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APOTHEOSIS OF REVENGE IN THE EPIC TRILOGY OF JOHN MILTON: *PARADISE LOST*, *PARADISE REGAINED*, AND *SAMSON AGONISTES*

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ABSTRACT

APOTHEOSIS OF REVENGE IN THE EPIC TRILOGY OF JOHN MILTON:
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This dissertation proposes that, despite the lack of scholarship on the theme of revenge in Milton, revenge is integral to all three of his major poems, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*. A close reading of these poems not only reveals that the theme of revenge is pervasive in all three works, but that Milton transforms the convention to create an apotheosis of revenge. Milton achieves this apotheosis by modifying the traditional revenger, who is marred by violence and hatred, into the sanctified revenger of God, who achieves godly vengeance through patience and sufferance.

By examining the contrasting types of revenge as exemplified by Satan on the one hand and the Son and Samson on the other, this dissertation attempts to show how Milton's handling of the theme of revenge in his major poems is used to contrast the failures of the Puritan Revolution with the original calling of the Puritan party to free the English nation from tyranny. This dissertation also seeks to reveal that the theme of revenge raises larger issues such as providence, free will, and the role of humanity in providential history.

The dissertation begins by arguing against the traditional view that revenge was condemned during the Renaissance. The first chapter thus

examines the philosophical and theological justification during the Renaissance for Milton's treatment of revenge as an instrument of divine justice in his three major poetical works. The second chapter explores Milton's treatment of Satan's revenge in *Paradise Lost* in relation to the problem of evil, which Milton sees as arising from disobedience and the assertion of individual will over the will of God. The third chapter examines Milton's effort to create an apotheosis of revenge by the Son in *Paradise Regained*, whose defeat of Satan serves as a definitive answer to sin, inviting an imitative response from the reader. Chapter four is devoted to the study of Milton's efforts to offer Samson as a more human example of sanctified revenge in *Samson Agonistes*. The dissertation closes with an epilogue which examines how Milton's epic trilogy as a whole projects Milton's hopeful vision of God's providential design.

In Loving Memory of My Father

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Introduction

An overlooked approach to *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes* is the relationship of these works to the theme of revenge. While this theme has been discussed at some length in connection with *Samson Agonistes*, there is a resounding silence regarding it in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. Certainly, there is no scholarly study that discusses Milton's treatment of revenge in the course of his three major poetical works. This dearth of critical studies on the theme of revenge in Milton's major poetical works is surprising, considering the fact that the word "revenge" is used twenty-one times in *Paradise Lost*, four times in *Samson Agonistes*, while special emphasis is given to the word "avenged" near the conclusion of *Paradise Regained*. Numerous other derivatives of the word "revenge" appear throughout Milton's three major poems.[1] The following study will therefore not only attempt to redress this past neglect of revenge in Milton's three major poems but argue that the concept of revenge is integral to their overall meaning.

A close examination of *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes* reveals that Milton is not only exploring the nature of revenge but progressively modifying it for religious and political reasons. A comparative study of the treatment of revenge in Milton's three major poetical works will reveal Milton's transformation of revenge from a traditionally individualistic and ungodly act into an act of divine retribution. By tracing the progressive transformation of the theme of revenge in Milton's three major works, this study

concerns itself with two largely interrelated issues of religion and politics. Because as G. Wilson Knight points out, "there is to Milton no final distinction between politics and religion: each reinforces the other,"[2] I will examine how the theme of revenge in Milton's poems contributes to the religious and political debates of his day. In the following chapters, then, I hope to examine how revenge in Milton's works touches on religious concerns related to the question of individual versus divine will, on the consequence of disobedience and the hope of redemption through unconditional obedience. I also intend to show that the progressive transformation of the concept of revenge in Milton's works is linked to his efforts to express contemporary social and political concerns relating to the failure of the Puritan Revolution, a failure which led to the Restoration.

Milton's treatment of revenge in his three major poetical works centers around two contrasting types of revenge, the satanic and the divine. Throughout the course of his poem, Milton presents his contrasting kinds of revenge in such a way that his readers are asked to choose between Satan's individualistic choice to act upon his "unconquerable will,/ And study of revenge," [3] and the examples of the Son and Samson who exemplify the apotheosis of revenge by elevating revenge as an instrument of divine justice. Because the term "apotheosis" has several different meanings, I would first like to clarify which sense I will employ in the following discussion. By apotheosis of revenge, I do not mean "deification" or "canonization," but strictly "an exaltation of a principle,

practice," a glorified "ideal" (*OED* 1, 559). Viewed from this perspective, the role Samson assumes in the fulfillment of providential justice functions as an exalted or glorified example for redeemed Christians to follow. However, because Samson is merely a type of Christ and thus at one remove from the perfection of Christ, he is more human and more fallible. Before presenting the example of Samson, therefore, Milton offers his readers the example of Christ's revenge on Satan in *Paradise Regained*. As Richard S. Ide points out, while it is Satan who assumes the role of the "villain revenger" in *Paradise Lost*, it is mankind who, through the Son, is destined to "have revenge against Satan's villainy at the Resurrection and at the end of time."[4] The overthrow of Satan by the Son in *Paradise Regained* thus fulfills the promise extended in *Paradise Lost* that "[Eve's] seed [Christ] shall bruise [Satan's] head" which "Would be revenge indeed" (*PL*, X. 181, 1036). The Son in *Paradise Regained*, however, unlike Samson, remains perfect and free of sin while undertaking the revenge on Satan. The Son's revenge in *Paradise Regained* is manifest in Satan's overthrow and in the Son's undoing of the effects of Fall, which he achieves through humility, faith, and obedience to the will of God.

The example of the Son in *Paradise Regained* also functions as an emblem of the right relationship between God and man, a relationship that Milton describes in his *De Doctrina Christiana* as involving the wisdom "WHEREBY WE EARNESTLY SEARCH AFTER THE WILL OF GOD, LEARN IT WITH ALL DILIGENCE, AND GOVERN ALL OUR ACTIONS ACCORDING TO ITS RULE."[5] Satan's quest for revenge in *Paradise Lost*, by contrast, is motivated by his own

individualistic will rather than the will of God. As John Carey points out, Satan makes a conscious choice to vent his revenge, against his better nature, upon the human race. This makes his act of revenge that much more diabolical.[6]

In seeking revenge, Satan, in his individualistic tendencies, most closely resembles the villain of Renaissance drama. While our own attitude towards "individualism" is influenced by the modern practice of valorizing it as a "free and independent individual action or thought" (*OED* 7, 880), the Renaissance held to a more negative attitude towards individualism, especially when that individualism works to undermine social and spiritual harmony. The Renaissance antipathy towards individualism is noted by critics such as Theodore Spencer, who uses the term "individualist" specifically to describe a villain such as Iago who is "separated from ordinary human beings on both sides of his nature" and who "has no capacity for seeing himself in relation to the state or the universal order of things."[7] According to Spencer, an individualist is another name for the Machiavellian "who enjoys evil...for its own sake" (Spencer, 131), and individualism as it is depicted in Shakespeare is viewed as "one of the attributes of villainy" (Spencer, 212).[8] Spencer's depiction of the attributes of villainy in Iago might just as easily be applied to Milton's Satan. Like Iago, Satan can be called an individualist who is spiritually alienated from God and from his fellow creatures by his commitment to evil. That Milton was aware of the threat posed by uninhibited individualism embodied by Satan is evident from his efforts to define true individuality as being synonymous with harmony and union with the will of God. As Mary Ann Radzinowicz points out, "Milton himself used the word

'individual' to signify aggregation, not segregation, to mean non-dividual as in the phrase 'abide/ United as one individual soule'(V. 609-610)."[9]

Satan in *Paradise Lost*, then, is an individualistic character, analogous to Machiavellian villains such as Macbeth, Richard III, and Iago in Renaissance drama, who acknowledge no constraints on their behavior other than those of self-interest. Though Barbara K. Lewalski does not include the darker implications of individualism in her discussion, she nonetheless traces the connection between Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost* and the villains of Elizabethan tragedy. By examining Satan's soliloquies, Lewalski concludes that Satan resembles Macbeth in his ambition, Richard III in his pursuit of power, and Iago in his "sheer malignity."[10] Satan, therefore, is an egotist who pursues his own goals with single-minded drive. Furthermore, his compulsive pursuit of revenge, undertaken in the vain hope of continuing his challenge to the divine order, furthers his spiritual division from divine grace, a division that St. Augustine defines as the very condition of evil. According to St. Augustine, evil is a privation of the good that is God, noting that "no nature at all is evil, and this is a name for nothing but the want of good."[11] Milton like Augustine, emphasizes in *Paradise Lost* that everything God created was good in its inception. That Milton's theory of evil in large part accords with that of Augustine becomes evident from his argument in *De Doctrina Christiana*, a useful gloss to the reading of *Paradise Lost*,[12] that all things created by God are good at their outset. According to Milton, "the original matter of which we speak, is not to be looked upon as an evil or trivial thing, but as intrinsically good" (*Columbia* XV,

23). Rather, as "[God] himself testifies," all "[m]atter, like the form and nature of angels itself, proceeded incorruptible from God" (Columbia XV, 67, 23-25). According to his Augustinian theory of evil, therefore, Milton attempts to show in *Paradise Lost* that Satan, by choosing to disobey God, moves against his nature which was created good. As good vanishes, so evil manifests itself. If God did not create evil, then, Satan's fall must be seen as a consequence of his own volition. Like Augustine, Milton believes that the good, by being subjected to choice and free will, can turn to evil. He argues that Matter, "having proceeded from God, and become in the power of another party," and "mutable", has nothing to prevent it "from contracting taint and contamination through the enticements of the devil, or those which originated in man himself" (*Columbia* XV, 25). Insomuch as "every act is in itself good; it is only its irregularity, or deviation from the line of right, which, properly speaking, is evil" (*Columbia* XV, 199), Milton asserts that God is blameless for the evil in this world. Central, then, to Milton's defense of God is the Augustinian theory of evil.[13]

In his conscious choice to pursue the course of revenge, even after the fact of his defeat in the war in Heaven, Satan embraces hate and despair instead of submission and restoration to the grace of God. This is both an assertion of his individualistic nature and a voluntary act of distancing himself from divine providence. As noted by Arthur E. Barker, the thematic pattern of *Paradise Lost* consists of man's first disobedience, his post-lapsarian woe, and his restoration.[14] Satan, likewise, experiences a disastrous fall resulting in "huge affliction and dismay" (*PL*, I. 57). Satan, however, unlike Adam and Eve, whose

fall is followed by submission and redemption, falls again by his quest for revenge. Satan's damnation therefore is a result of his own obdurate and stubborn disobedience and not something that was predestined. As Milton tells us in *De Doctrina Christiana*, "reprobation lies not so much in the divine will, as in the obstinacy of their minds; nor is it the decree of God, but rather the reprobate themselves, by their refusal to repent while it is in their power" (*Columbia* 14, 155).

Paradise Lost portrays the machinations of satanic revenge in order, among other things, to identify Satan's pride as the origin of sin and his revenge as the fundamental element that "Mov'd our Grand Parents in that happy state,/...to fall off/ From their Creator and trangress his Will" (*PL*, I. 29-31). As Radzinowicz points out, however, the poem's conclusion also presages the two themes that dominate *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*: "the example of the 'Redeemer ever blest' (*PL*, XII. 572-3)...and the addition of human deeds of faith, virtue, patience, temperance."[15] While Satan's revenge defines and exemplifies the nature of sin, the examples of the Son in *Paradise Regained* and Samson in *Samson Agonistes* attempt to show readers the means of overcoming the effects of sin by imitating "actions exemplary for man" (Radzinowicz, 229). *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes* thus are thematically interlinked. The story of temptation and fall in *Paradise Lost* is followed by the story of temptation and undoing of the Fall in *Paradise Regained*, followed by the temptation and redemption in *Samson Agonistes*. *Paradise Regained* provides a reworking of the concept of revenge by demonstrating that the "true 'revenger'" is

sometimes one who only "suffers patiently" (Ide 1983, 122). As Albert C. Labriola points out, the image of the Son in *Paradise Lost* in his "meek aspect" and "Filial obedience"[16] contrasts with Satan's "Ambition and Revenge," and his rebellion against God.[17] Milton expands upon this contrast in *Paradise Regained*, where the Son likewise takes on the role as the exemplar of Faith, proving his Sonship by waiting patiently and obediently for the spirit to instruct him in how to perform his office. By doing so, he shows that true Sonship and the "fairer Paradise" (*PR*, IV. 613) are attained by trust in God alone and not by assertion of one's individual will.

While Milton in *Paradise Regained* presents the Son as the New Testament antitype and example of perfection as well as fulfillment, he writes *Samson Agonistes* with Samson as a prefigurative type of Christ. The reason Milton is able to view Samson as a type of Christ is, as Lynn Veach Sadler points out, is because Milton "avoids a dichotomy between Old and New Testaments by making the prophets a kind of old dispensation equivalent of Gospel typology."[18] According to Sadler, because God, in his divinity, transcends the limitation of linear chronology, so his dispensation is equally applicable to both the Old and New Testaments (Sadler, 143-145). Because the Son is God-incarnate, he is the ideal exemplar given to man for imitation. Man, however, because of his fallen condition cannot hope to attain to the state of the Son's perfection. It is not surprising therefore that most of the examples that are given in the Bible are human.[19] For this reason, in *Samson Agonistes*, Milton portrays for the benefit of fallen man a human example, one who is as weak and sinful as the ordinary man

himself. This very fallen nature of Samson, which allows him to be more accessible to the reader, however, is also responsible for the critical debate between anti-regenerationist and regenerationist arguments in regard to how we should view Samson's final act of revenge in *Samson Agonistes*. Critics such as Irene Samuel and Joseph Wittreich have argued that any regeneration is at odds with Samson's revenge in the temple of Dagon.[20] Wittreich, for example, suggests that while Samson is no villain, he is deeply flawed in his heroism, and that his final act of revenge bespeaks not his "regeneration" but a "second fall"(Wittreich 1981, 80). However, I agree with others such as Hugh MacCallum and David Loewenstein who see Samson's final act of revenge not as "a foolhardy embracing of self-destruction" (Wittreich 1981, 231) but a fulfillment of divine vengeance in obedience to the Will of God. This view gains credence when we recall the fact that St. Augustine justifies Samson's suicide in *The City of God* because Samson was acting under the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Augustine 1950, 27). MacCallum thus argues that, in carrying out his revenge, "[Samson] acted not as a private person, but as one whose calling to free his country came from heaven."[21] Loewenstein likewise views Samson as a "radical saint moved by the Spirit to enact the dreadful vengeance of the Lord."[22]

In order for Samson to transcend the limitations of a personal vendetta, however, and truly become the instrument of divine retribution, Milton must demonstrate that Samson overcomes the consequence of disobedience for having "profaned/ The mystery of God given me under pledge/ Of vow, and have betrayed it to a woman."[23] Reading *Samson Agonistes* from this perspective,

one can see better how the tragedy is largely about the hero's recovery involving patience and faith, conquering the weakness which led to his fall, and obeying the call to further service.[24] Milton thus presents Samson in the tragedy initially as a betrayer of God, deprived of honor and integrity and subjected to various temptations. Samson, however, regains patience, humility, and faith in God through temptations and trials. It is only when Samson accepts full responsibility for the consequences of his disobedience and puts unquestioning faith in the will of God, that he claims to experience "Some rousing motions in me" (*SA*, 1382) to become again the instrument of divine retribution on the Philistines.

While Milton's treatment of revenge in his three major poems is revealing in its dramatization of the religious theme of the Fall and Redemption, it is equally helpful in illuminating some of the sociopolitical aspects of the Puritan revolution. In *Milton and the Experience of Defeat*, Christopher Hill brings our attention to Milton's criticism of the revolutionary party in his three major poems by correlating the Fall of Man with the failure of the revolution. According to Hill, Milton's "last three great poems deal with intensely topical problems set by the defeat of God's Cause" wherein "the sinfulness of fallen man became an explanation of failure."[25] What I propose to do then in the present study is to examine how Milton's treatment of revenge relates to and promotes such a critique. While Satan's persistence in his quest for revenge in *Paradise Lost* is a perversion of God's will and a reflection of Satan's individualist nature, it is also important for understanding the failures of the Puritan party. As indicated by

Marcia Landy, Milton's depiction of Satan in *Paradise Lost* is a dramatization of "the threat of rampant individualism" which represents "Milton's political and personal assessment of the dangers of individualism masked in revolutionary zeal and the rhetoric of liberty."[26]

Consumed by pride and ambition, both attributes of the "revengeful villain" of Elizabethan drama, Satan in *Paradise Lost*, like the Machiavellian Iago, is driven by "an overmastering desire to justify his own egotistical principles by seeing his own will and intellectual astuteness triumph over those who think themselves and are regarded by others as good."[27] When we consider the fact that, as Hill points out, the Puritan revolutionaries similarly allowed themselves to be seduced by the allurements of power, wealth, and ambition, [28] it is reasonable to draw an analogy between Satan and these revolutionaries. Just like Satan in *Paradise Lost*, Puritan revolutionaries made the grave error of rebelling against God by placing greater value on their individual will rather than the divine will. Like Satan, they arrogated to themselves, especially in the case of Cromwell, a king-like authority. While Hill stresses that Milton never actually condemned Oliver Cromwell (Hill 1984, 314), others, such as A.S.P Woodhouse, find Milton implicitly criticizing Cromwell in his final tracts, such as the *Readie and Easy Way* (1660), which rejects "any form of single-person rule-such as the Protectorate."[29] What the Puritan revolutionaries did not realize, as Adam and Eve learned from Michael before their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, is that freedom does not consist in the assertion of individual will, but the conformity of individual will to the divine will through self-purification and submission to God.[30]

If *Paradise Lost* symbolizes the failure of the Puritan revolutionaries placed in the context of the Fall, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* dramatize the extent to which they can learn the purpose of their calling. The example of the Son in *Paradise Regained* is dedicated towards re-educating the Puritan party of their purpose, which is to deliver and redeem the enslaved. Elaine B. Safer, however, is at pains to emphasize that the crux of *Paradise Regained* is "self-realization" rather than the "selflessness" of the Son and that the "progression in *Paradise Regained* is toward man's realization of his potential sufficiency to rise above his fallen condition."[31] The work of deliverance may not be always successful, as *Samson Agonistes* shows. Nevertheless, Milton's tragedy reminds the Puritan revolutionaries that their calling is not invalidated because of momentary weakness or failure. As *Samson Agonistes* shows, through faith and submission of his will to the will of God, Samson can again become the instrument of God. A bent towards political activism in *Samson Agonistes* has been argued by several critics, including Hill, who reads *Samson Agonistes* as reaffirming Milton's faith in the Puritan revolution, [32] and Jackie Di Salvo, who notes "a central movement from passivity to activism, an activism that ultimately takes the form of a violent struggle against a political oppressor."[33] *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* thus function as exempla for the Puritan revolutionaries in the teeth of their post-Restoration defeat. Their calling is to deliver the nation. Because Milton is mindful of past failures, *Samson Agonistes* ends with an admonition that opportunities yet remain for the Puritan revolutionaries to accomplish this work.

Integral to Milton's development of the theme of revenge in relation to his religious and political concerns is the way in which his three major poetical works are structured as an epic "trilogy." Barker long ago observed the dependence of *Paradise Lost* upon a "threefold" structural format, reminiscent of the *Aeneid*, of loss, suffering, and recovery (Barker 1965, 142). Barker's discovery of this thematic structure in *Paradise Lost*, I would argue, is equally applicable to the overall structure of Milton's three major poetical works. According to Barker, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* offer contrasting renditions of the theme of Adam's Fall in *Paradise Lost*: the former is an example of "an undeviating resistance to the Satanic temptation," and the other is a representation of "a more painful yet progressive resistance...to a repetition of earlier temptations." Barker therefore argues that *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, together with *Paradise Lost,* comprise "a trilogy."[34] Wittreich presents a similar argument, suggesting that Milton's three poems are mutually illuminating because *Paradise Lost* "serves as a gateway into the brief epic [*Paradise Regained*] and the tragedy [*Samson Agonistes*]." [35] Wittreich's conclusion regarding *Samson Agonistes*, however, differs radically from mine. While Wittreich views *Paradise Regained* as "a formulation of a new system of religion" which shows how "paradise within may be achieved," he views *Samson Agonistes* as an example of "how [paradise] may be lost, and the effects of its being lost" (Wittreich 1979, 209). By contrast, I follow the line of argument by regenerationist critics such as MacCallum and Loewenstein who view *Samson Agonistes* as portraying a process of regeneration within the context of Christ's

example set out in *Paradise Regained.* Difference of interpretation aside, I believe that Wittreich makes an important and valid observation regarding Milton's three major works when he says that "Milton's final vision, composed of *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*, is...tripartite in its structure" (Wittreich 1979, 193).

I believe that the most compelling argument for reading Milton's three major poetical works together is propounded by Hill, who argues in *Milton and the English Revolution* that "in all three poems Milton is grappling with problems set by the failure of God's cause in England" (Hill 1977, 345). That Milton was intent on explaining the reasons for the failure of the godly cause in these three major poems is hardly surprising when we consider that they were published after the Restoration. However, as Hill points out, what is unique to Milton is the way in which he turned to the biblical story of the Fall in order to explain the failure of the Puritan revolution (Hill 1977, 352). Not only does Milton address his concerns regarding the failure of the Puritan revolution in his three major poetical works but, as Hill points out, he does so in such a way that they create a thematic progression:

> We can trace a progression in the three great poems. *Paradise Lost* deals with Adam succumbing to temptation, with humanity, with Everyman. In *Paradise Regained* the hero is a perfect man, withstanding temptation and saving humanity by his example. In *Samson Agonistes* there is no mention of Christ, of whom in the orthodox tradition Samson

> was normally regarded as a type. Samson performs Christ-like actions, bringing salvation to his people by his own death. But--even more than Jesus in *Paradise Regained*--Samson is a man, a man acting, not merely suffering. His individuality is not unique: he is what any fallen sinner can become when he recovers and co-operates with Providence. (Hill 1977, 446)

As noted by Hill, Milton's epic trilogy reveals a thematic progression that begins with the depiction of the Fall in *Paradise Lost*. Significantly, however, Milton is careful to balance his portrayal of Adam's failure with the positive examples of Christ and Samson in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton attempts to come to terms with the failure of the Puritan revolution. Yet, just as Milton was at pains in *Paradise Lost* to demonstrate that the Fall was not due to predestination but was a direct result of one's individual free will, so the godly cause failed because the English people and their leaders had freely fallen. As Hill puts it, "Like the rebel angels, 'firm they might have stood/ Yet fell' (VI.911-12)" (Hill 1977, 348). Such failures, nevertheless, are something that can be understood and corrected. The central aim of *Paradise Regained*, then, is to present the Son as the perfect exemplar whose actions are meant to show how "Man can be regenerate on earth" (Hill 1977, 352).

Finally, I believe that there is an inherent significance in the fact that, despite publishing *Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes* together in 1671,

Milton placed the order of the text so that his epic trilogy concludes with *Samson Agonistes*. I agree with Hill's assessment that because Samson is a man, a type of Christ who "performs Christ-like actions," he is more representative of fallen man than even the Son in *Paradise Regained*. The Son shows how man may transcend individual uniqueness to become an exemplum of universal redemption. If a sinner like Samson can hope to be restored to the grace of God, then so can any fallen man.

In reading Milton's three major poems as a "trilogy," I follow the traditional order put forth by the majority of Milton scholars who read them in the order of *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. The chronology of Milton's trilogy, nevertheless, is a subject of contention that deserves some elaboration. First, there are critics who argue that Milton's works must be read according to the traditional chronology of *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes* (Ants Oras, Ernest Sirluck, Hill 1977: 481-486, Radzinowicz 1978:387-407). Others, though, challenge such a reading as flawed and argue that *Samson Agonistes* is an early work, putting the date of composition in the 1640s (W.R. Parker 1949, John T. Shawcross 1961).

While the contention over chronology revolves around differences of opinion concerning dates of composition using biographical details, prosody, and metrics, perhaps the center of the debate is, in the words of Barker, "the propriety of our being invited to pass from a poem representing the imperturbable resistance of the young Christ...to a poem representing chiefly the

perturbingly painful experience of the defeated and enslaved Samson" (Barker 1973,13). Any conjecture about the proper sequence of Milton's works, then, must answer Barker's question: "Should not Samson's fallen, if ultimately, in some sense, rescued, experience rather precede Christ's making possible the regaining of Paradise for all mankind, following mere historical or at any rate testamentary chronology?" (Barker 1973,14). Inverting the chronology and placing *Samson Agonistes* before *Paradise Regained* would seem to follow Biblical chronology in which providential history progresses from the Fall of Man to pre-Christian Samson to the New Testament Christ.

The fact, however, remains that Milton purposely published his epic trilogy so that his three major poems would be read in the order of *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. The rapid publication of Milton's major poetical works--*Paradise Lost* in 1667, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* together in 1671--may suggest that some of Milton's late work may have been begun earlier. Nevertheless, as Wittreich Jr. observes, "even *if* they [*Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*] were not composed sequentially, they were published that way" (Wittreich 1979,191). J. Max Patrick makes the same argument, saying that what we as critics must be concerned with is not the dates of composition but "the order in which Milton intended his three last major works to be read." According to Patrick, the order of publication in which *Samson Agonistes* holds the terminal position is a good indication that it is "Milton's intention...to have them read in that order and to have *Samson*

regarded as the last work in what we may view as a trilogy of interrelated masterpieces."[36]

Date of publication aside, the best argument for reading Milton's epic trilogy in the order of its publication, according to Hill, is because it makes for a most politically effective reading (Hill 1984, 314). As already noted by Hill, there is a discernible progression in Milton's epic trilogy. *Paradise Lost* lays out the sins of pride and ambition as the causes of defeat while *Paradise Regained* intimates that through the imitation of Christ's faith and obedience, man can achieve regeneration. And, *Samson Agonistes* balances the political realities of the post-Restoration England and the failure of the Godly cause with the idealistic hope that, like Samson who "Christ-like" fulfills God's purpose for him by paying the ransom for his nation, the Puritan revolutionaries too will "Find courage to lay hold this occasion" (*SA*, 1716).

Hill's interpretation of Samson as "Christ-like" is echoed by Sadler who argues that Milton looked beyond the "evangelical and chronological view of Christianity." According to Sadler, Milton's typology avoids creating a dichotomy between Old and New Testaments by elevating the prophets into "a kind of old dispensation equivalent of Gospel typology."[37] By emphasizing such continuity between dispensations, "Regeneration is made available to those who live before the Crucifixion, with faith as the catalyst through all dispensations" (Sadler, 145). Central to Sadler's argument is the idea that God is not confined to linear time as we are. Providential history is already complete and whole, and Christ is the crux (literally the "cross") standing at the nexus of past and future.

His pattern and influence extend in both directions through typology. The same typology allows man to imitate Christ and all his past and future types. Samson therefore unknowingly follows the pattern of Christ before Christ revealed that pattern to man. Samson is a "type of regenerative religious experience" (Sadler, 156) set before us by Milton as an exemplar.[38]

Lastly, for those who might object that Samson is a poor choice as subject for imitation because of his many weakness and failures, I would answer, what better choice for fallen man to emulate than Samson who, having fallen, re-enters into the grace of God through repentance, faith, and obedience to the will of God? Imperfect types like Samson are more accessible to us because their imperfections are closer to our own. This would have been painfully obvious to Milton writing amid the realities of the Restoration.

Paradise Lost and *Paradise Regained* thus need to be read in conjunction because *Paradise Regained* reveals the means to rectify the sin of pride and disobedience committed in *Paradise Lost*. The effort to achieve revenge through the assertion of "individualistic" will is replaced by the submission of free will to the greater will of God in order to achieve one's full instrumentality. This is what the Son does in *Paradise Regained* as a model for imitation. Milton states in *Of Education* that "The end of Learning is to repair the ruines of our first Parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, *to imitate him, to be like him*"(*Columbia*, 4. 277, my emphasis). It is for this reason that Milton presents the Son in *Paradise Regained* as a powerful example of "noble

individuality."[39] The recognition of the Son as an exemplar is important to the overall structure of the poems as an alternative or point of reference from which to critique Satan's flawed individuality in *Paradise Lost*. Although the dramatization of the Son's "Filial obedience" (*PL*, III. 269) in *Paradise Lost* elevates Him as a model of imitation, I believe that the Son as exemplar achieves his fullest exposition in *Paradise Regained*. Whereas the Son, as the Son of God, vanquishes Satan by merit in *Paradise Lost*, the Son in *Paradise Regained* is depicted not in his divinity but as a God-incarnate, as a second Adam, overcoming Satan. It is not surprising that Milton attempts to provide the Son as an ideal model if we accept Sadler's argument that Christ's ministry in the Gospels is intended as an "exemplification for our imitation" (Sadler, 143). This in turn sets the stage for *Samson Agonistes*, in which Milton shows how the fallible human agent may redeem himself and regain his faith through the imitation of Christ (*imitatio Christi*) in response to specific temptations.

During the Renaissance, English Protestants were divided on the practice of *Imitatio Christi*, depending on their conservative or reformist tendencies.[40] According to J. Sears MacGee, the reformists held a "radical view of human depravity" which led them to reject the feasibility of imitating Christ. To them man's relationship with Christ was "often intimate, but seldom imitative." The conservatives, on the other hand, held a more optimistic view of human nature which led them to believe that a "dynamic conception of the duty of imitating Christ was tenable...because they believed that man was equipped to perform it."[41] Despite being the source of contention during the Renaissance, the

practice of *imitatio Christi* is supported by Scripture. The biblical usage of the term *Imitatio* or *mimétés,* according to *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, "calls believers to imitate other believers, Christ, and God." However, because humans fall short of the ideal, Paul points to Christ in 1 *Cor.* 11:1 and 1 *Thess.* 1:6 as "the incarnate example of God for believers to emulate in their daily experience." [42] As *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* also points out, though imitation of Christ does not by itself imply self-justification, "participation in Christ's cross and resurrection...is constituted in the life of the believer here and now by obedience to the imperatival call to imitation" (*Anchor* 3, 392). The Scriptural basis of the theme of *Imitatio Christi* can account partly for the vast popularity of the English edition of the book *Imitatio Christi* which was reprinted right up to the early seventeenth-century (Hudson, 543). There is no way of knowing for certain if Milton read Thomas Rogers' translation, but this is largely immaterial. What we can and do know is that Milton's own words exhorting the Church to carry itself in humility "in true imitation of Christ" (*Columbia*, III. 252) places him on the side of the conservative Protestants in regard to the theme of *Imitatio Christi.*

Temptations will vary in accordance with one's time and place in human history, but as Samson shows, it is up to each individual, through the exercise of free will and right reason, to decide which actions will most conform with the will of God. It is only when Samson purges himself of his individual will and submits himself wholly to the will of God through unconditional faith that he can become an instrument of divine retribution. Once this occurs, his powers are restored to him and he can take vengeance upon the Philistines, a vengeance that is no

longer personal, arising from anger or human fallibility, but an expression of divine and impersonal Justice.

This dissertation proposes to discuss Milton's treatment of revenge in his three major poems and to argue that it constitutes an apotheosis of revenge. The traditional treatment of revenge found in Elizabethan drama revolves around tragic heroes such as Hamlet or individualistic villains such as Vindice and Iago whose acts of revenge invite criticism because they are motivated by personal vindictiveness. Milton, in contrast, begins with a traditional treatment of revenge in *Paradise Lost*, only to transform revenge in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* into an instrument of divine justice. An important criterion for differentiating between the treatment of revenge in Elizabethan drama and the apotheosis of revenge in Milton's epic cycle lies in the area of motivation. As Harry Keyishian points out, a distinction needs to be made between "portrayals of vindictiveness" and "authentic revenge," the latter which can at times have "potentially affirmative and even heroic functions" despite frequent social and religious prohibitions against revenge.[43]

While the prevalent condemnation of revengers in Renaissance tragedies such as *The Spanish Tragedy*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and *Hamlet* conveys the impression that revenge was universally condemned during the Renaissance, Milton offers a radically different view on revenge. In *De Doctrina Christiana* Milton argues that it is a "religious duty" to "hate the enemies of God and of the church" and that "We are not forbidden to take or to wish to take

vengeance upon the enemies of the church."[44] In chapter one, "Revenge as Just Retribution," therefore, I will examine the Renaissance attitudes toward revenge in order to establish the link between the act of revenge and the operation of justice. I believe that there were ample philosophical and theological justifications during the Renaissance for Milton's treatment of revenge as instrument of divine justice in his three major poetical works. What stands out in the Renaissance discussions of revenge is that there is a clear distinction between acts of private revenge and the operations of public revenge carried out for the common good, the latter of which is considered morally justifiable. To discuss these issues I will use a variety of sixteenth and seventeenth century sources both religious and secular as well as representative classical authors such as Aristotle, Plato, Seneca, and Cicero who were available in English translation at the time.

The second chapter, "Satan's Revenge and the Problem of Evil in *Paradise Lost*," will explore how the theme of revenge is related to the religious concern over the problem of evil, which Milton sees as arising from disobedience and assertion of one's individual will over the will of God. As C. S. Lewis defines it, the Fall is simply and solely "Disobedience" resulting from pride.[45] In *Paradise Lost*, Milton was interested in the problem of evil, not only in how it came about, in how those who perpetrate it justify their actions, but also in how to respond to it or overcome and purge it. By accentuating the elements of envy, pride, and hatred that shape Satan's revenge, therefore, Milton not only condemns Satan's revenge as being perverse and evil but attempts to promote a purgation of those

destructive passions in his readers by fostering a feeling of horror at Satan's malicious villainy. Another purpose behind Milton's portrayal of Satan's individualistic revenge in *Paradise Lost* is the elucidation of his stated intention to "assert eternal providence,/ And justify the ways of God to men" (*PL*, I. 25-26). In depicting Satan's unholy pursuit of revenge, Milton painstakingly emphasizes Satan's exercise of free will. In doing so, Milton shows that individual actions are free, and not predetermined by divine will, necessity, or decree. While Satan attempts to deflect blame away from his rebellion by charging that God "tempted our attempt, and wrought our fall" (*PL*, I. 642), Milton makes it clear that blame lies solely on Satan himself. Satan's rebellion against God and his subsequent decision to pursue the course of revenge on humanity is a result of his decision to choose evil; a decision made with free choice. Satan's damnation, therefore, is a consequence of his stubborn disobedience and not something that was predestined. Revenge in *Paradise Lost*, shown by Milton to be motivated by individualistic inclinations, also reflects upon the causes that he saw as leading to the failure of the Puritan revolution.

In chapter three, "Apotheosis of Revenge in *Paradise Regained,*" I will discuss Milton's attempt to dramatize the apotheosis of revenge by the Son in *Paradise Regained*. That *Paradise Regained* is a dramatization of the Son's revenge on Satan is evident from its conclusion, telling us that "now thou [the Son] hast avenged/ Supplanted Adam, and, by vanquishing / Temptation, hast regained lost Paradise"(*PR*, IV. 606-608). The Son's revenge represents a step-by-step reversal of the effects of the Fall, presenting in *Paradise Regained* an

alternate ending for *Paradise Lost*. In Book 12 of *Paradise Lost*, Michael foretells that Christ "shall quell/ The adversary serpent, and bring back/ Through the world's wilderness long wandered man/ Safe to eternal paradise of rest" (*PL*, XII. 311-14). The Son's mission in *Paradise Regained*, then, is the fulfillment of what God promised Adam and Eve through Michael in *Paradise Lost*: the achievement of divine vengeance upon Satan and the salvation of man. It has been argued by David Mikics, however, that the Son in *Paradise Regained* approaches the satanic in his desire "to realize prematurely his future status as apocalyptic victor over Satan" which "represents the aspect of the Son that is too close to the Satan who rebelled."[46] The best refutation of such a reading comes from the text of *Paradise Regained* itself where the Son is portrayed as the very epitome of faith as he overcomes Satan through humility, patience, and obedience to the will of God. The Son serves as a definitive answer to sin, while his moral and spiritual attributes in *Paradise Regained*, setting an example to which man can also aspire, invite an imitative response from the reader. Integral therefore to Milton's efforts in *Paradise Regained* is the theme of *Imitatio Christi*. In the words of C.A. Patrides, the God-man in *Paradise Regained* "was designated invariably as the most perfect exemplar of the conduct expected of all men, 'our patterne', 'a patterne to vs how we ought to walke...'"[47]

Chapter four, "Rigorous Justice: Imperative of Divine Vengeance in *Samson Agonistes*" is devoted to the study of Samson in *Samson Agonistes* as a sanctified revenger. As John F. Andrews points out, the only kind of revenge justifiable to Milton is that which is associated with divine vengeance.[48] The key

to understanding Samson's revenge is the question whether it constitutes divine vengeance or personal revenge. Samson has been variously interpreted as "a tragic agent," "a flawed man," (Samuel, 244) and as a "vengeful godly saint" who is "moved by the spirit to carry out God's militant work."[49] As Di Salvo points out, however, Milton underscores in *Samson Agonistes* the "providential nature of Samson's actions" by reminding the readers of God's direct intervention in Samson's revenge (Di Salvo, 48). As such, Samson takes on the role of instrument of divine vengeance. Before he can fulfill his role as an instrument of divine Providence, however, Samson must overcome the consequence of his fallen state, a condition heavy with political connotations for the Puritan revolutionaries after the Restoration. As Hill notes, Milton also holds out hope for the revival of the Puritan cause in *Samson Agonistes* (Hill 1984, 311-17). Just as Samson is restored into God's grace by his suffering, patience, repentance, and obedience to the will of God, so his redemption acts as a "stirring example" for the faltering Puritan revolutionaries (Di Salvo, 60), challenging them to recover their sense of election.

Lastly, in the epilogue, "Milton's Providential View of History in *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*," I will examine how Milton's epic trilogy as a whole attempts to depicts a paradigm of salvation and the fulfillment of God's providential design. While there are some suggestions that Milton's poems, particularly *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, reflect his deepening pessimism and quietism following the Restoration,[50] as Hill points out, there is a clear thematic progression in Milton's three poems depicting the

Scriptural pattern of the Fall, purgation, and restoration (Hill 1977, 446). Milton's portrayal of a progressive and transcendental view of history thus defeats the idea that Milton was writing a "tragedy of defeat" (Hill 1984, 313). Indeed, as indicated by Achsah Guibbory, Milton envisions in his poetry a hopeful ideal of "growth, vision, the purgation of error" that constitutes the "providential pattern of progress."[51]

Notes

[1] The word "revenge" in *Paradise Lost*: 1.35, 1.107, 1.604, 2.105, 2.107, 2.128, 2.337, 2.371, 2.1054, 3.85, 3.160, 4.123, 4.386, 4.390, 6.151, 6.905, 9.168, 9.171, 10.242, 10.1036; "revenge" in *Samson Agonistes*: 484, 1462,1591,1660; the word "avenge" in *Paradise Regained*: 4.606. The word "revenged" also appears in *Paradise Lost* 4.4 and *Samson Agonistes* 1468, 1712 while the word "vengeance" is used in *Paradise Lost* 1.170, 1.220, 2.173, 3.399, 4.170, 6.279, 6.808, 12.541. The above listing of usage was taken from *An Index to the Columbia Edition of The Works of John Milt*on, Frank Allen Patterson and French Rowe Fogel eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), vol. 2, pp. 1668-1669.

[2] G. Wilson Knight, *Chariot of Wrath* (London: Faber and Faber, 1942), p.134. Steven Edward Jablonski similarly speaks of overcoming the tendency to compartmentalize "Milton's thought and writings into the categories of the religious, the political, and the literary." *Evil Days: Providence and Politics in the Thought of John Milton and his Age* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation: Princeton University, 1994), p. 5.

[3] All quotations from Milton's *Paradise Lost* are from *John Milton: Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler (London: Longman, 1971), l.106-7. Further quotations appear parenthetically with volume and page numbers. Fowler's notes will be cited as "Fowler" with the page number on which the note appears.

[4] Richard S.Ide, "On the Uses of Elizabethan Drama: The Revaluation of Epic in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 17 (1983), p.122.

[5] *The Works of John Milton*, Frank Allen Patterson et.al.eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), vol. XVII, p. 27. Upper-case letters are Milton's. All quotations from Milton's prose are also from this edition and further citations from prose works will appear parenthetically as *Columbia* with volume and page numbering unless otherwise noted.

[6] John Carey, "Milton's Satan," in *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, Dennis Danielson, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 139.

