeks of married life, Mary received her husband's permission for an extended visit to her father's home; she promised to return in late September. Just before that date, the first blood of the civil war was shed (Parker [1996] 230); King Charles I was now openly at war with the militia Parliament had authorized the previous spring. Richard Powell (like Milton's lawyer brother Christopher) was an ardent Royalist. No doubt he hoped to restore his fortunes by pinning his hopes on the King. Mary Milton did not return to London until 1645.

Milton could, under existing canon law, have obtained a formally legal separation, a “meno et thoro”, as it was called--from bed and board. She had

deserted him, and that was sufficient grounds. This would not, however, dissolve the marriage, and neither John nor Mary would be free to re-marry. For divorce and re-marriage, Milton would have to argue (and prevail in court) that the marriage had never been valid because it was never consummated, that he was impotent or Mary frigid, or that she had been previously engaged to another. All these options involved terrible embarrassment to one's manly dignity. Such were the rules under canon law, virtually the same rules that obtained in the pre-reformation church.

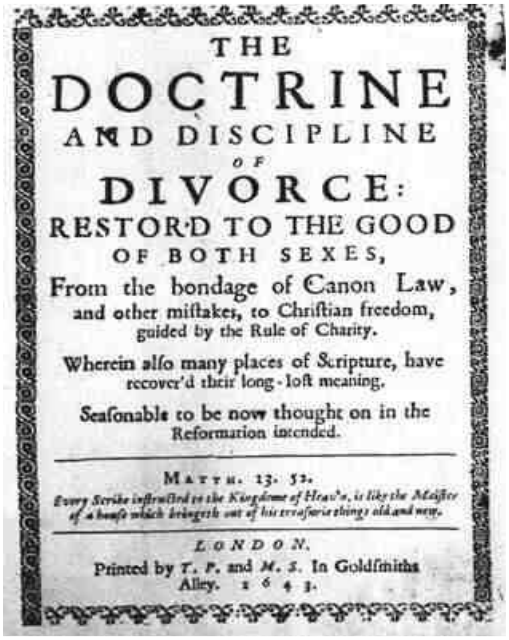
Milton grounded his arguments against canon law much as he did those against prelacy--on his interpretation of scripture. But the scripture-based case for freedom for men to divorce and re-marry, unlike that against bishops, ran into two huge obstacles: Matthew 5: 31-32 and Matthew 19: 8-9. Milton had to argue that the apparently "plain words" Jesus spoke on these occasions do not mean what they seem to at first glance. He argued that the ancient Hebrew rules for divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1-2) were perfectly consistent with the purposes for which God instituted marriage (Genesis 2:18), that women were first created and marriage instituted for men, to remedy male loneliness. If a wife fails to remedy male loneliness, especially if she aggravates it, any man should be free to divorce her and take another with or without her consent, and no "civil or earthly power" may hinder him. Milton argues that such male-centered rules would benefit "both sexes." He believed hindering a man's rights in these matters was irrational, unnatural, and uncharitable. Since Jesus could not have intended to introduce irrational, unnatural, or uncharitable restrictions on manly liberty, Milton argues, Jesus' words must not mean what they have usually been taken to mean; therefore Jesus must be exaggerating in order to reproach the Pharisees.

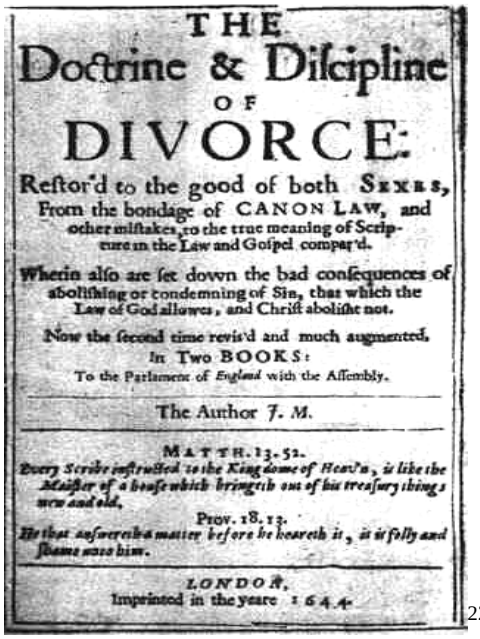
Milton's radical position on divorce involved a fairly radical position on hermeneutics, too. The Bible cannot be interpreted, he implied, to teach anything or require any behavior that does not meet a rather strict standard for rationality, charity, and naturalness. Many regarded this as putting natural law and reason above the word of God. Presbyterian reaction to The Doctrine and Discipline of

Divorce and Milton's subsequent tracts on divorce "The Judgment of Martin Bucer" [1644] and Tetrachordon [1645]) was overwhelmingly negative.

Many Presbyterian divines supported the anonymous *An Answer to a book entitled, the doctrine and discipline of divorce* (1644) that offended Milton so much and prompted from him the abusive response called *Colasterion* (1645). Milton's break with the Presbyterian party dates from the years of these debates about divorce, debates the Presbyterian leaders in Parliament and Assembly dearly wished to avoid or suppress.

First Edition **Second Edition**


THE
DOCTRINE
AND DISCIPLINE
OF
DIVORCE:
RESTOR'D TO THE GOOD
OF BOTH SEXES,
From the bondage of Canon Law,
and other miſtakes, to Chriſtian freedom,
guided by the Rule of Charity.
Wherein alſo many places of Scripture, have
recover'd their long-loſt meaning.
Seaſonable to be now thought on in the
Reformation intended.
MATTH. 13. 52.
Every Scribe inſtructed to the Kingdome of Heav'n, is like the Maiſter
of a houſe which bringeth out of his treaſurie things old and new.
LONDON,
Printed by T. P. and M. S. In Goldſmiths
Alley. 1643.


THE
Doctrine & Diſcipline
OF
DIVORCE:
Reſtor'd to the good of both SEXES,
From the bondage of CANON LAW, and
other miſtakes, to the true meaning of Scrip-
ture in the Law and Goſpel compar'd.
Wherein alſo are ſet down the bad conſequences of
abolishing or condemning of Sin, that which the
Law of God allowes, and Chriſt aboliſhe not.
Now the ſecond time revis'd and much augmented,
In Two BOOKS:
To the Parlament of England with the Aſſembly.
The Author J. M.
MATTH. 13. 52.
Every Scribe inſtructed to the Kingdome of Heav'n, is like the
Maiſter of a houſe which bringeth out of his treaſury things
new and old.
PROV. 18. 13.
He that anſwereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and
ſhame unto him.
LONDON,
Imprinted in the yeare 1644.

22

Critical review

Early responses to Milton's divorce tracts placed Milton as a polygamist and rumors were spread that his motivation was towards both divorce and polygamy. On 13 August 1644, Herbert Palmer read a sermon to Parliament stating:

[22] http://michaelbryson.net/miltonweb/divorce.html. March 2010.

"If any plead Conscience for the Lawfulnesse of Polygamy; (or for divorce for other causes then Christ and His apostles mention: Of which a wicked book is abroad and uncensored, though deserving to be burnt, whose Author hath been so impudent as to set his Name to it, and dedicate it to your selves... will you grant a Toleration for all this."[23]

The book in question was Milton's Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, and it is possible that the polygamy comment is in reference to rumors of Milton's pursuit of Miss Davis. This rumor continued to prevail, and Anne Sadleir, in a letter to Roger Williams in 1654, writes, "For Milton's book that you desire I should read, if I be not mistaken, that is he that has wrote a book of the lawfulness of divorce; and if report say true, he had, at that time, two or three wives living." [24]

Although Sadleir was neither Williams' nor Milton's friend, Cyriack Skinner, her nephew, was a close associate with Milton, and it is possible that further information came from her relative Daniel Skinner, who helped Milton write his *De Doctrina Christiana* and had possible knowledge of Milton's views on divorce and polygamy. Pierre Bayle, in his *Nouvelles* (1685) and *Dictionaire Historique et Critique* (1697), describes the idea of Milton approving of divorce and polygamy as common knowledge and traces these views to Milton's problems with his wife.

Nicolaus Moller, in his *De Polygamia Omni* (A study of All Polygamy) (1710), lists Milton twice. An obituary for Milton in *Allgemeine Schau-buhne der Welt*, claims that "He was a great defender of liberty of divorce (as he himself divorced himself from six wives one after the other)."[25]

[23] Miller, Leo. John Milton among the Polygamophiles. New York: Loewenthal Press, 1974, p. 282

[24] Miller, Leo.op.cit.p.122

[25] Miller, Leo. ibid.p.135.

A modern critic, Annabel Patterson, believed that the tract "presents a logical case for the reform of divorce law, superimposed on a subtext of emotional chaos."[26]

The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce contributed greatly during Milton's time calling for more leniencies in the church's position on divorce. Milton was a pioneer for the right of divorce in a time when it was prohibited by almost all denominations. This doctrine was very controversial but in spite of being rejected by many people especially by the church, this work has contributed a lot to the English Literature as well as to the reformations and laws at that time.

- **Judgment of Martin Bucer**

Published on 15 July 1644, *Judgment of Martin Bucer* consists mostly of Milton's translations of pro-divorce arguments from the *De Regno Christi* of the Protestant reformer Martin Bucer. By finding support for his views among orthodox writers, Milton hoped to influence the members of Parliament Protestant ministers who had condemned him.

Tract

The work begins with a preface titled "To the Parliament", and the preface connects the history of Bucer and his reformist ideas with the history of Milton's previous tract on divorce:

"For against these my adversaries, who before the examining of a profound truth in a fit time of reformation, have had the conscience to oppose naught else but their blind reproaches and surmises, that a single innocence (his own) might not be oppressed and over born by a crew of mouths for the restoring of a law and doctrine falsely and unlernedly reputed new and scandalous. God... hath

[26] Patterson, Annabel. Op.cit.p.289.

unexpectedly rais'd up as it were from the dead... one famous light of the first reformation to bear witness with me."[27]

Milton believed that a translation of Bucer's words would convince Parliament of the truth behind his previous tract on divorce. In the translation, he omits many sections that did not support Milton's purpose and added slight translations that connected to Milton's personal state.

- **Tetrachordon**

Tetrachordon appeared in March 1645, after Milton had published his defense of free speech, *Areopagitica*, in the interim. The name in Greek means "four-stringed." The title symbolizes Milton's attempt to connect four passages of Biblical Scripture to rationalize the legalization of divorce. Milton wanted to harmonize the four Scriptural passages (Genesis 1:27-28, Deuteronomy 24:1, Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:2-9, and I Corinthians 7:10-16) dealing with divorce. In this learned and dense Biblical analysis, Milton suggests that in the post-lapsarian world the secondary law of nature permits divorce.

Tract

Milton connects four Scriptural passages, (Genesis 1:27-28, Deuteronomy 24:1, Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:2-9, and I Corinthians 7:10-16), in order to argue that Scripture supports the legalization of divorce. In addition to this argument, the work is targeted at Herbert Palmer, who attacked Milton's The Doctrine and Discipline in a sermon to Parliament, and pamphlets published in support of Palmer's position. In particular, Milton claims:

"The impudence therefore, since he waigh'd so little what a gross revile that was to give his equall, I send him back again for a phylactery to stitch upon his arrogance, that censures not onely before conviction so bitterly without so much as

[27] Don Wolfe, ed.op.cit.p.437

one reason giv'n, but censures the Congregation of his Governors to their faces, for not being so hasty as himself to censure."[28]

Attacks such as this demonstrate how Milton abandoned his desire to reform the laws of England in order to focus on satirizing his enemies. This is not to say that Milton abandons any argument in regards to divorce, and he is sure to argue the point: if we seek *"an impartial definition, what Marriage is, and what is not Marriage; it will undoubtedly be safest, fairest, and most with our obedience, to enquire... how it was in the beginning".*[29]

Furthermore, Milton argues that St. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 11, "ends the controversy by explaining that the woman is not primarily and immediately the image of God, but in reference to the man... he the image and glory of God, she the glory of the man: he is not for her, but she for him".[30] This leads to Milton taking a misogynistic stance relying on St. Paul's characterization of women as inferior. Although he does allow for some exceptions, his standard view on the matter is expressed when he argues:

"But that which far more easily and obediently follows from this verse, is that, seeing woman was purposely made for man, and he her head, it cannot stand before the breath of this divine utterance, that man the portraiture of God, joyning to himself for his intended good and solace an inferiour sexe, should so becom her thrall, whose willfulness or inability to be a wife frustrates the occasionall end of her creation, but that he may acquitt himself to freedom by his naturall birthright, and that indelible character of priority which God crown'd him with."[31]

[28] Don Wolfe, ed.ibid.p.582

[29] Don Wolfe, ed.ibid.pp.586-587.

[30] Don Wolfe,ibid.p.589.

[31] Don Wolfe,ibid.pp. 589-590.

Critical review

Shortly after its printing, John Wilkins categorized *Tetrachordon* under "Of Divorce and Polygamy", uniting the view of Milton as a divorcer and a polygamist. Although this may have been done by coincidence, Martin Kempe's 1677 bibliography, *Charismatum Sacrorum Trias, sive Bibliotheca Anglorum Thelogica* (Triad of Sacred Unctions, or the Theological Library of the English), lists Milton under his two sections of *De Divortio* (of divorce) and *De Polygamia* (of polygamy).

❖ **Colasterion**

Meaning "rod of punishment" in Greek, Colasterion was published along with Tetrachordon in March 1645 in response to an anonymous pamphlet attacking the first edition of *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*. Milton makes no new arguments, but harshly takes to task the "trivial author" in offensive prose.

Tract

Colasterion is a personal response to the anonymous pamphlet “An Answer to a Book, Intituled, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*,” or, “A Pleas for Ladies and Gentlewomen, and all other Married Women against Divorce (1644).” The work contains many insults against the anonymous author, including "wind-egg", "Serving-man", and "conspicuous gull". In the tract, Milton promotes an idea of separation, and, in his situation, a separation from his previous wife.

3. SONNETS ON HIS OWN PERSONAL LOSSES

As we know, John Milton underwent many difficult situations during his life. These events did not stop him from writing and proving his talent, but the other way around; his several personal losses prompted him to write poetry and amazing works worthy to be read and analyzed.

