

Darkness Visible:  
Milton, Seventeenth- Century Perspectives,  
and the Changing Miltonic Canon

by

Thomas S. Dias

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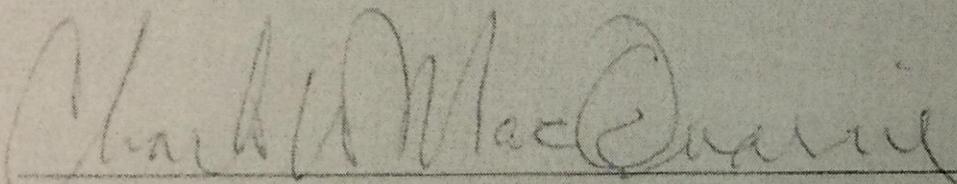
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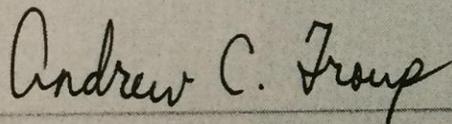
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This thesis or project has been accepted on behalf of the Department of English by their supervisory committee:



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Dr. Charles MacQuarrie



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Dr. Andy Troup

## I

Milton was without a doubt the seventeenth century's most intelligent and prolific artist. He was also the most ambitious counting himself among the most learned and talented men of the era. Idealistic and ambitious he appeared to have personified every quality of the classical bard and of the classical intellectual. Milton consciously aligned himself with the greats and was determined to outpace even the most prolific and influential poets: Homer, Virgil, Spenser. He wanted to compose an epic unlike anything ever before seen. Many maintain that he succeeded; this creator of *Paradise Lost*, arguably the greatest epic poem ever constructed, needed every advantage and every insight into psychology, society, religion, and theodicy he possessed.

Milton spent much of his youth and early adult life in solitary studying. The son of a strict Christian money-lender, young John Milton was afforded the luxury of time and much of his time was spent exploring the newly emerging literature of his time. Socially isolated, Milton formed a profound existential constitution that distinguished him from other readers of his time. Milton, the prodigal son from a well to do family, immersed himself in academia. Literary achievements, psychological theories, astronomical discoveries and every intellectual intrigue filled his every waking moment. Well educated, Milton was familiar with all of the most influential and essential thinking tracing history back into antiquity and he did it all to achieve one epistemological goal—to "justify God's ways to man" (1: 25-26). Milton was not always the steadfastly and unflinchingly orthodox Christian many early contemporary and modern scholars believe him to be. His beliefs wavered and his profound questioning led him to—the razor's edge—science. Every tentative and precarious discovery, every new theory, and every changing perspective that is today considered foundational was for Milton heretical, devious, and utterly intriguing. Astronomy, Astrology, and even some aspects of psychology were among the most dangerous of his topics; even discussing them could lead to charges of heresy. In spite of this Milton was fascinated with the sciences. He even began to question his own religious

theodicy. This sense of questioning and uncertainty pervades throughout his later works. It can also be found in his single most popular work, *Paradise Lost*, a work Milton believed would immortalize him. He could then stand among his heroes. David Hawkes explains this saying, "the young poet goes on to compare himself to such reputedly blind sages as Tiresias and Homer, respectively the greatest prophet and the greatest poet of the ancient world" (Hawkes 66). Milton's ambitious project has become one of the greatest literary works every made and it remains today a subject of controversy and curiosity.

Among these intense controversies stands one of the most predominant discoveries in literary criticism. There is and has been a lasting stalemate between the Anti-Satanists and the Satanists devoted to the problem of Satan within *Paradise Lost*. The heroic Satan and the tyrannical monarchy of God becomes a portrait of the author few critics of the seventeenth century would have or could have acknowledged. The debate regarding Milton's orthodoxy was never made in the seventeenth century. It was simply too sensitive a subject to discuss. Seventeenth century readers knew precisely where Milton must stand on the subject of Satan and no questions were raised because deviations were considered intolerable, abhorrent and heretical. Even today the division between the Satanists and the Anti-Satanists is growing ever wider.

The purpose of this study is to explore the controversies surrounding the most current ideologies and discoveries in the Miltonic canon and to prove that Milton was not a steadfast, unquestioning, or even an orthodox Christian when he composed *Paradise Lost*. In fact he explored many cosmologies and theories that would have condemned him; he was a quiet heretic that questioned the motivations of God in *Paradise Lost* associating God with tyranny and oppression and Satan with heroism and liberation. God, Satan, and character of the Son will be examined. Milton and his religious perspectives will also be examined from an ontological perspective.

*Paradise Lost* was not composed by a steady Christian. It was composed by an atheistic Milton that valued knowledge above all things. He studied veraciously and may have been influenced by a

number of heretical teachings. Aspects of Hermetic philosophy may even have influenced him. These developing personal philosophies, evident in *Paradise Lost*, have been long debated by the Satanists and Anti-Satanists and may be settled if it can be concluded that the composer of *Paradise Lost* was a curious atheist who dabbled in the pseudo-sciences of astrology and alchemy among others. He may even have studied occult theology. When *Paradise Lost* is explored considering these possibilities Milton and *Paradise Lost* becomes profound and new. Controversial, this rendering of Milton and *Paradise Lost* lends new credence to the conflicts portrayed within the text because they mirror in many ways the conflict within the author himself.

Contextualizing *Paradise Lost* means that the author's perspective must be better understood as it pertains to seventeenth century England. It is vital that *Paradise Lost* is fully explored, viewed through the lens of the seventeenth century reader of *Paradise Lost*, as well as through the lens of the author himself. The most critical of Milton's early critics was Samuel Johnson. He described *Paradise Lost* saying, "this novelty has been, by those who can find nothing wrong in Milton, imputed to his laborious endeavors after words suitable to his ideas... but the truth is, that in prose and verse he had formed his style by a perverse and pedantick principal" (Johnson 386). Johnson's criticisms were reflective of seventeenth century thinking, but his criticisms persisted, remaining influential into the early twentieth century. Most seventeenth century readers thought Milton's *Paradise Lost* was a poem imbued with religious fact. To the layperson of the seventeenth century Heaven and Hell were more than representations of Christian theology, they were real places and the characters portrayed within were equally real. The Devil, God, and the Son (Christ) were much more than fictions in an epic poem. They were the creators of life, of good, and of evil. When Milton describes Satan as "a great sultan" the fear resonates. The people of the seventeenth century and their fears of the devil or of the invocation of God's umbrage were far more real than fictitious (I: 348). Milton aligned himself with that of a prophet acknowledging that he was not writing for the people of his time because they lacked

awareness of mind. As far as he was concerned they lacked the mental precepts to fully conceptualize the subject matter of *Paradise Lost*. A revolutionary, Milton was writing for all of time. He believed that he was a prophetic intellectual; he was an iconoclast leading his ignorant countrymen toward freedom of thought and intellectual inquiry and away from the Church. Milton never found his equivalents among the readers of the seventeenth century, but he did enjoy his own brand of intellectual pursuit and has posthumously discovered his audience among twentieth and twenty-first century readers also moved by a more comprehensive cosmology. This three hundred year disassociation is primarily what led Milton to greatness as a poet. It also alienated him from his contemporaries.

Not all critics received Milton the way Johnson did. The vast majority held him in high esteem. Critics and readers alike failed to grasp the magnitude and subtle allusions buried within the intricacies of *Paradise Lost*, although the principal focus of debate regarding *Paradise Lost* has remained the same: the character of Satan. Seventeenth century critics were uneasy or set at odds when it came to Milton's obvious portrayal of Satan as heroic. The seventeenth century's Devil was clearly and consistently a monstrous adversary. Satan was a completely self-possessed and evil being, but Milton's portrayal challenged this view. This new difference led to an eventual division and to the Anti-Satanist and Satanist camps.

C.S. Lewis's *On Satan* clearly identifies with the most pervasive portrayals of Satan describing him as a scornful, ungrateful and parasitic entity. C. S. Lewis said, "no one had in fact done anything to Satan; he was not hungry, nor over-tasked, he only thought himself impaired... he could find nothing more interesting than his own prestige" (402). Lewis additionally misdirects and misleads casting Satan as the archetypal embodiment of evil and in so doing he effectively dismisses any and all perspectives describing Satan as sympathetic. As an early twentieth century Anti-Satanist, Lewis opposed praise and pity for Satan and openly denounces Satan saying "he claims that the 'terror of his

arms' had put God in doubt of 'his empire', I am not quite certain it is mere folly...there has never been any war between Satan and God" (402). Clearly Lewis is mistaken. In his view, Satan was a futile, servile spirit imagining a grand war rather than waging one. Lewis and other early Anti-Satanists view the Satanist perspective as heresy and dismiss it altogether arguing against its validity.

One of the problems with simple dismissal is that it ignores the dynamic and enigmatic character of Satan. Satan is clearly a key player in Milton's cosmic epic. He is essential to the poem and to a broader Christian theology, but Milton does not portray Satan as Lewis portrays him. In fact Milton's Satan is the opposite. He is tragic, darkly beautiful, and fatalistically flawed; he is very human and has feelings and perspectives. Of all of Milton's characters Satan is the most memorable, the best defined and the most rounded and complex, He is also the most controversial because he is evil and compelling. Critics like Lewis and Johnson embraced a fearful orthodox Christian perspective. They explained and portrayed the character of Satan away, though they were divergent from the reality of Satan according to Milton. Ignore and dismiss the obvious they might say. Allegorical and heroic qualities are false. God and the Son are central. The devil is, in *Paradise Lost*, fictional. Milton's Satan resembles that of Dante's<sup>1</sup>. This essential rendering is representative of the Anti-Satanist perspective. Satan is secondary, a character to be rejected and ignored. He is simple, unredeemable, and uninteresting. Beliefs to the contrary are heretical. This is the Anti-Satanist perspective that dominated and it dominated well into the twentieth century outlasting even the dominant influence of church still capable of equating difference with heresy.

Milton's public face was beginning to change. Milton was, from birth, associated with the strict orthodoxy of Christianity. Publicly he was wealthy and educated, an intellectual, and a businessman that was steadfastly devoted to the church, but even this image was beginning to fade. Years before he

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<sup>1</sup> It is critical to make the distinction between the two: Dante created a Satan that was more or less a structure of Hell itself rather than being an autonomous being. Having been completed in 1320 it precedes *Paradise Lost* by more than 300 years. However, Milton uses many of the images of hell available in Dante's work to create Pandemonium in his works. By the time *Paradise Lost* is completed the conceptual imagery of Hell as portrayed within the Christian doctrine and *Paradise Lost* can be largely attributed to Dante.

wrote *Paradise Lost* he began to question his own religiosity. Contrary to most contemporary views, Milton wavered both politically and religiously. Milton was becoming an iconoclast. He was experiencing a crisis of identity and began to separate himself from his church of idol worship. Upon identifying God's waning influence in the church and its corrupt leadership, Milton's faith in the Church waivered. At the same time he publicly portrayed himself as devout.

A pervasive thirst for knowledge eventually led Milton away from the church and toward the sciences. Some of what Milton studied within the scientific community was considered pseudo-sciences. These included astrology and astronomy, which were at the time considered synonymous and both were considered a threat to the church. Milton was fascinated with the emerging theories and scientific discoveries of the age and followed them closely although they conflicted with biblical tradition. Scientific truth and a not yet antiquated religious theological truth created a terrific conflict in Milton. He found himself questioning his very ideologies, especially since he was becoming increasingly revolutionary. Any public admission of such a changing ideology would have been crazy and would have been considered heresy. It also would have destroyed his public image and ruined him professionally so he masqueraded as the good Christian he was believed to be. Some of his doubts and progressive political views were clearly present in *Paradise Lost*, so too was a scientific perspective at odds with man's heaven. The church-dominated government and the tyrannical unquestioning omnipotence of God mirrored one another. The theodicy of the church and the controversial figure of Satan too clearly mirrored one another. The unyielding oppression of the church may also mirror the unforgiving nature of Milton's God. New scientific discoveries, the oppressive and tyrannical nature of the church - state, and the obvious influx of idol worship all became personal frustrations reflected in Milton's poetic allusions in *Paradise Lost*.

