

GOD AND HUMANITY IN JOHN MILTON'S *PARADISE LOST*

GOD AND HUMANITY IN JOHN MILTON'S *PARADISE LOST*

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## LAY ABSTRACT

This dissertation studies relationships in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, a poem that shows interdependent and positive self-relationships in Eden, as well as a mutual, beneficial, and enduring relationship between God and humanity. My thesis not only suggests that Milton's poem extols relationships that recognize others as welcome additions to the self rather than subtractions or even self-absorptions, but also explores what specific differences emerge across relationships (e.g., God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit versus Satan, Sin, and Death) and how they might help or impede God's plan for His original created good to continue for all time. I argue that within *Paradise Lost*, both earthly and divine self-identity develops and becomes fully realized only through relationships with others. Further, because the good in the created world of *Paradise Lost* comes from humanity's relationship with God, this relationship is the basis of all relationships that are good.

ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns questions of being in good relation, with others and the created world, in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which shows interdependent and positive self-other relationships in Eden, as well as a mutual, constructive, and enduring relationship between God and humanity. Working with Lee Morrissey's suggestion that "subjectivity requires difference, not, as Adam had assumed, similarity" ("Eve's Otherness" 340), my thesis not only suggests that Milton's poem esteems relationships that recognize others as welcome additions to the self – hence, Milton's "other self" (8.450, 10.128) – rather than subtractions or even self-absorptions, but also explores what specific differences emerge across relationships (e.g., God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit versus Satan, Sin, and Death) and how they might fulfill or, conversely, upend God's plan for His original created good to continue as such. I argue that within *Paradise Lost*, both earthly and divine self-identity develops and becomes fully realized only through relationships with others. And further, because the good in the created world of *Paradise Lost* comes from humanity's relationship with God, this relationship is the basis of all relationships that are good.

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## Introduction

### Human Identity in and as Relation in *Paradise Lost*

— You, have you built well, have you forgotten the cornerstone?  
Talking of right relations of men, but not of relations of men to GOD.  
'Our citizenship is in Heaven'; yes, but that is the model and type for your  
citizenship upon earth. (T. S. Eliot, *Choruses from 'The Rock'* 2.11-13)

My project, "God and Humanity in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*," is motivated primarily by two research questions, which are as follows: 1) what is the place of the human in *Paradise Lost*, and what does this tell us about the position of the human in the universe? and 2) how does Milton represent the relationship between humans and the central power in Creation? This dissertation considers relationality, specifically, the idea that the self is understood and constructed through the views of the other self. Of interest is not just interpersonal existence, but rather how the self (human and divine) comes into being through the other self, as well as questions relating to ethical action.

*Paradise Lost* (1667) has been read and studied for over three hundred and fifty years. However, a relational ethics of the poem – one that concerns relationships between characters in general, along with affinities *between* creaturely relationships – has not yet, to my knowledge, been proposed. What is God and humanity's relationship really like and how does it compare to the Father and Son's relationship (for instance)? And further, what do these relationships mean for human identity and purpose in Milton's cosmos? Generally, critics continue to propose studies on individual characters in *Paradise Lost*



rather than book-length considerations of relationships between characters.<sup>1</sup> Since gender relations in the poem is a topic that has been of “most interest in Milton scholarship” (McDowell and Smith v), my study seeks to add to more recent discussions of inter-species relationships in the poem by examining how one particular inter-species relationship might inform all other relationships.<sup>2</sup> In this study I propose that within *Paradise Lost*, both earthly and divine self-identity emerges and becomes fully realized only through relationships with others.<sup>3</sup> God’s good creation not only has a relational basis, but it is also perpetuated through proper relations. God and humanity’s relationship is the most significant in Milton’s cosmos because humans perform the Son’s heavenly work on earth; they are analogous beings. The virtuous human form is indispensable to God’s purpose because it expresses God’s interpersonal definition of love, which is the basis of the self. A change in God and humanity’s perfect but developing relationship in

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<sup>1</sup> According to Russell M. Hillier, “There have been two notable studies of Milton’s God, a study dedicated to Milton’s Satan, at least two monographs dedicated to the subject of Milton’s angels, one devoted to Milton’s Adam and Eve, and another to Milton’s Eve” (7). See William Empson, *Milton’s God* (1981); Dennis Richard Danielson, *Milton’s Good God: A Study in Literary Theodicy* (1982); Neil Forsyth, *The Satanic Epic* (2003); Robert Hunter West, *Milton and the Angels* (1955); Feisal G. Mohamed, *In the Anteroom of Divinity: The Reformation of the Angels from Colet to Milton* (2008); George Musacchio, *Milton’s Adam and Eve: Fallible Perfection* (1991); and Diane Kelsey McColley, *Milton’s Eve* (1983). In 2011 Hillier maintains, “While no previous scholarly engagement with Milton’s poetics or theology worth its salt can afford to overlook the Son’s role in the Miltonic [sic] canon, a book-length exploration of Milton’s treatment of the identity and office of the Son of God is warranted within the annals of Milton scholarship” (7).

<sup>2</sup> For example, Joad Raymond’s *Milton’s Angels: The Early-Modern Imagination* examines the relationship between humans and angels. Alternatively, Bruce Thomas Boehrer and Karen Edwards consider human-animal relations in *Paradise Lost*. See Boehrer’s *Animal Characters: Nonhuman Beings in Early Modern Literature* and Edwards’s *Milton and the Natural World: Science and Poetry in Paradise Lost*. I want to thank Dr. Daniel Shore for kindly alerting me to these studies (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

<sup>3</sup> The relational ethics proposed by this dissertation applies to angels and non-human animals as well, but I am focusing on God and humanity.

Book 9 is the climax of the poem and causes creation to be forever changed; however, God and humanity's relationship is restored despite the Fall.

Notably, this dissertation's major argument that self-identity, both earthly and divine, is constituted by relationships is opposed to the early modern period's most traditional ethical framework – what Philip P. Hallie refers to as “Inward Government” theory (158) – for I maintain that Milton expounds an inter- rather than an intra-personal ethics in *Paradise Lost*.<sup>4</sup> According to this theory, “a good person is one whose passions are under control of his reason. To be good one's soul must be a harmonious, smoothly running state with reason at its head. To be good is to be self-controlled, or rather reason-controlled” (Hallie 158). Erica Fudge points out how, in this theory, “[it is] the appetites of the body rather than the mind ... that must be controlled” (100). Crucial for my argument, Fudge observes that Inward Government theory is occasionally opposed to an ethics of relation:

the theory uses this opposition of human and animal [, where animals lack reason, but humans are defined by it,] to reiterate the centrality of not merely humanity but the individual human, *the self*. The focus is not upon the community as a whole – the government of others – as much as it is about the government of one's own being (although the former can emerge out of the latter – a tyrant rules through passion rather than reason). (100; italics mine)<sup>5</sup>

While Inward Government theory focuses on “the self” – Hallie refers to it as an “egocentric” theory, as Fudge points out (100, but see Hallie 170) – my dissertation

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<sup>4</sup> One proponent of Inward Government theory was Thomas Aquinas. I would like to thank Daniel Shore for pointing out that my argument for an interpersonal ethics in *Paradise Lost* is opposed to an intrapersonal ethics, specifically, the position that Milton was a self-government theorist (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> I want to thank Daniel Shore for pointing me to Fudge's essay, which has helped illuminate this dissertation's specific set of adversaries (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

focuses instead on relations to others (as exemplified by the other self), based on relation to God. In Inward Government theory, self-government is manifested outside of relations to others.<sup>6</sup> However, while Inward Government theory focuses on “good selves,” Michel de Montaigne’s ethics, introduced in his essay “Of cruelty” (first published in 1580), focuses on “good lives,” more specifically, the idea that “a good life must take note of the world in which it is lived; it must include in its contemplation not only its own actions but also the impact of those actions on other beings in that world” (Fudge 106).<sup>7</sup> Fudge helpfully summarizes: “Where in Inward Government theory the focus is on the beast within – the unreasonable part of that reasonable creature, the human – for Montaigne, the focus is upon the creature outside of us” (104). Significantly, Fudge highlights that “these two visions of ethics ... not only existed at the same time but also actually *coexisted* in the early modern period” (109). That two very different ethics coexisted during the period – one focused on reason (Inward Government theory) and the other focused on sentience (Montaigne’s vision), with the second being rarer because it was taken less seriously (Fudge 104) – suggests that my proposed ethics of relation in *Paradise Lost* is, in fact, another plausible reading of the poem.<sup>8</sup> To be sure, Inward Government theory is a credible reading of Milton’s ethics, as Raphael gives Adam ethical advice on self-government.<sup>9</sup> And further, critics such as David V. Urban treat Milton as a self-

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<sup>6</sup> I want to thank Daniel Shore for pointing out how Inward Government theory is opposed to the ethics of relation that I propose for Milton’s poem (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

<sup>7</sup> In his essay, Montaigne focuses specifically on animals. See Michel de Montaigne, “Of cruelty,” in *The Complete Works*, translated by Donald M. Frame, Everyman, 2003, pp. 372-85.

<sup>8</sup> Fudge observes, “What Montaigne does that is so remarkable ... is turn away from the self that is central to Inward Government theory and look instead at the other .... Montaigne goes further and makes the crucial distinction in his worldview not reason but sentience, not the ability to rationalize the world but the capacity to feel in it” (103).

<sup>9</sup> For example, in Book 8 Raphael advises Adam about governing his desire for Eve:

government theorist.<sup>10</sup> However, I show that Inward Government theory is not the entire picture of the poem, as seen through my proposal of a relational ethics in *Paradise Lost*.<sup>11</sup>

In this dissertation, the word ‘identity’ has an inherently social register. Indeed, I will suggest that in *Paradise Lost* identity is constituted by relationships.<sup>12</sup> This claim agrees with how current critics are using the word ‘identity.’ Linda Gregerson discusses “the referential self,” arguing that for Spenser and Milton “[t]he subject takes its shape from that which is outside it” (6). For Gregerson, that which is “outside” refers specifically to “an outside authority,” which ranges from a physical being such as a beloved to an abstract concept such as history (6). According to Charles Taylor, humans’ good (for him, modern identity has a moral component) “has always been defined as consisting in some relation to God” (267). My focus on identity as that which is constituted by relationships aligns with critics’ interest in what is outside the self, the emerging self’s relationality to God, and social definitions of identity.

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fair no doubt, and worthy well  
Thy cherishing, thy honouring, and thy love,  
Not thy subjection: weigh with her thyself;  
Then value: (8.568-71)

Raphael warns Adam that he should not be in subjection to his desire for Eve. I want to thank Daniel Shore for pointing out the credibility of Inward Government theory as an ethics for Milton’s poem, as well as the significance of Raphael as a possible proponent of this ethics (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

<sup>10</sup> See David V. Urban, “Liberty, License, and Virtuous Self-Government in John Milton’s Writings,” *Journal of Markets & Morality*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2014, pp. 143-66. Bryan Adams Hampton also discusses the importance of self-government for Milton. See Hampton, “Milton’s Parable of Misreading: Discernment, Self-Government, and the Hermeneutics of the ‘night-founder’d Skiff’ in *Paradise Lost*, 1.192-209,” in *Fleshly Tabernacles*.

<sup>11</sup> I want to thank Daniel Shore for encouraging me to show that Inward Government theory is not (in his words) “the whole picture” (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

<sup>12</sup> I want to thank Daniel Shore for his recommendation that I use the phrase “constituted by” throughout this dissertation (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

## Identity in and as Relation

Identity was relational specifically in the early modern period because, contrary to the twenty-first century, identity's fundamental relationality had not yet been obscured by, as Daniel Shore eloquently put it, "emergent myth of autonomous individual liberal subjecthood."<sup>13</sup> Different from today, "[s]ixteenth-century speakers lacked a vocabulary for abstract, subjective, autonomous selfhood – terms such as *individual*, *self*, *character*, and *identity*, which in their modern senses enable us to speak about persons without reference to their social context, or even to their own physicality" (Selleck 3).

Importantly, "Renaissance usage *insisted* on those social and physical dimensions of the person, pointing not to an isolated and interiorized individual, but to a physically and interpersonally embedded person" (Selleck 3; italics mine).<sup>14</sup> Specifically, Nancy Selleck contends that selfhood was cast "in interpersonal rather than individual terms" (1).<sup>15</sup> In both philosophical arguments and conventional usage, the notion of a 'kind of self' that 'resides' in the other thrives in early modern literature (Selleck 5).<sup>16</sup> Indeed, this might be why Milton mentions the 'other self' in his epic (8.450, 10.128), "[b]ut Genesis makes no suggestion that Eve is Adam's 'other self,' nor is such terminology used elsewhere in the Bible to describe married couples" (Urban 105). Further, Urban observes that in *Tetrachordon* (1645) Milton lays out his position that friendship is based in likeness-

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<sup>13</sup> (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

<sup>14</sup> Indeed, it is "not classical but Renaissance writers who ... make the self most radically relational" (Selleck 37). As Nancy Selleck discusses, Renaissance writers "suggest concretely that the self inheres in the other," "that one is constructed in the relationship, that the exchange – of interests, of awareness, of attachment – has *produced* this 'self'" (37).

<sup>15</sup> For example, William Shakespeare's and Donne's language provided its users "with conceptions and expectations of identity as an exchange, permeating, [etc.]" (Selleck 1).

<sup>16</sup> Selleck cites Cressida from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (1609). The relevant line is, "I have a kind of self resides with you" (3.2.147).

through-difference “in some detail, arguing that the original Hebrew for ‘help meet’ describes ‘another self, a second self, a very self it self’” (Milton qtd. in Urban 105). *Paradise Lost* might be the first epic to use the phrase ‘other self’ rather than “second self,” suggesting that self and other have equal significance in his poem.<sup>17</sup> For Milton, I will show, the other self is “a very self itself,” in that it is not subsumed by, subject to, or lesser than (for having been formed second), the self with whom it partakes. The other self contributes positively to the self’s identity.

My project on *Paradise Lost* uses the term ‘other self’ to describe relations between sentient beings. More particularly, ‘other self’ refers to “the sixteenth-century coinage in which ‘self’ is used in a transferred sense, to signify not oneself but one’s ‘other self’ – a beloved or supremely ... indispensable other” (Selleck 5). This conception of selfhood reframes two terms – ‘self’ and ‘other’ – that were, and often continue to be, forced into opposition. The term ‘other self’ selflessly prioritizes the other by putting it first syntactically and reveals the duality of self-existence by asserting that the self necessitates the other self. That the term ‘other self’ was first coined during the early modern period, and Milton’s poem makes use of it twice (as we will see), suggest that the cultural moment in which *Paradise Lost* was written called for it. After all, early modern discourses “stress the *oneness* of friends or lovers more in terms of their *mutuality*” rather than singularity (Selleck 36), suggesting the period’s emphasis on the importance of

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<sup>17</sup> In the anonymous *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Enkidu is Gilgamesh’s “second self” (74). According to the *OED*, the earliest use of the phrase ‘other self’ is found in Earl of Surrey et al. *Songes & Sonnettes* (new ed.) f. 105, specifically, in the line, “In wealth and wo thy frend, an other self to thee” (“self, *pron.*, *adj.*, *n.*, and *adv.*,” def. C.n.I.2).

accepting, and even putting to use, individual differences to form proper relations. Self and other reciprocally contribute to each other's self-growth.

Theorists from the last thirty years contend that relationships are significant for both identity and morality. Claire Colebrook observes, "The poetics of evil has been dominated by a double symbolism, whereby the goodness of active and proliferating life is opposed both to the chaos of mere elements without unity or bound, and to the body detached from all relation and temporal progression" (9). For Colebrook, evil in *Paradise Lost* is the absence of unity, relation, and temporal progression. However, for Taylor, the good occurs when humans are, more specifically, "in ... relation to God" (267). In this study, I will apply these claims to Milton's poem. More specifically, I will show that because the good in the created world of *Paradise Lost* comes from humanity's relationship with God, this relationship is the basis of all relationships that are good.

Notably, however, there is also a hierarchy of relationships in *Paradise Lost*, in that other relationships are built upon some more foundational relationships. For example, God and humanity's proper relation means that Adam and Eve are in proper relation, which in turn means that Adam and Eve care for Nature, and, as a result, humans and Nature are also in proper relation. Unfallen Adam and Eve's relationship with each other – caring for one another – allows them to care for Nature. Adam and Eve can respond to each other and help each other, which teaches them how to care for Nature. While Adam converses with Raphael about studious thoughts, Eve

went forth among her fruits and flowers,  
To visit how they prospered, bud and bloom,  
Her nursery; they at her coming sprung  
And touched by her fair tendance gladlier grew. (8.44-47)

Eve knows how to provide care and attention to the fruits and flowers in Eden because earlier, in Book 5, Adam tended to Eve after her bad dream. She became glad as a result of his thoughtful reassurance. Adam, with hope, tells Eve that “what in sleep thou didst abhor to dream, / Waking thou never wilt consent to do” (5.120-1). He advises her after, “Be not disheartened then” (5.122), and the narrator observes, “So cheered he his fair spouse, and she was cheered” (5.129). Adam’s genuine care for Eve, and the positive growth that results from it, is mirrored later in Eve’s tendance to her fruits and flowers, which grow “gladier” after Eve cares for them. Thus, humans’ “interconnection with one another in the web of life” (Jantzen 161) permits them to choose the good in terms of the kinds of relationships they nurture. For Grace Jantzen, “We have all begun as part of somebody else; we have all been utterly dependent, nurtured well or badly into being who we are both physically and spiritually” (243). “[W]ho we are,” or personal identity, springs from how other selves “nurture” us.

Importantly, the link between identity and relationships also works in the other direction since an improved sense of self leads to healthier relationships with others. For Jerrold E. Seigel, it is “[f]rom knowledge of what the self truly is [that] people have hoped to gain greater happiness, deeper fulfillment, liberation from fetters or restraints, better relations with other people, or ways to achieve power over them” (3). In other words, there is a positive feedback loop in the affinity between identity and relationships: not only do we form our identity through relationships, but we also relate *better* to others when we have “knowledge of what the self truly is.” We will see this feedback loop in effect in the final book of *Paradise Lost* (Book 12), when Adam finally realizes how he



should relate to God.<sup>18</sup> Seigel also expands John Locke's (1632-1674) work on identity by observing that Locke's discussion "actually suggests that it [personal identity] has three different aspects independently of our identity as 'men'" (103):

We are selves to others by virtue of what they know about our mental and moral life; we are selves to ourselves, but incompletely so, through the imperfect consciousness we have of our lives and deeds in the here and now; and we can imagine and hope to be complete selves in light of the transparency that God can and at a certain point will open up for us. (103)

Seigel suggests that two-thirds of our personal identity comes from the other (other selves and the Other). God is the so-called "ultimate Other" (Rambuss 523). The individual is not opposed to community; rather, relationships give shape to or form the individual. When Eve chooses Adam over her reflection in the lake in Book 4 of *Paradise Lost*, she, we might argue, "gain[s] greater happiness, deeper fulfillment, liberation from fetters or restraints, [and] better relations with other people" (Seigel 3). Through reflection, Eve realizes, "there [before the lake] I had fixed / Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire, / Had not a voice thus warned me" (4.465-7). Similarly, when God opens up some transparency to fallen Adam through Michael's vision in Book 11 (11.423-901), Adam learns about his wider role in human history, which then helps him relate better to God and Eve.

Relationships provide individuals with the knowledge they need to actualize both themselves and others as selves. For Catherine Keller, intimate relationships are the seat of knowledge. Keller observes that relationships make us "[able] to know something" and, what is more, "[to] participate in its actualization" (21). Instead of relying on self-

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<sup>18</sup> Adam realizes that he needs to depend solely on God (see 12.564).

knowledge for decision-making, Milton's characters need to trust in their relationship with God, which provides all the knowledge they need. In Milton's poem, we will see that characters not only come to know the significance of relationships above all else *through* their relationships, but also actualize other selves through their relationships – including God's self-identity. Keller proposes that in "the aporia of their [the creature's and the creator's] unexpected co-incident," the usual image of the 'creating creator' is "deconstructed" so that "the unpaintable icon of the *creatable-creature-creator*" is revealed (105; italics mine). For Keller, "the *ability* to be created signifies *potentiality* in God" (105). Keller proposes that God is a creature, which suggests that He can grow and change, just the same as human beings. The Son alludes to the Father's ability to change when He remarks that when He (the Son) eventually returns with His multitude of redeemed, in the Father's face "no cloud / Of anger shall remain, but peace assured, / And reconciliation" (3.262-4). Elsewhere in the poem, the 'cloudy,' sometimes angry aspect of the Father is often described (2.263-8, 3.378-80, 6.56-59, 10.31-33). These theorists' ideas about the significance of relationships for the creation of self-identity during the early modern period will inform my reading of *Paradise Lost*, where Milton's God is, arguably, "the creatable-creature-creator" that needs the Son and humans to help Him actualize His personal identity.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Gregory Chaplin analyzes the similarities between the Divine and the human, and what this might mean: "The Son's identity as a created being changes his redemptive role: it is his exemplary obedience to God, not his unique essence, that reconciles God and Man. By making the redeemer a creature, Arianism elevates the status and exalts the potential of all created beings" (360). Chaplin's use of the word "reconciles" not only makes us think afresh about how God and humans might be united, but also about how identity for *all* created beings is bound up with relationships between self and other. However, because not all created beings are sentient and hence not all are 'selves,' this statement does not apply to them.

One means through which the characters in Milton's poem help actualize each other and other selves, including God, is through conversations.<sup>20</sup> Significantly, it is discourse that "lodges subjectivity in the dialogic space *between*, in the movement of back and forth, and forever removes it from the fantasy of linear will" (Gregerson 169). In other words, spoken or written communication is what gives rise to subjectivity and makes humans reflective beings capable of growth and change. Gregerson discusses how relation might be connected to narration and knowledge of the self in *Paradise Lost*: "Relation is also the diachronic unfolding of narration, the discourse interpolated between two parts of similitude, as Raphael works between God and His image Adam: 'This friendly condescension to relate / Things else by me unsearchable' (VIII 9-10)" (170). Raphael educates Adam about his place in the cosmos through "unfolding ... narration." For Gregerson, relation is both "a mode of access ... that accommodates things divine to earthly comprehension" and "the liminal realm that separates two parts of likeness, the difference or defect that distinguishes likeness from identity, the 'grateful digression' that embellishes and *exemplifies* the path from earth to heaven" (170; italics mine). For example, during their luncheon, Raphael musingly says to Adam,

High matter thou enjoin'st me, O prime of men,  
Sad task and hard, for how shall I relate  
To human sense the invisible exploits  
Of warring spirits; how without remorse  
The ruin of so many glorious once  
And perfect while they stood; how last unfold  
The secrets of another world, perhaps  
Not lawful to reveal? (5.563-70)

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<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Adam's very first conversation is with God (see Book 8).

The threefold repetition of “how” suggests difficulty, but the series of enjambments – the enjambment after the word “relate” especially – reveals an easy flow of speech, which shows likeness and familiarity, as well as amiable instruction, between angels and humans. Like Gregerson, I also want to explore the importance of “the dialogic space *between*” characters in *Paradise Lost*; however, I will suggest that the poem contains much dialogue and little action because storytelling is the means by which characters learn about themselves, namely, from each other, and, as a result, form their identities.

Beyond providing the knowledge that relationships are integral to self-identity, storytelling directs individuals toward the good by permitting self and other to order events into a shared, meaningful narrative. Storytelling is *inherently* social for Nina Rosenstand, who observes, “We may try to tell stories to ourselves, with ourselves as the only audience – children often do, and it’s called daydreaming – but in order for it to feel right, and earn the title of story, the narrative must be shared and retold” (156). Of course, *Paradise Lost* boasts a myriad of dialogues between characters, and it focuses on (re-)telling and reflecting. For example, in the process of relating her origin story, Eve asks (Adam, or herself, or perhaps both), “what could I do, / But follow straight, invisibly thus led?” (4.475-6). Eve proceeds to relate how she followed the voice to Adam and, after a delay, chose to be with Adam (4.477-91). Storytelling in the poem is more than simply social; it provides an opportunity for humans to form relationships with others and, in so doing, to create and sustain meaningful lives which contribute to one’s sense of identity through a sense of personal merit. Colebrook insists on a connection between our “potential” as human beings, which is social in part, and “meaningful narrative”:

To be properly human is not simply to arrive at a pre-given definition, but to create one's life as an ongoing and meaningful narrative, where the past is directed towards a future. A good life is, therefore, a meaningful life. Life in its naturalist sense – physical, biological life – is not meaningless because each being goes through time in order to arrive at its proper form. For human beings this naturalist sense of life is supplemented by a metaphysical sense: in addition to physical growth and fulfilment our natural being also orients us towards narrative self-creation. We use language, define ourselves socially and understand our world in relation to others. A life without meaning is, therefore, less than human. If we failed to speak, failed to intuit the world in terms of meaningful relations and ongoing narrative time, then we would be failing to reach our potential. (2)

For Colebrook, identity takes shape through narrative because we “define ourselves socially and understand our world in relation to others.” Both “meaningful narrative” and “meaningful relations” are required for humans to reach their full potential. Colebrook draws out the implications of time, which is most clearly related to narrative, in the connection she sees between morality, narrative, and identity.<sup>21</sup> In Colebrook's reading of *Paradise Lost*, “Without the working and discoursing together that allows Adam and Eve to live their time meaningfully, so that the present carries over what they know of each other's past and looks towards a future that is not yet known or discovered, Adam and Eve would be mere bodies in relations of force, rather than dialogue and love” (51). Discourse permits development of a meaningful life, which creates relationships based on love rather than force. In *Paradise Lost* storytelling between characters is, I will suggest, prominent and ongoing because it leads to the formation and maintenance of proper,

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<sup>21</sup> Colebrook argues, “A life can be good ... because the self creates and establishes an end or idea which will order the decisions it makes through time; without that ordered and ongoing lived time there could be no sense of the good” (4). She is interested in the importance of time for relationships in Milton's poem, however; I am interested in the necessity of relationships for God's good creation and its perpetuation. For Colebrook, “Time is ... essential to the life and being of reason, but it is also definitive of love and relations in paradise” (50, but also see 49 for a more complete explanation).

loving relationships, which are necessary for both personal identity and sustaining God's good creation.