[7] Theodore, Spencer, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man*, 2nd ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1966), p. 132. Spencer similarly refers to Richard III as an individualist for whom "Order and society are nothing" and who refuses "to be

part of the order of nature and who refuses to see the interconnection between the various spheres of Nature's activity," p.72.

[8] In denoting individualism as an attribute of villainy, it is important to point out that, while the current usage of the term "individualism" incorporates both the negative aspect of "egoism" and the positive message of being "free and independent," the original usage of the term hardly used to be so inclusive. The first recorded use of the term individualist listed in *OED* is by William Ewart Gladstone who in 1840 *Church Principles considered in their results,* 131 calls the individualist in religion a worse danger than a catholic. Another example of the negative connotations of individualist is by Kingsley who in 1856 *Misc., Hours w. Mystics* I.351 equates the Pharisee with a selfish individualist (*OED*, vol.7: 880).

[9] Mary Ann Radzinowicz, "The Politics of *Paradise Lost,*" *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker(Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1987), p.225.

[10] Barbara K. Lewalski, *'Paradise Lost' and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 63-64.

[11] St. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), p.365.

[12] It is generally accepted that Milton began work on *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Paradise Lost* about the same time and thus critics such as Maurice Kelley find *De Doctrina Christiana* useful as a gloss on the doctrinal matter of *Paradise Lost.* See *This Great Argument: A Study of Milton's De Doctrina Christiana as a Gloss upon Paradise Lost* (Princeton, 1941). For arguments supporting the view that *De Doctrina Christiana* should be read as a gloss on *Paradise Lost* see also, Arthur R. Charlesworth, *Paradise Found* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1973), and George McMurry Muldrow, *Milton and the Drama of the Soul: A Study of the Theme of the Restoration of Man in Milton's Later Poetry* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1970).

[13] The notion of evil and good as the sum of choices is hardly unique to Augustine or Milton and can be traced back to Aristotle who makes a similar argument in his discussion of choices in *Nicomachean Ethics.* Noting that "choice is distinguished rather as being good or bad" (III.ii.10), Aristotle argues that "Virtue...is a settled disposition of the mind determining the choice of actions and emotions" (II.vi.15).

[14] Arthur E. Barker, "Structural Pattern in Paradise Lost," in *Milton: Modern Essays in Criticism*, Arthur E. Barker ed. (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 142.

[15] Mary Ann Radzinowicz, *Toward "Samson Agonistes": The Growth of Milton's Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 229.

[16] *Paradise Lost*, III, 266,269.

[17] Albert C. Labriola, "'Thy Humiliation shall Exalt': The Christology of *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 15 (1981), p. 38.

[18] Lynn Veach Sadler, "Regeneration and Typology: *Samson Agonistes* and Its Relation to *De Doctrina Christiana*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Paradise Regained*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 12 (1972): 141-156, p.143.

[19] See *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol.3, p.392.

[20] Joseph Anthony Wittreich Jr., *Interpreting Samson Agonistes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Irene Samuels, *"Samson Agonistes* as Tragedy," in *Calm of Mind*, Joseph Wittreich ed. (Cleveland and London: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1971).

[21] Hugh MacCallum, "*Samson Agonistes*: The Deliverer as Judge," *Milton Studies* 3 (1989), p.276.

[22] David Loewenstein, "The Revenge of the Saint: Radical Religion and Politics in *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Studies* 33 (1996), p.173. Also, French Fogle in "The Action of *Samson Agonistes*" sees Samson moving from private despair to public victory, while Wendy Furman in "*Samson Agonistes* as Christian Tragedy: A Corrective View," argues that Milton takes liberties with the book of Judges in order to make Samson's vengeance more acceptable.

[23] All quotations from Milton's *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* are from *Milton: Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey (London and New York: Longman, 1971), *Samson Agonistes*, 377-379. Further citations appear parenthetically with line numbers. Carey's notes will be cited as "Carey" with the page number on which the note appears.

[24] William Riley Parker, *Milton's Debt to Greek Tragedy in "Samson Agonistes"* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1937), pp. 237-238.

[25] Christopher Hill, *The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1984), p.310.

[26] Marcia Landy, "'Bounds Prescrib'd': Milton's Satan and the Politics of Deviance," *Milton Studies* 14 (1980), p. 117.

[27] Clarence Boyer, *The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1914), p. 119.

[28] Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), pp. 347-348.

[29] A.S.P. Woodhouse, *The Heavenly Muse: A Preface to Milton* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 116. This sentiment was voiced earlier by Don M. Wolfe who argues that, despite Milton's support of the Protector, his pamphlets of 1660, such as *The Ready and Easy Way*, rings with "denunciations of rule by a 'single person'," including Cromwell's. "Milton's Conception of the Ruler," *Studies in Philology* 33 (1936), pp. 266-267.

[30] In Book XII of *Paradise Lost*, Adam responds to Michael's instruction by concluding that "Henceforth, I learn, that to obey is best, /And love with fear the only God, to walk/ As in his presence, ever to observe/ His providence, and on him sole depend...worldly wise/ By simply meek; that suffering for truth's sake /Is fortitude to highest victory,/ And to the faithful death the gate of life" (561-564, 568-571).

[31] Elaine B. Safer, "The Socratic Dialogue and 'Knowledge in the Making' in *Paradise Regained*," *Milton Studies* 6 (1975), p. 222.

[32] See Hill, 1977, chapter 31.

[33] Jackie, Di Salvo, "The Lord's Battels': *Samson Agonistes* and the Puritan Revolution," *Milton Studies* 4 (1972), p. 40.

[34] Arthur E. Barker, "Calm Regained Through Passion Spent: The Conclusion of the Miltonic Effort," in *The Prison and the Pinnacle*, Balachandra Rajan ed. (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 14, 16. Mary Ann Radzinowicz similarly argues that "the fullest response to Milton's poetry...comes from interpreting its meaning in relation to its evolution within the corpus of his works" (Radzinowicz 1978, p. xix).

[35] Joseph Anthony Wittreich Jr., *Visionary Poetics: Milton's Tradition and His Legacy* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1979), p. 208.

[36] J. Max Patrick, "Milton's Revolution against Rime, and Some of Its Implications," in *Milton and the Art of Sacred Song*, J.Max Patrick and Roger H.

Sundell eds. (Madison and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), p. 115.

[37] Lynn Veach Sadler, "Regeneration and Typology: *Samson Agonistes* and Its Relation to *De Doctrina Christiana*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Paradise Regained*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* (1972), p. 143.

[38] Sadler argues that a Miltonic type takes on the role of an exemplar. Sadler, p.144.

[39] James A. Freeman, "Milton and Heroic Literature," *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, Dennis Danielson ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 61. While the phrase "noble individuality" is used by Freeman to describe the Son in *Paradise Lost*, I believe that it is an equally appropriate description for the Son in *Paradise Regained*. Marcia Landy similarly argues that Christ in *Paradise Lost* is an example of "proper individualism" (130).

[40] Elizabeth K. Hudson, "English Protestants and the *imitatio Christi*, 1580-1620," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 19:4 (1988), p. 542.

[41] J. Sears McGee, The Godly Man in Stuart England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 107, 111. Quoted in Hudson, pp.542-543.

[42] Quoted in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol.3, p.392.

[43] Harry Keyishian, The Shapes of Revenge: Victimization, Vengeance, and Vindictiveness in Shakespeare (New Jersey: Humanities Pres, 1995), pp. 1-2. Marvin Daniels also provides a similar classification between what he views as "normal" and "pathological" vindictiveness, p.169-170.

[44] *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, Don M. Wolfe ed., (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), vol. VI, p.743, 755. Quoted in Hill 1984, p. 315.

[45] C.S. Lewis, *A Preface to "Paradise Lost"* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942, rpt. 1961), p.70.

[46] David Mikics, *The Limits of Moralizing: Pathos and Subjectivity in Spenser and Milton* (Lewisburg, N.J.: Bucknell University Press, 1994), p. 163.

[47] C.A. Patrides, *Milton and the Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 146.

[48] John F. Andrews, "'Dearly Bought Revenge': *Samson Agonistes*, *Hamlet*, and Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy," *Milton Studies* 13 (1979), pp. 93-94.

[49] David Loewenstein, "The Revenge of the Saint: Radical Religion and Politics in *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Studies* 33 (1996), pp. 174-175.

[50] For quietist readings of *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, see *n.* 34 of Chapter 3 and *n.* 62 of Chapter 4.

[51] Achsah Guibbory, "John Milton: Providential Progress or Cyclical Decay," *The Map of Time:Seventeenth-Century English Literature and Ideas of Pattern in History* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 169-211, pp. 174-77.

Chapter One: Revenge as Just Retribution

Milton's treatment of the theme of revenge in *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes* has been largely overlooked. The question that needs to be addressed is how does the theme of revenge in Milton's major poems help to promote the concept of retributive justice and produce an apotheosis of revenge? As noted in the introduction, Milton's view of revenge, as laid out in his *De Doctrina Christiana*, is that the execution of revenge against the enemies of God and the Church is just retribution and should be lauded as a "religious duty" that is incumbent upon the Christian faithful.[1]

However, it must be noted that the modern critical approach to the theme of revenge has generally been moralistic and can be distinguished by its efforts to separate revenge from the operation of justice.[2] As Susan Jacoby points out, "[justice] is a legitimate concept in the modern code of civilized code of behavior. Vengeance is not."[3] The modern critic who condemns revenge, therefore, would agree with Arthur Schopenhauer's view that revenge rarely brings satisfaction, but torment and anguish brought about by a guilty conscience.[4] Readers who are schooled in the modern aversion to revenge, therefore, would be more likely to recoil in horror from Samson's act of revenge in *Samson Agonistes*. They would find the picture of the indiscriminate massacre of men, women and children repulsive and difficult to reconcile with justice. The modern aversion to revenge partly explains why critics such as Irene Samuel and Joseph Anthony Wittreich Jr. have condemned Samson's revenge as a second fall and proof of

his continuing degeneracy. It also explains why critics such as Lily B. Campbell and Eleanor Prosser, who base their studies of the theme of revenge in Renaissance drama, argue that the act of revenge was condemned during the Renaissance.[5] As I hope to show, however, Renaissance attitudes were not as uniform in their condemnation of revenge as these critics would have us believe. For instance, the condemnation of Samson's revenge does not take into account the fact that, in Milton's biblical source the book of *Judges* and in *Samson Agonistes*, Samson is an instrument of God's vengeance. In order to better understand that revenge in literary texts such as *Samson Agonistes* is used to describe the operation of heavenly justice, we need to know that during the Renaissance, revenge is inseparable from the execution of justice. What is needed, then, is the process of the reader "adjusting his views to Milton's than... having Milton retailored"[6] to satisfy our modern sensibilities about revenge.

In this chapter, then, I will attempt to provide a survey of the attitudes toward revenge expressed by various authors of the Renaissance period in order to establish the link between the act of revenge and the operation of justice. Moreover, I hope to show that there was ample philosophical and theological support for Milton's attempt in his major poems to elevate revenge as an indispensable instrument of divine justice. To do this, I will examine a variety of different sources: sermons, essays, and religious pamphlets of the period. The writers I will examine are Martin Luther (1483-1546), John Calvin (1509-1564), Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), and Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) among others.[7] I will also examine the discussions of revenge by classical authors such as

Aristotle, Plato, Seneca, and Cicero whose works were available during the Renaissance.[8] My decision to include classical authors in my discussion is based on the fact that books such as Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* and Cicero's *Offices* were influential sources of morals and ethics in Renaissance England. According to Curtis B. Watson, "the use of Cicero's *Offices* as the standard textbook on ethics in the Elizabethan grammar schools" was greatly responsible for classical moral concepts becoming "the cultural values of the ruling class of Elizabethan society."[9] Before examining Renaissance attitudes towards revenge, however, I will explore the meaning of the word "revenge" and its usage during that period. This should help in revealing the origin of the negative attitude towards revenge in modern thought.

The Word "Revenge"

During the Renaissance, the word "revenge" was frequently associated with the operation of justice. The twentieth century use of the word revenge, however, has strong negative overtones; so much so that the concept of justice has became separated from the concept of revenge. The instance Susan Jacoby gives in her book *Wild Justice* of the deportation hearing in 1972 of Hermine Ryan, a Nazi officer of the Maidanek death camp, provides a good example of the modern assumption that revenge and justice are mutually exclusive. When Maidanek survivors were asked whether "they were 'out for revenge'; all replied in controlled, dispassionate tones that they only wanted

justice." Jacoby argues that this illustrates "the cultural convention that makes it unacceptable to acknowledge any form of vengeance as a motivation" (Jacoby, 2). Disapproval of revenge can also be discerned from the fact that the definition of "avenge" in the *OED* is painstakingly distinguished from "revenge," which it defines as "malicious retaliation":

> Neither in earlier, nor even in modern, usage is the restriction of *avenge* and its derivatives to the idea of just retribution, as distinguished from the malicious retaliation of *revenge*, absolutely observed, although it largely prevails.
>
> (*OED*, 815)

According to Jacoby, we have become so comfortable with the notion of forgiving and forgetting that "[the] very word 'revenge' has pejorative connotations" (Jacoby, 1, 4). Noting, however, that only the negative meaning of revenge has survived in our current usage, Linda Anderson points out that, during the Elizabethan period, revenge could also mean "punishment" or "chastisement."[10] Ronald Broud corroborates Anderson's observation by pointing out that the word revenge was used during the Renaissance to signify not only personal retaliation, but the operation of justice, including both "legal justice and God's judgments." [11]

The current practice of restricting the meaning of revenge only to its negative aspect can be ascribed to a lengthy historical process of condemnation

by political and religious authorities that stems partly from the Tudor attempt towards centralization of justice. As S.F.C. Milson points out, the medieval judicial system, centered around trial by ordeal, had by the sixteenth century been progressively centralized in the hands of the sovereign.[12] Vendettas by powerful nobles came to be perceived as "a threat to the hard-won authority of monarchs" and became an object of control by civil and religious authorities (Jacoby, 34). Condemnation of revenge thus cannot be understood fully without taking into consideration the state's movement toward consolidation of power.

The modern propensity to condemn revenge can be illustrated by the examples that the *OED* chooses to help define the uses of the word. What is interesting is that, of the twenty-one examples provided for the first two definitions of "revenge" in the *OED*, only one example offers the possibility of a positive meaning. Taken from Kyd's *Murther I. Brewen Wks* (1592) the passage reads, "The blood of the just Abel cried..for vengeance and reuenge on the murderer." For the most part, however, the examples explicitly condemn private revenge as an unlawful or evil act. Norris in *Beatitudes* (1694) says "Private Revenge therefore is universally to be condemned, as utterly unlawful." Shelley in *Hellas* (1821) derides revenge saying "Revenge and Wrong bring forth their kind. The foul cubs like their parents are." In the examples for the second definition, Sidney in the *Arcadia (*1588) associates revenge with irrational conduct: "Fury in his eyes and revenge in his heart." Burkitt *On N.T. Luke vi.29* (1703) writes, "Revenge is a very troublesome and vexatious passion." Cogan in *Passions II.ii.* (1802) is more explicit and emphatic: "Revenge is an insatiable

desire to sacrifice every consideration of pity and humanity to the principle of vindictive justice."

The record of the examples condemning revenge in the *OED* clearly reveals a modern bias against it. This in turn negatively influences our attempt to understand the treatment of the theme of revenge found in Renaissance literature. In his *Studies of Words*, C. S. Lewis points out that historical changes in the meaning of words have an impact on our understanding of literary works:

> If we read an old poem with insufficient regard for change in the overtones, and even the dictionary meanings, of words since its date--if, in fact, we are content with whatever effect the words accidentally produce in our modern minds--then of course we do not read what the old writer intended.[13]

It is important to note that the distinction in *OED* between *revenge* as "malicious retaliation" and *avenge* as "just retribution" does not reflect the common attitude during the Renaissance. Rather, as Philip J. Ayres points out, a large number of revengers in Elizabethan narrative literature who engage in acts of revenge are portrayed not as villains, but as heroic and praiseworthy. [14] Also, an examination of the contexts in which revenge occurs in the drama of the period will reveal instances where justice and revenge are used interchangeably. For example, Hieronimo in *The Spanish Tragedy* laments that his sighs will "Beat at the windows of the brightest heavens,/ Soliciting for justice and revenge." [15]

Also, Constance in *King John* says of Arthur's tears that, "Ay, with these crystal beads heaven shall be bribed/ To do him justice and revenge on you."[16] Such associations between justice and revenge in literary usage during the period should alert us to the strong possibility that revenge was held in a more positive light during the Renaissance. They also suggest that Renaissance opinion of revenge was more flexible than has been generally recognized and that, under certain circumstances, revenge in the Renaissance was deemed justifiable. In the following discussion, I will attempt to highlight these points, beginning with the classical authors because the Renaissance notion of revenge as a socially sanctioned act of justice ultimately derives from classical authors whose works were available and widely taught during the period.

Classical Perspectives on Revenge

A close reading of representative classical authors writing on the subject of revenge reveals a conscientious effort to come to terms with the tension between the impulse towards vengeance carried out in anger, which was generally viewed as unethical, and the necessity of punishment, which was widely acknowledged as a rationally justifiable deterrent. According to Harry Keyishian, however, discussions of revenge by classical authors such as Aristotle are generally marked by a pragmatism that favors revenge, privileging "social and interpersonal concerns over questions of abstract virtue" (Keyishian,

19). This pragmatic attitude towards revenge in Aristotle can be traced back to Plato. Writing on the nature of punishment, Plato notes that,

> he who desires to inflict rational punishment does not retaliate for a past wrong which cannot be undone; he has regard to the future, and is desirous that the man who is punished, and he who sees him punished, may be deterred from doing wrong again.[17]

In advocating the usefulness of retaliation as deterrence, Plato recognizes the social function of revenge. Plato, however, is not alone in recognizing the social aspect of revenge. It also provides the basis of Aristotle's attitude towards revenge. While noting that a "good-tempered" man is generally magnanimous and "is not revengeful, but rather tends to make allowances,"[18] Aristotle argues that even for a good-tempered man, there are special circumstances in which endurance of insults is base. He makes it clear that there are situations in which being "angry at the right things and with the right people" and "as he ought, when he ought" should be praised. He also recognizes that there are times when enduring insults to oneself and one's friends is base and slavish:

> For those who are not angry at the things they should be angry at are thought to be fools, and so are those who are not angry in the right way, at the right time, or with the right persons; for such a man is thought not to feel things nor to be pained by them, and, since he does not get angry, he

> is thought unlikely to defend himself; and to endure being insulted and put up with insult to one's friends is slavish.
>
> (*Ethica*, 9:1125b-1126a).

When faced with unjustifiable injuries, Aristotle argues that one should feel the urge to retaliate against those who injure us in some way appropriate to the injury. One must act in these instances or suffer a loss of reputation or further injuries as well. In such situations, Aristotle urges that,

> It is noble to avenge oneself on one's enemies and not to come to terms with them; for requital is just, and the just is noble; and not to surrender is a sign of courage.[19]

Keyishian comments that "Aristotle's is a social view of revenge" in which he demonstrates his understanding that "how one is perceived affects how one is treated and regarded" (Keyishian, 19).

The pragmatic view of revenge voiced by Plato and Aristotle is echoed by Seneca. Although Seneca, like Aristotle, has definite reservations about anger and vengeance, to the all-important question of whether anger and vengeful impulses should necessitate the toleration of every sort of evil action, the answer nevertheless is an emphatic no. To the question "is not correction sometimes necessary?" he answers, "Of course it is."[20] While a wise man is not by nature vengeful (*De Ira*, I. VI .5), in obvious cases of injustice and injury where means of

"milder sort" (*De Ira*, I. VI. 3) are proven ineffective, Seneca asserts that it is one's duty to avenge a wrong:

> "What then?" you ask; "will the good man not be angry if his father is murdered, his mother outraged before his eyes?" No, he will not be angry, but he will avenge them, will protect them. Why, moreover, are you afraid that filial affection, even without anger, may not prove a sufficiently strong incentive for him? Or you might as well say: "What then? if a good man should see his father or his son under the knife, will he not weep, will he not faint?" But this is the way we see women act whenever they are upset by the slightest suggestion of danger. The good man will perform his duties undisturbed and unafraid; and he will in such a way do all that is worthy of a good man as to do nothing that is unworthy of a man. My father is being murdered--I will defend him; he is slain--*I will avenge him, not because I grieve, but because it is my duty.*
>
> (*De Ira*, I. XII. 1-3, italics mine)

In the administration of retributive justice Seneca advocates that it be carried out with "discretion, not with anger" (*De Ira*, I. VI. 1). Nevertheless, Seneca concedes that in cases of extreme crime, the wise man needs to administer extreme punishments so that "they may prove a warning to all" (*De Ira*, I. VI. 3-4).

Cicero's attitude towards revenge and retribution as shown in his *De Officiis* reflects that of Aristotle and Seneca in its pragmatism. While noting that there is nothing more commendable than "courtesy and forbearance," Cicero is careful to point out that "gentleness of spirit and forbearance are to be commended only with the understanding that *strictness* may be exercised for the good of the state" (*De Officiis*, I. XXV. 88, my emphasis). Thus Cicero maintains that there are times when retribution and punishment is necessary and that "the aggressor should be brought to repent of his wrong-doing, in order that he may not repeat the offense and that others may be deterred from doing wrong" (*De Officiis*, I. XI. 33). Asserting that justice is "the crowning glory of the virtues and on the basis of which men are called 'good men'" (*De Officiis*, I. VII. 20), he argues that he who does not take action to prevent wrong from taking place is equally guilty of an injustice:

> There are...two kinds of injustice—the one, on the part of those who inflict wrong, the other on the part of those who, when they can, do not shield from wrong those upon whom it is being inflicted. For he who, under the influence of anger or some other passion, wrongfully assaults another seems, as it were, to be laying violent hands upon a comrade; but he who does not prevent or oppose wrong, if he can, is just as guilty of wrongs as if he deserted his parents or his friends or his country."
>
> (*De Officiis*, I. VII. 23)

Renaissance Attitudes Toward Revenge

While the attitude towards revenge among classical authors was generally marked by a pragmatism that privileged the act of revenge, the task of determining the Renaissance attitude towards revenge is a more difficult endeavor. This is due to a cacophony of voices during the Renaissance, ranging from absolute condemnation to exhortation of revenge that makes it difficult to reach a consensus on the Renaissance attitude towards revenge.[21] What is significant for the purpose of this study, however, is the fact that there existed a strong tradition during the period that looked favorably upon retribution and revenge as a vehicle of justice. This was particularly true among Protestants divines who looked favorably upon "public" revenge against non-Christians and enemies of God as an extension of God's justice, and therefore considered this form of revenge as "a universally sacred duty."[22] As David N. Beauregard notes, recent scholarship has demonstrated the fact that punishment, correction, and divine retribution were morally acceptable motives for acts of revenge during the period.[23]

It is true that condemnation of revenge can be found in some writings of the period, and this seems to support arguments by Campbell and Prosser that revenge was condemned in Renaissance England. What Campbell and others overlook, however, is that there were conventions and codes in the Renaissance which supported the practice of revenge under certain special circumstances especially when formal channels--providence or the law--proved inadequate.[24]

More importantly, as Campbell herself acknowledges, religious condemnations of revenge during the Renaissance did not necessarily rule out all forms of retaliation. In her discussion of the "threefold aspect of revenge," Campbell distinguishes between "private revenge" and "public revenge," the latter of which she places in the same category as "God's revenge," thereby making it justifiable (Campbell, 290). Religious attitudes towards revenge during the Renaissance were marked by what Susan Jacoby views as paradoxical: rejecting human revenge as usurpation of God's prerogative even as "vengeance thought to serve God's purposes and conducted by his agents" was simultaneously given approval (Jacoby, 67-8). The issue for traditional Christian morality was thus not so much the "rejection of the idea of repaying evil for evil" as the question of "*who* may legitimately dispense it [punishment]" (Wallace, 373). Finally, there were those among the Protestant clergy during the Renaissance who lay special emphasis on the practice of public revenge that it was not only justifiable, but a positive duty, a tendency that William Lamont calls "the need for a coerced virtue."[25]

As already noted, one approach, exemplified by Campbell, uses writings from the period which condemn revenge to support a theory of a strong anti-revenge ethic in the Renaissance audience. According to Campbell, "there was a persistent condemnation of revenge in the ethical teachings of Shakespeare's England, a condemnation which was logically posited and logically defended" (Campbell, 281). Eleanor Prosser likewise argues that there was an "orthodox code of the Elizabethan Establishment" upheld by both Church and State, by

preachers and philosophers who were in "almost unanimous agreement" in their condemnation of private revenge (Prosser, 4,13).[26] According to Prosser, while the act of revenge was a familiar stage practice in the tragedies of the period, it was nevertheless regarded as morally damning.[27]

While critics such as Campbell and Prosser argue that revenge was condemned during the Renaissance, others such as Fredson Bowers, however, attempt to refute Campbell's argument that revenge was condemned during the Renaissance by submitting that it was justifiable to the audience of Shakespeare's England in some special circumstances:

> There can be little question that many an Elizabethan gentleman disregarded without a qualm the ethical and religious opinion of his day which condemned private revenge, and felt obliged by the more powerful code of honor to revenge personally any injury offered him.
> (Bowers, 37)

Indeed, there were those who supported the practice of revenge during the Renaissance in order to uphold one's honor or prevent further harm, a social view of revenge that echoes that of Aristotle in its pragmatism.[28] Niccolo Machiavelli, for instance, whose view of vengeance was based on "pragmatic rather than moralistic considerations" (Jacoby, 97) accuses Christianity in *The Discourses* of encouraging moral sloth by endorsing humility, lowliness and a contempt for worldly objects, arguing that it has,

made the world weak and turned it over as prey to wicked men, who can in security control it, since the generality of men, in order to go to Heaven, think more about enduring injuries than about avenging them." [29]

Machiavelli further underscores the virtue of swift retribution in *The Prince* where he argues that a ruler who practices "wise cruelty" will in the end prove to be more merciful than a weak one who, through too much mercy, invites the evils of rebellion and civil disobedience on his subjects:

A wise prince, then, is not troubled about a reproach for cruelty by which he keeps his subjects united and loyal because, giving a very few examples of cruelty, he is more merciful than those who, through too much mercy, let evils continue, from which result murders or plunder, because the latter commonly harm a whole group, but those executions that come from the prince harm individuals only.[30]

Machiavelli's sentiment is echoed by Francesco Guicciardini, a contemporary of Machievelli and a Florentine statesman. Guicciardini notes in his *Maxims* the connection between revenge and impersonal justice saying,

Revenge does not always stem from hate or from an evil nature. Sometimes it is necessary so that people will learn not to offend you. It is

perfectly all right to avenge yourself though you feel no deep rancor against the person who is the object of your revenge.[31]

In an argument reminiscent of the classical authors, Guicciardini argues that revenge is justifiable when motivated, not by hatred or rancor, but a desire to prevent further injury or loss of honor. The only reservation Guicciardini poses is that the offended party carry out the act of revenge openly to emphasize the impartial nature of the act:

> If you avenge yourself in such a manner that the injured party does not know whence the injury comes, you cannot be said to have done it for any reason but hatred or rancor. It is more honest to do it openly and in such a manner that everyone knows who did the deed. For then you can be said to have acted not so much out of hatred or the desire for revenge, as for the sake of honor. That is to say, you have done it so that others will know you are the sort of person who does not take insults.
> (Guicciardini, 93)

In England, we can find echoes of Machiavelli and Guicciardini in the works of Edward Reynolds, Thomas Hobbes and Sir Francis Bacon. Like the Italian humanists, they approach revenge from a practical point of view. Reynolds, for instance, urges that a victim of injury needs to retaliate to show "that there is in him more courage, power and worth than deserves so to be

neglected." [32] Hobbes, likewise, places a high value on the usefulness of revenge to effect future behavior. While admitting that revenge "glorying in the hurt of another, tending to no end" is "contrary to reason," he nevertheless states that it is a natural law that,

> *in Revenges*, (that is, retribution of Evil for Evil,) *Men look not at the greatnesse of the evill past, but the greatnesse of the good to follow.* Whereby we are forbidden to inflict punishment with any other designe, than for correction of the offender, or direction of others.[33]

Hobbes thus recognizes that revenge is an evil but argues that its usefulness as deterrence justifies it. Even Bacon, who generally opposes the practice of revenge in his essay, "Of Revenge," condones revenge in some instances. For instance, Bacon concedes that revenge is acceptable in situations where the law fails to provide justice: "The most tolerable sort of revenge is for those wrongs which there is no law to remedy: but then let a man take heed the revenge be such as there is no law to punish."[34] In carrying out the act of revenge, however, Bacon, like Guicciardini, urges in *De Augmentis Scientiarum* that it should be carried out openly in order to emphasize the corrective nature of revenge:

> Some, when they take revenge, are desirous the party should know whence it cometh. This is the more generous, for the delight seemeth to

be not so much in doing the hurts as in making the party *repent*. (my italic)[35]

Bacon further states his support of revenge by likening the act of revenge to "a kind of wild justice." Because the law too often fails, Bacon argues that revenge is a useful thing since the threat of revenge can prevent future wrongdoing:

> Revenge is a kind of wild justice. He who requites violence with violence, sins against the law but not against the man. The fear of private revenge is a useful thing; for laws too often sleep.[36]

Not only can revenge be useful as a tool of deterrence, but Bacon goes so far as to extol the virtue of "just revenge," arguing that "whosoever either relieves or avenges by war the calamities and injuries of men" have just and honorable cause (*De Augmentis Scientiarum*, 449).

While Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Reynolds, Hobbes, and Bacon supported the practice of revenge out of pragmatic concerns, Elizabethans and Jacobeans were also aware of religious precedents in which certain forms of retaliation were viewed as "acceptable acts of revenge" (Anderson, 14-15). Karen Robertson argues that modern condemnations of revenge are based on the false presumption that Renaissance attitudes were defined exclusively by homiletic and political injunctions against it. Rather, Robertson notes that there also

"existed powerful theological support for individual participation in the execution of justice."[37]

The foremost authority in support of the practice of revenge, paradoxically, is the Scripture. The Pauline injunction against revenge which the moral philosophers and theologians of the Elizabethan/Jacobean period based their arguments on "cannot be understood as ruling out all retaliations." On the contrary, according to Wallace, "with the exception of pacifists, Christians acknowledged a right to self-defence; indeed the influential doctrine of just war relies on such a right" (Wallace, 365). Indeed, St. Paul does leave the door open for revenge, warning that evil will be avenged by the "minister of God":

> For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil (*Rom.* 13, 4).

The definition of Paul's "the minister of God" was a point of contention during the Renaissance. While the religious and political establishment of the Renaissance took this passage as referring to civil magistrates and governors, some Protestant theologians such as Jeremy Taylor provide a much broader interpretation, suggesting all "godly" or "wise" men have the power to inflict punishment.[38] What is important, however, is the fact that the Scripture does not forbid the act of revenge *per se*. Instead, as Skulsky puts it, "the Christian God isn't so much interested in abolishing revenge as monopolizing it."[39]

The strongest sanction for the personal execution of revenge is found in the Old Testament.[40] In the book of Exodus, for example, the Lord directs Moses that "Thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe" (*Exodus* 21, 24-25).[41] Also, the book of *Deuteronomy* tells us that one who commits deliberate murders must be delivered without pity "into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die" (*Deut.* 19, 12). The explicit command that the murderer to be delivered to an avenger of blood, who is defined as "kinsman (brother, son) of a slain man who, as his redeemer, was duty bound to claim back his life from the slayer by killing him" (*The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, 1, 321), underscores the Scriptural sanction of individual acts of revenge. In fact, the book of *Deuteronomy* emphatically says that revenge is not only justified, but when "the crye of innocent blood" demands it, revenge becomes necessary for the welfare of the nation:

> Then the elders of his citie shall send
> and set him thence, and deliver him into the hands
> of the avenger of blood, that he may die.
> Thine eye shall not spare him, but thou shalt
> put away the crye of innocent blood from
> Israel, that it may go well with thee.
> (*Deut.* 19, 12-13)

That revenge is seen as an instrument of divine justice becomes clear from the admonition that "whosoever pardoneth murder, offendeth against the worde of God." This point is also restated in *Numbers,* where the law of murder and the duties of the revenger of blood are defined: if one slays another in enmity and hatred "The revenger of the blood him selfe shall slay the murtherer: when he meteth him, he shal slay him" (*Numbers* 35, 19). Both passages make it clear that it is the duty of the offended party to execute justice against those responsible for murder. This, then, is the "powerful theological support" for revenge alluded to by Robertson. The Scripture itself, especially the Old Testament, provides ample authority for those advocating the virtue of revenge as instrument of justice.

That revenge was viewed as a legitimate form of justice during the Renaissance is evident from the works of theologians of the period such as William Perkins, William Ames and Jeremy Taylor who saw revenge as necessary to prevent further evil. Perkins, for example, observes that "In some Cases, [a private man] may lawfully defend himselfe by force" against injuries and offences committed against him because the "Gospel doth not abolish the Law of nature, not the positive lawes of all countries."[42] According to Perkins, individual acts of violent retribution are justifiable in situations where "there is no other way to rescue ourselves, than by striking or killing." Also, in cases where there is no recourse to law, the magistrate being absent, Perkins states emphatically that "God puts the sword into the private mans hands" (Perkins, 293). Perkins even advocates that one must approach divine justice with a zeal

saying: "just and lawfull anger must bee kindled and stirred up by good and holy affections, and namely, by desire to maintaine the honour and prayse of God, by the love of justice and vertue, by hatred and detestation of vice, and of all that is evill"(Perkins, 297).

Ames, a Calvinist theologian and a contemporary of Milton, also argues that revenge or vengeance is "in some sort an act of Commutative justice," the responsibility for the execution of which is "sometimes taken for the Act of the judge" and "sometimes for the Act of a private man, whereby he himselfe punisheth his enemy."[43] According to Ames, revenge is morally justified when the individual is motivated by a desire to promote the common good, preserve himself from future injuries, reform the offender, or preserve his "credit" or his honor (Ames, 115). Ames argues that occasions exist when such revenge becomes a necessity:

> Yet there is something like revenge, which by way of Medicine, and as it may be necessary, either to prevent future crimes, or encourage Vertue, may be exercised, though no singular crime proceed. For as wee cut a Veine for the health and safeguard of the heart, so some certaine externall conveniences are to be denyed to some private men, as occasion shall serve, either for the prevention of greater inconveniences, or the procuring of some greater good.
>
> (Ames, 116)

Ames defines such an act of retribution as "public revenge." Only when the individual seeking revenge is motivated by viciousness and malice does revenge degenerate into private revenge:

> Publike Revenge, whether it be exercised by a Magistrate, or sought by a private man, if it proceed out of Envy, Hatred, Thirst of blood, or Cruelty, or if by any other meanes it be tainted in the impulsive, formall or finall cause, doth in that respect become private and unlawfull.
> (Ames, 116)

Similar arguments linking revenge with public justice can be found in another theologian of the period, Jeremy Taylor. Though Taylor advises in *Ductor Dubitantium or The Rule of Conscience* that it is generally best to leave vengeance in the hands of princes because "when a man is in pain and grief he strikes unjustly and unequally" (Taylor, 132), he recognizes that there are times when individual acts of revenge are necessary to implement divine justice. He suggests that the instances of Old Testament figures such as Phineas (*Numbers* xxv.7-15) and Mattathias (1 *Maccabees*, ii. 23-5, *NEB*), who killed those who committed sins against God in order to divert God's anger from their people, exemplify how the personal execution of revenge becomes retributive justice.

Revealing a pragmatism that is reminiscent of the classical authors, Taylor notes that "in some cases God permitted private persons to be executioners" (Taylor, 133) and that Christianity allows for the "punishment of reprehension, of

which every wise and good man may be judge and minister" (Taylor, 134). Indeed, Taylor, quoting Cicero, intimates that revenge is not only allowed, but is sometimes a necessary duty, "[for] 'a wise man is never a private man'" (Taylor 134). Examples of special circumstances in which a private act of revenge is lawful include instances involving "a cause of blood" in which case Taylor argues "the next of kin might kill the manslayer if he overtook him before he took sanctuary" (Taylor, 133). Individuals are also morally justified in executing justice and administering punishment in situations where there is no recourse to law:

> In the sea, and in desert places, where there can be no appeals to judges, every man is executioner of the sentence of the law of nations. Thus we find that Julius Caesar pursued the pirates in the Mediterranean and Adriatic seas; and because the proconsul would not, he gathered a sudden navy and overtook them, and hanged them upon the man-yards of their own vessels. Thus the wild Arabs and Circassian thieves that live in vast places, and under no government, being public enemies of mankind, and under no laws, no treaties or communications of peace, may be killed by every one that is injured and spoiled by them, when he can do it... 'he that kills a thief and a robber with his hand, or by command, or by consent, is innocent;' But this is to be understood of the permission in the law of nature.
>
> (Taylor, 133-134)

Another instance in which the injured person may avenge an injury to himself is when revenge is needed "for the prevention of future mischiefs." Cases that fall under this category include the precept of Justinian, who gave leave to every man to kill those who are bent on plunder, "for in that case there was no staying for solemnities of law" (Taylor, 135). Personal acts of revenge are justified in such instances because, "[this] which the law calls a revenge is but a mere defence, it is a taking the mischief before it be intolerable...for certainly if some punishments are lawful, all necessary defences are much more" (Taylor, 135).

Both Ames and Taylor, then, believed that on occasion, revenge by individuals against evildoers is necessary as an act of retributive justice. However, while Taylor is careful to stipulate that revenge must be undertaken under "unavoidable necessity" (Taylor, 134), and for the purpose of preventing further evil that may occur, there were others who held a more proactive and militant view towards retribution, advocating the "ideal of the godly magistrate."[44] Protestant divines such as Martin Luther, William Perkins, and Thomas Beard, for example, argue that it is a duty of godly society to mete out God's justice against non-Christians and to those who break God's law.[45] As pointed out by Kinney, the idea that "justice was thought to be the responsibility of all citizens" (Kinney, 45) was strong during the period, and this is especially so among Protestants.

Evidence for the belief in the need for "coerced virtue" alluded to by Kinney can be traced back to Martin Luther. In his attempt to address the

question of whether "a Christian too may bear the temporal sword and punish the wicked," Luther divides mankind into two classes, "Christians" and "non-Christians," a distinction that is later echoed by Milton. Among Christians, Luther admonishes that "the sword can have no place." In regard to non-Christians, however, Luther is less charitable, arguing that it is every Christian's duty to bear a sword against them:

> You have now two propositions. One is that the sword can have no place among Christians; therefore, you cannot bear it among Christians or hold it over them, for they do not need it. The question, therefore, must be referred to the other group, the non-Christians, whether you may bear it there in a Christian manner. Here the other proposition applies, that you are under obligation to serve and assist the sword by whatever means you can, with body, goods, honor, and soul.[46]

Thomas Beard, like Luther, believes that the responsibility of executing God's revenge lies with all godly Christians. Drawing an analogy between punishment of the sinner and "applying extreme and desperate medicines, as to desperate diseases," [47] Beard argues that:

> it is necessary that *wee* assay by all means to bring these men (if it be possible) to some modesty and feare of God; which if it cannot bee done by willing and gentle means, force and violence must be used to plucke

them out of the fire of God's wrath, to the end they be not consumed...For even as when a Captaine hath not prevailed by summoning a city to yeeld up it selfe, he by and by placeth his cannon against their walls, to put them in feare; in like sort must *we* bring forth against the proud and high minded men of this world, an army of Gods terrible judgements throwne downe by his mighty and puissant hand on the wicked, more terrible and fearefull than all the roaring or double canons in the World, whereby the most proud are destroyed and consumed even in this life, all their pride and power, how great soever it be, being not able to turne backe the vengeance of God from lighting upon their heads, to their utter destruction and confusion.

(Beard, I. iii. 5)

Such an admonition of one's duty to carry out God's punishment against sinners gives us insight into the period's ideas about individual responsibility and the individual's right to execute divine justice.