❖ **<u>Sonnet 19</u> "On his own blindness"**

"It is not miserable to be blind; it is miserable to be incapable of enduring blindness" John Milton.

Background

Milton's sight had been weak since he was a child but, it was completely lost in February 1652 when he was 44 years old. By about 1650, shortly after the Puritans had overthrown the monarchy, Milton developed glaucoma (an eye disorder) which led to his blindness. This even impacted him in a devastating way because he had not achieved the greatness which he had predicted for himself.

Milton recognized that he had an amazing ability to write poetry. However, he developed glaucoma and went blind while his poetic ability had still not been fully explored. His strongly Puritan sentiment made him worried that God himself would hold it against him and punish him for not using his poetic talent.

The glaucoma, however, did not end Milton's prodigious poetic career. Meditating on his "spent light", he came up with this beautiful sonnet known as "On his Blindness" by 1655. Milton dictated the sonnet to his daughters and continued to dictate his further works, either to his daughters or to his hired secretaries. Indeed, his greatest masterpieces, "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained" were created and dictated during these years of blindness.

The sonnet

"On His Blindness," by John Milton, is a Petrarchan sonnet, of iambic pentameter, a lyric poem with fourteen lines. This type of sonnet was popularized by the Italian priest Petrarch (1304-1374). It has a rhyme scheme of ABBA, ABBA, CDE and CDE. This sonnet was written in 1655, showing a simple diction, full and half-rhyme, enjambment, and contraction. Milton used his extensive knowledge of

scripture to create a deeply personal poem, and guide himself and his audience from an intense loss through to understanding and improvement.

Any time you feel you have little to give, or the wrong thing, you can recall Milton's final line: "They also serve who only stand and wait." At the center of the sonnet stands Patience.

When I consider how my light is spent ***1***
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide ***2***
And that one talent which is death to hide ***3***
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent ***4***
To serve therewith my Maker, and present **5**
My true account, lest he returning chide; ***6***
"Doth God exact day labor, light denied?" ***7***
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent ***8***
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need ***9***
Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best ***10***
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state ***11***
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed, ***12***
And post o'er land and ocean without rest; ***13***
They also serve who only stand and wait. ***14***

Meter

All the lines in the poem are in iambic pentameter. In this metric pattern, a line has five pairs of unstressed and stressed syllables, for a total of ten syllables. The first two lines of the poem illustrate this pattern:

1 2 3 4 5

When **I** | con **SID** | er **HOW**| my **LIFE** | is **SPENT**

1 2 3 4 5

Ere **HALF** | my **DAYS** | in **THIS** | dark **WORLD**.| and **WIDE**

Examples of Figures of Speech

- **Alliteration:** *my **d**ays in this **d**ark **w**orld and **w**ide* (line 2)
- **Metaphor:** *though my soul more bent / To serve therewith my Maker* (lines 3-4). *The author compares his soul to his mind.*
- **Personification/Metaphor:** *But Patience, to prevent / That murmur, soon replies . . .* (lines 8-9).
- **Paradox:** *They also serve who only stand and wait.* (line 14)

Themes, sense and tone of the sonnet

John Milton's meditative "Sonnet XIX"-"On his blindness" reveals the idea of man in adversity coming to terms with fate; the loss and regaining of primacy of experience.

Milton reflects upon the condition of his own soul in physical blindness through his ideas of service, duty, and talent in order to explore his relationship with God and his art: writing. The sonnet's imagery connotes multiple meanings. However, the main themes of this poem are Milton's exploration of his feelings, fears, and doubts regarding his failed sight, and his rationalization of this fear by seeking solutions in his faith. The sonnet suggests that man was created to work and not to rest. What helps the reader or listener to understand, interpret, and help resolve the thematic dilemma presented in his sonnet, is Milton's use of his diction and structure, which provides us clues to interpret it. The supportive details, structure, form, and richness of context embodies the theme. Milton also used several

allusions to biblical verse and historical parallels which help give important insight towards understanding the sonnet.

The sonnet goes through two phases: the first phase is Milton's question addressed to God, "Why me?" he asked. Then, the second phase offers a resolution to Milton's dilemma. Moreover, the sonnet acts as a self-poem to Milton, himself.

In the beginning of the sonnet, Milton suggests that his outstanding experience has been deferred since he became blind. The words, "dark'", "death", and "useless" (lines 2-4) describe Milton's emotional state.

"When I consider how my light is spent ***1***
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide ***2***
And that one talent which is death to hide ***3***
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent…" ***4***

Milton begins the poem by estimating how he wasted his ability to see. In this poem he used the word light for vision. He also used the word light to represent spirituality, and he meant here that how he ignored his spiritual capacity. He further tells us that he will spend remaining half of his life in darkness. Now when he lost his vision, he found himself surrounded by darkness only. Here he used the term dark world as his inability to understand the spiritual world and knowledge.

His blindness created a covered clarity within his mind. Line three, *"And that one talent which is death to hide"* is a reference to the biblical context of the Bible.

This line refers to the story of Matthew XXV, 14-30 where a servant of the lord buried his single talent instead of investing it. In this famous parable, the lord who is going away for a time gives his three servants money in proportion to their ability to increase its value. He distributes the money in talents, a unit of weight used in

ancient times to establish the value of gold, silver, or any other medium used as money in Israel.

In the "Parable of the Talents," a wealthy man gives the first servant five talents of silver, the second servant two talents, and the third servant one talent. After the employer returns from the trip and asks for an accounting, the first servant reports that he doubled his talents to ten, and the second that he doubled his to four. Both men receive promotions. The third servant then reports that he still has only one talent because he did nothing to increase its value. Instead, he buried it. The employer denounces him for his laziness, gives his talent to the man with ten, and casts him outside into the darkness.

Milton associated his poetic ability with such a talent which was being buried because he was now blind and could therefore no longer write. As a Puritan, he expected his God to punish him, even though it was not his own fault that he was now blind.

Milton implies in this sonnet that God judges humans on their labors for Him, based on their abilities to do their best. For example, if one carpenter can make only two chairs a day, and another carpenter can make five, they both serve God equally well if the first carpenter makes his two chairs and the second makes his five. If one carpenter becomes severely disabled and cannot make even a single chair, he remains worthy in the sight of God. For, as Milton says in the last line of the poem, "they also serve who only stand and wait."

In the lines:

"…Lodged with me <u>useless</u>, though my soul more bent ***4***
To serve therewith my Maker, and present ***5***
My true account, lest he returning chide…" ***6***

The fourth line refers to his useless eyes, though this handicap helps Milton to be more resolute to do more, and then he goes on into the fifth and sixth lines, where he implies that the judgment of Christ finds him wanting; his life's account shows no profit, and is rebuked. Milton also states that after losing his vision he has realized the importance of God, and now he wishes to serve him more than ever to prove how much he loves him. In the next line, he extends his desire to serve God by asking the question does it require the hard work of a day to please God, as his blindness may not allow him to do so.

In the lines:

"…"Doth God exact day labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent…"

Milton uses the word "fondly' rather than the word "foolishly", as if his question was not thought through. Also the line reflects a similar question posed to Jesus by his disciples as they left the temple, regarding why a man was blind.

"… And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered," neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." (John, 9, 1-3)

Milton's question is similar to that of the disciples, asking if his blindness was a daily wage for his labors from God, and his answer from The Inner Guide, the Comforter or, that which Milton refers to as Patience, tells him that God does not require what man thinks of as important. That his blindness is "but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

In the lines:

"…That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts, who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

Milton uses the words "mild" and "yoke" as another reference to Jesus and again denotes his deeper understanding of Christ's gentle disposition joined in the union of servitude towards mankind and his invitation to join in the world's salvation.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11, 29-30)

"Thousands bidding speed" appears to be a reference to the faithful awaiting Christ's Second Coming and their duty to *"Post o'er land and ocean without rest":* to proclaim that, *"They also serve who stand and wait"* appears to indicate that the ones who do so are also doing God's will.

He describes how his own wisdom answers him, that God does not need anyone's hard work or any kind of sacrifice to please him. One can serve God by obeying his wishes. It is the best way to serve God.

Conclusions

As we can notice, this sonnet is a beautiful poem about re-evaluating life after a big change, which of course is something really hard to do. Milton turns his tension

into a positive thing by seeking for himself truth or reason from his blindness, by exploring his own emotional response to his future, in seeking comfort from the scripture regarding the role that blind people have served in the spreading of the Word of God. Milton appears to understand that it is not what a person is or does which establishes his value to God, but the very fact that he serve as part of God's creation which is loved, and he needs to love in a similar way.

Through this sonnet, the author meditates on the fact that he has become blind. He expresses his frustration at being prevented by his disability from serving God as well as he desires to. He is answered by "Patience," who tells him that God has many who hurry to do his bidding, and does not really need man's work. Rather, what is valued is the ability to bear God's "mild yoke," to tolerate whatever God asks faithfully and without complaint. As the famous last line sums it up, "They also serve who only stand and wait."

- **Sonnet XXVIII (On his deceased wife)**

Background

Milton suffered many losses during his life. Two of his wives died giving birth. His first wife, Mary Powell, died on May 5, 1652, three days after giving birth to a daughter, Deborah, while his second wife, Katherine Woodcock, whom he married on November 12, 1656, died of fever on February 3, 1658, four months after giving birth to a daughter, Katherine, who survived her mother by only one month.

These serious events surely prompted Milton to write this sonnet "Methought I saw my late espoused Saint," which is perhaps the most intensely personal of all his sonnets. However, the problem for many biographers, critics, and other people alike is to identify which wife Milton was describing.

The sonnet

SONNET XXIII.

ON HIS DECEASED WIFE.

METHOUGHT I saw my late espoused saint **1**
Brought to me like Alcestis, from the grave, **2**
Whom *Jove's great son* to her *glad husband gave*, **3**
Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint. **4**
Mine, as whom wash'd from spot of child-bed taint **5**
Purification in the old Law did save, **6**
And such, as yet once more I trust to have **7**
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint, **8**
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind: **9**
Her face was veil'd; yet to my fancied sight **10**
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shin'd **11**
So clear, as in no face with more delight. **12**
But O, as to embrace me she inclin'd, **13**
I wak'd; she fled; and day brought back my night. **14**

John Milton's Sonnet XXIII, which begins "Methought I saw my late espoused saint," is primarily pentameter and follows the rhyme scheme abbaabba cdcdcd of the Petrarchan sonnet. However, its development follows that of the Shakespearean sonnet, in which the details of the poem divide themselves into four parts: three four-line parts with the fourth part, the resolution, occurring in the last two lines of the sonnet.

This sonnet offers an autobiographical dream vision of the poet's imagined reunion with his second wife, Katherine Woodcock. Most scholars posit Katherine Woodcock as the subject of Milton's dream in this poem, but some believe that the sonnet memorializes Milton's first wife, Mary Powell, who died on May 5, 1652—three days after giving birth to a daughter, Deborah while others argue that the poem commemorates both wives.

The poem speaks about the poet Milton being visited in his dream by his deceased wife, who died after giving birth to a daughter. Milton was blind. He can

see her. As he wakes he returns to his waking reality, where he is blind. Maybe the poem describes an after death contact experience, where the person who has died appears to her husband to reassure and comfort him.

Sonnet XXIII is merely "a moving and beautiful dream-vision"; Milton does not write this sonnet simply as a widower dreaming of the appearance of his dead wife. As evident in his prose tracts, the actions of man, even in the earthly realm of his relationship with his wife as husband, is intricately a part of his relationship with God as believer. This sonnet speaks about the development of these roles of wife, husband, believer, and God, which ends with a painful but true awareness of the right role of the believer in the world towards God.

Critics have also held the opinion that Sonnet XXIII is not an autobiographical poem, but an idealistic work that traces a movement from pagan legend to Christian doctrine, thereby representing a drama of the poet's personal salvation. Although the sonnet's ambiguity permits all these possible readings, the strongest evidence in the poem supports interpretations of Katherine as the subject of Milton's dream about a wished-for reunion with his "late espoused saint," as one who was "washed from spot of childbed taint." While both Mary and Katherine died after giving birth, only Katherine lived until the end of the period of purification according to "the old Law" of Leviticus 12:2-8.

Sonnet XXIII confronts not only these losses of interpersonal relationships but also the poet's own loss of the faculty of sight. Milton was totally blind at the time of his marriage to Katherine. According to many critics, this sonnet refers to her. Milton's dream of Katherine, which is the sonnet's main subject, momentarily allows the poet what had been denied but so strongly desired in life: full sight of his beloved's face. The work's first twelve lines present five different apparitions of Katherine and three corresponding conditions for her possible return from death, all underscored by Milton's conviction "yet once more…to have/ Full sight of her in heaven without restraint." However, the sonnet's concluding two lines, which shape

a sixth vision of and fourth possibility for recovering the beloved, qualify the poem's scenarios for reunion through the bittersweet image of Katherine who, upon reaching to embrace the dreaming poet, wakes Milton from his vision of "Love, sweetness, goodness in her person," thereby hastening her own disappearance: "But O as to embrace me she inclined/ I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night."

In keeping with the conventions of most English poetic elegies written in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Milton's elegiac sonnet crafts relationships between three fundamental components of the mourning process: lamentation, praise, and consolation. Each of the poem's imagined reunions with the beloved interlinks expressions of sorrow, love, and solace—though not necessarily in that strict order—thus achieving at each step a synthesis of those three emotional and rhetorical dimensions of grief. For example, in the fourth of these visions (lines 9-11) the poet fancies seeing his beloved once more in heaven, where she will appear "vested all in white, pure as her mind." This articulation of praise and love for Katherine's virtue quickly incorporates a qualification for their potential meeting in heaven—"Her face was veiled"—which implies lamentation and Milton's sorrow for his physical blindness during their life together. Although emotionally ambivalent and rhetorically ambiguous, this semblance of the beloved as both luminous and shrouded centers upon the consolation that the faculty of imagination may permit the poet to see beyond the veil: "yet to my fancied sight,/ Love, sweetness, goodness in her person shined." Milton's solace at this particular moment in the sonnet thus joins together praise and lamentation through the image of Katherine's mind.