A principal theme through which critics have traced identity in *Paradise Lost* is its focus on what is outside of or external to the self as fundamental for the formation of self-identity. For example, Gregerson contends that “[t]he subject locates itself in insufficiency” (6). In other words, the self is defined by what it lacks. Working with Gregerson’s suggestion that the subject “takes its shape from that which is outside it” (6), we might observe that characters such as Milton’s prelapsarian Adam and Eve take after God in terms of their divine-like shape because they are involved in a loving relationship with God, whereas Sin and Death lack shape because they are involved in destructive (for instance, incestuous) relationships. In both theory and literature, subject status is “conceived ... as radically contingent – political, devotional, erotic in its contours and consequences, and above all creaturely or, as we put it in an age of different faiths, constructed” (Gregerson 6). Indeed, in Book 2 of *Paradise Lost* we learn that Sin’s physical form changed in response to her participation in destructive relationships. When she has sex with Satan, Death tears through her entrails and transforms her nether shape (2.781-5). Later, when she has sex with Death, she births howling monsters that gnaw her bowels continually (2.794-802). As Gregerson suggests, *Paradise Lost* is a device “for the formation, and reformation, of subjects” (6); however, while Gregerson focuses on “[t]he readerly evolution of subjectivity,” which is, apparently, “of greater moment in *Paradise Lost*” (148), I seek to apply the readerly subject’s experience of a process of evolution to all creaturely subjects – both earthly and divine – in *Paradise Lost*.

Proper relations are of a divine nature because other selves are expressive of oneself and God, as Hugh MacCallum's study suggests. For MacCallum, "[P]rogress depends upon the discrimination and right evaluation of ... the 'I' or self as centre of impulse, feeling and thought; God, as the source of life and reason; and nature, or the 'other' (including other selves), that which is neither God nor self but contains notable expressions of both" (111). In this reading of the poem, other selves "contain notable expressions" of both oneself and God. A significant implication here is that when Milton's characters interact with other selves, they also, albeit in a more limited sense, engage with God, for the other contains important expressions of Him. For instance, Eve is for God in Adam: "she for God in him: / His fair large front and eye sublime declared / Absolute rule" (4.299-301). Not only is God in Adam, but Eve, we will see, brings out the best (or divine) in Adam. Similarly, the Son is, we might say, for love *in* God, since His mild temperament – a characteristic also attributed to the Father, though less so (6.735) – is emphasized: "The evening cool when he from wrath more cool / Came the mild judge and intercessor both / To sentence man" (10.95-97). In my study, I will show how Adam and Eve's reconciliation with each other after the Fall teaches them how to reconcile with God, which, in turn, allows them to relate better to each other, God's creatures, and God's created good at large. MacCallum suggests, "The self achieves ... wholeness through an understanding of the harmonies that link it to that which is external to it" (111). For him, the self depends on itself, God, and nature or the 'other.' However, because Milton's human characters are described as being especially like God, I suggest that the progress MacCallum discusses above comes about primarily through human beings' participation

in relationships. In other words, God and His created world – both of which are firstly good – depend on humans for their proper growth and continuation.

However, proper relations require reciprocity, specifically, in terms of conversation, for which language is significant. Brian Cummings discusses specifically mortal, that is, human identity in *Paradise Lost* in terms of an essential interface between the inner and outer:

Milton suggests that it is only by naming other things that Adam can identify himself; and also that to identify himself fully he needs the other creatures to reply, to name and describe him in return. There is an interesting reciprocity here which comes to preoccupy the poem. First, that it is in the nature of Adam's embodiment that it involves an interface between its inner and outer, that it cannot be understood in its entirety either from the point of reference of a controlling inner consciousness or of an external observer. Second, that embodiment implies otherness and therefore implies something else outside itself which it is not; and thus that the embodied body immediately yearns for some interaction with that otherness in order to explain itself. (304)

For Cummings, Adam can identify himself only when there is an interface between inner and outer and an interaction with something outside his own embodiment. In particular, mutuality between self and other is required. (When Adam names other things, he can identify himself; however, he also needs the other creatures “to reply, to name and describe him in return,” so that he can identify himself fully.) Indeed, Cummings asserts that Adam's first conversation with God is “a paradigm for what turns out to be a fundamental ethical ideal for embodied personhood within the poem: the reciprocity of dialogue brings Adam's identity into full realization, completeness, by enabling him to see himself as both subject and object” (Cummings 305). Dialogue enables Adam to engage in meaningful reflection and, as a result, transform narrative and his relations meaningfully. For example, by conversing with God, Adam realizes his – indeed, all



humans’ – need for a human partner, for, unlike God, “man by number is to manifest / His single imperfection” (8.422-3). Language, as it operates in the space between self and other, is important for Adam’s emerging identity. In order for Adam “[t]o understand himself as embodied he needs to be recognized as such by another being” (Cummings 305). I postulate that *both* mortal and immortal characters in *Paradise Lost* represent varying degrees of the “ethical ideal for embodied personhood” that Cummings describes and, further, that we can identify which characters exemplify what is ethical or good by attending to Milton’s descriptions of embodiment (in terms of shape, shadow, etc.).

In addition to mutuality in proper relations, an acknowledgement of personal differences – in a word, individuality – is needed. In regard to Milton’s Adam and Eve, Morrissey notes, “What is required then for harmony is for each of them to be aware of their similarities and differences, including which similarities are important to each of them” (“Eve’s Otherness” 340). For Morrissey, both Adam and Eve need to reflect upon their similarities and differences in order for them to live harmoniously with each other. For instance, when Eve first suggests that they labour separately, Adam praises Eve for her “household good,” which will promote “good works” in her husband (9.233, 234), but after some contemplation, a trait that is attributed to Adam specifically (4.297), he reasons that it would be best for Eve to labour at his side (9.265-69). Working with Morrissey’s suggestion that “subjectivity requires difference, not, as Adam had assumed, similarity” (“Eve’s Otherness” 340), my thesis will not only suggest that Milton’s poem esteems subjects that recognize others as welcome additions to the self (hence, Milton’s ‘other self’) rather than subtractions or even self-absorptions, but also explore what

specific differences emerge in the relationships between various characters in the poem (for example, God the Father and God the Son) and how they might contribute toward God's plan for His original created good to continue as such.

### **Relevant Historical and Cultural Debates**

Three historical and cultural debates in England during the early modern period – namely, the evolving debates about God's nature and His providence, the shifting conception of the self in relation to the collective, and the precise nature of the body-soul relationship – suggest that Milton would have been interested in writing about how and why humans, in particular, should be active participants in God's created world, even and especially as it changes over time, and God's self-identity.<sup>22</sup>

The rise of the modern world during the early modern era led to a debate about God's nature and His providence, in particular, how human beings should reconcile religious belief with, for example, René Descartes's (1596-1650) autonomous self. Indeed, the serious question of God's justice is evinced by the professed aim of Milton's poem: “[to] justify the ways of God to men” (1.26). Jane Donawerth observes, “This concentration on man is itself new with the Renaissance” (5). Humanist thought emphasized humans' rather than God's capacity for goodness, as well as rational means to resolve human problems. Thus, Morrissey calls for “[a] newly postsecular way of reading *Paradise Lost* [, which] would see it as an epic focused on a dramatic

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<sup>22</sup> I want to thank Daniel Shore for pointing me to the important early modern debate about God's nature and His providence (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

contemporary change in a relationship with God [during the seventeenth-century]”

(“Postsecular” 101).<sup>23</sup> However, while Morrissey reads Milton as initiating “‘the disappearance of God’ narrative that J. Hillis Miller sees as unfolding later”

(“Postsecular” 101), I want to trace the withdrawal and then *return* of God in God and humanity’s relationship in Milton’s poem. In *Paradise Lost* God withdraws in order to

allow His creatures complete freedom to choose.<sup>24</sup> God withdraws more – to the point

where Adam and Eve feel alienated from both each other and God in Book 9 – when

Adam and Eve choose to deny their relationality to Him and His commands. God’s

further withdrawal from humans in response to their willful disloyalty suggests that they

possess immense agency in the created world. God and humanity’s relationship is truly

reciprocal because, instead of merely forcing Adam and Eve to obey perpetually, God

gives them the power to accept or reject their relationship with Him at any point. Another

example of the supreme agency given to humans in *Paradise Lost* is Milton’s “unique

heterodox theory of the Incarnation,” where “the Son unites with a specific and complete

human person, not a generalized human nature as in orthodox accounts,” which realizes

a new Christian synthesis that can accommodate the increasing dignity, responsibility, and autonomy attributed to human individuals in seventeenth-century thought, without sacrificing former notions of collective support for personal identity, and the dependence of the self on ideal external standards of good. (Borris 221)

There is “greater scope for human agency” or autonomy than previously supposed in

Milton’s poem (Borris 227) not only because of Milton’s distinct theory of the

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<sup>23</sup> Morrissey observes, “By complaining about ‘the dissociation of sensibility,’ what T. S. Eliot and too much literary criticism – including criticism of *Paradise Lost* – missed is Milton’s interest in *narrating* a real seventeenth-century shift: England’s early experience of modernity” (“Postsecular” 101).

<sup>24</sup> For example, God permits Satan to rise from the burning lake in Book 1.

Incarnation, where the Son represents the contributions of both the unique individual and the collective to personal identity, but also because it is a Christian poem about a monotheistic world. All of God's creatures are invited to recognize their relationality to God and His commands of their own free will because they are not subject to the whims of multiple gods or the uncertainties of chance or fate, which are the norm in Greek and Roman epics. Arguably, Milton's poem reflects the early modern period's focus on human autonomy by showing us a world where humans, rather than God, choose to abandon the relationship between God and humanity, which sustained the created world up until that point in time.<sup>25</sup> Humans choose to distance themselves from God rather than God forsaking humans. Moreover, Adam and Eve's restoration of their relationship with God does not mean giving up autonomy, but rather highlights that Adam and Eve had autonomy already – that is, before they fell. For example, prelapsarian Eve tells Satan (while also reminding readers) in Book 9 that she and Adam have choice in abundance (9.620). Autonomy and right relationship are not opposed. Humans have the agency to form and deform their relationships with other selves, including God.

The shifting conception of the self in relation to the collective resulted in increased personal responsibility for not only one's continued spiritual relationship with God, but also one's self-government. Significantly, during Milton's time period the word 'individual,' "an adjective broadly meaning 'indivisible,'" "began to develop its current substantive meaning, which implies a socially atomic concept of personal identity" (Borris 226). For the first time, the 'individual' was considered atomistically. This change

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<sup>25</sup> That is, the Fall (Book 9 in *Paradise Lost*).

in perspective reflects the significant shifts that concepts of the self were undergoing in the seventeenth century, “from previous tendencies to ground identity in collective social wholes and standards of good located beyond the self in some cosmic order, to enhanced assumptions and awareness of personal autonomy and ‘individuality’” (Borris 227, but also see 226). This shift in emphasis toward self-government and individuality acquires significance in *Paradise Lost*, since Adam and Eve, though placed in absolute happiness, are mutable creatures and each possesses individual responsibility in their relationship with God, as seen through the ‘double’ Fall.<sup>26</sup> The Fall is only complete – that is, Death and Sin build a bridge to the created world, and the human couple is punished – when both Adam and Eve sin against God and His commands. Milton’s particular interest in self-government is seen in *Areopagitica*, where he writes, “I conceive therefore, that when God did enlarge the universal diet of man’s body, saving ever the rules of temperance, he then also, as before, left arbitrary the dieting and repasting of our minds, as wherein every mature man might have to exercise his leading capacity” (110). Here, Milton asserts that “every mature man” is responsible for the books he consumes, just as every man is responsible for what he eats. While Milton emphasizes the continued importance of God in the human life, he pushes the idea that the self governs itself rather than a community or other selves with ostensibly more authority setting limits on the self.

Tracts such as Milton’s *Areopagitica* and *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* suggest that the theme of humans having more agency in the created world (as unique

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<sup>26</sup> Eve falls and then Adam falls. Milton stresses that there are two falls when “nature gave a second groan” (9.1001).

individuals) than was previously supposed is important for our reading of the epic poem.<sup>27</sup> Around the time he composed *Paradise Lost* Milton “was eagerly exploring ideas of freedom of conscience, individual liberty, and greater scope for human agency” (Borris 227). For Kenneth Borris, “His [Milton’s] special doctrine of the Incarnation provides his system an exemplary guarantee of the status, heroic potential, and unique identity of the human person, while also furnishing means of incorporation into [an] ideal Christian community under Christ’s headship” (227).<sup>28</sup> In other words, Milton conceived of the self in a way that took into account both the unique individual and their place in a spiritual community. I want to suggest that we see Milton’s dual attention to the unique human person and the ideal Christian community in his depiction of human purpose in *Paradise Lost*, where Adam and Eve undergo individualized – and yet equally significant – forms of education in the Garden. While Eve learns to abandon her self-reflection in order to relate properly to another human (namely, Adam), Adam learns to temper his thirst for knowledge by trusting solely in his relationship with God. Both Adam’s and Eve’s educations rest in a proper understanding of how relationships work because relationships are the essential foundation for not just self-identity, but also continued good in God’s created world. In other words, the importance of proper relations extends to the

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<sup>27</sup> For example, in his *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643), Milton argues for greater liberty for individuals seeking to divorce their spouse. Another example is Milton’s *Areopagitica* (1644), where he pursues greater opportunity for human agency in terms of personal decision-making (for example, when it comes to choosing what one reads). Calvinists believed in predestination, whereas Milton believed that free will is incompatible with necessity (*De Doctrina Christiana* 368).

<sup>28</sup> Borris asserts that Milton’s theory “seeks to anchor such self-consciousness [his ‘heightened sense of concrete selfhood’] securely in commitment to Jesus Christ himself, as the ultimate paradigm for a fully realized human identity, so that it does not threaten to become satanically self-involved or skeptically relativistic” (227). While Borris maintains that Milton’s theory for “a fully realized human identity” is anchored in Jesus Christ, my thesis shows that Milton’s theory is depicted for us in the interactions that occur between self and other, more specifically, God and humanity.

surrounding place and environment, such that Adam and Eve's proper relation with each other means that they are also in a good relationship with the world or Nature.

The third relevant historical and cultural debate in England during the early modern period concerned the precise nature of the body-soul relationship, which was understood in terms of either monism or dualism.<sup>29</sup> Over the course of the seventeenth century, debates about the nature of the soul and its relationship to the body intensified.<sup>30</sup> Not only did “the soul, its nature, and its relationship with the body bec[o]me focal points for religious, medical, political, and ethical debates” over the course of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but “the choice of vocabulary itself – soul, spirit, mind, flesh, body – [also] had profound implications in how human and divine nature were represented in early modern literature” (Ezell 598). The body-soul relationship was contested in both oral and written form, and it influenced the depiction of human and divine natures in the latter.<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, Milton depicts human and divine natures as

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<sup>29</sup> At its most extreme, a monistic view “held that the material body is the only existence humans have (materialism) and that a ‘person’ simply is the material body, although some suggested that the material body could have experiences which were related to what had been described as the moving soul” (Ezell 599). In England during the early modern period, such views were frequently associated with atheism (Henry in Ezell 599). Understandings of the body-soul relationship that involved forms of dualism, “that the body did have something different in nature from the soul, and that a ‘person’ was the union of the body and soul,” were more common during the period (Ezell 599). For example, “[d]ualism, as expressed in Platonism ..., was central to the teachings of St Augustine and the Christian Church” (Cross in Ezell 599-600).

<sup>30</sup> See Margaret J. M. Ezell, *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern English Literature and Religion*, p. 598.

<sup>31</sup> Ezell points readers to Edward Popham's “attempt to establish an appropriate vocabulary to describe the soul as it functions within the body” as an example of “[t]he complexity of representing the nature of the soul and its relationship to the body” (599). Popham (1619: A12<sup>r-v</sup>) writes,

First, it [the soul] is an immateriall substance: While it doth revive the body, it is the Soule; when it willeth or chooseth any thing, it may (though improperly) be called the Minde: While it knoweth any thing, it may be called (though improperly againe) the Understanding: While it judgeth, some have tearmed it Reason: While it doth breathe or contemplate, a Spirit: While it calls any thing to minde, the Memorie: While it thinketh any thing (though more grosely) the Sense. But to speake of the Soule as it is, it is an immateriall substance, and Reason, Memory, Sence, & c. are the severall faculties and divers operations Thereof. (in Ezell 599)

much more similar than earlier writers had done, in order to emphasize that humans have more individual agency than was once believed. Diane Kelsey McColley suggests that Milton “was not a dualist who opposed matter and spirit but an integrationist” (*Milton’s Eve* 15).<sup>32</sup> In *Paradise Lost* the imperfect but obedient angels exemplify to humans how one’s free actions can reflect the correspondence between outward actions and appearance and inward dispositions and beliefs, and also correspond with God’s will, if humans completely and continuously trust in their loving relationship with God. This is one example of Milton’s beliefs as an integrationist during an age where the body-soul relationship was up for debate.

### **A Related Contemporary Subfield**

My study’s focus on selfhood as relation in Milton’s poem has bearing on the subfield of early modern environmental literary studies, an area of research that is increasingly relevant in the twenty-first century and, significantly, related to this dissertation in that right relationship between self and other self extends to right relationship between self and world. My proposal of a relational ethics for *Paradise Lost*

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The soul is “improperly” called the mind, the understanding, reason, a spirit, the memory, or the sense because these are its “severall faculties and divers operations” rather than what it actually *is*. According to Popham, the soul is ‘properly,’ perhaps, “an immateriall substance.”

<sup>32</sup> McColley explains,

[w]hatever in creation dualists . . . put in opposition, Milton remarries in a design so entirely one flesh that it is difficult to talk about its parts without doing the violence to the poem [*Paradise Lost*] of divorcing them again: nature and grace, matter and spirit, body and soul, action and contemplation, passion and reason, pleasure and virtue, liberty and obedience, creativity and responsibility, doctrine and poetry are united each to each and all to all. (*Milton’s Eve* 17)

Indeed, in *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton discusses “the whole man” (390).



can easily be extended to discussion of the poem's ecological ethics, since (im)proper relation to the Other affects the self's relation to the surrounding place, including Nature. While critics such as McColley, Wendell Berry, and Richard DuRocher have, as Hiltner observes, "been reading the epic 'Greenly' for years" (11), studies at the turn of the century have focused on place, both more generally (Jon Whitman) and more specifically (Hiltner).<sup>33</sup> Hiltner uses Martin Heidegger's "internal relation" and "external relation" to explain how Adam and Eve 'fall' out of their harmonious relation to place through self-imposed separation (12, but see 49). Through objectification, Adam and Eve 'other' the Earth, which was, and always will be (at least for Hiltner), a part of their own body, for "Adam was taken from the Earth as a 'wound'" and thus "share[s] a common 'body'" with it (131).<sup>34</sup> Criticism from the last decade has sought to explore the (non-)relation between humans and nature (Leah S. Marcus) and humans and Earth (Swarbrick). Hiltner, citing Bruce Foltz, asserts that "our fundamental *relation* to nature, rather than nature alone," is the primary subject of our current environmental crisis (50; italics retained), and he thus explores the problem of fallen angels and humans objectifying space through empire in the poem. Hiltner argues that the Fall marks a shift from humans thinking of nature as a source ("as *surgere*, 'an original rising' – a surging forth") to humans thinking of nature as abundant in re-sources ("as *resurgerre*, 'to rise again'") (27, 26), whereas Swarbrick maintains that "we need a different ecological ethics

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<sup>33</sup> See Whitman's "Losing a Position and Taking One: Theories of Place in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies*, vol. 29, 1992, pp. 21-34.

<sup>34</sup> Hiltner observes, "Though Milton does not refer to the place where Adam was taken from the Earth as a 'wound,' there is nonetheless a similarity which suggests that Adam and the Earth may share a common 'body' in the same way that Eve does with Adam and the Church with Christ" (131).

[completely], one that can tolerate the non-relation, or the bottomless non-identity of earthly life, if we are to grasp the catastrophe of the Anthropocene on its own terms: both as a queering of human agency via geology and as an event written in the earth itself” (278).<sup>35</sup> For Hiltner, *Paradise Lost* reveals that a more mutual relationship between the Earth and humans is needed: “the Earth is understood as an original ‘source’ which saves us as much as we save her” (28). For Swarbrick, however, the anthropocene “references a time without us” (278). Both Hiltner’s and Swarbrick’s works are grounded in a perception of loss: we can only share in the pain the Earth feels (Hiltner), and we must think of “*human history after humans*” (Swarbrick 278). Marcus’s more hopeful reading of the poem calls into question ecocritics’ “particular interest” in *Paradise Lost* as a work that, ostensibly, “place[s] the blame for the destruction of natural perfection and harmony squarely and directly on harmful human intervention in the natural world” (98). Marcus questions whether humans are directly (the vitalist version) or indirectly (the ‘divine interventionist’ version) responsible for the Fall and its effects on Creation in *Paradise Lost*.<sup>36</sup> Significantly, all of these critics are concerned about 1) the potential of human agency for creativity and destruction, 2) the extent to which humans should, or even can, be active agents in the world, and 3) the (non-)relation between entities. These similarities

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<sup>35</sup> Hiltner explains the difference between ‘re-source’ and ‘source’:

The distinction here is rather like the two ways one may think of a forest: considered as a re-source, the forest is a great stockpile of material that can be taken from the place (uprooted) so as to ‘rise again’ (*resurgere*) in some contrivance of human creation – such as a house ‘framed’ of the forest’s *dead* wood. Considered as a *source* (as *surgere* ...), the *living* forest provides oxygen, food, and shelter ..., not only for humans but for all varieties of life. (26-27)

<sup>36</sup> Essentially, for Marcus, “Milton hints at another explanation for the fall of nature [vitalist materialism], one in which the natural world is not thrown off kilter by the mechanical intervention of angels but deviates of its own accord. Did the angels ‘bid’ [10.672] the sun to change his route, or did the sun swerve of its (or should we say ‘his’) own free will?” (98).

suggest that the environmental crisis is a problem of negotiating the space *between* self and ‘other’ (including beings and places) in a way that is mutually supportive and freeing to nature and humans rather than careless or oppressive to nature, which is where my study intervenes in the environmental criticism on *Paradise Lost*.

The subfield of early modern environmental literary studies has failed to engage with Milton in terms of the connection between self-identity, relationships, and creative (or destructive) human agency in God’s originally good, created world. Marcus’s question about human agency in the poem – “Which account [the vitalist version or the ‘divine interventionist’ version] are we to believe?” (99) – is important since the answer would tell us more about the degree, and thus significance, of human agency in Milton’s universe. Both Hiltner and Swarbrick suggest that there is not much opportunity for humans to repair the physical separation between themselves and the Earth; Milton’s poem, I think, shows quite the opposite to be true. In Book 11, God accepts Adam and Eve’s prayers, which He receives through the Son – the Father says, “All thy request for man, accepted Son” (11.46) – and God and humanity’s relationship, though by no means the same, is in a state of potential repair.<sup>37</sup> Further, humanity’s concerted restoration of its relationship with God will repair its relationship with the Earth because God and humanity’s relationship is the basis of all relationships that are good. In other words, Adam and Eve’s renewal of their spiritual relationship with God can, concurrently – though only over time – renew their physical relationship to the Earth. When Adam and

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<sup>37</sup> Reflecting on Hiltner’s book, Marcus observes, “The most we humans can hope for [according to this reading of *Paradise Lost*] is to feel the wounding of earth as our own wound” (101).

Eve know how to relate to each other as husband and wife, they know, also, how to care for the fruits and flowers in the Garden, which, in turn, continue to grow good.<sup>38</sup> Part of humanity's work is to sustain God's sources of goodness, that is, to let them (or help them, as needed) continue in their natural state rather than abuse them through neglect or oppression.<sup>39</sup>

### **Major Themes in the Criticism on Relationships in *Paradise Lost***

Critics have focused on an ennobling kind of hierarchy – one that nurtures love because it gives others the freedom to choose for themselves – as the basis for proper relations in *Paradise Lost*. McColley remarks, “Eve’s relationship to Adam is analogous to that of the Son to the Father, a subordination explained by William B. Hunter which, as [Stella Purce] Revard has pointed out, endows the subordinate with freedom to act creatively rather than from necessity: ‘the Son has attained his oneness with God by choice ... and not by inoriginate identity’” (“Free Will” 110). Though Revard suggests that both the Son’s and God’s free choice matters in the poem, the Son is, as McColley observes, still largely read as “subordinate” to the Father, just as Eve is read as subordinate to her husband, Adam. My study seeks to expand Revard’s point that God “endows” the Son “with freedom to act creatively rather than from necessity” by testing it

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<sup>38</sup> For a discussion of Adam and Eve’s relation to the Garden, see pp. 158-160 (chapter 2).