Milton on Revenge

Milton's own views on revenge mirror Luther's and Beard's in their militancy. In his discussion of revenge, Milton, like Luther, makes a clear distinction between revenge against the children of God and revenge against God's enemies. In regard to revenge against God's people, Milton makes clear

in *De Doctrina Christiana* that the Scriptural injunction that "thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people." [48] Milton, nevertheless, is quick to point out that it is not forbidden to take revenge against the enemies of God and his holy Church. Milton argues that, "To avenge the church...or to desire that she be avenged of her enemies, is not forbidden" (*Columbia*17, 289). Not only is revenge against the enemies of God allowed but Milton suggests it is sometimes a necessity by arguing that hatred of "the enemies of God or the church" is "in some cases a religious duty" (*Columbia*17, 259) and that "[w]e are even commanded to call down curses publicly on the enemies of God and the church" (*Columbia* 17, 99). [49] Milton's uncompromising and militant approach to godly vengeance can be further found in his *Eikonoklastes* where he demands that the sword of justice be wielded in defense of "Truth" which he equates with "Justice":

> For Truth is properly no more than Contemplation; and her utmost efficiency is but teaching: but justice in her very essence is all strength and activity; and hath a Sword put into her hand, to use against all violence and oppression on the earth.
> (Columbia V, 292)

According to Milton's definition, the "enemies of the church" are all those who are "partly heretics, and partly profane opponents" and he argues that "the destruction of all is portended," (*Columbia*16, 313). Milton, in particular, reserves

a special place in his prose tracts for "Prelaty," and "Tyrants" as "enemies of church" and therefore subjects of godly revenge. In *The Reason of Church-government urg'd against Prelaty*, Milton exhorts the righteous that it is a duty to take revenge against the prelaty when they are found to be destructive to the holy reformed Church:

> Though God for lesse then ten just persons would not spare *Sodom*, yet if you can finde after due search but only one good thing in prelaty, either to religion, or civil government, to king or Parlament, to Prince or people, to law, liberty, wealth or learning, spare her, let her live, let her spread among ye, till with shadow, all your dignities and honours, and all the glory of the land be darken'd and obscurd. But on the contrary if she be found to be malignant, hostile, destructive to all these, as noting can be surer, then *let your severe and impartial doom imitate the divine vengeance*. (*Columbia* III, 278-279, my emphasis)

Milton argues that to be swayed by mercy while the prelaty is an affliction to the Church of Christ is not only a dereliction of duty but a pious presumption that "strive to goe beyond God in mercy" (*Columbia* III, 278).

Also, in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, Milton asserts that to show mercy to Tyrants responsible for the spilling of innocent blood is "the mercy of wicked men" and is tantamount to "hazarding the welfare of a whole Nation"

(*Columbia* V, 3-4). Milton further states that it is "lawfull" to execute revenge against tyrants, saying:

> be he King, or Tyrant, or Emperour, the Sword of Justice is above him; in whose hand soever is found sufficient power to avenge the effusion, and so great a deluge of innocent blood. For if all human power to execute, not accidentally but intendedly, the wrath of God upon evil doers without exception, be of God; then that power, whether ordinary, or if that faile, extraordinary so executing that intent of God, is lawfull, and not to be resisted.
> (*Columbia* V, 7)

Milton further admonishes his readers that, in failing to satisfy the call of justice, they may invite judgment upon themselves, as the voices of the many thousands of Christians, slaughtered by the actions of the tyrant (Charles I), are "crying for vengeance against the living that should have righted them" (*Columbia* V, 20-21).

Milton's view of retributive justice as expressed in his prose tracts not only sanctions but demands godly vengeance against evil. As we have witnessed above in the discussions of revenge by representative contemporaries of Milton, however, Milton does not stand alone in his zeal for public revenge. According to Skulsky, the fact that Milton reserves a special place for Christian vengeance against the enemies of God's people is not peculiarly Miltonic nor even

Protestant, but "the standard Christian line in seventeenth-century moral theology" (Skulsky, 60-61).

As I hope to show in the following chapters, nevertheless, what is uniquely Miltonic is the poet's treatment of the theme of revenge in his major poetical works. Tragedies of the period such as *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *Othello* project a critique of revenge by accentuating the individualistic and diabolical aspects of revengers such as Vindice and Iago. Milton, however, incorporates the concept of retributive justice in his major poems, thereby elevating revenge into an instrument of divine justice, a means whereby mankind may redeem itself from sin and bondage. As Desmond M. Hamlet points out, justice in *Paradise Lost* "must be understood as an indispensable instrument of the divine creative purpose," so that the punishment of Adam and Eve does not remain simply a matter of punishment for the Fall but part of the process of their regeneration (Hamlet 1975, 272-3). Writing after the collapse of the Puritan revolution, Milton was also concerned in his three major poems about the infiltration of immoral and ungodly motives behind acts of revenge. As noted by D. M. Rosenberg, "heroism is illusory without moral virtue."[50] Rosenberg, thus, argues that a conception of heroic action that indulges in its ferocity, lust for revenge, and egotistic desire for glory is satanic. What is wanted is Christian heroic virtue defined in terms of "the ideals of obedience, sanctity, and martyrdom" (Rosenberg, 188). Milton's depiction of the ethical superiority of patient fortitude over physical violence as means of godly vengeance in the poems, however, is not an invalidation of revenge. Rather, it sanctions the violence of vengeance by

reconciling it with a purity of motive, making it impersonal and public. In this way, I will argue, Milton creates an apotheosis of revenge that is unique and unparalleled in English literature.

Notes

[1] See note 17, p.22.

[2] I must acknowledge that any attempt to designate a particular period such as the modern as being anti-revenge is, at best, an imprecise generalization. No time period is fully anti or pro revenge. However, I feel obliged to make this distinction here because modern criticism has generally been dominated by critics such as Fredson Bowers, Irving Ribner and Eleanor Prosser who, following the footsteps of Campbell, have argued that revenge was condemned during the Renaissance, primarily on religious grounds. It is only more recently that critics such as Susan Jacoby, Gerry Wallace, and Karen Robertson have attempted to counter the earlier view by pointing out that the act of revenge was not only justified during the Renaissance but frequently associated with the operation of justice.

[3] Susan Jacoby, *Wild Justice: The Evolution of Revenge* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983), p.1.

[4] A. Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena* vol 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), pp.588-589. Quoted in Gerry Wallace, "Wild Justice," *Philosophy* 70 (1995), p. 370.

[5] Campbell, Lily B., "Theories of Revenge in Renaissance England," *Modern Philology* 28 (1931): 281-296; Eleanor Prosser, *Hamlet nd Revenge*, 2nd ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971). See also Charles and Elaine Hallett, "Introduction," *The Revenger's Madness: A Study of Revenge Tragedy Motifs* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 3-14.

[6] John E. Seaman, *The Moral Paradox of "Paradise Lost"* (The Hague, 1971), p.10. Quoted in Desmond M. Hamlet, "Recalcitrance, Damnation and the Justice of God in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 8 (1975), 267-291, p.269.

[7] Other authors that will be discussed in relation to the theme of revenge are William Perkins (1558-1602), William Ames(1576-1633), Thomas Beard (d.1632), Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540), Edward Reynolds (1599-1676), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), and Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626).

[8] Guillaume Du Vair for example notes that most of the principal works of the ancient Stoics such as Seneca and others were available in translation in the

beginning of the seventeenth century England. *The Moral Philosophie of the Stoicks*, trans. Thomas James, ed. Rudolf Kirk (New Brunswick, NJ, 1951), p.3.

[9] Curtis B. Watson, *Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honor* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1960), p. 65-66.

[10] Linda Anderson, *A Kind of Wild Justice: Revenge in Shakespeare's Comedies* (Newark, N.J.: University of Delaware Press, 1987), p.14.

[11] Ronald Broude, "Revenge and Revenge Tragedy in Renaissance England," *Renaissance Quarterly* 28 (1975), 39-40. Quoted in Linda Anderson, p.14.

[12] S.F.C. Milson, *Historical Foundation of the Common Law* (London, 1969), pp.3-22. Quoted by Catherine Belsey, "Tragedy, Justice and the Subject," in *1642: Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century* (Colchester: University of Essex, 1981), pp.170-171.

[13] C.S Lewis, *Studies in Words* (Cambridge: University Press, 1960), p.3.

[14] Philip J. Ayres, "Degrees of Heresy: Justified Revenge and Elizabethan Narratives," *Studies in Philology* 69 (1972): 461-474, p.465.

[15] Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, in *Four Revenge Tragedies*, ed. Katharine Eisaman Maus et.al (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3.7.13-14.

[16] William Shakespeare, *King John*, in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1992), 2.1.171-172.

[17] Plato, *Protagoras*, 324. In *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, 2 vols. New York: Random House, 1937.

[18] Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, trans. W.D. Ross, in *The Works of Aristotle*, ed W.D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 9:1125b. All quotations from *Ethica* are from this edition and further citations appear parenthetically

[19] Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, trans. Rhys Roberts, in *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. W.D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 11:1367a. Quoted in Keyishian, p. 19.

[20] All quotations from Seneca are from *Seneca Moral Essays*, trans. John W. Basore, 3 vols, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1958), *De Ira*, Book I. VI. 6. Further citations appear parenthetically.

[21] According to Broud (1975), Elizabethan revenge plays reflect "a considerable range" of atttitudes toward revenge, p.56. Quoted in Anderson, p.16.

[22] Fredson Thayer Bowers. *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), p.39.

[23] David N. Beauregard, O.M.V., *Virtue's Own Feature: Shakespeare and the Virtue Ethics Tradition* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995), p.104.

[24] Elinor Bevan argues that "dispasionate revenge," as part of class code, was acceptable. In "Revenge, Forgiveness, and the Gentleman," *Review of English Literature* 8, no.3: 55-69, 55. See also Broud (1975), 38-58; Philip J. Ayers, "Degrees of Heresy: Justified Revenge and Elizabethan Narratives," *Studies in Philology* 69 (1972): 461-74; John Sibly, "The Duty of Revenge in Tudor and Stuart Drama," *Review of English Literature* 8 (1967), 46-54.

[25] William Lamont, *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion, 1603-60* (London: St. Martins Press, 1969), p.172. Quoted in Kinney, p.34.

[26] The basis for the condemnation of revenge can be traced to the biblical injunction of St. Paul's *Epistle* to the Romans forbidding revenge: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men...Dearly beloved avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay saith the Lord" (*Rom.* 12:17-9). Not surprisingly, condemnation of private revenge during the Renaissance all invariably invoke the authority of Scripture on the subject. For example, the injunctions against private revenge by the anonymous writer of *Certain Sermons and Homilies 1547-1571* ed. Ronald B. Bond (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), is based upon Pauline admonitions against taking revenge: "We rede in the boke of Deuteronomy that al punishement perteineth to God by this sentence: vengeaunce is mine, and I will reward. But this sentence we must understand to pertein also unto the magistrates, which do exercise Gods roume in judgement and punishing by good and godly lawes here in yearth. And the places of Scripture whiche seme to remove from emong all Christian men judgement, punishment or kyllyng ought to be understand that no man, of his awne private aucthoritie, may be judge over other, may punish, or may kil. But we must refer al judgement to God, to kynges and rulers, and judges under them, which be Gods officers, to execute justice and by plain wordes of Scripture have their aucthorite and use of the swourd graunted from God, as we are taught by S. Paule" (163); John Calvin also warns us in his *Commentaries* vol.12 ed. Calvin Translation Society (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1948) that anyone taking revenge does so at the risk of ursuping the office of God saying:

"Anyone who jumps at vengeance intrudes into what belongs to God, and does not allow God to perform His own office. It is with reference to this that Paul says, 'Give place to Wrath' (*Rom.*12.19), meaning that the way is closed up against God, so that He does not Himself judge, when we anticipate Him. He confirms what he had said by the testimony of Moses, 'Vengeance is mine'(*Deut.*32.35)" (277).

[27] Eleanor Prosser argues that the moral and religious implications against revenge were clear to the original audience of Renaissance drama and that only the orthodox view of the Church received sanction on the stage saying: "We have not recognized the familiar ethical and religious foundations upon which the plays were constructed because it is buried too deep. I would agree...that the ethical question of revenge is rarely central in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, but is not central, I submit, precisely because it was not a "question" to the average playwright or to most of his audience. The issue was settled. Revenge was a sin against God, a defiance of the State, a cancer that could destroy mind, body, and soul--and that was that...A character needed only to say "Vindicta mihi" (and) the audience was to apply its familiar code of judgment. *Hamlet and Revenge*, 2nd ed.(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), p. 72.

[28] As discussed above, Aristotle demonstrates a pragmatic approach to the question of revenge by favoring revenge for the sake of honor and preventing further harm.

[29] Niccolo Machiavelli, *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others*, trans. Allan H. Gilbert (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1965), I: 331. Quoted in Keyishian, p.20.

[30] Ibid. pp.61-62.

[31] Francesco Guicciardini, *Maxims and Reflections of a Renaissance Statesman*. Trans. Mario Domandi (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 60. Quoted in Keyishian , p.20.

[32] Edward Reynolds, *A Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man* (1640), facsimile (Gainesville, FL: Scholars Facsimiles & Reprints, 1971), p.318. Quoted in Keyishian, p.20.

[33] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.106.

[34] Sir Francis Bacon, "Of Revenge," *Francis Bacon: Essays*, ed. Michaell J. Hawkins (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1992). All quotations from Bacon's *Essays* are from this edition.

[35] Francis Bacon, *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, p.555. Quoted in Keyishian, p.21.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Karen Robertson, "Chastity and Justice in *The Revenger's Tragedy*," in *Sexuality and Politics in Renaissance Drama*, Carole Levin and Karen Robertson eds. (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd., 1991), pp.215-216.

[38] See Jeremy Taylor, *Ductor Dubitantium or The Rule of Conscience* (London, 1660). Rpt in *The Whole Works of the Right Rev. Jeremy Taylor, D.D.*, 10 vols. Alexander Taylor ed. (London: 1883), vol.10, p.133-5. All quotations from Taylor are from this edition and will be indicated parenthetically.

[39] Harold Skulsky, *Justice in the Dock: Milton's Experimental Tragedy* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995), p.59.

[40] As Hill points out, "no scholar ransacking the Bible as the best guide to Christian conduct could fail to notice passages in the Old Testament justifying hatred of God's enemies" (Hill, 1984, 315).

[41] The Mosaic code, based on the belief that truest justice is one which precisely requite the original injury or loss, can be traced back to the Code of Hammurabi.

[42] William Perkins, *The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience* (London, 1651), p.293. All quotations from Perkins are from this edition and will be indicated in parenthesis.

[43] Willam Ames, *Conscience with the power and cases Thereof divided into Five bookes* (London: 1643), p.114. Some spelling modernized. All further quotations from Ames will be indicated parenthetically.

[44] Jane Meredith Kinney, *"To God's glory, and our owne reformation": The cultural work of John Rynolds' "The Triumphs of Gods Revenge."* (Unpublished Dissertation: Duke University, 1992), p.34. Further quotations from Kinney will be indicated parenthetically.

[45] Though William Tyndale limits the agents of retribution to civil magistrates, he nevertheless reflects the militant attitude of the Renaissance towards revenge by arguing that punishment of evil deeds is not only justifiable, but a sacred duty:

"Christ here intended not to disannual the temporal regiment, and to forbid rulers to punish evil doers." Moreover, he states that "where thou art no private man, but a person in respect of other, thou not only mayest, but also must,and art bound under pain of damnation to execute thine office." *Expositions and Notes on Sundry Portions of the Holy Scriptures*, Henry Walter ed. (Cambridge, 1849), p.59, 61. Quoted in Frye, 30.

[46] Martin Luther, "*Temporal Authority: To what Extent it Should be Obeyed,1523*," trans. J.J.Schindel in *Luther's Works*, "*The Christian in Society*," Walther I. Brandt ed. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), vol. 45, 95.

[47] Thomas Beard, *The Theatre of Gods Judgements* (London, 1597), Book I, Chapter iii., p.4. Spelling partly modernized. Further quotes will be indicated in parenthesis.

[48] *Deut.* xxxii.35. Quoted in "*De Doctrina Christiana*," *Columbia*, Vol.17, p.289. Also quoted by Milton in connection with evidence of Scriptural injuction against revenge on God's people; *Psal.* xciv.I, *Prov.*xx.22, *Rom.*xii.19, *I Pet.*iii.8,9.

[49] Austin Woolrych argues that Milton's view that the slaughter of the Catholic Irish who he saw as "a mixt Rabble, part Papist, part Fugitives, and part Savages" (*Observations upon the Articles of Peace* (1649), *CPW* III, p.312) is proper work for the Godly Englishmen was a common view of the period. Austin Woolrych, "Milton and Cromwell: 'A Short But Scandalous Night of Interruption?'" Ed. Lieb and Shawcross, *Achievements of the Left Hand: Essays on the Prose of John Milton* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1974), p. 188.

[50] D. M. Rosenberg, *Oaten Reeds and Trumpets: Pastoral and Epic in Virgil, Spenser, and Milton* (Lewisburg, N.J.: Bucknell University Press, 1981), p. 190.

Chapter Two: "unconquerable will,/ And study of revenge": Revenge and the Problem of Evil in *Paradise Lost*

While there very little scholarship dealing with the subject of revenge in *Paradise Lost*, this dearth of criticism belies the importance of revenge to the overall meaning of the poem. The importance of the theme of revenge in *Paradise Lost* is underscored by the fact that Milton refers to revenge twenty-one times compared to just four in *Samson Agonistes*, a work more recognized for its treatment of revenge theme. Its importance has also been suggested by Barbara Kiefer Lewalski who indicates the need to look at Elizabethan revenge tragedy as one of the literary concepts and models behind Milton's poem. According to Lewalski, Satan takes on the role of a revenge hero when he appeals to "Honor and Empire with revenge enlarg'd" as justification for his villainy (Lewalski 1985, 12-13, 63-64). Calling Satan a "pathological vindictive character," Marvin Daniels similarly stresses the need to understand revenge as the underlying motivation behind Satan's vengeful rebellion against God.[1]

Paradise Lost is, then, a story of revenge, Satan's egoistic and individualistic revenge against God and humanity for his defeat and expulsion from Heaven. From his very first introduction of Satan in Book I, Milton highlights Satan's stubborn attachment to pride, hate and revenge. In Book I we find Satan and his apostate angels awakening in Hell and beginning to realize the profound consequences associated with their rebellion. They have been hurled down from Heaven to the fiery pit of Hell, deprived of all hope, all joy, and even all light.

The "darkness visible" of Hell serves only to reveal "sights of woe,/ Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace/ And rest can never dwell, hope never comes/ That comes to all" (*PL*, I. 63-67). Yet, as the narrator tells us, though Satan is "in pain" and "racked with deep despair" (*PL*, I. 125-26) as he bemoans the changes brought about by his fall from Heaven, his thoughts, instead of seeking God's mercy and forgiveness, are marked by an appetite for revenge. Indeed, the first image we have of Satan in *Paradise Lost* is as a fallen angel rising from Hell's desolate landscape ranting against God with words of "revenge" and "immortal hate":

> What though the field be lost?
> All is not lost; the unconquerable will,
> And study of revenge, immortal hate,
> And courage never to submit or yield:
> And what is else not to be overcome?
> (*PL*, I. 105-109)

The emphasis during this scene on Satan's ranting, immortal hate and rashness is symptomatic of not only of his obduracy but also highlights the dubious nature of his revenge. As P. A. Samuels points out, the passions of wrath, ranting and rashness such as Satan engages in are indicative of the impurities of the conventional revenge tradition.[2] Milton's depiction of Satan's disdain and hatred, therefore, calls our attention to the private and personal

nature of Satan's revenge that makes it so suspect. Instead of allowing us to identify with Satan, therefore, the image of an arrogant, abrasive and prideful revenger undermines his heroic pretensions, leading us to condemn his destructive impulses. Even while Satan reluctantly acknowledges God's omnipotence, he refuses to "repent or change." He lets his pride get in the way of "[suing] for grace/ With suppliant knee" which he considers "an ignominy and shame beneath/ This downfall" (*PL*, I. 96, 111-16). In the face of defeat and banishment from heaven, Satan resolves to avenge his defeat, "[vaunting] aloud" that he will "wage by force or guile eternal war/ Irreconcilable, to our grand foe" (*PL*, I. 126, 121-22). Proceeding thus from despair and self-pity to anger and the need for revenge, Satan makes a desperate decision that he will attempt to perpetuate a never-ending war with God by carrying rebellion and damnation from Hell to Earth, and seducing mankind to revolt against God. This decision is one of a series of fateful choices Satan makes during several key episodes in *Paradise Lost* which take him ever deeper into sin and ultimately seals his own damnation.

Defeated in battle, Satan's overriding passion is his hatred of God and determination to get back at God at any cost. This much is evident from his own "eyes/ That sparkling blazed" (*PL*, I. 193-94) that betray the fire and rage burning within him. We are told that under his brows sat "dauntless courage, and considerate pride/ Waiting revenge" (*PL*. I. 603-04). Thus, when he addresses his troops for the first time after the fall, we see Satan focusing on the alleged injuries that he and his comrades have been forced to suffer when God "still his

strength concealed" and "tempted our attempt, and wrought our fall" (*PL*, I. 641-42). By attempting to shift the blame for their own rebellion and fall onto God by claiming that God was the instigator who brought about their fall, Satan stresses their need to exact revenge upon the enemy. It is in the context of revenge, therefore, that Satan presents revenge as an alternative course of action to his followers in his speech when he suggests they "work in close design, by fraud or guile" (*PL*, I. 646) to resume their war with Heaven:

> There went a fame in heaven that [God] ere long
> Intended to create, and there plant
> A generation, whom his choice regard
> Should favour equal to the sons of heaven:
> Thither, if but to pry, shall be perhaps
> Our first eruption, thither or elsewhere:
> For this infernal pit shall never hold
> Celestial spirits in bondage, nor the abyss
> Long under darkness cover. But these thoughts
> Full counsel must mature: peace is despaired,
> For who can think submission? War then, war
> Open or understood must be resolved.
> (*PL*, I. 651-62)

Satan's plan of revenge, first mentioned here in his speech to his followers is deliberated at greater length at the "great consult" (*PL*, I. 798) in Pandemonium. During the consult called by Satan to debate their future course of action, after Moloch, Belial, and Mammon advance their proposals—open war, passive endurance, or creation of a "nether Empire" (*PL*, II.296) in hell--Beelzebub takes the floor to press Satan's plan of revenge towards its insidious conclusion. Beelzebub has heard of a newly created world, earth, and he proposes its extermination or either the expulsion or the seduction of the "new race called Man" (*PL*, II. 348):

> By sudden onset, either with hell fire
> To waste his whole creation, or possess
> All as our own, and drive as we were driven,
> The puny habitants, or if not drive,
> Seduce them to our party, that their God
> May prove their foe, and repenting hand
> Abolish his own works. This would surpass
> Common revenge,
> (*PL*, II. 364-371)

Beelzebub's plan (devised by Satan) is to gain a measure of revenge that comes from frustrating the plans of God. His hope is that by seducing mankind, God in his fury might be prompted to destroy his creation, thus, giving the fallen angels

the revenge they crave. Having gained the assent of the assembly, Beelzebub sets the stage for Satan, who seizes and expands upon the opportunity by volunteering for this "perilous attempt" in the name of "[d]eliverance" (*PL*, II. 420, 465).

If the inclusion of Moloch, Belial and Mammon in the discussion reveals Satan's mastery of parliamentary politics, what stands out in the end is Satan's impetus towards revenge which acts as a testimony to his obduracy. As elaborated upon by Beelzebub, the scope of action open to them is severely limited. They can neither pursue Moloch's plan to seek "[d]esperate revenge" in "open war" (*PL*, II. 107, 51) for their strength is already found wanting against God. Nor is Belial's and Mammon's plan to make a Heaven of Hell feasible for as Beelzebub tells them, "[t]his place [is] our dungeon, not our safe retreat" (*PL*, II. 317). It is a proof of Satan's outrageous villainy, therefore, that, rather than repenting and seeking forgiveness, he persists in plotting to achieve what he deems to be some small amount of revenge by denying God the pleasure he takes in his latest creation. Satan's argument of revenge presented with stirring words of courage and honor, however, cannot hide the fact that his revenge springs from his hatred and pride rather than from concern for public good. To instigate war and revenge against God and his creation that had done him no wrong in the name of deliverance, therefore, is reprehensible and to be rejected.

In Milton's portrayal of Satan's unholy revenge in *Paradise Lost*, which is in diametrical opposition to the examples of redemptive vengeance Milton later

depicts in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, two things stand out. First is the fact that Milton is at pains to emphasize that Satan is motivated foremost by his own pride and hatred in his rash decision to seek revenge against God. This emphasis on the passions of pride, hatred, and revenge, the traditional impurities of the revenge tradition alluded to by P. A. Samuels, not only draws our attention to the apparent similarities between him and the villain revenger of Elizabethan drama but is central to Milton's tragic purpose. As Richard S. Ide points out, "in *Paradise Lost*...Satan strikes the pose of villain revenger when setting out to deceive man" (Ide 1983, 122). Like Iago, an example of the "revengeful villain hero" (Boyer, 119), Satan is a willful egoist who pursues his private revenge with malice and a single-minded purposefulness. Milton's depiction of the vice and passions associated with individualistic and destructive villains of Elizabethan revenge tragedy thus serves as a moral example in the poem; they are things that need to be purged as he warns his "fit audience...though few" (*PL*, VII. 31) of the self-destructive nature of violent anger and hatred, that they are ugly and wicked. In formulating his idea of tragedy, therefore, Milton follows the main tenets of Aristotle who in his *Poetics* defines catharsis as a tragic purpose.[3] According to Milton, "the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all other poems: therefore said by Aristotle to be of power by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such-like passions.[4] In short, the purpose of tragedy as Milton sees it is to purge from his audience-reader such-like passions as relates to Satan's revenge: envy, hatred, malice, pride and arrogance. As Christopher Hill points out, writing after

the failure of the Puritan Revolution, Milton was captivated with the problem of moral failure that led to the failure of the revolution.[5] Thus, though Milton goes on to dramatize the patient examples of the Son and Samson in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* as paradigms of public and redemptive vengeance, Milton begins his epic cycle by portraying in *Paradise Lost* the willful and destructive nature of Satan's hate-filled revenge in order to bring about a purgation of such passions in his audience.[6]

The second noteworthy element of Satan's revenge is the emphasis on his free will. As I hope to show in the following, there is a clear interconnection between Satan's revenge and his free will that serves Milton's purpose of dramatizing the problem of evil and "justify[ing] the ways of God to men" (*PL*, I. 26). One of the concerns for Milton in writing *Paradise Lost* is to resolve the question whether Satan is evil by nature or as the result of free choice. Because the God of the Bible is both omniscient and omnipotent, evil is a complex problem for Milton. In attempting to write the story of humanity's fall and redemption, Milton must reconcile the omnipotence of God with the existence of evil. He must answer two equally difficult questions: Is God responsible for the existence of evil or does evil exist outside of God? Since Milton as a Christian poet cannot accept the Zoroastrian concept of the dualism of Good and Evil, he must formulate an alternative explanation of evil and whence it derives. Milton attempts to provide answers to these questions by blaming the evil of Satan's revenge not on his nature, but on negative choices.[7] As Harold P. Maltz points out, *Paradise Lost* "exonerates God from responsibility for Lucifer's actions" by

pointing to the "principle of freewill."[8] Central then to Milton's efforts to defend the ways of God is to explain evil in terms of the doctrine of free will.[9] According to Diane Kelsey McColley, "the success of [Milton's] efforts to 'justifie the wayes of God to men' depends on the even scale of his characterization of Adam and Eve as 'Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall'."[10] While McColley confines her discussion to the example of Adam and Eve, her argument that the success of *Paradise Lost* depends on relating liberty with responsibility is equally applicable to understanding Satan's revenge in its truly evil perspective.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton goes out of his way to underscore the fact that Satan is in no way constrained or predisposed by his nature, which originally is created good, to seek the path of recrimination and ungodly revenge.[11] This is what makes his revenge so evil. The full ethical implication of this decision by Satan to pursue revenge becomes apparent when we have knowledge of who Satan once was and why he rebelled. According to Raphael Satan was "of the first,/ If not the first archangel, great in power,/ In favour and pre-eminence" (*PL*, V. 659-661). However, because of envy, hate, and self-love, Satan could not accept God's exaltation of the Son (*PL*, V. 601-615), leading him to initiate his rash rebellion against God:

> With envy against the Son of God, that day
> Honoured by his great Father, and proclaimed
> Messiah King anointed, could not bear
> Through pride that sight, and thought himself

impaired.

Deep malice thence conceiving and disdain...

(*PL*, V. 658-666)

The elevation of the Son, then, comprises the central issue in Satan's prideful rebellion, a rebellion that is founded on self-love. This penchant for self-love by Satan is described by Regina Schwartz in terms of narcissism.[12]

That Milton portrays self-love as the root-cause of Satan's rebellion is hardly surprising, considering that Christian morality places stern injunctions against the type of self-love evinced by Satan in *Paradise Lost*. Thomas Wright, a sixteenth century theologian warns against the dangers of self-love by admonishing that while "the love of God buildeth the city of the predestinate, self-love [buildeth] the city of the reprobate."[13] In rejecting the Father's decree as "new Laws ...imposed" (*PL*, V. 679) and exploiting the topic of freedom and equality to justify his revolt (*PL*, V. 787-802), Satan abuses his privilege of free will in order to indulge in his own sense of self-worth. However, as Satan's subsequent descent into hell, pursuit of revenge, and progressive degeneration indicates, Milton is at pains to demonstrate in *Paradise Lost* that "choices have their consequences" (Samuel 1968, 245).[14] Because of his obdurate revenge, Satan, an angel first in "favour and pre-eminence" becomes a "toad" and a "snake."[15] This is why the story of Satan's revenge is so terrifying. By placing his self-love before the will of God, Satan persists in his willful pursuit of revenge until he dooms himself to eternal damnation and becomes the very embodiment

of evil. The responsibility for evil therefore rests with Satan and his voluntary act of distancing himself from the will of God. This idea that evil derives from negative choices proves important for Milton in writing *Paradise Lost*. If Milton can demonstrate that the evil of Satan's revenge is a result of Satan's negative choice, then, Milton will succeed in his attempt to "assert eternal providence,/ And justify the ways of God to men."

The story of Satan's obdurate revenge continues in *Paradise Lost* when, following the contrived decision to pursue revenge as their course of action in the "great consult," Satan makes his solitary departure from Hell. Before he completes his journey to Eden and executes his revenge, however, he is faced on several occasions with vivid and persistent reminders of God's benevolence and mercy that provide him with opportunities to repent. One such reminder is the gate of heaven that Satan encounters after struggling across Chaos, offering him his first of several opportunities to repent:

> The stairs were such as whereon Jacob saw
> Angels ascending and descending, bands
> Of guardians bright, when he from Esau fled
> To Padan-Aram in the field of Luz,
> Dreaming by night under the open sky,
> And waking cried, *This is the gate of heaven.*
> (*PL*, III. 510-515)

The allusion to the Jacob's ladder illuminates the opportunity for repentance open to Satan at this point. Noting that while "the relevance of the simile to Satan's situation is usually missed," Alastair Fowler argues that "Satan like Jacob...is at a parting of ways where he could still repent" (Fowler, 173, iii 510-15 *n*). Keith W. F. Stavely likewise interprets the passage as a demonstration of God's benevolence and that "the archfiend himself is being granted the opportunity to choose repentance and faith."[16] He argues that the significance of this passage lies in the drama of real choice Milton portrays in this episode:

> If the passage depicts an escape from satanic intrigues and rages into the clear air of God's open sky, this is so exhilaratingly accomplished that we feel at least momentarily that all things are possible, and even the archfiend might wake up and cry, 'This is the gate of heaven.' ...In other words, God continues to extend the most crucial spiritual invitation to Satan despite Satan's previous rejection and despising.
> (Stavely, 131)

While some critics such as William Kerrigan find the following lines, "[t]he stairs were then let down, whether to dare/ The fiend by easy ascent, or aggravate/ His sad exclusion from the doors of bliss" (*PL*, III. 523-525), not only troubling, but proof that Satan is forever damned at this point,[17] the significance of the moment is hard to miss. As the narrator points out, this is a special

occasion. The stairs need not have been lowered, nor are they always so displayed: "Each stair mysteriously was meant, nor stood/ There always, but drawn up to Heaven sometimes/ Viewless (*PL*, III. 516-518). It is a moment punctuated by a possibility that all things, including redemption, are possible if Satan would but seize the moment. Just as Jacob escaped into God's mercy, so too could Satan likewise (Stavely, 132) if he would but repent. Instead of being a sadistic and unwarranted taunting of Satan, therefore, the incident is further proof of God's desire to bring good out of evil. The story of Satan in *Paradise Lost*, however, is about repeated missed opportunities for repentance and their consequences. Looking down from the "lower stair" (*PL*, III.540) of Heaven's gate, Satan finds the new world and is with "Such wonder seized...but much more envy seized" (*PL*, III.552, 553). In another moment of decision, Satan, instead of climbing up the stairs back to God, turns his back upon heaven's proffered grace in a downward spiral. Because of his envy, he cannot fall on his knees in a leap of faith and throw himself at God's mercy. The contrasting images between the biblical story of Jacob who looks up to the sight of heaven's gate with repentance and Satan who becomes a prey to his envy by looking downward on the lower stair is pregnant with symbolism. By underscoring the immobilizing nature of hatred, pride and envy that prevents Satan from relenting, prompting him ever further downward from God, Milton underscores Satan's evil and compels us to reject the vices and passions that characterize his egotistic and destructive revenge.

With his decision not to repent, Satan immediately flings himself "without longer pause/ Down right into the world's first region" in "flight precipitant" (*PL*, III. 561-563) past "[t]he golden sun" which "in splendor likest heaven/ Allured his eye" (*PL*, III. 572-573) and lands on Earth, on Mt. Niphates. Here, despite his previous rejection of God's grace, with the sun on one side and Eden on the other, Satan still finds ample evidence of God's benign presence all around him, urging voicelessly for his repentance:

> Sometimes towards Eden which now in his view
> Lay pleasant, his grieved look fixes sad,
> Sometimes towards heaven and the full-blazing sun,
> Which now sat high in his meridian tower:
> (*PL*, IV. 27-30)

The beauty of God's creation reminds Satan not only of his lost heaven but also of God, so that despite "his dire attempt (pursuit of revenge)" that "boils in his tumultuous breast" (*PL*, IV. 15-16), he is momentarily stopped from his gruesome task by his conscience. We are told that "horror and doubt distract/ His troubled thoughts" as "now conscience wakes despair/ That slumbered, wakes the bitter memory/ Of what he was, what is, and what must be" (*PL*, IV. 18-19, 23-25). As noted by Louis L. Martz, the fact that Satan still possesses the power of conscience is significant. Explicating that conscience is "the umpire that God will place within man's breast after the Fall, as a divinely given guide

that may lead man from light to light toward his salvation," Martz indicates that its presence in Satan denotes the possibility of grace for him:

> ...[Milton] reveals a Satan who still seems to possess the power of choice,...It even seems to Satan that a way out might still remain in repentance:...Milton is boldly raising here another of his ultimate questions: would not a just God prefer to see Satan repent, and give him the chance to repent?...The effect of Satan's whole soliloquy at the outset of book 4 is this: Satan, like any mortal man, seals his own doom by making a deliberate choice of evil. Milton leaves us with the feeling that Satan somehow has the power, if he had only used it, to make a better choice.[18]

The gravity of this occasion is not lost on Satan himself as, in a rare moment of honesty and introspection, he responds by truthfully if reluctantly admitting his guilt and loss:

> O sun...how I hate thy beams
> That bring to my remembrance from what state
> I fell, how glorious once above thy sphere;
> Till pride and worse ambition threw me down
> Warring in heaven against heaven's matchless king:
> Ah wherefore! He deserved no such return

From me, whom he created what I was
In that bright eminence, and with his good
Upbraided none; nor was his service hard.
(*PL*, IV. 37-45)

The "conviction of sin," that Satan displays here, the first of four steps of regeneration outlined in *De Doctrina Christiana*,[19] presents a golden opportunity for repentance if he would but act upon this knowledge and seek forgiveness.[20] At this moment, Satan's mood of self-recrimination should lead him back from the path of revenge to the path of contrition and true repentance. Infact, Satan does contemplate repentance, crying out to himself to "at last relent" (*PL*, IV. 79). That he does consider the possibility of repentance shows that some of Satan remains potentially redeemable. For an instant, everything hangs in the balance. Despite his previous acts of disobedience, he might actually turn back from his foolish pursuit of revenge. According to Stavely, "the psychic struggle" Satan undergoes at this point "feels as authentic as Adam's similar struggle in Book X" (Stavely,135). Satan, however, unlike Adam and Eve who repent of their sin, in a display of continuing degradation, again chooses to reject this occasion for repentance:

O then at last relent: is there no place
Left for repentance, none for pardon left?
None left but by submission; and that word

Disdain forbids me, and my dread of shame
Among the spirits beneath, whom I seduced
With other promises and other vaunts
Than to submit, boasting I could subdue
The omnipotent.
(*PL*, IV. 79-86)

As the sequence of Satan's rhetorical question and answer reveals unequivocally, opportunity yet remains for his repentance and pardon if only he submits himself to God. Just as his pride led to him to his original rebellion, however, it again gets in the way of his repentance. Despite the inner torments his foolish vanity has brought him (*PL*, IV. 86-88), therefore, he continues in the path of obdurate rebellion by resorting to the numbing effect of rationalization:

But say I could repent and could obtain
By act of grace my former state; how soon
Would highth recall high thoughts, how soon unsay
What feigned submission swore; ease would recant
Vows made in pain, as violent and void.
For never can true reconcilement grow
Where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep:
Which would lead me to a worse relapse
And heavier fall: so should I purchase dear

Short intermission bought with double smart.

(*PL*, IV. 93-102)

Satan, thus, is fully aware of his culpability. He is also cognizant of the fact that there is a chance of forgiveness if he is willing to repent, a fact told to him earlier in Heaven by Abdiel. According to Abdiel, Satan's rebellion is not irrevocable, since he urges Satan to repent in terms which indicate his time is not yet expired:

Cease then this impious rage,

And tempt not these; but hasten to appease

The incensed Father, and the incensed Son,

While pardon may be found in time besought.

(*PL*, V. 845-848)

Satan, nevertheless, refuses to repent.[21] His pride and self-love reject the submission his deliverance requires. As Joan F. Gilliland points out, the responsibility lies exclusively with Satan because "he chooses not to accept and act upon the truth of his condition and his experience" (Gilliland, 30). Instead, in an apparent death-wish, he willfully chooses to continue down the path of destructive and repugnant revenge[22]:

Farewell remorse: all good to me is lost;

Evil be thou my good; by thee at least

Divided empire with heaven's king I hold

By thee, and more than half perhaps will raign;

As man ere long, and this new world shall know.

(*PL*, IV. 109-113)

Milton emphasizes the diabolical nature of Satan's decision to choose evil and revenge over repentance right after his admission of guilt by depicting the physiological changes that overtake Satan. Immediately following his resolve, his face becomes dimmed by the passions of "ire, envy and despair" that marred his "borrowed visage." By underscoring Satan's "distempers foul" and "[d]eep malice" that "couched with revenge" (*PL*, IV. 114-24), Milton asks us to be repulsed by the malicious villainy of Satan's tainted revenge that was instigated under the banner of honor and public good.

Satan's deepening degeneration following his deliberate choice of evil over repentance becomes apparent when he encounters Adam and Eve for the first time. As Satan approaches Eden from Mount Niphates, he comes upon Adam and Eve whose traces of "divine resemblance" (*PL*, IV. 364) evoke a sense of envy and resentment against the creatures whom he perceives to have usurped their place:

O hell! What do mine eyes with grief behold,

Into our room of bliss thus high advanced

Creatures of other mould, earth-born perhaps,

Not spirits, yet to heavenly spirits bright

Little inferior;

(*PL*, IV. 358-62)

Even as Satan looks on the beauty of God's creation with tender feelings of wonder, longing and almost love (*PL*, IV. 363-65), he already relishes the moment of his revenge "when all these delights/ Will vanish and deliver [Adam and Eve] to woe" (*PL*, IV. 367-68). Though some good still left in him allows him to entertain the thoughts of regret and pity (*PL*, IV. 374), he easily sheds his moment of weakness and moves back to his vengeful intent with counterfeit arguments of honor and public reason which Milton calls the "tyrant's plea" (*PL*, IV. 394):

hell shall unfold,

To entertain you two, her widest gates,

And send forth all her kings; there will be room,

Not like these narrow limits, to receive

Your numerous offspring; if no better place,

Thank him who puts me loth to this revenge

On you who wrong me not for him who wronged.

And should I at your harmless innocence

Melt, as I do, yet public reason just,

Honour and empire with revenge enlarged,
By conquering this new world, compels me now
To do what else thought damned I should abhor.
(*PL*, IV. 385-392)

More than any outward signs of ranting, wrath and rage, this image of a callous and sadistic creature who can simultaneously experience the feeling of tenderness and love towards his innocent victims while contemplating their destruction just so he can indulge his desire for revenge, fosters a sense of deep repulsion at this grotesque depiction of Satan's reprobation. The effect upon the reader-audience at the sight of such perversion is one of horror which is intended to promote purgation of such passions as envy, pride, and hatred that underlines Satan's revenge.