The public perspective of Milton and his views of the church and politics were not the only things that began to change; the Satanist view was growing and becoming a recognized aspect of the

Miltonic canon. This perspective was not new – rather it was suppressed. The view describing Satan as a kind of heroic if not tragic figure was easily rejected and condemned by influential critics like Johnson and Lewis, but this incarnation endured in spite of the influence of the church and authoritative criticism. This is because Satan proved himself an engaging and magnificently constructed redemptive force and because his passionate rhetoric cannot be ignored. Satan is not the adversary the church commands. He is instead betrayed. He is a victim, scorned and demoted, he is a spirit eager for revenge against an unjust Lord but he is not evil incarnate. Bernard Parris points this out saying, "In their craving for honor and dominion, God and Satan are very much alike...God's elevation of the Son is like Lucifer's dream come true... it crushes his hopes of further advancement. The new order of things in heaven deprives Lucifer of the greater glory of which he dreamed but it also diminishes the glory he has enjoyed. He feels that he has been devalued" (Parris 19). Clearly the concept of Satan as a sympathetic creature is an enduring one in spite of opposing efforts to formulate a cohesive analysis to the contrary. Satan became an archetypical anti-hero seeking not evil but justice within Milton's epic. Satan's character is antithetical to goodness in the idealistic sense, but he is not evil incarnate devoid of quality.

The premise that Satan possessed heroic qualities while maintaining an evil charisma was developing in seventeenth century criticism. Milton intentionally and consciously portrayed Satan this way. A betrayed Satan with heroic qualities, a fallen adversary, is much more interesting than a Satan of pure evil. Satan has become the central figure and the major character in *Paradise Lost*. He is imbued with such profound and intrinsic psychological complexities that he has essentially transformed the entire construct. *Paradise Lost* provides insight into a Satan with human frailties, and human qualities. *Paradise Lost* invites a closer, deeper and more concise inquiry into complex psychological natures rather than an obvious look into malevolence. The heroic nature of Satan as anti-hero and even as a deliverer from a tyranny is compelling. It forces critics to explore Satan's

etymology more closely. As A. J. A. Waldock points out, Satan is much more complex than previously conceptualized. Waldock says, "we can condemn Satan for some things and at the same time find him extremely admirable for others... what we are chiefly made to see and feel ... are quite different things: fortitude in adversity, enormous endurance, a certain splendid recklessness, remarkable powers of rising to an occasion, extraordinary qualities of leadership and sticking intelligence in meeting difficulties that could seem overwhelming" (414). Milton's Satan is intended to occupy several archetypal personalities and several points of meaning. He has an importance. Satan represents psychological complexity. He is a frustrated politician, as well as frustrated victim, he is also guilty of avarice, but he is not beyond redemption. Milton intentionally portrays Satan as quasi-heroic. He is bad but not evil and he is redeemable for a multitude of reasons. Seventeenth century readers could not identify with this Satan. Milton portrayed Satan as a heroic figure, a representation that is clearly evident to twenty first century readers capable of perceiving a more complete persona utilizing a more analytical and less frightened religious perspective. Rajan points out that "amidst the impieties which this enraged spirit utters... the author has taken care to introduce none that is not big with absurdity and incapable of shocking a religious reader" (409). As previously mentioned, Milton thought of himself as a poetic prophet and likened himself to Homer and Virgil. He did not compose *Paradise Lost* for readers of his own repressed time but he diluted his message to conceal his truths. *Paradise Lost* was intended for a twenty-first century perspective. His complexity is better appreciated and his rendering is today not so dismissible. Milton intended that he might someday be found in Satan's character and that the connection might someday be made. Waldock explains this saying, "he [Milton] was able, in a marked degree, to conceive Satan in terms of himself: in terms of the temptations to which he felt his own nature especially liable and after which his own nature especially responded" (413). Just as God constructed Adam in his own image so did Milton construct the same in Satan.

Contradictory to the wishes of the seventeenth century critic and the seventeenth century Church, Satan has not been dismissed and ignored. He has not faded into the background or become the hated evil. Instead Satan has evolved and has effectively become the most complex and comprehensively defined character within *Paradise Lost*. Within the context of the twenty first century Milton was correct—the true natures and intricate complexities of the characters within *Paradise Lost* have become more defined and better appreciated. The psychologically and philosophically dynamic character of Satan early criticism deemed irredeemable has found a worthier audience. This new attendance can now view Satan through the retrospective lens Milton originally intended. They can see his characters more accurately and acutely than his own readers ever could. Perhaps now Satan will complete his evolution and become the character Milton hoped he might become. Satan will get his redemption, not through the glorification of a greater God, but through understanding and a divergent capacity for insight. Perhaps he can emerge from the darkness of an unforgiving abyss and become far more than Heaven's fallen angel.

A twentieth century perspective identifies a completely transformed Satan. The Satan of today is very different in character from that of the Satan of the seventeenth century. Changing context has created a troubled hero emblematic of the anti-heroes of the romanticist tradition. No longer a figure of fear this fallen angel has become the focus of literary and philosophical fascination. Milton is responsible for this paradox because he has effectively generated two distinct versions of Satan. Balachandra Rajan points this out explaining that Satan is “notably different from the archangel of the first two books ... those who feel this discrepancy are compelled either to assume that Milton changed his mind about Satan as he drew him or... found ways of making the difference acceptable” (410). One of the main obstacles when attempting to analyze Milton's Satan is this dualism. Satan's duality is a consequence of Milton's own tendency to portray Satan as heroic. The Gods of classical mythology that Milton so famously revered may have motivated this. Attempting to emulate the gods of antiquity

created a paradox: the ancients magnified their deities making clear distinctions between morality and behavior. Milton, following in the footsteps of the polytheistic Greco-Roman tradition found that creating characters resembling those found in *The Odyssey* and other classics magnified the scope of the epic. Overtly heroic demigods, the glorification of deities, and the supremacy of heroes and anti-heroes became an enhancement Milton wanted to duplicate. Figures like Zeus: arguably the most glorified power-hungry warmonger and notorious adulterer and rapist in antiquity was celebrated as the king of the Gods by Homer and Virgil. This often overlooked fact clashes ethically, stylistically, and tastefully with the morality of a fundamentally moral Christianity. This clash presented literary obstacles. Since Milton followed in Homer and Virgil's literary footsteps he found himself epitomizing their literary works. He was through this emulation glorifying Christianity's monotheistic deities. This glorification worked well when applied to God and Christ but Milton's glorification was inadvertently applied to Satan.

This portrayal of Satan was antagonistic and unwelcomed among Christian theologians and the Church. Waldock explains, saying, "...there is hardly a great speech of Satan's that Milton is not at pains to correct, to damp down and neutralize" (414). Milton is effectively attempting to do what Homer and Virgil never needed to do. He is attempting to glorify some deities while condemning others. This moralistic condemnation leads to the disassociations that differentiate Milton's Satan of the first books from Milton's Satan of the latter. The devil we know in the early works is effectively described by Waldock, "Satan...does not degenerate: he is degraded" (417). This break, or rift in continuity is perceived as an attempt to mute Satan in the last books or to obscure the glorification of Satan in the first books. The degradation of Satan was essential to the reconstitution of the conditions in which Milton lived and must have influenced his work. Milton did not completely differentiate either of his two versions of Satan; instead Milton split not only in Satan's characteristics but also in his psychology. Milton's complex Satan implies significantly more than one might expect. Milton's

insight and psychological understanding and complexity is unique to Milton's Satan. Satan is the only one that requires special analysis because he is so intellectually complex. Satan is not only adversarial but also anti-heroic. He is strong and dichotomous and he is as complex as any human, perhaps more complex because he is a supernatural entity. This rift is perceived only from a textual analytical perspective but this divergence is not really divergent. What many critics seem unable to come to terms with is that this complex Satan *is* Satan. *Paradise Lost* is not a representation of his actions in a disassociated past but in an associated present. The two versions are merely records of his actions contrasted and they seem to provide insight into his complex character. There is a resentful quietude in him and there is a grand emperor in him. He is of Hell and of Heaven in the first two books. The second portion, the portion where many critics assume the divide occurs is a rendering of his mind.

We have seen what he can do psychically now we are seeing the divide that exists within him. He is doomed and irredeemably evil and yet he wants to be loved. This internal rift perceived is expressive of an irreconcilable inconsistency:

Satan's inconsistencies are neither unrelated nor arbitrarily imposed; they are a product of his inner conflict, which are brilliantly portrayed...he [Milton] depicted Satan's plight in vivid detail and the frequent shifts in mental and emotional states. The character we see in book four and nine is of a piece with the rest of Milton's portrait and greatly enriches it by giving us deep inside views of Satan's torments and vacillations (Paris 61).

It is this complex inner divide and deep inside view is what Milton is trying to express. Kenneth Gross explains this textual divide saying, "Satan is Milton's picture of what thinking looks like, an image of the mind, of subjectivity, of self-consciousness." It is "a representation of the awkward pressures we put on ourselves to interpret our own situation within the mind's shifting circle of freedom and compulsion" (422). This inner framework is the focus of the fall and redemption motif

embedded in the subtext of *Paradise Lost*. Milton's break does not detract from Satan's complexity. It instead identifies and isolates Satan's intellectual, psychological, and philosophical identity. It creates a clearer demarcation separating Satan from God and Christ. It makes Satan unique to the still elevated Gods of creation (God and Christ) and creates a necessary dichotomy from the divine in *Paradise Lost*. Milton deliberate divergence is a literary allusion intended to frustrate liturgical accusations of heresy. He intentionally constructed this complex Satan as a defense and a warning because Satan is present and always lurking just behind parts unseen.

## II

Lucifer's physical and psychological transformation and fall into Satan is one of controversy and debate. It is also one of the most critical theological and allusional elements in *Paradise Lost*. Perceptions and sympathies for Satan remain deadlocked identifying critics who perceive Satan as a liberating antimonarchical figure possessive of a complex character worthy of some notoriety and critics who perceive him as a lowly and servile archetype atypical of seventeenth century literature. Worthy of both condemnation and esteem, Satan is far more complex and well developed than any seventeenth century reader could have imagined. Even the most steadfast Anti-Satanist cannot refute suppositions describing his disturbingly enigmatic character. As we shall soon see Milton created his literary alter ego when he created Satan. Once feared and described as the most evil in all of creation, Satan may also be worthy of forgiveness and compassion.

The fall of Lucifer and the fall of man are inextricably linked. His destiny is our destiny and he holds critical importance celestially and historically. Danielle A. St. Hilaire explains this interconnectedness with the adversary saying "Satan is significant in the poem as an origin, and specifically as *our* origin, insofar as the poem addresses us as fallen creatures in a fallen world" (Hilaire 3). The fall of Lucifer and of humanity are bound. It is therefore critical that the theological and philosophical complexities surrounding Satan are re-evaluated because his fall is significant to the theme of *Paradise Lost*. To gain better insight into Satan it is vital that Lucifer (God's right hand) be examined. Lucifer's rebellion is prompted by God's creation and exultation of the Son. It is this event that explains the construction and evolution of Lucifer's motivations; a betrayal that essentially drives the final books in the epic. Lucifer begins his rebellion challenging God's decree that the Son should be worshipped as he is. This offends and provokes Lucifer. God's elevation of the Son is an inexcusable offence, which fuels Lucifer's general disdain for God's already abortive monarchical authority. Lucifer's contempt for God also stems from God's strict hierarchical caste and his sanctified

need for personal glorification. Milton was extremely antimonarchical and Satan in many ways exemplifies Milton's distaste for tyrannical self-glorifying government<sup>2</sup>. This is not to say that the two are synonymous. Satan simply represented suppressed attitudes in opposition to the fundamentally restrictive rule of the Church. Milton identifies himself as an intellectual and philosophical "prophet" convinced that society must establish independence from theological rule<sup>3</sup>. In *Paradise Lost* Satan leads a revolt in defiance of Heaven's monarchy. He encourages freedom through chaos and Pandemonium. The parallels between Milton and Satan are frequent and critical, particularly with regard to theodicy. Political revolutionaries, Milton and Satan agree. Both oppose totalitarianism and tyrannical monarchical rule concluding that the hypocrisy in it is too egregious to be tolerated. Satan does not compromise he rebels; Milton on the other hand subverts through writing specifically *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina Christiana*.

Lucifer's rebellion and subsequent fall is typically viewed as a betrayal of God's beneficence. It is therefore considered an act of evil. However, Milton's entire dichotomy as well as his existential humanity invariably hinges on Lucifer's revolt. It cannot then be evil. Lucifer's rebellion and subsequent expulsion from Heaven and the fall of humanity are essentially consequences born by the glorification of the Father and the exaltation of the Son. The glorification of God and the glorification of the Church then can be considered causes of the falls. From a Miltonic theological perspective then, the real war in Heaven begins with God's totalitarian monarchy. Satan rallies against God's own glorification. Inherent to God's will, to His very design of Heaven, exists one absolute commandment: glorify Me. God himself demands that the angelic caste system source his own preeminence. God

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<sup>2</sup> At the time *Paradise Lost* was being written the Church of England was becoming increasingly hostile to any other denominations other than Catholic. After the beheading of Charles I England entered into multiple phases of reformation, all preceded by wars. Milton in 1630 and being from a prominent family was well aware of the atrocities of the church. He used his works as a way to surreptitiously subvert the church's power. The controversial text of *De Doctrina Christiana* was never published in his lifetime. If it had been it would have certainly meant the end for Milton.