<sup>39</sup> My argument is closest to Sarah Smith’s, for whom *Paradise Lost* can be read as advocating for an ethics rooted in reverence for the way God has arranged his creation and a version of stewardship that compels us to see God’s providential plan in all our encounters with matter. It is an environmental ethics that asks us to consider not just the damaging consequences that will arise from, for example, fracking, but to question the morality of interfering with God’s creation in the first place. (51-52)

in terms of God's relationship with humanity, which is endowed with a similar creative freedom. McColley's reading evaluates one relationship (Adam and Eve's) in terms of another (the Father and Son's) and argues for the importance of "the bond of love" as the foundation of Milton's Trinity ("Free Will" 110), but I want to investigate the extent of the effects of "the bond of love," in terms of its creative agency-bequeathing power in God and humanity's relationship, to see if relationships in the poem are – or at least have the potential to be – more reciprocal and less strictly hierarchical in nature. For McColley, characters' relationships in *Paradise Lost* are based on hierarchy that has an ennobling creative purpose:

Its [hierarchy's] purpose is the delegation – not, as Satan thinks, the limitation – of creative powers, of which God is the ultimate source. It provides a means by which created beings may be exalted by the interaction of grace and their own efforts, especially on behalf of beings 'lower' on the scale – that is, less mature in growth toward the fullest exercise of their capacity to obey God which is 'happiness entire' (VI, 741) – and thus gives each rational being an opportunity to share the joy of being creative as well as created, responsible as well as responsive, generous as well as grateful. Each figure of authority in this order is, as the word 'author' implies, a promoter of individual growth. ("Free Will" 108)

McColley's focus on relationships based on hierarchy – specifically, hierarchy that is arranged in accordance with a creature's degree of obedience to God – is significant because it is an *unfixed* hierarchy, in that creatures "may be exalted by the interaction of grace and their own efforts, especially on behalf of beings 'lower' on the scale." In other words, because Milton cannot deny that there is a hierarchy, he reconfigures hierarchy so that there is a dignity that is recognized in the poem.<sup>40</sup> In Milton's depiction of hierarchy,

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<sup>40</sup> I want to thank Dr. Mary V. Silcox for helping me think through Milton's use of hierarchy in *Paradise Lost* (personal communication, November 22, 2022).

there is relationship in hierarchy, such that it is not arbitrary. For example, even though Eve is subordinate to Adam, she possesses dignity and helps Adam become his best self. Raphael expresses to Adam, “Made so adorn [Eve] for thy delight the more, / So awful, that with honour thou mayst love / Thy mate, who sees when thou art seen least wise” (8.576-8). McColley’s reading of hierarchy in the poem not only gives agency to God’s creatures (they are creative, responsible, and generous ‘authors’), but it also suggests that creatures grow and change through their relationships with other selves.<sup>41</sup> Each “figure of authority” is “a promoter of individual growth,” in that each creature contributes to other creatures’ developing identity.

Notably, even feminist-leaning critics interpret the relationships in Milton’s poem as rigidly (and in the traditional sense) hierarchical.<sup>42</sup> Danielle Clarke finds “Echo ... the mediating term by which the male self engages in self-contemplation – a dynamic that is also at work in Milton’s use of Echo to structure the relationship between Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*” (79). For Clarke, the parallel between Eve and Echo “demonstrates the negative potentials of female rhetorical power within a masculine hierarchy based upon the separation of gender roles grounded in obedience to male authority” (82). Critics continue to read the poem with an androcentric view because Milton does not, of course, remove hierarchy. Clarke suggests that *Paradise Lost* depicts “a masculine hierarchy”

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<sup>41</sup> The latter is related to the new science’s erosion of a chain of being, to be replaced after with a more rhizomatic map of natural kinds.

<sup>42</sup> Barbara K. Lewalski asserts that we might read *Paradise Lost* in terms of heterosexual interdependence. While a heterosexual reading of the poem agrees with the historical and cultural context of the period in which *Paradise Lost* was composed, the view that heterosexuality is the only fully harmonious kind of relationship in the poem is limited. There are good relationships in the poem – such as the Father and Son’s – that are not heterosexual. When we read the poem solely in terms of heterosexual relationships, we analyze just Adam and Eve’s relationship and, what is more, neglect the all-important relationship between God and humanity.

“grounded in obedience to male authority.” In my thesis, I seek to show that Milton portrays the positive and negative potentials of relationships between selves for all beings, indiscriminate of gender and species. For instance, Milton reveals the negative potential of relationships through Sin’s improper (because incestuous) relationship with Satan, which he implicitly contrasts with Adam and Eve’s positive relationship through parallelism: while Eve asks Adam what else she could do but follow the voice (presumably God’s) that led her to him (4.475-6), Sin asks Satan, “whom should I obey / But thee, whom follow?” (2.865-6). Obedience to God as such, rather than obedience “to male authority,” is what matters for Milton’s God.<sup>43</sup>

One critic suggests that we can understand human relations with God in Milton’s poem through the Incarnation. Borris maintains that “the Incarnation functions as the ground and epitome of human relations with God in Milton’s poem” (222). He makes the case that “[t]he way in which the Son comes to assume human characteristics determines the way in which he can serve humanity as a model for Christian heroism, and that is the central subject of both poems [*Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*]” (Borris 222). Borris sees the Son as the heroic exemplar for all humans, focusing on the inherent similarity between the Son and human beings – their humanness. While Borris suggests that the relationship of humanity with God is “the crux of heroism in the poem” (183), he ultimately emphasizes the *distance* between God and humanity in their relationship. For

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<sup>43</sup> Milton does not eliminate gender subordination – as one example, Adam is for God only, while Eve is for God in Adam (see 4.299) – but gives it less importance than obedience to God, such that Eve can choose – rightly, too – not to listen to Adam, or suggest they do otherwise, when he is not in proper relation to God. Milton’s ethics of relation, though still hierarchical, is grounded in what is just. For Milton, both Adam and Eve are valuable, even if one is more highly placed in the hierarchy.

instance, he observes that even prelapsarian Adam and Eve cannot define God in human terms (Borris 183). While I agree that there is distance between God and humanity in their relationship – the Son performs the role of mediator for this reason – I want to suggest that prior to the Fall and, consequently, prior to the Incarnation which makes the Son fully human, Adam and Eve have a close, personal relationship with God, which lasts for much of the poem (at least eight books). Prelapsarian Adam and Eve meet frequently and intimately with God’s messengers until Book 9, when, as the narrator delineates, there is a sudden change in the social interaction between humans and angels:

NO MORE of talk where God or angel guest  
With man, as with his friend, familiar used  
To sit indulgent, and with him partake  
Rural repast, permitting him the while  
Venial discourse unblamed: (9.1-5)

The ease with which God or angel and humans socialized with one another is made apparent in Milton’s use of enjambment. Later, in Book 8, we discover that Adam spoke directly with God when he was first created. Adam and Eve only need the Incarnated Son to learn about how to relate properly to God *after* the Fall, when they have grown distant from God and His commands. Prior to the Fall, the Father and Son’s relationship, rather than the Son as human-to-be, serves as a model for how prelapsarian humans might relate to God.<sup>44</sup>

Another major theme through which critics have traced relationships in *Paradise Lost* is their inherent difficulty, which means that conflicts or problems can occur. Robert

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<sup>44</sup> Prelapsarian humans need the model because, though they are perfect, they are constantly developing and learning in the Garden.



Crosman's main contention in his book concerns conflict rather than cooperation in Milton's poem. His argument is that "[t]he true conflict in Milton's epic is not between God and Satan, or even between Man and Satan, but between Man and God. ... Eve and Adam are free to fall or not to fall, the issue being between them and God, and Satan is only a pretext" (Crosman 58). The keyword in this quotation from Crosman is "between." The "conflict in Milton's epic" takes place "between" self and other, that is, in relationship. Regardless of who is involved, the conflict in the poem is, for Crosman, one that emerges in the space between selves rather than within the self. Contrary to Crosman, who claims that Milton's subject of the relationship between God and humanity is found only in Books 7-12 (29), Milton's poem delineates the *trajectory* of Adam and Eve's relationship with God. A limitation of Crosman's study is that it focuses on the conflict in the poem. God and human beings are not in conflict with each other at the beginning of the poem, nor at its end; in fact, the change occupies a single book in a poem comprised of twelve: "I *now* must change / Those notes to tragic" (9.5-6; italics mine), the narrator says. In addition, while Crosman recognizes that in prelapsarian Eden God and humanity's love "is as perfect as Adam's love for Eve" (106), he simplifies matters by missing Milton's hierarchy of relationships, where other relationships are built upon some more foundational relationships.<sup>45</sup> I will show that in *Paradise Lost* all loves cannot truly

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<sup>45</sup> In a proposition about how the various relationships in the poem might relate to one another, Crosman observes,

Adam's 'aria' [4.432-9] performs a little circle of perfection, beginning and ending at the same point, the fullness of his love for Eve, and including within its cycle a complete diagram of perfect relationships: love between God and mankind is as perfect as Adam's love for Eve; both loves are mirrored in the perfect harmony between man and created nature. In fact, the song implies, all loves are one and the same; pick any facet of their experience, even the task of gardening or the forbidden fruit, and you will find simply one more aspect of this unitary love. (106)

be “one and the same” (Crosman 106) because (for example) God and humanity’s proper relation is a prerequisite for Adam and Eve’s proper relation. Moreover, I suggest that God and humanity’s love cannot be “mirrored in the perfect harmony between man and created nature” (Crosman 106) without Adam and Eve first being in proper relation to each other. And further, while I agree that God and humanity’s relationship is “perfect” prior to the Fall, this statement should be qualified through mention of Adam’s and Eve’s concomitant process of self-creation. Humanity’s relationship with God is perfect not because it does not change, but because humanity and God change with, and in response to, each other – in a word, mutually. When Adam and Eve’s relationship is inharmonious (a direct result of God and humanity’s inharmonious relationship), created nature is negatively affected because proper relations sustain God’s good creation while improper relations (or relationship difficulties) upend it.

Anthony Low and Dennis Richard Danielson also speak to the difficulties found in relationships, in particular, in sustaining good relationships. For Low, the presence of personal relationships, or the lack thereof, is what differentiates Milton’s heaven and hell. He observes, “Completely absent from his hell are personal freedom, love, concern for others, and the possibility of personal relationships, such as any true community would allow and support” (Low 178). Indeed, Death, the enemy of life and loving relationships, is compared to hell: “black it [Death] stood as night, / Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell, / And shook a dreadful dart” (2.670-2). Death is also “fierce,” just like the “fierce desire” in hell (4.509). Further, Low argues that several scenes in *Paradise Lost* suggest that before the angels fell, they had a more personal, intimate kind of relationship with each

other (see 178). It is difficult, even for God's angels, to maintain personal relationships. The importance of having relationships and sustaining them, despite their inherent difficulties, is suggested when Low observes that both Satan's and Adam's rebellion occur because of "a sense of estrangement from ... [their] closest companion and soul mate" (179). However, again, I will suggest that Milton's poem demonstrates how it is not enough simply to be in relation; rather, one must maintain proper personal relationships over time. For Danielson, creaturely freedom (rather than God's good creation) is at stake when it comes to the existence and maintenance of one's relationship with God: "For true and lasting creaturely freedom must, in accordance with the truth about its own genesis, recognize its relationship, its relativity, to God and his commands, without which it is meaningless, self-defeating and 'alienate' (5.877)" (115-6). In *Paradise Lost* characters such as Satan, as well as fallen Adam and Eve, are estranged from both God and other selves when they deny their relationality to God and His commands (for example, by touching or eating the forbidden fruit). However, when Satan, Adam, and Eve fail to obey God, they demonstrate the difficulty of not only maintaining obedience and good personal relationships, but also sustaining God's good creation, which depends on proper relations in the created world.

Colebrook contends that relationships are the very source of good in Milton's poem, but she does not explicitly link proper relations to God's good creation (and its perpetuity), as I wish to do in my dissertation. She observes, "For a world in which matter becomes ever more formed and ever more substantial – enters into change and relation in order to arrive at what ought to be – is a world in which being recognizes divine life as a

good that would be freely adopted and affirmed” (Colebrook 53). For Colebrook, creation must enter into relation in order for the world to reach actualization. If this is so, then all relationships in the created world in Milton’s poem have significance for “recogniz[ing] divine life as a good that would be freely adopted and affirmed.” Colebrook suggests that “the exposure of love towards an other who is not fully known or comprehended in advance” is what might be defined as the good in *Paradise Lost* (112). In other words, relationships are the source of the good in Milton’s poem. Further, Colebrook contends that relationships provide the means for characters to grow together toward their divine nature: “Love as it was depicted in paradise is not the coupling of two beings, but a relation in which each subject becomes in relation to the other: Adam recognizing Eve’s beauty as an expression of divine creation, Eve recognizing Adam as one through whom she can bear a relation to divine reason” (112). An example of this is when Adam tells Raphael how he felt when Eve was created: “what seemed fair in all the world, seemed now / Mean, or in her summed up, in her contained / And in her looks” (8.472-4). For Adam, all that is beautiful in the world is found in Eve. Similarly, near the end of the poem, fallen Eve acknowledges Adam’s superior reason: “but now lead on; / In me is no delay; with thee to go, / Is to stay here [in Eden]” (12.614-6). Colebrook’s examples of Adam and Eve suggest that relationships actually connect humans to God. I want to test the significance of relationships in *Paradise Lost* for personal identity (both earthly and divine), human heroism, and the good, as such, in God’s created world.

### **Plan of the Argument**

Self-identity, both earthly and divine, emerges and becomes fully realized only through relationships with others. I argue for the relational basis of creation – and further, its proper perpetuation – in *Paradise Lost*. God and humanity's relationship proves to be most important in Milton's cosmos because humans perform the Son's heavenly work on earth (they are analogous beings), in terms of contributing to God's and the world's good growth until heaven and earth are one (chapter 1). Further, the virtuous human form, which takes shape through free human agency in particular, is indispensable to God's purpose because it expresses God's interpersonal definition of love, which is the basis of the self (chapter 2). And finally, a change in God and humanity's perfect but developing relationship is the climax of the poem (Book 9) and causes creation to be forever changed (chapter 3).<sup>46</sup> Despite the Fall, the good can continue because God and humanity want to preserve their relationship, which is *the* source of continued good in the created world.

Chapter 1 argues that in order to become His more fully realized self, God the Father needs both the Son and humanity. God is vulnerable (He has needs and evolves), which means that the relationship between God and humanity is the subject of the poem. *Paradise Lost* advances the idea that the acknowledgement of one's own self-insufficiency is characteristic of the self, for both the Divine and human beings. God's identity as an interpersonal God, as well as God's and creation's fundamental and original goodness, is exemplified by the other self. By expressing God's love, humans participate in both God's created world and God's evolving selfhood.

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<sup>46</sup> This is an oxymoron (at least in Aristotelian teleological thought). After the Fall, relationships contain fear instead of pure joy.

In chapter 2, I contend that *Paradise Lost* reconceives the body as an opportunity for humans primarily, but also other selves with bodily features, to make the spiritual self more spiritual through the embodiment of virtue, which occurs when one's free actions reflect the correspondence between outer actions and appearance and inner dispositions and beliefs, and also correspond with God's will. Characters with consistent shape in the poem embody virtue, since they assiduously maintain their goodness. Because virtuous relationship to other selves is expressed in the form of the body, Sin's shape is inconsistent, Satan's and his comrades' shapes do not stay the same, and Death lacks a consistent form.

Chapter 3 argues that Milton's poem transforms the traditional militant heroes of epic into relational heroes – heroism is in steadfast faith and love of God – with multiple characters demonstrating this kind of heroism, and Adam and Eve exemplifying a different kind and degree of this heroism, in that their heroism is only a potential until after the Fall, when they learn how to be fully heroic in an imperfect world. Adam and Eve's heroism is in the process being formed throughout *Paradise Lost*. Prelapsarian Adam and Eve exercise qualitatively different kinds of heroism: Adam is for valour and contemplation, while Eve is for love and compassion. Eventually, Adam and Eve learn how to become the first fallen heroes; as such, they are the models for Milton's fallen readers, who are also learning to shape their self-identities.

## Chapter One

### Visibly “Expressed”:

#### Self and Other (Self) in the Created World of *Paradise Lost*

— What life have you if you have not life together?

There is no life that is not in community,

And no community not lived in praise of God. (T. S. Eliot, *Choruses from ‘The Rock’* 2.38-40)

#### Introduction: The Self and its Others

Any entity that is fully self-contained, even a ‘pure spirit,’ has only the kind of being that objects have, because, like a turtle that does not emerge from its shell, it lives turned in on itself, never entering into relations with things outside. However ‘spiritual’ we may say it is, such a being is without genuine inwardness because, perceiving nothing outside itself, it has nothing to contrast with its immediate existence and thus to reflect inside; because its being involves no ‘unrest’ it remains inert, and this is what it means to ‘lack Self.’ (Seigel 400)

The passage above is noteworthy for two reasons. First, because it suggests that “genuine inwardness” or spirituality demands “relations with things outside” the self and second, because it draws the reader’s attention toward the intimate relationship between “unrest” and emergent selfhood. While Jerrold E. Seigel’s comparison of this “lack [of] Self” with a turtle might at first seem simplistic, I want to suggest that it is perhaps one of the most enlightening readings of what it means to be a self in the world. The metaphoric turtle that does not emerge from its shell sees nothing and no one, living – if it lives at all – in solitary darkness. Since the turtle cannot be aware of its visibility to others, the turtle becomes invisible to itself. It cannot be truly spiritual, nor “reflect” on its existence, because it has chosen to cut itself off from its surrounding reality. Worse, however, is that the turtle is unchanging, that it experiences no growth. To “lack Self” is, for Seigel and

this thesis, to be inactive, complacent, and at rest. Conversely, to be a self means to be shaken by other selves into action or involvement with those selves in the world. The protective shell must be traded for openness and vulnerability. And here, it is important to recognize that Seigel's misguided turtle, which is "turned in on itself," resembles a spiritual recluse. John Wall states that the word "religion," by its very definition, demands from us the opposite approach. He writes, "One possible origin ... is the Latin *religare* meaning 'to retie,' to reconnect, to put back together what has been broken" (Wall 4). In other words, religion, as a practice, unites an individual with its others so that it might cultivate itself as a self among selves. Moreover, Wall's subsequent interpretation of religion makes the implicit explicit. He says that religion serves "to perform a work of reconnection and reconciliation" (Wall 4). Such "reconnection" and "reconciliation" implies that other selves are integral to the self, in that they are "what the self is made on" (Selleck 4). Continuing with the origin of the word "religion," Wall says that it "may also be from the Latin *relegere*, meaning 'to reread,' to change and renew understandings, to question old readings and make them new" (4). These two Latin origins of the word "religion" are, together, crucial for my reading of Milton's deeply religious work, *Paradise Lost*. I will show that the poem reconnects God and humans through its portrayal of their interdependence (readers re-read their relationship with God).

Indeed, I argue in this chapter that God the Father needs both the Son and humanity to become His more fully realized self.<sup>47</sup> The relationship between God and

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<sup>47</sup> Hereafter, 'God' refers specifically to Milton's God, unless otherwise stated. I am distinguishing between God and the Father, as Milton does. For Paris, Milton's God has psychological needs:

We are seldom given direct inside views of his [God's] psyche; but since he is omnipotent, everything that happens is an expression of his personality, which is writ large in his creation and



humanity is the true subject of the poem because God is vulnerable (He has needs and evolves). Human beings possess unique qualities, such as the ability to honour the Other willfully on earth and to labour purposefully, that God both values and needs.<sup>48</sup> Since Milton communicates the idea that God needs nothing from His creations in both his *De Doctrina Christiana* and across poems, I am advancing a heretical Miltonic theology – one in which God is dependent, mutable, and evolving.<sup>49</sup> *Paradise Lost* advances the idea that loving vulnerability – that is, the acknowledgement of one’s own self-insufficiency – is characteristic of the self, for the Divine and human alike.<sup>50</sup> God is a vulnerable, incomplete God, which means that He is not by any means a static entity. As such, God is an interpersonal God.<sup>51</sup> And further, Milton’s poem reveals God’s and creation’s essential

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in the course of events within it. Both the Fall and his response to it are part of his effort to satisfy his psychological needs. (111)

<sup>48</sup> Indeed, as we will see, God and humanity’s relationship is the most important in Milton’s cosmos because humans perform the Son’s heavenly work on earth, in terms of contributing to God’s and the world’s good growth until heaven and earth are one.

<sup>49</sup> For example, in *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton writes, “No works whatever were required of Adam; a particular act only was forbidden” (384). Similarly, in Milton’s “Sonnet XIX,” patience tells the speaker, “God doth not need / Either man’s work or his own gifts; who best / Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best” (9-11). I want to thank Daniel Shore for pointing out to me the controversiality of this chapter’s major argument (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

<sup>50</sup> Indeed, Adam falls in part because he wrongly believes that Eve is sufficient in herself. In Book 9, lines 308-317, “[Eve] repeats her turning away from Adam at their first meeting, and it seems to confirm his sense of her as complete in herself and self-sufficient. The center of his debate with Eve – quite apart from the doctrinal issue about the testing of virtue by temptation that has received the bulk of critical attention – is Adam’s anxious question about their mutual interdependence” (Quint 292). Quint continues,

Eve’s seeking of independence ... grows out of her relationship with Adam as much as from diabolic suggestion. The more he communicates his feeling of dependence on Eve, and his feelings that she may *not*, in the self-sufficiency he envisions in her, stand in need of him, the more he encourages her to strike off on her own, which in itself gives further rise to his feelings of creaturely inadequacy. (292)

According to Quint, Adam and Eve’s interactions cause them to believe that Eve does not need Adam, which is not at all the case in reality. In *Paradise Lost*, both human and divine selves are comprised of interpersonal love, such that the self is a self through webs of inter-relation.

<sup>51</sup> This chapter expands critics’ arguments for the prevalence and significance of the interpersonal self during the early modern period (Nancy Selleck, Charles Taylor, and Kelly Oliver, to name a few) by suggesting that Milton’s poem illustrates for readers how God and humanity are involved in each other’s (self-)creation.

and original goodness, as exemplified by the other self.<sup>52</sup> Humanity participates in Milton's God's created world, as well as God's emerging and evolving selfhood, by expressing God's love.<sup>53</sup> My argument that divine self-identity develops is controversial, as it goes against at least three-hundred years of polemic writing.<sup>54</sup> With the exception of mutability, I maintain that God retains all of the other perfections traditionally ascribed to Him, namely, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.<sup>55</sup>

### **Imagination and Perception: Re-Reading God and Humanity's Relationship**

If we, in our modern world, have made it hard to imagine positive self-other relationships, then we have made it notoriously difficult to imagine positive self-Other relationships, namely, the relationship between the human being and God. Paul Cefalu

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<sup>52</sup> Russell M. Hillier also "seeks to restore the balance by returning Milton's reader to that other face of Holy Scripture, that is, to the more affirming side of Milton's poetic theology and his theological poetry" (2). However, Hillier focuses on the Son rather than the Father and Son's relationship: "Milton's God is correspondingly a deity who reveals a side of Himself that understands how to compassionate and to love. ... The clement aspect to Milton's conception of divinity is manifest in the Son" (2). For the opposite view, namely, that God "is largely hostile to humans" (123), see Bernard J. Paris's chapter, "After the Fall: God's Response," in his book titled *Heaven and Its Discontents*.

<sup>53</sup> Linda Gregerson argues that "in one significant and restricted terrain, psychoanalysis – by which I mean the Freudian line continued in Lacan – shares enough ground with Milton's epic (and with Spenser's) to be of theoretical pertinence: this is in its insistence upon the precipitating agency of the Other in the reciprocal evolution of subjectivity and cognition" (158).