As if to underscore his belief that "God excludes no one from the pale of repentance and eternal salvation...even to a late hour (*Columbia*, XIV. 153), however, Milton indicates that even now not all is lost for Satan. An opportunity yet remains for him to deviate from his suicidal path of revenge.[23] Satan is given this chance when he is rendered "self-forgetful"[24] by the goodness in Eve:

Such pleasure took the serpent to behold
This flowery plat, the sweet recess of Eve
Thus early, thus alone; her heavenly form
Angelic, but more soft, and feminine,

Her graceful innocence, her every air

Of gesture or least action overawed

His malice, and with rapine sweet bereaved

His fierceness of the fierce intent it brought:

That space the evil one abstracted stood

From his own evil, and for the time remained

Stupidly good, of enmity disarmed,

Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge;

(*PL*, IX. 455-466, my emphasis)

Standing "Stupidly good" Satan is offered his best and final opportunity for repentance. Unburdened of the evil of his guile, hate, envy and revenge by the goodness of Eve, the road to submission, repentance and redemption is open before him, if only he seize his chance. McColley suggests that the episode showing Satan being abstracted from his diabolical revenge demonstrates God's grace being channeled through Eve, creating one last opportunity for Satan to cease his attempts at revenge before he damns himself utterly (McColley 1983, 190). However, as Gilliland points out, "love and pity represents only possibility, not actuality" (Gilliland, 29). Satan can make his opportunity a reality only if he repents and desists from his evil intent to wreak revenge upon the innocent. While Satan may have chosen a different path, he nevertheless recollects himself, rededicating himself to his mission of revenge: "Thoughts, whither have ye led me, with what sweet/ Compulsion thus transported to forget/ What hither

brought us, hate, not love, nor hope" (*PL*, IX. 471, 473-475).[25] By choosing the path of hateful revenge, he loses his final opportunity for redemption.

Milton's statement in *De Doctrina Christiana* that no one is excluded from salvation until after prolonged and persistent rejection of grace is significant not only for its emphasis on the opportunity for redemption but also for the underlying threat of consequence if one does not finally relent and repent. Milton's argument when paraphrased reads, "those who are guilty of repeated, obstinate rejection of grace even to the very late hour are deserving of damnation." Thus, Satan who is guilty of repeatedly despising and rejecting the call to grace will not have another opportunity for redemption again. Instead, what we witness in the last books of *Paradise Lost* is the terrible consequence of Satan's revenge where, finally devoid of grace and left to his evil volition, he consummates his damning revenge by seducing mankind to sin against God.

In Book IX, the plan of revenge proposed by Satan in Pandaemonium is put into effect as Satan uses deception and false rhetoric to seduce Eve to sin against God. Having once been foiled in his attempt to "[s]quat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve" (*PL*, IV. 800) and sow the seeds of rebellion in Eve during her sleep by the angelic guard in Book IV, Satan again strikes against Eve in the form of a serpent. When he encounters Eve working alone in the garden, he first ingratiates himself into her trust with an exaggerated show of humility by oft bowing "[h]is turret crest, and sleek enamelled neck,/ Fawning, and [licking] the ground whereon she trod" (*PL*, IX, 524-26). Having gained Eve's attention,

Satan begins his "fraudulent temptation"(*PL*, IX. 531) with flowering words of praise for her beauty:

> Fairest resemblance of thy maker fair,
> Thee all things living gaze on, all things thine
> By gift, and thy celestial beauty adore
> With ravishment beheld, there best beheld
> Where universally admired; but here
> In this enclosure wild, these beasts among,
> Beholders rude, and shallow to discern
> Half what in thee is fair, one man except,
> Who sees thee? (And what is one?) Who shouldest
> be seen
> A goddess among gods, adored and served
> By angels numberless, thy daily train.
> (*PL*, IX. 538-48)

Even as Satan plays off Eve's vanity through flattery, he begins his pernicious work of revenge by intimidating that she was somehow being wronged to be relegated to the garden of Eden. The inference of Satan's suggestive praise is that someone of such "celestial beauty" should, by the merit of that beauty, be in heaven as a "goddess among gods, adored and served" rather than wallow in obscurity. Just as Satan focused on the injuries and oppression that he and his

comrades allegedly suffered to get them to support him in his quest for revenge, he now uses the same argument of injured merit to plant the seed of rebellion within the heart of Eve.

Having established that he has her interest at heart, Satan continues his temptation of Eve by enticing her to the "tree/ Of prohibition" (*PL*, IX. 644-45) with promises of indescribable pleasure and heightened powers of reasoning (*PL*, IX. 576-601). Once he has led Eve to the tree, with a "show of zeal and love/ To man, and indignation at his wrong" (*PL*, IX. 665-66), Satan tempts her to disobey God's commandment by seeking to discredit God. He begins by arguing that there is no basis to the threats of death because he (the snake) ate of the tree and lived (*PL*, IX. 685-88). Not only is the threat baseless but the very prohibition is an act of injustice and tyranny meant "to keep ye low and ignorant/ [God's] worshippers" for "in the day/ Ye eat thereof...ye shall be as gods." In order to rationalize disobeying God, Satan further resorts to slander, insinuating that the prohibition against eating the fruit springs from envy and the desire to keep Adam and Eve low; "wherein lies/ The offence...What can your knowledge hurt him...Or is it envy, and can envy dwell/ In heavenly breasts?" (*PL*, IX, 725-7, 729-30). Satan sums up his argument by alleging that "these and many more/ Causes import your need of this fair fruit" (*PL*, IX, 730-31).

Satan's temptation proves dramatically effective as "his words replete with guile/ Into her [Eve's] heart too easy entrance won" (*PL*, IX, 733-34). As Eve gazes on the fruit, she considers that the fruit "[g]ave elocution to the mute" and that the serpent "[i]rrational till then" now "knows, and speaks, and reasons, and

discerns" (*PL*, IX. 748, 764-66). In light of this fact, Eve reasons wrongly that the prohibition was unjust. Echoing Satan's argument, Eve asks whether it was just "to us denied/ This intellectual food, for beasts reserved" (*PL*, IX. 767-68). Rationalizing that "[s]uch prohibitions bind not" (*PL*, IX. 760) and with her thoughts on her impending "godhead" (*PL*, IX. 790), Eve plucks from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, eats and falls, a victim of Satan's hatred and revenge.

The seduction of Eve ostensibly seems a successful execution of Satan's revenge against God. Satan's revenge, however, proves costly, as it will "rebound/ Upon his own rebellious head" (*PL*, III. 85-6) as foretold for from this moment he is condemned in the eyes of both God and his audience. According to McColley, Satan's temptation and precipitation of Eve's fall is the defining moment which eliminates all hope of his redemption: "...[Satan] might have continued to choose damnation. But his success with Eve ensures it. It cuts off his opportunity not to sin by corrupting innocence" (McColley 1983, 191). Satan has only himself to blame for his damnation, which is a direct result of his disobedience and rejection of proffered grace. As Desmond M. Hamlet points out, "Satan's damnation in *Paradise Lost* is the direct result of both of his obduracy and his moral degeneration" which are "consequences of his self-imposed perversion.[26] The success by which Milton dramatized the evil of Satan's revenge as deriving from his free choice, then, goes a long way towards facilitating Milton's theodicy.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton portrays the evil of Satan's obdurate revenge as a consequence of his negative choices rather than something that is preordained or having substance of its own. By doing so, Milton achieves his purpose of justifying "the ways of God to men." A being created good by God, Satan is damned in *Paradise Lost* by his obstinate pursuit of his revenge. Through protracted pursuit of hatred and revenge, Satan falls ever deeper into a tightening spiral leading down to damnation, until finally, he is sucked past the point of no return and consigns himself to reprobation without hope of grace.

The drama of choice Satan undergoes, however, tells us that Satan's damnation need not have been so. This is what makes the story of Satan's revenge so tragic and so compelling. In *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton argues that God "created men and angels reasonable beings, and therefore free agents" (*Columbia* XIV, 83). Furthermore, he insists on a broad definition of redemption that allows equal access to grace and salvation for all, including Satan: "[Scripture] themselves...prove that *no one* is excluded by any decree of God from the pale of repentance and eternal salvation, unless it be after the contempt and rejection of grace, and *that at a very late hour*" (*Columbia* XIV, 157, my italics). Only repeated, stubborn disobedience merits God's ultimate punishment. Even then, punishment is not so much externally imposed as it is the direct and inevitable consequence of obdurate disobedience.

Milton's belief that the responsibility for reprobation lies "not so much in the divine will" but with the "reprobate themselves, by their refusal to repent while it is in their power"(*Columbia* XIV, 155) has a direct bearing on his portrayal of

Satan in *Paradise Lost*. Throughout the poem, Milton rejects the notion that reprobation is the result of God's arbitrary decree. Gilliland argues that in *Paradise Lost* Milton's approach to the doctrine of *Apocatastasis*--the doctrine that Satan will ultimately be restored to God--involves not only theological but artistic considerations (Gilliland, 26-27). Thus, Gilliland is of the view that repentance is theoretically still possible for Satan in *Paradise Lost* because "the remote chance still remains that some external gesture might break in upon his [Satan's] evasions and denials" (Gilliland, 29). Satan is, therefore, damned, not because he is "the archetypal Calvinist reprobate," but because he "fails to follow the steps of regeneration which are outlined in the *Christian Doctrine*: 'Conviction of sin, contrition, confession, departure from evil, conversion to good'" (Gilliland, 27). C. A. Patrides also notes that "the dramatic context [of *Paradise Lost*] demanded that Satan's redemption should at least be entertained as a possibility."[27] Stavely even goes as far as to attribute Milton's refusal to accept that "Satan *must* remain Satan" to his Arminianism (Stavely, 125). As Stavely puts it, the "choice is [Satan's]. He can continue to wage the war...or he can abandon the contest and take his place at this radiant table of grace and peace" (Stavely, 133).[28]

The depiction of moments when Satan is confronted with the real element of choice before he actually commits his act of revenge bears out the arguments of Gilliland, Stavely and Patrides that *Paradise Lost* does not present us with a Satan who is irredeemably damned. Depending on the direction Satan chooses to move, he may yet achieve redemption or damnation. Milton is thus at pains to

emphasize that it is Satan himself who epitomizes the problem of evil by voluntarily distancing himself from divine grace and the hope of redemption by his unyielding quest for revenge. For this purpose, Milton provides us, at the beginning of the poem, with a Satan who is fallen but still free to choose between good and evil, repentance and persistent disobedience, salvation and damnation.[29] By Satan's own admission, it is by his own choice that he ended up in hell: "in my choice/ To reign is worth ambition though in hell:/ Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven" (*PL*, I. 261-263). By choosing hatred and revenge over patience and repentance, he chooses evil. In this way, Milton attempts to show in his poem that the difference between good and evil, virtue and sin, derives from will and choice rather than predetermination. This is highlighted by the contrasting examples of Adam and Eve versus Satan, where the drama of contrition and restoration seen in Adam and Eve is juxtaposed against the evil of Satan's revenge.[30] A major concern for Milton in his epic cycle is for fallen man to recover that "happy state"(*PL*, V. 536), which he lost by rebelling against God, thus, reestablishing the heavenly "concord" (*PL*, III. 371) with God. Milton tells us in *Paradise Lost* that we can regain this union with God by exercising "right reason" by which we can discover "the oneness of truth, the unity of God's nature."[31] It is for this reason that the drama of Adam's and Eve's regeneration in *Paradise Lost* involves the movement towards their decision to repent of their sin in the hope of resurrecting their original state of union with God:

Before him reverent, and both confessed

Humbly their faults, and pardon begged, with tears
Watering the ground, and with their sighs the air
Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite, in sign
Of sorrow unfeigned, and humiliation meek.
(*PL*, X. 1110-1114)

According to Milton, all who approach God in contrition, repentance and humble heart can receive forgiveness. The choice is theirs. Adam, Eve and Satan all suffer for their transgressions against the will of God. However, while Satan's dark determination towards evil, manifest in his vow to wage eternal war and never-ending enmity against God, dooms him to eternal damnation, Adam and Eve attain the hope of grace and redemption through their patient contrition and repentance. This healing message of patience, first mentioned in *Paradise Lost*, is at the very heart of Milton's effort to dramatize of a new approach to revenge in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*.

While the dramatization of Satan's revenge in *Paradise Lost* helps to answer religious questions relating to the problem of evil and free will, it provides an equally cogent commentary on the failure of the Puritan revolution. Critics such as Stevie Davies, Joan S. Bennett and Herbert Zarov argue that Satan in *Paradise Lost* represents the tyranny of Charles.[32] Considering Milton's consistent opposition to all forms of tyranny, their attempt to draw a parallel between Satan and Charles is valid to a point. However, considering that

Paradise Lost was written amidst the collapse of the Puritan revolution, I believe that Milton's portrayal of Satan in *Paradise Lost* has an even more immediate purpose of denouncing those who had betrayed the "Good Old Cause"[33] and explains typologically the failure of the Puritan revolution.[34]

As Christopher Hill points out, by the time Milton began writing *Paradise Lost* around 1658, the failure of the Puritan revolutionaries must have been manifest to him (Hill 1977, 347), a failure which he believed arose from moral failure. Believing that the Restoration was brought about by the "avarice and ambition" among the revolutionary leaders (Hill 1984, 282), Milton finds a strong correlation between the failure of the revolution and the moral lapses of the revolutionaries.[35] The fall of Satan and his "associates and copartners" (*PL*, I. 265) in *Paradise Lost* can therefore be seen as paradigmatic of all those who betrayed the ideals of the Puritan revolution. While Milton was critical of all those who failed the revolution, in the following, I will examine how his portrayal of Satan's tyranny can be read as an implicit criticism of the Presbyterians and their policy of "ecclesiastical despotism" (*Columbia* VII, 495) as well as the despotic oppression of the Cromwellian Protectorate.

Milton's criticism of the Presbyterians revolves mainly around "their failure to keep faith, or covenant, and...their prelatelike oppression."[36] For Milton, the "presbyters" are not only guilty of betraying the "Godly cause" but are responsible for persecuting the liberty of conscience of the Independents, the true remnant, who held true to the Godly cause. In Sonnet XVI, for example, Milton calls the Presbyterians "hireling wolves whose Gospell is their maw"

(*Columbia* I, 65), an assertion that evokes the image of Satan as a "prowling wolf" in *Paradise Lost*. Also, in "On the new forcers of Conscience under the Long PARLIAMENT," Milton charges that the "*New Presbyter* is but *Old Priest* writ Large." In imitation of the Prelaty whom they "envi'd, not abhor'd," they have refused to "adjure the Civill Sword/ To force our Consciences" (*Columbia* I, 71). Likewise in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, Milton vehemently denounces the Presbyterians for having "blasphm'd the vengeance of God."[37] According to Milton, the Presbyterians are not only guilty of placing "avarice and ambition" before the will of God but, by making the Independents, the remnant of God's cause, the object of their revenge, they war against heaven's matchless king.[38] In the *Articles of Peace* Milton goes as far as to liken this penchant for revenge by the Presbyterian government to the Inquisition[39] while in the *Digression to the History of Britain*, Milton denounces the Presbyterian "divines" of engaging in satanic revenge by relying on physical force over "evangellic perswasion."[40]

As his minor poems and prose works amply indicate, Milton accuses the Presbyterians of "civil as well as ecclesiastical despotism" (*Columbia* VII, 495), a charge Milton implicitly lays upon the Presbyters again in *Paradise Lost* through his portrayal of Satan. The parallel between Milton's portrayal of Satan and the Presbyterians has been noted by Catherine Gimelli Martin who likens Satan to a "good Calvinist."[41] Like the false presbyters, whom Milton accuses of falling by putting "avarice and ambition" before God[42], the fall of Satan in *Paradise Lost* is caused by pride, which denotes a heinous self-interest that alienates him from God. Just as Milton accuses the Presbyterians in *The Tenure of Kings and*

Magistrates of unwarranted vengefulness which "blasphem'd the vengeance of God" (*Columbia* V, 45), so Satan is obsessed with hatred and revenge. Likewise, as the Presbyterian have become consumed with "hatred,"[43] so Satan's quest for revenge is motivated by his "immortal hate" (*PL*, I. 107). Read in the context of Milton's scathing denouncement of the Presbyterians in his prose, then, Satan's revenge on mankind in *Paradise Lost* can be read as a typological rendering of the false presbyters and their persecution of the "sons of light" (*PL*, V. 160) and their liberty of conscience.

In the epic itself, Satan is portrayed as a type of false cleric, "the first/ That practised falsehood under saintly show" (*PL*, IV. 121). Milton continues to exploit this parallel between Satan and the false presbyters by comparing him to a prowling wolf in a sheepfold, an image which Milton had earlier used to denounce church hirelings in "Lycidas" [44] as well as a "thief" and "a comorant," all common images for false clergy[45]:

> As when a prowling wolf,
> Whom hunger drives to seek new haunt for prey,
> Watching where shepherds pen their flocks at eve
> In hurdled cotes amid the field secure,
> Leaps o'er the fence with ease into the fold:
> Or as a thief bent to unhoard the cash
> Of some rich burgher, whose substantial doors,
> Cross-barred and bolted fast, fear no assault,

In at the window climbs, or o'er the tiles;

So clomb this first grand thief into God's fold:'

So since into his church lewd hirelings climb.

Thence up he flew, and on the tree of life

The middle tree and highest there that grew,

Sat like a cormorant;

(*PL*, IV. 183-196)

Satan's first acts on earth, therefore, can be viewed as a prefiguration of the wicked clergy, such as the prelates and the Presbyterians, who subvert the liberty of the God's chosen. Just as Satan and his fallen angels determine in their Pandemonium debate to "drive as we were driven,/The Puny habitants, or if not drive, / Seduce them to our party," (*PL*, II. 367-9), so the Presbyterian party also attempted revengefully "to drive as they were driven" those who remained faithful to "God's cause" thereby becoming guilty of warring against God. Thus, Abdiel's warning to Satan in Book V that he cease his "impious rage" and seek forgiveness "While pardon may be found in time besought" can be read as a figurative warning leveled at the Presbyterians to cease their impious persecution of the "Godly."

If Satan's revenge in *Paradise Lost* can be read as typifying the "ecclesiastical despotism" of the Presbyterians, it can also be read as symbolizing the tyrannical oppression of the Protectorate. Just as Milton uses Satan's obsession with revenge to criticize the Presbyterians for their "prelatelike

oppression," so his depiction of Satan's strategy of revenge in *Paradise Lost* can be read as an indictment of the vindictive policies pursued by Cromwell's Protectorate.

Milton's attitude toward the Protectorate has long been a subject of debate. Robert T. Fallon, for example, does not see any break with the Protectorate, saying that Milton's faith in the Army and by implication Cromwell, was unwavering.[46] Merritt Y. Hughes also finds Milton impatient with the Parliament rather than with the Lord Protector.[47] However, others such as Austin Woolrych argue that Milton regarded Cromwell and his Protectorate as an aberration from the principles of the Puritan revolution.[48] Christopher Hill also argues that, while Milton never attacked the Protectorate or Cromwell directly, he was unhappy with Cromwell's role in the dissolution of the Rump, the reestablishment of a state church and the failure to eliminate the tithes. That he mourned the dissolution of the Barebones Parliament in 1653 is evident from his warning to Cromwell in the *A Second Defence* (1654) against usurping the liberty of his fellow Englishmen (Hill 1977, 197, 189-90, 193). This begs the question, what is Milton's real view of Cromwell and his Protectorate? To find out, it would be useful to examine Milton's *A Second Defence of the English People* (1654) where its eulogy of Cromwell masks deep misgivings about the undemocratic and despotic nature of the Protectorate.

Ostensibly, Milton's purpose in *A Second Defence* is to defend the Commonwealth and to extol the revolutionary government and its leader, Cromwell. In *A Second Defence*, Milton advocates the notion of civil power that

is defined as a moral, philosophical superiority that both shuns personal gain and serves as a moral exemplar to the English people. Milton also tell us that Cromwell is just such an ideal leader who is "exercised in the knowledge of himself," but also an example of "divine virtue."[49] Despite all the ostensive praise of Cromwell's virtue and the exemplary influence it can have on the English people, however, the fact remains that for Milton, who consistently argued against the concentration of power in the hands of any one individual, the investment of total power in Cromwell was a cause for alarm.[50] Such unrestricted power was repellant to Milton not only for its close resemblance to the very monarchy that Cromwell supplants, but because of its potential of abuse.

Often read as an unequivocal endorsement of the Protectorate (established in 1654), *A Second Defence* contains strong indications of Milton's ambivalence towards the new form of government and his reservations concerning Cromwell's ability to withstand the temptations of power. Austin Woolrych, for instance, argues that despite all its eloquence, what stands out in Milton's eulogy of Cromwell in *A Second Defence* is its impersonality. This is in clear contrast to the warmer and more personal tones displayed towards other leaders of the Commonwealth such as Overton and Bradshaw, both opponents of Cromwell's since the expulsion of the Rump (Woolrych, 192-193.) Milton's praising Bradshaw and Cromwell in the same breath is a contradiction that underscores Milton's misgivings about Cromwell and his Protectorate. In fact, Woolrych argues that Milton's criticism of the Protectorate in his final tracts is

proof that Milton regarded the Protectorate as "a grave aberration in the Commonwealth's development" and that he never mourned its demise (Woolrych, 200). The anxiety Milton felt towards the unqualified authority of Cromwell is evident from his call for power sharing between Cromwell and other revolutionaries[51] and his words of warning to Cromwell that those who engage in tyranny in turn become slaves to their own tyranny:

> Last of all, respect yourself, and suffer not that liberty, which you have gained with so many hardships, so many dangers, to be violated by yourself, or in any wise impaired by others. Indeed, without our freedom, you yourself cannot be free: for such is the order of nature, that he who forcibly seizes upon the liberty of others, is the first to lose his own, is the first to become a slave...
> (*Columbia* VIII, 227)

Events proved Milton right in fearing the abuse of unrestricted power invested in the hands of one individual. Like Satan who patronizes his followers with the use of flattering titles in *Paradise Lost*, calling them "Princes, potentates,/ Warriors, the flower of heaven" (*PL*, I. 315-16), Cromwell conferred hereditary peerage, baronetcies and knighthood upon his favorites.[52] The depiction of a vain Satan sitting exalted, "[h]igh on a throne of a royal state" (*PL*, II. 1-6) is also analogous to Cromwell's own assumption of the pomp and dignity of a king in all but name. More significantly, just as Satan stirred his followers

towards the path of revenge during the "great consult" in order to sustain his power over his fellow angels, the Protectorate also followed a policy of oppressive retribution as a means of securing and furthering its power. The Protectorate's vindictive approach to its critics and political opponents is apparent from the fate of critics of Cromwell such as Vane and Bradshaw. These men, who Milton held in high esteem for being true to the ideals of the revolutionary principals, were either removed from office or, in the case of Overton, kept imprisoned without trial for the duration of the Protectorate (Woolrych, 194). Yet others, such as the leaders of the Levellers, he imprisoned and shot.[53] *A Second Defence*, therefore, records what Milton and others, such as the Levellers, regarded as Cromwell's fall from the republican ideals of the Good Old Cause, and reflects as well their withdrawal of support from the autocracy of the Protectorate.[54]

To understand the flow of Milton's argument, therefore, the reader needs to understand that in 1654, the difference between the titles of king and Lord Protector is merely nominal rather than substantial. Since Cromwell has become a *de facto* king, which is synonymous to Milton with tyranny, Milton's portrayal of Satan in *Paradise Lost* can be read as an implied critique of Cromwell himself or of his tyranny and oppression. In the poem itself, the portrayal of Satan as a tyrant is manifest in the opening lines of Book II where Satan presides over the "great consult" dressed in the trappings of an oriental despot:

> High on a throne of a royal state, which far

Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,

Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand

Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,

Satan exalted sat, by merit raised

To that bad eminence...

(*PL*, II. 1-6)

Despite Satan's attempt to justify his kingship by claiming to be sitting in "a safe unenvied throne/ Yielded with full consent" (*PL*, II. 23-24) and his rhetoric of "union, and firm faith, and firm accord, /More than can be in heaven" (*PL*, II. 36-37), what stands out is the image of him as the "archetypal tyrant."[55] While Hughes attempts to divorce Satan's tyranny from its contemporary setting,[56] the characterization of Satan as a tyrant in the poem can be specifically related to Cromwell and his despotic rule. As G. Wilson Knight, J.B. Broadbent and James A. Freeman all point out, it is Cromwell who Satan most resembles in *Paradise Lost*. Knight argues that the image of Satan inspecting his troops in Hell was meant to recall that of "a Cromwell casting an 'experienced eye' over his ironside warriors" (Knight, 127). Broadbent also suggests that Milton is satirizing Cromwell when he presents Satan as the "devils' Cromwell."[57] Freeman is more emphatic in his argument that "If we look for a real-life counterpart to Satan...we probably should point to Oliver Cromwell."[58] Parallels abound in *Paradise Lost* between Satan and Cromwell. Both are former generals who, under the guise of statesmanship, assume the *de facto* powers, if not the form, of a monarch. In

addition, both employ a strategy of revenge that goes hand in hand with their political objective of consolidating power. Just as Cromwell used the policy of retribution to suppress opposition and consolidate his power, so Satan's quest for revenge in *Paradise Lost* is motivated by desire to consolidate his place of supremacy among his peers.

When we first encounter Satan in *Paradise Lost*, we find him unrepentant, vowing revenge against God. By focusing on the alleged injuries he and his comrades have suffered, Satan emphasizes the need to exact revenge against their enemy, promising that by waging "by force or guile eternal war" (*PL*, I. 121), they will "repossess their native seat" (*PL*, I. 634). Assuming the guise of a benevolent leader seeking deliverance for his followers, then, Satan proposes to undertake his quest for revenge against God's "new worlds" and "A generation...equal to the Sons of Heaven" (*PL*, I. 650, 654). The propagandist nature of his rhetoric aside, however, what Satan really seeks in undertaking his quest for revenge is the establishment of his dominance among the fallen angels (*PL*, II. 465-73). Milton's depiction of Satan's quest of revenge therefore reveals a parallel between Satan and Cromwell in that both maintain the façade of an unselfish leader devoted to promoting the public good while in reality they are motivated by ambition and self-interest.[59] The analogy between Cromwell's vindictive policy of oppression against his critics and Satan's quest of revenge against mankind, thus, can be read as a criticism of Cromwell for betraying the Puritan Revolution through excessive self-love.

Composed during the waning years of the Puritan Revolution, *Paradise Lost* grapples with the "experience of defeat" as perceived by Milton. As Hill pointed out, writing during the Restoration, Milton was concerned about the triumph of evil in the world which in turn called into question either God's goodness or his omnipotence (Hill: 1984, 307). Satan's revenge in the poem, therefore, goes beyond a portrayal of Satan's villainy; it dramatizes the very problem of evil. It also examines the failure of the Puritan Revolution placed in the context of the fall of Satan, and, subsequently, of Adam and Eve.

The realization of failure, however, does not mean that Milton has abandoned the ideals of the revolution. As Mary Ann Radzinowicz indicates, *Paradise Lost* is neither a poem of "political disengagement or of political encryption," that "*Paradise Lost* has a public role to play," and that Milton expected it to "'inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of vertu, and publick civility'" (Radzinowics 1987, pp. 205-6). If the machination of Satan's evil in *Paradise Lost* serves the role as "a warning exemplar,"[60] Milton goes on to juxtapose the problem of evil with the steadfastness of the Son in *Paradise Regained* and the example of Samson's renewal in *Samson Agonistes*. The work of deliverance will not be easy. However, Milton also demonstrates that all is not lost because of momentary weakness or failure. Milton reminds the Puritan revolutionaries that, even after the Fall, at the end of *Paradise Lost*, "The world was all before them" (*PL*, XII. 646).[61]

Notes

[1] Marvin Daniels, "Pathological Vindictiveness and the Vindictive Character," *Psychoanalytic Review* 56 (1969): 169-196, pp. 170, 190-91.

[2] P. A. Samuels, *"Samson Agonistes and Renaissance Drama* (Dissertation: City University of New York, 1993), p. 139.

[3] According to Aristotle, the purpose of tragedy is "a mimesis of an action—that is, is [morally]serious and purposeful, having magnitude; uttered in heightened language and...bringing about thorough [a process of] pity and fear [in the events enacted] the purification of those destructive or painful acts." Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. George Whalley, *Aristotle's Poetics*, ed. John Baxter and Patrick Atherton (Montreal & Kingston, London and Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), pp. 67-69.

[4] "Preface to *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton: Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey (London and New York: Longman, 1971), p. 341.

[5] According to Hill, Milton believed that "political failure was ultimately moral failure" (Hill 1977, 350).

[6] As E. M. W. Tillyard points out, "for all [the Son's] furious urge to activity, contemplation, the purged and settled state of mind, is ever the condition on which activity is legitimate." E. M. W. Tillyard, "The Christ of *Paradise Regained* and the Renaissance Heroic Tradition," *Studies in Philology*, 36 (1939): 247-52, p. 249.

[7] By blaming Satan's evil on his negative choice rather than his evil nature, Milton's theory of evil in large part accords with that of Augustine, namely *privatio boni* or a lack, or a perversion, of good. This close affinity between Milton's theory of evil and that of Augustine has been noted by Peter Fiore and Roland Mushat Frye. Fiore, for example, argues that both Milton and Augustine see evil as deriving from perverted will: "For Augustine and Milton, evil is the perversion of a good nature by a will gone bad...Bad things are good things perverted, and this perversion arises when a conscious creature becomes more interested in himself than in God and wishes to exist on his own." Peter A. Fiore, *Milton and Augustine: Patterns of Augustinian Thought in Paradise Lost* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981), pp. 18, 19. Frye, likewise, argues that fundamental to *Paradise Lost* is the Augustinian concept of evil as the perversion of good: "It is basic to Milton's epic, and to Christianity in

general, that the created order is good. Against this good in all its forms, as well as against the divine source of all goodness, Satan reacts, when he declares the creed of hell: 'Evil be thou my good' (IV, 110)." Roland Mushat Frye, *God, Man, and Satan: Patterns of Christian Thought and Life in Paradise Lost, Pilgrim's Progress, and the Great Theologians* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 21, 30. That Milton's concept of evil in *Paradise Lost* follows that of Augustine in depicting evil as a lack of good or a perversion thereof is also noted by Molly Smith who argues that Milton's Satan is "an extended treatment of evil as lack of essence." *The Darker World Within* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), p. 165.

Augustine's own views concerning the nature of evil can be found in his *Confessions.* To the question of "Whence comes evil?" Augustine himself states that, "I yet knew not how that evil was nothing else but a privation of good, next indeed to that which has no being." He further argues that evil is "not to be a substance" but a perversion of will and choice: "And I inquired what iniquity should be: but I found it not to be a substance, but a swerving merely of the will, crooked quite away from thee, O God, (who art the supreme substance) towards these lower things; casting away its inward parts, and puffed up outwardly." Augustine believes that all things are created good. It is when a creature, by the exercise of free will, places greater value in "lower things" that a disorder is effected. Evil, then, is a deprivation of the good brought about by the exercise of wrong choices. *St. Augustine's Confessions*, trans. William Watts (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1931), pp. 121, 383.

[8] Harold P. Maltz, "Lucifer's Fall: Freewill and the Aetiology of Evil in '*Paradise Lost*'," *Theoria* 72 (1988): 63-73, p. 63. For similar argument on the angel's free will see Joan F. Gilliland, "'But Say I Could Repent': Satan's Decision," *Bulletin of the West Virginia Association of College English Teachers* 5 (1979): 26-32.

[9] As Irene Samuel points out, the central thesis of *Paradise Lost* is the doctrine of free will. "*Paradise Lost*," in *Critical Approaches to Six Major English Works*, ed. R.M. Lumiansky and Herschel Baker (Philadelphia: University Of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), 209-253, p.244.

[10] Diane Kelsey McColley, "Free Will and Obedience in the Separation Scene of *Paradise Lost,*" *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 12 (1972): 103-20, p. 104.

[11] In accordance with his idea stated in *De Doctrina Christiana* that everything was created good at its inception (*Columbia* XV, 23), Milton initially portrays Satan as having admirable and heroic qualities. This has led to charges that Milton valorizes evil to the detriment of the good in the poem, resulting in a "Satanic" controversy regarding the true purpose of Milton's poem. William Blake

for example claims in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that "Milton wrote in fetters" writing of Angels & God, and "at liberty" when writing of Devils & Hell, and that he "was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it" (Blake, 150). Blake's statement highlights a critical debate regarding the true intent of the *Paradise Lost*, dividing critics between " 'Satanist' or 'anti-Satanist' camps" (Linda M. Lewis, 57). According to Linda Lewis, writers who belong to the "Satanist" school include Joseph Addison, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and William Hazlitt while those advocating the "anti-Satanist" reading include Samuel Johnson, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley (Lewis, 57-58). Among modern critics, those who accentuate the appealing qualities of Satan in their reading of *Paradise Lost* are William Empson and A.J.A. Waldock. Others such as C.S. Lewis and Peter Gregory Angelo, however, reject such a reading, arguing that Satan is the very epitome of evil. A closer reading of *Paradise Lost*, however, proves the satanic controversy a moot point. Milton's depiction of Satan reveals that he abuses his heroic qualities by choosing evil intentionally. God, having "created men and angels reasonable beings, and therefore free agents" (*Columbia*, XIV, 83), Satan was free to choose between good and evil. When Satan chose to disobey the will of God, he was deviating from the right and becoming the quintessence of evil.

[12] According to Regina Schwartz, "Satan's narcissism is most powerfully in evidence in his refusal to acknowledge the Other, his Creator. His claim to be self-begotten, his resistance to the Son, all bespeak a towering self-love. He responds to the elevation of the Son with more than denial: he responds by reproducing himself in his own image, conceiving Sin. With Sin his 'perfect image,' 'likest to [him] in shape and cont'nance bright'(II. 756), Satan's love for Sin is self-love." Regina Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating: Biblical Creation in Paradise Lost* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 100.

[13] Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General*, ed. William Webster Newbold (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986), p. 98.

[14] Balachandra Rajan likewise argues that free will and humanity's responsibility for its own destiny stand at the center of *Paradise Lost* saying, "radical evil has its place in the web of *Paradise Lost* but the web itself is perhaps better explored by other guiding principles such as infinite responsibility and the great movements of meaning and consequence that are made to center round the gift of freedom." "*Paradise Lost*: The Web of Responsibility," in *Paradise Lost: A Tercentenary Tribute,* ed. Balachandra Rajan ([Toronto]: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 108.

[15] C. S. Lewis notes that Satan progressively degenerates from "hero to general, from general to politician, from politician to secret agent, and thence to a thing that peers in at bedroom or bathroom windows, and thence to a toad, and finally to a snake—such is the progress of Satan." *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942; New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 99.

[16] Keith W. F. Stavely, "Satan and Arminianism in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 25 (1989): 125-139, p. 128.

[17] William Kerrigan argues that the episode of the lowered stairs is a "travesty of free choice" created "for the purpose of mockery, like a school lesson repeated with no intent to educate, only to humiliate." He states that the whole episode as a "false invitation" meant only to declare "the finality of damnation." Kerrigan found this whole scene so troubling he charges that "Maybe [Milton] intended to convey through this cruel derision an aspect of his deity that creatures cannot fully savor; maybe, with regard to this theme, one might concede something to Empson and Waldock, for Milton cannot command our sympathies when he makes the creator of the universe behave like a spoiled child." *The Sacred Complex* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983), p.173, 172.

[18] Louis L. Martz, *Poet of Exile: A Study of Milton's Poetry* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 107.

[19] Noted in Gilliland, p. 27 and William A McQueen, "The Hateful Siege of Contraries": Satan's Interior Monologues in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 4 (1970): 60-65, p.62.

[20] Stavely calls this moment Satan's "most golden spiritual opportunity of all" and that "what Satan has just experienced of the descrying of new lands has had an impact on him after all" (Stavely, 132, 134-5).

[21] Richard S. Ide describes Satan's soliloquy in Book IV is "a tragic example of impenitence." Despite hearing God's call and His invitation to salvation, Satan call damnation upon himself by refusing to humble himself, turn from evil, and turn to good (Ide 1983, 123).

[22] Harold Bloom argues that Satan's refusal to repent in this episode represents his final degradation saying, "[h]ere Satan makes his last choice, and ceases to be what he was in the early books of the poem. All that the anti-Satanist say about him is true after this point; all or almost all claimed for him by the Satanists is true before it...Nothing that can be regenerated remains in Satan, and the rift between his self-ruined spirit and his radically corrupted nature widens until he is the hissing serpent of popular tradition, plucking greedily at the Dead Sea fruit of

Hell in a fearful parody of Eve's Fall." "Introduction," *John Milton's Paradise Lost: Modern Critical Interpretations*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York, New Haven and Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 7. As the following scene where Satan is made "Stupidly good" by the sight of Eve indicates, Satan, at this juncture, is not completely damned.

[23] Stella Purce Revard, however, implies that Satan is beyond redemption by the time he encounters Adam and Eve by asserting that he refuses "to regard Adam and Eve as anything other than means to his revenge." *The War in Heaven* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 80.

[24] Diane Kelsey McColley, *Milton's Eve* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p195.

[25] John Carey points to the fact that Satan was disarmed of his evil purposes at the sight of Eve as proof that Satan's "natural element" is love, not evil, and that "hatred is an effort of his will." Milton's Satan," *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, ed. Dennis Danielson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.139.

[26] *One Greater Man: Justice and Damnation in Paradise Lost* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1976), p. 17. Carey similarly argues that Satan was not created a "destructive automaton" and that his damnation is a result of his choosing "to destroy the human race against the prompting of his better nature" which makes his revenge that much more diabolical (John Carey 1981, 139).

[27] C.A. Patrides, *Premises and Motifs in Renaissance Thought and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 208. For the origin and history of the doctrine of apocatastasis, the term coined by the Greek theologian Origen to denote the possibility of Satan's restoration to grace at the end of time, see Patrides, pp. 200-217.

[28] Unlike Milton who examines the possibility of Satan's repentance and salvation in *Paradise Lost*, an opportunity he willfully rejects, John Donne refuses to entertain even the remote possibility of such an event arguing that "once fallen from Heaven, they fell also into 'an absolute incapacity of reconciliation,' and so will 'never be forgiven,' 'never return to mercy'." John Donne, *Sermons*, II, 139; V, 78, V, 86. Quoted in Patrides (1982), pp. 208-209.

[29] Commenting on the scene where Satan is moved to tears by the sight of his peers (Book I, 620), Fowler argues that "the hardening of Satan's heart is not yet complete" (Fowler, 80, i 620 *n*).

[30] According to McQueen, Satan and his victims "in many ways parallel each other, although the outcome differ" (McQueen, 62).

[31] Joan S. Bennett, " 'Go': Milton's Antinomianism and the Separation Scene in *Paradise Lost*, Book 9," *PMLA* 98 (1983): 388-404, p. 397. Milton states in *The Christian Doctrine* that it is through "right reason or conscience" that "the existence of God is further proved" (*Columbia* XIV, 29).

[32] Stevie Davies, *Images of Kingship in Paradise Lost* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983), p.11; Joan S. Bennett, "God, Satan, and King Charles: Milton 's Royal Portraits," *PMLA* 92 (1977): 441-57, pp. 442-44; Herbert Zarov, "Milton and the Rhetoric of Rebellion," *Milton Quarterly* 7 (1973): 47-50.

[33] The term "Good Old Cause" is taken from Christopher Hill. Hill,1984, p. 54.

[34] Milton's criticism of the Puritan revolutionaries in *Paradise Lost* can be better understood when we read the poem within its historical context. While the Restoration in 1660 marked the final failure of the Puritan revolution, evidences of backsliding leading to the failure of the Puritan revolution were everywhere long before that. Examples of revolutionaries backsliding include the failure by the Barebones Parliament to abolish the tithes and the state church, the offer of the crown to Cromwell, and Cromwell betraying the ideals of the revolution by becoming the Lord Protector establishing "a virtual monarchy" (Hill 1977, p.198).

[35] See "Introduction," Note no. 21.

[36] William B. Hunter, Jr. et. al eds., *A Milton Encyclopedia*, vol. 7 (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1979), p.13.