Forms and Devices

In Sonnet XXIII Milton shapes the Petrarchan form through the use of two key poetic devices: simile and conceit. Milton's dream-as-poem offers six distinct visions of Katherine each signaled by a simile, which together shape four possible

scenarios for her imagined return: the first theme informed by a classical legend; the second, by Hebraic law; the third, by Christian faith; and the fourth, by secular humanism. In the first simile Katherine is compared to Alcestis, who, after giving her life to save her husband, Admetus, was rescued from the underworld by Hercules ("Jove's great son"): "Methought I saw my late espoused saint/ Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave."

Katherine is next likened to a mother who, in accordance with Leviticus 12:2-8, has neither touched any sacred objects nor entered any places of worship for a period of eighty days after giving birth to a daughter: "Mine as whom washed from spot of childbed taint,/ Purification in the old Law did save." By way of the next two similes, the sonnet then links this Old Testament condition for Katherine's purification with New Testament principles of redemption and Christian virtue: "And such, as yet once more I trust to have/ Full sight of her in heaven without restraint,/ Came vested all in white, pure as her mind." These classical, Hebraic, and Christian themes culminate in the following image of Katherine as one who embodies Renaissance humanist ideals of "Love, sweetness, goodness" that shine within her person "So clear, as in no face with more delight." The poem's final simile grounds those ideals in a tangible desire for relationship—Katherine's imagined gesture of reaching toward the dreaming poet—that ironically disperses his vision and awakens Milton to the reality of both her absence and his own sightlessness: "But O as to embrace me she inclined/ I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night."

In each case, Milton's similes both initiate and join together these six apparitions of Katherine that collectively determine the poem's thematic progression from pagan lore to Old and New Testament doctrine to secular humanist principles. This rhetorical movement in turn underscores the sonnet's central conceit that Katherine's spirit embodies the best elements from all four cultural traditions that conclude in the poem's image of her mind's singular virtue: "So clear, as in no face with more delight." The sonnet thus invests Katherine's

spirit with Protestant tenets of the soul's indwelling grace and covenant of redemption in a characteristic gesture that distinguishes most, if not all, of Milton's poetic works, from "On Shakespeare" (1632) to Paradise Lost (1667, 1674), in which the poet places essential moral teachings from classical, Hebraic, and other cultural, literary, and religious traditions in the service of Protestant reform and secular humanist ideology. Since that conceit is such a driving force in this sonnet, Milton elides the poem's syntactical division between octave (abbaabba) and sestet (cdcdcd), thereby working within Petrarchan formal conventions to achieve a fluid synthesis of Katherine's changing semblances against the sonnet's more predictable rhyme scheme.

Themes and Meanings

Milton's careful attention to this balance between poetic form and poetic devices in Sonnet XXIII illustrates his chief concern with merging the Greek notion of poetry as poiein ("to make or craft") with the Roman idea of the poet as vates (a priest or diviner). Just as this elegiac poem works within the metrical conventions of the Petrarchan sonnet in order to make (poiein) a perfect pattern, the poem's similes and central conceit underscore the poet's experience as a visionary (vates)—an artist, that is, who can not only craft a good poem, but who can use poetic form as a vehicle for revealing sacred truths. In nearly all of Milton's writings (prose and verse alike) this tension between poetic making and divining reveals a larger cultural and philosophical conflict about the poet's social responsibility that was much debated in sixteenth and seventeenth century England. Was the poet a rhetorician (in the tradition of Cicero) or a religious visionary (in the tradition of St. Augustine)?

As a record of Milton's dream, or fancied sight, Sonnet XXIII places the poet in both of those roles through the work's subtle fusion of classical legends, Hebrew and Christian doctrines, and humanist ideals that culminates in a private vision of his beloved's spiritual perfection. However, of all the themes working within this

sonnet that explore the poet's competing roles as orator and diviner, the most poignant is that of the relationship between physical (or external) blindness and spiritual (or inward) vision. The poem announces this particular thematic tension from the very first line—"Methought I saw my late espoused saint"—and articulates the substance of that conflict until the very last line, when the dream vision is broken: "I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night."

Whereas the poem's first three scenarios for Katherine's imagined recovery offer positive consolation for the poet's confrontation with loss, the sonnet's final glimpse here of the disappearing beloved presents a more complex solution that paradoxically achieves a diminished solace through resistance to consolation. Although Katherine flees as Milton wakes from dreaming, his reversion to physical, external blindness—"day brought back my night"—suggests both a qualification of consolation as well as an open, diurnal movement toward his ongoing remediation of loss by which new apprehensions of the beloved may appear "yet once more" when the poet returns—through dreams—to spiritual, internal sight. Though fleeting and veiled, dreams embody redemptive power for Milton and serve as bridges between the secular and sacred realms. The sonnet's final and transitory image of Katherine foretells of Milton's "Full sight of her in heaven without restraint," thus infusing personal vision with religious significance.

CHAPTER III

PARADISE LOST, THE EPIC

Introduction:

Paradise Lost is generally agreed to be the greatest epic, even the greatest work of literature written in the English language.

Paradise Lost is Milton's best-known poem; an epic in blank verse presented in twelve books in the tradition of Virgil's Aeneid. It tells the biblical story of the fall from grace of Adam and Eve in language that is a supreme achievement of rhythm and sound. It recounts the story of Satan's rebellion against God, and of the disobedience and fall of Adam and Eve, led astray by Satan's lies. The story of Satan's rebellion is not found in the Bible, except in passing references capable of more than one interpretation. On the other hand, the story of how Adam and Eve came to be created and how they came to lose their place in the Garden of Eden, also called Paradise is the same story we can find in the first pages of Genesis. However, Milton expanded it into a very long, detailed, and narrative poem.

1. Key facts

"Full title: *Paradise Lost*
Author: John Milton
Type of work: Poem
Genre: Epic
Language: English
Time and place written: 1656–1674; England
Date of first publication: First Edition (ten books), 1667; Second Edition (twelve books), 1674
Publisher: S. Simmons, England
Narrator: Milton
Point of view: Third person

Tone: Lofty; formal; tragic

Tense: Present

Setting (time): Before the beginning of time

Setting (place): Hell, Chaos and Night, Heaven, Earth (Paradise, the Garden of Eden)

Protagonists: Adam and Eve

Major conflict: Satan, already damned to Hell, undertakes to corrupt God's new, beloved creation, humankind.

Rising action: The angels battle in Heaven; Satan and the rebel angels fall to Hell; God creates the universe; Satan plots to corrupt God's human creation; God creates Eve to be Adam's companion; Raphael answers Adam's questions and warns him of Satan

Climax: Adam and Eve eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

Falling action: The Son inflicts punishment; Adam and Eve repent; Adam learns about the future of man

Themes: The Importance of Obedience to God; The Hierarchical Nature of the Universe; The Fall as Partly Fortunate

Motifs: Light and Dark; The Geography of the Universe; Conversation and Contemplation

Symbols: The Scales in the Sky; Adam's wreath

Foreshadowing: Eve's vanity at seeing her reflection in the lake; Satan's transformation into a snake and his final punishment." [32]

[32] SparkNotes Editors. "SparkNote on Paradise Lost." SparkNotes.com. SparkNotes LLC. 2003. Web. 23 Sept. 2010.

2. Background

Milton was a really prodigious and talented writer who had something supreme in mind. At the early age of sixteen, Milton already aspired to write the great English epic. As he read the classical epics in school: "Homer´s Odyssey and Iliad, and Virgil´s Aeneid," he began to fantasize about bringing such an artistic and brilliant work to the English language.

To come to create such great epic as Paradise Lost, Milton considered many topics for his epic. First of all, he thought to write an epic about the noble story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Then, as he grew a little older, he hoped to write an epic about Oliver Cromwell, who took control of England in 1653 after he helped to dethrone and execute King Charles.

Analyzing these two topics, we can notice that Milton´s purpose was to write his epic basing it on a distinctly British topic that would inspire nationalist pride in his countrymen. A topic of this kind would also reflect or imitate Homer´s and Virgil´s nationalist epics of strong, virtuous warriors and noble battles. However, Milton abandoned both of these topics, and for some time he gave up the concept of writing an epic at all.

In spite of this, in the mid-1650s Milton returned to an idea he had previously had for a verse play: the story of Adam and Eve. After analyzing it, Milton came to the conclusion that this story might fail as a drama but succeed as an epic since this topic had all the necessary elements to be performed as such work.

3. The Epic

Paradise Lost is an epic poem written in blank verse[33] in the verse form of iambic pentameter the same used by Shakespeare. In this style, a line is composed of five short, unaccented syllables, each followed by a long, accented one. Milton´s epic follows the tradition of Virgil´s Aeneid.

In 1656, the blind Milton began to recite verse to verse each morning to his daughters, his secretaries who wrote his poem down for him. This task continued for several years, ending in 1667, when the poem was first published in ten books. Milton soon returned to revise his epic, reorganizing it into twelve books as the classical epics were divided; by dividing two of the longer books into four. Milton published it in its authoritative second edition form in 1671. This edition has minor revisions throughout and a note on the versification. Milton also added an introductory prose "argument" summarizing the plot of each book, to prepare readers for the following complex poetry. Part of that complexity is due to the many analogies and digressions into ancient history and mythology throughout the poem.

Paradise Lost has many of the necessary elements of an epic:

- It is a long narrative poem
- it follows the exploits of a hero (or anti-hero)
- it involves warfare and the supernatural
- it begins in the midst of the action (in medias res, in Latin), with earlier crises in the story brought in later by flashback, and
- It expresses the ideals and traditions of people.

[33] **Blank verse:** It´s a type of poetry, distinguished by having a regular meter, but no rhyme. The most common meter used in English has been iambic pentameter.

So Milton´s epic has these elements in common with the Aeneid, The Iliad, and The Odyssey.

The poem concerns the Christian story of the Fall of Man: the temptation of Adam and Eve by the fallen angel Satan, and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. This story is built around a few paragraphs in the beginning of Genesis. The epic also uses elements from many other parts of the Bible, particularly involving Satan's role. Milton's purpose, stated in Book I, is to "justify the ways of God to men" and clarify the conflict between God's eternal foresight and free will, by tracing the cause and result for all involved.

In the last two books of the epic, Milton includes almost a complete summary of Genesis. This lengthy section may seem anti-climactic, but Milton's mission was to show not only what caused man's fall, but also the consequences upon the world, both bad and good. A concept central to this tale is that of the "felix culpa" or fortunate fall. This is the philosophy that the good which ultimately evolves as a result of the fall—God's mercy, the coming of Christ, redemption and salvation leaves us in a better place, with opportunity for greater good than would have been possible without the fall.

In his epic, Milton also incorporates Paganism, classical Greek references, and Christianity within the poem. It also deals with many topics like marriage, politics, and monarchy, and struggles with many complicated theological issues, including fate, predestination, the Trinity, and the introduction of sin and death into the world, as well as angels, fallen angels, Satan, and the war in heaven. To write about all these topics, of course Milton used his exquisite knowledge of languages, and the bible: Genesis, The New Testament, the deuterocanonical Book of Enoch, and other parts of the Old Testament.

The books´ lengths vary; the longest book is Book IX, with 1,189 lines, and the shortest one is Book VII, having 640. The poem starts *in medias res* (Latin for *in the midst of things*), the background story being told in Books V-VI.

4. Plot overview

Milton begins his prodigious epic Paradise Lost by stating that his subject will be Adam and Eve´s disobedience and fall from grace. The poem begins with Milton´s invocation to a muse for help. Milton´s story contains two arcs: one of Satan or Lucifer, and another of Adam and Eve. The story of Satan follows the epic convention of large-scale warfare.

The action begins with Satan and his followers who have been defeated and cast down by God and chained to a lake of fire in Hell, or as it is also called in the poem, Tartarus. They quickly free themselves and fly to land, where they discover minerals and construct Pandemonium, which will be their meeting place. Inside Pandemonium, Satan uses his rhetorical skill to organize his followers; he is helped by his lieutenants Mammon and Beelzebub. Belial and Moloch are also present. The rebel angels, who are now devils, debate whether they should begin another war with God. Beezelbub suggests that they attempt to corrupt God's beloved new creation, humankind. Satan agrees, and volunteers himself to sabotage the new creation of God. As he prepares to leave Hell, he is met at the gates by his children, Sin and Death, who follow him and help him to go to Earth by building a bridge between Hell and Earth.

On the other hand, in Heaven there is a council too. This time God tells the angels of Satan´s intentions, and no one else but the Son volunteers himself to make the sacrifice for humankind. Meanwhile, Satan travels through Night and Chaos and finds Earth. He disguises himself as a cherub to get past the Archangel Uriel, who stands guard at the sun. He tricks Uriel by telling him that he wishes to see and praise God's glorious creation, and Uriel accepts.

Satan then gains entrance into the Garden of Eden, where he takes a moment to reflect. Seeing the splendor of Paradise brings him pain rather than pleasure. When Satan sees Adam and Eve's happiness, he becomes jealous of them and reaffirms his decision to make evil his good, and continue to commit

crimes against God. Satan jumps over Paradise's wall, takes the form of a cormorant (a large bird), and perches himself atop the Tree of Life. He overhears Adam telling Eve about God´s commandment that they must not eat the fruit from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge meanwhile; Uriel notices that one of the fallen angels has entered the garden and warns Gabriel and the other angels about it. The other angels agree to search the Garden for intruders.

Meanwhile, Adam and Eve return to their bower and rest after a long day of work. There, Satan is caught in the shape of a toad trying to whisper into Eve´s ear and is thrown out of the Garden of Eden meanwhile; Eve awakes and tells Adam about a dream she had, in which an angel tempted her to eat from the forbidden tree. Worried about this, God sends Raphael, another Archangel, to the Garden, who warns Adam and Eve about Satan, and reminds them that they have the power of free will to determine their fate. Raphael also tells them all about Satan and his rebellion, and how God's Son threw them into hell. He speaks of a time when heaven and earth could become one, and leaves Adam and Eve with a final warning.

Unfortunately, Satan has not been sufficiently deterred, and eight days after his banishment he returns to Paradise as a mist. There he takes the form of a serpent. Meanwhile, Eve suggests to Adam that they work separately for awhile, so they can get more work done. At the beginning, Adam hesitates, but then he assents. Satan is delighted to find Eve all by herself. In the form of a serpent, he talks to her and compliments her on her beauty and godliness. Eve is impressed and amazed by the fact that an animal can speak. Satan tells Eve that he can speak because he ate from the forbidden tree. Thus, Satan convinces her that she should eat from the Tree of knowledge, since it only made him "more perfect" and could make her a goddess. She is hesitant at first, but then she eats from the tree.