<sup>54</sup> I want to thank Daniel Shore for helping me articulate this chapter's claim in its full controversiality (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

<sup>55</sup> An example of God's omnipotence is when the Father refers to the Son as "Second omnipotence" (6.684). An instance of God's omniscience is when Raphael warns Adam that God alone is omniscient: "nor let thine own inventions hope / Things not revealed, which the invisible king, / Only omniscient, hath suppressed in night" (7.121-3). And finally, an example of God's omnipresence is when Michael tells fallen Adam that "his [God's] omnipresence fills / Land, sea, and air, and every kind that lives" (11.336-7). If God is immutable in the poem, it is in the sole sense that His nature as a good God cannot change. Hence, the narrator relates, "Thee Father first they [the angels] sung omnipotent, / Immutable, immortal, infinite, / Eternal king" (3.372-4). It is important to remember, however, that by portraying God in a poem, Milton takes care to teach readers that this is God not as He is in Himself, but as He appears to humans and their limited comprehensions. I want to thank Daniel Shore for reminding me of the important distinction between representation and actuality (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

observes that when poets such as John Donne, Richard Crashaw, Milton, and Thomas Traherne strip away the theatrical masks of what Cefalu calls “the accoutrements of Hobbesian ‘artificial persons’” in order to reveal the ‘authentic’ nature of both creaturely subjects and God,

what they often find is not the subject of psychoanalysis, at least as it is defined idiosyncratically by [Stephen] Greenblatt as an ‘inalienable self-possession’ or ‘biological continuity,’ but precisely as the void, real, or empty place that is worth recovering because it emerges as the common denominator linking subjects to neighbors and God. (31)<sup>56</sup>

For Cefalu, these early modern poets show that ethical conduct “often involves a painful acknowledgement of subjects’ own and their neighbors’ fundamental inability to satisfy their elusive desires” (32). Cefalu is ultimately concerned with voids and absence rather than fullness or self-presence. Kelly Oliver points out that our lexicon for other selves is itself alienating (3). She writes, “To see oneself as a subject and to see other people as *the other* or objects not only alienates one from those around him or her but also enables ... dehumanization” (Oliver 3). Our othering of the other has negative consequences for both the self (alienation) and the other self (dehumanization). There is mutuality, in the self’s

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<sup>56</sup> In *Leviathan* (1651), Thomas Hobbes maintains that speech is what allows for commonwealth, society, contract, and peace, and, further, that it differentiates humans from beasts:

But the most notable and profitable invention of all other was that of speech, consisting of *names* or *appellations*, and their connexion, whereby men register their thoughts, recall them when they are past, and also declare them one to another for mutual utility and conversation, without which there had been amongst men neither commonwealth nor society, nor contract nor peace no more than amongst lions, bears, and wolves. (54)

Moreover, speech connects humans to God, who was “[t]he first author of speech” (Hobbes 54). However, Hobbes’s political philosophy emphasizes a state of war between self and other rather than peace:

in all times, Kings, and Persons of Sovereigne authority, because of their Independency, are in continuall jealousies, and in the state and posture of Gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their Forts, Garrisons, and Guns upon the Frontiers of their Kingdomes; and continuall Spyes upon their neighbours; which is a posture of War. ... To this warre of every man against every man, this also is consequent; that nothing can be Unjust. (85)

For Hobbes, humans are ultimately desirous and brutish.

and the other's experience of negative affect, even in a relationship between the self and "the other" that apparently denies its relationality. By imagining other selves as "threatening" rather than "familiar," we, as Nancy Selleck suggests, "limit our discussion to one model of self, in which identity is constructed in opposition to context" (2). If our only model of the self frames identity "in opposition to context," and other selves are necessary to the self, then our preconception of otherness truly "undoes rather than constitutes the self" (Selleck 3). Such a framework for self-other relationships impedes the development of self and others that it ought to nurture. When we believe that there is "[a] self *prior* to self-fashioning – a discrete entity already in place to be threatened by the encounter with the 'Other'" (Selleck 2-3) – we, as Oliver puts it in another context, "start from the assumption that relations are essentially antagonistic struggles for recognition" (4) rather than live contexts for the growth of compassionate relationships. Further, by using 'either/or' terms – that the other confers recognition on us (*à la* Axel Honneth and Jürgen Habermas) or that we confer recognition on the other (*à la* Taylor and Nancy Fraser) – we either worship the other or force the other into a space of invisibility or nonexistence (Oliver 5-6). In both cases, we render relationships high-stake gambles and therefore "doom any attempts to formulate the possibility of cooperative relationships" (Oliver 12).

Selleck's *The Interpersonal Idiom in Shakespeare, Donne, and Early Modern Culture* is far from the first or only work to propose a more cooperative reading of the self and other selves; however, it is particularly valuable for its applicability to early

modern concepts and selves.<sup>57</sup> While her book touches on *Paradise Lost* in terms of this positive conception of relationality, much work remains if we are to refute the claim that “[t]he true conflict in Milton’s epic is ... between Man and God” (Crosman 58).<sup>58</sup> Before we re-read Milton’s poem in terms of cooperation rather than conflict, we must acknowledge that “in being conceived [by Milton’s contemporaries] in terms of ... the all-too-human desires for power and glory, God has been scandalously and blasphemously imagined [by readers in the past and even in the present] in such a way as to be nearly indistinguishable from the Devil” (Bryson 12). When the speaker in the poem states that he seeks “[to] justify the ways of God to men” (1.26), he is saying that his aim is to defend God’s ways as proper, to give a justification for God’s actions.<sup>59</sup> However, that human beings’ “ways” also need justification is made explicit in the epic when Adam reminds Eve, “Man hath his daily work of body or mind / Appointed, which declares his dignity, / And the regard of heaven on all his ways” (4.618-20). Because God “takes ... account” of the work that humans perform (4.622), humans, unlike other creatures, have a responsibility to perform daily-appointed labour. Milton’s early, defensive attention to God’s “ways” and his subsequent turn to humanity’s “ways” suggest “not that God has

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<sup>57</sup> See Erving Goffman (1956), Taylor (1989), and Oliver (2001) for additional cooperative readings of the self and other selves. For a more recent cooperative reading, see Karen L. Edwards, “Learning and Loving in *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Studies*, vol. 62, no. 2, 2020, pp. 239-51.

<sup>58</sup> While critics such as Selleck have begun to apply a positive conception of relationality to *Paradise Lost*, if we are to refute Crosman’s claim that “[t]he true conflict in Milton’s epic is ... between Man and God” (58), we need to (among other tasks) re-read Milton’s poem in terms of cooperation, re-evaluate the “conflict” in Milton’s poem – what do we mean by ‘conflict’ and, by our definition, what is/are the conflict(s) in the poem? – and re-consider the poem *as a whole*, rather than, for instance, focusing on a range, or select number, of books.

<sup>59</sup> In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Book 1, line 26 from *Paradise Lost* is given as an example for the following transitive sense of the word “justify”: “Of a person or body: to show or maintain the justice or reasonableness of (an action, claim, etc.); to give a justification for; to defend as right or proper” (v., def. 6a).

been unfair to man, but that man has been unfair to God” (Bryson 28).<sup>60</sup> By pointing to humanity’s ways, Milton shows us that all beings – heavenly and earthly – are held accountable for their actions. By seeking explanations for God’s actions alone, we are worshipping God “in the image of the Devil” (Bryson 28). Just as we view the other as threatening, we wrongly imagine that God’s ways need justification, rather than probing our theoretical model of self, our interpretation of God in the poem, or our understanding of the relationship between God and humanity in religious narratives.

While I agree with Michael Bryson’s assertion that Milton’s true God “is not the Devil” (12), my reading of the poem differs radically from his. He contends that *Paradise Lost*’s God is portrayed as tyrannous so that the reader might realize his or her mistaken perception of the true God (outside of Milton’s poem), but I claim that the poem itself seeks to re-imagine God by expressing how humanity might – indeed, should – envision the relationship between God and human beings. In other words, I read Milton’s God as only *seemingly* tyrannous. This chapter expands Selleck’s argument for the interpersonal self, then, by suggesting that Milton’s poem illustrates for us how God or the so-called “ultimate Other” (Rambuss 523) and humanity might be involved in each other’s (self-)growth.<sup>61</sup> For Samuel Fallon, *Paradise Lost* presents a “theological and metaphysical hypothesis” that aims “to put forward a coherent theory of how an eternal, infinite God

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<sup>60</sup> In a similar vein, Marilyn Arnold claims that the Father is “[e]xtremely sensitive to the opinions of his subjects” (66). She observes that He “labors incessantly to exonerate himself in his dealings with man” and, further, that “[t]he Father’s anxious desire to be exonerated and justified is poetically important, for it leads to the Son’s emergence as man’s mediator and redeemer” (Arnold 66). Arnold continues, “If God is to be justified and understood by man, he must somehow make himself accessible to man as an agent of love and redemption as well as law. If man can come to view his punishment in terms of eventual good, perhaps he can accept that punishment and grant that God is good” (66).

<sup>61</sup> Richard Rambuss, in his paper on Crashaw’s religious poetry, discusses “the fear of confronting the Other – that is, the ultimate Other, God – and finding this Other altogether not other enough from us” (523).

interacts with the limited world he created” (36). Fallon’s use of the words “hypothesis” and “theory” is useful when we read it in concert with Thomas F. Merrill’s claim that the function of God-talk is “not to inform but to *perform* – to change human attitudes rather than provide facts” (66; italics mine).<sup>62</sup> What distinguishes Milton’s Christian epic from others is its dramatic imagining of the Divine as two separate but interrelated and interacting beings, namely, the Father and the Son.<sup>63</sup> When the Son says, “First, highest,

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<sup>62</sup> Merrill explains God-talk:

we should compare it with this basic statement by John Milton on the subject of how we are to know God: ‘For granting that both in the literal and figurative descriptions of God, he is exhibited not as he really is, but in such a manner as may be within the scope of our comprehensions, yet we ought to entertain such a conception of him as he, in condescending to accommodate himself to our capacities, has shown that he desires we should conceive [*De Doctrina Christiana* qtd.]’ Not God ‘as he really is,’ but God as ‘he desires we should conceive’ is the basis of Milton’s divine epistemology. (25)

<sup>63</sup> Arnold (1973) summarizes the scholarship on the Father and Son as one or two persons:

There has been much discussion over whether or not the Father and Son in *Paradise Lost* represent one or two persons, and if two, whether or not the Son is equal or subordinate (or even superior in personal characteristics) to the Father. [Maurice] Kelley has a great deal of support among commentators who have read *Paradise Lost* as an indication of Arianism in Milton. William Empson, *Milton’s God*, 2nd ed. (London, 1965), ... says that Milton did not believe Father and Son were one identity (p. 16). [Arthur] Sewall says Milton comes to a view ‘almost Arian’ in his conception of the Father and Son (p. 47). Herbert McLachlan, *The Religious Opinions of Milton, Locke, and Newton* (Manchester, 1941), pp. 63-64, maintains that Milton moved from a rather orthodox view of the Trinity to an Arian point of view. David Daiches, *Milton* (London, 1957), p. 150, says that the opening passage of *Paradise Lost* in which Milton calls Christ ‘one greater man’ shows that Milton preferred to regard the Son as Man instead of God. ... (p. 64). Back on the other side of the ledger [C.A.] Patrides holds that Milton maintains the unity of the Godhead in *Paradise Lost* and does not distinguish between the Father and the Son (p. 30). Stella P. Revard, ‘The Dramatic Function of the Son in *Paradise Lost*: A Commentary on Milton’s “Trinitarianism,”’ *JEGP*, LXVI (1967), 45-58, says that Milton’s views in *De Doctrina* are not anti-trinitarian. She claims that Milton never denies the basic ‘oneness’ of the Father and the Son in either *PL* or *De Doctrina*. (70-71 [footnote 1])

For a more recent study, see Daniel Shore’s “Milton’s Lonely God,” *Milton Studies*, vol. 60, no.1-2, 2018, pp. 29-52, where he proposes a dianoetic criticism that “would ... shift debate and controversy outside the domain of belief to the larger domain of thought,” “[attending] to error not as the mere negation, inversion, or perversion of doctrinal *thinking that*, but rather as an enabling condition of poetic *thinking through*” (48). Shore argues that because Milton could not have supported or considered the idea of a lonely God (God as one being, not two) as a matter of doctrinal truth, God’s progressive loneliness “appears as an ostentatious, provocative error, a wandering from the strict confines of doctrinal assertion” (“Milton’s Lonely God” 39). In *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton claims that the Father and Son “are different persons”:

Generation must be an external efficiency, since the Father and Son are different persons; and the divines themselves acknowledge this, who argue that there is a certain emanation of the Son from the Father ...; for though they teach that the Spirit is co-essential with the Father, they do not deny

holiest, best, thou [the Father] always seek'st / To glorify thy son, I always thee" (6.724-5), He reveals the essence of their relationship, namely, that they praise and worship, or "glorify," each other by perceiving and augmenting what is "highest, holiest, best" in each other. This reciprocal glorification "makes possible the loving apprehension of a distant and invisible reality [God's love]" (Shuger, *Sacred* 249). Milton's portrayal of a dialogic God is one way that his poetic work seeks to draw God and humankind, figuratively and literally, together, toward a sense of "loving apprehension."

As I observe in the Introduction to this dissertation, identity was relational specifically in the early modern period because identity's fundamental relationality had not yet been obscured by (for instance) our modern lexicon – terms such as "character" do not acknowledge that identity is constructed through the self's relation to others, both physically and socially (Selleck 3) – and *Paradise Lost* demonstrates the fundamental relationality of identity not only through its dialogic God, but more specifically, through its references to, and detailed descriptions of, the other self.<sup>64</sup> In the poem, God refers to Eve as Adam's "other self" (8.450). God tells Adam, "What next I bring shall please thee, be assured, / Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self, / Thy wish exactly to thy heart's desire" (8.449-51).<sup>65</sup> Selleck claims that early modern discourses "stress the *oneness* of

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its emanation, procession, spiration, and issuing from the Father, which are all expressions denoting external efficiency. (374)

<sup>64</sup> See p. 6 in my Introduction.

<sup>65</sup> Adam also refers to Eve as his "other self" (10.128). Even after the Fall, in Book 10, Adam exclaims, O heaven! in evil strait this day I stand  
Before my judge, either to undergo  
My self the total crime, or to accuse  
My other self, the partner of my life;  
Whose failing, while her faith to me remains,  
I should conceal, and not expose to blame (10.125-30)



friends or lovers more in terms of their *mutuality*” (36). We observe this mutuality in the Father and Son’s relationship when the Father says, “Easy it might be seen that I intend / Mercy colleague with justice, sending thee [the Son] / Man’s friend” (10.58-60). Humans see the Father as “[m]ercy colleague with justice” through His relationship with the Son. In the *OED*, “colleague” means “to cooperate for a common end” (*v.*, def. 2), and in the poem the Father and Son work together to deal justly with humanity. For example, the Father anoints the Son “universal king” so that the Son can assume His “merits,” which include His tremendous love for humans.<sup>66</sup> The Father says,

Son both of God and man,  
Anointed universal king; all power  
I give thee, reign for ever, and assume  
Thy merits; (3.316-9)

The Father’s transference of His power to the Son permits the latter to “reign” over the universe and, moreover, to do so in a loving manner. The Son is now able to actualize the best part of the Father’s nature, which is His love. This reading aligns with Marilyn Arnold’s recognition that, indeed, Milton’s poem “confirms repeatedly that the Son is love, *the active embodiment of the loving facet of the Father’s personality*” (68; italics mine).<sup>67</sup> This teamwork between Father and Son is mirrored in the relationship between

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<sup>66</sup> The Father says, “[I]n thee [the Son] / Love hath abounded more than glory abounds” (3.311-2).

<sup>67</sup> Arnold continues, “It is interesting to note that though the Son is represented from the beginning as the embodiment of love, love comes to dominate his actions increasingly as the epic unfolds. The poem moves toward love as an expression of Godhood as the Son assumes more and more responsibility” (68). Her observation supports my major argument that Milton’s God changes or evolves. Differently, Christopher Bond ascribes more individuality to the Son, arguing that He is able to influence the Father through His Word:

The idea that the Son has matured into an independent agent whose speeches and actions are a complement to, rather than simply a cipher for, those of his Father is confirmed by his spontaneous presentation of Adam’s and Eve’s prayers, together with his plea on their behalf, to the Father at 11.20-44. The Son takes apparent control of the situation and demonstrates that he has worked out what he needs to do to help mankind without having to be prompted by the Father. (176)

husband and wife. Adam tells Raphael that there is “[h]armony to behold in wedded pair” (8.605):

Those thousand decencies that daily flow  
From all her [Eve’s] words and actions mixed with love  
And sweet compliance, which declare unfeigned  
Union of mind, or in us both one soul; (8.601-4)

As Charles Taylor suggests, “A self exists only within ... ‘webs of interlocution’” (36).

Eve’s “words and actions mixed with love / And sweet compliance” – that is, her interactions with Adam – declare their “[u]nion of mind” and oneness (“one soul”). Adam knows his own mind and soul through his relationship with Eve. Both the Father and Son and Adam and Eve, as pairs and as a group, are bound up with each other, in terms of their selfhood.

*Paradise Lost* is also a poem that, similar to other literary works from the period, emphasizes human potential, which suggests the possibility of loving interdependence among humans and between humans and other beings.<sup>68</sup> Milton was “more enthralled by human possibility than human limitation” (Chaplin 359). In *Paradise Lost*, God is able to “clear his own justice and wisdom from all imputation” because He “created man free and able enough [on his own] to have withstood his tempter” (“*The Argument*” [Book 3]). God gives humans the power to make decisions and fight their own battles. Humanism,

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<sup>68</sup> In the anonymous play *Everyman* (1510?), spectators observe Everyman’s capacity to repent for his mistakes (Knowledge advises him to wear a robe that is wet with his tears until his journey’s end), which demonstrates that everyone can enter heaven if they learn to repent; in Baldassare Castiglione’s *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), L. Octavian argues “that vertues may be learned” (267), which suggests that humans can improve themselves through education; and in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1590), the Red Cross Knight becomes Saint George – his best, saintly self – only after he has dealt with all the parts of himself that manifest in other selves (for example, Orgoglio). Regarding the last example, A. C. Hamilton notes that the word ‘Orgoglio’ “contains the root of the Knight’s name, George” (99 [footnote for Stanza 14, line 5]). The connection between the name “Orgoglio” and the name “George” implies that both figures are bound up with the Red Cross Knight’s identity.

importantly, widened our perspective on the human by encompassing a variety of new ideas, including “a belief in man’s ability to fashion his own nature; ... a belief in the importance of self-projection or dramatisation, which stresses ‘bravery’ and ‘boldness’ and conceives of man as an actor; and above all a belief in the power of the word” (Rhodes 41). In *Paradise Lost*, Raphael persuades Adam that angels think just as highly of humans as vice versa. Raphael says, “Nor are thy lips ungraceful, sire of men, / Nor tongue ineloquent; for God on thee / Abundantly his gifts hath also poured” (8.218-20). From the angel’s standpoint, human beings are “also” active, worthy agents of God’s creation; indeed, humans are “fellow servant[s]” of the Lord (8.225). Thus, we can apply Grace Jantzen’s model of human flourishing, where humans are perceived as “having an inner natural capacity and dynamic, being able to draw on inner resources and interconnection with one another in the web of life, and having the potential to develop into fruitfulness” (161), to *Paradise Lost*, which begins, “OF MAN’S first disobedience, and the fruit / Of that forbidden tree” (1.1-2). While we might interpret “the fruit” as the Fall or the fruit on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we might instead interpret it as the fruition or human growth that results from the events that are about to unfold before us; after all, the Father tells the Son, “They [humans] open to themselves at length the way / Up hither [to heaven], under long obedience tried” (7.158-9). God gives agency to human beings, for they “open to themselves” the path toward the Divine.

### **Milton’s Good God**

Having argued that readers of *Paradise Lost* need to question their current model of self and employ “the language of flourishing” (Jantzen 161) in their interpretation of humanity, and its relationship to God in the poem, I would now like to explore the paradox that in *Paradise Lost* God seems bad, even though He is essentially good, because His true nature cannot be “[m]ade visible” (3.386) without the Son’s and humanity’s aid, whose purpose it is to reveal and also augment all that is good in Him.<sup>69</sup> Alone, God is neither “the Old Testament God of ... glory and wrath” nor the “Pauline God of love and mercy” (Cefalu 35); instead, He is a knotted amalgamation of both. Throughout *Paradise Lost*, we see the Father’s continuous tempering of His glory or wrath with love. Jacob Boehme’s theorizing of the Christian God in *Academia Londoniensis*, *The Aurora* (1612), and *Mysterium Magnum* (1623) provides a starting point for my discussion of Milton’s Father.<sup>70</sup> Milton, like Boehme, never attributes an evil will to God. Also similar to Boehme’s God, Milton’s Father cannot manifest Himself without the activity of unfolding, whereby He expresses an idea of Himself as fully actualized. It is while He is before the Son that the Father “unfold[s] bright[ly]” and blazes forth as an

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<sup>69</sup> In Book 10, after Sin and Death build their bridge, God Himself explains that He merely “seems” bad:  
the folly of man

Let in these wasteful furies, who impute  
Folly to me, so doth the prince of hell  
And his adherents, that with so much ease  
I suffer them to enter and possess  
A place so heavenly [the created world], and conniving seem  
To gratify my scornful enemies,  
That laugh, as if transported with some fit  
Of passion, I to them had quitted all,  
At random yielded up to their misrule; (10.619-28)

In subsequent lines, God reveals that “these wasteful furies” “know not” His larger plan (10.629, but see 630-40).

<sup>70</sup> Cefalu’s explanation of Boehme’s God (see Cefalu 106) informs my ensuing analysis.

“unclouded deity” (10.63, 65). In the poem, the Son is the self-giving (or outgoing) will that helps actualize the Father. However, most crucial here is how, as with Boehme’s God, the two wills – outgoing and ingoing – are interdependent, and that the outgoing will (for Milton, the Son) allows the ingoing will (the Father) to evolve. We might say that in *Paradise Lost* God is an interpersonal God because the Father’s other self, the Son, “keep[s] God’s ... anger at bay” (Cefalu 109) by tempering it with the love that defines God’s goodness. When the Father sends the Son to end the vain war between the angels and Satan’s comrades, we are told that “half his [the Son’s] strength he put not forth, but checked / His thunder in mid-volley, for he meant / Not to destroy, but root them [the fallen angels] out of heaven” (6.853-5). In this case, the Son does not make full use of His strength; the Son does not destroy the Father’s enemies even though He has the power to do so. In fact, Milton refers to the Son as “mild” a couple of times in the poem (10.67, 96), suggesting that temperance is a fundamental aspect of His personality. Moreover, the Son’s exhibition of self-restraint actually influences the Father’s future approach to punishing humanity. In Book 11, Michael informs Adam that God will “make a covenant never to destroy / The earth again by flood, nor let the sea / Surpass his bounds, nor rain to drown the world” (11.892-4).<sup>71</sup> Significantly, the sign of God’s promise will be “His triple-coloured bow, whereon to look / ... call[s] to mind his covenant” (11.897-8). The “triple” colour of the rainbow is reminiscent of the Son’s intervention on the *third* day of the war in heaven.<sup>72</sup> Just as the Son is a visible sign of the Father’s emotions, God’s

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<sup>71</sup> It takes but “one just man [Noah]” (11.890) for the Father to feel remorse and make a new covenant with humans.

<sup>72</sup> The Father says to the Son,  
Two days are therefore past, the third is thine;

rainbow is something that humans can witness. Also, similar to how the Son “check[s]” His thunder “in mid-volley,” the Father now “remit[s] his ire,” realizing that without humanity He is “[g]rieved at his heart” (11.885, 887). In the same book, the Father shows compassion by asking the Son not to leave Adam and Eve “disconsolate” about their fall (11.113). By evolving through His relationship with the Son, a being who typifies self-restraint, and His human children, beings who remind Him of His own ability to love, the Father emerges as a loving being.

Despite the evolutionary nature of God and His creation, both are firstly and fundamentally good. My approach to the age-old problem of good and evil is both similar to and different from William Empson’s. Like Empson, I try to show that those elements of the poem that critics typically read as bad are actually what make the poem so good (11).<sup>73</sup> However, unlike Empson, I do not believe that “[t]he reason why the poem is so good is that it makes God so bad” (13, 275). Rather, in my reading, God initially appears to be bad, that is, angry and tyrannous, in order for Milton to dramatize that a good God is a dependent, interpersonal God, that is, a God who needs to distribute His “gifts” (8.220) – and especially His glory – among the angels, His Son, and His human children in order to become His best, temperate self. In Book 5, Abdiel reminds Satan that “all the spirits of heaven” were “created in their bright degrees, / Crowned ... with glory” (5.837, 838-

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For thee I have ordained it, and thus far  
Have suffered, that the glory may be thine  
Of ending this great war, since none but thou  
Can end it. (6.699-703)

<sup>73</sup> For example, Empson suggests that Milton’s “struggling to make his God appear less wicked” creates ongoing “searching” in *Paradise Lost*, which becomes “the chief source of its fascination and poignancy” (11).

9); in Book 6, the Father bestows the task of “ending this great war [in heaven]” (6.702) on the Son; and in Book 10, Adam recognizes that prior to the Fall he was “[t]he glory of that glory [that is, the world]” (10.722). As discussed earlier, when God is conceived too much in terms of His power and glory, He is “scandalously imagined in such a way as to be nearly indistinguishable from the devil” (Bryson 12). Milton avoids the conception of God as a power- and glory-hungry Devil by presenting his God as sharing His power and glory. In doing so, he both strengthens the bond of kinship between God and humanity and gains humans’ allegiance in the struggle to sustain this good world. Milton draws a sharp distinction between the Father’s praiseworthy glory and Satan’s vainglorious glory. In Book 6, Raphael tells Adam that “eternal silence” is the punishment for those angels whose strength “to glory aspires / Vainglorious, and through infamy seeks fame” (6.385, 383-4). My reading, like Empson’s, emphasizes that the epic “is not good in spite of but especially because of its moral confusions” (13). In terms of the poem’s “moral confusions,” however, Empson is speaking about the controversy among critics “largely ... conducted between attackers who find it [*Paradise Lost*] bad because it makes God bad and defenders who find it all right because it leaves God tolerable, even though Milton is tactless about him” (13). I see the moral confusions as opportunities for free will that Milton has built into *Paradise Lost*. Milton imitates God’s strategy. For example, God’s “withdraw[al] [of] himself, in order to allow a space – physical, spiritual, and psychological – for natural contingency within which human and angelic free will can operate” (Low 151) imparts agency to others. God’s withdrawal also permits other selves, “at choice, [to] diverge from goodness” (Low 151). In the poem, this is confirmed when

Raphael states, “All things ... up to him [God] return, / If not depraved from good, created all / Such to perfection, one first matter all” (5.470-2). This gift of choice, of divergence, from original goodness reveals an awesome truth, namely, that evil is a result rather than a cause. Evil results when God’s creatures decide to pervert the freedom to choose by diverging from original goodness. God cannot inflict evil upon the self because evil arises from personal choices.