[37] In his *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, Milton accuses the Presbyterians of being atheists who "blasphm'd the vengeance of God," oppressing the zeal of the people because of their "filthy love of gaine":

> But if they [Presbyterians] be the Ministers of Mammon in stead of Christ, and scandalize his Church with the filthy love of gaine, aspiring also to sit the closest & the heaviest of all Tyurants, upon the conscience, and fall notoriously into the same sinns, whereof so lately and so loud they accurs'd the Prelates...more like Atheists they have blasphem'd the vengeance of God, and traduc'd the zeale of his people. (*Columbia* V, 45)

[38] According to Milton, "Only those who are called Independents knew from first to last how to be true to their cause, and what use to make of their victory" (*Columbia* VII, 497).

[39] In the *Article of Peace*, Milton compares the Presbyterians ecclesiastical courts to the Spanish Inquisition:

> Nevertheless as we perceave it [Presbyteriall government] aspiring to be a compulsive power upon all without exception...to require the fleshly arm of Magistracy in the execution of a spirituall Discipline, to punish and amerce by any corporall infliction those whose consciences cannot be edif'd by what authority they are compell'd, we hold it no more to be *the hedg and bulwark of Religion*, then the Popish and Prelaticall Courts, or the *Spanish Inquisition*. (*Columbia* VI, 264).

[40] In his *Digression to the History of Britain*, Milton accuses the Presbyterian of practicing ecclesiastical vengeance and charges that their very reliance on retribution as tool of bodily compulsion exposes their tyranny:

> And yet the main doctrin for which [Presbyterian divines] tooke such pay, and insisted upon with more vehemence then gospel, was but to tell us in effect that thir doctrin was worth nothing and the spiritual power of thir ministrie less availeable then bodilie compulsion; perswading the magistrate to use it as a stronger means to subdue & bring in conscience then evangellic perswasion. But while they taught compulsion without convincement (which not long before they so much complain'd of as executed unchristianlie against themselves) thir intents were cleere to be no other then to have set up a spiritual tyrannie by a secular power to the advancing of thir owne authoritie above the magistrate.
> (*Columbia* X, pp. 321-22)

[41] Catherine Gimelli Martin, "No Fortunate Fall, No 'Unfeared Second Fate': Satan and the Critique of Meliorism, *Paradise Lost*, Book 2," *Spokesperson Milton: Voices in Contemporary Criticism*, Charles W. Durham and Kristin Pruitt McColgan eds. (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1994), p. 33.

[42] In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, Milton denounces the Presbyterians as "rav'nous Wolves" for their efforts to solicit the Parliament for "new setling of thir Tithes an Oblations" and for "double lin'd themselves with spiritual places of commoditie beyond the possible discharge of thir duty" (*Columbia* V, 44).

[43] Arguing that the Presbyterians were motivated by more by "thir hatred to the Army" than love to seek reconciliation with Charles I, (*Columbia* V, 37), Milton accuses them of being "Ministers of sedition, not of Gospel" (*Columbia* V, 39).

[44] In "*Lycidas*," Milton denounces church hirelings as "grim wolf with privy paw" who "for their bellies' sake,/ Creep and intrude, and climb into the [sheep]fold" (*Lycidas*, 114-29).

[45] The association of the cormorant with false clergy is noted by Fowler who points out that it "was especially often used of 'hireling' clergy" (Fowler; 203, iv 196 *n*).

[46] Robert T. Fallon, "Milton in the Anarchy, 1659-1660: A Question of Consistency." *Studies in English Literature* 21 (1981): 123-46, p.134.

[47] Merritt Y. Hughes, *Ten Perspectives on Milton* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p.267.

[48] Austin Woolrych, "Milton and Cromwell: 'A Short But Scandalous Night of Interruption?" Ed. Lieb and Shawcross, *Achievements of the Left Hand: Essays on the Prose of John Milton* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1974), pp. 185, 194, 200.

[49] In *A Second Defence*, Milton initially praised Cromwell as "a soldier, above all others the most exercised in the knowledge of himself; he had either destroyed, or reduced to his own control, all enemies within his own breast—vain hopes, fears, desires. A commander first over himself, the conqueror of himself, it was over himself he had learnt most to triumph...To evince his extraordinary, his little less than divine virtue, this mark will suffice; that there lived in him an energy whether of spirit and genius, or discipline, established not by military rule only, but by the rule of Christ and of sanctity, that he drew all to his camp, as to the best school both of military science, and of religion and piety—nay those who were already good and brave from all parts, or made them such principally by his own example" (*Columbia* VIII, 215-7).

[50] Besides *A Second Defence*, Milton's opposition to all forms of single person rule can be found in *Eikonoklastes* where he argues that "It were a Nation miserable indeed, not worth the name of a Nation, but a race of Idiots, whose happiness and welfare depended upon one Man" (*Columbia* V, 254). Also, in "A Letter to a Friend, Concerning the Ruptures of the Commonwealth," Milton states that the terms upon which the Senate needs to stand on are "Liberty of Conscience to all professing Scripture to be the Rule of thir Faith and Worship; and the Abjuration of a single Person" (*Columbia* VI, 104). In a similar line of argument, Milton states in *The readie and easie way to establish a free Commonwealth* that "Certainly then that people must needs be madd or strangely infatuated, that build the chief hope of thir common happiness or safetie on a single person...The happiness of a nation must needs be firmest and

certainest in a full and free Councel of thir own electing, where no single peron, but reason only swaies" (*Columbia* VI, 121-122).

[51] Milton attempted to persuade Cromwell to relinquish the absolute powers of the Protectorate by involving other revolutionaries in the government: "All these things and more, I doubt not, you frequently mediate, and revolve in your mind; as likewise, by what means you may give effect to those momentous considerations, and restore to us our liberty safe, and augmented. This, in my judgement, you could in no way be more likely to accomplish, than by associating those, as you do, among the first, in your counsels, whom you first as companions of your labours and of your dangers—men distinguished alike for their modesty, their integrity, and their courage" (*Columbia* VIII, 229).

[52] Wilbur C. Abbott, *Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1937-47), IV, 952-53. Quoted in Woolrych, 195.

[53] *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill*, vol. 3 (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), p.72. The vindictive nature of the Protectorate is again apparent from Christopher Hill's observation that the "regicides' judges included many former Oliverians" and that "all the non-regicides who suffered severe penalties—Vane, Lambert, Haslerig, Harrington—had been opponents of kingship for Oliver" (Hill 1984, 323).

[54] In his Introduction, Don M. Wolfe emphasizes the eight months (Dec. 12, 1653 to Sept. 1654) prior to the writing of *A Second Defence* that Cromwell and his council ruled without a parliament. *CPW* IV.1, 234.

[55] Hughes argues that "In the world of the poem the archetypal tyrant is Satan" (Hughes 1965, 166).

[56] "Satan and the 'Myth' of the Tyrant," *Ten Perspectives on Milton*, pp. 165-195.

[57] J.B. Broadbent, *Some Graver Subject: An Essay on Paradise Lost* (New York: Schocken Books, 1960), p. 115.

[58] James A. Freeman, *Milton and the Martial Muse: Paradise Lost and European Traditions of War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p.143.

[59] John Steadman notes that while "Satan himself claims to have undertaken his enterprise [of revenge] for the public good, the *salus populi*," in Milton's eyes "he is a thief and a homocide." "Satan as the Hero of *Paradise Lost*," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 120 (1976), 253-305, p. 281.

[60] Laura Lunger Knoppers, *'League with You I Seek': Milton's Concept of Covenant* (Unpublished Dissertation. Harvard University, 1986), pp. 3, 160.

Chapter Three: Apotheosis of Revenge in *Paradise Regained*

A novel, yet meaningful way to approach *Paradise Regained* is to read it as a drama of revenge. As Peggy Anne Samuels points out, *Paradise Regained* is "the story of revenge, Christ's revenge on Satan, prophesied in the protevangelium" (P. A. Samuels 1993, 140). The fulfillment of this protevangelical prophecy, which the *OED* defines with an allusion to God's judgment in Genesis 3:15 promising that a seed of a woman will avenge mankind by crushing the head of the serpent, is an essential part of the poem's meaning.[1] *Paradise Regained* tells of a Second Adam, who "avenged/ Supplanted Adam"[2] and began to reverse the effect of the Fall, offering the possibility of redemption for Man in the process. As such the poem is linked to *Paradise Lost* as a "companion poem"[3] with regard to the theme of revenge, the Son's revenge in *Paradise Regained* counteracting and undoing the effects of the Fall brought about by Satan's malevolent and destructive revenge in *Paradise Lost.*

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton examines the problem of evil as it is manifested in the revenge of a willful and self-serving Satan who seduces Adam to sin in order to fulfill his fantasies of vengeance against God. Expelled from Heaven because of what Hugh Richmond called his "pathological egotism," Satan rejects "the principle of love and creativity...a principle which is an intrinsic part of God,"[4] choosing instead to follow his impulse towards revenge by sowing destruction and damnation on Adam and Eve. Even as Milton's *Paradise Lost* examines the

causes and the consequences of man's downfall, however, I would argue that he looks forward to the "one greater man"(*PL*, I. 4) who will avenge Mankind. According to Richard S. Ide, although it is Satan who poses as a "villain revenger" in *Paradise Lost* as he sets out to deceive man, it is Adam, Eve and their descendants who, "through the Son, the seed destined to bruise the head of the serpent" will have the final revenge against Satan's villainy (Ide 1983, 122). Intimations of the Son's revenge on Satan abound in *Paradise Lost* and make ironic the machinations of Satan's revenge. For instance, the Son in Book III foretells the time when he will "rise victorious" and "lead hell captive maugre hell, and show/ The powers of darkness bound" (*PL*, III. 250, 255-6). Pointing to such prophecy by the Son, Stephen Wigler argues that Book III and the opening of Book IV "imaginatively recreate and celebrate the Son's decision 'to execute fierce vengeance on his foes'."[5] The theme of the Son's forthcoming vengeance on Satan is underscored in the last two books of *Paradise Lost*. There Michael offers Adam a panoramic vision of the biblical history of man, culminating with the "protevangelical promise" (Ide, 122) of "that destined seed" who shall "bruise/ The Serpent" and "achieve/ Mankind's deliverance" (*PL*, XII. 233-235). As Adam remarks, "to crush [Satan's] head/ Would be revenge indeed" (*PL*, X. 1035-6).

Paradise Regained appears to respond directly to the prophecy made through Michael in *Paradise Lost* that "[a] son, the woman's seed...foretold" (*PL*, XII. 327) shall avenge Adam and "bruise/ The Serpent." As Northrop Frye points out, the "defeat of Satan as tempter" in *Paradise Regained* "fulfills the prophecy

in Genesis that the seed of Adam shall 'bruise the serpent's head."[6] Similarly, Samuel Smith argues that the poem presents a "dragon-killing," and that in Milton's three temptation scenes, "Christ's final victory over the dragon is typologically and prophetically present."[7] Indeed, *Paradise Regained* establishes its link to the subject of the Son's revenge at the very outset by stating that the object of the "brief epic"[8] is "Recovered Paradise" and of "the tempter foiled/ In all his wiles, defeated and repulsed" by "one man's firm obedience fully tried/ Through all temptation" (*PR*, I. 3-6). An even more direct indication that the poem attempts to depict the fulfillment of the promise that the seed of Adam will avenge mankind comes from "the adversary" (*PR*, I. 33), Satan himself, who proclaims during the first demonic council that,

> And now too soon for us the circling hours
> This dreaded time have compassed, wherein we
> Must bide the stroke of that long-threatened wound
> (*PR*, I. 57-59)

As Satan's dread of the impending blow suggests, *Paradise Regained* is a story about the Son's revenge on Satan, the execution of that "fatal wound" Satan had awaited with dread ever since he supplanted Adam and Eve with deception (*PR*, I. 49-55). Milton's treatment of the Son's revenge on Satan, however, is unlike any which those familiar with Satan's revenge or the genre of revenge tragedy would expect. It is, I would argue, an apotheosis of revenge.[9]

One of the characteristics of the Son's revenge, which make it an apotheosis of the revenge topos, is its impersonal nature. The Son's refusal to submit to the temptation of pride or to the equally deadly temptation of personal anger enables him to rise above the corrupting violence and wrath that frequently characterize sinful revenge, allowing him instead to become the instrument of divine justice. Not all critics, however, see it that way. In relation to the Son's demeanor in his battle with Satan, critics such as David Mikics, for example, have suggested that the Son is too much like Satan in his "edgy impatience, and too responsive to his angry stimulus" (Mikics, 163).[10] According to P. A. Samuels, nevertheless, the Son's revenge in *Paradise Regained* transcends the moral flaws of the revenge tradition such as "barbarism, violence, wrath, ranting, striking wide, exultation...rashness." Instead, the recurring language of "due time, retiring, waiting, fulfilling"[11] in the brief epic is proof of Milton's attempt to transform the traditional subject of revenge tragedy, presenting us with his "version of a revenger who during the course of the work remains innocent of sin" (P. A. Samuels, 139-141). Certainly, as the Father informs Gabriel, though the Son will avenge mankind by driving Satan and his apostate angels back to hell and restore Paradise to humanity, his vengeance will be exclusively a spiritual victory,

> [Satan] now shall know I can produce a man
> Of female seed, far abler to resist
> All his solicitations, and at length

All his vast force, and drive him back to hell,
Winning by conquest, what the first man lost
By fallacy surprised. But first I mean
To exercise him in the wilderness,
There he shall first lay down the rudiments
Of his great warfare, ere I send him forth
To conquer Sin and Death the two grand foes,
By humiliation and strong sufferance:
His weakness shall o'ercome Satanic strength
(*PR*, I. 150-161)

The spiritual qualities of humility and sufferance in the Son's vengeance are in a diametrical opposition to those of the adversary, who is "with envy fraught and rage" (*PR*, I. 38) suggesting that the "true 'revenger' is sometimes one who "suffers patiently" (Ide 1983, 122).

Another principal feature of Milton's treatment of revenge in *Paradise Regained* is the way in which the brief epic intertwines the story of revenge with the story of restoration. Speaking mainly in reference to *Paradise Lost*, Desmond M. Hamlet argues that, for Milton, God's justice is "essentially creative and restorative" in nature. Thus, the concept of the Son's justice cannot be restricted merely to retribution "as if the Son of God were a mere agent of God's law" whose role is punishing the wicked (Hamlet 1976, 166-7). Rather, in accordance with the "essentially restorative and instrumental nature and function

of God's justice" (Hamlet 1976, 32), the focus of the Son' revenge in *Paradise Regained* is not merely the punishment of Satan, but the restoration of fallen man. Richard S. Ide argues that justice and mercy are reconciled in the Son so that "the merciful promise of redemption" is joined "to the administration of divine justice" (Ide 1983, 125). Milton himself emphasizes this dual nature of the Son's "mediatorial office" (*Columbia* XV, 285) in his *De Doctrina Christiana*: "The effect and design of the whole ministry of mediation is, satisfaction of divine justice on behalf of all men, and the conformation of the faithful to the image of Christ" (*Columbia* XV, 315). Though Milton emphasizes that Christ "OVERCOMES AND SUBDUES HIS ENEMIES" (*Columbia* XV, 301),[12] divine justice cannot be satisfied by punishment alone, but must incorporate the concept of recovery by his own example. Closely tied up with the "restorative" aspect of the Son's revenge, then, is the theme of *Imitatio Christi*.

The underscoring of the restorative nature of the Son's revenge in *Paradise Regained* can be found at the very beginning of the brief epic where the epic narrator, in his invocation, associates the "defeat" and "repulse" of the tempter with "Recovered Paradise" (*PR*, I. 1-7). The Father, who informs Gabriel that the ultimate purpose of the Son's vengeance is the restoration of man, further confirms that the Son's revenge in *Paradise Regained* manifests the corrective as well as the punitive aspect of justice.

> [Satan] now shall know I can produce a man
> Of female seed, far abler to resist

All his solicitations, and at length

All his vast force, and drive him back to hell,

Winning by conquest what the first man lost

By fallacy surprised.

(*PR*, I. 150-155)

Two notable ideas are expressed in the Father's speech to Gabriel. One is the special calling of the Son of Man to fulfill the protevangelical prophecy of revenge by crushing the head of the serpent and thereby "...earn salvation for the sons of men" (*PR*, I. 167). The other is the emphasis on overcoming temptation (Satan's "solicitations") as the means of realizing that purpose.[13] As Gary D. Hamilton points out, "Milton uses the temptation episodes to foreshadow Christ's future victories over Satan and thus 'incorporates the whole Christian theology of redemption'."[14] Despite the objection that Paradise is regained through the Passion and not his Temptation,[15] the theological context which allows Milton to use the episode of the Temptation in the Wilderness as a paradigm for salvation can be found in the works of other English Puritans of the period such as Thomas Taylor and William Perkins. Thomas Taylor, for instance, describes Christ's Temptation in connection to brushing the serpent's head, destroying and dissolving the works of the Devil and as the means to man's spiritual "rescue." [16] William Perkins also concludes that because Christ, as the Second Adam, undertakes to recapitulate Adam's trial, standing "in our roome and stead," the Son of God recovers for man his lost spiritual condition.[17]

Paradise Regained, then, is about the unique nature of the Son's revenge. Milton's dramatization of the Son's revenge overturns our generic expectation that it will be marred by violence, rage and hatred. Rather, Milton offers a new approach to revenge by presenting revenge as a tool for fulfilling God's providential design for man's redemption. By resisting a series of temptations which parallel the temptations of Adam and Eve, but with contrasting results, the Son shows not only the fulfillment of his revenge on Satan but also how the Fall may be reversed through imitation of his example.[18] The humanity of the Son, as he fulfills his protevangelical mission, is crucial to Milton's purpose of depicting the "restorative and instrumental nature" of the Son's revenge. As Jack W. Herring points out, "Christ must—as a man—defeat Satan" if that example is to be "demonstrated to be viable." Failure to do so would leave man with "no model, no comfort, no inspiration, no lesson, no confidence, no source of strength in the example."[19] As such, the Son serves as "both an individual and as an emblem."[20] According to Stella P. Revard, the trials of the Son in the poem correspond to those of Adam in that both Adam and the Son face the temptations to "sensual pleasure" and "desire for glory."[21] By subjecting the Son to trials that parallel those of Adam and Eve, the poem attempts a recapitulation of the moment of the Fall in order to dramatize both the Son's vengeance against the source of that Fall and the recovery of Paradise. Thus, as Richard Douglas Jordan points out, if the first Adam involved all men in sin and enabled Satan and his crew to rise from hell to reside in middle air, the triumph of Christ not only dislodges Satan from that position but involves all men in the triumph of

the Second Adam.[22] John M. Steadman similarly argues that the central action of *Paradise Regained* involves "a simultaneous process of ceremonial divesture and investure, 'putting off' the garment of the First Adam and 'putting on' those of the Second Adam." Steadman, therefore, argues that the poem depicts "the process of man's gradual renewal in knowledge after the image of the Creator...a paradigm of regeneration."[23] It is in this sense that the Son not only avenges Adam but succeeds him. As the Second Adam, he rewrites divine history, as the New Testament rewrote the Old. As this Second Adam, he demonstrates the process of recovery through his own example, giving the sons of Adam a second opportunity at Paradise if they but follow his example.

Toward the end of *Paradise Regained*, the Son, having resisted all the temptations of the world, is whisked by Satan to the "highest Pinnacle" of the Temple. There the adversary of mankind challenges the Son: "There stand, if thou wilt stand; to stand upright/ Will ask thee skill" (*PR*, IV. 551-552). Purified through the trial of his temptations, however, the Son responds by putting his faith in God saying, "[t]empt not the Lord thy God..." and stands while Satan, "smitten with amazement" (*PR*, IV. 561-562) falls. As Ira Clark points out, the Son's stand during Satan's fall is the central emblem of *Paradise Regained*. The climactic scene on the pinnacle of the Temple portrays the fulfillment of the protevangelical promise that the seed of man will avenge mankind as the Son, the Second Adam, "supplants Satan" and "visually prophesies himself to be the new king of the middle air," regaining by conquest the Paradise that Satan

usurped (Clark 1974, pp. 106-7). According to the Father's prefatory speech, however, the Son defeats Satan not for himself but for man's salvation (*PR*, I. 140-67). In order for the Son's vengeance to be complete, therefore, human nature must be restored to its prelapsarian state. As Raphael points out in *Paradise Lost*, "God made [Adam] perfect" but "not immutable" (*PL*, V. 524). Because of sin, therefore, Adam and Eve suffer "a conscious degradation of mind" and "the loss of divine grace" (*Columbia* XV, p. 205).[24] According to Milton, the object of Christ's miraculous incarnation was to "obviate [this] contamination consequent upon the sin of Adam" (*Columbia* XV, 281). The drama of the Son's revenge in *Paradise Regained*, thus, centers on the recovery of "divine grace" lost through sin. This emerges in a sequence of temptation scenes, which culminates not only in the Son's vengeance on Satan, but also the recovery of Paradise which was lost through Adam's disobedience (*PR*, I. 1-7). It is for this reason that the Son enters the wilderness, the traditional locus of lost Paradise, in his role as the Second Adam and defeats Satan by overcoming temptation. In the overall scheme of *Paradise Regained*, therefore, the Son's victory over each temptation in the poem can be viewed as instances of his revenge against Satan. However, the temptations to stones-to-bread, of wealth, glory and zeal as well as the pinnacle scene appear to have a more direct bearing on the issue of revenge and clarify the manner in which the Son transforms the traditional revenge. Thus, in the following, I will examine how the "restorative" nature of the Son's revenge is manifest in *Paradise Regained*.

The dramatization of the "restorative" nature of the Son's revenge in *Paradise Regained* begins with the Son's defeat of Satan's stones-to-bread temptation. Interestingly, this temptation contains no direct "allusions to the Christ-Adam parallel" (Lewalski 1966, 193). However, according to Patrick Grant, because it represents an assault on the Son's faith which "is at the basis of every temptation," it offers a logical "prior temptation" subsuming and serving to introduce all other following temptations (Grant, 37). Noticing the "glimpses of his father's glory" that "shine" in the face of the Son and sensing "danger on the utmost edge," Satan decides to tempt the Son with "well-couched fraud, well-woven snares" (*PR*, I. 92-97). Since temptation succeeded so well with the first Adam, Satan decides to try "Temptation and all guile" to "subvert" this "man of men, attested Son of God" whom he suspects is "raised/ To end his reign on earth so long enjoyed" (*PR*, I. 122-125). Thus, Satan begins his trial of the young Jesus whom he finds alone after wandering forty days in the wilderness, appearing disguised as "an aged man in rural weeds" (*PR*, I. 314) and challenging him to turn stones into bread:

> But if thou be the Son of God, command
> That out of these hard stones be made thee bread;
> So shalt thou save thyself and us relieve
> With food, whereof we wretched seldom taste.
> (*PR*, I. 342-45)

In Satan's phrase, "if thou be Son of God," there is a subtle temptation to doubt and unbelief. Correctly seeing through Satan's trap as a test of his faith in God, however, the Son refuses to allow physical hunger to cause distrust in God's providence. Rather, asking whether there is any force in bread, the Son refutes Satan's temptation to rash and precipitous action by his unflinching obedience to the Word of God, remarking that "[m]an lives not by bread only, but each word/ Proceeding from the mouth of God" (*PR*, I. 347, 349-50). By successfully thwarting Satan's lure with his knowledge of and faith in the Word of God, the Son not only begins the process of his unique revenge which will culminate in the recovery of lost Paradise but demonstrates in his example "the ability of every man who lives under the New Dispensation to defeat Satan in his own life through the right use of the Scripture" (Elliott, 239).

The temptation that is even more helpful in explicating the issue of the Son's revenge against Satan for seducing Adam and Eve to sin in *Paradise Regained* is the temptation to wealth, glory, and zeal. Having failed in his temptation to doubt, Satan disappears, "[u]p to the middle region of the air" (*PR*, II. 117) to contemplate his next attack. There "doubting" and fearing defeat and "...expulsion down to hell" (*PR*, II. 147, 128), Satan next decides to try the Son's constancy with "manlier objects" that have "...more show/ Of worth, of honour, glory, and popular praise;/ Rocks whereon greatest men have oftest wrecked" (*PR*, II. 225-28). Finding the Son's faith to be steadfast, therefore, in this temptation to wealth, glory, and zeal sequence, Satan follows up his attack on

the Son with a more insidious strategy by trying him with the temptation to the sin of impatience, preemptory action and violence and, in this display of self-sufficiency, to deny his trust in God. As Samuels points out, however, *Paradise Regained* attempts a "rewriting of the revenge tradition" by giving us "Milton's version of a revenger" who overcomes "the tremendous difficulty of balancing patience and action" (P. A. Samuels, 141). By overcoming the temptation to "ambition," "war," and "violence" (*PR*, III. 91), therefore, the Son valorizes patience, temperance, and "strong sufference" as the best means of accomplishing his vengeance on Satan.

Because, as noted by Charles A. Huttar, Satan is unable to "link messiahship with suffering, Satan tempts Christ with immediate exaltation" (Huttar, 251). After observing how the Son's thoughts are set on "high designs,/ High actions," Satan tempts the Son by suggesting that the best means of fulfilling his high purpose is to seek worldly "wealth." Because "[m]oney brings honour, friends, conquest, and realms" (*PR*, II. 422), Satan urges the Son to,

> Get riches first, get wealth, and treasure heap,
> Not difficult, if thou hearken to me,
> Riches are mine, fortune is in my hand;
> They whom I favour thrive in wealth amain,
> While virtue, valour, wisdom sit in want.
> (*PR*, II. 427-31)

Ascribing all worldly wealth to himself, thus, Satan insinuates that if the Son is to ascend "Judah's throne/ (Thy throne)" (*PR*, II. 424-25), he must seek Satan's help. To Satan's offer of wealth and patronage, however, the Son replies "patiently" that without "virtue, valour, wisdom" (*PR*, II. 431), the worldly riches as means to "[h]igh actions" are self-defeating. "Riches," according to the Son, are not the proper means to the sort of crown he is seeking: "...not for that crown,/ Golden in show, is but a wreath of thorns" (*PR*, II. 453-44). More in keeping with his mission are the means of "virtue, valour, wisdom" with which Old testament figures such as Gideon, Jephtha and David "have oft attained/ In lowest poverty to highest deeds" (*PR*, II. 437-39). In essence, to accept Satan's offer of wealth as means to his kingdom would be tantamount to confusing the ends with the means. For the Son to accept Satan's help would be to become subservient to those means. Moreover, to accept Satan's offer of wealth and its attendant "honour, friends, conquest, and realms" would be to commit the sin of premature and vainglorious action resulting in the Son's "immediate exaltation" at the cost of anticipating God's will.[25] The Son's solution to Satan's temptation to rash action is to balance impatience with patience, action with non-action through a language of denial.[26] It is with such patience and waiting on the will of God instead of impatience and rash action that the Son achieves his revenge by defeating Satan and regain "by conquest what the first man lost" (*PR*, I. 154). It is how Milton develops his apotheosis of revenge in *Paradise Regained*. As we shall see, it is a message that is repeated over and over again in *Paradise Regained*.

When his temptation to worldly wealth fails to move the Son, Satan next tempts the Son with flattery, complimenting him on his intelligence, his eloquence, and his demeanor (*PR*, III. 9-19). Flattery, however, is merely a prelude to the next temptation as Satan suddenly urges the Son to glorify himself with earthly fame and glory:

> These godlike virtues wherefore dost thou hide?
> Affecting private life, or more obscure
> In savage wilderness, wherefore deprive
> All earth her wonder at thy acts, thyself
> The fame and glory...
> (*PR*. III. 21-25)

Playing on the Son's "godlike virtues," Satan attempts to stroke the vanity of the Son in order to goad him into the sin of pride and vainglorious action. To further strengthen his argument, Satan holds up Alexander, Scipio, Pompey, and Julius Caesar as examples of those "most erected spirits, most tempered pure" (*PR*. III. 28) and urges he surpass them (*PR*, III. 38-42). Satan's position, however, is in direct opposition to "the pattern of heroic patience and better fortitude of suffering and martyrdom" that the Son affirms to be the true measure of heroism throughout *Paradise Regained*.[27] In response to Satan's intemperate prompting, therefore, the Son "rejects the notion that exaltation can be separated from obedience" (Huttar, 251) and denounces the pursuit of glory as but "the

blaze of fame" (*PR*. III. 47). While Satan eagerly espouses examples of military and political power to illustrate his definition of glory, the Son patiently counters with Job and Socrates as examples of "true glory" (*PR*, III. 60). "True glory," according to the Son, is attained "without ambition, war, or violence;/ By deeds of peace, by wisdom eminent,/ By patience, temperance" (*PR*, III. 90-92).[28] The Son's assertion of a new conception of glory in this scene goes hand in hand with Milton's attempt to depict a new and passive approach to revenge in *Paradise Regained*. Just as the Son rebuffs Satan's temptation to fame and glory by espousing patience and temperance over war and violence, so it will be the power of his "humiliation and strong sufferance" that will avenge Adam and Eve and drive Satan back to hell. It is by waiting, enduring, and watching for the hand of providence that the Son will achieve his impersonal and godly vengeance.

Though momentarily stricken dumb with guilt "for [Satan] himself/ Insatiable of glory had lost all" (*PR*, III. 146-8), Satan, nevertheless, again tempts the Son into untimely action by appealing to his sense of zeal and duty. As indicated by Stanley Fish, the basis for Satan's attempts to "provoke the Son to action" in this temptation is "the desire of the apostles [Andrew and Simon] for a dramatic and imminent redress of their grievances" (Fish 1971, 30). It is also, according to Joan S. Bennett, at the heart of "the ambiguity and heartache experienced by the adherents of the Good Old Cause on the matter of reading the providences."[29] Attempting to use prophecy against the Son, therefore, Satan attempts to seduce the Son into taking on the role of a rash and

impetuous revenger arguing that he is duty-bound to take up "arms" against the "Roman yoke" (*PR*, III. 166, 158):

> If kingdom move thee not, let move thee zeal,
> And duty; zeal and duty are not slow;
> But on occasion's forelock watchful wait.
> They themselves rather are occasion best,
> Zeal of thy Father's house, duty to free
> They country from her heathen servitude;
> So shalt thou fulfil, best verify
> The prophets old, who sung thy endless reign,
> The happier reign the sooner it begins,
> Reign then; what canst thou better do the while?
> (*PR*, III. 171-79)

This passage shows Satan at his most eloquent moment as he subverts prophesy, zeal, and duty for the purpose of luring the Son into presumptuous action. As Bennett points out, Satan's argument is a close approximation of "a Miltonic definition of public commitment," close but "deadly in its error" (Bennett 1989, 179). The temptation appeals to a particular kind of vengeance involving meeting violence with violence and tyranny with tyranny that had appealed to the young Jesus but since renounced for "winning words" and "persuasion" (*PR*, I. 215-16, 222-23). Hence, we can see the guile of Satan here. It would be so

tempting to act suddenly to avenge the violation of the Temple and the "foul affronts" to the Law (*PR*, III. 160-61). As David Quint points out, however, reliance upon military strength rather than upon God would be tantamount to committing the sin of pride.[30] Even worse, to take retribution against the Romans in an impetuous manner would be to doubt God's providence by anticipating God's will with his own. Realizing that Satan's temptation revolves around timing and means,[31] therefore, the Son defeats Satan's wiles by refusing violence and premature action: "All things are best fulfilled in their due time,/ And time there is for all things, Truth hath said" (*PR*, III. 182-83). In not acting, however, the Son is providing his strongest affirmation of his faith in God's providence that the Father will deliver his people in his own good time. Also, to Satan's argument that only means of achieving his kingdom is through the use of military might, the Son responds with "humiliation and strong sufferance":

> What if he hath decreed that I shall first
> Be tried in humble state, and things adverse,
> By tribulations, injuries, insults,
> Contempts, and scorns, and snares, and violence,
> Suffering, abstaining, quietly expecting
> Without distrust or doubt, that he may know
> What I can suffer, how obey? Who best
> Can suffer, best can do; best reign, who first

Well hath obeyed

(*PR*, III. 188-96)

David Loewenstein explains in connection with the above passage that the poem emphasizes "the inner faith and quiet expectation" exemplified by the Son as he "perseveres, overcomes, and ultimately regains 'lost Paradise'."[32] Thus, having presented a more humble and passive view of kingship and heroism, the Son espouses patience, waiting, delayed action and faith as the best means of achieving God's will. This is how the Son achieves his revenge on Satan. It is also how mankind can recover from the Fall, by slow increments rather than sudden and revolutionary action. It is, I would argue, an apotheosis of revenge.

Satan's reaction to the Son's "non-action"(Fish 1971, 31) is implicitly to accuse him of impiety for not actively seeking to accomplish God's will. He asks, "[w]hy move thy feet so slow to what is best,/ Happiest both to thyself and all the world,/ That thou who worthiest art shouldst be their king" (*PR*, III. 224-26)? Implying that perhaps the Son hesitates because his private life has left him unprepared for his mission (*PR*, III. 232-35), Satan offers to help: "...I will bring thee where thou soon shalt quit/ Those rudiments" (PR, III. 244-45). Satan, therefore, transports the Son up to a mountaintop and conjures up visions of Parthia and Rome. In these two episodes, which are merely modifications of Satan's previous argument that attempts to lure the Son to untimely action through its appeal to zeal and duty, Satan again endeavors to provoke the Son into the posture of a rash and violent revenger.

In the first instance, Satan offers the Son visions of the Parthians in all their "military pride" (*PR*, III. 294- 315) so that the Son may find out for himself what it is that will "reinstall" him in "David's royal seat," and achieve "[d]elieverance of [his] brethren" (*PR*, III. 372-74). He claims that unless the Son strives to act, the prophecy of his "messiahship" will not come to being: "...prediction still/ In all things, and all men, supposes means,/ Without means used, what it predicts revokes." Thus, Satan invites the Son to "[e]ndeavour, as thy father David did" (*PR*, III. 354-56, 353) offering the Son the military might of the Parthians:

> ...it shall be my task
> To render thee the Parthian at dispose;
> Choose which thou wilt by conquest or by league.
> By him thou shalt regain, without him not,
> That which alone can truly reinstall thee
> In David's royal seat, his true successor,
> Deliverance of thy brethren, those ten tribes
> Whose offspring in his territory yet serve
> In Habor, and among the Medes dispersed,
> (*PR*, III. 368-76)

According to Bennett, the temptation the Son faces at this juncture is analogous to the "dilemma of the English radical humanist" who is acutely aware

of the need not to "either act precipitously or fail to act" and "to find the right time and way to act" (Bennett 1989, 185). Pointing to the ten tribes of Israel languishing under servitude, Satan tries to tempt the Son to immediately act to free the Israelites. The Son's response, however, is an unequivocal rejection of Satan's methods for redressing their grievances. The Son argues that "fragile arms" and "instrument of war" may be "[p]lausible to the world" but that to him they "are worth naught." He maintains that these means are "argument/ Of human weakness rather than of strength" (*PR*, III. 388, 393, 401-02). More importantly, to Satan's attempt to lure the Son into premature and aggrandizing action by deliberately misrepresenting the Son's "messiahship" as a temporal kingship that is meant to effect an immediate deliverance of the Israelites from political oppression, the Son responds with a rationale for inaction, for waiting. Thus, the Son refuses to deliver the Israelites from their political servitude "precipitously" while they choose to remain in *spiritual* servitude:

> Should I of these the liberty regard,
> Who freed, as to their ancient patrimony,
> Unhumbled, unrepentant, unreformed,
> Headlong would follow; and to their gods perhaps
> Of Bethel and of Dan? No, let them serve
> Their enemies, who serve idols with God.
> (*PR*, III. 427-32)

Lest we overlook the subtlety of the Son's argument, it must be emphasized that he never categorically denies the Israelites all hope of deliverance. What he does do is refuse them deliverance while they persist to "wrought their own captivity" by worshipping idols rather than God (*PR*, III. 415-18). To restore this nation in its current "[u]nhumbled, unrepentant, unreformed" state would not only be futile but would to anticipate God's will, His "time and providence" (*PR*, III.440). By tempting the Son to seek redress for the Israelites against the tyranny of the Romans through violent and untimely action, Satan wished to lure the Son to the sin of self-exaltation. Under such condition, revenge becomes a temptation to sin. Included among those who work against the will of God, according to Samuels, are revengers "who misconceive the nature of action and therefore work too precipitously, too violently, too rashly" (Samuels, 151-52). Thus, Fish argues that "the prerequisite for real action" that is in accordance to the will of God, "is the disposition to withhold action even in the face of situations which seem to call for it" (Fish 1971, 44-45). By resisting the lure of power, glory and violent means, therefore, the Son elevates his revenge so that it becomes the catalyst of obedience and an instrument of man's spiritual salvation.

As indicated by the narrator in the prologue to Book IV of *Paradise Regained*, though the battle between the Son and Satan, for all practical purpose, is over at this point, Satan "for very spite/ Still will be tempting him" (PR, IV. 12-13). Thus, following the Son's rejection of Parthian military might, Satan continues in desperation to seduce the Son with "glorious Rome, queen of the

earth" (*PR*, IV. 45). Noting that the emperor Tiberius is now "[o]ld and lascivious, and from Rome retired/ To Capreae an island small" in order to enjoy in private "[h]is horrid lusts," and ruling through "a wicked favourite," "[h]ated of all, and hating" (*PR*, IV. 90-97), Satan tempts the Son with his offer of Rome by appealing to his sense of justice and moral duty implying that to evict the evil Tiberius from his throne would be a fitting revenge for his sins:

> with what ease
> Endued with regal virtues as thou art,
> Appearing, and beginning noble deeds,
> Might'st thou expel this monster from his throne
> Now made a sty, and in his place ascending
> A victor people free from servile yoke!
> (*PR*, IV. 97-102)

Central to Satan's temptation is an attempt to lure the Son into misconstruing the nature of his role as the protevangelical revenger by insinuation that he, as reformer, should act instantly to avenge the people of Rome. Just as the Son reacts to Satan's argument that he free the Israelites from the oppression of Rome with the praise of "[s]uffering, abstaining, quietly expecting" (*PR*, III. 192), so the Son responds to the temptation of Rome with the same refusal to act prematurely to take revenge upon a depraved emperor or impose freedom upon a people who have willingly become "vile and base"

asking "could of inward slave make outward free"(*PR*, IV. 132, 145)? Rather, as the Son informs Satan, it is to "[e]xpel a devil who first made him such" (*PR*, IV. 129), thereby warning Satan of his own impending retribution. When, in an act of desperation revealing of his depravation and lack of understanding, Satan makes one last offer of the kingdoms of the world if but the Son "fall down,/ And worship me as thy superior lord" (*PR*, IV. 166-67), the Son commands: "Get thee behind me; plain thou now appear'st/ That Evil One, Satan for ever damned" (*PR*, IV. 193-94).

The narrator tells us that with the Son's rejection of Satan's last effort to snare the Son into the bondage of sin, Satan is left "Quite at a loss, for all his darts were spent" (*PR*, IV. 366). Unlike Adam and Eve, Satan's temptations have fallen on deaf ears. Using Perkins' analogy, the Son's repudiation of glory, power and premature action symbolizes that the Son has stood "in our roome and stead." That is, he symbolically recovers for man his original spiritual condition. The only weapon left in Satan's arsenal, therefore, is the threat of physical violence which comprises the action of his final temptation. After failing in his attempt to terrify the Son with the device of a tempestuous storm and infernal ghosts which, according to Grant is a means by which Satan hopes to move the Son to the sin of "unjust anger, or rage" (Grant, 42), Satan, "swoll'n with rage" (*PR*, IV. 499), transports the Son to the pinnacle of the Temple and challenges him to "stand":

There stand, if thou wilt stand; to stand upright

Will ask thee skill; I to thy Father's house

Have brought thee, and highest placed, highest is best,

Now show thy progeny; if not to stand,

Cast thyself down; safely if Son of God:

For it is written, He will give command

Concerning thee to his angels, in their hands

They shall uplift thee, lest at any time

Thou chance to dash thy foot against a stone.