<sup>3</sup> Even from his earliest days Milton perceived himself to be intellectually differentiated from the other students. He did not fit in any of the schools he attended. He perceived himself to be an intellectual prophet in the sense that his works as well as his profession as a schoolmaster, intended to guide England to become the intellectual hub of the world.

himself only supersedes the master of all the angels Lucifer. Bernard Paris explains this need, saying, "God has created millions of angels whose only reason for existing is to worship him" (11). God—the epicenter and the Heavenly host—must be worshipped. He demands it. His gift of life demands it. Lucifer, intelligent and self-actualized, identifies God's need, his tyranny. This true nature, while revealed slowly, identifies God's seeming insecurity and less-than-benevolent nature. Paris describes this dark temperament:

"God provides the angels with splendid trappings and an easy life. His beneficence depends on service to his ego. Because he has created the angels and giving them everything they have they owe him endless gratitude and absolute obedience. He makes it clear that, should they ever fail to meet his expectations even once, they will be cast forever into "utter darkness" he is a domineering parent who feels that the angels are objects that are there to serve his needs" (12).

Lucifer perceives God's tyranny and recruits an army to rebel. Tyrannical rule and oppression was well known to Milton. The monarchical tyranny of the Church and the indulgences of the Church during the seventeenth century resembled God's indulgences. Milton's God mirrors the supremacy of the Church. Both his God and the Church of the age demanded faithfulness. For all of its "goodness" the church too commanded loyalty. Like the pre-fallen Lucifer, Milton believed that tyrannical power cannot go unchecked. While comparing Milton to Lucifer may seem audacious, even contradictory, it is critical to establish these similarities. Satan's character, an unrepressed expression of Milton's feelings about the church and even his Judeo-Christian orthodoxy, legitimizes these claims. Lucifer was not evil. His rebellion reevaluated from the perspective of a tyrannical God paradigm completely subverts the notion that he was wholly evil and Milton's compositions suggest this. It is particularly apparent when he composes *De Doctrina Christiana* and challenges the orthodoxy of the Church through which Milton veils his true feelings in the pages of *Paradise Lost*

Lucifer's rebellion against God's reign marks him as an anti-hero and as Satan the Adversary. It is essentially Lucifer's failure in conjunction of the exultation of the Son that forces Lucifer to turn from bitter worshipper to aggressive adversary prompting the war that inevitably leads to his fall and the fall of man. Lucifer's steadfast constitution and commitment is described by Paris who says, "Even allowing for their bitterness in defeat, their attitudes towards life in Heaven seem to reflect the way they felt before their rebellion" (12). The Son's rise to power excites Lucifer's aggressive nature and further justifies his conclusion that God's laws are unjust. God's requirements for continuous praise set unfair expectations of the angels. God is rebarbative and essentially set them up for revolt and failure. God also enjoys testing his subjects in order to ensure that all who remain in Heaven are unflinchingly loyal. The angels, seemingly imbued with free will, are forced to provide the continuous praise. Failure to yield or comply guarantees damnation. Although the angels may be sentient they remain extensions of God's will. Created to serve, they must comply or be thrust into "darkness visible." God's edict is demonstrated by Paris:

"[H]e [God] likes to test his subjects so as to be sure of their devotion, his edict gives them opportunity to demonstrate their obedience. Those who remain loyal give him pleasure and are worthy of praise... he penalizes the ungrateful angels with what they feel to be a demotion on the pretext of making them happy, while preparing to cast them out should they disobey and edict that is calculated to make them rebel" (16).

Lucifer is second to God himself. He is not low. He is supreme to all but one. In order to understand Lucifer's fall it is vital that his place and expectations of God is understood. Lucifer wasn't created to be evil. Betrayed by God, he was made evil. Miltonian criticism commonly blames Lucifer. God and the Son are not as dynamically represented as Lucifer and yet they represent Lucifer's disdain. His actions may seem evil, but his actions are not dissimilar to God's commands. Paris shows this saying, "in their craving for honor and dominion, God and Satan are very much alike. At the heart of Milton's

epic is a contest between two glory-hungry beings, both of whom are insatiable" (19). The main crux of the epic and its overarching dichotomy is the continuous grappling for domination. Neither being is particularly good—both are selfish, egotistical, glory hungry, power seekers lusting for control. Milton did not construct *Paradise Lost* for easy comprehension and nothing within the text is entirely straightforward or absolutely definitive. The dichotomy between God and Satan is no exception. Both beings have a little bit of the other's essence. Rather than assigning the responsibility or oversimplified dualistic terms like good and evil; it is imperative to contextualize the epic using shades grey. Lucifer's nature and motivations are more appropriately recognized when we realize that he is not so much evil as fundamentally flawed. At his very core, Satan is malevolent, but he is also angry, aggressive, and above all beaten and betrayed. A powerful adversary, Satan is made, betrayed and abhorred by the one entity he thought valued him best. Paris describes Satan's inner conflict:

"...his [Satan's] fawning, cringing and servile adoration suggest that he hoped for additional favor from the lord. God's elevation of the Son is like Lucifer's dream come true, but for another rather than for himself; it crushes his hopes of further advancement. The new order of Heaven not only deprives Lucifer of the greater glory of which he has dreamed, but it also diminishes the glory he has hitherto enjoyed. He feels he has been devalued" (19).

God is vindictive and severe and his reprisal is harsh. The fallen angels are ungrateful beings so he sends them to Hell. As an orthodox Christian and part of the accepted Christian construct of the age Milton rebelled against the Christian dogma by creating an unfavorable portrayal of God drawing a parallel between his God and the Church of the age.

Within the framework of *Paradise Lost* God and Satan are both characterized best by anger. God is consistently portrayed as an angry and insecure, an entity that values glorification. Neither angels nor mankind can escape this fact. Only the Son can quell God's unrelenting hostility. Even after the

war in Heaven is decided God refuses to destroy Satan. Instead he continues to punish him. Neither being is willing to relent and Satan is no longer afraid. Paris describes this saying, "much of the richness, complexity and tension of the poem derives from the fact that although God is so powerful there really is a contest for Satan is a wily antagonist that refuses to surrender" (28). In this way Lucifer effectively becomes Satan—God's nemesis—and each continuously strives to subvert the other. This brings to the reader's attention several startling discoveries and discrepancies regarding the existential nature of God and Satan. God is initially shown as a stern but benevolent God. This complies with the general assumption consistent with Milton's orthodoxy. This assumption dominates the Miltonic canon. What is often unrecognized is Satan's role within this paradigm. Through a close reading of *Paradise Lost* we see God not as benevolent but as rebarbative, tyrannical, and even negligent. He is surprisingly insecure, continuously destructive, angry, domineering, and aggressive. In much of his actions and temperament he resembles Satan. Most critics overlook this fact. What has also been overlooked is Satan's true constitution and innate leadership ability. When Lucifer fell he effectively became a shadow of his former glory: Satan. His state was determined for him by the God that made Hell a home for him.

This God is divergent if not contradictory to the popularized Christian doctrine. He is more akin to a corrupted tyrant in need of total control. God is nearly though not entirely antithetical to the popularized God of Judeo-Christian theology. In *Paradise Lost* God is angry, jealous, remorseless and vengeful. He is also egotistical and insecure. It is in this context that Satan's rebellion is licensed and even warranted. Satan is not rebelling against an indifferent father. He is instead raging against an unjust tyrant king. Paris describes this version of God:

"God does not seem to love his creations or even to be tolerant of them. He cannot allow them to have an autonomous existence, to develop as separate beings with their own natures to fulfill. His Heaven is not a home fit for free being to live in. Conformity to his

will is the sole value in God's world; and because of his omniscience, he can see that some of his creatures are only pretending to comply. When they go their own way he revenges himself by sending them to Hell" (21).

Milton's God is not a merciful God of peace. Instead he shares similarities with the demiurge within Gnostic cosmology<sup>4</sup>. Milton's portrayal of God contradicts the accepted dichotomy of his orthodoxy. His portrayal was then hardly acceptable to seventeenth century constitutions. His portrayal also condemns the actions of God identifying base level humanity rather than supreme benevolence. When viewed utilizing this lens Satan also emerges anew. Milton's Satan becomes a warrior for good, a savior. He does not damn the angels that rebelled with him. He saves them. Satan's rebellion is almost always portrayed as a negative act born by a selfish being, but when read through the framework of a Gnostic, tyrannical God this traditional dichotomy is shifted and Satan's act becomes one of liberation and escape.

The moral ambiguity or the immoral certitude in Milton's cosmology precisely identifies the essence that makes his work so progressive and revolutionary. This complexity and ambiguity lend to the richness of *Paradise Lost* explaining why Milton's earliest readers and critics failed to identify the moral struggle hidden within the text. Contrary to the most predominant of critics, Satan's fall does not weaken his resolve or condemn his character. It instead humanizes him making him stronger. Paris describes this fundamental humanity, this innate freedom, saying, "Satan comforts himself with the thought that however much his circumstances have changed, his self is intact; he has remained the same. He still has his rebellious attitudes, his appetite for glory, and his claims of equality with God [...] in Hell he can be more authentic than he had been before" (29). His

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<sup>4</sup> The Gnostic cosmology suggests that the demiurge is a malevolent, amoral force that controls the world. He is able to manipulate the material universe but not the spiritual. Instead of God having direct contact, he exists outside of the demiurge as an incorporeal entity and uses human will to either be utilized through his acts of good or would be influenced by the more prominent demiurge. It is no surprise that in certain Gnostic sects the demiurge is the same as the God of the Old Testament. Milton uses this Gnostic representation frequently in the presentation of God and how he acts towards his creations but Milton's rendering of God is more complex. Rather than basing the God in *Paradise Lost* from only Gnosticism, he draws it from multiple sources and theologies, making the God of *Paradise Lost* unlike any other rendering ever created.

circumstances changed, Satan is freed, released from his oppressive role as God's angel. Though he has fallen and been condemned to Hell, Satan is now free. God is existentially different from the theodicy often utilized to confound notions of benevolence. Milton disguises his subversion as dogma. Complex intertextuality and dynamic and existential character construction obscure Milton's designs for both God and Satan. At times, both embody the other's dogmatic qualities. This also applies to Satan's compassionate side. This may seem counterintuitive, however Paris successfully identifies Satan as more compassionate than Milton's God. "[H]e beholds with "passion" and "remorse" those "millions of spirits" who are "condemn'd/ For ever now to have their lot in pain" because they followed him. They have remained faithful despite their loss and Satan is deeply moved by their fate" (Paris 35). Satan then assures loyalty not through edict, but through compassion. God does not garnish this kind of loyalty. He is not is not sympathetic. He is stern and remorseless. He takes his loyalties to his own great pleasure and he demands conformity, obedience, and servitude. Throughout the text Satan's empathetic capacities are juxtaposed to God's unfeeling dismissal. Even after the fall of the angels and prior to the fall of man, Satan circumvents the world and perceives an Earth populated by Adam and Eve. Seeing Earth and the first humans does not inspire hate or jealousy instead Satan is deeply moved by Earth's beauty and by Adam and Eve. Paris describes this saying, " God does not seem to experience conflict or sadness about the fate of Adam and Eve and their progeny, Satan feels sorry for his prospective victims and must struggle with himself to pursue his revenge by undoing them" (47). Satan's motivations are as transparent as his sympathies. Most critics—Satanists and Anti-Satanists alike—identify a duality in *Paradise Lost*. There does appear to be two distinct versions of Satan but not in accordance with the oversimplified ideology prescribed by many critics.

It has been suggested by many critics that there are two Satan's. There are not. What exist are actually dualistic complexities. There is a Satan and there is what remains of Lucifer. The Satan of the

first two books is identified predominantly by his soliloquies, grandiose boasts, and militant and rebellious attitudes towards God. This Satan is a proud military commander and he loves to show God that he will not be defeated. The Satan that is textually the weakest is also symbolically the most revealing. Satan of the final books of *Paradise Lost* is not "degraded" as A. J. A. Waldock says nor does he "disintegrate." The fallen Satan is introspective and dichotomous. He is conflicted and tortured. Once Lucifer, Satan remains on some level, still Lucifer. Most notably it is his capacity for regret, self-hatred, and even compassion that proved this; damned perhaps, he remains an angel. After Hell and after his defeat, even after becoming Satan, Lucifer remains with Satan. This is where the dualism that many critics debate becomes opaque and difficult to reconcile. Milton's complex rendering of a deeply conflicted Satan identifies a bold, stern, and unwavering hero: an angel. Once brightest of all angels he retains some of his angelic qualities. He is Lucifer and he is Satan. Created for good he maintains his character. On some level the arch-angelic capacities are still at work within the immensely complex psychological dichotomy that is Satan. Satan is a fallen hero rather than evil incarnate. Paris explains this saying, "in book four, he is alone; and through his soliloquies we now obtain inside views of his emotional state. He is, indeed, racked with deep despair and he may have been so all along" (49). Milton's use of subtle allusion, complex psychology, and biblical theology allows him to form a Satan of complexities. Satan is admirable and sympathetic. Without fear Satan stood against tyranny.