Further, not only does God confront and punish evil in the created world, but He also re-instates goodness when evil removes the good in original creation. This is a significant truth, provided that it answers – and I think that it does – the major dilemma of theodicy, as “that which attempts to account for the existence of evil given the proposition that God the creator is good” (Stocker 70).<sup>74</sup> In Book 2, the narrator states that the fallen angels’ arguments about the meaning of good and evil are futile:

Of good and evil much they argued then,  
Of happiness and final misery,  
Passion and apathy, and glory and shame,  
Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy: (2.562-5)

The fallen angels’ endless arguing is made ridiculous when Milton deals with the problem of theodicy by matter-of-factly stating that the Father continually renews creation. Milton writes, “for evil only good” (2.623).<sup>75</sup> We actually *see* “for evil only good” when Michael

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<sup>74</sup> The problem of theodicy is “necessarily a topic which engages Christians in a crucial argument” (Stocker 70).

<sup>75</sup> John N. Morris points out God’s Divine intention to bring good out of evil: “The fall of the angels is succeeded by the creation of the world and man; and upon the judgment of fallen man follows the promise of his redemption and reconciliation with God” (70). Furthermore, “Not just once, but time after time, God contrives to bring greater good out of evil” (Morris 73). Indeed, in praise of God the angels sing,

Who seeks  
To lessen thee, against his purpose serves  
To manifest the more thy might: his evil  
Thou usest, and from thence creat’st more good. (7.613-6)



tells Adam how the story of Cain and Abel will conclude. While the unjust (Cain) will slay the just (Abel), “the bloody fact / Will be avenged, and the other’s faith approved / Lose no reward, though here thou [Adam] see him die” (11.457-9). Though Cain will kill Abel in this world, in the next world Cain will be punished and Abel will be rewarded. Also, Michael tells Adam that though God will “destroy / The earth . . . by flood” (11.892-3) in order to punish “a dark age” (11.809), He will later “purge all things new, / Both heaven and earth, wherein the just shall dwell” (11.900-1). To “purge” something means to *remove* a condition or quality that is undesired, rather than start from scratch. In the case of the flood, God will “not . . . blot out mankind” (11.891). God is good because He consistently re-instates goodness in a world overturned by evil, because He decides to create over and over rather than give up and utterly destroy what He first loved. As Adam joyfully realizes, God will “raise another world” for “one man [Noah] found so perfect and so just” (11.877, 876). God’s ultimate goodness or love in the face of evil is seen in Book 12, when Adam responds to the conclusion of his prophetic vision with the following words: “O goodness infinite, goodness immense! / That all this good of evil shall produce, / And evil turn to good” (12.469-71). Not only does God turn evil into good, but Adam’s exclamatory “O” also suggests an important circularity to the problem of good and evil, namely, that goodness is both the first and final end of God’s creation.

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As an example of God’s creation of goodness despite evil, the angels afterward proclaim, “Witness this new-made world, another heaven” (7.617) and proceed to describe the created world with wonder. Another example of “for evil only good” (2.623) is when, even after the Fall, God removes Adam and Eve from Eden with the aim to protect them from eating from the Tree of Life, to which they are more susceptible because of their upstart passions. As a further precautionary measure, God puts a flaming sword in front of Eden to prevent *the devils* from taking the fruit and tempting Adam and Eve with it on earth. God makes it clear that He removes Adam and Eve from Eden because He does not want them to endure immortal suffering. See Book 11, lines 90 to 108.

Indeed, Eve also shows us “for evil only good” when, in Book 11, she acknowledges humbly to Adam God’s immense “pardon” (11.167) of her sinful actions:

Ill worthy I such title [of ‘Eve’<sup>76</sup>] should belong  
To me transgressor, who for thee ordained  
A help, became thy snare; to me reproach  
Rather belongs, distrust and all dispraise:  
But infinite in pardon was my judge,  
That I who first brought death on all, am graced  
The source of life; next favourable thou,  
Who highly thus to entitle me vouchsaf’st,  
Far other name deserving. (11.163-71)

Though Eve has sinned, and she rightly acknowledges the evil that she has created – she “first brought death on all” – she also realizes that God has graced her with the power to create good from this evil, namely, to be “[t]he source of life” for generations to come. However, despite God’s nature as ultimate Creator and Advocate of goodness, His creatures’ nature as free agents means that He will not use His power to make an instantaneous heaven on earth.<sup>77</sup> In Book 5, Raphael tells Adam, “And good he made thee, but to persevere / He left it in thy power, ordained thy will / By nature free, not overruled by fate” (5.525-7). God leaves it in humans’ power – it is their purpose! – to persevere, no matter how long it takes them to learn how to choose goodness consistently.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Etymologically, in Hebrew ‘Eve’ is cognate with ‘life.’

<sup>77</sup> There is an important difference between what God can do – He *can* change human nature – and what He will, or will not, do. God will not, for example, change human nature because then humans would lose free will, a decree that God declared unchangeable when He decreed it:

I else must change  
Their [humans’] nature, and revoke the high decree  
Unchangeable, eternal, which ordained  
Their freedom, they themselves ordained their fall. (3.125-8)

<sup>78</sup> Quint similarly sees the importance of time for the fulfillment of God’s plan: “they [Adam and Eve] are required to persevere in faith and righteousness *through time* and its vicissitudes, free to fall at any

### **Multiplicity: Hierarchy and Milton's Interpersonal God**

With the belief that God is a good God providing the framework for what follows, I want to investigate how forms of multiplicity in *Paradise Lost* serve both to substantiate Milton's implicit argument for the interpersonal self, with respect to God and humanity, and to dramatize, through darkly humorous parody, the contrast between the image of creation offered by the Father and Son and the image of destruction furnished by Satan. In the poem, the relationship between Satan, Sin, and Death parallels and parodies the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in two ways. First, the relationship imitates monarchical rule and second, it disparages interpersonal selfhood. According to Bryson, Milton's "present[ation] [of] his Father as a king ... and his Satan as an aspiring king" reveals that, for Milton, "kingship, *both on earth and in heaven*, is part of the larger problem of how God has been misconceived" (29). He maintains, "In presenting the entire course of universal history as revolving around kingship, both the having and the desiring, Milton makes the case that it is not kings who must be overthrown, but *kingship* itself" (Bryson 29). While the Father is presented as a king, and Satan is certainly an aspiring king, Bryson lumps the two together as "kings," instead of recognizing how the Father's kingship differs from Satan's and an absolute ruler's.<sup>79</sup> Here, parody does not serve merely or primarily to mock Satan's monarchical

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contingent occasion, even or especially in the face of a death that intervenes before the divine promises can be fulfilled" (285).

<sup>79</sup> After the Father anoints the Son, the angels continue to sing, "Thee Father ... omnipotent, / Immutable, immortal, infinite, / Eternal king" (3.372-4). Father and Son, together, are king. The narrator relates how Satan, "high uplifted beyond hope, aspires / Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue / Vain war with heaven" (2.7-9).

aims, but to highlight *differences* between how the Father wants to rule and how Satan wants to rule. While the Father endorses merit and seeks to empower other selves, Satan is egotistical and actually seeks to degrade others.<sup>80</sup> Sin reminds Satan that she

with attractive graces won  
The most averse, thee chiefly, who full oft  
Thyself in me thy perfect image viewing  
Becam'st enamoured, (2.762-5)

Here, Milton places Satan and Sin in the role of Father and Son, respectively. While the Father, like Satan, sees an image of Himself in another individual, namely, the Son, He sees the Son as a separate, active entity, rather than a static already-“perfect” duplication of Himself.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, Satan's infatuation with the image of himself in Sin produces absolutism, through her subjection to his lust, rather than the individual agency that we saw in the Father and Son's relationship above.<sup>82</sup> Further, Satan and Sin parody the Father and Son's interpersonal relationship when Sin says, “I shall reign / At thy [Satan's] right hand voluptuous, as beseems / Thy daughter and thy darling, without end” (2.868-70).<sup>83</sup> While the Father interacts with the Son in terms of an intimate friendship, Sin interacts with Satan in terms of what she can offer him with her body (“right hand voluptuous”).<sup>84</sup> Death's birth, resulting from the violence of Satan's self-love with Sin, perverts the Father and Son's relationship by translating an act of creation (procreation or life) into an

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<sup>80</sup> The Father insists that the Son is “throned in highest bliss / Equal to God, and equally enjoying / Godlike fruition,” and that the Son “hast been found / By merit more than birthright Son of God” (3.305-7, 308-9).

<sup>81</sup> Addressing the Son, the Father says, “in whose hand what by decree I do, / Second omnipotence” (6.683-4).

<sup>82</sup> That Satan “took'st” joy in Sin, and “in secret” no less (2.765, 766), suggests that he actually rapes his daughter.

<sup>83</sup> There is some misogyny in the line “Thy daughter and thy darling.”

<sup>84</sup> The Father will spare the Son from His “bosom and right hand” (3.279).

act of destruction (Death itself). Additionally, while the Holy Spirit acts as a helpmate for the Son's and humanity's creative purposes on earth, Death creates conflict between selves by setting on the "yelling monsters" (2.795, but also see 2.804) that are conceived and born hourly from Sin.<sup>85</sup> Again, the Father as king relinquishes power to others. The differences between the two monarchies give us a clearer picture of God's project, which is not singular or absolute rule, but interpersonally achieved self-rule.

The physical multiplicity of God – that is, the Son is an external, separate manifestation of God, with whom the Father interacts interpersonally – shows that the self is 'more' with the other, by the essential equation that God the Son plus God the Father equates to God, and that God *is* God because of the Father and Son's loving relationship.<sup>86</sup> If, as Cefalu suggests, "God's nature defies predication and can only be apprehended in and through the enactings of love," or what he terms "[t]he very performance of love" (56), it is fitting that Milton chooses the grandest poetic form (epic) to illuminate the love that God has for humans through this dramatized, loving relationship between God the Father and God the Son. Epic is a distinctively social genre:

*Paradise Lost* suggests ... that individual choices of conscience, themselves the product of complicated psychological processes, can have far-reaching, indeed

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<sup>85</sup> The Spirit comes with the Son when He "create[s] new worlds" (7.209), and Michael tells Adam that the Father will send "a comforter" (that is, the Holy Spirit) and place it "within them" "[t]o guide them in all truth" (12.486, 488, 490).

<sup>86</sup> While Fallon notes Milton's "more unusual" denial of the doctrine of the Trinity (33), Chaplin comments on his Arian view that "the Son of God [is] a finite being ... whose exalted status depends on the will of the Father" (354). Fallon reads Milton as denying the Trinity. Kelley, in *This Great Argument: A Study of Milton's 'De Doctrina' as a Gloss upon 'Paradise Lost'* (Princeton, 1941), also argues for Milton's anti-trinitarianism. Kelley "maintains that the theology of the two documents is basically the same" (Arnold 70 [footnote 1]). These scholars are right to note such particularities, as they demonstrate that Milton's God is different from others' and thus of significant interest for analysis. I focus on the Son and Father's relationship for the sake of space, but the Holy Spirit also plays a role in this formulation. The Holy Spirit is more a part of the Son than the Father. In Milton's poem, the Father sends the Holy Spirit to be "with" or "within" other characters (7.165, 12.488), suggesting that it serves as a spiritual guide toward truth.

world-historical consequences. Private life is thus continuous with the public, political world; personal actions in one sphere reveal states of mind that have implications for and impact upon behavior in the other. (Quint 283)

An individual's personal actions have ramifications for others. Quint's *Epic and Empire* ends with Milton's poem as a kind of coda that challenges the genre's tendencies toward zero-sum games, in ways that resonate with my argument.<sup>87</sup> As a narrative poem, the epic does not just tell a story, but it also gives voice to a multitude of characters – including characters that normally do not speak in fictional works, such as God. The value of voice and dialogue in epic is made evident if we compare, for example, lines from *The Argument* for Book 3 with their corresponding inclusion in the poem proper:

The Son of God freely offers himself a ransom for man: the Father accepts him, ordains his incarnation, pronounces his Exaltation above all names in heaven and earth; commands all the angels to adore him; they obey, and hymning to their harps in full choir, celebrate the Father and the Son. (*The Argument* [Book 3])

What *The Argument* relates in six prose lines takes up one hundred and eighty-one lines in the poem itself, and of these lines, one hundred and eighteen are dialogue.<sup>88</sup> Further, though the Father is emotionless and seems almost dictatorial in *The Argument* (He “pronounces” and “commands,” and the angels “obey”), the poem proper reveals that during this narrative trajectory the Father also affectionately refers to the Son as His “sole

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<sup>87</sup> For example, Quint observes,

Milton follows Homer by portraying the undecideability of the heavenly war as the result of the hero's absence; and without the Son, the good and bad angels begin to look alike. But Milton also follows the pattern of Virgil's Actium and ascribes that undecideability – the possibility of endless strife and chaos – to the losers, the rebel angels who are not merely demonized but are literal demons. (48)

In this way, “[e]pic reaches here its farthest extreme from the impartiality for which Homer is famous, an impartiality that is also a sympathy for Greeks and Trojans alike” (Quint 48). Quint's book revolves around epic as the story of winners (not losers). Similar to my argument, Quint asserts that Milton's rendition of epic permits Adam and Eve's “hope and free choice to surface again after the Fall, to resist the notion that the Fall and its consequences are final and irreversible” (303).

<sup>88</sup> The one hundred and eighty-one lines that I refer to are found at 3.236-417.

complacency,” calls the Son’s (or man’s) life “dear life,” and tells the angels to honour the Son “as me” (3.276, 297, 343). This is to say, the dialogue in the poem not only provides a window for the reader into God’s emotional experience, but also reveals how characters influence, and are influenced by, their interactions with the other characters.

In *Paradise Lost*, the Son’s personhood allows the Father to express His love – through interactions with His separate, other self – for the Son and other selves.<sup>89</sup> While Fallon claims that the Son’s appeals on humans’ behalf in Book 3 mean “that the Father answer[s] to a real interlocutor,” that He is “coax[ed] ... into personality, into sociability, into narrative” (44), I suggest that the Father is far from needing any such coaxing into sociability because He is able to speak with humans when He is one with the Son. When God discusses with Adam the question of Adam’s solitude in the Garden, we witness Milton’s sleight of hand in making God one being.<sup>90</sup> This change suits his dramatic and narrative purposes. In this scene, we see God’s personal feelings about sociality surface. Even though the Father is, as I have showed, invisible, His union with the Son here – that

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<sup>89</sup> In his discussion of Traherne’s God, Cefalu notes, “God can, in some respect, give love to himself, add love to his existence, through the very process of giving it to another person with whom he shares, minimally, the same substance” (171).

<sup>90</sup> In *Paradise Lost*, God is most often two beings (Father and Son). In Book 7, lines 162-173 and 192-196, the Son enacts creation as the Word. The Son is the agent of the Father’s will and goodness. In line 519 in Book 7, the Father speaks to the Son and says, “Let us make now man in our image” (7.519). The phrase “our image” means that humans are made in the image of Father and Son, according to their individual personalities (as just and merciful, respectively). However, from Book 8, line 232 onward, the Creator is referred to as God. A variety of epithets are used in Book 8 for the Divine, but He is never referred to as Father, only God. In Book 8, the Father speaks of the Son as the one through whom He created the world. Milton’s sleight of hand in making God one being is in accordance with his claim in *De Doctrina Christiana*, namely, “For to Adam God stood less in relation of Father, than of Creator, having only formed him from the dust of the earth; whereas he was properly the Father of the Son made of his own substance” (377).

is, as *God* – permits Adam to see and speak with, that is, access, God temporarily.<sup>91</sup> With great emotion, God urges Adam to place himself in His shoes:

What think'st thou then of me, and this my state,  
Seem I to thee sufficiently possessed  
Of happiness, or not? who am alone  
From all eternity, for none I know  
Second to me or like, equal much less.  
How have I then with whom to hold converse  
Save with the creatures which I made, and those  
To me inferior, infinite descents  
Beneath what other creatures are to thee? (8.403-11)

Here, God not only appears surprisingly human, but He also discloses the singularity of His experience (“for none I know / Second to me or like, equal much less”).<sup>92</sup> While the Son is able to “hold converse” with the Father – we saw the Son do so in Book 3 – the Son, too, was “made” or created and is thus not self-identical to the Father, despite their apparent oneness in certain scenes.<sup>93</sup> Eve is similarly neither self-identical to Adam nor of

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<sup>91</sup> Regarding Adam’s communications with God, Arnold observes,

In heaven the Son is always distinguished from the Father, while in his dealings with man or the earth he is referred to as God or the Almighty. . . . Dramatically, Milton treats the Son as the God of the earth, but not as the God of heaven, who is so remote as to be completely inaccessible to man. (65)

<sup>92</sup> God appears human when He asks Adam to evaluate His happiness, or lack thereof, from His perspective and tells him that He is “alone” (8.405).

<sup>93</sup> In Book 3, the angels sing that the Son was begotten first of all creation: “Thee next they sang of all creation first, / Begotten Son, divine similitude” (3.383-4). Chaplin writes, “Milton conceives of the Son as a created being (‘the first of created things’) subject to time, change, and choice: ‘God begot the Son as a result of his own decree . . . within the bounds of time’” (360). He cites Milton’s *De Doctrina Christiana* (206, 209) as evidence for his claim. However, John Leonard points out that for more than a century critics misinterpreted the Father’s use of the word “begot” in Book 5, line 603 (“This day I have begot whom I declare [ / My only son,]” [5.603-4]) (393). Specifically, in 1926 Sir Herbert Grierson demonstrated that the word ‘begot’ “has the metaphorical sense ‘made him a king’” (Leonard 393). This sense of the word ‘begot’ aligns with Richard S. Ide’s interpretation of the word ‘begot’ in relation to Psalm 2:7:

[Milton,] I believe, intended that the ‘begetting’ in heaven be related to all three traditional interpretations of the psalm verse: it refers principally to the Father’s generation of the Son in his divine nature, by analogy to the Father’s generation of the Son in his human nature, and by implication to the metaphorical exaltation on the third day when, in heaven as on earth, the Son fulfills the purpose of his begetting. (146)

Ide continues, “What does occur at this moment in heaven is not the actual begetting of the Son, but the revelation of a prior begetting. The divine Son, literally begotten as Logos at the beginning of creation, is



the male sex. Nonetheless, both God and Adam show that “one cannot be a self on one’s own” (Taylor 36). Adam explains to God why he needs a human partner. He says, “By conversation with his like to help, / Or solace his defects” (8.418-9). His partner will be able to engage him in helpful dialogue because she will be “his like.” Further, she will provide him with consoling words so that he can live with his imperfections (“defects”). Throughout the poem, the Son is the Father’s “conversation partner” (Taylor 36). In Book 5, the Father addresses the Son with these words:

Son, thou in whom my glory I behold  
In full resplendence, heir of all my might,  
Nearly it now concerns us to be sure  
Of our omnipotence, and with what arms  
We mean to hold what anciently we claim  
Of deity or empire, such a foe  
Is rising, who intends to erect his throne  
Equal to ours, throughout the spacious north;  
Nor so content, hath in his thought to try  
In battle, what our power is, or our right.  
Let us advise, and to this hazard draw  
With speed what force is left, and all employ  
In our defence, lest unawares we lose  
This our high place, our sanctuary, our hill. (5.719-32)

The Father’s use of the plural “our” seven times, the plural “we” three times, and the plural “us” twice shows that He and the Son rule together, and that they find solace in

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now revealed to the angels as Christ, as anointed king and heir, the Logos’s superior rank by right and merit, as Abdiel will soon remind Satan” (146-7). According to Ide, the Father’s begetting of the Son before the angels marks “the revelation of a prior begetting” at a “secret” time (147). Indeed, in *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton asserts that the Son was created first: “Certain, however, it is, whatever some of the moderns may allege to the contrary, that the Son existed in the beginning, under the name of the logos or word, and was the first of the whole creation, by whom afterwards all other things were made both in heaven and earth” (375). The difficult question of whether or not the dialogic, but not-yet-Incarnated, Son was created or is co-extensive with the Father remains. I do not think that we need to solve something that Milton obviously wants to leave undisclosed and flexible.

working side-by-side (“our sanctuary” succeeds “our high place”).<sup>94</sup> However, the Son is actually able to contribute to the Father’s evolving self because He upholds a separate perspective and is thus not subsumed by His Father. The Son asserts self-control over His future as Incarnated Jesus while also acknowledging the Father as the original source of His power to act in the world. He tells the Father, “by thee I live” and “by thee raised I ruin all my foes” (3.244, 258).<sup>95</sup> Once the Son performs these actions, the Father will change. The Son says, “wrath shall be no more / ... but in thy presence joy entire” (3.264-5). This reading of Milton’s Son as an individual – an entity that possesses agency separate from the Father’s will – is not often discussed.<sup>96</sup> The examples above demonstrate that God is expressed in the communion of God the Father and God the Son.

Milton’s idea of the soul, as expressed in the Father and Son’s communion, might be read as more of an expansion than oneness, which is a different interpretation of the one-soul trope. Selleck’s reading of Donne’s “The Ecstasy” is instructive in terms of its similar focus on the positive additions that the other self brings to the relationship between self and other. In other words, Donne’s poem also explores the idea that the self is a better version of itself on behalf of its other(s). Selleck writes that the poem “resists the possibility of complete merger in th[e] one-soul trope, holding onto the more complex sense of two persons,” such that “[t]he interest ... is not so much in *oneness* as in

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<sup>94</sup> It is less likely that God is using the conventional royal “we,” since He also uses the collective “our” and “us.”

<sup>95</sup> The Son also uses the active “I” eight times in thirty-nine lines of dialogue (see 3.227-65).

<sup>96</sup> The exception is Bond’s book, *Spenser, Milton, and the Redemption of the Epic Hero*. Bond emphasizes the Son’s free will and developing agency in Book 3, when He offers His life for humans:

If the Son’s first triumphs demonstrate his loyalty and competence, his offer to ‘Account me man’ (PL 3.238) demonstrates his freely willed ‘immortal love’ and ‘Filial obedience’ (PL 3.267, 269). His choice thus presents him as an autonomous character, capable of making his own decisions, than as a straightforward extension of his Father’s will. (175)

*expansion*” (5). While Selleck is discussing “The Ecstasy,” the following comment that she makes applies equally well to my interpretation of Milton’s idea of the soul: “[Donne invokes] a multiplication rather than a mere union of selves in love, suggesting ... a sense of the growth or complexity that comes with attachment – a continual reminder that each of the lovers becomes subject and object” (164). Selleck also concludes from Donne’s poem that “the recognition of the other’s separateness (or subjectivity) is what most profoundly signals the real *tie* [between self and other] ... as opposed to a stance either of holding the other at bay or of subsuming the other within the self” (164). Likewise, the intimate fellowship between God the Father and God the Son in my reading is founded on not just their mutuality, but also their individuality. In *Paradise Lost*, the Son does not simply help the Father grow; the Father also helps the Son mature as an individual. For example, the Father does not make the Son judge humanity until Book 10, when He says, “Vicegerent Son, to thee I have transferred / All judgment” (10.56-57). Earlier, in Book 3, the Son says that *the Father* is “judge / Of all things made” (3.154-5). My contention that the Father not only evolves, but also helps His other self, the Son, develop diverges from what has been said by other critics about the Father, namely, that He is unable to change.<sup>97</sup> Selleck’s work on Donne’s idea of the soul is edifying for my reading of

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<sup>97</sup> For example, Fallon observes,

The more Milton shows God speaking and acting, the more apparent become the things he cannot do: he cannot die; he cannot suffer; ultimately, *he cannot change*. Whereas Adam, Eve, Satan, and even the Son are all capable of transformation – as demonstrated by the two Falls on the one hand and the Son’s ascent ‘[b]y merit more than birthright’ on the other – the Father is bound by his nature [for example, as omniscient and omnipotent] to always remain the same (*PL*, 3.309). (45-46; italics mine)

He contends that the Father has received less attention from readers precisely because He is “armoured against [life in narrative]” (Fallon 47). Fallon writes, “The fact that Satan and the Son are fully equipped for life in narrative [that is, they can change] while the Father is armored against it may explain why the former have proven so attractive to readers, and why the Father has not” (47). This reading is exactly the opposite

Milton's idea of the soul, as it reveals that Milton's poem prioritizes self-growth and complexity in Son and Father.<sup>98</sup>

For Milton, plurality constitutes the self. God is, as we have seen, multiple in more ways than one. God is 'bad' but fundamentally good; He is manifested in the communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit because selfhood is embedded in multiplicity, or the ongoing negotiation of self and others.<sup>99</sup> God is God the Father plus God the Son in order to reveal to readers that selfhood is predicated on one's reciprocal involvement with others. Catherine Keller employs a particularly valuable diction when discussing the confrontation between self and other. She says that the encounter "directly involves, enfolds, [or] implicates" the self (Keller 217). The word "enfolds" might remind us of the lines where Milton describes the Father unfolding before the Son. After the Father decides that the Son will "judge man fallen" (10.62), the narrator relates,

So spake the Father, and unfolding bright  
Toward the right hand his glory, on the Son  
Blazed forth unclouded deity; he full  
Resplendent all his Father manifest  
Expressed, (10.63-67)

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of my own. I maintain that the Father's nature *is* to evolve. Indeed, Fallon's argument loses a bit of weight when we recall that the Father says "our omnipotence" in His address to the Son in Book 5 (5.722). If the Son is omnipotent like the Father, then the Son is also unfit for "life in narrative" (that is, unable to change); however, Fallon has already conceded that "*even* the Son [changes]" (italics mine). If even the Son can change, then why is it that the Father cannot? Victoria Silver also argues that Milton's God is unchanging: "But from the beginning of the poem Milton has done everything possible to make us realize that within his universe nothing is self-sufficient and immutable except God" (376).