(*PR*, IV. 551-59)

Lewalski has called Satan's action during the tower episode "an attempted murder of Christ" (Lewalski, 306). Samuel Smith concurs, saying Satan commits an act of "tyrannic violence" and that the Son is "in peril of his life" (S. Smith, 78). By placing the Son under such dire situation, Satan believes he is forcing the Son to reflect upon whether the Father will catch him or let him dash his foot against a stone. In this final temptation, Satan believes he is forcing the Son to obey his demand that he either stand or throw himself into the arms of God's ministering angels. If the Son were to act, either by presuming his divinity and choosing to stand, or by despairing of God's help in trying to leap to safety, he would both lose his battle with Satan and fail in his task to redeem mankind. The Son's trial at the pinnacle, however, shows the Son successfully defeating Satan and demonstrating the fulfillment of himself as the perfect man who awaits God's

will. In this scene, Milton replaces Satan's violence and "rage" with the Son's patience and sufferance. Instead of following Satan's logic of either/or, the Son demonstrates, in his non-action, the right way to defeat Satan's rage and guile is through the Word of God:

> ...Also it is written,
> Tempt not the Lord thy God, he said and stood.
> But Satan smitten with amazement fall
> (*PR*, IV. 560-62)

The result of the Son's response is immediate and dramatic as it strikes Satan like a thunderbolt prompting his literal and figurative fall which according to Samuel Smith evokes "the image of the fall of the dragon in Revelation, chapter xii" (S. Smith, 78). Understanding the Pinnacle scene, as Samuel Smith does, in the apocalyptic context is useful in exemplifying the "restorative" nature of the Son's revenge in *Paradise Regained*. Just as the *Revelation* depicts the theme of man's eternal salvation following Christ's vengeance on Satan,[33] so the Son's stand on the pinnacle is symbolic not only of the final defeat of Satan but the redemption of humanity. In this way the Son's revenge in *Paradise Regained* represents, symbolically, not only the restoration of mankind, but also serves as a model, teaching man how he may also participate in the Son's revenge by following the Son's example.

The symbolism of Satan's fall is hard to miss, illustrating the finality of Satan's defeat. Comparing the Son to Hercules who had strangled Antaeus, the poem tells us that Satan has been fitly "[t]hrottled at length in the air," falling from "when he stood to see his victor fall" (*PR*, IV. 562-71). This, we are told by the heavenly angels, is the fulfillment of God's foretold revenge:

> ...now thou hast avenged
> Supplanted Adam, and, by vanquishing
> Temptation, hast regained lost Paradise
> (*PR*, IV, 606-608)

Paradise Regained, then, is about the Son's revenge on Satan, of the fulfillment of divine justice on Satan for occasioning Adam and Eve's fall. Since the Fall, Satan has occupied the "middle region of the air." However, by making the series of right choices, the Son has not only displaced Satan from the airy kingdom he has been unlawfully usurping but also shown fallen man the way back to Paradise. It is in this sense that he has "avenged/ Supplanted Adam." The "snares" with which Satan has seduced mankind "are broke" and his "seat of earthly bliss" in man is now "failed" (*PR*, IV. 611-12). Though, in an allusion to the Cross he still has to bear, the angels tells us the Son must "[n]ow enter" upon his vocation "to save mankind" (*PR*, IV. 635), the Son's status as the "[q]ueller of Satan" (*PR*, IV. 634) is irresistible at this point. As Huttar phrases it, "the victory over Satan in the wilderness was the key conquest after which all else was

'inevitable'" (Huttar, 250). The battle between the Son and Satan in the Wilderness, thus, prefigures the final defeat of Satan at the end of time. *Paradise Regained*, therefore, concludes with the angels' praise of the Son's accomplishment and the warning to Satan that his days are numbered: "But thou, infernal serpent, shalt not long/ Rule in the clouds" (*PR*, IV. 618-19).

As we have seen, in *Paradise Regained*, Milton exploits the restorative and instrumental nature of the Son's revenge in order to dramatize his idea of a paradigm of recovery and redemption. The same paradigm, however, is latent with a political vision for the post-Restoration Puritan revolutionaries. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton explores the reasons for the failure of the Puritan Revolution, which, he believes, derives from the moral failures of its leaders and the nation. As Christopher Hill points out in his *Milton and the English Revolution*, however, the recognition of failure does not mean that Milton's early revolutionary zeal is displaced by a denial of God's providence or that Milton's later poems such as *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* become the railing of a defeated political outcast. Rather, I agree with Hill that Milton attempts to show the Puritan revolutionaries in *Paradise Regained* that by following Jesus's example, not only can the Fall be reversed but they can "recover the lost internal Paradise and themselves become Sons of God" (Hill 1977, 350, 423).

While some critics such as Andrew Milner and William Kolbrener attempt to read *Paradise Regained* as an apolitical text that espouses Quaker

"quietism,"[34] more recent criticism has tended to concur with Hill that *Paradise Regained*, together with *Samson Agonistes*, are charged with political intent for the defeated Puritan revolutionaries. Hill, for example, argues that despite the apparent defeat of his cause, Milton never reneged on his "total political commitment." Rather, he stresses that, in renouncing political action, the Son in *Paradise Regained* is not rejecting action *per se* but merely the causes "which led the English revolutionaries astray—avarice and ambition, the false politics of compromise with evil...the urge for instant solutions" and not his "determination to change this world" (Hill 1977, 421, 459-60). Elizabeth Sauer likewise states that though the Son "renounces temporal force...his verbal criticism of an absolute and centralized governmental power and his prophesied destruction of all monarchies are not the expressions of a quietist attitude."[35] Joan S. Bennett similarly emphasizes the need to understand that bound to the Son's "interior experience" in *Paradise Regained* is "a need for action in the world." Because, for Milton, the "cultivation of inner light" is tied to "a commitment to social and political activism," Bennett argues that the portrayal of the Son's obedience in *Paradise Regained* is intended as "both the source and model for the readers' own spiritual liberation and public action" (Bennett 1989, 161-62, 169).[36]

From a worldly perspective, *Paradise Regained* may indeed end unsatisfactorily. At the conclusion of the poem, we do not witness the Messiah lead Israel out of bondage. This is projected into the future. Although the angels inform us that "A fairer Paradise is founded now/ For Adam and his chosen sons" (*PR*, IV. 613-4), we are also reminded that it is not yet the time to live without

fear of "Tempter and temptation" (*PR*, IV. 616-7). Though the angels urge the Son to "[n]ow enter, and begin to save mankind" (*PR*, IV. 635), we are told that the Son "...unobserved/ Home to his mother's house private returned" (*PR*, IV. 638-39). In the end, the Son's defeat of Satan's temptation does not lead to the kind of action that would allay the "heartache" Bennett argues the adherents of the Good Old Cause are experiencing after the Restoration.[37] Especially troubling for readers who see *Paradise Regained* as a poetry of disillusionment and withdrawal from politics is the Son's perceived negative attitude, his scathing renunciation of immediate action as he berates "the people" as "a herd confused, A miscellaneous rabble, who extol/ Things vulgar" (*PR*, III. 49-51). The implication is that only a poet who had little hope for success in political action could espouse such a stance.

As Hill is quick to point out, however, it would be wrong to attribute the Son's renunciation of violence and premature action to "Milton's spleen or disappointment." On the contrary, because "political failure was ultimately moral failure," Hill argues that, in *Paradise Regained*, it is "the Son of God's *duty* to disregard the wishes of those whose standards have been hopelessly vitiated by...avarice and ambition of this world" (Hill 1977, 350, 426). It is for this reason that the poem places greater emphasis on rectifying the soul, of moving one to love and serve God rather than the imperative to action. The Son's critique of the Israelites and the Romans, therefore, is not an unequivocal denunciation. Instead, it is a carefully prescribed qualification intended to define for the Puritan revolutionaries more appropriate means and goals as well as providing a heroic

paradigm suitable for their imitation. As such, *Paradise Regained* represents a further attempt by Milton to instruct the Puritan revolutionaries with respect to their calling as "Sons of God."

In *Paradise Regained*, Milton provides his readers with the perfect example of the Son who avenges Adam and Eve by overcoming every temptation through humility and obedience to the will of God. In so doing, the Son addresses the demands of God's justice with the fulfillment of God's grace. However, if the Son's "stand" on the pinnacle of the tower in *Paradise Regained* is indicative of the recovery of Paradise from the grasp of Satan, in the words of Burton Kurth, the Son's "victory over Satan was meant to represent an essentially human kind of victory, or at least one which, within human limitations, the Christian hero could imitate."[38] Hill likewise stresses the humanity of the Son in *Paradise Regained* saying, "Jesus' refusal, his rejection of the miraculous, stresses his humanity: where Adam and Eve fell by aspiring to be gods, the Son of God triumphs by staying human. The 'perfect man' remains man" (Hill 1977, 414).[39] This emphasis on the humanity of the Son is latent with political overtones for, by portraying the Son who defeats all temptations and assaults by Satan as a Second Adam, "Milton created a compelling model for radical saints in Restoration England" (Loewenstein 1994, 82). The merging of the Son's humanity and his exemplary role as Milton depicts the drama of the Son's revenge in *Paradise Regained* provides the Puritan revolutionaries with an example they can relate to, thereby suggesting hopeful possibilities that they too

can rediscover their vocation to free England from the bondage of sin and *spiritual* servitude.

Paradise Regained, therefore, is not so bleak in its outlook as some critics would have us believe. Instead of being apparent repudiation of all politics after his disappointments over the failure of the Puritan Revolution, *Paradise Regained* carries a voice of faith and hope. As Loewenstein points out, the notion of "'due time,' of waiting and 'quietly expecting'," suggest "a prophetic sense of expectation particularly resonant in the culture of radical Puritanism" (Loewenstein 1994, 78-79). Thus, despite the Son's refusal to bring about instant solutions to Israel's problems in *Paradise Regained*, the poem is remarkably hopeful in its posture of expectancy. Because of the "restorative and instrumental" nature of the Son's vengeance, man is able to choose to walk the path of the righteous. We may follow the example of the Son's obedience or we may harden our hearts against him and fall further from God. The choice, Milton seems to imply, is ours to make. Writing with the knowledge of revolutionary failure, Milton knows that not all will make the right choice. However, depending on our choice, he holds out hope that the "fit audience, though few" (*PL*, VII. 31) will achieve redemption.

Notes

[1] *OED*, XII. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* also notes that the term, traditionally applied to God's judgment in Genesis 3.15 ("I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed; He shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for his heel), as indicative of the "triumph over the serpent's evil power" (*NCE*, vol. 11).

[2] All quotations from Milton's *Paradise Regained* are from *Milton: Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey (London and New York: Longman, 1971), IV. 606-607. Further quotations from Milton's *Paradise Regained* appear parenthetically with volume and line numbers.

[3] Barbara K. Lewalski argues that *Paradise Regained* is a "companion poem" to *Paradise Lost* with its own distinct subject and focus. *Milton's Brief Epic: The Genre, Meaning, and Art of Paradise Regained* (Providence: Boston University Press, 1966), p. 325. Stella P. Revard also notes the close link between the two poems in their subject matter. Arguing that *Paradise Regained* is a "sequel" to the *Paradise Lost*, Revard argues that the two poems need to be read together because the latter was born out of Milton's effort to provide an alternate ending to the failure of Adam in the former. Revard Stellar P, "Visions and Revision: A Study of *Paradise Lost* 11 and *Paradise Regained*," *Papers on Language and Literature* 10 (1974): 353-62, pp. 354-5.

[4] Hugh Richmond, *The Christian Revolutionary: John Milton* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1974), p. 134-5.

[5] Stephen Wigler, "The Poet and Satan Before the Light: A Suggestion about Book III and the Opening of Book IV of *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 59 (1978): 59-64, p.62.

[6] Northrop Frye, "The Typology of *Paradise Regained*," *Modern Philology* 53 (1956): 227-38, p. 227.

[7] Samuel Smith, " 'Christs Victorie over the Dragon': The Apocalypse in *Paradise Regained*," *Milton Studies* 29 (1992): 59-82, p. 60.

[8] In defining *Paradise Regained* a "brief epic," I follow Barbara K. Lewalski's assessment that the poem is a biblical epic modeled on the Book of Job (Lewalski 1966, pp. 7-8).

[9] The tendency of Milton to make use of generic expectations for his own purpose has been noted by Lewalski who argues that, in Milton's works, "conventions of genre go far to control our approaches to and our expectations from a literary work" (Lewalski 1966, 5). Samuels, likewise, notes that Milton uses "generic conventions as a springboard from which he could launch his own artistic inventions" (Samuels, 3).

[10] See also A.E. Dyson who argues that Christ's victory is marked by "pride," even "insolence" rather than compassion and moral insight." "The Meaning of *Paradise Regained*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 3 (1961): 197-211, pp. 202ff.

[11] Sanford Budick, *The Dividing Muse* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p.124. Quoted in Samuels, p. 140.

[12] Upper-case letters are Milton's.

[13] Milton's theology of the fall and recovery as dramatized in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* supports this understanding of man's original nature lost by the process of the Fall, and recovered by the process of temptation of the Son.

[14] Gary D. Hamilton, "Creating the Garden Anew: The Dynamics of *Paradise Regained*," *Philological Quarterly* 50 (1971): 567-81, p. 568. See also Emory Elliott, "Milton's Biblical Style in *Paradise Regained*," *Milton Studies* 6 (1974): 227-41. Elliott also argues that we need to see the temptations in context, as part of the Son's mission of salvation. Charles A. Huttar, while conceding that temptation is not redemptive, argues that "Milton contrived by literary means to encompass Redemption proleptically." "The Passion of Christ in *Paradise Regained*," *ELN* 19 (1982): 236-60, p. 237.

[15] For discussions on the theological objection to Milton's choice of the temptation motif, see Charles A. Huttar, p. 236.

[16] Thomas Taylor, *An exposition of Christ's temptation, or, Christ's combate and conquest: being the lyon of the tribe of Judah vanquishing the roaring lyon, assaulting him in three most fierce and hellish temptations* (London: Printed by Cantrell Legge, For Leonard Greene, 1659), pp.1- 2.

[17] William Perkins, *"The Combat Betweene Christ and the Diuell Displayed: Or A Commentarie vpon the Temptations of Christ,"* in *The Workes of that famous and worthy minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, M.W. Perkins*, Vol.2 (London: Printed by John Haviland, for James Boler, 1631), p.376.

[18] According to Irene Samuels, Milton chose the temptation as the basis of *Paradise Regained* because "it was regularly taken as the ground for the *imitatio Christi* and therefore offered itself as that action...which might be amplified and explored as defining the right way for every man.." "The Regaining of Paradise," in *The Prison and the Pinnacle*, ed. Balachandra Rajan (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p.122.

[19] Jack W. Herring, "Christ on the Pinnacle in *Paradise Regained*," *MiltonQ* 15:3 (1981), p. 98.

[20] Ira Clark, "Christ on the Tower in *Paradise Regained*," *MiltonQ* 8 (1974): 104-07, p. 104. Emory Elliott, likewise, argues that the brief epic emphasizes "the humanity of the young Christ...and his role as an example" (Elliott, 225).

[21] Revard, p. 354. See also Patrick Grant who, identifying the three sins of man as "concupiscence, curiosity, and pride," argues that these sins "typify the original temptations of Adam which are, in the fullness of time, endured again by the second Adam." "Time and Temptations in *Paradise Regained*," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 43 (1973): 32-47, p. 36.

[22] Richard Douglas Jordan, "*Paradise Regained* and the Second Adam," *Milton Studies* 9 (1976): 261-75, p.268.

[23] John M. Steadman, *Milton and the Paradoxes of Renaissance Heroism* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), p.212. See also Patrick Grant, p.36 and Lewalski 1966, p. 222-23. Grant states that "just as the sin of Adam introduced time the destroyer in *Paradise Lost*, the prudence and good judgment of Christ, similarly tempted in *Paradise Regained*, revalidates for man the perspectives of time the revealer." Pointing to several references of Second Adam in *Paradise Regained*, Lewalski similarly argues that the poem "presents Christ's temptation as a reprise and reversal of Adam's temptation experience."

[24] The psychological changes of Adam and Eve portrayed in *Paradise Lost* closely follows the first two stages of the "four several degrees of death" outlined by Milton in *De Doctrina Christiana* as punishment for Adam's sin. The first is "ALL THOSE EVILS WHICH LEAD TO DEATH, AND WHICH IT IS AGREED CAME INTO THE WORLD IMMEDIATELY UPON THE FALL OF MAN" including "guiltiness" followed by "terrors of conscience" and attended by "a diminution of the majesty of the human countenance, and a conscious degradation of mind." The second is "SPIRITUAL DEATH" which signifies "the loss of divine grace, and that of innate righteousness, wherein man in the beginning lived with God." This also involves "the loss, or at least in the obscuration to a great extent of that right

reason which enabled man to discern the chief good," and the "deprivation of righteousness and liberty to do good...which constitutes, as it were, the death of the will." This if followed by the "DEATH OF THE BODY" and "DEATH ETERNAL, THE PUNISHMENT OF THE DAMNED" (*Columbia* XV, pp.203-251. Upper case letters Milton's).

[25] As Ashraf H. A. Rushdy points out, the temptation to "premature action" is the "leitmotif of all temptations" in *Paradise Regained*. "Standing Alone on the Pinnacle: Milton in 1752," *Milton Studies* 26 (1990): 193-218, p.198. Quoted in Samuels, 141.

[26] As Stanley Fish indicates, the Son's reaction to all temptations is a stubborn reaffirmation of the resolution "to do nothing at all." "Inaction and Silence: The Reader in *Paradise Regained*," in *Calm of Mind*, ed. Joseph A. Wittreich, Jr. (Cleveland: Case Western University Press, 1971), 25-47, p.30.

[27] John M. Steadman, *Milton and the Renaissance Hero* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 33.

[28] As Paul Baumgartner points out, Milton's message of patience runs through his three major poems and that it is "recommended and praised without qualification as the 'truest fortitude,' the 'exercise' and 'crown' of saints." "Milton and Patience," *Studies in Philology* 60 (1963): 203-13, p. 205.

[29] Joan S. Bennett, *Reviving Liberty: Radical Christian Humanism in Milton's Great Poems* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press, 1989), p.178.

[30] David Quint, "David's census: Milton's politics and *Paradise Regained*," in *Remembering Milton: Essays on the Texts and Traditions*, eds. Mary Nyquist and Margaret W. Ferguson (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), p.131.

[31] According to Rushdy, every temptation in *Paradise Regained* "has been to forego God's time in favor of human expediency and to forego God's means in favor of human means" (Rushdy, 208-09).

[32] David Loewenstein, "The Kingdom Within: Radical Religious Culture and the Politics of *Paradise Regained*," *Literature & History* 3:2 (1994): 63-89, p. 66.

[33] According to J. Barton Payne, the *Revelation* is closely tied up with the theme of "Apocalypse," which is designed to emphasize the elements of "divine wrath, cataclysm, and judgment," and is important in establishing God's final word and

providing for His solution to the evils of the world. *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1973), pp.590-92.

[34] D. Saurat, for instance, suggests that the general mood of the poem is one of fatigue. D. Saurat, *Milton : Man and Thinker* (London: 1924), p.235. Quoted in Andrew Milner, *John Milton and The English Revolution* (London and Basingstoke: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1981), p. 168. Andrew Milner concurs with Saurat, arguing that the "theme of quietism" that dominatès *Paradise Regained* is a reflection of the "social 'fatigue'" precipitated by the collapse of the Commonwealth. Thus, Milner argues that the central intellectual meaning of the poem is contained in "the doctrine of quietism" and the "renunciation of the world, of political action" (Milner, pp. 168, 178-79). More recently, William Kolbrener, arguing that "inaction accompanied by silence...do little to 'justify the ways of God to men'," also reads *Paradise Regained* as a defeatist poem, asserting that "Milton's ambivalences about political engagement...amplified in *Paradise Lost*, reach their final articulation in *Paradise Regained*." William Kolbrener, *Milton's Warring Angels: A Study of Critical Engagements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.144-45, 49. For further reading of *Paradise Regained* as a "retreat from politics," see Blair Worden, "Milton's Republicanism and the Tyranny of Heaven," in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, ed. Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner and Maurizo Viroli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 224-25. S. Marx, "The Prophet Disarmed: Milton and the Quakers', *SEL* 32 (1992): 111-28.

[35] Elizabeth Sauer, *Barbarous Dissonance and Images of Voice in Milton's Epics* (Montreal, Kingston, London and Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), p.136.

[36] For similar readings of *Paradise Regained*, see also Gary D. Hamilton, "*Paradise Regained* and the Private Houses," in *Of Poetry and Politics: New Essays on Milton and His World*, ed. P.G. Stanwood (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance texts & studies, 1995), pp. 239-48. David Loewenstein, "The Kingdom Within: Radical Religious Culture and the Politics of *Paradise Regained*," *Literature & History* 3:2 (1994): 63-89. Stella P. Revard, "Milton and Classical Rome: The Political Context of *Paradise Regained*," in *Rome in the Renaissance: The City and the Myth*, ed. P.A. Ramsay (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval & Renaissance texts & studies, 1982), pp. 409-19. David Quint,128-47.

[37] See note 30 above.

[38] Burton Kurth, *Milton and Christian Heroism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959), p. 116.

[39] The extent and degree to which the Son's divine nature was involved in his defeat of Satan, particularly during the pinnacle scene, was a source of critical debate. Cameron Allen, for example, argues that on the pinnacle the Son "flares into divine certainty." *The Harmonious Vision: Studies in Milton's Poetry* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1954), p.119. Lewalski, while noting that the Son's humanity accentuates the drama of his trial in the wilderness, concedes that on the pinnacle the Son is given the "miracle of full illumination," becoming aware of his identity as the "conscious agent of the divine power" (Lewalski 1966, 317). Rushdy, however, stresses that *Paradise Regained* consistently underscores the Son's humanity arguing that he "is neither the agent nor the recipient of a miracle" and that he stands on the pinnacle "of human volition and by human power" (Rushdy, 203-04). Louis Martz, pointing to Milton's steadfast preference for the term "Son of God" over "Jesus" or "Christ," similarly argues that Milton emphasizes the Son's human nature in the brief epic to highlight his exemplary role. As indicated by Martz, Milton uses the phrase "Son of God" thirty-nine time, "Jesus" six times, "Savior" twenty-one times, "Messiah" seven times, but significantly, "he never once calls his hero by the name of Christ." Martz goes on to argue that Milton avoids the term "Christ" because "he is not writing only about the life of Christ, that unique being, Prophet, Priest, and King; he is writing about a composite generalized being whom he calls the Son of God." *The Paradise Within* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 180-81. For further studies on the Son's human nature in *Paradise Regained*, see Thomas Langford, "The Nature of the Christ of *Paradise Regained*," *MiltonQ* 16 (1982): 63-67; Gary D. Hamilton, "*Philological Quarterly* 50 (1971): 567-81; A. B. Chambers, "The Double Time Scheme in *Paradise Regained*," *Milton Studies* 7 (1975): 189-205; Elaine B. Safer, "The Socratic Dialogue and 'Knowledge in the Making' in *Paradise Regained*," *Milton Studies* 6 (1975): 215-226.

Chapter Four: Rigorous Justice: Samson, Vengeance and Paradigm of Deliverance in *Samson Agonistes*

As F. Michael Krouse has argued, *Samson Agonistes*[1] "brings to full circle the immense story, which Milton took up in *Paradise Lost* and continued in *Paradise Regained*."[2] If *Paradise Lost* depicts the problem of the Fall, *Paradise Regained* dramatizes the Son's victory over Satan, which enables man's restoration to grace. After Milton completed *Paradise Regained*, however, he still has to demonstrate the victory over sin on a human level. Having provided the theologically perfect example of the Son's victory, Milton wanted in *Samson Agonistes* to provide his readers with a more humanly accessible model. Hence, his choice of Samson who, as a humanly flawed protagonist, is more likely to inspire identification. Writing after the failure of the Puritan revolution, Milton wants in particular to demonstrate that redemption was possible even for those, such as the Puritan revolutionaries, who Milton believes were guilty of betraying the godly cause.[3] For this reason, in *Samson Agonistes*, Milton provides for the benefit of fallen man an example of a human hero who is as weak and as sinful as contemporary men.[4] This sinful Samson, Richard S. Ide argues, "completes an exemplary journey of heroic regeneration"[5] before proceeding to fulfill his destined role as instrument of divine vengeance. Samson's victory, which reveals him as "*Homo Victor*" (the parallel of "*Christus Victor*") is thus "a palpable exemplification of the meaning to Man of his Redemption" (Krouse, 132-133).[6]

What it tells Milton's readers is that the final victory over sin is attainable, however difficult, and is not merely an ideal.

Integral to Milton's efforts to depict Samson as an approachable human exemplar in *Samson Agonistes* is his dramatization of Samson as a sanctified revenger of God. In *Paradise Regained*, Milton offers the unique example of the restorative and instrumental nature of the Son's revenge as a paradigm for man's regeneration. *Samson Agonistes* continues where *Paradise Regained* left off. It depicts the story of Samson's revenge on the Philistines in order to dramatize the example of a sanctified revenger on a more human level. The importance of the drama of revenge in *Samson Agonistes* is pointed out by various critics, including John F. Andrews, who argues that *Samson Agonistes* is "a species of revenge tragedy" (Andrews, 81). Despite Milton's declaration in his preface that *Samson Agonistes* was never intended for the stage, as Andrews points out, many parallels exist between Renaissance revenge tragedy and *Samson Agonistes*, and this makes Milton's dramatic poem an interesting study from the aspect of revenge.[7] Peggy Anne Samuels concurs with Andrews, arguing that "of all the dramatic sub-genres surely it is revenge drama that Milton's play most blatantly recalls" (P.A. Samuels1993, 108). Similarly, Richard S. Ide notes that the poem's emphasis on Samson's triumph and revenge, together with the bloody destruction he visits upon his enemies, seems to "encourage the association of Samson with the conventional revenger" (Ide 1997, 159).[8] Simply put, *Samson Agonistes*, according to Hugh Trevor-Roper, is "a drama of revenge, pure and simple."[9] Indeed, the overriding and climactic

event within *Samson Agonistes* is the "horrid spectacle" of Samson's vengeance upon the Philistines which takes place offstage. This rigorous justice results in the "desolation of a hostile city," killing all the "[l]ords, ladies, captains, counsellors, or priests,/ Their choice nobility and flower."[10]

As indicated by Andrews, notwithstanding having the traditional attributes of the typical protagonist of a revenge tragedy, Milton's Samson differs substantially from his original model, creating "something approximating a transformation of the genre" (Andrews, 83). One feature that sets *Samson Agonistes* apart from the Elizabethan revenge tragedy is the public nature of Samson's vengeance, which derives from Samson's original vocation as Judge of the Israelites. As Samson himself affirms during his debate with Harapha,

> I was no private but a person raised
> With strength sufficient and command from heaven
> To free my country...
> (*SA*, 1211-13)

Using works of Protestant exegetes to support her argument, Barbara K. Lewalski points out that the Israelite Judges had two functions: "deliverance of God's people from bondage and wreaking Divine vengeance upon God's enemies," both of which are also functions of Milton's Samson. Accordingly, Lewalski maintains that, consistent with the tradition of Protestant exegesis, "Samson's desire for revenge was not a personal motive, or a fault, but an

aspect of his office."[11] Hugh MacCallum, like Lewalski, affirms that Samson "acted not as a private person, but as one whose calling to free his country came from heaven" (MacCallum, 276). Though *Samson Agonistes* echoes the form and expectations of Elizabethan revenge tragedy, Andrews maintains that Samson "acted as an inspired minister of God rather than as a reprobate scourge" (Andrews, 93-4, 95). Ide similarly calls our attention to the fact that, behind Milton's evocation of the Senecan revenge and Elizabethan revenge tragedy tradition, exists a "countervailing conception of tragedy as a revelation of God's justice" in which "Samson's role is to act as the agent of divine vengeance." Unlike the typical protagonist of the revenge tragedy whose acts of revenge are frequently tainted by angry passions, Ide argues that *Samson Agonistes* "reinforces one's sense of divine retribution at the catastrophe" (Ide 1997, 158-60, 161).[12]

Another distinguishing characteristic of *Samson Agonistes* is the way in which the instrumental and restorative nature of Samson's vengeance mirrors that of the Son's in *Paradise Regained.* According to John Mulryan, the unsympathetic view of Samson as being crude and barbaric springs from a problem in interpretation that places undue emphasis on the theme of revenge. Instead, Mulryan points to a "shift in meaning from vengeance to deliverance" in the recent translation of *Judges* that indicates Samson is motivated not by vengeance *per se* but by vindication or deliverance.[13] Thus, just as the Son's vengeance in *Paradise Regained* transcends the merely retributive aspect of justice to become an instrument of man's restoration, so Samson's vengeance is

a means rather than an end unto itself. "'Deliverance' now takes the place of 'vengeance' as the motivating force behind Samson's actions" (Mulryan, 218). It is to this important correlation between vengeance and deliverance within *Samson Agonistes* that David Loewenstein is alluding when he argues that the dramatic poem envisions "a 'speedy redresse'" of persecution and enthrallment of the godly by means of "a terrifying vengeance against the ungodly Philistines" (Loewenstein 1996, p.170). In the end, Samson's final act of vengeance can be read as a fulfillment of the angel's promise that Samson "[s]hould Israel from Philistian yoke deliver" (*SA*, 38-9),[14] a point brought home by Manoa at the conclusion of the poem:

> Samson hath quit himself
> Like Samson, and heroicly hath finished
> A life heroic, on his enemies
> Fully revenged, hath left them years of mourning,
> And lamentation to the sons of Caphtor
> Thorough all Philistian bounds. *To Israel*
> *Honour hath left, and freedom*, let but them
> Find courage to lay hold on this occasion,
> (*SA*, 1709-1716, emphasis mine)

Before Samson can be reinstated to his office as " 'deliverer' and minister of God's revenge" (Ide 1997, 172), however, he must first undergo what John T.

Shawcross calls the process of "renovation"[15] in order to "transcend himself, both what he was and what remained of his past self" (Shawcross 1996, 200). As John Steadman suggests, this process of Samson's renovation, which is manifest in his "repentance and faith", may be "a theological precondition for Samson's major act."[16]

At the outset of *Samson Agonistes*, Samson appears alone, tormented by "restless thoughts" and suffering from "swoonings of despair,/ And sense of heaven's desertion"(*SA*, 19, 631-32). Samson himself tells us that his alienation from God's grace was a consequence of his own disobedience in publishing "impiously" God's "holy secret" and thereby abandoning his vocation (*SA*, 497-98). Samson's betrayal of his secret to Dalila, grievous though it may be, is, however, not the only instance of his disobedience toward God and certainly not the only flaw in his character. The earlier Samson is a character of many flaws, as is evident from his own admission that, "swoll'n with pride", "[f]earless of danger, like a petty god/ I walked about admired of all and dreaded" (*SA*, 533, 529-30). An impetuous hero who is easily given to anger and violence, the unregenerate Samson embodies many of the impurities of the revenge tradition such as "barbarism, violence, wrath...rashness" (P. A. Samuels 1993, 139) which he has to overcome before he can execute his office as instrument of God. However, as John S. Hill argues, by learning the "lessons of humility, patience, and faith" through the process of spiritual renovation involving suffering and undergoing a series of temptations, Samson is "spiritually created anew and made the fit instrument of the divine wrath against the worshippers of Dagon."[17]

Intimately linked to Samson's vocation as a vehicle of divine vengeance and deliverance in *Samson Agonistes*, then, is his role as paradigmatic pattern of redemption. Through his ordeal, Samson undergoes all the traditional stages of conversion: "Vocation, Fall, Regeneration, Temptation, Trial, Growth in spiritual perfection" (Lewalski 1970, 1055). As Fredson Bowers indicates, "Samson may serve as a paradigm for any individual" faced with the problems of "sin, punishment, and reconciliation."[18] Shawcross similarly argues that, rather than being "simply the biblical figure wreaking revenge," Samson takes on the role of "a type of the Son exemplifying what must be done to escape from bondage"(Shawcross 1983, 235). As such, *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Regained* are companion poems in that the renovated Samson parallels the heroic action of the Son in his faith and obedience to the godhead (Shawcross 1996, 196).[19] It is in his capacity as an exemplar, then, that Milton chose Samson as his protagonist in *Samson Agonistes*.

The fact, however, remains that at the outset of *Samson Agonistes*, Samson appears a fallen and degenerate sinner cut off from God's grace and his vocation to avenge and deliver his people from bondage. Thus, before he can exact vengeance against the enemies of God, Samson must first experience regeneration. At the beginning of the poem, we find him eyeless, languishing in captivity, and tortured by the memory of "[t]imes past, what once I was, and what am now" that torments him like "a deadly swarm/ Of hornets" (*SA*, 19-22). Samson's physical blindness is symbolic of his alienation from the divine presence, which is reflected in the bitterness and anger in his speeches. In the

process of seeking an explanation for his calamity, Samson comes close to despair and rebellion as he harshly questions the wisdom of divine dispensation:

> Why was my breeding ordered and prescribed
> As of a person separate to God,
> Designed for great exploits; if I must die
> Betrayed, captived, and both my eyes put out,
> Made of my enemies the scorn and gaze;
> To grind in brazen fetters under task
> With this heaven-gifted strength? O glorious strength
> Put to the labour of a beast, debased
> Lower than bond-slave!
> (*SA*, 30-38)

Samson's cry of "why?" shows the degree to which he questions divine dispensation. This ingratitude and presumption, together with self-pity, anger, resentment, guilt and self-loathing, indicate the extent of despair and degeneracy to which he has fallen.[20] Samson's complaint is that he clearly serves no divine purpose in prison, where his "heaven-gifted strength" is wasted and debased and that his current condition appears to betray the original promise given at his birth that he will deliver Israel from the Philistines. He sorrows over being constrained under the "Philistian yoke" (*SA*, 39). Ingrained in Samson's thinking at this point is his association of a champion of God with "glorious strength" and

"great exploits" (*SA*, 36, 32). Samson has a classically heroic conception of himself. The Chorus underscores Samson's earlier propensity to violence through brute strength. According to the Chorus, the Samson of old was someone who used to be "heroic," "renowned," and "Irresistible," performing great deeds of glory and martial valor. He was someone "[w]ho tore the lion," who with "trivial weapon" felled "[a] thousand foreskins," and bore the gates of Azza upon his shoulders in the manner of Hercules bearing the heavens upon his shoulders (*SA*, 125-50). We are also told that, instead of waiting patiently upon the will of God, the early Samson took God's promise that he would begin the deliverance of Israel as a license for willfulness and impetuosity. In a delusion of self-sufficiency that imposed his will over the will of the Creator, Samson acted "like a petty god," committing sins of rashness, precipitous action, and violence, the flaws traditionally associated with the conventional revenger.

Thus, as Darryl Tippens aptly points out, while *Samson Agonistes* is ultimately a demonstration of the power of weakness and the ultimate triumph of "Humiliation and strong sufferance," the "early Samson accepts most of Satan's assumptions about the means to greatness—through classical heroic action." Even before his disclosure of God's holy secret to Dalila, Samson, according to Tippens, was "vain, boastful, naïve, and dependent upon brute strength."[21] Furthermore, Samson's opening lament discloses that he continues to associate his role as the instrument of God's vengeance exclusively with physical strength and military prowess, war and violence.[22] This, according to Tippens, affiliates Samson with the Satanic, rendering him unfit as an instrument of God. In order

for Samson's final vengeance to transcend the limitations of personal revenge and its corresponding impurities of pride, violence and rage, it is necessary for Samson to demonstrate his fitness as a vehicle of divine justice. Milton satisfies this "theological precondition" (Steadman 1992, 218) by depicting Samson remaking himself within the crucible of temptation, in the manner of the Son in *Paradise Regained*.[23] While *Paradise Regained* dramatizes the Son bruising the head of Satan after overcoming all temptations "[b]y humiliation and strong sufferance" (*PR*, I. 160), *Samson Agonistes* offers a more human example of the sanctified revenger as Samson defeats his temptations through humility, suffering and obedience. It is through this process of humiliation that Samson is prepared to receive his "rousing motions" (*SA*, 1382)—those divine instructions that will enable him to carry out his mission of divine vengeance against the Philistines at his moment of greatest humility.

The drama of Samson's revenge, therefore, revolves around the process of Samson's renovation into a sanctified revenger of God through a series of temptations presented to him by Manoa, Dalila, Harapha, and the Philistian officer. As Anthony Low indicates, the process of preparing for just vengeance and deliverance involves Samson first refusing "the alternatives offered by each of his visitors" (Low 1974, 168).[24] By replacing past impulses to rash action, violence and pride with patience, humility and faith, Samson succeeds in expiating the sin of betraying God's secret. At the same time, Milton succeeds in his efforts to rewrite the revenge tradition in English drama, a task he began by dramatizing the apotheosis of revenge in *Paradise Regained*. As in *Paradise*

Regained, Milton interrogates and critiques the flaws associated with traditional revenge in *Samson Agonistes*, transposing upon it his own idea of sanctified vengeance.

Milton's ongoing effort in his epic cycle to portray a new approach to revenge, a revenge that would rise above the impurities of excessive violence and rage that marred the traditional revenge tragedy, begins in *Samson Agonistes* with the arrival of Manoa, who embodies the temptation to rash and impetuous action. A mourning father, Manoa, observing the "miserable change"(*SA*, 340) in his once heroic son, is stricken with despair. Questioning the justice of Samson's punishment, he offers to ransom his son from the Philistines. As Bowers points out, according to the idea of redemptive justice that governs *Samson Agonistes*, the purpose of punishment is to lead those who have crossed the divine purpose back to God's favor. The spiritual blindness of Samson, Manoa and others, however, leads them to assume that God's punishment is solely punitive rather than redemptive (Bowers 1989, 216-7). Samson's renovation as a sanctified revenger must, therefore, begin with humility, patience, and the understanding of the purposefulness of God's punishment, that it is "the 'saving med'cin' necessary for his spiritual health" (Ide 1997, 163-64).[25] Had Samson prematurely given in to Manoa's suggestion of retiring to the comfort of his father's house, he would have consigned himself to perpetual banishment from the vocation to which he was born. In order for Samson to respond to the "rousing motions" that lead him to enact God's

vengeance against the Philistines, Samson must therefore stay where he is, endure his humiliation, and gradually replace his disposition to violence and rashness with patience and humility. This, in Milton's reformed outlook, is how one can truly achieve godly vengeance.

When Manoa enters the poem, he displays a flow of reasoning that uncannily mirrors Samson's opening lines in questioning the justice and efficacy of the divine dispensation (*SA*, 368-72). As Kathleen M. Swaim points out, Manoa, together with Dalila and Harapha, serve as agents of Samson's regeneration by acting as his "mirrors or extensions of the hero's mind and thought" thereby serving "to facilitate his growing understanding and selflessness by presenting aspects of the hero that can thus be seen, evaluated, and transcended."[26] Thus, like Samson, Manoa, in his opening speech, reveals his attachment to appearance, power and physical strength as he glorifies Samson's past heroic deeds:

> O miserable change! is this the man,
> That invincible Samson, far renowned,
> The dread of Israel's foes, who with a strength
> Equivalent to angel's walked their streets,
> None offering fight; who single combatant
> Dulled their armies ranked in proud array
> (*SA*, 340-45)

Manoa's reveling in Samson's past and his lingering attraction to the lures of power, glory and violence is an important indicator of his blindness to the ways of God and the redemptive purpose of Samson's punishment. In a manner similar to Samson's opening complaint, Manoa questions the wisdom of Providence in providing Samson with his "mortal strength" (*SA*, 349) only to desert him by allowing Samson's fall into bondage. Ever a grieving father, Manoa cannot see that Samson's "suffering is merited, for such recognition would involve condemnation of his son."[27] Eager to deflect blame away from Samson, Manoa even goes as far as to accuse God of cruelty, charging blasphemously that God set Samson up for betrayal:

> O wherefore did God grant me my request,
> And as a blessing with such pomp adorned?
> Why are his gifts desirable, to tempt
> Our earnest prayers, then given with solemn hand
> As graces, draw a scorpion's tail behind?
> For this did the angel twice descend?
> (*SA*, 356-61)

Manoa's criticism of God hinges on the argument that God's punishment seems overly severe for one of his elect. Manoa contends that God "should not so o'erwhelm" those "God hath chosen once/ To worthiest deeds" and that Samson "bear'st/ Enough, and more the burden of that fault" (*SA*, 370, 368-69, 430-31).

His belief that Samson's punishment is excessive and cruel leads Manoa to excuse Samson as an injured party and to suggest that Samson accept his offer to ransom him from the Philistines.