When Adam finds Eve and realizes she has eaten the forbidden fruit, he feels horrified and debates what he should do. Knowing Eve has fallen, he decides

to do the same, since he does not want to remain pure and lose her. So he eats the fruit as well. After that, their innocence is lost. Adam looks at Eve in a different way, and they become lustful. Then they become hostile, blaming each other for their disobedience, and finally they see shame in their nakedness.

God immediately knows what has just happened, and tells the angels in Heaven that Adam and Eve must be punished, but with justice and mercy. The Son is being sent to give out the punishments. The serpent is first punished by the Son. It is condemned never to walk upright again. Eve and all women must suffer the pain of childbirth and must submit to their husbands, and Adam and all men must hunt and grow their own food on a useless Earth.

Meanwhile, Sin and Death know that Satan has succeeded and build a highway to earth, their new home. Satan comes back to hell expecting celebration of victory, but he and his followers are turned into serpents and tormented by a copy of the Tree of Knowledge, which turns to ashes instead of bearing real fruit. Back on earth, Adam reconciles with Eve and finally they do penitence. God sends the Archangel Michael to send them out of Paradise, but first Michael shows Adam visions about other unfortunate events resulting from his disobedience. Adam is sad at first, but cheers up when he knows God's Son will someday come to save mankind. Finally, Adam and Eve sadly leave Paradise, hand in hand, waiting for their future.

5. Contents of the 12 books

❖ Book I, Lines 1-26: The Prologue and Invocation

In this book Milton opens Paradise Lost, invoking the “Heavenly Muse,” a mystical source of poetic inspiration, but he specifies that his muse inspired Moses to receive the Ten Commandments and write Genesis. Milton’s muse is the Holy Spirit, which inspired the Christian Bible. Milton introduces his theme: the Fall of Man, the consequences that followed from it, and his aim, to “justify the ways of

God to men." Milton also asserts that Adam and Eve's original sin brought death to human beings for the first time, causing us to lose our home in Paradise until Jesus comes to restore humankind to its former position of purity.

In addition, Milton says that his poem, like his muse, will accomplish things never attempted before, because his source of inspiration is greater than the Classical poets. After that, he asks the Holy Spirit to fill him with knowledge of the beginning of the world. Milton announces he wants to be inspired with this spirit because he wants to show his fellow man that the fall of humankind into sin and death was part of God's greater plan, and that God's plan is justified.

- **Book I, Lines 27-722: Satan and Hell**

In these lines, Milton explains that Adam and Eve's actions were partly due to a serpent's deception. This serpent is Satan, who is joined by his followers in Hell who were expelled from Heaven. Together they organize a rebellion against God and His creation.

Then the poet gets to the heart of the action and presents the reader an image of Satan and the host of newly fallen angels, Beelzebub and Moloch among them, who are described as lying on a lake of fire, from which Satan rises up to claim Hell as his own domain and delivers a rousing speech to his followers: "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven." Satan's pride has caused him to believe that his own free intellect is as great as God's will. Satan remarks that the mind can make its own Hell out of Heaven, or, in his case, its own Heaven out of Hell.

- **Book II:**

Satan opens a debate in Pandemonium whether to wage another war on Heaven or not. Moloch speaks first, pleading for another open war, this time armed with the weapons of Hell. He argues that there is nothing to lose by another attack,

and that nothing, even their destruction could be worse than Hell. Then Belial contradicts him by telling them that God has not yet punished them as fiercely as he might if they went to war with him again. He also says that God may one day forgive them, and it is better that they live with what they now have. Belial's purpose is to find excuses to prevent further war and to advocate lassitude and inaction. Mammon speaks up next, advising that they should forge their own kingdom in hell and enjoy their freedom from subjection to God. This argument is given the greatest support among the legions of the fallen angels, who receive it with applause.

Beelzebub also speaks, telling that he also prefers freedom to servitude under God, but proposes another action against God. He tells them of a new world being created by God which is to be the home of Man, whom God will favor more than angels. Beelzebub advises Satan to take revenge by destroying or corrupting this new beloved race. The rest of the devils agree and vote unanimously in favor of this plan. Satan volunteers to go and explore this new world.

Satan flies off and reaches the gates of Hell, guarded by Sin and Death. Death threatens Satan with his spear and Satan decides to confront him, demanding passage through the gates. They are about to do battle when Sin cries out, explaining to Satan who they are, claiming that they are in fact Satan's own offspring. While Satan was still an angel, she sprang forth from his head, and was named Sin. Satan then incestuously impregnated her, and she gave birth to a ghostly son named Death. Death in turn raped his mother Sin, begetting the dogs that now torment her. Sin and Death were then assigned to guard the gate of Hell and hold its keys. Although commanded by God never to unlock the gates, Sin is convinced by Satan to do so, and she lets him out.

When Satan is flying, he hears a great tumult of noise and makes his way toward it; it is Chaos, who is joined by his consort Night, with Confusion, Discord, and others at their side. Satan explains his plan to Chaos as well. He asks for help,

saying that in return he will reclaim the territory of the new world, thus returning more of the universe to disorder. Chaos agrees and points out the way to where the Earth has recently been created. With great difficulty, Satan moves forward, and Sin and Death follow far behind, building a bridge from Hell to Earth on which evil spirits can travel to tempt mortals.

- **Book III:**

This book opens with a second invocation to his muse, the Holy Spirit. Milton asks that the heavenly light shine inside him and illuminate his mind with divine knowledge, so that he can share this knowledge with his readers.

Then the scene shifts to Heaven, where God observes Satan's journey and foretells how Satan will bring about Man's Fall. God emphasizes that the Fall will come about as a result of Man's own free will, and excuses himself of responsibility. The Son of God offers himself as a savior for Man's disobedience, an offer which God accepts, ordaining the Son's future incarnation and punishment. God says that those who have faith in the Son will be redeemed, but those who do not accept grace will still be doomed to Hell.

The story returns to Satan, who lands on Earth. At length, Satan sees a high-reaching gate. This gate guards Heaven, which was at that time visible from Earth. Flying over to it, Satan climbs up a few steps to get a better view. He sees the new creation in all its glory, but can only feel jealousy. Then he sees an angel standing on a hill. To deceive him, Satan changes into a cherub, or low-ranking angel. Recognizing the other angel as the Archangel Uriel, Satan approaches and addresses him. Satan claims to have just come down from Heaven, full of curiosity about the new world he has been hearing so much about, and curious about its inhabitants. The Archangel is pleased that a young angel is showing so much enthusiasm to find out about the world that God fashioned out of Chaos from earth,

air, wind, and fire. He happily points out the way to Paradise, where Adam lives. After giving his due respects, Satan flies off with dark intentions.

- **Book IV:**

Now Satan stands on Mount Niphates, in full view of Eden. Seeing the beauty and innocence of Earth he is reminded of what he once was. He even briefly considers whether he could be forgiven if he repented, but reasons that even if he returned to Heaven, he still could not bear to bow down. Knowing that repentance is impossible, he resolves to continue to commit acts of sin and evil. Satan's internal debate of fear and anger is shown in his face. He is observed by Uriel, the archangel he tricked into pointing out the way, who notices his conflicting facial expressions, and since all cherubs have permanent looks of joy on their faces, Uriel concludes that Satan cannot be a cherub.

Satan leaps over the bounds of Paradise. There he can see an amazing world. The Tree of Life and the forbidden Tree of Knowledge are there. Satan perches himself on the Tree of Life, disguised as a cormorant, a large sea bird. He notices two creatures walking naked and erect without shame. The sight of their innocence and beauty increases his pain and envy. He could have loved them, but now his damnation will be revenged through their destruction.

Satan overhears Adam telling Eve about all the blessings received from God, and that the only condition of their living in Paradise is that they do not eat from the Tree of Knowledge since it will bring death into the world. Eve is also told how she was created from Adam, and with him she will become the mother of the human race. Witnessing this, Satan understands God's prohibition and resolves to tempt them to eat from the Tree.

Meanwhile, Uriel warns the Archangel Gabriel about Satan's presence in the Garden. So Gabriel promises to look for him and send him out of Paradise. On the other hand, Adam and Eve finish their daily work. They lie together, making love without sin, and rest. When the night falls, two of Gabriel's angels find Satan

disguised as a toad, whispering into the ear of Eve as she sleeps. At first, Satan feigns innocence, but Gabriel knows he is a liar, and threatens to drag him back to Hell. Satan prepares to fight Gabriel, but a sign from Heaven appears in the sky which means Satan could not win, so he flies off.

- **Book V:**

This book is a strange mixture between the domestic and the divine. Eve wakes up from an uneasy sleep, and tells Adam about her dream. She tells him that an apparent angel offered her the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, telling her she could be a goddess if she ate it. Adam assures her it was just a dream, and they say a prayer for nature and animals to praise God, and go off to work in the fields.

Meanwhile, in Heaven God sends the Archangel Raphael to warn Adam of Satan's intentions and remind him of his free will. Raphael first describes the composition of the things God created on Earth. God gave different kinds of substance to all living things. But the highest substance is spirit, which God put into humankind. The Archangel says man is the highest being on Earth because of his God-given ability to reason, and warns Adam to always choose obedience to God. In addition, Raphael also tells Adam how disobedience first came into Heaven by relating Satan's fall.

One day God announced that the Son, Christ, had been begotten, and he was to rule at his right hand. One of the angels was angry at this announcement. That angry angel lost his heavenly name, and is now called Satan. Jealous of the son, he persuaded other angels in Heaven to join him against God. But there was one angel who refused his proposals. It was Abdiel, who denounced Satan as a blasphemous ingrate, and asserted God's supremacy as creator.

- **Book VI**

Raphael continues his story of the first conflict between Satan and the Father. Abdiel returns to heaven and finds that the angels are preparing for war. The good and bad angels go into battle. Satan's army is defeated. Night falls, and while Michael and the good angels sleep, Satan and the fallen angels are plotting. In the morning, the battle begins again. Satan and his army have invented artillery, which throws the good angels to the ground. The good angels respond by throwing mountains. God then commissions his Son to win the war, which otherwise would be unwinnable by either side, so that the Son will be seen as Messiah, God's chosen king. The Son rides out in his chariot, and the evil angels escape from him and fall over the wall of Heaven into Hell. The Son returns in a parade of victory and is summoned by all the angels of Heaven. Raphael finally explains that Satan and his followers were at a disadvantage; they had disobeyed God and brought evil upon themselves. God's followers had an advantage; they were innocent, defending God, and refusing to sin and disobey His rule.

- **Book VII**

In this book, Raphael continues his revelations to Adam. The book begins with a recapitulation of Milton’s appeal for divine inspiration from Book I. Milton invokes a muse once more, but this time it is Urania, the Muse of Astronomy. Milton asks that the muse inspire him through the rest of Raphael’s speech, directly paralleling Adam’s request for knowledge.

Back on Earth, Adam asks Raphael about how and why the world was created, as well as about his own creation. Raphael explains to Adam that after Satan and his followers went to hell, God decided to create another world to show the fallen angels that His glorious kingdom can be expanded indefinitely. This new world, as well as humans was created with the idea that Earth and Heaven would

eventually be joined together as one kingdom through mankind's obedience to God's divine will.

Next, Raphael relates the story of creation, which does not deviate greatly from Genesis. God sends the Son down to create Earth. On the first and second days, The Earth is first formed out of Chaos and given light and dark, or night and day, in equal measure. On the third day, dry land is separated from water, and on the next days, animals are created to populate both land and sea. The creation takes six days; Adam is created at last, and Eve is formed from him. The Son makes man in His image and gives him authority over all the animals on Earth. God gives Adam one command: he must not eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which gives knowledge of good and evil. He re-ascends to Heaven as the angels sing hymns and praise his work. Pleased with his work, God rests on the seventh day, which then becomes known as the Sabbath.

- **Book VIII**

After all the information Raphael has related to Adam, he asks the Archangel sophisticated questions about the movement of planets and the universe. Raphael insists then that Adam must concern himself with earthly knowledge rather than hidden secrets of heaven. Cleared of doubt by the angel's reply, Adam describes to the angel his experiences since his creation. Adam relates how he woke up and found himself able to speak. Then he had a dream in which he was ordained "first father" of man.

Adam tells Raphael about his first views of Paradise, his first conversations with God, and finally how Eve was created. Adam remembers he told God he felt alone, since the beasts and animals were inferior to him, and what he needed was an equal to keep him company. Then God decided to satisfy him. He makes Adam fall asleep, and uses one of his ribs to make a woman. Adam has not received a true equal, however; he explains that Eve is "th' inferior, in the mind and inward

faculties."[34] Still, he is happy. Raphael finally leaves Adam, once more encouraging him to resist temptation.

- **Book IX**

In this book, Milton tells the reader he must "change the story to tragic, foul distrust and breach disloyal on the part of man, revolt and disobedience"[35], and Milton assets his intention to show that the fall of humankind is more heroic than the tales of Virgil and Homer. Again, Milton asks Urania for help, and returns to present-time action.

Satan returns to Earth the night after Raphael's departure, and searches for a creature to inhabit. He chooses the serpent, since he is the most subtle animal he can find. The more pleasures and beauty Satan sees on Earth the more torment and jealousy he feels. He explains, "Only in destroying I find ease to my restless thoughts".[36]

The next morning, Adam and Eve prepare for their usual morning labors. Eve suggests that they work separately, so they will get more work done. After much resistance, Adam concedes, as Eve promises him to return to their bower soon.

In the form of the serpent, Satan is delighted to find Eve alone. He begins flattering her beauty, grace, and godliness. Eve is amazed to see an animal speaking. Then Satan affirms that the forbidden fruit is able to give those powers, and even more. After using this argument, among others, the serpent convinces

[34] Book 8, lines 541-542.

[35] Book 8, lines 5-8.

[36] Op.cit. lines 129-30.

Eve to eat the fruit. Everything looks perfect to her, so she reaches for an apple, plucks it from the tree, and finally takes a bite.