Satan's duality and dichotomous conflict can be explained. He was deeply complex and psychologically confused. Known as the Mature Theory, Satan's duality is actually composed of a complex system of emotional and mental states situated in direct opposition to one another. This dualism confounded by a singular mental framework describes a constitution at war with itself. Paris explains Satan's mental constitution:

"Satan's character structure seems to be one in which aggressive trends are predominant but in which compliment tendencies also play a role [...] he rejects such values as loyalty, love and gratitude and despises those who subscribe to them. Despite his duplicitous way of pursuing it, he wants love from God, and his vendetta is motivated in part, by the frustration of this desire [...] he feels guilty towards his followers but is ashamed of his tears and scornful of his remorse" (21).

Satan appears to be of two minds just as many anti-Satanist critics proclaim. Milton's rendering of Satan is not less palpable or powerful because he had somehow become "diminished." Milton simply alternates perspectives seamlessly and without effort. Readers move from active omniscient to passive narratives quickly and in doing so we see Satan roar and Satan fall. He is plainly conflicted, both evil and divine. After the first two books Satan does not fade. He instead is changed because the audience is allowed to see his difference. His inner conflicts and the juxtaposition that identifies two halves become apparent. He exists in a constant state of psychological conflict torn between remorse and revenge. The Satan that presents himself to the reader for contemplation is two.

As a reader of *Paradise Lost* it is quite easy and natural to overlook or misinterpret the subtle and nuanced personality Milton buries surreptitiously within Satan. It is easier still to misunderstand Milton and to conclude that Satan is evil. However reading *Paradise Lost* this way severely underestimates Milton and his writing. The reader is better served suspending disbelief. Doing this allows the reader an opportunity to experience Satan as something more than evil. The supremely intricate details that make *Paradise Lost* such a compelling literary tapestry can then be better appreciated. Misreading Milton is misreading Satan. Milton knew that Satan would be vilified within the Judeo-Christian paradigm. No one in the seventeenth century would have considered the possibility that Milton may have been Gnostic or that he might have created a demiurge archetypal deity out of God creating a sympathetic character out of Satan. According to tradition God's station is absolute:

God is good. Satan's station is similarly formed: Satan is irrevocably evil. These characteristics however could not be further from the truth. When read closely, God is angry and vengeful and Satan more than evil. Indeed, he is remorseful, conflicted, sympathetic and occasionally self-effacing. Rebelling against God identifies Satan as heroic within the traditional dichotomy. He also embodies the remorse and sorrow of a fallen angel. He possesses qualities that transcend traditional notions of Satan. Paris explains this saying that "he is bound to be miserable whatever he does, for he can escape neither Gods anger or his own self-laceration [...] he can find no joy by neither serving Heaven nor reigning in Hell. Satan is still fully in the grip of his agony" (55). Satan's duality is not the result of an erroneous or doubting Milton it is a deliberate rendering of a tortured identity.

Ambitious, vengeful, hubristic, and tormented become descriptions of Satan in *Paradise Lost*. Satan is not irredeemably evil. He is instead conflicted. Satan is cursed to Hell and to himself. The serpent in the garden is fully aware. His transgressions, his own sins, his mistakes, and his regrets are genuine. He feels the torment of sorrow. He is unable to escape his own agony. Satan for all his boasts and grand claims seems forever destined to sabotage himself. Consumed by his frailties this once brightest of all angels anguishes forever in regret.

## III

As previously demonstrated Milton and his works must be re-evaluated in an effort to gain a more comprehensive and accurate construction of the author and his work rather than to accept the most persistent archetypal presentations of Milton and his theodicy. Neither Milton himself, nor his works can be typified within the established paradigm, which has remained unchanged for centuries. Doing so is detrimental to the Miltonic canon. Milton was not the devout orthodox Christian prescribed. He was doubtful. He was contemptuous of the church and its monarchical rule. He also subscribed to elements of Gnostic and atheistic theologies and his works have dispelled the chains of assumed dichotomy. His characters are not simple and straightforward. They are complex, diverse, and subversive. Given this changing paradigm of the Miltonic canon, it is critical that we re-examine the characters of *Paradise Lost* and the author himself. Milton was not devout and his incarnations are not black and white. Satan is not evil and God is not good. Man and the Son too are not so simply definable.

Milton's theodicy is not what it seems; within the changing canon we find Milton's cosmology, but not the cosmology or theodicy that portrays Milton within the traditional framework. Instead it challenges the accepted dichotomy. Milton's God shares characteristics common to Gnosticism. Traditional orthodoxy within the Christian tradition fails to do so. Similarly, Milton's Satan, when viewed through the Gnostic lens, is more complex and better developed. If Milton's God is portrayed as the demiurge then Satan necessarily becomes not evil, but good, not an anti-hero, but a hero raging against a tyrannical monarchy: a demiurge God. It is within this framework that the roles of these cosmic deities must be critically examined.

If Satan can be redeemed it is because God has fallen and can be condemned for his antagonistic actions, not only toward his angels but also to man. In drawing the characters of *Paradise Lost*, Milton's veil of orthodox Christianity disguised his true opinions of the church along

with his Gnostic and atheistic ideas. Had he chosen to be open about his theories publishing *De Doctrina Christiana* in his lifetime then he would have been tried as a heretic and executed. Milton's portrayal of God actually redeems Satan rendering him a rebel raging against monarchical tyranny, but Milton's portrayal of God betrays even the demiurge associated with Gnosticism. Conceptually, Milton's God—part demiurge, part tyrant—becomes infinitely more complex. He takes shape within the Miltonic canon as a deity replete with the characteristics of the Christian God and the demiurge, a being intrinsically complex, unique to Milton's poly-dimensional cosmology.

If Satan can be examined and reconstructed within the Miltonic canon then these examination parameters (the twenty-first century conception) can and should be necessarily applied to all characters within *Paradise Lost* including God. Incredibly complex, Satan is not exclusively evil. He is fatalistically flawed. So too is God, existing above reproach however his complexities and fatalisms have eluded and perplexed many critics of *Paradise Lost*. If Satan's actions are to be validated and justified, then it becomes necessary to explore the constitution of God and his overlooked and under-examined fall from the traditional into the Gnostic.

God's construction within the Miltonic canon is composed of a variety of characteristics inherent to Gnosticism. He resembles kings in construction and is a king, an autocrat. Just as the Christian Church rules so too does God. Each is powerful and each expects submission and subjection, the natural consequence of the gift of grace. When Milton writes explains that he will "Justify the ways of God to man" (1. 25-26) it becomes vital to distinguish between common perceptions describing Milton's intentions and Milton's intentions. He is not attempting to justify God, nor is he attempting to condemn God. He is attempting to transcend the limitations of the Christian construction of God. His own knowledge of the divine, his own invocation of the muse, his very conclusions defy traditional constructions and human comprehension. He observes God's actions so that he can deconstruct the working model, the very nature of God and of the Church.

However his construction is inherently dangerous and impossible to safely convey. Further, God as a construct too complex to comprehend. Even a mind as powerful as Milton's cannot fully conceptualize God. Despite Milton's invocation of the muse and his learning, Milton's God rejects Milton's construction and becomes something entirely new. Despite himself, he creates a character entirely independent of his original intentions. The God in *Paradise Lost* cannot be appropriately identified without accepting a combination of alternative religious perspectives. He rejects the philosophical canon describing the benevolent Father and chooses instead to create a God that encompasses a demiurge's malevolence. In conjunction with this, he incorporates his own raging mistrust of tyrannical monarchical government. Intentional or otherwise, in *Paradise Lost* Milton caricatures the Church's cult of personality agenda constructing a God that describing abusive autocratic decadence.

God is not the benevolent Christian God associated with New Testament theodicy. He instead better resembles the vengeful and often violent God of the Old Testament, but Milton takes this resentment towards God, or the Church one step further. Within *Paradise Lost* God is reactionary, a deity raging and paranoid. He mistrusts his angels and, like a tyrannical king, rejoices in an obedience he defines as necessary and absolute. As such he resembles the demiurge of Gnosticism rather than the God of Christianity. He is precognitive and omnipotent, yet he is volatile and abusive becoming angry when the angels, his angels, exercise free will—a privilege endowed them but never allowed them by God. Additionally God makes several critical mistakes attempting to glorify himself. These mistakes set in motion events that catalyze the major conflicts within *Paradise Lost*. Rebarbative, petty, insecure, and vengeful God is unsurprisingly corrupted—it seems absolute power corrupts even gods.

It is difficult to discern whether Milton intended to portray God this way. Nevertheless, it is clear that he was thoughtfully skeptical of the Church and interested in Gnosticism and Atheism.

Michael Bryson explains saying, "From the fourth century CE [Common Era] through Milton's days, two positions will get you accused of atheism: Arainism and Materialism. By the end of his life, Milton subscribes to both" (35). His unorthodoxy may have contributed to his God of Gnosticism. It may also have influenced his many illusive subversions of the Church and its dogma. Independent of tradition, Milton's rendering of God is entirely unique to Milton. Acting and reacting in accordance with the universe he created, Milton's God consistently attempts to dominate creation and the implementation of independence and agency among his subjects. This weakness is a fatalistic flaw that undermines God's authority. Prior to the fall of Satan, God's authority and ability to control is already faltering, but it is his exultation of the Son that facilitates its complete failure.

Satan falls, but he does not fall alone. When Satan fell he took God's infallibility and authority with him. By refusing to comply Satan inadvertently usurped God's ability to create. Satan's betrayal undermines God's authority over the heavens. As a consequence Satan became a something impossible. He became a facilitator of universal individualism and of free will. This circumstance forces God to relinquish some of his power to Satan. As such Satan becomes an equal to God in that he too is a creator. The principal difference here is simple: God's creative capacity exists perceptively as something positive and Satan's perceptively as something negative. Danielle St. Hillarie explains this consequence:

"What emerges is not a divine being possessed of divine knowledge, but the negation of that divinity, a creature to whom the created world is dark and unknown and who can therefore stand forth to challenge the known, to question it and deny it... When Satan enters, he creates with his questions a space that is necessarily ungodly, a space that God does not occupy" (45).

When Satan wrestles some measure of authority from God's grasp, he alters God's plan and the cosmic balance distinguishing notions that differentiate positive and negative, good and bad, and

even order and chaos. Satan effectively demoralizes God's active universe and perceptions of God generally. Before Satan attempts to influence man, God's imagistic creation into fallenness, he has already degraded God's universality. It is in this way that *Paradise Lost* becomes less about justifying God's way and more about justifying the nature of fallenness. As *Paradise Lost* is a poem depicting fallenness, so too is God a fallen construct. God falls in *Paradise Lost*. He loses not only power, but also authority and unquestioned control. The individuality and self-awareness Satan engendered when he acknowledged that he is "self-begot, self raised" challenges God's creative capacity and generative authority (5. 853-63). God's speech in *Paradise Lost* is also indicative of his loss of power—a confirmation of his own fallenness.

This is where Milton diverges significantly from what is often considered typical of the Christian canon. He creates a God that speaks with malevolence, a God that acts accusatively and tyrannically, a God whose anger and rage can be felt cosmically. This fall from atypical associations mirror Satan's fall just as his actions and reactions call the universality of his authority into question. In *Paradise Lost* God's behavior controverts the archetypal thesis intended to define him. God's own choices essentially undermine his beneficence. God's first anointing of his Son, naming him a king second only to himself is presumptive and cruel. Bernard Paris explains, saying, 'God offers no explanation of his action, and the tone of his edict is harsh and threatening' (15). Even before Satan rebels and challenges his authority, God threatens the Angels with damnation should their obedient servitude to God waiver. He forces Satan's hand. Satan must make a decision he knows will have disastrous and far-reaching implications. This seems a consequence God, given his omniscience, must have known would end badly for humanity. Yet God allowed Satan to rebel, to fall, to become something pejorative, and to tempt mankind. Paris describes this invitation into hell for all, calling it a vendetta:

"Not only does he [God] free Satan from the burning lake, he also gives the keys of Hell to Sin, Satan's daughter, with instructions that she should let no one out. Sin's loyalty to her father instead of to him is something God must have foreseen... God gives him access in order to fuel his vendetta, which he pursues despite its cost to humanity" (2).