<sup>98</sup> Both the Son and Father are judges, for example, but under different circumstances and with different priorities – for instance, mercy versus justice, respectively.

<sup>99</sup> I say that God is 'bad' but fundamentally good with respect to the two major tenets of my argument for this chapter. First, God's original creation is good, but evil is always possible (which makes God look 'bad') because first, God defends His creatures' freedom to choose and second, God evolves into the best version of Himself over time, namely, through the relationships that He has (with the Son and humanity).

These lines convey a deeply positive connotation for the experience of interpersonal selfhood as something that embraces, as in a physical embrace, or doubles, as in ‘more’ instead of ‘less,’ the self rather than threatening or annihilating the self. The Father’s bright blazing on the Son does not make the Son blaze too, which would merely be a reflection, but instead, the Son is “full / Resplendent” and expresses, indeed “manifest[s],” the Father. This “constitutive sociality” between Father and Son is, in Keller’s words, “an actualization itself enfolding and unfolding its own relation” (217). Each fold “becomes a tangle when it doubles” (Keller 153) because each other-self encounter reveals indivisible plurality rather than self-sameness. The pronoun “he” in line 65 (10.65) is not explicitly identified until the next line, demonstrating the intimate tangling between Father and Son, while at the same time, the careful enjambment in these lines maintains the sense of their separate, plural existences.

### **A Fuller Realization of God as God: God’s Need for the Son and Humanity**

As we saw in the last section, plurality in *Paradise Lost* does not remove individual subjectivity, but rather nurtures it through the reciprocal growth that is the principal feature of loving, interpersonal relationships. This section examines the specific subjectivity of what has been referred to by Rambuss as the “ultimate Other,” namely, God (523). God the Father needs both God the Son and humanity to express an idea of Himself as fully actualized.<sup>100</sup> Oliver suggests that “[it] is an obligation to acknowledge

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<sup>100</sup> Paris goes so far as to claim that God is needy: “God is himself a needy being with turbulent emotions, and the humans he has created in his image are similarly unstable” (67).

my dependence on others and otherness for my sense of myself as *I*, as a subject or agent” (208). Because subjectivity and agency are granted through loving, self-other interactions, the self is defined by self-insufficiency. Milton provides readers with a wonderful metaphor of this concept of relationships in Raphael’s education of Adam in Book 8. Adam asks why nobler heavenly bodies such as the sun should seem to serve “this earth, a spot, a grain, / An atom, with the firmament compared” (8.17-18). Raphael replies that the sun’s “virtue on itself works no effect, / But in the fruitful earth; there first received / His beams, unactive else, their vigour find” (8.95-97). This self-insufficiency also applies to God the Father. Similar to the sun’s bright beams, the Father’s virtue as Maker “on itself works no effect” but “[its] vigour find[s]” when He gives this virtue to His Son and human beings. We are told that when the Almighty spake, “His word [the Son], the filial Godhead, gave effect” (7.175), and that the Father says to humanity, “Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth, / Subdue it, and throughout dominion hold” (7.531-2). The Father’s command that Adam and Eve “fill” the earth, hold dominion “throughout” the earth, and also “[s]ubdue” the earth shows that the created world requires humans’ active contribution. The Father truly needs both the Son and humanity to actualize His purpose.

### **God’s Need for the Son and Humanity: How the Son Creates a Fuller Realization of God**

One way in which God the Son creates a fuller realization of God the Father – and therefore a fuller realization of God, who is, as I have been arguing, understood through the Son and Father’s relationship – is by tempering the Father’s emotions. Quite different

from Satan, whose name is Hebrew for “accuser” (Wright 45), the Son aims to preserve His Father’s honour while encouraging Him to choose love over vainglory.<sup>101</sup> In contrast to the “[m]any readers [who] have thought that God has ‘an evil side’” (Leonard 496), I abstain from suggesting that the Father without the Son is evil and, instead, assert that Milton’s Father, and thus God, is simply obscured or not as fully realized without the Son. The Son is not a better version of the Father; rather, the Son enriches the Father through their intimate interactions. Milton’s Father needs the Son to help Him preserve His greatness or honour and realize His goodness or love.<sup>102</sup> We see the Father and Son’s agreement about God’s (really, *their*) purpose for fallen humanity in the following lines: “To whom the Father, without cloud, serene. / All thy request for man, accepted Son, / Obtain, all thy request was my decree” (11.45-47). The Son does not argue with the Father; rather, the Son simply expresses the Father’s decrees. However, the Father and Son’s “harmony” actually reveals God. In Book 3, the Son states,

For should man finally be lost, should man  
Thy creature late so loved, thy youngest son  
Fall circumvented thus by fraud, though joined  
With his own folly? that be from thee far,  
That far be from thee, Father, who art judge  
Of all things made, and judgest only right. (3.150-5)

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<sup>101</sup> Etymologically, ‘Satan’ also means “adversary.” Milton often uses this word as a designation for Satan (see 2.629 and 9.947). I want to thank Daniel Shore for pointing out this etymology (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

<sup>102</sup> Notably, the angels also preserve God’s honour. In Book 8, Raphael says to Adam, “But us he sends upon his high behests / For state, as sovereign king, and to enure / Our prompt obedience” (8.238-40). In his edition of *Paradise Lost*, Merritt Y. Hughes notes that “For state” means “to preserve the dignity of God’s state, for his honor,” and that “enure” means “[to] discipline, train” (190 [footnote for 8.239]). Not only do the angels maintain God’s honor, but they also, just like human beings, must practice obedience to God. However, while the angels preserve God’s honour in heaven, humans preserve God’s honour on earth.

Here, it is as if the first “that be from thee far” is the Son’s personal acknowledgement of what He will not do on the Father’s behalf.<sup>103</sup> The change in wording is emphatic, since the Son is in some sense advocating for human beings themselves. The Son’s repeated “[t]hat far be from thee” is used to temper the Father’s anger.<sup>104</sup> He appears to ask the Father this: will you hold true to your word (that is, in offering grace to “man”), or will you change your mind and actually let Satan win? The Son poses significant, but clearly rhetorical, questions to the Father. The Son says, “So should thy goodness and thy greatness both / Be questioned and blasphemed without defence” (3.165-6). The astute reader will notice that Milton does not include a question mark at the end of line 166. Crosman notes that “the Son knows that God [the Father] will not let evil overwhelm good” (75). The Son’s questioning reveals the Father’s essential goodness to both the Father and the reader.

God the Son also creates a fuller realization of God the Father, and thus God, through His affirmation of the Father’s authority and divine justice. The Son not only considers and accepts the Father’s justice, but He also carries out or expresses, through His nature as personified Word, a loving justice for human beings. When the Son says to His Father, “[Thou] art judge / Of all things made, and judgest only right” (3.154-5), He confirms the Father’s authority and reveals that the Father’s judgement is linked with His

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<sup>103</sup> The succeeding variation of the phrase “that be from thee far” (3.153) is clearly addressed to the Father.

<sup>104</sup> My claim diverges from the dominant reading, which is (as Daniel Shore shared with me) that this conversation between the Father and Son occurs as an opportunity for the Son freely to demonstrate His compassion and heroic self-sacrifice (personal communication, November 11, 2022). God manipulates here with the goal of creating choices for the Son, so that He can practice and by that means merit His goodness (Daniel Shore, personal communication, November 11, 2022). For instance, for Irene Samuel, the lines, “that be from thee far, / That far be from thee, Father” (3.153-4), show the Son arguing, such that “[i]n Milton’s Heaven the independent being speaks his own mind, not what he thinks another would like to hear” (604).



own judgement.<sup>105</sup> While I disagree with Desmond M. Hamlet's claim that "God's righteousness or justice is most fully expressed [in the Son]," I do agree with his subsequent assertion, which is as follows: "[T]o understand the person and function of the Son is to understand the nature of God's justice, and to appreciate the nature and function of God's justice we must first appreciate the person and function of the Son" (35).<sup>106</sup> While the Son accepts the Father's justice, He garners glory through love.<sup>107</sup> He says to the Father, "I for his [man's] sake will leave / Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee / Freely put off, and for him lastly die" (3.238-40). The Son's decision to leave the Father's bosom confirms the Father's just rule and re-doubles the Father's love by extending it from the Son to humans as well.

Indeed, God the Son brings God the Father into a relationship with humanity by articulating the Father's love in terms that humans can perceive.<sup>108</sup> In turn, God the Father is actualized as God (that is, God the Father plus God the Son). The Father's position as light that cannot be seen means that in order for Him to communicate with His creatures in a way that He might be understood, the Son needs to act as mediator; indeed, in Book 3, the angels' song makes it clear that the Son alone makes the Father visible:

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<sup>105</sup> One cannot read the word "right" (3.155) without visualizing the Son seated at the "right hand" (3.279) of the Father.

<sup>106</sup> I have been arguing that God's justice is "most fully expressed" through the Father and Son's relationship.

<sup>107</sup> I want to thank Daniel Shore for pointing out to me that the Son gains glory through His willing sacrifice for humanity (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

<sup>108</sup> The Father's invisibility is established when, addressing the Father, the angels chant, "Fountain of light, thyself invisible / Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sit'st / Throned inaccessible" (3.375-7). Since the God of heaven is "completely inaccessible to man" (Arnold 65), the Son acts as mediator for the angels in heaven and for humans on earth, so that they have indirect access to the God of heaven. For Arnold, "It is not enough that the champion be a mere representative from God like Raphael and Michael. He must *be* God from man's point of view, and hence, exalted in power and glory, or as Henry More described him early in the eighteenth century, '... the *divine intellect* as it is communicable to humane souls'" (67).

Begotten Son, divine similitude,  
In whose conspicuous countenance, without cloud  
Made visible, the almighty Father shines,  
Whom else no creature can behold; (3.384-7)

The Son makes the Father, or at least an image of Him (“similitude”), approachable for angels.<sup>109</sup> However, we should also attend to the Son’s role as mediator between God and humanity, since past philosophers’ “horror of mediation” obscured the reality that “the absolute’s relatedness to these [ostensibly] inferior modes [that is, anything outside itself] was proclaimed by the very terms through which it was distinguished from them” (Seigel 395).<sup>110</sup> The Son reminds us “that ‘other’ means more than just difference,” that “it also refers to similarity, to more of the same” (Selleck 4). In *Paradise Lost*, the Son is not ‘other’ to the Father, but the Father’s other self, His “divine similitude” (3.384). Though the Son is more similar to the Father than different, He is a unique individual. Moreover, through His relationship with the Father, the Son not only interprets God for humans, but He also interprets the Father *for* the Father, so that God the Father and the Son, as one, might realize God.<sup>111</sup> It is essential for us to recognize, as Merrill has, that “God’s revelation of Himself through the medium of man [both the Son and humanity, I suggest] ... does not cut God down to human size but opens to the human imagination His

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<sup>109</sup> Arnold observes, “Even before assuming his role as man’s accessible God, the Son seems to function as a kind of accessible God for the angels. ... The cloud which surrounds the Father and makes him invisible to the angels does not obscure the countenance of the Son” (67). The Son’s function “as a kind of accessible God for the angels” prior to His function as a kind of accessible God for humans emphasizes that angels and human beings are related to each other by degree, in particular, degrees of closeness to the God of heaven.

<sup>110</sup> Seigel observes Hegel’s predecessors’ (for example, Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling) “revulsion against conceiving the absolute as operating or developing by way of anything outside itself” (395).

<sup>111</sup> God the Father, like the turtle that needs to see itself as being seen by/interpreted by others in order to have a self, needs to see Himself as seen by/interpreted by the Son.

ineffable magnitude” (54). In other words, aspects of the human condition – for example, our interpersonal model of selfhood – are the means to realize God on earth.

Consequently, the Son has a dual imaginative purpose, which is to express God more clearly, or fully, through 1) His relationship with God the Father and 2) His relationship with humanity. Moreover, just as we cannot know ourselves in isolation, God “is not self-transparent” (Cefalu 102). The Son not only moderates the Father’s “glorious brightness” (3.376) so that human beings can see Him, but He also provides a means for God the Father to see His full self.<sup>112</sup> The Father reflects, “Son in whose face invisible is beheld / Visibly, what by deity I am” (6.681-2). Just as humanity needs the Son to see the Father and understand God better, the Father needs the Son to realize God through His relationship with the Son.

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<sup>112</sup> The idea of God being too bright to be seen adequately by human eyes is a common trope in literature. For example, Eric Pyle notes, “The [*Divine*] *Comedy* consistently employs this metaphor, describing the overwhelming perfection of God’s presence in the vocabulary of light too bright for eyes to endure. The first instance of this trope is in the second canto of the *Purgatory*” (60). Of course, the Bible also includes references to humans’ inability to behold God:

As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so *was* the appearance of the brightness round about. This *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw *it*, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake. (*Authorized King James Version*, Ezek. 1.28)

and

Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, *and stood* over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD’S glory. (Ezek. 10.4)

In *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton observes, “When we speak of knowing God, it must be understood with reference to the imperfect comprehension of man; for to know God as he really is, far transcends the powers of man’s thoughts, much more of his perception” (365). Milton then cites the Bible as evidence for humans’ “imperfect comprehension”:

Timothy 6:16, ‘dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto.’ God therefore has made as full a revelation of himself as our minds can conceive, or the weakness of our nature can bear. Exodus 33:20, 23, ‘there shall no man see me, and live . . . but thou shalt see my back parts.’ Isaiah 6:1, ‘I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.’ John 1:18, ‘no man hath seen God at any time.’ 6:46, ‘not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.’ 5:37, ‘ye have neither heard his voice at any time.’ I Corinthians 13:12, ‘we see through a glass, darkly . . . in part.’ (*De Doctrina Christiana* 365-6)

In *Paradise Lost*, the Son perceives the Father's greatness and goodness, and tries to magnify these aspects. We must not neglect "[t]he Son's significance as the very *expression* of the Godhead" (Hamlet 137); indeed, without the Son, the Father and, by extension, God, is without agency. During the creation of heaven and earth, the Father says, "And thou my word, begotten Son, by thee / This I perform, speak thou, and be it done" (7.163-4). The Son interprets the Father's intent and then translates it into action. Further, He receives the Father's love so that humans can, in turn, interpret God's nature. The narrator relates how the Father "on his son with rays direct / Shone full, he [the Son] all his father full expressed / Ineffably into his face received" (6.719-21). The Son's role as mediator between the Father and humans as well as His magnification of the Father's greatness and goodness permits a fuller realization of God as God: a being that loves and can be loved in return.

### **God's Need for the Son and Humanity: How Humanity Creates a Fuller Realization of God**

The Father's need for the Son, who is both God and Logos, points to God's need for that other inheritor of language, namely, humanity. The Father's identity is created, in part, through the recognition that He receives from human beings. In particular, the Father, and thus also God, rejects strict obedience; for Him, His sense of Himself as honourable Father derives from His creatures' self-willed, vocalized honouring of Him. Thus, "God seems to undergo a process of subjectivization akin to some of the experiences of any common religious subject" (Cefalu 27). God the Father's need to be

recognized by humans as their God – to be honoured voluntarily as such – reveals that God has some human-like needs, since He, too, possesses the desire for another being to recognize His identity.<sup>113</sup> Humans’ “voluntary service” (5.529) confirms the Father’s honour. During the period, “defamation had such gravity both as sin and crime ... because ... [it] was a world in which each person entrusted his identity to the words others spoke about him” (Shuger, *Censorship* 161). Not only does the Father entrust the portrayal of His identity to God the Son, who speaks on His account, but He also, by logical extension, entrusts His sense of self to humans. In terms of Erving Goffman’s “chain of ceremony,” “each individual is responsible for the demeanor image of himself [his public identity] and the deference image of others,” so that the self is a result of “joint ceremonial labor” (493).<sup>114</sup> Goffman’s “chain of ceremony” applies to *Paradise Lost* in the sense that it emphasizes interdependence between self and other. The self “not only encounters and responds to the other, [but] it [also] emerges through the conceptual framework of the other” (Selleck 4). Milton’s decision to dramatize the Father and the Son as persons encourages us to heed the reality that “[the self] is constituted not in ... [its] own inward experience but in ... its outward manifestation” – that is, in others’ “experience” of the self (Selleck 8). It is no wonder Milton stresses that the Son is the

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<sup>113</sup> Eve recognizes Adam’s identity as “head” in their relationship (4.443). She says to him, “I was formed flesh of thy flesh, / And without whom am to no end, my guide / And head, what thou hast said is just and right” (4.441-3). Compare to Paris, who argues, “He [God] craves glory not to compensate for a sense of deprivations . . . but to confirm his grandeur” (127). For Paris, “God creates others in order to satisfy his hunger for glory through their worship and free obedience, but once he does so he becomes emotionally vulnerable. Any failure of theirs to honor his claims calls his image of himself into question and fills him with inordinate rage” (127). I cannot agree with Paris’s subsequent claim that God has “an anger management problem” (127).

<sup>114</sup> “[T]he deference image of others” (Goffman 493) refers to one’s valuing of others’ dignity to the same extent as one’s own public identity.

expression of the Father for the benefit of humanity. Humans' recognition of the Son is, in part, an acknowledgement of the Father. Milton stresses the importance of this respect when Gabriel refers to the Father as "the acknowledged power supreme" (4.956).

From this it follows that the Father needs humanity's recognition of its own need for Him and His creation. *Paradise Lost* shows that human gratefulness gives both the Father and humanity the ability to know themselves and become their best selves. This is why variants of "ingrate" occur in the epic (3.97, 4.811, and 9.1164). The Father desires that humans serve Him simply by being grateful. Considering humanity's future, the Father reprimands, "ingrate, he [humanity] had of me / All he could have; I made him just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (3.97-99). Cefalu suggests that there is a reciprocal, and empowering, element to gratitude: "The infinitude of God's desires is matched by the infinitude of God's creatures' desires to make satisfaction. This redounds to the creatures' benefit" (166). The satisfaction of God's desires both "produces creaturely contentment" and makes explicit "God's dependence on creaturely desire" (Cefalu 166). In the absence of this mutual offering – that is, the Father makes humans "[s]ufficient" and humans express gratitude in acknowledgement of their need – the Creator and humans cannot be pleasingly empowered as active agents.<sup>115</sup> As the Father explains, "Where only what they [humans] needs must do, appeared, / Not what they would? What praise could they receive? / What pleasure I from such obedience paid" (3.105-7). Gratitude results in mutual joy and aligns with free will. Once God creates Eve for Adam, Adam responds,

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<sup>115</sup> I pick up on this idea of both God and humans being creators a bit later in this chapter.

This turn hath made amends; thou hast fulfilled  
Thy words, creator bounteous and benign,  
Giver of all things fair, but fairest this  
Of all thy gifts, nor enviest. I now see  
Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, myself  
Before me; woman is her name, of man  
Extracted; for this cause he shall forego  
Father and mother, and to his wife adhere;  
And they shall be one flesh, one heart, one soul. (8.491-9)

Adam delights in the Father's gift because Eve satisfies his need for comfort, conversation, and support in daily life. God's gift to Adam is empowering because, when he is with Eve, Adam learns about himself and how to relate to others. However, God is also empowered in the act of creating because He satisfies His creature's expressed need.

God the Father experiences emotional shifts – that is, He continually tempers His wrath – because of His need for human love. Since “[o]nly a lacking, vulnerable being is capable of love” (Žižek 115), and Milton's Father, as we have seen, expresses affective dependence on humanity, God knows Himself in part through the humans whom He loves and receives love from. God the Father needs His other other self – humans, in addition to the Son – in order to transcend what Cefalu refers to as His “self-alienation” (3). Unlike Cefalu, however, I do not read the Father as inherently ‘lacking’ in Himself so much as being incomplete or unrealized as a full self without the addition of human beings’ love.<sup>116</sup> Because God's essence is, as Cefalu maintains, “self-communicative love” (28),

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<sup>116</sup> I suggest that God can be incomplete without ‘lack’ in the sense that the Son and humanity help realize God, who is a perfect but evolving God. Perfection is not incompatible with evolution – God can be perfect and still evolve. An example of this is prelapsarian Adam and Eve, who are perfect but, nonetheless, still able to learn, grow, and develop in the Garden. Raphael tells Adam that God “created all / Such to perfection” (5.471-2), but both prelapsarian Adam and Eve learn in the Garden. In Book 5, Adam did

not ... let the occasion pass  
Given him by this great conference [with Raphael] to know  
Of things above his world, and of their being  
Who dwell in heaven, (5.453-6)

we realize that Milton's God necessarily seeks other selves with whom to communicate His love. In tandem with Charles M. Stang's understanding of God, in *Paradise Lost* "[o]ur ecstatic yearning after God" is "in response to God's ecstatic yearning after us" (169). In Book 10, "God / Approaching, thus to Adam called aloud. / ... / ... I miss thee here" (10.101-4). Adam and Eve are avoiding God because they are afraid that He will punish them for their nakedness. In the past, God and the human couple were equally excited to see and hear each other. God says, "My voice thou oft hast heard, and hast not feared, / But still rejoiced, how is it now become / So dreadful to thee?" (10.119-21). Milton reverses the biblical notion of humans calling out to God; here, *God* calls out to human beings, questioning why they are no longer ecstatic to see Him.<sup>117</sup> While Slavoj Žižek suggests that "[i]t is the very radical separation of man from God that unites ... [man] with God" (77), we have seen, specifically, that God's separation from humans exposes the vulnerable, but necessary, process of negotiating this gap through dialogic, self-other interactions. The Son is "[f]ound worthiest" because in Him "Love hath abounded" (3.310, 312). When the Father "unfold[s]" toward the Son, and the Son is then

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And earlier, in Book 4, Eve recalls how she "yielded [to Adam], and from that time see / How beauty is excelled by manly grace / And wisdom, which alone is truly fair" (4.489-91). Another example of how perfection is compatible with evolution is found in Traherne's poems from the *Dobell Folio* (1903), where God is less realized without humans. God needs humans and experiences through them. In Traherne's "The Anticipation," though God's "Essence Perfect was in all its Features," "No Joy could ever be / Were there no Want," and "he [God] these Joys did Need" (1.19, 73-74, 22). Traherne's speaker observes, "Then may He Benefit receiv [sic] from Things, / And be *not Parent only* of all Springs" ("The Anticipation," ll. 9-10). I want to thank Dr. Mary V. Silcox for recommending Traherne's poems in the *Dobell Folio* to me – in particular, "The Anticipation."

<sup>117</sup> Again, because Milton switches from the "the mild judge" (10.96) to "God" (10.101) in Book 10, I suggest that it is God Himself (that is, God the Father plus God the Son) who calls out to humanity. This is the just *and* merciful God. Paris also reads Milton's God as craving love and veneration – only, he talks about God's love in relation to the Son: "Like God, Adam craves love and veneration, and Eve provides these in abundance. He wants a companion who will think and feel as he does and do exactly what he wants; and he finds this in Eve, much as God finds it in the Son" (67).



“full / Resplendent all his father manifest / Expressed” (10.63, 65-67), the Father’s vulnerability in loving is experienced through a dramatic, interpersonal encounter by not just Father and Son, but also humans, who see the Son’s substantial expression of the Father’s love.

Further, the Father identifies human beings as His other other self because they embody His inward and outward image.<sup>118</sup> Milton aligns humanity’s inward and outward image with the Son’s inward and outward image. In terms of the former, the Son’s and human beings’ inner features emanate God’s inner love. While the Son’s “meek aspect / Silent yet spake, and breathed immortal love / To mortal men” (3.266-8), Eve “into all things from her air inspired / The spirit of love and amorous delight” (8.476-7). In terms of the latter, the Son’s and human beings’ physical brightness reflects God’s outer, praiseworthy glory; while the Father blazes forth on the Son’s aspect (see 10.64-65), even Satan observes how “lively shines / In them [Adam and Eve] divine resemblance” (4.363-4). As he dines with Adam, Raphael notes, “[F]or God on thee / Abundantly his gifts hath also poured / Inward and outward both” (8.219-21). Man’s inward and outward image are “gifts,” both from and for God; the human being is an addition to God’s glory rather than

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<sup>118</sup> According to Raphael, the Father says to the Son,  
Let us make now man in our image, man  
In our similitude, and let them rule  
Over the fish and fowl of sea and air,  
Beast of the field, and over all the earth,  
And every creeping thing that creeps the ground. (7.519-23)

Raphael continues, saying to Adam,  
he [God] formed thee, Adam, thee O man  
Dust of the ground, and in thy nostrils breathed  
The breath of life; in his own image he  
Created thee, in the image of God  
Express, and thou becam’st a living soul. (7.524-8)

a subtraction. We see that God “does not see the sinner but the merits and righteousness of His own perfect image” (Calvin in Lewalski 17) when we witness the Son,

[a]s father of his family ... clad  
Their [Adam and Eve's] nakedness with skins of beasts, or slain,  
Or as the snake with youthful coat repaid;  
And thought not much to clothe his enemies:  
Nor he their outward only with the skins  
Of beasts, but inward nakedness, much more  
Opprobrious, with his robe of righteousness,  
Arraying covered from his father's sight. (10.216-23)

The Son covers the couple's outward nakedness not because their physical nakedness is shameful after the Fall, but because “the air ... now / Must suffer change” (10.212-3) – winter is imminent. Only Adam and Eve believe that their outward image is corrupted. Their self-consciousness about their “inward nakedness” transfers inappropriately to their outward image. Adam and Eve's “inward nakedness,” however, *is* unsightly to the Father. Prior to the Fall, the narrator says that “[there] was not guilty shame, dishonest shame / Of nature's works, honour dishonourable” (4.313-4). Here, in Book 10, the couple embodies “honour dishonourable.” Their outward image remains – indeed, it always is – “honourable” because it is in God's image, but their inward image is “dishonourable” because their image of themselves is no longer in concert with God's perception of them. The Son covers their “inward nakedness,” which is “much more / Opprobrious,” from the Father because they have shamefully chosen to cover their outward, divine image. Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve's outward majesty is associated with brightness and divinity. Adam and Eve, “[i]n naked majesty seemed lords of all, / And worthy seemed, for in their looks divine / The image of their glorious maker shone” (4.290-2). Their perceived

inward darkness forces them to conceal their outward brightness, which disappoints God.