At the beginning Eve considers keeping the fruit for herself, but finally she decides to share all and brings Adam a sample. He is horrified. However, he cannot bear to be separated from Eve, even if this means death, and he decides to follow her and eats the fruit. He also feels invigorated at first. Then Adam and Eve become lustful, engaging in sexual intercourse.

After waking up from an uneasy sleep, they see the world in a new way. They recognize their sin, and realize that they have lost Paradise. They now see each other's nakedness and are filled with shame. They cover themselves with leaves. Milton explains that their appetite for knowledge has been fulfilled, and their hunger for God has been satisfied. Angry and confused, they continue to blame each other for committing the sin, while neither will admit any fault. Their shameful and tearful argument continues for hours, inducing new feelings: high passions, anger, hate, mistrust, suspicion, and discord, among others.

- **Book X**

The scene returns to Heaven, where God knows immediately about what Adam and Eve have done. Then God sends his Son down to Earth to judge them. The Son first condemns and curses the serpent, whose body Satan possessed, and all serpents, to crawl on their bellies and never to carry themselves upright again. The Son decrees that Adam and Eve's children will bruise the serpent's head, while serpents will forever bite humans by the heel. As punishment for the couple, Eve and all women to follow will give birth in pain, and must submit to their husbands. Likewise, Adam and all men after him will have to labor, to hunt and harvest food in cursed ground. After passing these sentences, the Son returns to Heaven.

Meanwhile, in Hell, Sin and Death, feeling Satan's victory, build a bridge across Chaos to ease their passage into the mortal world. Satan returns victorious and relates his tale of success, just moments before he and his followers receive their sentence and are turned into snakes who, attracted by the forbidden fruit, try to eat it, but only find their mouths filled with dust.

God sees that Sin and Death arrive on Earth to begin their work. However, He allows them to stay on Earth until the Judgment Day.

Now humankind will have to endure extreme hot and cold seasons, instead of enjoying the constant temperate climate that existed before. After seeing all the consequences of his sin, Adam is sorrowful, and laments. Eve comes to him, but Adam is angry; he blames and insults Eve's female nature, wondering why God ever created her.

Later, they stop blaming each other and begin to reconcile and to repent of their actions. In the spot where they were punished, Adam and Eve fall to their knees, confess their sins, and ask for forgiveness. God has promised that the Son will one day redeem man's wrong.

- **Book XI**

God hears the prayers of Adam and Eve, so He allows his Son to pay for humankind's sins. The Father accepts Adam and Eve's regret, but they still cannot stay in Paradise, so God commands the Archangel Michael to go down to Earth to make them leave, prompting their grief.

When Michael announces to them to leave Paradise, Adam and Eve feel very sad, even though their death will be delayed so that they may live many years. Adam laments that he will never be able to speak with God again, but Michael explains that Adam can speak to God wherever he goes. The Archangel then puts

Eve to sleep and takes Adam up to a high hill to show him visions of humankind's future.

Adam is revealed the consequences Earth and men will suffer because of his sin. Adam sees how his own son, Cain, kills his brother Abel. He also sees the other ways that death will take men's lives: disease, war, and old age. Michael advises him that obeying God and living a virtuous life can allow people to live long and fruitful lives, so long as Heaven permits.

Finally, the Archangel Michael demonstrates the exceptions of Enoch and Noah, who are saved through their virtue. Adam feels reassured by these exceptions, and especially by God's promise to Noah that virtue and obedience to God will continue on Earth, through him.

- **Book XII**

Michael then explains what else is to come, including the story of Nimrod building the irreligious Babel, and the faithful Abraham, who is promised land by God to start a new community, and whose work is continued by Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Michael also reassures Adam that Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, will overcome Satan and Death through his own crucifixion.

Adam is now more than comforted. He can hardly believe that out of his evil deed so much good will come. Now, however, it is time for him and Eve to leave Paradise. He comes down from the mountain with Michael. Eve awakens from her sleep and tells Adam that she has had an educating dream. Michael then leads the couple to the gate of Eden. There he stands with other angels, brandishing a sword of flame that will forever protect the entrance to Paradise. Slowly and tearfully, Adam and Eve turn away, hand in hand with Michael, and wander out into a new world:

They looking back, all the eastern side beheld
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,
Waved over by that flaming brand, the gate
With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms:
Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and providence their guide:
They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.
~XII.641-end.

6. Characters

Many characters take part in this wonderful Epic. There are characters in Heaven, Hell, and Earth, and some personifications who play an important role in the development of this masterpiece.

Main characters

***God the Father:** One part of the Christian Trinity. God is the creator of Eden, Heaven, Hell, and of each of the main characters. He is omnipresent and omnipotent, but bestows on man free will to decide his actions. God is father of the Son, upon whom he gives the power to judge man. God foresees the fall of mankind. He does not prevent their fall, in order to preserve their free will, but he does allow his son to atone for their sins.

***God the Son:** Jesus Christ is the second part of the Trinity, though he is never named explicitly, since he has not yet entered human form. The son is very heroic and powerful, and defeats Satan and his followers when they rebel against God, and drives them into Hell. He is given the power to judge man. He gives hope to the poem, because although Satan conquers humanity by successfully tempting Adam and Eve, He offers to become mortal to save man. However, after crucifixion, he is resurrected. He is given the glory in stopping Satan's rebellion. He

also confronts Adam and Eve after their transgression and, after clothing them, doles out their punishments.

***Satan:** God's adversary and head of the rebellious angels who have just fallen from Heaven. Satan becomes jealous of the Son of God and leads multitudes of angels into a rebellion against God, originating sin on Earth by corrupting mankind. He takes part in a mission that leads to the fall of Adam and Eve, but also worsens his eternal punishment. His character changes throughout the poem. Satan often appears to speak rationally and persuasively, but later in the poem we see the inconsistency and irrationality of his thoughts. He can assume any form, adopting both glorious and humble shapes. He is the father of Sin and Death.

***Adam:** The first human, and the father of our race, created by God. He is Eve's husband and ruler, inhabiting the Garden of Eden. He is tested by God by forbidding him to eat of the Tree of Knowledge. He is grateful and obedient at the beginning, but falls from grace when Eve convinces him to join her in the sin of eating the forbidden fruit.

***Eve:** She is the second human created, taken from one of Adam's ribs and shaped into a female form of Adam. She is Adam's wife, and the first woman and the mother of mankind often described both seductively and submissively. Eve is weaker then Adam, so she is tricked by Satan into eating the forbidden fruit, and receives the punishment of becoming mortal and suffering pain in childbirth.

Angels, Inhabiting Heaven and Earth

These are spirits who serve God in Heaven. Archangels are the highest ranking angels. Others include Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, and Pricipalities, though Milton never clearly defines these. They are pictured, with some ambiguity, as winged spirits who can change shape at will, yet they can be

physically wounded in battle and can sup with humans. They battle the rebel angels in God's behalf, and later act as man's protectors.

***Abdiel:** An angel who at first considers joining Satan in rebellion, but later is the only one who finds himself unwilling to break faith with God. He argues against Satan in front of his followers, and returns to God. His character demonstrates the power of repentance.

***Gabriel:** Second in rank to Michael. Gabriel is one of the archangels of Heaven, who acts as a guard at the Garden of Eden. Gabriel confronts and expels Satan after his angels find Satan whispering to Eve in the Garden.

***Ithuriel:** One of the two angels sent by Gabriel to find Satan in the Garden of Eden. They find him whispering to the sleeping Eve. Ithuriel taps Satan's shoulder with his spear.

***Michael:** Highest ranking of God's army of angels. Michael leads the angelic forces against Satan and his followers in the battle in Heaven. He also stands guard at the Gate of Heaven. Michael is sent by God to visit Adam and Eve after their fall. His duty is to escort them out of Paradise, and tell them of both good and bad events which will happen.

***Raphael:** Raphael is an Archangel who is sent by God to warn Adam and Eve about Satan's plot to seduce them into sin, and remind them of their free will. He engages in a lengthy discussion of Satan's rebellion and the universe's creation at Adam's request.

***Urania:** Milton's Christian muse, the angel-like female spirit whom Milton invokes in the beginnings of Books I, III, VII, and IX, to inspire him in writing the poem. In the poem's opening lines she seems to be identified with the Holy Spirit of the Trinity. Milton borrowed her from Greek mythology, where she is the muse of astronomy and astrology.

***Uriel:** Archangel of the sun, who guards the planet earth. Uriel is the angel whom Satan tricks when he is disguised as a cherub. Uriel, as a good angel and guardian, tries to correct his error by making the other angels aware of Satan's presence.

***Uzziel:** A guard in Eden, next in rank to Gabriel.

***Zephon:** Archangel. With Ithuriel, he discovers Satan trying to whisper into Eve's ear in Paradise.

***Zophiel:** A warrior "of swiftest wing" in the battle against Satan's forces.

Devils, Inhabiting Hell

These are the angels who, led by Satan, rebel against what they consider God's tyranny. They are thrown into Hell, where they become devils, devoted to the destruction of the human race as revenge against God. Some were destined to become the false gods of ancient civilizations.

***Adonis (or Thammuz):** In Greek mythology a beautiful youth destined to yearly death and resurrection associated with nature's cycle and symbolized by a river of blood. Milton plays up the sexual overtones.

***Adramelec:** A powerful Throne in Satan's army, beaten by Uriel.

***Ariel:** One of the rebels defeated by Abdiel.

***Arioc:** Another of the rebels defeated by Abdiel.

***Ashtaroth:** Several spirits of feminine gender in Satan's crew.

***Asmadai:** A Throne who lost his battle with Raphael despite his weapons of diamond.

***Astoreth:** Worshiped as the queen of Heaven in Solomon's temple.

***Azazel:** A tall Cherub who raises Satan's standard in Hell to lift the spirits of the defeated rebels as Satan is about to speak.

***Baalim:** A name for fallen spirits who would become beast-like gods of Israel.

***Beelzebub:** His name means "The Lord of the Files". In the New Testament it is another name for Satan. He is Satan's second-in-command. Beelzebub discusses with Satan their options after being cast into Hell, and at the debate suggests that they investigate the newly created Earth. He and Satan embody perverted reason, since they are both eloquent and rational but use their talents for wholly corrupt ends.

***Belial:** A fallen angel. He thinks that hell isn't that bad, and if God isn't angered, he might remit the punishment of the fallen angels anyway. His graceful manner conceals a vice-ridden soul. On Earth he would corrupt churches and palaces, and fill the streets at night with violence and debauchery.

***Chemos:** A devil who would turn the Jews against Moses and lead them in sinful sex orgies.

***Dagon:** A sea-monster, part man, part fish, worshiped by the Philistines.

***Lucifer:** Satan's name before he fell. It means "brightest star." In his original state, he was glorious to behold.

***Mammon:** A devil known in the Bible as the epitome of wealth. Mammon always walks hunched over, as if he is searching the ground for valuables. In the debate among the devils, he argues against war, seeing no profit to be gained from

it. He believes Hell can be improved by mining the gems and minerals they find there.

***Moloch:** A rash, irrational, and murderous devil. Moloch argues in Pandemonium that the devils should engage in another full war against God and his servant angels. He would cause Solomon to build a temple against God. Children would be burned alive in sacrifice to his idol.

***Mulciber:** The architect of Pandemonium, Satan's palace in Hell. He comes with much experience, having designed many grand towers in Heaven. This character is based on a Greek mythological figure known for being a poor architect, but in Milton's poem he is one of the most productive and skilled devils in Hell.

***Nisroch:** Badly wounded in battle, during a nighttime truce, this fallen spirit laments his newly discovered physical pain.

***Ramiel:** Another of the rebel angels defeated by Abdiel.

***Rimmon:** A devil who practiced his demonic craft in Damascus.

Personifications

In mythological style, Milton turns certain concepts into living beings. Among these are Grace, Liberty, Night, Chance, Discord, and the following three who become central to the plot.

***Sin:** Satan's daughter. Half-woman, half-serpent, she sprung from Satan's head when he conceived the thought of rebelling against God. Her middle is ringed about with Hell Hounds, who periodically burrow into her womb and chew her entrails. She is charged to hold the key to the gates of Hell. Together with her son, Death, she builds a highway from Hell to Earth.

***Death:** Satan's son by his daughter, Sin. Death is a faceless creature who in turn rapes his mother, begetting the mass of beasts that torment her lower half. Death confronts Satan at the gate of Hell, and the two are prevented from a deadly battle when Sin reveals that he is Satan's son/grandson by incestuous union with her. The relations between Death, Sin, and Satan mimic horribly those of the Holy Trinity.

***Chaos:** The being who personifies the infinity of uncreated matter between Heaven, Hell, and our universe, with his companion Night. Chaos resents God's intrusion on his domain by creating the new world, and cheers Satan on in his pursuit to destroy it.

7. Analysis of major characters

❖ God:

An omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent character who knows everything before it happens. He is the creator of the whole universe. The poem portrays God's process of creation in the way that Milton believed it was done, that God created Heaven, Earth, Hell, and all the creatures that inhabit these separate planes from part of Himself, not out of nothing. Attempting to present such an unimaginable character accurately, Milton appropriates several of God's biblical speeches into his speeches in *Paradise Lost*. God loves his creation and strongly defends humankind's free will. He presents his love through his Son, who performs his will fairly and mercifully.

God, in *Paradise Lost,* is less a developed character than a personification of abstract ideas. He is unknowable to humankind and to some extent lacks emotion and depth. He has no weaknesses, embodies pure reason, and is always

fair. He explains why certain events happen, like Satan's decision to corrupt Adam and Eve, tells his angels what will happen next, and gives his reasoning behind his actions in theological terms. God allows evil to occur, but he will make good out of evil. His plan to save humankind by offering his Son shows his unwavering control over Satan.

- **The Son:**

For Milton, the Son is the manifestation of God in action. While God the Father stays in the realm of Heaven, the Son performs the difficult tasks of banishing Satan and his rebel angels, creating the universe and humankind, and punishing Satan, Adam, and Eve with justice and mercy. The Son physically connects God the Father with his creation. Together they form a complete and perfect God.

The Son personifies love and compassion. After the fall, he pities Adam and Eve and gives them clothing to help diminish their shame. His decision to volunteer to die for humankind shows his dedication and selflessness. The final vision that Adam sees in Book XII is of the Son's (or Jesus') sacrifice on the cross; through this vision, the Son is able to calm Adam's worries for humankind and give Adam and Eve restored hope as they go out of Paradise.