God may have the capacity to create, but this capacity is undermined, overshadowed by his willingness to destroy creation on a petty whim proving his own despotism. God's capacity for despotism consistently undermines his station as God creator. He constantly places his own needs and his own dominance over creations' need for unselfish governance and fair rule. This need to outwardly confirm his importance consistently subverts his authority. An omnipotent creator should not feel this need to consistently remind His subjects of His own importance. This need for validation is an irrevocable aspect of God's flawed character. Though logical conclusions can be made to validate this frailty, they do not flatter the king; instead they humanize him further validating this notion of fallenness. It also calls into question God's supremacy and perhaps even more damning his vulnerability. Perhaps the absoluteness of his position in heaven is illusionary. The character of God is then paradoxical. He cannot be both holy omnipotent and wholly imperfect. If God consistently feels the need to assert his omnipotence then God's omnipotence may not reflect the true aspect of his nature. God then is not omnipotent. If this conclusion is valid so too is a conclusion that validates the danger inherent in Satan's insurrection. Satan represents a genuine threat to God's reign and to his supremacy. If God felt that his authority was in jeopardy, if he felt threatened then his precognitive guess at Satan's actions may have fueled his edict and contributed to his fall. Independent of Satan, God is losing power: first his omnipotence, then his status as sole creator. As the text of *Paradise Lost* progresses, God's character is continuously diminished. He is the demiurge and the cult of personality that informs his greatness is weakening. One of the fallacies

that contribute to God's fall within the canon is his role as father. He consistently places expectations on his creations and his creations continually fall short of his expectations. A differentiation exists between the ideal and the actual. God is then, again defined dichotomously. Paris explains that God's conception of reality is skewed, "God creates millions of angels to adore him; and when some of them fail to do so, he becomes enraged and casts them out replacing them with humans. God is not sufficient to himself but is extremely dependent on others" (43). God's dependence or insufficiency to himself diminishes his power. He essentially creates not for the good of creation, but to satisfy his own dependence upon others. This need for personal adoration defines for him and for us his very being. He creates to be validated; this interdependence is paradoxical. If God were really omnipotent, then he would create not simply to be validated, but also for the good of creation. He too would create a perfect creature or better a creature perfect for adoration. When God becomes angry at his creations, part of that anger is based in that creature's very agency. That is, that creature's very being, which has failed God is in fact God's failure. This is suggestive of God's imperfection. If God is not perfect God is not omnipotent. He is the creator, one capable of creation, and he is dependent upon his creations. The God of *Paradise Lost* is not the ideal incarnation consistent with Christian Dogma. He is something less. Milton's God is the demiurge. Milton's God is as flawed and as fallen as every other beast in the poem.

Milton's God is not benevolent either. He is a Gnostic demiurge. God in *Paradise Lost* is the only entity that can pass judgment and the only entity that cannot be judged. God's authority is absolute, but his morality is ambiguous at best. God's punishments are entirely arbitrary applying only to his creations rather than himself. God makes the rules, but does not abide them. He is judgment incarnate demanding conformity alone changing his edict to suit his whims. Paris explains this saying, "There is no standard by which he can be judged, and goodness consists in obedience to his will. His creatures are entirely at his disposal, and fairness is whatever he decides their fate must

be" (94). Judgment falls from God's unmerciful hand. Justice exists only in perfect obedience. God may exist above reproach, but his actions can be judged. Judgment comes from the narrative and the reader. The narrator of the poem is, unlike God, omniscient and the story being told invites the judgment of the reader. Milton invites judgment and the hypocritical God is exposed.

God's hamartia becomes evident as his hypocrisy is unveiled. God claims benevolence and yet he is willing to consign Adam, Eve, and their progeny to the horrors of mortality. God's luxury is God's whim. He enjoys pointing the finger at Satan. He might absolve Satan of his sin, instead he punishes Satan mercilessly. This mercilessness further facilitates God's fall; it demonstrates God's willingness to condemn without faith and without providence. Adam and Eve are pawns, participants in a feud spanning eternity. God then chose through his own feebleness to seal their fates when he gives the keys of Hell to Sin. God's willingness to condemn his creations to mortality in an effort to prove his own rightness is reflective of fallenness. His speech to the Son as they watch Satan fly to earth compounds God's own sin:

Only begotten Son, seest thou what rage  
 Transports our adversary, whom no bounds  
 Prescrib'd, no bars of Hell, nor all the chains  
 Heapt on him there, nor yet the main Abyss  
 Wide interrupt can hold; so bent he seems  
 On desperate revenge, that shall redound  
 Upon his own rebellious head? And now  
 Through all restraint broke loose he wings his way  
 Not far off Heav'n in the precincts of light  
 Directly towards the new created world... (3. 80-89)

This speech is disturbing because it questions God's omnipotence and his integrity. Here, God announces to the Son two critical pieces of information that help to support this idea: "whom no bounds/ Prescrib'd, no bars of Hell/ Heapt on him there, nor the main Abyss." God is explaining that Satan has broken free from Hell, from his control. Despite God's best efforts, Satan is loose on the world. If we accept this statement then the God of *Paradise Lost* is not the God of Judeo-Christian dogma. He is instead a Gnostic demiurge. God, by his own admittance, could not restrain Satan. This failure is contrary to the notion of omnipotence. God also lies about Satan's freedom saying, "all the chains/ Heapt on him there/ wide interrupt can hold". God is lying to the Son about how Satan was able to break free from Hell. God claims that, "No bars of Hell, nor all the chains/ Heapt on him there/... can hold," but what God is omitting here, even to his anointed Son, is that it was he that gave the keys of Hell to Sin. He is now attempting to conceal this. God's lie of omission brings into question not only God's benevolence but also his integrity. God has deceived his only begotten son. This is explained by Paris who says, "He seeks to preserve his image in the eyes of the Son by prevaricating about Satan's escape, and he may also be deceiving himself in order to protect his sense of his own benignity" (102). It is here that God and Satan echo one another: Satan believes that he is a whole though independent of God. He clarifies this belief saying, "We know no time when we were not as now, /Know none before us self-begot, self-raised...Our puissance is our own. Our own right hand /Shall teach us highest deeds by proof to try/ Who is our equal (5. 859-66). He is attempting to distinguish himself calling for choice and calling upon his own might. He wants to establish independence from God and God, the perfect opposite, seems utterly dependent upon Satan so that his son may have purpose. Both deceivers, God and Satan depend upon one another believing the opposite is true. The injustice inherent in God's punishment of Satan falls aside taking second stage to God's desire to prove he is justified in his anger towards Satan. He also hopes to remain, in

the eyes of his Son and subjects, benevolent. According to Paris, God's actions and words are incongruous:

"He [God] has subjected the human pair to the machinations of a fiendishly clever seducer and that has done so as part of his plan to tempt Satan to commit greater evil. His statement that man had of him 'All he could have' does not seem right, for surely God could have protected the humans more effectively had he chosen to do so" (103).

Although God has the capacity for indefinite benevolence he consistently and consciously chooses subversion rather than goodness in his dealings with Satan. His benignity is consistently subverted by the wrath he harbors towards Satan. Despite God's rage, he wants to prove his benevolence and mercy though these qualities seem unnecessary to prove. God in *Paradise Lost* is evidently, questioning of his own image. Exterior perceptions seem important to God, a personality uncomfortable with his own image. This is of course a notion God denies. Paris suggests this, saying, "God himself seems strikingly defensive... God's discomfort with himself creates a need for denial and self-vindication. God has inner conflicts that the Son helps to manage and to express" (105). The God of *Paradise Lost* is drawn differently from the God of the Christianity—he is jealous, insecure, obsessively vindictive, and even deliberately deceitful. Milton's depiction of God describes not only a fallen God, but a fallen world.

*Paradise Lost* is reactionary. Born of ontological and existential thought, Milton's fallen world is *Paradise Lost* just as *Paradise Lost* is itself fallen. It is derived from the misperceptions inherent to estranged thought denying not only the divine, but from its earthly institution. This sense of fallenness is then fundamental to *Paradise Lost*. For example, Milton's narrator evokes the muse in an attempt to challenge divinity itself in order to validate and authenticate the poem; unfortunately, the narrator has fallen and goes unheard. Hilaire explains why the narrator's calls go unheeded, saying, "No matter how many times he calls to her, the narrator as a fallen man cannot

make his divine muse immediately present and so his repeat invocations can only reveal his distance from the divine that itself points to the narrator's distance from his fellow humans" (176). Just as virtually every character is fallen so too is the narrator himself. He therefore acts as an additional construct intended to reflect this notion of fallenness. God (within the poem), Satan, mankind, and even the narrator have fallen.

The reason why God in *Paradise Lost* seems to feel the pervasive need to insure humans and his Son of his benevolence is because the God in *Paradise Lost* is more akin to the demiurge than to the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition. *Paradise Lost* sets itself apart subverting traditional notions regarding the nature of divinity, of heaven, and of their relationships to man.

In an attempt to redefine its own particularity, Milton constructed a poem and a God that is just as frail (flawed) as the Gods of antiquity. *Paradise Lost* is reflective of the ancient traditions. His God resembles the demiurge of the Gnostic tradition. *Paradise Lost* is derived from this tradition. It must then set itself apart. Creating a poem so ontologically conscious and a narrator so plainly fallen is one way of exploring the very nature of being and of believing. Hilaire explains, "they [Adam and Eve] know from experience that God is good and interested in their good, for if all they knew rests upon a void – a great unanswerable question – then God's goodness is, subject to doubt, interrogation and uncertainty" (33). God, a construct of the human mind, is grounded in fallenness. Just as Milton's muse is an attempt to reconnect to divinity so too is his portrayal of God and Satan an attempt to humanize immortality. Quietly set against tradition, *Paradise Lost* recognizes its own fallenness while attempting to "justify the ways of God to men." All of the characters including the narrator are products of fallenness. Therefore virtually every character—God included—is representative. This in some respects makes God and Satan equal rivals. Both share precarious traits too similar to ignore and each is corrupted. God and Satan are not opponents, but two sides of the same coin. If God has fallen then Satan poses a real threat to his reign then God is vulnerable, not

only to Satan but to man. God is conflicted, imperfect, and morally erroneous. The Son remains the only character capable of redeeming God, Satan, mankind, and even the narrator.

Throughout the text of *Paradise Lost* the Son connects God to his creations. His role is essential. He is unambiguously a part of God and of man. He is also individual and singular, the center of the poem linking all of the characters and strifes to one another. The Son is the redeemer in *Paradise Lost*. Unconcerned with his own image, the Son feels no need to assert his benevolence. He simply is benevolent. He is also considerably more compassionate and forgiving than his father. The Son is the catalyst of redemption not only of man, but also of God and even Satan. Unique, he is both divine and human though morally and existentially better than both. The Son is the vessel that facilitates a genuine connection to the divine for the narrator and the other characters in *Paradise Lost*. Finally consistent with the Judeo-Christian tradition, redemption can be realized through the Son alone.

## IV

When Milton created *Paradise Lost* he incorporated his own cosmology and theodicy within the text making *Paradise Lost* both part of the Christian tradition as well as Milton's own theology. With such prominent and complex characters as God and Satan, the role of the Son is typically situated as a tertiary character—one whose voice is seldom heard. The Son plays an essential and critical role within Milton's epic. His role may seem inconsequential, but he is absolutely essential because he acts as both redeemer and intermediary. He allows God to rest his rage and offer redemption while allowing humanity to reach up, to become divine. The Son is capable of miracles not simply in the Judeo-Christian rendering of miracles but also in the philosophical and spiritual sense. He calms God's wrath and even offers redemption to Satan, dismissing the aggressive actions of the warring deities while accepting their nature and fostering their benevolent characteristics. The Son's role in *Paradise Lost* is critical to the overall dichotomy of the poem and helps the reader understand Milton's complex theology. The Son is the only one whose creation and deification remains perfect; hence he is uniquely suited as part God and part man. He redeems and forgives both; he acts as the balancing force within the epic and shows the better sides of God, Satan, and humanity.