As with the Son, humans' outward brightness is meant to express God's divinity.

While we might read the Son's Incarnation as a kind of stooping toward the world of the flesh, *Paradise Lost* encourages the opposite reading. The epic favours the human form because it is a means of access to the world after time ends, when earth and heaven are interchangeable. Fallon notes Milton's endorsement of "accommodation," "the hermeneutic principle that God adjusts his revealed persona to human intellects" (37). This view, however, implies that God makes a sort of compromise for humanity. Instead, we should "accept the literal truth of passages in which God appears or acts like a human being" (Fallon 37), not only because "[God] desires [that] we should conceive [of Him]" this way (Milton, *De Doctrina Christiana* 366), but also because this reading reveals to us the ways in which the human form is unique, and thus indispensable, to God's purpose. Again, we read that humans will "open to themselves at length the way / Up hither, under long obedience tried, / And earth be changed to heaven, and heaven to earth" (7.158-60). Humans play a crucial role in the conversion of the earth into heaven. While God will change heaven to earth at the Final Judgement ("heaven to earth"), humans will, in the meantime, make a heaven on earth by sustaining God's good creation ("earth be changed to heaven").<sup>119</sup> Both actions are required to fulfill God's plan. Milton's comma in the

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<sup>119</sup> This partnership between God and humans finds further support in Milton's stress on mutual partnerships throughout *Paradise Lost*. While, as we saw earlier, the Father and Son work together, the quotation about God and humans also, simultaneously, suggests an important partnership between earth and heaven. In her discussion of the place of the Ptolemaic model of a concentric universe in the poem, McColley observes, "Milton sometimes retains this perspective, at least metaphorically, for the sake of its coherence, but he radically modifies it by his sense of process, his esteem for earth both as good in itself and as a means toward heaven, and his scriptural view of mutual help between partners who are 'heirs together of the grace of life' (1 Peter 3:7)" (*Milton's Eve* 36-37). In the quotation, "And earth be changed to heaven, and heaven to earth" (7.160), earth and heaven are mutual partners; in fact, the parallelism before

middle of the line (7.160) literally and figuratively unites the two transformations in creation. Early in the poem Adam tells Eve that they have daily work – unlike other creatures – because their lives are spiritually purposive:

other creatures all day long  
Rove idle unemployed, and less need rest;  
Man hath his daily work of body or mind  
Appointed, which declares his dignity,  
And the regard of heaven on all his ways; (4.616-20)

Humans need more rest than non-human animals because, if they are to declare God's dignity on earth, they must perform "daily work of body or mind." Further, the Son validates humanity's humble participation in God's will as an invaluable, human contribution.<sup>120</sup> His eventual Incarnation as Jesus stresses humility and vulnerability. The Son will leave the Father, put off His glory, and, ultimately, give up His life for humanity.

### **God's Need for the Son and Humanity: How the Son and Humanity Similarly Realize God**

God needs both the Son and humanity to create on His behalf; specifically, their work or labour keeps the good that God first created growing. No one can deny that for Milton work is an essential component of life. In *Paradise Lost*, he uses variants of the word 'work' – including "work," "works," and "working" – almost one hundred times.<sup>121</sup> While, as we will see, work for Milton encompasses both physical work and faithful 'works' of love, I want to turn first to the former. But even before that, I want to draw

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and after the comma, despite the shifted syntax, suggests that earth and heaven are – or at least can become – interchangeable.

<sup>120</sup> Human beings participate in God's will through their "long obedience" (7.159).

<sup>121</sup> Ninety-nine times is the precise number.

attention toward *Paradise Lost*'s original – even groundbreaking – focus on human beings' contribution to creation. Gordon Teskey observes, "Milton is the last major poet in the European literary tradition for whom the act of creation is centred in God and *the first* in whom the act of creation begins to find its center in the human" (5-6; italics mine). One major way in which humans contribute to creation is through choosing to labour, which is unique to human beings. However, since humans are free to choose what work they will perform in their daily lives, God does not sanction all human labour – especially not after the Fall. Michael says that God "oft descends to visit men / Unseen, and through their habitations walks / To mark their doings" (12.48-50). In one situation, the construction of the tower of Babel, Michael observes how God "[c]omes down to see their [humans'] city, ere the tower / Obstruct heaven towers" (12.51-52). God's "beholding" of the tower (12.50), and His decision to "[set] [u]pon their [the builders'] tongues a various spirit to rase / Quite out their native language, and instead / To sow a jangling noise of words unknown" (12.53-55), demonstrates that humans are held accountable for their actions on earth. Nicholas Thomas Wright remarks about the Christian faith, "[W]e are not called just to understand the problem of evil and the justice of God, but also to be part of the solution to it" (128). When humans choose not to understand the problem of evil, they lose any sense of understanding between themselves; in the case of the tower of Babel, "Forthwith a hideous gabble rises loud / Among the builders; each to other calls / Not understood" (12.56-58). It is fitting that, in their arrogance for not seeking to understand the problem of evil, the builders lose their capacity for understanding, which would be a divine height.

Milton's poem is built upon the belief that humans are accountable for their actions. A large part of the solution to the problem of evil is, for Wright and Milton, proper, humble, and heroic acts:

We are called to live between the cross and resurrection on the one hand and the new world [heaven on earth] on the other, and in believing in the achievements of the cross and resurrection, and in learning how to imagine the new world, we are called to bring the two together in prayer, holiness and action within this wider world. (Wright 128-9)

We see that this “action” on earth is what God calls for when He states, “My umpire conscience, whom if they [humanity] will hear, / Light after light well used they shall attain, / And to the end persisting, safe arrive” (3.195-7). Here, God stresses human beings’ ability to act in the world – their agency – and the human labour involved in persisting. The comma after “persisting” enacts, through caesura, the safe arrival of the hard-working human being in the kingdom of heaven. God reassures humanity that rest will ensue once the hard but necessary work on earth is fully performed. We see, in the continuous unfolding of Milton’s epic, Adam and Eve’s “developing capacity to respond creatively to God’s providential love, and therefore their potential for the renewal of that growth in the process of regeneration” (McColley, “Free Will” 107). Adam and Eve’s “potential for the renewal of ... growth” in other creatures, and in regard to God’s providential love, is best seen in Book 9. Adam and Eve’s “pleasant task” is “to tend plant, herb and flower” (9.207, 206), and, more significantly, Adam and Eve sustain God’s good work. Without Adam and Eve’s labour, “wanton growth derides / Tending [the foliage] to wild” (9.211-2). God’s good creation literally requires human hands.

In addition to their manual labour, however, God needs humanity's creative or image-bearing works. The Son, and Adam and Eve also, create on behalf of God by embodying His image in and throughout the created world.<sup>122</sup> Similar to how the Son is God's "agent to speak his creating Word" (Greenblatt 2067 [footnote 4]), Adam and Eve fulfill their role as God's exultant servants by continually creating in His name. They partake in God's divinity when they accept their role as creators, more specifically, when they heed God's "call to be stewards of creation" (Wright 127). As creators, Adam and Eve create songs of praise and Eve practices cookery.<sup>123</sup> Further, Adam and Eve are not

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<sup>122</sup> Early in the poem, Uriel names God "[t]he great work-master" (3.696).

<sup>123</sup> In Book 5, Adam and Eve praise God eloquently in both prose and verse:

they bowed adoring, and began  
Their orisons, each morning duly paid  
In various style, for neither various style  
Nor holy rapture wanted they to praise  
Their maker, in fit strains pronounced or sung  
Unmeditated, such prompt eloquence  
Flowed from their lips, in prose or numerous verse,  
More tuneable than needed lute or harp  
To add more sweetness, and they thus began. (5.144-52)

They then praise God from line 153 to line 208 (Book 5). Adam and Eve's praise for God is noted again in Book 9, from lines 192-200. We see Eve engaged in cookery in Book 5, just before and during Raphael's visit:

within [the bower], due at her hour prepared  
For dinner savoury fruits, of taste to please  
True appetite, and not disrelish thirst  
Of nectarous draughts between, from milky stream,  
Berry or grape: (5.303-7)

We also see Eve's creativity in cookery through Milton's use of the words "contrived" and "tempers" (5.334, 347) to describe her preparation of a meal for Raphael. The narrator relates how

So saying, with dispatchful looks in haste  
She [Eve] turns, on hospitable thoughts intent  
What choice to choose for delicacy best,  
What order, so contrived as not to mix  
Tastes, not well joined, inelegant, but bring  
Taste after taste upheld with kindest change,  
Bestirs her then ...

...

for drink the grape  
She crushes, inoffensive must, and meads  
From many a berry, and from sweet kernels pressed  
She tempers dulcet creams, nor these to hold

only “procreators,” in the sense that they have “[t]he extraordinary ability to bring forth new life,” for example, by begetting children (Wright 126), but also rightful rulers, “serving God and reigning on the earth,” because they are “equipped to reflect his [God’s] image into his creation” (Wright 139). Just as the Son creates the best version of the Father through His relationship with the Father, which holds the Father accountable for His actions, Adam and Eve guide each other toward the development of their best or most divine selves by supporting each other’s virtuous actions and shaming each other’s erroneous actions. In Book 9, Adam warns Eve,

Subtle he [Satan] needs must be, who could seduce  
Angels, nor think superfluous others’ aid.  
I from the influence of thy looks receive  
Access in every virtue, in thy sight  
More wise, more watchful, stronger, if need were  
Of outward strength; while shame, thou looking on,  
Shame to be overcome or over-reached  
Would utmost vigour raise, and raised unite. (9.307-14)

As Adam emphasizes, “others’ aid” is not “superfluous.” The presence of other selves forces us to hold ourselves accountable for how we behave. In this way, Adam and Eve contribute to each other’s self-creation. In *Areopagitica* (1644), Milton stresses that while “‘the performance’ is God’s, ... the will and the endeavour is ‘theirs’ [humans’] as they serve as ‘mediators’ for God’s ‘signes’ and ‘actions’” (qtd. in Loewenstein 37). While God created Adam and Eve and made them sufficient to live and reign on earth, it is Adam and Eve’s responsibility to put their abilities to work through their relationships.

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Wants her fit vessels pure, then strews the ground  
With rose and odours from the shrub unfumed. (5.331-49)



For Milton, the Son and humanity are signifiers of the Signified (God Himself). I maintain not only that in *Paradise Lost* humanity creates a fuller realization of God, but also that Milton critiques traditional biblical typology by conceiving a new type – what I am going to call the ‘super-type.’<sup>124</sup> Firstly, if God is, as I continue to argue, really God the Son plus God the Father, then, by extension, Milton also enfolds humanity into the equation.<sup>125</sup> The Son will become God and Man. Secondly, if a type foreshadows something greater in the future, namely, the anti-type, then a super-type would share common attributes distinct from the type and the anti-type. In other words, the super-type is connected to both the type and the anti-type. For example, humanity itself might be called a super-type because it shares attributes with Adam (a type) and the Son (Adam’s anti-type) that are distinct from each other. The human race is born from Adam and Eve, but humans are also, as we will see, linked to the Son, as signs, unequivocally. Compare Book 7’s depiction of humanity with Book 10’s description of the Son, where “in his [God’s] own image he / Created thee [Adam, but also all humans], in the image of God / Express” (7.526-8) and “[on the Son, the Father] Blazed forth unclouded deity; he full / Resplendent all his father manifest / Expressed” (10.65-67). Milton’s language shows, through parallelism, that humanity and the Son are to be read as *analogous* beings in that they both “express” his God.<sup>126</sup> Milton’s depiction of humanity and the Son as analogous

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<sup>124</sup> I would like to acknowledge Dr. Silcox here. She was the first, to my knowledge, to use this wonderful phrase. Silcox mentioned it in one of her lectures (Fall 2018) for the course *IC06A: A History of English Literature* at McMaster University, in Hamilton, Ontario. She has kindly approved my use of it in this chapter.

<sup>125</sup> In *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton writes, “His [the Son’s] nature is twofold, divine and human” (391).

<sup>126</sup> Ide argues that heavenly time and earthly time are analogous and continuous:

Separately, each defines time as Christocentric; but as heavenly time is made to anticipate earthly time, together they define time as a progressive revelation – first to the angels, then to men – of the Father in the person of the Son. Books 5 and 6 encapsulate all time, heavenly and earthly, from the

beings shows that while the Son is mediator in heaven, humans are mediators on earth. Indeed, Gregory Chaplin claims that the angels, the Son, and humanity share “ontological continuity” (359) because they possess a debt that is owed to the Creator.<sup>127</sup> Chaplin points out that all three “can be active, heroic servants of God the Father” (359). What Chaplin misses in his observation, however, is the following: if the Son is a servant of God, and also a part of God – His other self, as I claim – and the Son and humanity are analogous beings, then God serves humanity in some way as well. In Book 10, when the Son clothes fallen Adam and Eve, He is described precisely as a servant. The narrator says, “Thenceforth the form of servant to assume, / As when he washed his servants’ feet so now / As father of his family” (10.214-6). Further, a few lines later the Son purposefully covers the human couple’s inward nakedness “from his Father’s sight” (10.223). Here, the Son acts like a kind servant, looking out for His human ‘masters’ so that their superior, God the Father, will not punish them.<sup>128</sup> Humanity is a super-type

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begetting of the divine Son in heaven through the Incarnation and Redemption on earth to the eschatological promise at the end of time, thus manifesting the grand providential design in which the regenerate Christian participates. (142)

If “heavenly events mirror Christian history on earth” (Ide 141), then the Son’s actions in heaven mirror Adam’s (and Eve’s) Christian actions on earth.

<sup>127</sup> Chaplin writes,

He [Milton] expresses a profound sense of debt to God: he is fully aware of himself ‘as a creature, something made, circumscribed, finite,’ who has an obligation to refine and perfect himself as an instrument of God’s glory (Rumrich qtd.). But it is a debt that he owes to the creator, not the redeemer, and an obligation that all created beings share. Thus, this debt foregrounds ontological continuity, placing human beings – and Milton in particular – in the same category as the angels and the first created being, the Son of God. (359)

<sup>128</sup> The Son as servant in this scene of the poem actually foreshadows His Incarnation, where He will also adopt the form of a servant:

The revelation of Christ’s divinity on earth, one recalls, was a life-long process that began at the Nativity and was crowned at the Resurrection; for, as Calvin observes, ‘whereas he was humbled before, hauing taken as it were the forme of a seruant, he did then [that is, at the Resurrection] appeare to be the conqueror of death & the Lord of life, so that he wanted nothing of the maiesty which was meet for the son of god.’ (Ide 151)

because it shares attributes with Adam (humans are born from Adam and Eve) and the Son (humans are linked with the Incarnated Jesus as signs that can express God).

Milton's poem about God and humanity, and their mutual participation in creation, invites readers to see that "identity is constituted intersubjectively" (Oliver 4), that interpersonal existence is a *sine qua non* for all selves – both earthly and divine beings – in the sense that the self is not itself without the other self.<sup>129</sup> As Crosman discerns, God is "[f]ar from being exempt from change," since "[He] himself submits to a process of evolution" (83). However, while Crosman reads this "evolution" as God the Father ultimately giving way to God the Son, and the Son, in turn, giving way to the "all in all" that Milton mentions in line 341 of Book 3 (3.341), I read this evolution as taking place within *Paradise Lost's* narrative, in the on-going intimate space of the loving relationships that are nurtured between both God the Father and God the Son, and God the Son and God's youngest creation, humanity. There is, as Ira Clark reiterates from William Whittaker's work, "a potency inherent in the interaction between referents" (13). Clark writes,

Citing Canaan as referring to both the country and also the kingdom of heaven, he [Whittaker] describes the potent interpretative interaction he sees in a type: When we proceed from the sign to the thing signified, we bring no new sense, but only bring out into light what was before concealed in the sign. When we speak of the sign by itself, we express only part of the meaning, and so also when we mention only the thing signified: but when the mutual relation between the sign and the

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<sup>129</sup> This idea that identity was thought to be constructed represents a whole line of criticism working against the opposing idea of the autonomous self (propounded by René Descartes), which was thought to be created within and not having anything to do with anyone else. Gregerson suggests that humanity and the Divine participate mutually in each other as part of "a reformatory project":

In the cosmos Raphael describes, the labor of human love is itself a reformatory project, a progressive perfection of the divine lineaments lodged in human flesh, 'the scale / By which to heav'nly Love thou may'st ascend' (VIII 591-2). The progress is digressive and incremental, a refinement in obedience, which is to say, in likeness: its perceptual footholds are the self in the other ('my Self / Before me,' VIII 495-96) and the Other in the self. (184)

thing signified is brought out, then the whole complete sense, which is founded upon this similitude and agreement, is set forth. (13-14)

The mechanics of the relationship between the sign and the signified in typology, as explained by Clark and Whittaker, sound much like the relationship that we see between God the Father and God the Son in *Paradise Lost*. They also clarify the significance of the interpersonal relationship between Father and Son, where “the whole complete sense” of Milton’s God is brought out only through mutual relation, which is founded upon similitude and agreement. The Son’s “similitude” to and “agreement” with His Father expresses their “mutual relation.” As Joseph A. Galdon suggests, “biblical typology is more than simply biblical exegesis, a method of interpreting scripture which relates persons and events as type and anti-type, shadows and fulfillments of each other” (5). It is, additionally, a means to see that human signs – the Son and humanity – “[participate] in God’s ongoing self-revelation” (Perry 137) and, further, that “[t]he whole action [of *Paradise Lost*] is played out as a drama of signs” (Stocker 84). When Adam asks Raphael to “unfold” knowledge of the Father’s “eternal empire,” he says that he asks this with the aim “[t]o magnify his [God’s] works” (7.94, 96, 97). Adam seeks to enlarge God’s good works and, moreover, “to bring [them] out into light” (Clark 13) or reveal them to others.

### **Humans’ Involvement in God’s Purpose**

Humans’ willing and willed participation in God is required not only for a fuller realization of God as an evolving being, but also for the divine purpose to be carried out and, at long last, fulfilled. However, God’s goodness is conditional, in that good only continues as such on account of humans’ loving relationship with God. Humanity must,

as Milton stresses, “persevere” (5.525, 7.632) as God’s “faithful labourers,” to borrow the title of John Leonard’s reception history of *Paradise Lost*, so that evil recedes. Prior to the Fall, accomplishment is recognized as inherently a part of Adam and Eve’s identity. In Book 4, Adam reveals that Eve’s achievements are one with her nature. He states that she is “[d]aughter of God and man, accomplished Eve” (4.660). Eve’s accomplishments in part make her the “[d]aughter of God and man.” As McColley points out, “Milton’s Paradise is not a place of languorous idleness but one that elicits deep feeling, hard thinking, and active accomplishment” (*Milton’s Eve* 103). When Eve tends to nature, she is also tending to herself; thus, without her loving, creating hands, abundance in the Garden “falls to the ground” (4.731). Humanity must keep itself growing good. Though made “perfect” and “good” (5.524, 525), humanity is “not immutable” (5.524), so goodness, and God’s plan, can either *still* unfold or collapse. Milton makes the difficulty and importance of this endeavour plain when Adam mentions it in the final book (Book 12). Adam says that he and his progeny are “ever to observe / His [God’s] providence, and on him sole depend,” for He is “[m]erciful over all his works, with good / Still overcoming evil, and by small / Accomplishing great things” (12.563-4, 565-7). After the Fall, humanity must “depend” on God in order to accomplish “great things” and in due time overcome evil. Indeed, after the Fall Michael tells Adam that the bad, rather than deprived or absent, is *with* the good – they contend:

know I am sent  
To show thee what shall come in future days  
To thee and to thy offspring; good with bad  
Expect to hear, supernal grace contending  
With sinfulness of men; thereby to learn  
True patience, (11.356-61)

God's grace contends with men's sinfulness, a sign of the disorder that results from original sin. Moreover, God's goodness – that is, His compassion toward humanity – is “contingent upon a certain response [from human beings]” (Crosman 215). God makes it clear, as Crosman points out, that Michael might extend solace to Adam and Eve after the Fall only if they listen to his bidding patiently (215). God uses the conditional tense, saying to Michael, “If patiently thy bidding they obey, / Dismiss them not disconsolate” (11.112-3). Here, God's goodness is sustained through Adam and Eve's patience. Adam and Eve's continued ability to influence their relationship with each other and God shows that humans have the power to ameliorate God's wrath. As McColley notes, “For Milton, whether in heaven, in Paradise, or in the world we know, the peace of God is not the absence of labor or even of evil, but the power and grace to resist evil and achieve good” (*Milton's Eve* 103). Adam and Eve attain “the power and grace to resist evil and achieve good” when they choose to obey Michael and, in so doing, find “the peace of God.”<sup>130</sup>

While humanity serves in part to augment God's glory, it also fulfills His purpose by strengthening His need for love. Both the Son and humanity actualize the Father and, as a result, they actualize God. However, I want to make it clear that, in my reading of the poem, it is not that the Son is the best version of God; instead, the Son cultivates, and thus enriches, God the Father through the loving relationship that He shares with the Father. This reading illustrates that Milton's God is a continually evolving God, that He is a vulnerable, incomplete God, and that He is not a static entity. Indeed, we will see that the Father's ultimate purpose necessitates His own evolution. My interpretation of *Paradise*

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<sup>130</sup> Adam and Eve can leave Eden “yet in peace” (11.117) if they patiently obey Michael.

*Lost* originates, in part, from Keller's book, where she observes, "What relationship that matters doesn't twist us to the faltering edge of possibility? Desire and fear blend together. What future comes before us unclouded?" (1).<sup>131</sup> She tethers together possibility and actuality – two ostensible antitheses – through the context of loving relationships. Not only does relation "offer itself as the [very] condition of our every possibility," but it is also on behalf of our relations that we are "[able] to know something" and "participate in its actualization" (Keller 21). In *Paradise Lost*, the Son, as we have seen, participates in the Father's actualization in several ways. The Son glorifies what is best in the Father's nature, namely, His love; the Son teaches the Father to temper His emotions, His wrath especially; and the Son translates the Father's intent into action through the creating Word, which He utters. Keller argues that in "the aporia of their [the creature's and the creator's] unexpected co-incident," the usual image of the 'creating creator' is "deconstructed" (105). For her, "the *ability* to be created signifies *potentiality* in God" (Keller 105). In *Paradise Lost*, the Father is more creatable than 'creating'; while the Son carries out most creator tasks by giving effect to the Father's purpose, the Father's image changes continually in the epic.<sup>132</sup> As the epic unfolds, and the Father displaces more and more of His power to various sites, it becomes clear that the Father's ultimate purpose

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<sup>131</sup> Significantly, the Father appears clouded before all creatures (even the angels). Satan observes that "oft amidst / Thick clouds and dark doth heaven's all-ruling sire / Choose to reside" (2.263-5). The Son also refers to the Father's "face, wherein no cloud / Of anger shall remain [one day]" (3.262-3). The angels, as well, sing that they see the Father "through a cloud / Drawn round about thee like a radiant shrine" (3.378-9). This cloudiness could very well signify the unknowability that is inherent to relationships. The Father's inaccessibility is made evident in these examples. However, because the Father's "cloud" signifies anger to the Son rather than inaccessibility, as it does for the angels, the Son's "conspicuous countenance," with which "without cloud / Made visible, the almighty Father shines" (3.385, 385-6), suggests the *possibility* of a more harmonious relationship between God and humanity (even before the Fall) rather than humanity's complete access to the Father.

<sup>132</sup> When I say that the Father's image changes constantly in the epic, I mean from the reader's perspective.

necessitates His own evolution, namely, from a remote and mysterious Other to a more intimate and somewhat intelligible other self.<sup>133</sup>

### **The Son and Satan: Openness Versus Closedness to Alterity**

For Milton, how we interpret or read the Other corresponds both to how we relate to God and other selves and how we understand ourselves. There is, as Oliver asserts, “an intimate and necessary correspondence between how we conceive of others and how we treat them” (3). From one critic’s perspective, Satan is “the glass ... through which we see God darkly” (Merrill 55). However, where Satan is ‘dark,’ the Son is all ‘brightness,’ which suggests that the Son is the glass through which we see God brightly. In terms of the former, the narrator relates, “For those rebellious [such as Satan], here their prison ordained / In utter darkness, and their portion set / As far removed from God and light of heaven” (1.71-73). Satan’s designs are described as “dark” (1.213), and his original brightness is reportedly “[d]arkened so [after his fall]” (1.599). Satan notes “ever-during dark / Surrounds me” (3.45-46), and the narrator calls Satan “the prince of darkness” (10.383). In terms of the Son, we are told that the Father’s mercy (observed in the Son) “shall brightest shine” (3.134), the Father “[b]lazed forth” on His Son’s aspect (10.65), (as Jesus Christ) the Son’s ascension is “bright” (10.187), and the Son makes “bright appearances” (11.329). If the Son illuminates how humanity might properly relate to God, Satan exposes how humanity might wrongly relate to God. Indeed, Gary Kuchar states

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<sup>133</sup> I am not suggesting that perfections such as omnipotence are contradictory to intimacy and intelligibility, but simply that it is more difficult for one to grow near to and/or know a being which is (for example) all-powerful.



that Satan repeatedly misinterprets his relationship to God; in particular, there is a problem with Satan's "relation to language" (66). Satan has a "tendency to invest everything ... with his own image" (Kuchar 66). He retreats from God and turns in on himself. We see Satan's consciousness about how *others* see him, rather than how he sees others, in the narrator's description of Satan's reaction when Zephon catches him at the ear of sleeping Eve and tells him that he is no longer as bright as when he was "in heaven upright and pure" (4.837). The speaker relates how Satan "saw, and pined / His loss [of virtue]; but chiefly to find here observed / His lustre visible impaired" (4.848-50). While Satan "pines" the loss of his virtue, he is "chiefly" concerned with his fall in stature. "Know ye not then said Satan, filled with scorn, / Know ye not me?" he asks Zephon incredulously (4.827-8). Milton reveals the significance of how we interpret or read others for both interpersonal relationships and self-identity.