- **Satan:**

Satan is the first major character introduced in the poem. He is a tragic figure best described by his well known words "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven." He is sent to Hell after a failed rebellion against Heaven and God.

Satan is portrayed as charismatic, and persuasive. Satan shows his persuasive powers from the beginning of the epic when he makes arguments to his

followers to convince them to overthrow God. These powers are also evident during the scene in which he assumes the body of a snake in order to convince Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Satan's ego is both his greatest strength, as it motivates him to succeed, but also his greatest weakness. He is continually outdone by his own overconfidence. Satan's vanity is shown by the fact that he is actually aroused by his own image. Upon observing that Sin resembles a female version of himself, he feels sexual attraction to her (before finding out that she is his daughter). Milton's Satan feels guilt and doubt before he tricks Eve, knowing the results of his actions will curse innocents. Similarly, Satan has feelings of guilt when he first enters Paradise. But his feelings always turn to re-affirmation of evil once he reflects on his own exile from Heaven.

Satan is an extremely complex and subtle character. For Milton, It would have been difficult, or maybe impossible, to make perfect, infallible characters such as God the Father, God the Son, and the angels as interesting to read about as the faulty characters, such as Satan, Adam, and Eve. Satan, moreover, shows he is apparently unafraid of being damned eternally.

Milton dedicates much of the poem's early books to developing Satan's character. Satan's greatest fault is his pride. He casts himself as an innocent victim. But his ability to think so selfishly in Heaven, where all the angels are equal and loved and happy, is surprising. His confidence in thinking that he could ever overthrow God shows his tremendous vanity and pride. When Satan shares his pain and alienation as he reaches Earth in Book IV, we may feel somewhat sympathetic to him, or even identify with him. But Satan continues to devote himself to evil. Every speech he gives is fraudulent, and every story he tells is a lie. He works persistently to trick his fellow devils in Hell by having Beelzebub present Satan's own plan of action.

Satan's character, or our perception of his character, changes significantly from Book I to his final appearance in Book X. In Book I he is a strong, imposing figure with great abilities as a leader and public statesman, whereas by the poem's end he moves back to Hell in serpent form. Satan's gradual degradation is dramatized by the sequence of different shapes he assumes. He begins the poem as a just-fallen angel of enormous stature, looks like a comet or meteor as he leaves Hell, then disguises himself as a more humble cherub, then as a cormorant, a toad, and finally a snake. His ability to reason and argue also deteriorates. In Book I, he persuades the devils to agree to his plan. In Book IV, however, he reasons to himself that the Hell he feels inside of him is reason to do more evil. When he returns to Earth again, he believes that Earth is more beautiful than Heaven, and that he may be able to live on Earth after all. Satan, removed from Heaven long enough to forget its unparalleled grandness, is completely demented, coming to believe in his own lies. He is a picture of incessant intellectual activity without the ability to think morally. Once a powerful angel, he has become blinded to God's grace, forever unable to reconcile his past with his eternal punishment.

- **Adam:**

Adam is a strong, intelligent, and rational character possessed of a remarkable relationship with God. In fact, before the fall, he is as perfect as a human being can be. He has an enormous capacity for reason, and can understand the most sophisticated ideas instantly. He can talk with Raphael as a near-equal, and understand Raphael's stories easily. From the questions he asks the angel Raphael, it is clear that Adam has a deep, intellectual curiosity about his existence, God, Heaven, and the nature of the world. This is a kind of curiosity that Eve does not have. But after the fall, his conversation with Michael during his visions is significantly one-sided. Also, his self-doubt and anger after the fall

demonstrate his new ability to indulge in rash and irrational attitudes. As a result of the fall, he loses his pure reason and intellect.

Adam's greatest weakness is his love for Eve. He falls in love with her immediately upon seeing her, and confides to Raphael that his attraction to her is almost overwhelming. Though Raphael warns him to keep his affections in check, Adam's fall will result from this excessive and almost submissive love to his wife. After Eve eats from the Tree of Knowledge, he quickly does the same, realizing that if she is doomed, he must follow her into doom as well if he wants to avoid losing her. Eve has become his companion for life, and he is unwilling to part with her even if that means disobeying God.

Adam's curiosity and hunger for knowledge is another weakness. The questions he asks of Raphael about creation and the universe may suggest a growing temptation to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. But like his physical attraction to Eve, Adam is able to partly avoid this temptation. It is only through Eve that his temptations become unavoidable.

- **Eve:**

Created to be Adam's mate, Eve is inferior to Adam, but only slightly. She surpasses Adam only in her beauty. In a positive sense, she is the model of a good subject and wife. She consents to Adam leading her away from her reflection when they first meet, trusting Adam's authority in their relationship until she is influenced by Satan. She falls in love with her own image when she sees her reflection in a body of water. Ironically, her greatest asset produces her most serious weakness, vanity. After Satan compliments her on her beauty and godliness, he persuades her to eat from the Tree of Knowledge easily.

Aside from her beauty, Eve's intelligence and spiritual purity are constantly tested. She is not unintelligent, but she is not ambitious to learn. She prefers to be guided by Adam, as God intended. As a result, she does not become more

intelligent or learned as the story progresses, though she does accomplish the beginning of wisdom by the end of the poem. Her lack of learning is partly due to her absence for most of Raphael's discussions with Adam in Books V, VI, and VII, and she also does not see the visions Michael shows Adam in Books XI and XII. Her absence from these important exchanges shows that she feels it is not her place to seek knowledge independently; she wants to hear Raphael's stories through Adam later. The instance, in which she deviates from her passive role, telling Adam to trust her on her own and then eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, is disastrous.

Eve's strengths are her capacity for love, emotion, and forbearance. She persuades Adam to stay with her after the fall, and Adam in turn dissuades her from committing suicide, as they begin to work together as a powerful unit. Eve complements Adam's strengths and corrects his weaknesses. Thus, Milton does not denigrate all women through his depiction of Eve. Rather he explores the role of women in his society and the positive and important role he felt they could offer in the divine union of marriage.

7. Themes, Motifs and Symbols

Themes

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

- **The Importance of Obedience to God**

At the beginning of the Epic Milton states that the poem's main theme will be "Man's first Disobedience." Milton narrates the story of Adam and Eve's disobedience, explains how and why it happens, and places the story within the context of Satan's rebellion and Jesus' resurrection. Raphael tells Adam about Satan's disobedience in an effort to give him a firm understanding of the threat that

Satan and humankind's disobedience poses. In essence, *Paradise Lost* presents two moral paths that one can take after disobedience: the spiral of increasing sin and degradation, represented by Satan, and the road to redemption, represented by Adam and Eve.

While Adam and Eve are the first humans to disobey God, Satan is the first of all God's creation to disobey. His decision to rebel comes only from himself. He was not persuaded or provoked by others. Also, his decision to continue to disobey God after his fall into Hell ensures that God will not forgive him. Adam and Eve, on the other hand, decide to repent for their sins and seek forgiveness. Unlike Satan, Adam and Eve understand that their disobedience to God will be corrected through generations of hard work on Earth. This path is obviously the correct one to take: the visions in Books XI and XII demonstrate that obedience to God, even after repeated falls, can lead to humankind's salvation.

❖ The Hierarchical Nature of the Universe

Paradise Lost is about hierarchy as much as it is about obedience. The layout of the universe, with Heaven above, Hell below, and Earth in the middle, presents the universe as a hierarchy based on proximity to God and his grace. This spatial hierarchy leads to a social hierarchy of angels, humans, animals, and devils: the Son is closest to God, with the archangels and cherubs behind him. Adam and Eve and Earth's animals come next, with Satan and the other fallen angels following last. To obey God is to respect this hierarchy.

Satan refuses to honor the Son as his superior, thereby questioning God's hierarchy. As the angels in Satan's camp rebel, they hope to beat God and in this way dissolve what they believe to be an unfair hierarchy in Heaven. When the Son and the good angels defeat the rebel angels, the rebels are punished by being banished far away from Heaven. At least, Satan argues later, they can make their own hierarchy in Hell, but they are nevertheless subject to God's overall hierarchy,

in which they are ranked the lowest. Satan continues to disobey God and his hierarchy as he seeks to corrupt mankind.

Likewise, humankind's disobedience is a corruption of God's hierarchy. Before the fall, Adam and Eve treat the visiting angels with proper respect and acknowledgement of their closeness to God, and Eve accepts the subservient role assigned to her in her marriage. God and Raphael both instruct Adam that Eve is slightly farther removed from God's grace than Adam because she was created to serve both God and him. When Eve persuades Adam to let her work alone, she challenges him, her superior, and he yields to her, his inferior. Again, as Adam eats from the fruit, he knowingly defies God by obeying Eve and his inner instinct instead of God and his reason. Adam's visions in Books XI and XII show more examples of this disobedience to God and the universe's hierarchy, but also demonstrate that with the Son's sacrifice, this hierarchy will be restored once again.

❖ The Fall as Partly Fortunate

After he sees the vision of Christ's redemption of humankind in Book XII, Adam refers to his own sin as a *felix culpa* or "happy fault," suggesting that the fall of humankind, while originally seeming an absolute catastrophe, does in fact bring good with it. Adam and Eve's disobedience allows God to show his mercy and temperance in their punishments and his eternal providence toward humankind. This display of love and compassion, given through the Son, is a gift to humankind.

Humankind must now experience pain and death, but humans can also experience mercy, salvation, and grace in ways they would not have been able to have if they had not disobeyed. While humankind has fallen from grace, individuals can redeem and save themselves through continued devotion and obedience to God. The salvation of humankind, in the form of The Son's sacrifice and

resurrection, can begin to restore humankind to its former state. In other words, good will come of sin and death, and humankind will eventually be rewarded. This fortunate result justifies God's reasoning and explains his ultimate plan for humankind.

8. MOTIFS

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, and literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

❖ Light and Dark

Opposites abound in *Paradise Lost,* including Heaven and Hell, God and Satan, and good and evil. Milton's uses imagery of light and darkness to express all of these opposites. Angels are physically described in terms of light, whereas devils are generally described by their shadowy darkness. Milton also uses light to symbolize God and God's grace. In his invocation in Book III, Milton asks that he be filled with this light so he can tell his divine story accurately and persuasively. While the absence of light in Hell and in Satan himself represents the absence of God and his grace.

❖ The Geography of the Universe

Milton divides the universe into four major regions: glorious Heaven, dreadful Hell, confusing Chaos, and a young and vulnerable Earth in between. The opening scenes that take place in Hell give the reader immediate context as to Satan's plot against God and humankind. The intermediate scenes in Heaven, in which God tells the angels of his plans, provide a philosophical and theological context for the story. Then, with these established settings of good and evil, light and dark, much of the action occurs in between on Earth. The powers of good and evil work

against each other on this new battlefield of Earth. Satan fights God by tempting Adam and Eve, while God shows his love and mercy through the Son's punishment of Adam and Eve.

Milton believes that any other information concerning the geography of the universe is unimportant. Milton acknowledges both the possibility that the sun revolves around the Earth and that the Earth revolves around the sun, without coming down on one side or the other. Raphael asserts that it does not matter which revolves around which, demonstrating that Milton's cosmology is based on the religious message he wants to convey, rather than on the findings of contemporaneous science or astronomy.

❖ Conversation and Contemplation

One common objection raised by readers of *Paradise Lost* is that the poem contains relatively little action. Milton sought to divert the reader's attention from heroic battles and place it on the conversations and contemplations of his characters. Conversations comprise almost five complete books of *Paradise Lost*, close to half of the text. Milton's narrative emphasis on conversation conveys the importance he attached to conversation and contemplation; two pursuits that he believed were of fundamental importance for a moral person. The sharing of ideas allows two people to share and spread God's message, as with Adam and Raphael, and again with Adam and Michael. Likewise, pondering God and his grace allows a person to become closer to God and more obedient. Adam constantly contemplates God before the fall, whereas Satan contemplates only himself. After the fall, Adam and Eve must learn to maintain their conversation and contemplation if they hope to make their own happiness outside of Paradise.

9. SYMBOLS

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, and colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

❖ **The Scales in the Sky**

As Satan prepares to fight Gabriel when he is discovered in Paradise, God causes the image of a pair of golden scales to appear in the sky. On one side of the scales, he puts the consequences of Satan's running away, and on the other he puts the consequences of Satan's staying and fighting with Gabriel. The side that shows him staying and fighting flies up, signifying its lightness and worthlessness. These scales symbolize the fact that God and Satan are not truly on opposite sides of a struggle. God is all-powerful, and Satan and Gabriel *both* derive all of their power from Him. God's scales force Satan to realize the futility of taking arms against one of God's angels again.

❖ **Adam's wreath**

The wreath that Adam makes as he and Eve work separately in Book IX is symbolic in several ways. First, it represents his love for her and his attraction to her. But as he is about to give the wreath to her, his shock in noticing that she has eaten from the Tree of Knowledge makes him drop it to the ground. His dropping of the wreath symbolizes that his love and attraction to Eve is falling away. His image of her as a spiritual companion has been shattered completely, as he realizes her fallen state. The fallen wreath represents the loss of pure love.

10. Who is the best developed character in the Epic?

Trying to establish who the best developed character in Paradise Lost is has been the subject of much scholarly debate.

For some readers Satan is the hero or protagonist of the story as well as the best developed character, because he struggles to overcome his own doubts and weaknesses and accomplishes his goal of corrupting humankind. This goal, however, is evil, and Adam and Eve are the moral heroes at the end of the story, as they help to begin humankind's slow process of redemption and salvation. For other readers, Satan is far from being the story's object of admiration, as most heroes are, although there are many powerful qualities to his character that make him intriguing to readers.

Milton devotes much of the poem's early books to developing Satan's character. That is why many readers have argued that Milton deliberately makes Satan seem heroic and appealing early in the poem to draw us into sympathizing with him against our will, so that we may see how seductive evil is and learn to be more vigilant in resisting its appeal.

One reason that Satan is easy to sympathize with is that he is much more like us than God or the Son are. As reflecting human errors, he is much easier for us to imagine and empathize with than an omniscient god. Satan's character and psychology are all very human, and his envy, pride, and despair are understandable, given his situation. But Satan's speeches subtly display their own inconsistency and error.