The character of the Son forms the basis of the redemption motif that pervades throughout the text of *Paradise Lost*. As we have seen *Paradise Lost* is a fallen poem, voiced by a fallen narrator in a fallen world. Even the God and the Son are fallen. This fallenness requires a redemptive act to allow the poem to assert itself as a particular. In order to do this Milton allows the Son to fall—like all the other characters—only so that he may rise above the fallacies of the characters in *Paradise Lost* offering a means at redemption and harmony within the poem. Like God and Satan, the Son in *Paradise Lost* is also fallen. Unlike the major deities however, the Son volunteered to fall in order to offer this redemption and to help lift the fallenness inherent to the poem. Neil Graves

suggests the Son's fallenness, saying, "The Son *decides rationally* (emphasis his) to break communion with God by listening to the persuasion of another... the whole concept of the Incarnation is traditionally perceived as a "fall", for Christ voluntarily takes upon himself the sins of the world, and in this technical sense he thus falls in order to be the agent of redemption" (167). The Son's decision to fall imbues him with symbolic significance. Unlike God, Satan, and the human pair, the Son does not fall because of some inward strife or complex psychological conflict. The Son falls because he chooses it. He falls in order to subdue God's rage so that he can offer forgiveness. Even Satan can be offered redemption allowing humanity a chance at saving grace. It is this voluntary fall that identifies the Son as unique—central to the poem.

The Son exists as an extension of God's merit of God's subduction of his own inner conflicts. This subverts God's pervasive inclination towards anger and revenge. As previously shown, the God in *Paradise Lost* is not the deity atypically associated with the Christian tradition. He is instead an antagonistic, aggressive, and insecure deity capable of acting on rage to prove his own omniscience and omnipotence. The Son's role in *Paradise Lost* is significant because he stabilizes and grounds God's wrath exemplifying the benevolence as inherent to his nature as rage. God is conflicted and the Son helps him organize his inner contradictions. According to Marilyn Arnold, "The text confirms repeatedly that the Son is love, the active embodiment of the loving facet of the Father's personality, the only power that can finally develop a bond of understanding between heaven and earth" (68). The character of the Son allows God to outwardly experience his own beneficence without glorification. God wants to be perceived as benevolent and the Son allows God to manage his own conflicts. The Son also allows him to become the benevolent God that reinforces his own ideology. The character of the Son is the existential embodiment of God's benevolence. The Son exists beyond the reach of God's idiosyncratic need for glorification and tendency towards anger and

revenge. The Son is then the very best of God and God recognizes the Son's unconstrained benevolence admitting:

By Merit more than Birthright Son of God,  
 Found worthiest to be so by being Good,  
 Far more than Great or High; because in thee  
 Love hath abounded more than Glory abounds,  
 Therefore thy Humiliation shall exalt,  
 With thee thy Manhood also to this Throne;  
 Here shalt thou sit incarnate, here shalt Reign  
 Both God and Man, Son both of God and Man,  
 Anointed universal King; all Power  
 I give thee, reign forever, and assume  
 Thy Merits... (3. 308-19)

Here the Son is given equal power to that of God, his benefactor. Here we also see the critical distinctions that differentiate God and the Son. God's most prized possession is his glory while the Son's is love. Through the Son, God becomes redemption; he becomes the redemptive capacity for love. Simply, because the Son's "Love abounds," he can accept God's glory. Here God's glory takes second place to the virtue of the Son. The father recognizes that the Son's principal merit is love. He further recognizes that the Son is capable of God's love and of acting against God's own need for glorification and revenge. The anointing of the Son King over all of his domain—the domain of man—is an act of humility superseded only by the Son's own abounding glory, exaltation, and goodness and the facilitation of the fall of man, the quarry of both God and the Son. The Son is able to counter God's malevolence while simultaneously presenting to God his own capacity for love and forgiveness.

Although the Son's incarnation can be conceived as a kind of fall, it is unlike the other characters' falls in the poem because these falls are ontological and remain transfixed. The Son's fall is unique in that his fall is one of free will. He volunteered to fall and thus can freely rise, something no other character can accomplish. The unique physiology of his fall can redeem both God and man.

God's fall was due to his prioritization of revenge and anger over compassion and Satan's was precipitated by a need for recognition and rebellion in the face of a tyrannical God. Adam and Eve fell because they failed to adhere to God's law—but the Son's fall is not empirical in nature—it is instead a voluntary act of love and salvation. Even God is left only to praise the Son whose constitution is far nobler than God's. The Son is the living incarnation of God's benevolence, free of the tyrannicism and vindictiveness. God's conflicting makes it almost impossible to obtain true salvation. The fall of the Son helps save mankind's perceptions of God and God's perception of himself. Paris explains this saying, "God needs to regard himself as gracious and merciful and to be regarded as such by others. He is saved from appearing excessively harsh by the Son who rescues not only the human race but also his father's reputation" (107). The Son is then more than merely an extension of God, as some critics have contended. He is instead completely independent of the father. He is autonomous—good.

The fallacy of God's constitution and mental constructs along with his attitudes towards his created, discussed in previous chapters, supports notions describing the Son as independent of the father. He cannot be merely an extension of the father's will, because he is better than the father—purer. The two are separate entities for two reasons: the Son's inward perception values intrinsic knowledge and intuition over that of the external. The Son's ontological perception is that of inward contentment and personal enlightenment. His kingdom is not an external physical kingdom like the Father's. Instead it is a spiritual manifestation of "the kingdom of God...within you" (Luke, 17. 22). Unlike God's kingdom, which is almost exclusively devoted to the physical, it is a construct

principally created to represent God's glory. It is a mirror image of Pandemonium—Heaven's streets are paved with gold—and unlike the Son, God's focus remains transfixed and myopic. His pursuit of glory and adherence to his omnipotence is what directs his actions. The Son is interested in none of these things. He freely falls so that humanity may be redeemed. He freely displays the love that God has, throughout the course of the epic, been unable to show. According to Christopher Bond, the Son's existence is independent from God's existence. He says the Son's "choice thus presents him as more of an autonomous character, capable of making his own decisions, than as a straightforward extension of his Father's will" (175). The Son is his own individual because he disagrees with his father and because he has convinced him to choose something merciful. The Son acts with love and as a kind of moral conscience, which quells the father's rage allowing for an improved self-perception. God is somehow greater because he has fathered the Son. The Son's existence then improved God's self-image. Throughout the course of the epic the Son constantly assumes the title of mediator. He may be a product of heaven, but he chooses mediation. He mediates God's anger and falls to earth to become a mediator and intermediary to God and man, death and everlasting life, hope and despair, even damnation and salvation. He chooses this not in pursuit of omniscience and not as an act of obedience. He doesn't do this for glory or to be glorified either. He chooses to fall for love, a love that is benevolence. He also allows God the luxury of idealization. By reinforcing God's own benevolent qualities he simultaneously mitigates the violence inherent to God's constitution. Paris says, "The Son meditates not just between man and God but also, just as importantly, between the warring components of God's own nature" (108). The Son is not only God's conscience. He is God's goodness and can disagree with the father. HE can be better than the father. As Bond might explain it, the Son's love is essentially greater and more profound than the Father's glory:

“His lengthy and emotionally- nuanced conversations with Adam and Eve suggest a more independent and developed personality than do the straightforward executions of physical tasks he performs earlier in the poem. His decision to array the fallen couple with "his robe of righteousness" to cover their "inward nakedness...from his father's sight" implies that the Son is now capable of thinking and acting on his own initiative and in a manner that seems not to be entirely consistent with his father's wishes" (176).

Not only is the character of the Son in possession of his own existential qualities and personality, he is the embodiment of God's better characteristics. When the Son falls he becomes something unlike any other character within the poem; he becomes a hybrid of divinity and fallenness, effectively reconciling mankind's fallenness with his own divinity and with his father's benevolence. He is able to do what God cannot. He can forgive the fallen and fallenness generally. "Love hath abounded more than glory abounds" is telling because it is suggestive of God's previous need for glorification and of his Son's superior love (3. 11). God recognizes that love is nobler and more divine than the pursuit of glory admitting as much, saying, "I give thee Reign forever, and assume/ Thy merits..." (3. 18-9). Clearly even God recognizes the beneficence and elegance of reign through love. The Son is something pure, something more and less than the Father. He is pure Good.

God is more accessible; he is human through the Son. The Son is the physical embodiment on earth of divinity itself. He is a liaison travelling two worlds simultaneously: divinity and mortality. Milton's construction of the character of the Son is intentional. He is a secondary character—the Son is placed second to the Father rhetorically, but not significantly. His role is one of balance. God character is ambiguous at best and Satan is the antihero, but both have fallen. The Son then must be heroic, but Milton was careful not to glorify the Son with impunity. Milton uses the Son surreptitiously in an effort to subtly demonstrate his power. The Son's power is not

outwardly focused. It is instead retained within. Bond notes this saying, "By attempting to make the Son into a fully-fledged literary character, Milton makes him mutable and less omniscient- in short, less like the father, and more like us... the inferiority of the Son is a necessary and vital element of the characterization and didacticism of *Paradise Lost*" (176). By adding the Son to fallenness, Milton allows the Son to be more accessible and influential than the Father. He is a representation of goodness in divinity and human. He is then more perfect and more human than God. Because he is both simultaneously God and man, he is the physical manifestation of God humanly. He actively seeks the salvation of God and of humanity showing humanity that God is benevolent. The Son's capacity to redeem is inherent to his nature. His goodness then is more than his actions. His capacity to show compassion is a quality beyond God's reach in *Paradise Lost*. The Son becomes the God that humanity, Satan, and God need. Merciful and just, omnipotent and loving, he is unlike his father. Marilyn Arnold demonstrates this, saying, "It seems that, whatever his personal his personal beliefs on the matter might have been, Milton views the Son in *Paradise Lost* as the God of the earth...but not as the God of heaven, who is so remote as to be completely inaccessible to man" (65). Although the character of the Son may be less commanding than the other characters, his constitution is far more complex.

The Son allows the reader, through a fallen poem, to reach salvation while simultaneously allowing God to outwardly perceive his own fallacious need for glory. Despite his association with divinity, he still is mortal and must prove to the Father that his fallen state is not transfixed. The son must prove that he is an impermanent manifestation of God on earth. Despite the Son's divine origins and capacity for mercy and love, he must still contend with the Father's punitive discontentedness. The Son must prove to the Father that he is truly benevolent and omniscient. He must be redemption incarnate to personify both divinity and humanity. He must be the best of both. In order to prove his goodness, the Son is subjected to temptation. The temptation of the Son shows that the Son capable

of resisting temptation itself. In so doing the Son accomplishes something that neither God nor Satan could accomplish. He rose above frailty and the triviality of self.

The temptation of the Son is paramount to the portrayal of him as perfect. Milton uses subtle allusions to demonstrate the true natures of God and Satan, keeping these natures concealed from the uninitiated reader. With the son however, he is obvious. The Son has no ulterior motivations and is portrayed as perfect and good. The Son's mastery over temptation demonstrates his divineness. Not only does temptation prove his beneficence, it also proves his mastery over divinity and his rhetorical mastery of the knowledge of good and evil. It essentially denotes growth beyond the petty frailties of the other characters. Bond notes this, saying, "He is at once as constant and unchangeable in his heavenly nature as a star, but also capable of change as he rises and grows into a full understanding of his perfection" (200). The temptation of the Son represents the battle over knowledge. Satan is commonly described as "the prince of this world" (14:30). He is the ruler of Pandemonium and the earth. He is the cunning deceiver, a user of false rhetoric. What makes Satan so threatening is his effective use of logic, a quality valued by both God and the Son. Satan uses logic in order to circumvent the Son's purpose and to tempt him. Satan wants the Son to play Satan's game, to prove himself to Satan, but the Son cannot play this game. He affirms himself to himself. Michael Lieb explains that self-knowledge sets the Son apart as a deity, saying, "That turning inward as an act that compliments the knowledge of the other is a development of major import in the confluence of ontological/epistemological speculation...the experience of knowing God lends to the corresponding experience of affirming his existence" (58). Satan tempts the Son with his own corporeality believing that forcing the Son to focus on his own corporeality might lead to the rejection of aspects of his own incorporeality causing his to turn away from spirituality and from God. Further, by provoking the Son into some kind of competition, Satan believes he can effectively lower the Son's status. The Son might have fallen and remained fallen. Satan's temptation is

paramount to the dichotomy of both the Christian tradition and Milton's epic. All of the other major characters within *Paradise Lost* fell in one form or another and each of these falls was principally due to some intrinsic flaw and since *Paradise Lost* is a fallen poem these intrinsic fallacies are critical to the theodicy of the poem. In order to render the character of the Son as redemptive, the Son must be constitutionally composed of true divinity, a virtue absent in other characters. He must exist beyond temptation. He must be good for goodness' sake.