Despite his fatherly good intentions, Manoa's offer serves as a temptation to Samson by enticing him to join in Manoa's indictment of God and thereby aggravate his past mistakes. As Jeanne K. Welcher explains it, Manoa's role in the poem is to voice an alternative choice of retirement and retreat to Samson that undermines the whole *raison d'être* for which he was conceived. Thus Manoa represents "the alternative against which Samson must struggle" in the poem.[28] Manoa's temptation, however, has an unintended but meritorious effect on Samson, for his "confrontation with Manoa, like the confrontations after it, permits the hero to see and hear himself" (Cullen, 208).[29] Samson's recognition of Manoa's spiritual blindness in questioning the divine dispensation reminds Samson of his own sinfulness and separation from God. Seeing a mirror image of himself he dislikes in Manoa, Samson therefore rejects the part of himself he sees there and repents and acknowledges his own responsibility for what has happened to him. In this way, Manoa's temptation plays a pivotal role in the unfolding drama in that it induces Samson to come to terms with his own culpability and place the blame where it rightly belongs, on his own shoulders:

> Appoint not heavenly disposition, father,
> Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me
> But justly; I myself have brought them on,

Sole author I, sole cause:

(*SA*, 373-76)

By accepting his own guilt as "sole cause"[30] of his afflictions rather than attempting to deflect blame onto an unjust God, Samson achieves a new level of "sorrow and contrition" which, according to Bowers, is a point of emphasis in the Manoa episode (Bowers 1989, 227). Thus, in a display of "proper humility," which M.E. Grenander considers "a necessary condition before he can be restored to God's favor,"[31] the bitter irony in Samson's speech is replaced by a patient and conciliatory tone. It is Manoa's rash attack on God as over-demanding and unjust that arouses Samson to a role reversal, defending rather than accusing God. Whereas Manoa attempts to minimize Samson's transgression to an instance of human error committed out of frailty, Samson emphasizes the depth of his culpability and the appropriateness of his punishment. As Samson points out to Manoa, he had willingly chosen servitude to freedom by betraying the secret of his strength "to a woman,/ A Canaanite" (*SA*, 379-80). Samson further acknowledges, in a clear and simple tone of confession and prayer, that his folly has contributed to the glory of Dagon: "Father, I do acknowledge and confess/ That...to God have brought/ Dishonour, obloquy, and oped the mouths/ Of idolists, and atheists; have brought scandal/ To Israel, diffidence of God, and doubt/ In feeble hearts" (*SA*, 448-55). Within the overall context of Samson's regeneration, Samson's admission of guilt and

contrition is significant and constitutes one of the turning points of the poem, indicating Samson's first step towards regeneration.[32]

The clarity of vision and patience brought about by the admission of guilt allows Samson to oppose Manoa when he returns to the original purpose of his visit, which is obtaining his son's release from captivity. Apparently unconvinced by Samson's justification of the ways of God, Manoa argues in favor of ransom and release by stating,"[t]hou must not in the meanwhile here forgot/ Lie in this miserable loathsome plight/ Neglected" (*SA*, 478-81). In an attempt to persuade his son, Manoa even goes as far as to suggest that it is the Philistines rather than God who are the agents of Samson's destiny. Manoa's argument, however, displays a blatant lack of judgment and understanding of God's redemptive purpose. It also reveals that Manoa still clings to the belief that Samson's punishment was unequal to his crime. It is for this reason that Manoa urges Samson to act swiftly to end his punishment instead of trusting in God. As Bowers points out, however, had Samson acceded to Manoa's offer, "he would once more have interposed his will against God's by seeking to cut short the punishment that justice has visited upon him" (Bowers 1989, 223). It would also mean giving up hope of ever again being called back to his vocation by God. In a testament to how far he has progressed from his first opening cries of agony, Samson patiently refuses Manoa's temptation by pointing out that his punishment is not merely punitive but redemptive:

let me here,

As I deserve, pay on my punishment;

And expiate, if possible, my crime,

Shameful garrulity.

(*SA*, 488-91)

The key to Samson's refutation is the concept of "expiation" which the *OED* defines as "the action of expiating or making atonement for" a crime or "ceremonially purifying from guilt or pollution." By stating his hope to expiate his crime through punishment, Samson offers the endurance of punishment with patience and humility as the only sure means to atone for his sins of betrayal. He advocates self-mortification, denial of the self and submission to God as the cornerstone of spiritual renovation. At this moment, Samson no longer looks on his punishment as simply punitive. Punishment has provided the far more beneficial function of expiation as Samson embraces it as the means to make reparation for his sin. The poem's final catastrophe, thus, is no arbitrary accident of history but the logical outcome of Samson's repentance and restoration. It is his patience and humble sufferance that not only enables Samson to avoid falling into another pitfall of "false action"[33] but to participate in God's plans. Samson's rejection of the temptation to precipitous and rash action, and his decision to wait and suffer patiently instead, is significant in that it not only shows the true path towards individual regeneration but towards godly vengeance as

well. Through the example of Samson, Milton demonstrates how one becomes a sanctified revenger of God.

As Mary Ann Radzinowicz and others indicate, however, "Samson's regeneration does not trace a simple curve; like all suffering men, he can and does lapse from new levels of insight back into old positions" (Radzinowicz 1978, p. 237).[34] At this early stage, he is far from being the embodiment of patience and self-sacrifice that he is by the conclusion of the poem. Thus, during the Manoa temptation, although Samson has come a long way in confronting his past by acknowledging his guilt and the justice of God, he demonstrates that he is not yet ready to face his future by relapsing back into self-pity and despair upon Manoa's departure. After contemplating his present state of slavery and degradation against the possible future, be it in Dagon's temple or his father's house, Samson finds his situation to be even more distasteful and cries despairingly, "His pardon I implore; but as for life,/ To what end should I seek it?" (*SA*, 521-22). Faced with a future not to his liking, Samson clings to the only life he knows, his former life as a violent and heroic deliverer. Reversing his acceptance of his punishment as a means of expiating his sin, Samson now rejects his mortification and abasement as an integral and necessary part of the regenerative process. The only satisfactory future imaginable for Samson is his restoration as a deliverer in the image of his earlier self, "admired of all and dreaded" (*SA*, 530). Hence his horror at Manoa's plans to ransom him and take him back home to what he believes would be a useless and ignoble life:

To what can I be useful, wherein serve

My nation, and the work from heaven imposed,

But sit idle on the household hearth,

A burdenous drone; to visitants a gaze,

Or pitied object, these redundant locks

Robustious to no purpose clustering down,

Vain monument of strength; till length of years

And sedentary numbness craze my limbs

To contemptible old age obscure.

(*SA*, 564-72)

Samson's disdain at the prospect of being a "pitied object" and his fear of a "contemptible old age" shows how far he needs to go before he can be fully restored to his divine vocation. His attitude reveals how the contemplation of his future has overshadowed the spiritual insights he has gained through his selfless defense of God, bringing about a momentary halt to his regeneration.[35] Thinking of his vocation as the sanctified revenger of God only in terms of the human, the physical and the martial, Samson mistakes strength for worth and refuses to see how God could make weakness the means to godly vengeance. He, therefore, sees no reason to preserve himself and wishes for "oft-invocated death" (*SA*, 575). This echoes the earlier wish for oblivion in his opening speech. It is important to point out, however, that this portrayal of Samson's regression, following immediately upon his moment of enlightenment, does more than

indicate the difficulty involved in Samson's regenerative process. What it creates is a diametrical contrast, pitting violence and haughty pride against patience and humility in order to assert the moral superiority of patient fortitude over physical violence. If there is to be any future for Samson as a sanctified revenger of God, he must first undergo a meaningful transformation based on patience, humility and unequivocal submission to the will of God. That, according to Milton, is how Samson can fulfill God's mission, how the violence of divine vengeance can be reconciled with godly purpose. It is a message we see demonstrated in Samson's encounter with Dalila, who offers him "the opportunity to expunge his previous uxorious weakness by passing the test he once failed."[36]

Milton's efforts in *Samson Agonistes* to depict the process of Samson's renovation and reinstatement as an agent of divine vengeance continue with Dalila's temptation. When Dalila arrives upon the scene, she attempts to seduce Samson with the same duplicity she used to betray him.[37] Appearing humble and contrite, Dalila approaches Samson with "feigned penitence" (John S. Hill, 162) and attempts to persuade Samson to forgive her for betraying the secret of his strength to his Philistine enemies. Pronouncing herself guilty, she tells Samson she deserves his displeasure, but that now, she seeks to learn how she may appease and make amends for his suffering (*SA*, 732-47). As if to emphasize her claim of penitance, Dalila even talks of shedding tears to atone for her sin, a parodic image of Samson's earlier offer to expiate his crime through suffering:

yet if tears

May expiate (though the fact more evil drew

In the perverse event than I foresaw)

My penance hath not slackened, though my pardon

No way assured.

(*SA*, 735-39)

As Thomas Kranidas points out, however, the truthfulness of Dalila's confession is suspect.[38] Though Dalila says she has come only to seek Samson's pardon, her efforts to shift blame away from herself reveal that her confession is more an excuse than a heartfelt admission of guilt.[39] Indeed, as Low points out, Dalila persists on putting "the blame on Samson, on her weakness as a woman, on the Philistine magistrates and priests, but never for a moment on herself" (Low 1974, 148). Dalila's attempt to lessen and play down her guilt provokes Samson to react angrily with a violent outburst of "Out, out hyaena!" Prompted by his "inexpiable hate" (*SA*, 839) towards Dalila, Samson denounces her entire attempt at self-exoneration as evidence of her "wonted arts" and "feigned remorse," intended to try his patience and virtue (*SA*, 748-58). Samson's angry response to Dalila, however, does more than expose the insincere artifice of Dalila's confession, revealing Samson's own propensity towards rationalization as he tries to depict himself as an innocent victim:

That wisest and best men full oft beguiled
With goodness principled not to reject
The penitent, but ever to forgive,
Are drawn to wear out miserable days,
Entangled with a poisonous bosom snake,
If not by quick destruction soon cut off
As I by thee, to ages an example.
(*SA*, 759-64)

An intricate aspect of Dalila's temptation, therefore, is the temptation for Samson to view Dalila as a scapegoat. Samson's attempt to depict himself as an innocent victim cursed with an overly forgiving nature is problematic at best, considering he is in the process of working out his own expiation for a transgression greater than Dalila's, revealing God's secret. If he does not recognize in his rage his own complicity in his fall, then he will have projected all of his guilt upon Dalila. Indeed, as Mason Tung points out, Samson's initial confrontation with Dalila indicates that "he is really blaming Dalila for all his problems, especially for ruining his future, his prophesied opportunity to help God fulfill Israel's delivery."[40]

Nevertheless, in the context of Samson's regeneration, Dalila's attempts at equivocation and rationalization prove fortuitous in that they stimulate Samson towards the path of regeneration by sharpening his sense of responsibility and remorse. As Cullen points out, Dalila, together with Manoa and Harapha

"presents Samson with a mirror to his Adamic corruption" (Cullen, 202). Dalila's temptation thus becomes the means towards Samson's spiritual growth and understanding, fostering patience and a deep understanding of "what true repentance really means," an essential component for his eventual regeneration.[41]

With her initial protestations of remorse exposed as false and rebuffed by Samson, Dalila next attempts to seduce Samson into pardoning her by laying the blame for her betrayal on Samson. Dalila reasons that, in light of her infirm nature, Samson is also at fault for revealing the source of his strength to her "importunity" in the first place:

> Was it not weakness also to make known
> For importunity, that is for naught,
> Wherein consisted all thy strength and safety?
> To what I did thou show'dst me first the way.
> (*SA*, 778-81)

The crux of Dalila's argument is that both she and Samson share the mutual weakness of "shameful garrulity" (*SA*, 491). Just as Dalila is guilty of publishing the secret of Samson's strength to his enemies, so he is likewise at fault for betraying the secret of his strength to her against the express command of God. Because, as Dalila correctly points out, "Samson has been as guilty in the past

as she has been" (Low 1974, 147), she suggests that it might be best for both to forgive and forget:

> To what I did thou show'dst me first the way.
> But I to enemies revealed, and should not.
> Nor shouldst thou have trusted that to woman's frailty
> Ere I to thee, thou to thyself wast cruel.
> Let weakness then with weakness come to parle
> So near related, or the same of kind,
> Thine forgive mine; that men may censure thine
> The gentler...
> (*SA*, 781-88)

Despite her attempt to justify, or at least find forgiveness for her sin of betrayal, Dalila's effort has the opposite effect, underscoring her rebrobation. As Samson informs her, "by evasions thy crime uncover'st more" (*SA*, 841). To ask forgiveness only on the grounds of weakness or mutual guilt is merely to excuse one's actions and not a true repentance. As Low points out, Dalila's excuse lacks the very conviction of sin, which is the first necessity for repentance. Thus, her efforts to seek forgiveness, rather than an indication of her contrition, merely reflect her attempt to make her crime seem inevitable, simply to be "glossed over and forgotten" (Low 1978, 149, 147).[42] Dalila's temptation, however, proves beneficial in that it provides Samson with a moment of retrospection. Hearing

Dalila use the same kind of rationalizations for her actions that he himself had used earlier instills within him a heightened sense of responsibility for his own predicament. Thus, instead of resorting to anger or attempting to justify himself as he did in his first exchange with Dalila, Samson demonstrates his growing understanding and maturity by taking full responsibility for his crime:

> I gave, thou say'st, the example,
> I led the way; bitter reproach, but true,
> I to myself was false ere thou to me
> (SA, 822-24)

Samson's admission of guilt reveals a very definite benefit of his exchange with Dalila. Like her, Samson has been hardly "impartial, self-severe, inexorable" (*SA*, 827) towards himself in his examinations of his downfall. Though he has admitted to Manoa the folly of trusting God's secret to Dalila, true objectivity has been hard to maintain as he has been continually tempted to rationalize and excuse his actions and to shift the blame away from himself. Because of his confrontation with Dalila, however, Samson sees the end of such reasoning in its most bitter light. Thus, because "neither for himself nor for Dalila will weakness serve as an excuse" (John S. Hill, 163), weakness being an abnegation of responsibility, Samson correctly responds with an injunction against Dalila's argument of weakness:

weakness is thy excuse,

And I believe it, weakness to resist

Philistian gold: if weakness may excuse,

What murderer, what traitor, parricide,

Incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead it?

All wickedness is weakness: that plea therefore

With God or man will gain thee no remission.

(*SA*, 829-35)

The chief difference between Samson and Dalila lies less in the nature of their crimes than in their response to sin. While Samson is tortured by his betrayal of God and his people, Dalila, according to George M. Muldrow, "seems never to have realized that an unequivocal admission of sin a necessary step in her repentance" (Muldrow, 197). Despite the blunt and unforgiving nature of Samson's rebuttal that "[a]ll wickedness is weakness," therefore, he is correct in exercising rigorous justice towards Dalila because her easy excuses and self-exoneration represent a possible stance his own conscience might assume.[43] Initially, he himself had indulged in it. However, Samson's perception of Dalila's self-serving nature becomes the impetus for his growth in transcending what she represents. Realizing that Dalila's argument is a kind of casuistry in which he cannot allow himself to indulge, Samson rejects Dalila's argument of weakness, thereby ruling out this possible justification for himself.[44]

The Samson who defeats Dalila's temptation is a different person from the angry and despairing sinner we see at the beginning of this temptation. His confrontation with Dalila has taught him the need to take full responsibility for his guilt. Samson's recognition of guilt has also nurtured a deep sense of repentance, leading to an inner transformation that replaces anger and denial with contrition, penance, and submission to the will of God. By reacquiring humility and temperance through repentance, he is now able to recognize the hand of God in Dalila's visit:

> God sent her to debase me,
> And aggravate my folly who committed
> To such a viper his most sacred trust
> Of secrecy, my safety, and my life.
> (*SA*, 999-1002)

Considering that Samson's engagement with Dalila teaches Samson the first two step of regeneration admission of guilt, acceptance of responsibility, and repentance the trial of temptations is a gift of God to him. As noted by Sherman H. Hawkins, "Manoa, Dalila, and Harapha come because—all unknowingly—they are sent" (Hawkins, 225). Without God's benevolent intercession, the temptations and taunts would have resulted in no progressive self-realization.

The plain language of "So let her go" shows that Samson has come a long way from the violent emotions of "out, out Hyena." It indicates an understanding

of his own culpability and the presence of God's providence in his punishment. It also shows that Samson is through blaming Dalila and is prepared to move on. Armed with his new selflessness, Samson is now ready to face his final temptation. The depiction, in the aftermath of his confession and repentance, of the simplicity and calmness of Samson's demeanor also serves to remind us that true strength lies not in physical might but in humility, sufferance, and the abasement of the self before God. By making confession, contrition and departure from evil prerequisite steps before Samson can take the final step to his regeneration, "the acceptance of the challenge to action" (Muskin, 243),[45] Milton reveals a new approach to revenge--one that emphasizes the power of weakness rather than physical force or violence. It is not through heroic acts but through humble repentance and obedience that Samson can fulfill his vocation as a vehicle of God's vengeance. That, Milton tells us, is how one achieves godly vengeance against the enemies of God.

Despite having taken the first two steps towards regeneration through his confession and contrition at the end of Dalila's temptation, Samson's renovation is not yet complete. As his defeat of Dalila's temptation shows, Samson has come very close to his restoration as the agent of God's vengeance. However, his violent response to Dalila's final offer to approach and touch his hand (*SA*, 952) throws into relief his remaining vulnerability to the temptation of physical violence. What Samson needs is one more challenge to help him transform himself into a fit instrument of God. "In terms of Samson's spiritual recovery,"

therefore, Harapha's appearance represents the culminating temptation (Cullen, 227) that educates Samson on the moral superiority of patient fortitude over the excesses of violence, particularly in the service of vainglory and pride. In his discussion of *Paradise Lost*, D. M. Rosenberg argues that, by exposing to ridicule Satan's vainglory and self-deceiving pride, Milton attempts to subvert "the ideal of military heroism" in favor of "true heroic action founded on the Christian ideal of obedience and suffering patience" (Rosenberg, 86-89). Rosenberg's findings concerning Milton's valorization of true heroic action based on obedience and patience in *Paradise Lost* are equally applicable towards understanding Milton's efforts to elevate godly vengeance above the impurities of rage, ranting and violence that mar conventional revenge in *Samson Agonistes*. If Samson's "pride in his epic strength" was the cause of his fall, "his humiliation and self-acknowledged weakness will be the source of his *heroic* recovery" (Ide 1997, 171).

The appearance of Harapha gives the readers something of a portrait of what Samson was prior to his fall.[46] According to Tippens, there is a striking similarity between Harapha and the old Samson; Harapha is a "mirror image of Samson's former heroic self—vain, boastful, naïve, and dependent upon brute strength" (Tippens, 187). Harapha thus exemplifies for Samson what the pursuit of vainglorious violence does to an individual character. It is an example to be shunned and avoided. Harapha's disposition towards violence is conveyed in the poem by the Chorus, who compares him to a "storm" and as a "kind of tempest" (*SA*, 1061-63). He is the typical braggart soldier. With his opening

remarks, Harapha boasts of what he could have done had he met Samson on the field of battle, how he would have won fame by defeating him in battle:

> O that fortune
> Had brought me to the field where thou art famed
> To have wrought such wonders with an ass's jaw;
> I should have forced thee soon wish other arms,
> Or left thy carcass where the ass lay thrown:
> So had the glory of prowess been recovered
> To Palestine, won by a Philistine
> From the unforeskinned race, of whom thou bear'st
> The highest name for valiant acts, that honour
> Certain to have won by mortal duel from thee,
> I lose, prevented by thy eyes put out.
> (*SA*, 1093-103).

Harapha's haughty bravado; however, is no worse than what Samson has described of his own earlier ambition when "like a petty god," he was always "after some proof/ Of acts indeed heroic, far beyond/ The Sons of Anak" (*SA*, 526-29). Intoxicated with power he has received, Samson appears to have gone to the extreme to maximize his own heroic stature, to show what he is capable of: "on their whole host I flew/ Unarmed, and with a trivial weapon felled/ Their choicest youth" (*SA*, 262-64). Even now, blind and in chains, Samson does not

allow Harapha's provocation to go unanswered. He responds to Harapha's threats and taunting with a challenge of his own: "Boast not of what thou wouldst have done, but do/What then thou wouldst" (*SA*, 1104-05). When Harapha demurs to Samson's offer of battle with a disdainful refusal to "combat with a blind man" (*SA*, 106), Samson reissues his challenge of "carnal duel" (Ide 1997, 187) to Harapha with a bristling insult to the power of Philistine arms and threats of violence and death:

> Therefore without feigned shifts, let be assigned
> Some narrow place enclosed, where sight may give
> thee,
> Or rather flight, no great advantage on me;
> Then put on all thy gorgeous arms, thy helmet
> And brigandine of brass, thy broad habergeon,
> Vantbrace and greaves, and gauntlet, add thy spear
> A weaver's beam, and seven-times-folded shield,
> I only with an oaken stall will meet thee,
> And raise such outcries on thy clattered iron,
> Which long shall not withhold me from thy head,
> That in a little time while breath remains thee,
> Thou oft shalt wish thyself at Gath to boast
> Again in safety...
> (*SA*, 1116-28)

In his confrontation with Harapha, Samson comes face to face with an image his earlier self, "a parodic double" of his vengeful self that used to strut around like a "petty god," threatening violence.[47] Samson can surely hear in Harapha's misplaced thirst for battle something of his own earlier attachment to violence. Harapha's likeness to what Samson has described of his own days as a "petty god," however, unwittingly illustrates for Samson the perversion of priorities when one places violence and martial prowess over spiritual insight. The presence of Harapha, eager for violence and battle, therefore, is particularly instructive for Samson, for the hollow boasting of Harapha shows Samson not only something of his own self, but what he needs to avoid. Due to the presence of the mirror image of his own moral errors, "Samson is helped to purge the same faults from his own spiritual system" (Low 1974, 162).

The edifying effect of Harapha's temptation on Samson becomes evident in the next scene which underscores Samson's growing humility and patience as he moves from self-centeredness to defense of God. Samson's confrontation with Harapha, which initially threatens to dissolve into violence, undergoes a transformation when Harapha touches on the subject of God's involvement. Attempting to demean Samson's God-given strength, Harapha ridicules it by attributing it to black magic:

> Thou durst not thus disparage glorious arms
> Which greatest heroes have in battle worn,
> Their ornament and safety, had not spells

And black enchantments, some magician's art,
Armed thee or charmed thee strong, which thou from
heaven
Feign'dst at thy birth was given thee in thy hair
(*SA*, 1130-35)

By claiming that Samson's divine dispensation was counterfeit, Harapha inadvertently mimics Samson's own past murmuring against God. At the beginning of the poem, Samson himself had questioned divine dispensation by blaming God for his own predicament. Attributing his fall to lack of wisdom, he had blasphemously dared to blame God for not having given him wisdom equal to his strength: "O impotence of mind, in body strong!/ But what is strength without a double share/ Of wisdom, vast, unwieldly, burdensome,/ Proudly secure, yet liable to fall/ By weakest subtleties" (*SA*, 52-56). According to Bowers, up to this moment Samson had responded to Harapha as "a private man, not as a representative of his nation or of his God" (Bowers 1989, 231). Harapha's disparagement of heavenly dispensation, however, marks the turning point of the episode. As Tung points out, "only after Harapha ridicules Samson's God-given strength does the challenge move from a personal to a religious basis" (Tung, 486). Confronted with Harapha's impiety, Samson changes his focus from himself to God as he comes to the public defense of his deity:

I know no spells, use no forbidden arts;

My trust is in the living God who gave me

At my nativity this strength, diffused

No less through all my sinews, joints and bones,

Than thine, while I preserved these locks unshorn,

The pledge of my unviolated vow.

(*SA*, 1139-44)

Samson's solemn refutation of Harapha's remarks indicates a dramatic shift in the process of Samson's renovation. It would have been easy for Samson to rebuff Harapha's attempt to belittle his strength with an impetuous challenge to battle as he had been doing earlier. Nevertheless, instructed on the virtues of patience and humility by looking at the mirror image of his own impetuous and violent self, Samson now responds to the latest challenge with restraint, avowal of his trust in God, and recognition of his own instrumentality. The humble confession of trust in God is a significant development for Samson, who earlier complained that God had "cast [him] off as never known/ And to those cruel enemies.../ Left me all helpless with the irreparable loss/ Of sight" (*SA*, 641-45). If Samson's fall was a result of the hubris that lead him to forget that his strength "was a 'high gift...committed' to him by God" (Ide 1997, 171), his new expression of trust in God, the admission that his strength is contingent upon his keeping his "pledge" to God, and that he is only an instrument of a higher power, indicates a newfound selflessness and spiritual maturity. The pride that had caused his downfall has been transformed into faith.

In spite of Samson's growing spiritual maturity and confidence, however, in a typical display of a soldier's contempt for religion, Harapha bellicosely rebukes Samson's expression of faith. He presents Samson's current captive state as evidence that, even if Samson's God does exist, he has clearly disowned him and therefore cannot be trusted:

> Presume not on thy God, whate'er he be,
> Thee he regards not, owns not, hath cut off
> Quite from his people, and delivered up
> Into thy enemies' hand...
> (*SA*, 1156-59)

Besides sounding surprisingly like Samson's earlier accusation that God had abandoned him, Harapha's taunt reveals that the loudmouthed bully does not have the intellectual or spiritual resources to perceive Samson's growing maturity. As Tippens points out, "the scurrilous charges are the bitter truths in ways Harapha and others cannot fathom" (Tippens, 188). Ironically, however, the bitter truth behind Harapha's charge that Samson is a pariah isolated from God paves the way for Samson's redemption and triumph. Instead of despairing, therefore, Samson responds to Harapha with a testament of faith and a humble acknowledgment of guilt:

> All these indignities, for such they are

From thine, these evils I deserve and more,

Acknowledge them from God inflicted on me

Justly, yet despair not of his final pardon

Whose ear is ever open; and his eye

Gracious to readmit the suppliant;

(*SA*, 1168-74)

The equanimity with which Samson now accepts his punishment from God clearly indicates the extent of his spiritual growth and regeneration. Admittedly, he has taken responsibility before for his actions, only to regress back to despair and doubt. The difference between this acknowledgment and his earlier ones, however, is that he now expresses his faith in God's "final pardon." In spite of his humiliation and suffering, therefore, Samson can now fully acknowledge the justice of his suffering without despair or doubt. According to Grenander, "[t]his faith in his ultimate restoration to divine favor is the last step necessary for Samson to take before he can be chosen again as God's agent" (Grenander, 387). Punishment does not mean God has abandoned him. Rather it signals continued attention. Samson's humiliation and defeat is a means of educating Samson to the "possibility that the punishment has been corrective and that God will pardon him in the end if he will act correctly in accord with God's will" (Bowers 1989, 233). Armed with his newfound confidence in God's final pardon, Samson reassumes his public role as the vehicle of God's vengeance by renewing his challenge to "mortal fight"[48]:

In confidence whereof I once again
Defy thee to the trial of mortal fight,
By combat to decide whose god is God,
Thine or whom I with Israel's sons adore.
(*SA*, 1174-77)

In contrast to his previous challenges that are tainted by his thirst for personal revenge, this latest challenge by Samson, by subsuming himself beneath God, becomes impersonal and public in nature. In a clear indication of his spiritual development, Samson's renewed challenge to combat is restated in such a way that Samson the hero disappears, becoming instead a humble instrument representing God in a test between God and Dagon. The confidence of victory is as strong as ever. However, the confidence is no longer an expression of his own pride but of faith. The pride that had caused his downfall has been transformed into faith.[49]

The confrontation between Samson and Harapha is crucial to Milton's efforts to reconcile violence with humble patience in *Samson Agonistes*. Ostensibly, Samson's struggle with Harapha valorizes patience and obedience over physical violence. This symbolizes Milton's efforts to transcend violence and military heroics, moving from active force to passive fortitude. The presence of a vain and violent Harapha who mirrors many of Samson's own failings, such

as pride, boastfulness and the propensity to violence, presents Samson with an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of his fall. Milton's depiction of the passions associated with the violent revenger in the poem thus serves as a moral example, that angry passions needs to be purged, warning the readers about the consequence of abusing one's power through angry violence. Instead of reacting in kind to Harapha's threat of violence Samson therefore responds with temperance, faith, and obedience to God. This is how Samson ultimately achieves his vengeance on the Philistines. It is no accident that Milton depicts Samson's retributive destruction of the temple of Dagon as the outcome of Samson's spiritual growth. It is only when Samson reaches the state of "better fortitude/ Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom" (*PL*, IX. 31-32) that he ultimately achieves his revenge on the Philistines.

The emphasis on patience, nevertheless, does not mean that Samson renounces all violence as his challenge to Harapha and his final act of vengeance against the Philistines indicates. As Radzinowicz points out, despite the realization that wisdom is "better and prior necessity," Samson never rejected the use of violence in public terms (Radzinowicz 1978, 169). Patience for Milton, therefore, is not the rigid mask of impassivity and pacifism. Milton does not reject violence *per se*. He learns to divert it from specific persons and occasions and wait for the right moment when it can be used for the glory of God. Samson's latest challenge of "judicial combat," therefore, signifies the all-important movement "from Samson as private to Samson as public champion" (Bowers 1989, 231-32).[50] It indicates that "self-pitying becomes a true

repentance, wrath turns to righteous indignation, contentious pride to zeal for Israel's God" (Hawkins, 224). The episode thus demonstrates Samson's successful transformation as a humble instrument of God showing that Samson is "again worthy to receive the 'rousing motions' that are God's means of commanding His agent's acts" (Libby, 524).

As Radzinowicz points out, *Samson Agonistes* is "a poem of growth and change, depicting a hero who achieves late insight into his earlier thoughts" (Radzinowicz 1978, xx). Samson achieves this growth and insight through humility, penitence, and faith as he overcomes the successive temptations of Manoa, Dalila and Harapha. The point therefore has come when Samson must no longer suffer in patience but act in his capacity as instrument of God. The impetus to action comes to him in the form of a Philistine officer who commands Samson's attendance at the feast of Dagon: "[t]o honour this great feast, and great assembly;/ Rise therefore with all speed and come along" (*SA*, 1315-16). At first, Samson refuses this opportunity to act by citing Hebraic Law: "Our law forbids at their religious rites/ My presence" (*SA*, 1320-21). Though Samson may be genuine in his concern for God's law, the anger and distress he also shows at the prospect of the Philistines making "a game of [his] calamities" (*SA*, 1331) reveals the residual "I" that still rule his thoughts:

> Can they think me so broken, so debased
> With corporal servitude, that my mind ever

Will condescend to such absurd commands?

Although their drudge, to be their fool or jester,

And in my midst of sorrow and heart-grief

To show them feats, and play before their god,

The worst of all indignities, yet on me

Joined with extreme contempt? I will not come.

(*SA*, 1335-42)

The portrayal of Samson's concern over himself, coming after his repentance, seems inconsistent with the growth and change which he has already demonstrated at the end of Harapha's temptation. However, by offering this realistic depiction of the inner conflict that is dividing Samson within, Milton conveys not only the complexity of the situation faced by Samson but also accentuates the sacrificial nature of Samson's decision to submit himself to certain humiliation when he feels the hand of God guiding him. The image of Samson grappling with the conflicting demands of God and his own pride indicates how far removed he is from his earlier self caught under the "sense of heaven's desertion" (*SA*, 632). Samson has made too much progress toward reconciliation with God to allow his pride to rule his action. Thus, in spite of his realization that humiliation and punishment is the underlying motivation behind the Philistine order, Samson displays a new "Heroic magnitude of mind" (*SA*, 1279) by choosing to humble himself and put his trust in God:

Yet that he may dispense with me or thee
Present in temples at idolatrous rites
For some important cause, thou need'st not doubt.
(*SA*, 1377-79)

According to Christopher Grose, "these lines contain the 'presage in the mind' to which Samson refers eight lines later."[51] Prepared by patience and faith, Samson now feels the hand of God in the form of "rousing motions" guiding and directing his course of action, prompting him to comply with the Philistine officer's command:

Be of good courage, I begin to feel
Some rousing motions in me which dispose
To something extraordinary my thoughts.
I with this messenger will go along,
(*SA*, 1381-84)

In following the divine impulse that sends him to Dagon's temple, Samson enacts an unconditional surrender that is analogous to that of the Son's act of supreme submission in the Pinnacle scene in *Paradise Regained*. By having Samson move to the temple of his own volition, there to perform the humiliating and disgraceful acts that he dreads and to become a spectacle before those he most loathes (*SA*, 1614-28), Milton emphasizes Samson's total surrender to the

will of God. As MacCallum points out, there is an undeniable personal cost to Samson in his decision to appear at the feast of Dagon involving the surrender of his sense of personal honor, the humiliation of wearing the state livery of the Philistines and of playing the fool for them (MacCallum, 278). This image of a man who sacrifices his pride and personal honor in order to obey the "rousing motions" (*SA*, 1382) of God dispels any notion of a rash revenger going on a rampage of vengeance.

When he leaves the stage, Samson does not yet know what great act he is to perform. He only knows that he has been called again and follows divine impulsion, trusting that God will use him for "something extraordinary." That extraordinary act is manifest in an act of retribution at the temple of Dagon where, as narrated by the Hebrew messenger, "with the force of winds and waters pent,/ When mountains tremble," Samson shook "two massy pillars/ With horrible convulsion" and pulls the roof of Dagon's temple thundering down onto the hated Philistines (*SA*, 1647-52). The result is truly apocalyptic, bringing about a "universal groan" filled with "[b]lood, death, dreadful deeds.../Ruin, destruction at the utmost point" (*SA*, 1511, 1513-14). As pointed out by the Chorus, Samson's act fulfills his calling to avenge Israel and God:

> O dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious!
> Living or dying thou hast fulfilled
> The work for which thou wast foretold
> To Israel, and how li'st victorious

Among thy slain self-killed

Not willingly, but tangled in the fold,

Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoined

Thee with thy slaughtered foes in number more

Than all thy life had slain before.

(*SA*, 1660-68)

Despite the magnitude of destruction involved in Samson's revenge, however, Milton is careful to defend Samson's revenge as a sacrificial act of heroism done in accordance to the will of God and for the good of his people. As Swaim points out, for readers schooled in Christian paradox, the emphasis that Samson incurred his death "[n]ot willingly" is significant in that it "signifies Samson's transcendence of his earlier willfulness and his submission to fulfilling the divine will" (Swaim, 231-32). Similarly, Radzinowicz also valorizes Samson as being praiseworthy for, by his action, he is "representative of the pious few who acted in the name of the welfare of the nation" (Radzinowicz 1978, 81).

The violent context of Samson's revenge, nevertheless, has prompted some critics such as Lana Cable to reject the Chorus' interpretation of Samson's action as the fulfillment of divine dispensation.[52] Cable argues that *Samson Agonistes* dramatizes an "old vaunting Samson" who is much like the rebellious angel Satan of *Paradise Lost*.[53] Pointing to the magnitude of the catastrophic destruction caused by Samson's revenge, P. A. Samuels also asserts that the act of Samson's revenge is a story of "excessive violence rather than measured

justice." She further suggests that Milton purposely raised in the dramatic poem the "issues of excess, violence, crudeness, and wrath" which make Samson's act of revenge suspect rather than cleansing it of moral perplexity (P.A. Samuels 1993, 118, 119, 124).[54] In opposition to revisionist critics such as Cable and Samuels, however, critics such as Raymond B. Waddington support the reading of Milton's dramatic poem as a vindication of divine providence by arguing that "the process of Samson's spiritual regeneration constitutes the action preceding the catastrophe" (Waddington, 259).[55] Burton J. Weber also endorses the reading of Samson's act as a victory by arguing that, by the time "Samson receives God's motions, he is already a regenerate man."[56] William Kerrigan similarly argues that Samson is a chosen man driven by the "irresistible, terrible, the rousing motions of God" to deliver Heaven's "Anger and just rebuke, and judgment giv'n"(*PL*, IX. 10). Kerrigan further maintains that while Samson's final act is "at once a sacrifice and a judgment," the emphasis of Samson's action lies in its message of "typological fulfillment" as "[h]umility passes to revenge, passivity to action."[57] Kerrigan's assessment of Samson's action as an act of divine vengeance is collaborated by Low, who argues that Milton's purpose in his dramatic poem is the depiction of "not private but divine vengeance, not spite but justice" and that in his deed Samson "is supported and vindicated by God himself."[58] Low argues that Samson's destruction of the Philistine temple is "the culmination...of his inner development and regeneration, made possible by his new self-knowledge and humility, his victory over despair, and his confirmation in...patience" (Low 1974, 87). Thus, Samson's vengeance for his personal

injuries is unimportant compared to the fulfillment of his mission, "the vindication, and glorification of God, the salvation of Israel, the destruction of their enemies" (Low 1971, 231).[59]

Despite the violence and destruction associated with Samson's final act, critics who argue that regeneration is at odds with Samson's revenge fail to take into account the centrality of the pattern of loss and recovery behind his act of vengeance. Samson at the conclusion of the dramatic poem is definitely a much different person than when we first find him at the beginning, tormented by "restless thought...like a deadly swarm/ Of hornets armed" (*SA*, 19-20). The argument for a regenerate reading of Samson's final act gains further credence when we consider Milton's painstaking efforts to forestall condemnation of Samson's vengeance in *Samson Agonistes.* As Carole S. Kessner points out, Milton "raises Samson to the highest level of heroism" by purposely eliminating motives such as suicide and personal revenge which would be antithetical to Samson's spiritual progress in the poem.[60] Stating that it is notable that Milton suppressed Samson's death-wish of *Judges* xvi, 30 ("Let me die with the Philistines") in his poem, David Loewenstein also argues that its express purpose is to dismiss the suggestion of "willful self-destruction" from Samson's act of revenge and destruction (Loewenstein 1996, 173). The chorus' efforts to dissociate Samson's final act from the suspicion of suicide by attributing his death to "necessity" (*SA*, 1660-66), therefore, provide a context, which allows easy acceptance of the instrumentality of Samson's vengeance.

At the end of *Samson Agonistes*, Samson is a regenerate hero who is at peace with himself and with his role as the instrument of divine justice. The result of his renovation is that Samson's vengeance against the Philistines becomes an act of self-sacrifice performed in accordance with the will of God that will begin the liberation of the Israelites from the bondage. By portraying Samson's demeanor as "patient but undaunted" (*SA*, 1623) and devoid of any signs of rage or hatred as he carries out his vengeance, Milton is careful to elevate Samson's act of vengeance above the impurities of conventional revenge. Through the depiction of Samson's drama of self-abasement, Milton espouses patience, waiting, enduring and biding one's time as the only path to becoming a sanctified revenger of God. In so doing Milton depicts an example of a new approach to revenge that reconciles "action with patience" (Radzinowicz 1978, 175), thereby extolling the virtues of humility, self-sacrifice and patient suffering as not only the means to but an integral part of divine vengeance itself. Instead of indulging in an orgy of violence and physical strength, one must wait, endure, and watch for the hand of Providence. That, Milton tells us, is how one achieves godly vengeance.