When Satan first sees Earth and Paradise in Book III, he is overcome with grief. His description of his situation is eloquent; his expression of pain is moving. Perhaps readers pity Satan as he struggles to find his new identity while reflecting on his mistakes. Likewise, his feeling of despair is familiar with feelings that all human beings undergo at some point. However, Satan's despair becomes fuel for his ever-increasing evil, rather than the foundation for repentance. His anger and irrationality overcomes him, and he resolves to make evil his virtue. In many ways Satan becomes more understandable in this speech for his pitiable human qualities, and he becomes more interesting as well due to the unpredictability of his

character. But, overall, his ever-increasing stubbornness and devilish pride make him less forgivable.

Satan can seem the best developed character throughout the epic; however, for some people, and particularly for me, the hero of this story at the end turns out to be the Son, Jesus Christ, since he volunteers himself to sacrifice his life in order to save humankind and redeem men's sins. This is a wonderful and unselfish show of pure and unconditional love, which is Jesus' greatest legacy for every human being, to find the path of salvation.

CHAPTER IV

1. COMPARISON AND CONTRAST BETWEEN MILTON'S AND THE BIBLE'S VERSION

Introduction

The fact of being a Puritan and fond of religion influenced Milton greatly as a poet. Paradise Lost as well as most of his other poems such us Samson Agonistes, Paradise Regained, On the Morning of Christ's Nativity among others, dramatize stories from the Bible. Phrases and images from the Bible are everywhere in both his poetry and his prose.

The Bible was not only relevant to Milton as a literary source, but also was used in all kinds of different contexts in the seventeenth century, since it was accepted by most people as an authoritative source. Milton relied heavily on the Bible to write his pamphlets against bishops, in favor of divorce, and his writings defending the execution of the king.

However, Milton's epic Paradise Lost, about the "Fall" of Adam and Eve, is the most famous biblically based Christian poem in English literature. Beginning in Genesis at the start of time, Milton transforms the fall of Eden into a fictional work of art. Milton's version of the Creation, Satan's rebellion, and the fall of man is probably the version most widely known in the Western part of the world, known even by those who have never read the Bible. Milton's epic account has over the centuries become part of some people's culture.

The whole account of the Creation, Adam and Eve's eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, God's judgment of them, and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden takes up only the first three chapters of Genesis. But Milton's poem goes well beyond the Bible. He draws on material from later Christian and rabbinic traditions and commentaries, and from Greek and Roman mythology and literature (Evans 1968; Patrides 1966; Rosenblatt 1994; Revard 1980; Shoulson 2001; Sims 1962; Turner 1987). His poem attempts to incorporate the whole sweep of human

history and culture as it was known in Milton's days, as if he is not there just to "justify the ways of God to men", as he says in his opening invocation, but also to explain the order, nature, and meaning of the world. It could be said that he had a great impulse to explain the universe through his epic.

The story Milton tells us in Paradise Lost is easy to understand by reading the Bible since it was taken from it. However, Milton's version is full of details and elements which make this story more attractive to read. This chapter is destined to analyze both the Bible's version as well as Milton's story in order to find the similarities and differences relating to their plot, characters, and Satan's arguments.

1. Similarities and Differences

Milton tells the story of the Bible as a progression of events; from Creation and Satan's rebellion and war in Heaven through the Fall and the Redemption, and finally towards Consummation. Milton's narrative adds increasing imagery, though a few unnecessary elements are included.

❖ Plot

Creation

The story about the Creation in Milton's Book VII of Paradise Lost is the same story we can find in the Bible account. However, Milton uses imagery and embellished details to increase the appeal of the story. He keeps the background of the events described in the Bible intact, but adds more substance to the account.

One of the major variations is that Milton's Creator of the universe is the Son, who rides out into chaos to begin his work in a chariot "on the wings of cherubim uplifted, in paternal glory" while "all his train followed in bright

procession". However, some critics prefer the Bible's powerful image of the solitary "Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

Another difference is that in Milton's epic Adam realizes that he already knows each of the names of all the creatures of Earth because God had given him this knowledge beforehand. Then, Adam asks God to give him a companion more equal to himself than the animals, since he needs a person with whom he can share his life and thoughts. That's why God created Eve from Adam's rib in order to fulfill his desire. This differs from the Bible account, which tells us that God himself sees the necessity of giving Adam a companion in order to allay his loneliness.

According to the Bible, God made the world and everything in it perfect. He created humanity, male and female, to look after and develop the world, living in perfect harmony with God and the rest of creation. On the other hand, in Milton's epic the world's creation is related to Adam by the Archangel Raphael, in Book VII, and the creation stories of man and woman are told by Adam and Eve in Books VIII and IV, respectively. The relationship of Adam and Eve to the rest of creation is described in Book IV, ironically through the eyes of Satan:

> *"Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,*
> *Godlike erect, with native honour clad*
> *In naked majesty seemed lords of all,*
> *And worthy seemed, for in their looks divine*
> *The image of their glorious maker shone."*
>
> (Book IV.288)

To tell the creation story, Milton takes some of Raphael's language directly from popular English translations of the Bible. Milton uses biblical language to give Raphael's account more authority, and makes the invented details of his story more credible. The Archangel's extended explanations about the world, God, and

Satan, show how Milton was concerned about the absolute importance of conversation, knowledge, and thought.

Milton begins with the orthodox Christian argument of a three-part God and then elaborates on the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. Milton shows how God and the Son can work separately yet still work as one God by having God send the Son to defeat Satan and create the universe. Even though they appear as separate characters, Milton believed that the Son represents the living, active, almost human likeness of God.

Satan's Rebellion and the War in Heaven

The account of Satan's rebellion and fall from heaven with all his followers takes up a major portion of the plot of Paradise Lost. Milton spends the first quarter of his epic telling us about the antagonist, Satan, rather than the protagonist. On the other hand, the Biblical sources of this event are brief, but early church writings had amplified these lines by the time Milton began composing his epic.

The fall of Lucifer or Satan is stated in a few lines of the Bible. These lines briefly describe how Lucifer falls from the sky, and how God tells him he is brought down: "You said to yourself, *'I'll climb to heaven and place my throne above the highest stars. I'll sit there with the gods far away in the north. I'll be above the clouds, just like God Most High.' But now you are deep in the world of the dead."*[37]

The Bible sources of war in Heaven, devils against God and His angels, can be found in Revelation. Here the story differs from Milton's epic, being one of the major differences related to Satan's rebellion. In the Bible, Satan is described as a Dragon waiting for a woman to give birth and eat her child as soon as it is born. This is why a war breaks out in Heaven. Michael and his angels fight against the

[37] Bible. Isaiah XIV,13-15

dragon and its angels. But the dragon loses the battle, so it and its angels are forced out of their places in heaven and thrown down to the earth. Then it is stated that the snake, which fools everyone on earth, is known as the devil and Satan.

In contrast, Milton's story tells us that God announces that the Son is chosen to be the ruler at his right hand. Satan feels angry and jealous at this announcement, so he persuades other angels in Heaven to join him against God, and thus they begin a war in Heaven. However, as stated in the Bible, Satan and his angels lose the battle and are sent out of Heaven.[38]

There are several places where Milton adds distinct scenes to the creation story. A long description of hell is given, describing the society of demons, and the atmosphere of hell. This contains several surprising ideas, which are not commonly accepted biblical truths. Hell is not generally viewed as a democracy, but the demons are clearly described as voting on their plans. Rather than ordering them to do his orders, Satan must convince hell's politicians that his plan is a wise one. Satan and Beelzebub are also referred to as separate entities, something that is not taken from the Bible. Milton adds many inventions to the plot. Some of these additions may seem blatant and out of place, which can confuse the reader with what might really happened. However, these inventions do not contradict or obfuscate the critical and real message of Genesis 3.

The Fall of Man

The first humans, Adam and Eve, are tempted by the serpent to eat the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. This line summarizes perfectly both Milton's and the Bible's story of the Fall of man. However, Milton adds many details to explain this event.

[38] "Paradise Lost". Book V.

In Genesis, the story begins with the following description: *"Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made."* So we can assume that mankind's first temptation comes through the mouth of "the serpent."Adam and Eve are tempted by the serpent, but Genesis does not state how the serpent became evil or how Satan possessed the serpent's body to fulfill his revenge. In the Bible it is not explicit that the serpent is a representation of Satan. In contrast, Milton describes how Satan in his hunger for revenge decides to assume a serpent's shape to carry out his temptation and deceive Eve by using many strategies and arguments.

Milton states explicitly that the serpent is Satan. Satan chose to use the serpent as his disguise since it had a general appearance as beautiful and a pleasant animal to be around. It can even be assumed that the serpent made a god pet and was probably constantly around Adam and Eve.

The serpent is called *"more crafty than any beast of the field",* but the word "crafty" is not primarily a negative term in the Bible. Rather, it often suggests wisdom. This description of the Serpent is in direct contrast to the foolishness exhibited by Adam and Eve in their search to be wise, like God.

In Milton's story as well as in Genesis the serpent convinces Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. However, Milton adds that the serpent is looking for Eve when she is alone in order to make her transgress. Eve convinces Adam to work separately; thus the serpent takes advantage of her when she is alone. Contrary to the Bible, in order to fulfill his revenge Satan uses some elaborate and convincing arguments, which will be analyzed below.

In Genesis, after eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, Eve gives it to her husband, who does the same. Their eyes are opened. Both of them realize they are naked and look for fig leaves to cover their nakedness. Hearing to God's steps in the Garden, Adam and Eve hide from Him. God punishes them and the serpent, and finally Adam and Eve are sent out of the Garden. These events also happen in

Milton's epic, with the difference that after eating from the forbidden tree, Adam and Eve feel lust, shame, and many other new feelings: high passions, anger, hate, mistrust, suspicion, and discord, among others. They blame each other for their sin and finally reconcile. Contrary to the Bible, Adam and Eve are taken away from Paradise by the Archangel Michael.

Milton adds these and more details to his plot, making the fall of man the climax of his epic.

Redemption and Consummation

God, as soon as humanity has fallen, begins to put in motion a plan to rescue his creation and restore it to what it has to be, starting to insinuate that a chosen king will come to rescue God's people and defeat the powers of evil. In Genesis chapter 3, this is a fairly mysterious or secret clue, but in Paradise Lost Milton dramatized this decision in Book III and related the historical outcome in the long narrative by the archangel Michael in Books XI and XII which summarizes much of the rest of the Bible.

Contrary to the Bible, the Archangel Michael shows Adam visions about the consequences his sin will bring to men. These visions in Books XI and XII provide a larger context to Paradise Lost and allow Milton to "justify the ways of God to men" and to conclude his epic poem with the message that one must live virtuously and be obedient to God.

The stories, narrated as Adam's visions, explain why God allows sin and death into the world, and why God wants us to live a certain way. Without these visions and stories, Milton could not explain God's reasoning and his glorious plan for humankind. These visions enable Milton to transcend his focus from the first narrative in the Bible to the redemption in the New Testament which is not mention in Genesis.

From the stories of Enoch and Noah Milton describes in Adam's vision, Adam can recognize the power of devotion to God. These visions, and Adam himself, demonstrate the path of greatness that prefigures the salvation of humankind through Jesus' sacrifice. These visions also demonstrate Milton's belief that a true measure of a person, from Adam up until modern times, is his or her virtuous relationship with God.

❖ **Characters**

Throughout his epic, Milton develops many more characters than the Bible does. Milton incorporates all kind of characters: angels, devils, humans, personifications, and mythological personages, and during, Archangel Michael's prophecies, characters from the Old Testament such as Cain, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Nimrod, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Pharaoh, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, David, Solomon, etc. This fact makes Milton's story very appealing.

However, there are some differences as well as similarities between Milton's characters and the Bible's, which will be analyzed focusing on the main characters.

- **God the Father**

In Both versions, God is the creator of the universe; an omnipotent and supreme being who knows everything that happens in Heaven as well as in Hell and Earth. However, one of the major differences is that He announces that His Son will rule at his right sending him to create the Earth, a fact which we cannot find in the Bible.

In addition, and opposite to the Bible, in Milton's version, several times, God sends his angels to warn Adam and Eve of Satan's intentions. This event shows how strong and elaborate Satan's arguments and temptations are, to go against God's command and His angels' warnings. Another important difference is that

after knowing about man's sin, God is not the one who punishes Adam and Eve directly; rather He sends His Son again to do so.

Moreover, after the punishment, God explicitly makes the decision of rescuing His creation from the devil; something which does not happen in the Bible.

- **God the Son**

Both versions state that the Son or Jesus Christ is the only one who will save humankind from the devil and sin; however, as was stated before, in Genesis the Son does not appear in the way He does in Paradise Lost.

Contrary to Milton's Epic, in the Bible just a clue about Jesus' coming is given. On the other hand, Milton gives a more significant role to the Son throughout his epic by developing him as one of the major characters, and illustrating that God acts through him. Actually, Milton departs from the Bible in making the Son create the world, while Genesis does not say anything about the Son.

Another important difference is that the Son volunteers to give his live in order to save man. This account cannot be found in the Bible since it states that God, by his own decision, sends the Archangel Gabriel to tell the Virgin Mary she is going to conceive God's son, who later will save men.

Finally, in Paradise Lost, after Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit, the Son directly speaks with Adam, Eve, and the serpent in order to punish them. In contrast, the Bible states that God himself talks to Adam first to ask him about what happened with them. Shortly after Adam tells God about his and his wife's sin, He punishes them and the serpent too.

These facts show how Milton wanted to add more imagery and importance to the role of the Son as a divine being and savior of mankind.

- **Satan**

Satan is an evil angel who fell from Heaven in the Bible as well as in Milton's epic. However, in the Bible we can find just some brief and superficial references about this fact which can have more than one interpretation.

While In Revelation Satan is described as a dragon defeated by God's angels, Paradise Lost describes Satan as one of God's angels whose jealousy and hunger of power make him rebel against God.

In contrast to the Bible, Milton spends most of his epic describing and developing Satan as one of the most important characters, who makes Adam and Eve transgress. However, as the story goes on, Satan's eloquence and power diminish little by little until he is cursed and punished by the Son.