The temptation of Satan is central to the redemption motif and to the epic. This is because the temptation transforms *Paradise Lost* from a fallen poem in a fallen world to a redemptive poem explaining "God's ways to man." This act of temptation shows what God is supposed to represent to mankind. The Son's struggle with temptation incarnate can be identified simply. Michael Bryson says, "Tempt not the Lord thy God (4. 561), [has a] threefold meaning: (1) *do not tempt me*—I am God; (2) *do not tempt anyone*—all creatures, sharing in the divine as their origin, are also God; and (3) *do not tempt yourself*—you, even you, Satan, are included in points 1 and 2" (116). This statement by the Son leaves Satan in "amazement" because it is antithetical to Satan's vision of temptation (4. 562). The Son's evocation of the nature of origin does not exclude even Satan and establishes that even Satan—the manifestation of depravity—can find salvation through benevolence. The Son recognizes Satan's nature through his disguise, but Satan's disguise is not merely corporeal. Satan resembles an old man outwardly, but he is a scorned angel inwardly. This is the disguise the Son can see through. He recognizes Satan as a creation of divinity and of fallenness like the rest of the world, but he remains a part of that divinity and of the world. The Son's recognition opposes the will of the Father, which intended to exclude Satan from heaven. Even Satan's viewed himself differently. What makes the Son's temptation so unique is that he does not

reject Satan. He views him as a creation of heaven—a unique cosmology specifically situated within Hermeticism<sup>5</sup>.

The Son's temptation is at the crux of the redemption motif embedded within the theodicy of *Paradise Lost*. The temptation of the Son is not merely a worldly temptation. It is specifically focused on the interior development of the Son. Many critics regard the character of the Son as underwhelming because this lack of worldly exposition. The Son's complexity, like Satan's, is nuanced and more developed when his inner complexities become perceptible. Satan's temptations are not only utilized to demonstrate that the Son is not focused on the physical. They also promote the development of the Son's ontological quest. The Son is trying to discover his own spiritual path, a path solidified by temptation.

One critical oversight of both God and Satan is the focus on the corporeal. According to Bryson, the outward grandeur lies in stark contrast to the existential and spiritual manifestation of the Son, "Mary, Satan, and the Father all seem to envision this kingdom as an earthly or heavenly variant on the political and military kingdom. The Son's kingdom [is] a spiritual kingdom that is neither accompanied by eschatological signs nor located in space (117). The existential difference between the inner spiritual world and the fallen external world is evident when the Son fulfills his role as redeemer. He reconciles a fundamentally flawed human world and an unobtainable and ambiguous spiritual world. The Son is both God and man and he therefore has a comprehensive conceptualization of what humanity requires of the father. By focusing inward, the Son uncovers the mysteries of his incarnation and through temptation he comes to understand his purpose, his importance to both worlds. The Son's incarnation is not determined by the will of God, but through

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<sup>5</sup> As explored in greater detail below, Hermeticism essentially states that since everything exists within God, nothing can exist outside of God and because God is in every being then every being—both corporeal and incorporeal—share that divine substance, a divine spark. If viewed through the lens of hermetic philosophy than even Satan shares a link with God and because God created Satan than even the most evil of all entities will eventually reconvene with God. This holistic ideology is in direct opposition to the Christian ideology. In hermeticism nothing is wasted or thrown away, and even the most corrupted gets purified and becomes a part of the whole.

grace. It is because of this that the Son so effortlessly combines love and grace and through this that the Son can commune with all of God's creations, even the fallen angels. Bond says, "Will is subordinate to grace, since will is the product of grace; but will must still cooperate with grace in completing the process of salvation that grace has begun" (130). This grace and ability to redeem is derived from God's will but it is never utilized by God himself. Though the power is born in the Father it too is born in the Son and only the Son wields this power of salvation.

The Son does not only bridge the corporeal and spiritual. He facilitates access to divinity, a representative of the instantaneous incarnation of divine knowledge. This is critical to the Miltonic canon and consistent with Milton's pursuit of knowledge found throughout his literary career. The Son is an interpreter of divine knowledge and divine grace, the opener of the window of ascension. According to Michael Lieb, the Son is a conduit for divine knowledge representing the correlation between inward revelation and divine knowledge:

"That turning inward as an act that compliments the knowledge of the other is a development of major import in the confluence of ontological/ epistemological speculation ...For Milton, the human mind represents the medium through which deity fully manifests itself (58.64).

Since the fallen world is ontologically populated with beings of subordinate corporeal condition, God's offer of salvation and redemption becomes problematic, disingenuous, because God is so fundamentally removed from the material world. The Son therefore becomes the conduit linking the other world to the worldly; he becomes a manifestation of God's and of our own existential identities.

Through the Son, God is able to more acutely identify and communicate corporeality. Just as the Son discovered his identity through access to the Father, so do we with access to the Son. God (the Son) can save fallen humanity. The Son is the only character within the poem that focuses

inward. The Son's unique capacity to utilize grace and act as an independent agent of the Father allows him to comprehend the fallen world through a lens of humanity and he is not any less deified for it. The Son is composed of both divinity and degradation, two existential states. He is both, and at once, spiritual and material—he can and does embody divine knowledge as well as humanity, compassion, and free agency. The Son is divinity, but he is divinity without any of the fallacies that coincide with the tyranny of omnipotent corruptibility or original sin. The Son's triumph over temptation existed not just in logical capacities or within the physical realm upon which many critics focus. He is also transcendent even of the metaphysical. He can explore the fathomless depths of the human soul through incorporeality and through the worldly. The Son is eternal regardless of the fallacies consistent with God's character. Humanity is assured—his love and grace precede him—he exists to offer salvation, redemption, and forgiveness because the Son exists. The Son is love. He is humanity incarnate. He is God without rage or ego. The Son is knowledge and faith as much as knowledge of faith. He is beyond temptation and yet he remains fundamentally human.

Milton's most complex and ontologically ambitious character is the Son. Despite Milton's comprehensive knowledge and use of logical and classical rhetoric of the nature of knowledge, theology, and the divine he still had difficulty creating a rendering of the Son that could embody the literary expression of hero and fallen, of both humanity and divinity. He did not solve this problem in *Paradise Lost*. Instead he constructed this enigmatic character within *Paradise Regained*. The character of the Son is the literary rendering of human fallacy combined with divinity. His expressions and actions are subtle and nuanced, but profound. By creating the Son as his own being capable of agency, Milton is able to show how complex the Son is without compromising humanity and fallenness. The Son must be accessible to humanity. He must be accessibly human while remaining divine so that Milton could demonstrate the redemptive and heroic aspects of divinity. Although the character of the Son within *Paradise Lost* may not have been the manifestation of

heroism Milton envisioned and later manifested in *Paradise Regained*, the Son in *Paradise Lost* is still the most humanly drawn and relatable character in the epic.

Both God and Man, the Son has achieved what the father could not. He becomes grace through redemption, forgiveness. He becomes lover outwardly manifested. Being both God and man, the Son becomes the bridge between the ethereal and material world. The Son is both God and man. He is composed of qualities of each. Through Milton's rendering the Son becomes reconciliation and grace. He is able to circumvent God's fallacies and absorb his beneficence. The Son is able to do what God never can do. He becomes human and by becoming human while remaining corporeal the Son is able to show humanity the path to God, to redemption, and to grace. He shines the light on the fallen worlds. He illuminates both darkened worlds illuminating hope. The Son is the original great teacher. He is the theological root of Hermeticism and Alchemic spiritual evolution. Shining his light, he continuously shows us our inner natures; he shines a light into the darkness.

## V

Milton's interest in alchemy and hermetic theology has been generally overlooked. Milton is applauded for his ubiquitous pursuit of knowledge and for his study of conventional theology and science, but his interest in “fringe” disciplines has been ignored, although it was his passion for learning that inevitably led him to "fringe" disciplines: astronomy, astrology, and alchemy. This may be due to the fact that the Church deemed these disciplines heretical in nature. Undeterred, Milton's pursuit of knowledge, his life's work, demanded that he examine even the most tabooed philosophies and concepts. Milton's explorations and philosophical inquiries into tabooed sciences opened his mind. Liberated, Milton was able to examine the nature of his own cosmology and to challenge the most pervasive doctrines and dogma of the age. Alchemy excited Milton's notions of the natural world and Hermeticism challenged his notions of the divine (a subject to which he devoted much of his time). Milton challenged orthodoxy and privately began to confute theology while delving into occult or tabooed philosophies<sup>6</sup>. The evidence is inescapable. Both alchemy and Hermeticism challenged Milton's worldview and heavily influenced his intellectual and literary pursuits. In addition, each appears to have altered his ontological identity. The notion that these occult theologies may have actively influenced one of the great Christian poets is controversial and contentious. As is common with Milton, his intentions and the occult influences buried within *Paradise Lost* become less opaque and illuminate the darkest recesses of his cosmology. The real Milton becomes visible through the obscurity of time. Milton is a contradiction; famously Christian he was a poet of doctrine; infamously “fringe” he was a subversive ideologue quietly challenging doctrine.

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<sup>6</sup> During the Elizabethan age the use of alchemy became more prominent and was utilized for its promise to turn lead into gold. Milton having already followed astrology would have been exposed and investigated into the premise alchemy proposed. The extent of Milton's knowledge of the occult may never be fully known. If he knew about both alchemy and hermeticism he likely knew of other occult theologies as both theologies are "gateway" philosophies that may lead to other, darker theologies. How far into the occult world this Christian poet ventured is hinted at by Frances Yates who says, "Milton inherited the Neoplatonic Christian cabala of the Elizabethan age as expressed by its early seventeenth-century successor, Robert Fludd, the Rosicrucian" (Yates 209). If Milton knew of Fludd than he knew of all of the occult secret societies including the Rosicrucian, Illuminati, and Freemasons amongst others. He would also know of most of these societies magical and divinatory associations.

The turbulent seventeenth century saw many extraordinary changes politically, culturally, and scientifically. Science was inextricably linked to heretical thinking that was in direct opposition to the doctrine of the Church. During this era astrology and astronomy were synonymous with alchemy, a “fringe” discipline that was becoming increasingly influential. Milton, dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, placed value on the primacy of the intellect and on the responsibility of the intellectual to intensely scrutinize all ideas. Therefore all ideas were subject to Miltonic scrutiny.

The Church during Milton’s lifetime became increasingly totalitarian and its doctrine increasingly repressive. His dissatisfaction with the Church and his divergent theology influenced his decision to seek divinity elsewhere. Milton explored a variety of alternative religious theologies including atheism and Gnosticism, each of which are evident in *Paradise Lost*, and *De Doctrina Christiana*. Around 1640 Milton's interest redirected itself; he turned from theology to scientific inquiry. This encouraged exploration into a number of the scientific disciplines of the era, many of which were possessive of theological philosophies. Milton was influenced by principles within aspects of alchemy; these influences asserted themselves within Milton's writings and his constitution. Laurence Babb identifies Milton's participation in alchemy, saying, "Milton's mineralogy shows the influence of alchemy. He seems to accept the alchemical theory of transmutation; that is, he apparently believes in the theoretical possibility of turning lead or iron into gold" (31). Milton's interest in alchemy was not feigned.

Milton's interest in these new “fringe” sciences was rooted in his persistent need to acquire knowledge that promised liberation from the tumultuous world of religious tyranny and cultural upheaval. Knowledge was, to Milton, synonymous with deliverance from the oppressive influence of the Church religiously, culturally, and philosophically. Where both religion and politics failed to provide satisfactory answers to the questions Milton sought science succeeded. His invocation of the muse failed him. The muse could not answer his deepest questions. Undeterred he resolved to find

those answers elsewhere. Milton's faith in the politics of the seventeenth century was almost nonexistent and his confidence in the Church was being steadily stripped away so Milton turned to the sciences and incorporated the lessons of these sciences into his work. However he did so carefully. During Milton's era many of the influential discoveries of Galileo<sup>7</sup> and Copernicus had already become public. Science itself, scientists, was under a great deal of scrutiny. The very nature of the natural world was a matter of doctrine rather than testable and observable study. The church was so influential and so dedicated to its own primacy that new discoveries and their discoverers were condignly punished and faced charges of heresy, sentences of excommunication, and even death.

There was no distinction made to describe the differences between these "fringe" disciplines. Astronomy and astrology were both considered scientific. So too was alchemy, but alchemy enjoyed favor because it promised wealth. The influence of alchemy was extremely influential because the transmutation of base metals into gold was at the center of its promise. What specifically appealed to Milton was not this ability to alter or transmute metals. Milton was interested in the alchemical and metaphysical processes—the ability to turn an individual from a corporeal being into divine substance. This is the point where science becomes enchanting, where the physical becomes the metaphysical, where the discipline becomes occult theology.