While the emphasis on humility and patience is at the heart of Milton's efforts to portray his new approach to revenge in *Samson Agonistes*, it is also intimately linked to his efforts to create a political vision in the wake of the failed Puritan revolution. Milton attempts in *Samson Agonistes* to answer the question of how the fallen Puritan revolutionaries, who have failed to live up to their vocation, can regain their calling and complete the task to which they were

elected. As Radzinowicz points out, there is a pertinence of the Samson story to the situation of the English Puritan revolutionaries after the Restoration that Milton exploits in *Samson Agonistes*:

> Milton wanted to show how his own nation had erred and betrayed the light of God within them: he wanted to show the responsibility of the English people for their tragic enslavement; and in giving them an instance of God's renewal of freedom, he wanted to dramatize the possibility of recovering liberty, of remaking their national life when they saw occasion.
> (Radzinowicz 1978, 169) [61]

Despite the tendency among some critics to read *Samson Agonistes* as a work of pessimism and quietism because, from a historical perspective, Samson died in vain without achieving the liberation of Israel (Hill 1984, 311),[62] critics such as Jackie Di Salvo emphasize the centrality of political activism in the poem by arguing that it shows "a central movement from passivity to activism, an activism that ultimately takes the form of a violent struggle against a political oppressor" (Di Salvo 1972, 40). Christopher Hill similarly rejects the idea that *Samson Agonistes* is "a tragedy of defeat," arguing that there is "no evidence that Milton ever adopted the post-1661 Quaker position of pacifism and abstention from politics." He argues that, by depicting the successful withstanding of temptation in *Samson Agonistes* as well as *Paradise Regained*,

"[b]oth poems offer hope [that] the people of England for whom Milton was writing might one day do better" (Hill 1984, 313-15). As Bennett puts it, "[t]hat their liberation will be short-lived...does not invalidate the justice of Samson's cause or the justice of the Philistines' punishment, or the basis for the Israelites' dimly understood hope" (Bennett, 161). Lewalski, in a like manner, argues that despite the biblical record of Israel's continued corruption and servitude, "the Samson paradigm allows no retreat from the political arena" because "in the play's historical moment that future is not yet fixed, and choices are still possible." Thus Lewalski stresses that, for the Israelites in the poem, and by implication the English and all others that come after, "liberation might be possible; the chance is always there" (Lewalski 1988, 248). *Samson Agonistes*, therefore, "is not pessimistic. It is in one sense an intellectual and moral analysis of failure and defeat. But the failure is not accepted as final...*Samson Agonistes* is a call of hope to the defeated" (Hill 1977, 441).[63]

Because "political failure is moral failure" (Hill 1977, 350), however, Milton's efforts to create a bridge between present defeat and ultimate victory in *Samson Agonistes* begins with the examination of failure and defeat. Though Milton evidently feels that there is enough responsibility to go around, he reserves his harshest criticism for the leaders of the revolution, "Israel's governors, and heads of tribes" whom he accuses of squandering the God-given opportunity to establish political freedom by "[acknowledging] not, or not at all considered/ Deliverance offered" (*SA*, 242-46). Comparable to Samson who was promised that he "Should Israel from Philistine yoke deliver" (*SA*, 38-39), the

Puritan revolutionaries, Milton believed, were specially elected as deliverers of England. Again, similar to Samson, who failed in his mission to deliver the Israelites from tyranny through his "own default" (*SA*, 45), they were also led astray by such temptations as ambition, pride, and "the urge for instant solution," (Hill 1977, 421). Milton sees the plight of the Puritans as analogous to that of Samson who, according to Hill, repeated Eve's mistake of aspiring for "a godlike power" instead of relying on "self-knowledge and self-discipline" (Hill 1977, 351). In the end, though, Milton spares no one in his efforts to identify the causes that led to the Restoration. Using Samson to voice his anger and dismay over the failure of the revolution, Milton charges that the English people as a whole are guilty of corruption and servitude:

> But what more oft in nations grown corrupt,
> And by their vices brought to servitude,
> Than to love bondage more than liberty,
> Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty;
> And to despise, or envy, or suspect
> Whom God hath of his special favour raised
> As their deliverer...
> (*SA*, 268-74)

As Hill is quick to emphasize, however, the "diagnosis of national failure," rather than resulting in quietism and a repudiation of action, "leads to the

prophecy of the conditions necessary for a successful republic" (Hill1984, 311). Having shown how the Puritans had erred and are responsible for their own bondage, Milton goes on offer the hope of restored liberty if they but rededicate themselves to the Good Old Cause by arming themselves with the power humility, and repentance and faith. Though Milton does attempt to reconcile violence with patience, to spiritualize struggle is not to pacify it. Thus, just as Milton offers a defense of Samson's vengeance as a means of deliverance, so he promotes violence against oppressive institutions and the segments of the populace who invite or administer them:

> My nation was subjected to your lords.
> It was the force of conquest; force with force
> Is well ejected when the conquered can.
> (*SA*, 1205-207)

Milton further validates acts of resistance against tyranny in *Samson Agonistes* by emphasizing the providential nature of Samson's vengeance. Not only is the sanctity of Samson's revenge confirmed by the "patient but undaunted" (*SA*, 1623) demeanor he displays in the temple but, by accentuating Samson's prayer to God preceding his act of retribution, Milton underscores the instrumental nature of his self-sacrifice. It is thus that the Chorus celebrates the destruction of the temple as the final fulfillment of Samson's mission: "thou hast fulfilled/ The work for which thou wast foretold/ To Israel."

Because of Samson's revenge, Israel has been bequeathed an opportunity for freedom, "let but them/ Find courage to lay hold on this occasion" (*SA*, 1661-63, 1714-16). Milton thus not only endorses Samson's revenge, but also articulates a political faith in the face of the Puritans' post-Restoration defeat. Through Samson's example, Milton holds out hope to the Puritan Revolutionaries that occasion may yet remain for them to fulfill their divine calling. By contrasting the earlier Samson with the renovated Samson, Milton offers not only the reasons for the failure of the Puritan revolution, but also shows ways the fallen Puritan revolutionaries can recover their calling to liberate the English people from political tyranny.

The story of Samson's fall, recovery and fulfillment of his vocation to avenge and deliver his people, therefore, must not be read as an isolated story. Rather it needs to be placed within the larger context of human history as a paradigm of deliverance. As Radzinowicz points out, Samson's action was "exemplary and given to his nation for their encouragement and education" (Radzinowicz 1978, 177). The importance of Samson's role as exemplar is also stressed by Sharon Achinstein who argues that *Samson Agonistes* is "Milton's way of writing a political tract for his times in poetry, a message for how one ought to behave by the exemplary...story of Samson's internal growth and final action."[64] The story of Samson's failings, his punishment, and his eventual renovation therefore serves as a convenient medium for Milton to convey what Bowers calls the "healing message of *Samson Agonistes*," that even those who have crossed divine purpose and have been alienated from grace can be taught

to understand the will of God and thereby return to God's favor (Bowers 1989, 216). With the destruction of the Philistine temple, Samson's part is done. However, the part of the Israelites, and by inference all those who follow in Samson's footsteps, is just beginning. As a humanly flawed exemplar embodying all the strength and weaknesses characteristic of humanity, Samson provides a pattern for the regeneration of every individual. The decision for action, however, remains theirs. Like Samson, every human being must face and overcome a series of powerful temptations, sometimes from enemies, sometimes from well-meaning friends. As Samson's scalding rebuke of the governors and heads of Israel for failing to seize upon the offered deliverance reminds us (*SA*, 241-46), freedom and regeneration cannot be forced upon a reluctant and unworthy people. Thus, while Milton presents Samson as an example for all men, Milton also tells us that only those who willingly weather these spiritual challenges through humility and patience can become one of the elect, a chosen remnant, one of the "fit audience...though few."

Notes

[1] The term "agonistes" according to *OED* is from "agonist" meaning a "combatant in the games," "a contender," "a person engaged in a contest or struggle," or "a protagonist." Because "agonistes" is a derivative of a word signifying a struggle or contest, Anthony Low argues that Milton intended the title "*Samson Ago*nistes" to suggest the meaning of "spiritual conflict" and by extension, a "spiritual warrior or saint" and that, "Samson proves the victor of both a spiritual and a physical combat." Anthony Low, *The Blaze of Noon: A Reading of Samson Agonistes* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1974), no. 1, p. 62.

[2] F. Michael Krouse, *Milton's Samson and the Christian Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 132. Sherman H. Hawkins provides a concurring argument by advocating a view of "triadic pattern of *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*" in which the image of Samson's "sacrificial self-offering" completes "the pattern of history and of Milton's three great poems." "Samson's Catharsis," *Milton Studies* 2 (1970): 211-30, pp. 227, 211.

[3] David Loewenstein argues that the publication of *Samson Agonistes* in 1671 invites us to construe the implication of the dramatic poem in relation to the Restoration. "The Revenge of the Saint: Radical Religion and Politics in *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Studies* 33 (1996): 159-80, p.159.

[4] As Anthony Low puts it, Samson is "Milton's most human hero" (Low 1974,164).

[5] Richard S. Ide, "The Renaissance Dramatic Heritage of *Samson Agonistes*," in *Soundings of Things Done, Essays in Early Modern Literature in Honor of S.K. Heninger Jr.*, Peter E. Medine and Joseph Wittreich eds (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), p.164.

[6] In a similar line, M. V. Rama Sarma indicates that, because Old Testament events and persons sometimes prefigure and foreshadow the New Testament, Samson can be seen as a Christ figure. " 'The Unsearchable Dispose of Highest Wisdom': *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Quarterly* 13 (1979): 85-9, p.87.

[7] Some of the parallels between Samson and the conventional revenger of Renaissance drama indicated by Andrews include: the preoccupation over injustices and injuries, the sense of despair and isolation, and, the meditations

on vengeance that result in violent and bloody deaths, including that of the protagonist himself (Andrews, 83-85).

[8] For further studies of the revenge motif in *Samson Agonistes* see Richard F. Hardin, "Milton's Radical 'Admirer' Edward Sexby, with a note on Samson's revenge," *Milton Quarterly* 15 (1981): 59-61; R.J. Kaufmann, "Bruising the Serpent: Milton as a Tragic Poet," *Centennial Review* 11 (1967): 371-86; Anthony Low, "No Power but of God: Vengeance and Justice in Samson Agonistes," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 34 (1971): 219-32.

[9] Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans: Seventeenth Century Essays* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), p.280.

[10] "*Samson Agonistes*," *Milton: Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey (London and New York: Longman, 1971), 1542, 1562, 1653-54. All quotations from Milton's *Samson Agonistes* are from this edition and further quotations will appear parenthetically with volume and line numbers.

[11] Barbara K. Lewalski, "*Samson Agonistes* and the 'Tragedy' of the Apocalypse," *PMLA* 85 (1970): 1050-62, p. 1056-57. See also Jackie Di Salvo who also notes Milton's use of the sermons of Puritan preachers in which Samson and other heroes of the Old Testament who became "moral models" in the context not only as saints but "soldiers fighting 'the Lord's Battells'" (Di Salvo, 40).

[12] For further reading on the providential nature of Samson's revenge, see Harold Skulsky who argues that Samson final act of vengeance must be viewed in the context of his office as one of the Judges of Israel. As Skulsky points out, Samson informs us that it is God's motions which are presumably "disposing" him to do the "something extraordinary" which he finally does, thereby implicating God in the act (Skulsky, 74-5). Jackie Di Salvo likewise argues that "Milton underlies the providential nature of Samson's actions by constantly reminding the reader that his power to overcome the Philistines is always directly provided by God" (Di Salvo, 48).

[13] John Mulryan, "The Heroic Tradition of Milton's *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Studies* 18 (1983): 217-34, pp. 217-19.

[14] Cf. *Judges* 13:5: "...the child (Samson) shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

[15] John T. Shawcross maintains that the term "renovation" best describes what happened to Samson considering Milton's own testament that "[i]t is by MAN'S

RENOVATION that he is BROUGHT TO A STATE OF GRACE AFTER BEING CURSED AND SUBJECT TO GOD'S ANGER." John T. Shawcross, "Misreading Milton," *Milton Studies* 33 (1996): 181-203, p.192.

[16] John Steadman, "Efficient Causality and Catastrophe in *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Studies* 28 (1992): 211-26, p. 218.

[17] John S. Hill, "Vocation and Spiritual Renovation in *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Studies* 2 (1970): 149-74, pp. 156-57. See also William Riley Parker who argues that Samson's recovery involves patience, faith, conquering the weakness which led to his fall and obeying the call to further service (Parker 1937, 237-38).

[18] Fredson Bowers, "Milton's *Samson Agonistes*: Justice and Reconciliation," in *Hamlet as Minister and Scourge and Other Studies in Shakespeare and Milton* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 211-39, p.214.

[19] Other critics who identify Samson's role as exemplar, see Joan S. Bennett who argues that "Samson serves as a model for the regenerate Christian." "Liberty Under the Law: The Chorus and the Meaning of *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Studies* 12 (1978): 141-63, p. 142. See also Low who note that Samson's regeneration and "his recovery of the special relationship he once enjoyed with God" is important "as an emblem for imitation" (Low 1971, 227).

[20] Samson's monologue lamenting his fate, questioning divine justice, and then correcting himself not to "rashly call in doubt/ Divine prediction" (*SA*, 43-44) have a striking resemblance to an earlier lament by Adam in *Paradise Lost*. Following his fall and judgment in Book X of *Paradise Lost*, Adam, in a monologue, bemoans his fate, questions divine justice (X. 720 ff.), and then, corrects himself by acknowledging his own complicity; "first and last/ On me, me only, as the source and spring/ Of all corruption, all the blame lights due" (*PL*, X. 831-33).

[21] Darryl Tippens, "The Kenotic Experience of *Samson Agonistes*, " *Milton Studies* 22 (1986): 173-94, pp. 185, 187.

[22] According to Tippens, at the opening scene of the dramatic poem, the humiliation of the unregenerate Samson is "more like the humiliation of the defeated rebel angels rather than Christlike martyrdom" (Tippens, 185).

[23] Critics such as P. A. Samuels, however, read *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* as "contrastive companion poems" (P.A. Samuels, 140). Wittreich also argues that *Paradise Regained* shows how "paradise within may be achieved," while *Samson Agonistes* demonstrates "how [paradise] may be lost, and the effects of its being lost" (Wittreich 1979, 209). However, I agree

with Radzinowicz's assessment that the two works are complementary in that both "end in *anagnorisis* or discovery," and that temptations are "the very material of which virtue is made" in both works (Radzinowicz 1978, 229, 232).

[24] The indispensable role of temptation to Samson's renovation has been also argued by Ann Gossman who argues that "temptation is the means of causing Samson to assert and manifest his virtue of intelligence and thereby to be regenerated." Ann Gossman, "Milton's Samson as the Tragic Hero Purified by Trial," *JEGP* 61 (1962): 528-41, pp.530, 535.

[25] According to Ide, in Milton's poems the only acceptable disposition for the sinner in this fallen world is to accept patiently God's justice and that "essential to this patient disposition is the belief that God's punishment is purposeful" (Ide 1997, 163).

[26] Kathleen M. Swaim, "The Doubling of the Chorus in *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Studies* 20 (1984): 225-245, p.230. Patrick Cullen likewise finds in Manoa's speech the mirror of "Samson's meditation in its despair and distrust" of God. *Infernal Triad: The Flesh, the World, and the Devil in Spenser and Milton* (Princeton and London: Princeton University Press, 1974), p.208.

[27] Nancy Y. Hoffman, "Samson's Other Father: The Character of Manoa in *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Studies* 2 (1970): 195-210, p. 204.

[28] Jeanne K. Welcher, "The Meaning of Manoa," *Milton Quarterly* 8 (1974): 48-50, p.49. Ide likewise notes that, by advising Samson to avoid God's punishment, Manoa play the role of a bad physician in the poem (Ide 1997, 164).

[29] Because Manoa's temptation is instrumental to Samson's renovation, he can be categorized as an instance of "good temptation." "A good temptation" as Milton defines it "is that whereby God tempts even the righteous for the purpose of proving them, not as though he were ignorant of the disposition of their hearts, but for the purpose of exercising or manifesting their faith or patience, as in the case of Abraham and Job; or of lessening their self-confidence, and reproving their weakness, that both they themselves become wiser by experience, and other may profit by their example" (*Columbia* XV, 87-89).

[30] Samson's admission that he is the "sole cause" of his fall is in clear contrast to his earlier attempt to shift responsibility by stating to the Chorus that he was the "prime cause" (*SA*, 234), implying that he was not the "sole cause," and responding to the fact that Israel still serves the Philistines with a disclaimer, "That fault I take not one me, but transfer" (*SA*, 241).

[31] M. E. Grenander, "Samson's Middle: Aristotle and Dr. Johnson," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 24 (1954-55): 377-89, p. 385.

[32] The process of regeneration as outlined by Milton in *De Doctrina Christiana* involves the "Conviction of sin, contrition, confession, departure from evil, conversion to good" (Gilliland, 27).

[33] Nicholas Jose, "*Samson Agonistes*: The Play Turned Upside Down," in *Ideas of the Restoration in English Literature 1660-71* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p.148.

[34] See also Anthony Low who notes that Samson's inward progress is not an even one that it goes through setbacks moving by waves and turns (Low1974, pp. 169-70) and Shawcross who argues that "Samson's renovation must occur in stages, moving the self-absorbed and still proud and recriminatory defeated blind man in to one who gives himself up fully to guidance and selflessness and action" (Shawcross 1996, 200).

[35] Other indicators of Samson's retrogressive mental state include his continuing attachment to his public image, and the depiction of himself as a victim. Forgetting for the moment his own admission to be "Sole author I, sole cause" of his fall, Samson again bemoans the fact that, having been brought up as God's special "nursling" and "choice delight," he is left "all helpless" among his enemies to be "the subject of their cruelty, or scorn" (*SA*, 633, 644-46).

[36] Raymond B. Waddington, "Melancholy Against Melancholy: *Samson Agonistes* as Renaissance Tragedy," in *Calm of Mind*, ed. Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. (Cleveland & London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1971), p. 274.

[37] The potency of her temptation which lies in her charms and artfulness is highlighted by the Chorus who depicts her in the manner of an "ornate" and "stately ship" (*SA*, 712-14). Dalila's "wiles" (*SA*, 402) had not only seduced Samson to, like Adam in *Paradise Lost*, supplant his duty to God with his love for a woman, but it still remain a puissant threat to his renovation. That Samson is still potentially vulnerable to her "feminine assaults" (*SA*, 403) is evident from Samson's agitation upon hearing her arrival.

[38] According to Kranidas, Dalila acts as an unscrupulous lawyer who defends a guilty client by "pleading...for an outweighing of the evidence." "Dalila's Role in *Samson Agonistes*," *Studies in English Literature* 6 (1966): 125-37, p.128. See also George M. Muldrow who notes that despite her claims to the contrary, the reason she presents why she deserves pardon "sounds more like excuses for

the betrayal." *Milton and the Drama of the Soul* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), p.193.

[39] According to Peggy Samuel, this speech is an attempt to transform moral error into an accident. "Fire not Light: Milton's Simulacrum of Tragicomedy," *Milton Quarterly* 30:1 (1996): 1-15, p.4.

[40] Mason Tung, "A Reinterpretation of Milton's *Samson Agonistes*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 9 (1968): 475-92, p.482.

[41] Miriam Muskin, "Wisdom by Adversity": Davidic Traits in Milton's Samson," *Milton Studies* 14 (1980): 233-255, p.243. Because, pardon for Samson can result only from the Hebraic scheme of repentance, Miriam Muskin argues that Samson's willing repentance is instrumental towards turning his back to Dalila, leaving evil behind him and moving up back to God.

[42] Michael Atkinson also emphasizes Dalila's obduracy in this scene by arguing that what Dalila asks of Samson is not to forgive her sin but condone it. This, in opposition to true repentance, would be to perpetuate sin by accepting and retaining it unchanged. "The Structure of the Temptation in Milton's *Samson Agonistes*," *Modern Philology* 69 (1972): 285-91, p.288. Hugh M. Richmond provides a similar reading of this scene by arguing that Dalila is tempting Samson to "slur over the issues in a facile reconciliation with evil and failure" and suggesting that "human inadequacy is so universal it should simply be accepted and forgotten" (Richmond, 183).

[43] It must be pointed out that the implication of Samson's statement is not that it is wrong to forgive weakness. He is, after all, in the process of working out his own expiation for an admitted transgression even greater than Dalila's. What Samson refuses to condone in the poem, however, is Dalila's obdurate refusal to repent her evil.

[44] Importantly, if Samson seems harsh in his condemnation of Dalila, he exercises the same harsh judgment upon himself by acknowledging that "I to myself was false ere thou to me" (*SA*, 824). Thus, his injunction against easy excuses is directed as much to himself as to Dalila.

[45] According to Muskin, the Hebraic scheme of repentance used by Milton in *Samson Agonistes* involves free admission of guilt, turning one's back on evil, and learning to do good or accepting the challenge to action (Muskin, 243). This is generally analogous to the process of regeneration as outlined by Milton in *De Doctrina Christiana* involves the "Conviction of sin, contrition, confession, departure from evil, conversion to good" (Gilliland, 27).

[46] As Low points out, "[a]lthough [Samson] began life as a chosen champion of God, he came closer and closer to turning into a mere Harapha, until only the agony of his fall could save him and set him back on the right course. Harapha, then, represents what Samson nearly became, and would have become if he not had God's chastening help"(Low 1974, 163).

[47] According to Low, "Samson's description of himself, walking about swollen with pride or hybris like a petty god...comes very close to the behavior of Harapha at their meeting. In fact, it is clear that by introducing the giant into the play, Milton provided Samson with a parallel, a parodic double" (Low 1974, 162).

[48] Nancy D. Libby emphasizes the public nature of Samson's latest challenge to Harapha by arguing that from this moment on, "no longer is this to be a contest between men, but between gods." "Milton's Harapha," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 71 (1972): 521-29, p.523. Jon S. Lawry likewise argues that it constitutes a prophetic challenge from "the living God" to Dagon. *The Shadow of Heaven: Matter and Stance in Milton's Poetry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), p.386.

[49] Despite its public nature, Samson's latest challenge to Harapha has been pointed out by P. A. Samuels among others as sign of his "failure to resist the temptation of violence" (P. A. Samuels 1993, 118) and that no regeneration has occurred at all. Lawrence W. Hyman also suggests as much when he argues that Samson's final challenge to Harapha isn't symptomatic of "increased hope" as a sign of "resignation." "The 'true experience' of *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Quarterly* 13 (1979): 90-95, p.93. In a similar vein, William V. Nestrick indicates that Samson's challenge to Harapha serves to evoke a sense of unease and that it is "a false image of the trial of fortitude that must be rejected." "*Samson Agonistes* and Trial by Combat," *Studia Neophilologica* 43 (1971): 246-51, pp. 247, 251. Such an argument, however, is predicated on the mistaken assumption that Milton views all violence as evil. As Hill points out, however, rather than a rejection of violence as a viable course of action, "it is the use of force for worldly ends, or its untimely use by God's servants, that is condemned" in *Samson Agonistes* (Hill 1984, 314). What Milton attempts to achieve in *Samson Agonistes*, therefore, is a reconciliation of violence with the purifying emotion of patience and humility.

[50] Ann Gossman similarly argues that Samson indicates his return to the role of God's elect hero by issuing his challenge to battle "not like a petty god, but like God's champion" (Gossman, 539).

[51] Christopher Grose, " 'His Uncontrollable Intent': Discovery as Action in *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Studies* 7 (1975): 49-76, p.62.

[52] As Steadman points out, while the "general consensus" is to view Samson as an instrument of God in *Samson Agonistes*, "revisionist criticism" not only deny the notion of Samson's regeneration but the role of divine providence in the final catastrophe (Steadman 1992, 211). Gallagher similarly notes the tendency of some recent criticism to "depreciate the traditional view that Samson finishes his career as the reinstated champion of God" (Gallagher, 259).

[53] Lana Cable, *Carnal Rhetoric: Milton's Iconoclasm and the Poetics of Desire* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), p.171.

[54] In her most recent article on *Samson Agonistes*, however, P.A. Samuels appears to have reversed her position regarding Samson, giving implicit approval to a regenerationist reading of the poem. Noting that the poem resists a "reconciliation that would rewrite sin as accident" and conclude weakness as inevitable, P. A. Samuels concludes that, for Samson, "forgiveness becomes a temptation to be resisted" (P. A. Samuels, 1996, 5-6). For further reading on anti-regenerationist criticism of *Samson Agonistes*, see John Carey who charges in his introduction to *Samson Agonistes* that the ending of the dramatic poem is "morally disgusting" and that "Samson's last bloody act of vengeance....is condemned, at a deeper level, by the progression of imagery" resulting in a "the weak-minded, vengeful hero" who is reduced to "the level of Dalila and the Philistines" (Carey, 333, 338-41); Helen Damico, "Duality in Dramatic Vision: A Structural Analysis of *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Studies* 12 (1978): 91-116; Lawrence W. Hymen, "The Unwilling Martyrdom in *Samson Agonistes*," *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 13 (1968): 91-8; G. A. Wilkes, "The Interpretation of *Samson Agonistes*," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 26 (1963): 363-79; Clay Daniel, "Lust and Violence in *Samson Agonistes*," *South Central Review* 6:1 (1989): 6-31; Stanley Fish, Question and Answer in *Samson Agonistes*," Critical Quarterly 11 (1969): 237-64.

[55] While most critics take the stance of either the regenerationist or anti-regenerationist argument regarding Samson's final act of vengeance, Stella P. Revard offers an interesting third perspective by suggesting that Samson may be neither be fully regenerate or unregenerate at the conclusion of the dramatic poem. Revard suggests that it may be Milton's intention to induce mixed reaction from his audience, wanting "his audience to pity his dying hero" while at the same time "not necessarily to approve of the destruction he accomplishes." "The Politics of Milton's Hercules," *Milton Studies* 32 (1995): 217-45, pp. 240-41.

[56] Burton J. Weber, "The Worldly End of Samson," *Milton Studies* 26 (1990): 289-309, p.289.

[57] William Kerrigan, *The Prophetic Milton* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974), pp.246-49.

[58] Anthony Low, " 'No Power but of God'": Vengeance and Justice in *Samson Agonistes*," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 34 (1971): 219-32, pp.231-32.

[59] For further regenerationist readings of *Samson Agonistes* see, Ann Gossman, "Milton's Samson as the Tragic Hero Purified by Trial," *JEGP* 61 (1962): 528-41; John S. Hill, "Vocation and Spiritual Renovation in *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Studies* 2 (1970): 149-74; Lynn Veach Sadler, "Regeneration and Typology: *Samson Agonistes* and its Relation to *De Doctrina Christiana*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Paradise Regained*," *SEL* (1972): 141-56; Philip J. Gallagher, "The Role of Raphael in *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Studies* 18 (1983): 255-294; Hugh MacCallum, "*Samson Agonistes*: The Deliverer as Judge," *Milton Studies* 23 (1987): 259-90; Fredson Bowers, "Milton's *Samson Agonistes*: Justice and Reconciliation," in *Hamlet as Minister and Scourge and Other Studies in Shakespeare and Milton* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 211-39; David Loewenstein, "The Revenge of the Saint: Radical Religion and Politics in *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Studies* 33 (1996): 159-80.

[60] Carole S. Kessner, "Milton's Hebraic Herculean Hero," *Milton Studies* 6 (1975): 243-58, pp. 256-57.

[61] Joan S. Bennett also emphasizes the political context underlying *Samson Agonistes* by arguing that "*Samson Agonistes* is a drama of spiritual struggle in the context of revolutionary political commitment and defeat" (Bennett 1989, 119).

[62] One such critic is Irene Samuel who points to Samson's ultimate failure to liberate Israel to support her argument that Milton repudiates politics and violence in *Samson Agonistes*: "Samson's announced vocation was to deliver Israel, not to slay Philistines. Ask for that great deliverer at the end, and find him dead in Philistia among his 'slaughtered foes'...We need only read past Chapter 16 in the Book of Judges to learn how much deliverance Israel gained" (Samuel 1971, 252-53). Noting that "the pacifist note, the repudiation of force...is the theme of his major poetry," Michael Wilding also argues that there is an underlying "moral rejection of force as a means of change" running through *Samson Agonistes*. Wilding, *Dragons Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp.253, 257. For further reading of *Samson Agonistes* as a withdrawal from politics see also Barbara Lewalski who argues that "[r]eaders will hardly derive from [*Samson Agonistes*] an optimistic assessment of the possibilities for political liberation." "Samson and the 'New Acquist of True [Political] Experience," *Milton Studies* 24 (1988): 233-51, p.247.

Arguing that "*Samson Agonistes* is a poem of, and partly about, the Puritan Revolution," Joseph Wittreich likewise maintains that Samson "becomes a mirror for gazing upon its failures." Because Samson is marked by his "continual backsliding, his retaliatory spirit, his wanton lust, his becoming inured to blood and violence" Wittreich stresses that Samson provides an analogy of the fall rather than the exaltation (Wittreich 1986, 218, 220).

[63] For further reading that underscores the political activism of *Samson Agonistes* see David Loewenstein who argues that the poem is about "fierce rage and defiance against outward authority" (Loewenstein 1990, 141-42); John F. Andrews who stresses that "Samson's death affords the opportunity for political freedom" (Andrews, 97); Mary Ann Radzinowicz who emphsizes that "Milton did not abandon either politics or his nation and was never a quietest or an elitist" (Radzinowicz 1978, 168); E. M. W. Tillyard who go as far as to read Milton's dramatic poem as a kind of "political manifesto" that is "nothing less than stark defiance of the restored government and a prophecy that it will be overthrown." *Milton* (London, 1961), p. 329.

[64] Sharon Achinstein, "*Samson Agonistes* and the Drama of Dissent," *Milton Studies* 33 (1996): 133-58, pp. 135. See also Lynn Veach Sadler who also emphasizes Samson's role as exemplar by arguing that "Samson acquires his regenerative consolation under the Old Testament dispensation, but is exemplary, after the Christ's own role of Exemplar, for those who adjust his experience to that of their own historical circumstances" (Sadler, 141).

Epilogue: Milton's Providential View of History in *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*

In order better to understand Milton's poetic purpose in *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*, it is best to read them together as an epic trilogy. Rather than being separate works, Milton's three major poems comprise the progressive stages of one epic vision, one intellectual process. As Christopher Hill points out, there is evidence in Milton's three major poems of a thematic progression involving the Scriptural pattern of the Fall, purgation, and restoration (Hill 1977, 446) that illustrates not only a paradigm of salvation but a providential view of history.[1]

As indicated by Achsah Guibbory, Milton accepts the Christian view that history has taken a "cyclical course" in which periods of virtue and purity are followed by corruption and decline. Milton, however, believes that this cyclical pattern of history can be transcended "through man's efforts aided by God's providence." Integral to Milton's works therefore is the ideal of "the providential pattern of progress" (Guibbory, 170-72, 177).[2] One of the ways in which Milton's providential view of history is manifested in his poems is through the depiction of two contrasting types of revenge: satanic and divine. While Satanic revenge is identified with the causes that led to the Fall, divine revenge is presented by Milton as the means of repairing the effects of the Fall. Through his adaptation and transformation of the theme of revenge, Milton not only presents an

apotheosis of revenge but also uses it to raise more far-reaching questions concerning providence and the role of humanity in providential history.

Milton's development of the theme of revenge in his epic trilogy begins in *Paradise Lost* where he presents Satan's attempted revenge against God and humanity in its most grotesque and evil aspects. Satan is a villain revenger who is motivated by envy, pride, and hatred to pursue his revenge with intense single-mindedness. He is also a spiritually isolated individualist who acknowledges no restrictions on his behavior other than those that conform to his self-interest. Despite his attempt to keep up the guise of an unselfish leader, the grotesque images of his soliloquies reveal that he is driven by a cold and venomous hatred which compels him to engage in a perverse act of destruction against those whom he acknowledges have done him no wrong (*PL*, IV. 386-87). There is, however, a purpose to Milton's depiction of Satan's desire for ungodly revenge. As Huston Diehl points out, the grotesque can be an effective vehicle as catalyst to change and for underscoring moral lessons.[3] In *Paradise Lost*, therefore, Milton presents Satan as a negative example, which he then counters with the examples of the Son and Samson in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. As Christopher Hill points out, if men follow the Son's example, Milton believes that "the Fall can be reversed" and the elect "on earth recover the lost internal Paradise and themselves become Sons of God" (Hill 1977, 423). Writing after the failure of the Puritan revolution, however, Milton is also acutely aware of the limitations of fallen man, of how easily he can be discouraged from the true path that leads up to God. Thus, for the benefit of fallen man, Milton also offers the

example of Samson's revenge in *Samson Agonistes*, which exemplifies the divine revenge on a more human level.[4] Samson's revenge, which is marked by its abandonment of "all self interest" and the surrendering of himself as "a willing instrument of God's purpose" is also indicative of "how the remnant, the conscious minority should behave" (Hill 1977, 446).

By portraying two contrasting types of revenge, satanic and divine, Milton suggests that Man must choose between the two. The war between good and evil is the war between two champions God and Satan, who are bent on revenge against each other. Aligning oneself with one or the other makes one a soldier in God's or Satan's army. The theme of revenge in Milton's epic trilogy therefore involves the element of free will which affords Man the liberty of choice.[5] As Golda Werman points out, Milton differs radically from the Reformed theology of the period in that he rejected the Calvinist view of man as "totally depraved" and "vitiated by the effects of original sin." Instead, Werman maintains that Milton insisted on the agency of free will in man's redemption by arguing that "man plays an effective part in his own salvation."[6] Reuben Sánchez Jr. similarly argues that "the need to struggle, to strive, so that one may achieve and manifest proffered grace is...fundamental to Milton."[7]

Milton himself expounds his doctrine of free will in *De Doctrina Christiana*, where he asserts his belief that the Fall does not annul contingent election, and that "the gift of reason has been implanted in all, by which they may of themselves resist bad desires" (*Columbia* XIV, 131). The emphasis on the operations of free choice in *Paradise Lost* also offers scope for understanding

Milton's position concerning the theological controversy between divine will, predestination and free will. Watching Satan flying from Chaos to Earth in Book III, God foresees that man will fall by choosing to disobey His commandment (*PL*, III. 93-96):

> Ingrate, he had of me
> All he could have; I made him just and right,
> Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.
> Such I created all the ethereal powers
> And spirits, both them who stood and them who failed;
> Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.
> (*PL*, III. 97-102)

Explicating this paradox that "predestined" is the antithesis of being "free," however, God states to the Son that both man and angels are endowed with free will for without freedom of will they would be incapable of faith or love and would be serving "necessity,/ Not me" (*PL*, III. 103-04, 110-111). Foreknowledge, which is merely cognitive, is not the same as direct causation, which involves active intervention.

Considering Milton's firm belief in the efficacy of free will, it is hardly surprising that implicit in Milton's offer of the Son's and Samson's revenge as exempla is his firm belief in our ability as individuals to help shape providential history. As Hill points out, Milton's faith in the individual's ability to participate in

God's providential design is evident from his firm belief in "the Old Testament doctrine of the remnant"[8] from whose efforts he believe "victory would still come in the end, however tragic the present, provided we do not lose our heads or our heart" (Hill 1977, 348, 463).[9]

Not all critics, however, agree with Hill's assessment that Milton envisions "a hope for humanity on earth in the future, attainable by human effort and self-discipline" (Hill 1977, 387). William Kolbrener, for instance, argues that *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* are defeatist poems which articulate "Milton's ambivalence about political engagement" (Kolbrener, 49). David Loewenstein also suggests that Milton's poems, rather than an unequivocal testament of political faith in the face of defeat, reveal a troubled mind grappling with the question, "to what degree *can* a human agent....both participate in and configure the drama of history."[10] According to Loewenstein, the "disturbing mixture of pessimism and iconoclasm," the conflation of the degenerative and cyclical with the apocalyptic and typological elements in Milton's poems, is indicative of a poet who did not believe in the possibility of positive change in the historical process (Loewenstein 1990, 5-7).

To some extent, both *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* may seem to end unsatisfactorily, leaving their audience troubled. As noted by Hill, Milton clearly rejects in *Paradise Regained* the "urge for instant solutions," and this explains the Son's "dismissal of political solutions" to Israel's problems (Hill 1977, 421). Despite its celebration of a "new acquist/ Of true experience" (*SA*,

1755-56), *Samson Agonistes* likewise appears to end without a definitive and satisfying conclusion, as the hero is killed alongside the Philistine oppressors.

At the end of *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, we experience neither Redemption nor the Apocalypse. By projecting these indefinitely into the future, however, Milton is not advocating quietism, as some have claimed, but is reminding us that redemption is an ongoing process, that we are at a crossroads between redemption and damnation and that the choice is ours to make. Because of his experience of the failure of the Puritan revolution, Milton realizes that life does not insure that the reader will make the right choice. We may react positively to the examples of the Son and Samson, or we may follow Satan and fall further from God. What Milton emphasizes is that we are free to choose between the satanic and the divine. To be disturbed by the inconclusive endings or discomfited by the unsettled nature of things in Milton's poetry thus is to miss the point, for I would argue that indeterminacy and free choice is the very essence of Milton's poetic purpose. As the nature of history is yet indeterminate, everything is possible if we but choose correctly. Herein lies the basis for Milton's ideal of "the providential pattern of progress." Instead of the rantings of an embittered political outcast, therefore, Milton's final poems are an expression of faith in the ability of the elect to deliver themselves and their nation from the bondage of sin. While misery, a product of disobedience, is an aspect of the human condition, Milton demonstrates in his poetic works that occasions yet remain for the elect to fulfill God's providential design.

Notes

[1] Milton himself emphasizes the importance of this providential pattern of loss and recovery in *De Doctrina Christiana* where he argues that "[t]he Providence of God as regards the fall of man, is observable in the sin of man, and the misery consequent upon it, as well as in his restoration" (*Columbia* 15, 179). This restoration, Milton tells us over the course of his three major poems, involves God's salvation for those individuals who repent and return to him through obedience to his Will.

[2] In emphasizing Milton's understanding of the cyclical versus the providential pattern of history, Achsah Guibbory echoes a similar argument by Christopher Hill who earlier notes that despite Milton's realization that "there was a cyclical return to evil after each good start," he adhered to the belief that "God's people must learn to escape from history as circular treadmill" (Hill 1977, 386).

[3] According to Huston Diehl, "the grotesqueness of many acts of stage violence serves to make memorable certain moral ideas." Diehl's argument has implication towards understanding Milton's portrayal of the grotesque nature of Satan's revenge, that it not only leads to its condemnation but promote in Milton's "fit audience" the purgation of the contrarious passions of pride and hatred. Huston Diehl, "The Iconography of Violence in English Renaissance Tragedy," *Renaissance Drama* 11 (1980): 27-44, p.33.

[4] M.M. Mahood explains this progression as an attempt by Milton to first explore "metaphysical roots of both true and false heroism" before attempting to offer "a pattern-hero in the character of Samson." *Poetry and Humanism* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1950), p.211.

[5] According to J.B. Savage, the fundamental and distinguishing feature of Milton's humanism is a belief in man's innate freedom. "Freedom and Necessity in *Paradise Lost*," *ELH* 44 (1977): 283-311, p. 286.

[6] Golda Werman, "Repentance in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 22 (1986), pp. 123, 121. The debate between determination and free will can be further understood within the context of another debate involving "faith" versus "practice" or "works." Milton's argument in *Of Civil Power* that "evangelic religion...is told in two word, faith and charitie; or beleef and practise" (*Columbia* VI, 21) reveals how fundamental the dichotomy between faith and practice is to the English Reformation. However, as in the case of determination versus free will, how one approaches faith versus practice was a point of controversy. While the concept of faith before works underlie the theological discussion among those adhering

to the Reformed theology, Milton offers a differing view on the matter, favoring practice over faith.

The Reformed theologians such as Luther and Calvin affirms that that one can achieve salvation only by faith or relegates practice or good works to the secondary or derivative role. Luther, for instance, argues uneqivocally that "salvation is utterly beyond [one's] own powers, councel, undeavours, will, and works, and absolutely depending on the will, councel, pleasure, and work of another, that is, of God only" ("The Bondage of the Will," *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, ed., intro. James Bruce Ross and Mary Martin McLaughlin (New York: The Viking Press, 1953, p. 700). Calvin also places faith over practice by insisting that "righteousness, if dependent on works, must inevitably be confounded in the sight of God, therefore it is contained exclusively in the mercy of God and the participation of Christ, and consequently in faith alone" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2 vols. Trans. John Allen (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1936), II. iii. 5, p. 25).
Milton, however, represents a departure from the Reformed theology in stressing practice over issues of faith and doctrine. In *Of Reformation*, for instance, Milton, contemplating the cause for the "*Depravities of the Church*" of England, complains that what is wanting is greater emphasis on the role of works: "for, albeit in *purity of Doctrine* we agree with our Brethren [continental reformers]; yet in Discipline, which is the *execution* and *applying* of *Doctrine* home, and laying the salve to the very *Orifice* of the *wound*; yea tenting and searching to the *Core*, without which *Pulpit Preaching* is but shooting at Rovers; in this we are no better then a *Schisme*, from all the *Reformation*, and a sore scandall to them" (*Columbia*, III, 6). Milton goes even further in *Animadversions*, charging that faith without practice is an act of hypocrisy: "Hypocrites, the Gospell faithfully preach'd to the poore, the desolate parishes visited and duely fed, loyterers throwne out, wolves driven from the fold, had been a better confutation of the Pope and Masse, than whole Hecatontomes of controversies" (*Columbia*, III, 175).

[7] Reuben Sánchez Jr. *Persona and Decorum in Milton's Prose* (Madison and Teaneck, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997), p.164. Dewey D. Wallace Jr. similarly argues that in both *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina Christiana* Milton postulates the principle of human freedom and the belief that justification is by a faith "not destitute of works." *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology, 1525-1695* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), p. 132.

[8] According to *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, the word "remnant" has a special significance in the prophecies of Isaiah, "as denoting a 'holy seed,' or spiritual kernel, of the nation of the people of God, being blessed of God and made a blessing," vol. 4, p. 2557.

[9] As Barbara Riebling points out, "if...in a wicked and corrupt world, virtue can be found in an individual who serves God, he becomes the saving remnant and society's hope for a better future." "Milton on Machiavelli: Representations of the State in *Paradise Lost*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 49:3 (1996): 573-97, p. 595.

[10] David Loewenstein, *Milton and the Drama of History: Historical Vision, Iconoclasm, and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 4.

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