In Genesis, it is not stated that Satan assumes the form of a serpent to tempt Eve, while in Milton's story Satan undergoes many transformations. He first disguises himself as a cherub in order to deceive the Archangel Uriel and get entrance into the Garden of Eden. Then he takes the form of a cormorant, next of a toad, and finally a snake.

In short, we can affirm that Satan's character is more developed in Milton's epic than in the Bible account.

- **Adam**

In the Bible as well as in Paradise Lost, Adam is the first human to be created by God. He is the one who names all the animals, and takes care of and looks after everything created in the Garden of Eden.

In Paradise Lost, however, Adam is described as a strong, intelligent, and very rational character. He is shown as a perfect human being before his fall. In

addition, Book VII presents a curious Adam, who seeks knowledge. The great hunger of knowledge Adam has shows his potential temptation to eat from the Tree of Knowledge.

Milton shows Adam as superior to Eve, while the Bible does not say anything explicit about this. However, we can deduce that Eve is inferior to Adam, since she was second created and from Adam's rib.

- **Eve**

In both accounts Eve is tempted by the serpent, agrees to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, and finally gives it to her husband. However, Milton shows us throughout his epic that Eve is inferior to Adam, surpassing him only in her beauty. In Book VIII, Eve is shown as a woman full of vanity who falls in love with her own image reflected in the water.

As it was stated before, the Bible slightly insinuates that Eve is inferior to Adam, while Milton expressly describes her as submitted to her husband. An instance of this is shown in Book VIII when Eve decides to leave Raphael and Adam alone, preferring to listen to their conversation from Adam afterwards. Moreover, Milton tells us that she prefers to hear the story mingled with Adam's caresses, indicating that intellectual stimulation by itself is not sufficient for her.

In Genesis, Eve's inferiority can also be assumed, since the serpent chooses Eve to be tempted, as she is weaker than Adam is. This is also more developed in Milton's epic, showing how easy it was for Satan to convince Eve to eat the forbidden fruit.

❖ **Satan's arguments and strategies**

Genesis (3: 1-5) records the account of Satan's temptation in a briefer way than Milton's does throughout book IX. In the Bible the serpent speaks to the woman and asks the first question recorded in Scripture: "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall

not eat from any tree of the garden?"[39] This is not an innocent conversation starter. The Serpent reduces God's command to a question.

Satan is so subtle. He does not directly deny God's Word, but introduces the assumption that God's Word is subject to our judgment. Notice how Satan spins the question. He does not say, "Why would God keep you from eating the fruit of one tree?"

It was understood in more deceptive words, as he implies that God, who has forbidden one tree, has forbidden them all. However, the issue was one tree, not "every tree of the garden." The Devil's words were misleading, and that is the way temptation always comes.[40]

Satan focused Eve's attention on God's one prohibition. He suggested that God did not really want what was best for Adam and Eve but rather was denying something to them that was essentially good. He hinted that God's line of protection was actually a line that He drew because He was selfish. The Serpent wants God's Word to appear harsh and restrictive. Satan is cleverly attempting to plant a seed of doubt in Eve's mind concerning God's Word and God's goodness.

Later, Eve's reply is a little changed from God's original command. Eve answers the serpent: "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'you shall not eat from it or touch it or you will die.'" In her reply to the Serpent, Eve attempts to defend God's honor, but in the process distorts His Word. First, while God said, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely" (2:16), Eve said, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat" (3:2). Eve omits "any" and "freely";

[39] Genesis, 3: 1-2

[40] David Hocking."*The Rise and Fall of Civilization"* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1989), 90.

the two words that emphasize the generosity of God Eve subtracts from God's Word.

Eve also expresses that God exaggerates His prohibition by saying "You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die" (3:3). Her comment suggests that God is so harsh that an inadvertent slip would bring death. Satan erroneously states God's command as a question so as to appear that he is misinformed and needs to be corrected. Few of us can avoid the temptation of telling another that they are wrong. And so, wonder of wonders, Eve has begun to walk the path of disobedience while supposing that she was defending God to the Serpent.[41]

To Eve's reply the serpent says: "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'" (3:4-5). In the first question, Satan tempts softly Eve on her blindside, but now he advances and proceeds forcefully on her broadside with a bald-faced lie. It's the Serpent's word versus God's Word. The serpent is so saturated with lies that he even attempts to make God out to be a liar!

Satan's strategy began rather innocently by introducing and encouraging doubt. His strategy quickly culminates in a blatant denial of God's Word. In denying it he attributes motives to God that are not consistent with God's character. God's true motive is the welfare of man, but the Serpent implies it was God's welfare at man's expense. This added suggestion seemed consistent with what the Serpent had already implied about God's motives in 3:1. Having entertained a doubt concerning God's Word, Eve was ready to accept a denial of His Word.

It is interesting to note that in the Bible account the Serpent only speaks twice. That is all the talk that was needed to plunge man downward into the spiral

[41] Deffinbaugh. "*Genesis, Lesson 4: The Fall of Man" (Genesis 3:1-24)*.

of sin. On the other hand, Milton develops more talk from Satan to convince Eve to eat from the forbidden tree.

The first strategy used by the serpent is flattering Eve's beauty, grace and godliness. Praising her beauty and grace, in Book IX the serpent tells Eve: "… *Thee all living things gaze on, all things thine by gift and thy Celestial Beautie adore with ravishment beheld, there best beheld where universally admired..."* Her godliness is praised in these lines among others: *"…A Goddess among Gods, adored and served By Angels numberless, thy daily Train…" "…Queen of this universe..."*

These words get into the heart of Eve, who allows the serpent's compliments to win her over, demonstrating that she cares more about superficial things such as beauty than profound things such as God's grace.

Eve is amazed to see a creature of the Garden speak. So the serpent finds his opportunity to introduce his second argument. He tells Eve in tempting language that he gained the gifts of speech and intellect by eating the savory fruit of one of the trees in the garden. The serpent sees the chance to praise the tree so Eve would be more tempted to eat from it by saying:

"…I chanc'd
A goodly Tree farr distant to behold
Loaden with fruit of fairest colours mixt,
Ruddie and Gold: I nearer drew to gaze…
Grateful to appetite, more pleas'd my sense
Then smell of sweetest Fenel, or the Teats
Of Ewe or Goat dropping with Milk at Eevn,
Unsuckt of Lamb or Kid, that tend thir play."

And he again flatters Eve by saying that eating the apple also made him seek her out, in order to worship her beauty:

"…I turnd my thoughts, and with capacious mind

Considerd all things visible in Heav'n,
Or Earth, or Middle, all things fair and good;
But all that fair and good in thy Divine
Semblance, and in thy Beauties heav'nly Ray
United I beheld; no Fair to thine
Equivalent or second, which compel'd
Mee thus, though importune perhaps, to come
And gaze, and worship thee of right declar'd
Sovran of Creatures, universal Dame"

Satan's speech about the powers of the tree is so strong that Eve feels amazed and curious to know which tree holds this fruit, so she follows the serpent until he brings her to the Tree of knowledge. What Eve tells the serpent in the Bible about God's command (which is stated above) is the same Eve in Paradise Lost tells Satan.

Although Eve tells the serpent they cannot eat from that tree, Satan persists, developing his third argument. He argues that God actually wants them to eat from the tree. Satan says that God forbids it only because he wants them to show their independence. Satan comes to convince Eve that they will not die if they eat the forbidden fruit by saying:

"Queen of this Universe, doe not believe
Those rigid threats of Death; ye shall not Die:
How should ye? by the Fruit? it gives you Life
To Knowledge? By the Threatner? look on mee,
Mee who have touch'd and tasted, yet both live,
And life more perfet have attaind then Fate
Meant mee, by ventring higher then my Lot."

Eve is now seriously tempted. The flattery has made her desire to know more. She reasons that God claimed that eating from this tree meant death, but the serpent ate (or so he claims) and not only does he still live, but can speak and think.

In addition, the serpent uses one more argument referring to knowledge. Satan argues that the tree instead of killing, gives great knowledge of good and evil. This argument is good because it convinces Eve that knowing what is good and evil makes it easier to do what is good, wrongfully assuming that knowledge is always good. And finally, the serpent affirms that knowledge will make Adam and Eve be like God. That is why God prohibited eating from the Tree of knowledge. He fears men will reach His level, so He would rather have them remain ignorant:

"…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 obeid:
Your feare it self of Death removes the feare.
Why then was this forbid? Why but to awe,
Why but to keep ye low and ignorant,
His worshippers; he knows that in the day
Ye Eate thereof, your Eyes that seem so cleere,
Yet are but dim, shall perfetly be then
Op'nd and cleerd, and ye shall be as Gods,
Knowing both Good and Evil as they know.
That ye should be as Gods, since I as Man,
Internal Man, is but proportion meet,
I of brute human, yee of human Gods"

After these strong arguments, Eve comes to reason that God would have no reason to forbid the fruit unless it were powerful, Eve thinks, and seeing the tree right before her eyes makes all of the warnings seem exaggerated. The tree looks so perfect to Eve. She reaches for an apple, plucks it, and takes a bite. The Earth

then feels wounded, and nature sighs in woe, for with this act humankind has fallen.

As we can see, the arguments and strategies used by the serpent in Paradise Lost are more in number, and of course more elaborate. At the least we can get four, while in the Bible Satan just needs two. Either Satan needs one or more arguments to tempt people; the purpose of these passages is to show that we should never underestimate Satan's powers. We must be aware of consequences coming from disobedience to God. Instead of listening to Satan's temptations, which of course seem good, we should avoid and refuse them, not giving Satan a chance to dialog with us.

CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing his works and life, it can be agreed that John Milton was a genius able to write and create masterful works in spite of being totally blind at the age of 44. That is why he was recognized as the "Third Giant of English Literature."

All the events and happenings Milton had to undergo, such as his several marriages, the loss of some of his family members and friends, and the loss of his sight, played a significant role during his literary life and career. Actually, it can be affirmed that Milton's works mirror his life.

He was privileged to be brought up in a prosperous family and receive the best education, first by private tutors at home, followed by entrance into St. Paul's School, and later Christ's College, Cambridge. He was a brilliant student who had already mastered a number of classical and modern European languages, using some of them to write some of his poetry.

Milton used his prodigious talent to write about several topics related to politics and religion. He addressed particular themes such as the right to divorce, religious freedom, the right to overthrow a tyrannical king, and freedom of speech, among others. These works greatly influenced his time, and they continue doing so.

Related to his prose works, it can be agreed that the most influencing one was The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, a work that strongly shows Milton's beliefs towards marriage and divorce, affirming that marriage required the happiness and consent of both parties, so just incompatibility was a valid reason for the right to divorce. He was prompted to write about this topic after his second wife's desertion of him. And of course it was a subject of several controversial opinions and troubles, especially with the authorities and the church.

Among his poetry, Sonnet 19, On his own blindness, is one of the greatest poems, which mirrors Milton's state. The fact of having lost his sight impacted

Milton in a devastating way since he had not achieved greatness in his literary carrier yet.

However, this fact was not an obstacle for Milton to continue writing and creating masterful pieces of writing. On His Blindness is a beautiful sonnet based on the scriptures which creates a deeply personal poem, and a guide for Milton and his audience from an intense loss through to understanding and improvement. Through this sonnet, Milton meditates on the fact that he has become blind. He expresses his frustration, but he is answered by "Patience," who tells him that God does not really need man's work but the ability to bear God's "mild yoke," to tolerate whatever God asks faithfully and without complaint.

Another sonnet which perhaps is the most intensely personal of all Milton's sonnets is "Methought I saw my late espoused Saint." This sonnet speaks about Milton being visited in his dream by his deceased wife, who died after giving birth to a daughter. In spite of being blind, Milton describes how he can see her. However, he returns to his waking reality, where he is blind. Most scholars postulate Katherine Woodcock as the subject of Milton's dream in this poem, but some believe that the sonnet memorializes Milton's first wife, Mary Powell, who died on May 5, 1652 three days after giving birth to a daughter, Deborah, while others argue that the poem commemorates both wives.

These sonnets on his personal losses are amazing; however, Milton's most masterful poem is Paradise Lost, which is agreed to be the greatest epic, even the greatest work of literature written in the English language. This epic presented in twelve books tells us the biblical story of the fall of Adam and Eve, and the story of Satan's rebellion against God. These stories can be found in the Bible account; however, Milton expanded it into a very long, detailed, and narrative poem full of imagery and details which make this poem very appealing to read, rather than the Bible version.

Milton's purpose in writing this epic was to "justify the ways of God to men" as was stated in his opening invocation.

To create this masterpiece, Milton not only used his knowledge of the Bible but also incorporated classical Greek references, material from later Christian and rabbinic traditions and commentaries, and Greek and Roman mythology and literature, attempting to incorporate the whole sweep of human history and culture as if he was not there just to "justify the ways of God to men", as he says in his opening invocation, but also to explain the order, nature, and meaning of the world. It could be said that he had a great impulse to explain the universe through his epic.

Throughout this epic, Milton developed a lot of characters of many kinds: angels, devils, humans, and personifications in order to fulfill his purpose of explaining God's creation, the Fall of Man, Satan's rebellion against God, and of course man's ultimate redemption.

As for characters in the epic, Satan seems to be the best developed one or even the hero or protagonist of the story, since Milton devoted much of the poem's early books to describe and develop him. However, as the story went on, Satan was losing his powers and his abilities to reason well. He was even punished and damned by God, so for me it can be affirmed that the real hero of the story at the end turns out to be the Son, since he volunteers to sacrifice his life in order to save humankind and redeem men's sins. This fact shows us a wonderful and unselfish demonstration of pure and unconditional love, which is Jesus' greatest legacy for every human being, to find the path of salvation.

In contrast with the Bible, Milton added many more details and images to develop the epic. Paradise Lost differs in some aspects or details from the Bible account; however, these small differences do not affect the Bible's main purpose and teaching.

With the creation of this epic, Milton reaffirmed his talent and showed us how ambitious he was to contribute an epic poem to the English language, in spite of being totally blind. In spite of some criticisms of him, he is generally agreed to be a genius. He is even considered a giant, the third Giant of English literature after Chaucer and Shakespeare. Could anybody surpass his talent and become a Giant as well as he did? Could somebody be able to contribute with such epic to the English literature? Just time will give us the answer.

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