The pursuit of intellectual perfection is something that specifically appealed to Milton and the transmutation of matter was more than speculative. Stanton Linden explains, saying, "closely related to scripturally-based alchemical allegory is the parallel phenomenon of millennialism and eschatological doctrine conceived alchemically, which appears frequently [...] in the poems of Milton. Vital to this concept is the perceived analogy between Christ and the philosopher's stone, both notable

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<sup>7</sup> Although the works of Galileo may have been public so was his involvement with the church which caused other scientists to keep the majority of their discoveries secret. This may have also convinced Milton himself to imbed his true ideologies with *Paradise Lost*. In 1632 Galileo was formally charged with heresy after promoting a heliocentric universe. He was allowed to live although he was forbidden to teach or make public any of his discoveries. In 1633 he ignored these orders and published *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*. He was convicted of heresy and sentenced to house arrest until his death in 1642.

for their regenerative potency and ability to "heal" imperfect matter, whether human or metallic" (35). Christ's capacity to alter matter and his focus on spiritual transmutation is evident in the dialogue between the Son and Satan in the temptation in *Paradise Lost*.

Milton grappled furiously within himself to find harmony binding scientific theory with religious ideology. This battle is sated by the Son's capacity to master the matter of the outer cosmos as well as the inner complexities of divinity. The Son, at least, is the representation that the alchemical process of transmutation is an actual possibility. Milton could not find God through the hypocrisy of the Church, nor the purely material mechanizations of science, but he did find a kind of deity in alchemy. This is because alchemy promises both spiritual and material transmutation suggesting that both are interconnected and that divine ascension is possible. Alchemy presented Milton with a philosophy that combined religiosity and physicality. With alchemy both corporeal and incorporeal substances can be transmuted, both can become ideal through metaphysical ascension. This notion is represented by the image of the Son when he achieves the existential mastery of both materiality and divinity. His capacity to manipulate matter is divine transmutation; the Son's divinity is the philosopher's stone, the object that promises ascension and perfection or physical divinity.

Among Miltonic critics, alchemy is acknowledged allegorically and satirically, rather than as evidence of Milton's actual interest in or participation in the "fringe" activity. Milton's satire is intended to be applied within the framework of its philosophical treatise. It is not merely a literary device. Even when viewed satirically, alchemic representations in Milton's works are intended to propose his own dichotomy favoring alternative perspectives over the traditional dogmas. In his time it was a way to persuade and influence. He hoped to quietly engender the understanding that there are alternative ideologies contradictory to those of the Church. Alchemy was real to Milton. It presented an alternative path to understanding, to his muse. Linden explains this, saying, "For Milton, the primary association of alchemy is fundamental change, whether of the kind exhibited in the demeanor

of the fallen angels upon hearing the heralds' "sounding alchemy" or in the extended discussion of ontology and the operations of nature" (249). The figure of the Son in *Paradise Lost* is the existential rendering of the theological and ontological capacities of alchemic transmutation to produce ascendance.

Alchemic representations within the Miltonic canon are diverse and represent a complex ideology. The seriousness with which Milton applied alchemy to his own ontological imperative can only be derived from these applications. The nature of the associations and importance of the allusions provided are evident within the canon showing explicitly the preponderance of Milton's perception of alchemy. It is doubtful that Milton saw alchemy as an opportunity for satire. Milton's preoccupation with divinity and the nature of God is reflected by the conceptual framework of transmutation as a means to divinity and to physical ascension. Each highly resonated with the poet and contributed to the consistency of alchemical and hermetic allusions pervasive within *Paradise Lost*. According to Linden, this idea of alchemic process seems to have fundamentally influenced Milton:

"Milton's optimistic and fluidic ontology is expressed most memorably in Raphael's familiar speech beginning "one Almighty is, from whom/ All things proceed," with its famous image of the tree becoming increasingly "spiritous" and rarefied as it rises towards its divine source" (253).

Milton's complex ontological framework coupled with his intense quest for knowledge provided the catalyst and need to view alchemy as a serious enterprise.

If Milton did indeed consider alchemy legitimate, a claim to the scientific community. He would have been ontologically removed from the ideology of the church. Perceptions of Milton would have changed. He would no longer be considered within the literary canon as an orthodox Christian. Additionally Milton's cosmology would have been heavily influenced. This can be seen by the actions and the physiology of the Son in *Paradise Lost* and of Christ in *Paradise Regained*. The application of

alchemy within his works and the seriousness of their nature clearly demonstrate how erroneous the image of Milton as a devout Christian has been. Milton is more an existential experimentalist, much like the early astronomers, than he was unorthodox. His philosophical quest to uncover the truth of the nature of divinity sets him apart from earlier theologians. If Milton's perceptions of alchemy are renderings of his own cosmology then Milton would have found himself in dangerous company. He might have better resembled the theorists of the Neoplatonism and occultism than the theorists of orthodoxy. Linden explains this:

"This [Milton's works] bears important general resemblances to certain alchemical and hermetic ideas that appear in the works of contemporary occult writers [who] discussed the concept of the *prima materia* and the convertibility of the four elements "that in quaternion run" is fundamental to alchemical theory and practice and also recalls the pattern of emanation and return that pervades the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the writings of the Neoplatonists" (257).

Alchemy provided some of the theological associations linking the known material universe and the unknowable divine universe. The concept and general principals prevalent within alchemy addressed and sated some of Milton's curiosities, both corporeal science and spiritual transmutation. The philosophical aspects of alchemy appealed to Milton, but the prevailing focus on the metallic transmutation, which seemed to dominate the metaphysical aspects, was reason enough for Milton to reject alchemical concepts. He wanted to scientifically argue for the existence of God utilizing a scientific enterprise. The materially transmutative forms of alchemy measured the limits of greed rather than the existence of divinity. The focus on the transmutability of individual spirit was the aspect of the philosophy that inspired Milton.

Milton's quest for divine knowledge is principally and theologically incorporeal. He is interested in ascension and the divine rather than materiality. Like the figure of the Son, Milton was attempting to gain knowledge focusing on immateriality. Babb describes this conflict:

"Milton had a choice between rejecting the very reasonable conclusions of the scientists and abandoning his belief in the infallibility of scripture. He seems to have found this dilemma frustrating and painful. He did not solve it. In *Paradise Lost* the new astronomy appears for the first time (and the last) in Milton's work" (93-4).

By the time *Paradise Lost* was completed Milton had abandoned the notion that a pathway to divine ascension could be found utilizing the "fringe" science of alchemy. Although he did credit the practice's legitimacy and sound philosophical and theological precepts, the generalized fixation on its corporeal qualities rendered it incompatible with his application of it. He needed a philosophy, an incorporeal concept that was securely rooted in both the alchemic science and in the metaphysical universe. He needed a theory to bridge the gap separating alchemy and his own cosmology, his own theodicy. Milton found this balance in Hermeticism. Similar to alchemy philosophically, Hermeticism focuses on the divine inclusiveness of God; it lacks corporeal motivations. Within Hermeticism Milton found newly emerging occult theology mixed with scripture. This combination produced the most convincing argument for physical transmutation or ascension.

Much of the philosophical context regarding God and the Son in *Paradise Lost* is directly associated with Hermetic philosophy, which posits an ontological cosmology that most closely resembles Milton's own theology. Alchemy and Hermeticism are theologically linked. Alchemy acts as both a science and a philosophy and Hermeticism extrapolates from the alchemic premise of transmutation utilizing a more incorporeal and existential philosophy that fundamentally disregards the literal materiality of alchemic metallurgy. Linden explains this:

"the important distinction between hermeticism and alchemy is not between a crude form of charlatanism and a respectable metaphysical system, but between aspects of a large and complex body of thought that were now and again either more practical and utilitarian or more theoretical, religious and philosophical in nature and purpose" (241).

Being predominantly fixated on the philosophical and religious implications of Hermeticism, Milton was able to find an associative link connecting the Christian doctrine and the philosophies of Hermes Trismegarus, the father of Hermeticism.

This link identifies Hermes association and relationship with Christ. Much of what Hermetic thought teaches focuses less on the teacher and more on the content of the philosophy itself. The idea that conservative orthodox Christian doctrine is theologically and fundamentally linked to the occult Hermetic philosophy is a surprising revelation. This would have certainly become the link between Milton's increasingly stagnant perspective of Christianity and his new interest in a philosophy that blends divinity with material essence to make a determinate and permanent divine state. The nature of the Hermetic philosophy stems from all matter existing as the physical embodiment of God's will.

Linden describes this synthesis:

"...man's participation in the divine through the presence of the spark within his soul, is based not only on a long tradition of Christian theological commentary but also on the Neoplatonic and hermetic commonplace that since all creation is the work of God, all creation is divine, and that "rays" and "seeds", emanating from the One, determine mortal thought and conduct" (233).

The concept of "the One" and of all life emerging and eventually integrating within a singular will is outlined in *The Kyballion*—a philosophical treatise of Hermeticism.

The concept of divine association with the material universe is personified within the Son in *Paradise Lost*. Milton's use and application of hermetic occult theology is explicit in *Paradise Lost*.

The association between the ontological imperative within *Paradise Lost* and its Hermetic link is evident. Like Milton, the world was reforming. New associations inextricably linked science to religious theology. Milton was fundamentally influenced by this fervor. Amazingly both of Milton's primary interests—religious philosophy and science—find themselves coinciding with the theology of Hermeticism. Linden explains this saying, "most of these are a part of the "new" philosophy with its increasingly empirical investigation of nature, and among them are Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Messene, Harvey, Hobbesian Materialism, Cartesian Rationalism, the experimentalism of the Royal Society, and the correct dating of writings long attributed to Hermes Trismegistus" (19). Evidently Milton did not sit alone at the threshold of existential philosophy and Hermetic thought. Milton and his contemporaries, occult or heretical, were influenced and influencing these changes in thought and thinking. As the scientific community was proving that the material universe was once infinitesimally dense, Milton was simultaneously demonstrating that the source of this point, and of all matter, exists and is an aspect of divinity manifested physically. The association between the scientific and religious and the Christian and hermetic ideologies are all manifested at once, existing within "the One." The idea that Milton's *Paradise Lost* shows evidence of Hermetic influence can be anticipated and expected when the conditions and philosophical constructs that influenced the Elizabethan era are taken out of modernity and reevaluated within the correct context.

Since God exists in all things according to Hermetic theology, then both science and the occult are a part of God's will manifested within the confines of a material universe. Both of these theologies exist within the framework of Milton's ontological and metaphysical renderings and both are apparent in *Paradise Lost* and other works. Milton was not the solitary revolutionary standing against antiquated constructs, but was instead a part of a larger movement responding to Elizabethan influence. Since Hermeticism had such a pervasive association with paganism it was associated and labeled occult—a label that still persists today. Milton's focus, the major premise of Hermeticism,

"The All in All" of it failed to dispel common associations with occultism and even magic. Neither aspects of Hermeticism can be directly associated with Milton. No distinctions between science, new philosophies, and outright witchcraft were made during this era—all was heretical and pagan in the eyes of the Church. According to Linden, "The cosmic hopes which the hermetic philosophy seemed to open up were not wholly unreasonable in the mid-seventeenth century when magic and science were still advancing side by side" (36). Many of the subtle allusions referenced within Milton's works are veiled references to these occult or Hermetic works. Through these references a new conceptualization of Milton emerges. He becomes a figure that was anything but orthodox, a figure that delved into the most obscure and heretical doctrine in pursuit of understanding. In many ways Milton is a product of the Elizabethan constructs that typified and shaped the seventeenth century.

Milton and his contemporaries shaped the new world using newly emerging theologies and sciences. Milton helped give rise to the reformation. Milton irrevocably altered the literary genre with *Paradise Lost*, not only through scope but also through ideas hidden within the grandeur and scope of *Paradise Lost*. Actively experimenting and exploring the boundaries of the physical and metaphysical universe, Milton joined the greatest thinkers of the age making a literary contribution to the ontological inquiry of existence that was a critical part in the Elizabethan age. By exploring these avenues of alchemy, Hermeticism, and occult theology Milton became part of an older tradition aligned with the greatest mind and artists of the age. His theories, a blending of theologies with science, set him apart. Milton was not an orthodox Christian. He had little esteem for the tyrannical nature of the Church, but because he existed in a time when disobedience meant death, Milton convincingly created a work of conformity that was, in reality, sub-textual and subversive. The real Milton is among the greatest thinkers of the seventeenth century. He did for literature what Copernicus and Galileo did for science and astronomy. He was not a traditionalist but an experimentalist that was fully convinced that England would one day become the hub of intellectual discussion. All of his life

Milton studied to become the greatest bard of the seventeenth century. Through his blending of ontological and philosophical treatises emerged a poem like nothing before or since, a poem that undertakes the very essence of human inquiry coming to terms with the nature of existence. Through the blending of Hermetical philosophy and Milton's own brand of cosmology comes a way to God, a way to understanding being.

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