The importance of the act of reading or interpreting other selves is perhaps best seen in the triangular relationship that is comprised of Milton's Satan, Father, and Son, with the Father at the apex. Milton's paralleling of the Son and Satan through their powerful rhetorical language not only implies that readers can choose the Son or Satan as their model for forming their personal relationship with God, but it also paints God in two different pictures, and these pictures emphasize the power of the imagination for faith.<sup>134</sup> While (as we saw) Satan reads God the Father's actions as wrathful and evil, the Son interprets God the Father's actions as loving and good. My reading of the Son and Satan

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<sup>134</sup> We see the Son temper the Father's anger through His use of persuasive language. The Son says, "that be from thee far, / That far be from thee" (3.153-4). Satan commands the fallen angels with convincing lies. Raphael relates to Adam how "[h]is [Satan's] countenance, as the morning star that guides / The starry flock, allured them, and with lies / Drew after him the third part of heaven's host" (5.708-10).

as representations of *the choice*, between openness and closedness to alterity, that faith presents is supported by Milton's own claims in *Areopagitica*, where uncensored reading is crucial in two senses. Uncensored reading is important first, because it exposes readers to good and evil and second, because it gives readers the chance to exercise their critical thinking skills through personal judgement. Milton asserts, "He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true warfaring Christian" (*Areopagitica* 111). Milton concedes in *Areopagitica* that it can be hard to separate good from evil: "Good and evil we know in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil, and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discerned" (111). The same difficulty applies to the reader's interpretation of Satan's and the Son's readings of God's nature. Is Satan heroically opposing a wrathful God, or is the Son heroically supporting a loving, but misunderstood, God? While I have been arguing that the poem endorses the second reading, Milton extends the first to readers because free will is exercised through personal choice – humans choose how they will read God.

Fortunately for Milton's reader, Milton also, ultimately, fashions another reading of God's relationship to humanity. God the Son and God the Father, if combined, offer a vision of equal rule (rather than self-threatening monarchy), whereby God and all human beings will eventually be leveled as one. Milton places such importance on the Son in *Paradise Lost* not because He is the sole bearer of this vision, but because, again, it is through the Father's relationship with the Son that this vision is, in part, fulfilled.

Politically and historically, there is precedence for us to consider that *Paradise Lost* promulgates the idea of equal rule, rather than, say, heavenly monarchy. For example, Anthony Low says explicitly, “Politically ... Milton hated kings, bishops, and tyrants” (145), and Chaplin states that Milton was “the great Protestant poet and tireless champion of English republicanism” (354). If Milton hated kings, was a Protestant, and advocated for English republicanism – I do not think that we can deny these things – then it stands to reason that we should read *Paradise Lost* within the context of supreme power being held by the many. Indeed, Chaplin further says, “Milton tends to destabilize political, religious, and intellectual monopolies by dispersing power and authority to multiple sites” (356). This quotation brings us back, of course, to our discussion of God’s multiplicity. Might the shared power between God the Son and God the Father be a microcosm of the macrocosm, where “Milton invests ... authority in all men” (Chaplin 356)? Bryson’s main argument is that Milton seeks “to break not the king’s image, but the King’s image,” that is, “the very image of God he presents in the form of the Father,” while “simultaneously laying the groundwork for a new image, conceived in terms of the Son” (18). While Bryson claims that Milton seeks to break the image of God that the Father presents and conceive a new image of God in terms of the Son, I perceive the Son and the Father as linked in their vision for humanity. Consider how both the Father and Son are involved in the eventual collapse of traditional, monarchical rule. In Book 6, the Son says,

Sceptre and power, thy [the Father’s] giving, I assume,  
And gladlier shall resign, when in the end  
Thou shalt be all in all, and I in thee  
Forever, and in me all whom thou lov’st: (6.730-3)

The Son discloses that the happiest sort of rule is not the absence of rule, but rather communal, inward rule (“all in all”), and that all beings – earthly and divine – will be rulers.<sup>135</sup> Milton does, in fact, “[redefine] what it means to be truly ‘kingly’” (Bryson 63). When Milton foretells that the Son will throw down the sceptre, he suggests that the Son will embrace humanity in the name of divinity – that is, he reveals that the interpersonal nature of human relationships, made visible through the Son and the Father’s relationship, and Adam and Eve’s relationship, will be the righteous seat or image for harmonious, equal rule among All. In Milton’s original conception of God, as God the Son plus God the Father, we discover that he is against traditional hierarchy because it prevents selves from relating properly to others. While Satan wrongly reads the Son as all-powerful by birthright rather than merit, he rightly argues that hierarchy based on birthright or power prevents proper relations with other selves. Addressing his comrades, Satan remarks,

Thrones, dominations, principdoms, virtues, powers,  
If these magnific titles yet remain  
Not merely titular, since by decree  
Another now hath to himself engrossed  
All power, and us eclipsed under the name  
Of king anointed, (5.772-7)

Satan acknowledges that “magnific titles” can be “merely titular” and that the individual can be “eclipsed” by a monarch (“under the name / Of king anointed”). Although Satan misses the Father’s wholehearted empowerment of individuals on account of their self-merit, part of the reason why Satan is so persuasive in the epic is because he correctly discerns what is typically wrong with monarchs, namely, their creation of an *illusion* of

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<sup>135</sup> Communal, inward rule is at first expressed through rewards for individual merit and, later, an equal distribution of power among all creatures.

disseminated power. However, the Father and Son actually seek to implement communal, inward rule, which is as follows: how I rule myself is intimately bound up with how I have related to external, but also intimate, other selves, who are involved in my inward self. The Son speaks about this new kind of rule with the Father not because it is His own idea, but because He is interpreting the Father's intent (for Himself and others), consenting to its terms, and drawing His own observations about the future.<sup>136</sup>

The Son's articulation of His and the Father's ultimate vision reveals that what God seeks is this interpersonally founded "all in all" (6.732). Satan's desire to be king serves, in part, to emphasize, through juxtaposition with the Son, that he wants more and more monarchy, whereas the Son wants less and less. While I have already suggested that "all in all" implies inward, communal rule, I want to situate this idea more firmly within the interpersonal context that we have been discussing. Specifically, I want to stress that this notion of "all in all" fulfills the idea of the self unfolding and enfolding amongst others. It will be useful for us to use Keller's theory of the cloud of the impossible. In reference to God's signification as "boundless," Keller contends that "while there is no fixed boundary [between God and the self], there is nonetheless a heightened *distinction* between creator and creation" (62), that while "[t]he difference between the finite and the infinite appears as infinite," this "*difference ... is not boundary but relation*" (63). In *Paradise Lost*, the Son, a being who is divine first and man second, and Adam, a being who is man first and divine second, are not divided but related through their human and divine natures. For example, both individuals are leaders. While the Son is "[t]he head of

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<sup>136</sup> The Son consents to the terms of this new rule when He says, "I / ... / ... shall" (6.730-6).

all mankind” (3.286), Adam is “head” of Eve (4.443).<sup>137</sup> In Milton’s use of multiplicity, we see that distinction will not be undone, but rather *division* between selves. The Son says that all His redeemed will be made one “with” Him (11.44 but see 11.43). Further, while Milton’s epic scorns power (Bryson 62), it does not scorn hierarchy or distinction.<sup>138</sup> Hierarchy or distinction can be consonant with “rule by all” because in Milton’s universe, distinction is difference that brings self and other together rather than separating them. As we will see below, the Son’s distinction does not increase His status (that is, place Him above the angels), but rather unites Him with the angels (He is among them). When one individual gains distinction, others are made more illustrious as well. Merit *is* rewarded. Abdiel tells Satan that his claim is “blasphemous, false and proud” (5.809) because he refuses to admit that the Son’s merit exceeds his own. Abdiel says to Satan,

Unjust thou say’st  
Flatly unjust, to bind with laws the free,  
And equal over equals to let reign,  
One over all with unsucceeded power. (5.818-21)

Abdiel explains to Satan that though the Son is “head” of the angels, this is in a sense a reduction of His status because He becomes “[o]ne of our [the angels’] number” (5.842, 843). Further, Abdiel stresses that the Son’s reign does not force the angels into a space of invisibility but makes them more dignified. Abdiel says, “nor by his reign obscured, / But

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<sup>137</sup> Again, Eve addresses Adam as “my guide / And head” (4.442-3).

<sup>138</sup> Bryson observes, “[I]n *The Ready and Easy Way*, Milton is writing of spiritual kingship, not a ‘Heavenly’ kingship that looks like an impossibly glorious version of the court of Charles I. In other words, ‘the future kingdom of Christ’ is a spiritual arrangement of *faith* and *worship*, not a secular arrangement of politics and power (no matter whether such a ‘secular’ arrangement is located on earth or in heaven)” (62). I show, more specifically, that Milton’s epic scorns the kind of power that subjugates others (for example, an absolute monarchy).

more illustrious made” (5.841-2). The Son’s reign dignifies rather than oppresses others.<sup>139</sup>

Unlike the Son, who reads the Father as a loving being who will renounce the throne, Satan chooses to read the Father in accordance with his (mis)perceptions; in particular, he construes the Father as a threat to, rather than a nurturer of, his personal identity and power. Satan behaves like the self that Oliver paints as violent, hostile, and decisively anti-interpersonal. Not only does Satan conceive of himself as “self-identical,” but he also believes that his identity is “opposed to difference” (Oliver 2).<sup>140</sup> Because Satan imagines self-other relationships in these terms, he “conceive[s] of anything different or outside of ... [himself] as a threat to ... [his] own identity” (Oliver 2-3). We see that Satan’s ‘relationships’ are, as Oliver would label them, “hostile” (3) in his description of God the Father as one who “[s]ole reigning holds the tyranny of heaven” (1.124). Satan conceives of the Father as wrathful and oppressive not because the Father is actually so, but because he chooses to read the other self as “other,” namely, as a threat to his sense of himself as a subject (Oliver 10). Satan reflects, “What matter where, if I be still the same, / And what I should be, all but less than he [the Father] / Whom thunder hath made greater?” (1.256-8). Satan’s sense of who he is (“what I should be”) is framed

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<sup>139</sup> Abdiel contends that the Father is “bent rather to exalt / One happy state under one head more near / United” (5.829-31).

<sup>140</sup> Oliver writes, “If we conceive of ourselves as self-identical, and we conceive of identity as opposed to difference, and we conceive of anything or anyone outside of the boundaries of ourselves as different, then we will conceive of anything different or outside of ourselves as a threat to our own identity” (2-3). Satan says that he and his legions are “[s]elf-raised” (1.634), which shows that he conceives of himself as self-identical. He also labels the Father “our grand foe” (1.122), which shows that he believes his identity is opposed to difference.

in relation to the Father. Satan is “less than” the Father, who is “made greater.”<sup>141</sup>

Because he does not understand the Father, and he refuses to try, Satan “strives to reduce God from an omnipotent mystery to a mere powerful adversary” (Merrill 33). Satan’s attempt to reduce God “to a mere powerful adversary” is also seen in his followers’ perception of God, since they interpret the darkness that surrounds the Father as a sign of His “majesty” and attempt to compete with the Father’s “light” (2.266, 269); however, the narrator and Adam prove that the devils’, and so Satan’s, reading of God’s nature is mistaken and thus leads to unnecessary violence. Gazing at hell, Mammon reflects,

This deep world  
Of darkness do we dread? How oft amidst  
Thick clouds and dark doth heaven’s all-ruling sire  
Choose to reside, his glory unobscured,  
And with the majesty of darkness round  
Covers his throne; from whence deep thunders roar  
Mustering their rage, and heaven resembles hell?  
As he our darkness, cannot we his light  
Imitate when we please? (2.262-70)

Though Mammon says that the Father chooses to reside “oft amidst / Thick clouds and dark,” the narrator and Adam reveal that the Father strives to create light from darkness and separate light from darkness – both are very different from Mammon’s assumption that the Father imitates hell’s darkness. The narrator describes the act of Creation thusly: “God saw the light was good; / And light from darkness by the hemisphere / Divided: light the day, and darkness night” (7.249-51). Because God realizes that the light is “good,” He separates it from the darkness so that it is pure. Further, near the end of the

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<sup>141</sup> Tobias Gregory discusses Satan’s obsession with status: “The world Satan sees is one in which all relationships are based on hierarchy, and his personal torment includes continual blows to his status-obsession” (192).



poem, Adam recalls that “creation ... brought forth / Light out of darkness!” (12.472-3). Mammon’s misreading of the Father’s darkness as a sign of His “glory” (2.265), rather than as a sign of His continual desire to create good “out” of evil, incites the fallen angels to outdo the Father and pursue vainglory rather than praise the Father’s genuine goodness.

Misperception might not only construct violent relationships, but also, in some cases, inhibit the formation of relationships completely, as when Satan denies the power of tears. Satan’s misreading of tears as a sign of weakness rather than interpersonal strength, whereby self and other self recognize their mutual vulnerability, shows his denial of the embeddedness of self in other. Kuchar points to Satan’s “despairing solipsism” (71). He says that it is “expressed” by “the way ... [he] resist[s] the intersubjective dimensions of the poetry of tears as a mode” (Kuchar 71).<sup>142</sup> Unlike humans, who express their personal feelings to God through tears, Satan expresses “despairing solipsism” by retreating into himself (just like the turtle I mention in the introduction to this chapter).<sup>143</sup> We see Satan try to deny his tears and so betray “the

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<sup>142</sup> I retain Kuchar’s use of the word “expressed” in order to emphasize that we might always productively compare Milton’s Son with his Satan.

<sup>143</sup> For example, in Book 10, Adam remarks to Eve,

What better can we do, than to the place  
Repairing where he [God] judged us, prostrate fall  
Before him reverent, and there confess  
Humbly our faults, and pardon beg, with tears  
Watering the ground, and with our sighs the air  
Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite, in sign  
Of sorrow unfeigned, and humiliation meek.

...

they [Adam and Eve] forthwith to the place  
Repairing where he judged them prostrate fell  
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. (10.1086-92, 1098-1104)

dialogical nature of sorrow” (Kuchar 71) when the narrator relates, “Thrice he assayed, and thrice in spite of scorn, / Tears ... burst forth: at last / Words interwove with sighs” (1.619-21). These “sighs” calls to mind the scene in which the Son interprets Adam and Eve’s repenting sighs. The Son advises the Father, “Now therefore bend thine ear / To supplication, hear his [man’s] sighs though mute; / Unskilful with what words to pray” (11.30-32). Unlike Satan, who forces out words over the “mute” ‘language’ of his tears, the Son labours to interpret the couple’s tears and sighs. These *signs* bring out the humanity in both the couple and the Father, who chooses to hear the sighs. Satan’s attempt to thwart his tears and sighs is a denial of interpersonal strength.

### **Self-Loving Satan**

While the Son turns the Father’s love outward by embodying self-giving love for humanity, Satan rejects the Father’s love and internalizes his love for himself, or self-love, to the extremity of narcissism. Ironically, the necessity of other selves for the self’s and the other self’s existence in the world is only made clearer through Satan’s explicit denial of interpersonal relationships. Milton’s Satan shows that the problem of evil is an interpersonal problem. Specifically, it is a rebuff of the necessity of other selves, of creation and creativity, and of love. Satan fails to recognize the “truth” of his own “genesis,” namely, “its relationship, its relativity, to God and his commands” (Danielson 116). When Satan claims, “Our puissance is our own, our own right hand” (5.864), he not only opposes the Son, but he also, again, refuses relationality through his rejection of the

Son's position as the Father's right-hand companion.<sup>144</sup> He also opposes the Son – more specifically, creation – when he rebukes Abdiel's entreaty to ask for pardon from “[t]he incensèd Father, and the incensèd Son” (5.847). Satan says, “That we were formed then say'st thou? and the work / Of secondary hands, by task transferred / From Father to his son? strange point and new!” (5.853-5). Satan refuses to acknowledge that he was fashioned by anyone other than himself; he separates his existence from the Father's and the Son's. He argues that the Father simply “transferred” the task of creation to the Son and gave Him “unsucceeded power” (5.821). Further, in his soliloquy to the sun, Satan expresses his antagonistic relationship with the cosmological sun and *the* Son, whom he “hate[s]” (4.37).<sup>145</sup> He cries, “O sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams / That bring to my remembrance from what state / I fell, how glorious once above thy sphere” (4.37-39). Satan hates both the cosmological sun and Son of God because they represent the relationality that he feels God has denied him.<sup>146</sup>

Satan wrongly chooses to believe in self-sufficiency when he positions pride or self-idolatry above reciprocal relations with other selves. Satan and the Son's ongoing juxtaposition reveals that the transition from self-love to self-giving love – a movement that might be described as one turning the self inside out – is a key part in the process of the self becoming fully realized. In this way, Satan's status as an example of “the self-

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<sup>144</sup> The Son is, as we know, “the right hand of [the Father's] glory” (6.747).

<sup>145</sup> According to M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, “[m]any apostrophes ... imply a personification of the nonhuman object that is addressed” (346). This implication strengthens my argument that Satan is speaking to the Son, albeit indirectly, when he addresses the sun.

<sup>146</sup> The sun is involved with the moon and the earth, just as the Son is involved with the Father and humans. Earlier, we saw Raphael use the sun as a metaphor for self-insufficiency – all creatures need interpersonal relationships in order to be virtuous.

loving spirit” does, in fact, illustrate that the Son of God is “the image of some state of being opposite to Satan’s” (Williams xii, xiii). Unlike the Son, who advocates for loving relationships by embodying the capacity to love for others, in speech and wordless expression, Satan retreats from love and nurtures his pride. Not only does Satan’s pride “cast him out from heaven,” but it is also what first inspired him “[t]o set himself in glory above his peers, / ... to [aim to] ... equal the most high” (1.37, 39-40). Satan’s pride pulls him further into himself while also pushing him away from his fellow angels and humans, which are, for Milton, defined by webs of inter-relation. Idolatry results when self-love is turned inward rather than outward in an interpersonal way. In the poem, Satan makes himself appear as a courageous leader to the fallen angels by providing the illusion of a fair debate about another war with heaven and accepting Beelzebub’s request for one who is “[s]ufficient” to bear “[t]he weight of all” (2.404, 416), by finding the new world (earth) and learning about God’s newest creatures.<sup>147</sup> When Satan observes that someone must investigate the new world, he sounds like the Father in Book 3. The Father says that humanity needs someone willing to act as sacrifice. In both cases, the angels are silent. The narrator relates that “the heavenly choir stood mute” (3.217) and “all [the fallen angels] sat mute” (2.420). Yet, unlike the Father, Satan (through Beelzebub) makes his

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<sup>147</sup> Notably, Milton’s Father plays fair in the war in heaven. Though Satan, we are told, “[d]rew after him the third part of heaven’s sons / Conjured against the highest” (2.692-3), the Father, Raphael tells Adam and Eve, said,

Gabriel, lead forth to battle these my sons  
Invincible, lead forth my armèd saints  
By thousands and by millions ranged for fight;  
Equal in number to that godless crew  
Rebellious, (6.46-50)

The Father commands Gabriel to lead forth “my armèd saints / ... / Equal in number to that godless crew” – a third of heaven’s angels – rather than the two thirds of heaven’s sons that He possesses. The Father chooses to meet Satan’s army in equal number.

proposition before the angels so that he can adore himself rather than elevate another individual. Before Satan accepts his *own* proposal, the narrator reveals, “Satan, whom now transcendent glory raised / Above his fellows, with monarchal pride / Conscious of highest worth, unmoved thus spake” (2.427-9).<sup>148</sup> Satan’s “monarchal pride” and “[c]onscious[ness] of highest worth” turn his seemingly brave proposal into a parody of the Father and Son’s true merit as rulers. The narrator tells us that Satan’s sovereignty is based on artifice rather than true selflessness:

Thus saying rose  
The monarch [Satan], and prevented all reply,  
Prudent, lest from his resolution raised  
Others among the chief might offer now  
(Certain to be refused) what erst they feared;  
And so refused might in opinion stand  
His rivals, winning cheap the high repute  
Which he through hazard huge must earn. But they  
Dreaded not more the adventure than his voice  
Forbidding; (2.466-75)

Satan actively “prevent[s] all reply,” which means that he takes away the fallen angels’ freedom to choose, and so, despite the syntactical meaning of the lines, Satan “win[s] cheap[ly] the high repute” that he should “earn.” Moreover, the narrator comments that Satan would actually reject any self-giving offer if it were made. Satan’s effective disavowal of the fallen angels’ agency is made evident when the narrator observes that the angels dreaded Satan’s forbidding voice as much as the actual proposal of a difficult adventure to the new world. Satan deprives himself of selfhood by actively shutting down even the possibility of interpersonal relationships. His approach to the ‘debate’ about war

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<sup>148</sup> The narrator reveals, “Thus Beelzebub / Pleaded his devilish counsel, first devised / By Satan, and in part proposed” (2.378-80).

with heaven is one-sided rather than reciprocal since he renders the fallen angels mute. Milton's description of the heavenly angels' muteness versus the fallen angels' muteness stresses that while the Father gives agency to others, Satan takes agency away. He tries to improve his own status rather than advance that of others. Satan thwarts active exploration of the self, and its consequent evolution, by denying the self's involvement with others.

Satan is not inherently evil; rather, he becomes someone whom we might refer to as 'evil' because he chooses to withdraw from love. That is, he cannot be complete within himself by existing separate from others. Evil is not a specific presence or thing, but, in Thomas Aquinas's (1225-1274) view, an absence (Wright 113) that results when something that was good is no longer such. This understanding of good and evil resembles Augustine's, since he "generalized the problem of evil into 'defect,' into 'privation,' emptiness, or lack, of God" (Colie 235). In line with Augustine's ontology of evil, in *Paradise Lost* evil is an absence of good, rather than a separate reality; Satan observes that God can "bring forth good" "[o]ut of" evil (1.163), which implies that goodness is the presence of the good while evil is the absence (or destruction) of the good. The self that retreats into itself is not alive, but lifeless; it is alienated from both other selves and itself. We see this "not-being" in the poem's portrayal of hell. It is, for Satan and his comrades, "[w]here neither joy nor love, but fierce desire, / Among ... [their] other torments not the least, / Still unfulfilled with pain of longing pines" (4.509-11). Hell propagates "fierce desire" or lack rather than the fulfillment of emotions. For Milton, hell is defined by love's *absence*. Satan invents hell by believing in what Stanley

Fish calls “[the] illusion of his independence” (*Self-Consuming Artifacts* 157). This illusion is made apparent when Satan imagines that he and his companions have “scaped the Stygian flood / ... by their own recovered strength” (1.239-40). In reality, the “high permission of all-ruling heaven / Left him [Satan] at large to his own designs” (1.212-3). Satan becomes evil when he is “alienate from God” (5.877). His fall is “[d]etermined” (5.879) when he resolutely chooses hateful emptiness over loving fulfillment.

One reason why Satan decides to alienate himself from others is the epistemological uncertainty that interpersonal relationships engender. Satan is, as we have seen, concerned with visibility – more specifically, with how he appears before others in terms of shape and brightness – because he thinks that acts of seeing rather than believing are all the knowledge there is, that it is impossible to gain knowledge from others since the self, apparently, does not, or cannot, change. Satan’s desire to see with his own eyes in order to know something prevents him from recognizing the relational basis of creation. In an accusing tone, Satan asks the angels,

who saw  
When this creation was? rememb’rest thou  
Thy making, while the maker gave thee being?  
We know no time when we were not as now; (5.856-9)

Not only does Satan suggest that one’s own sight and memory are the only verifiable sources of self-knowledge (“who saw” and “rememb’rest thou”), but he also rejects other selves’ involvement in the self’s origin and development. In doing so, he denies the natural and necessary process of becoming that occurs when self and other interact. Keller suggests that relation “is indeterminacy enfolded in interdependence” (7). A crucial part of unfolding self-existence is our recognition of our non-knowing – first on our own, and

then in the space of mutual relation – so that we might ‘know’ knowledge’s principal uncertainty. We see this in Book 10, when Adam gently reprimands Eve for her offer to bear all the blame for the Fall:

Unwary, and too desirous, as before [the Fall],  
So now of what thou know’st not, who desir’st  
The punishment all on thyself; alas,  
Bear thine own first, ill able to sustain  
His [God’s] full wrath whose thou feel’st as yet least part,  
...  
Thy frailty and infirmer sex forgiven,  
To me committed and by me exposed. (10.947-57)

Adam has learned from his and Eve’s experience of the Fall that they must be wary of knowledge. The couple’s uncertainty about the future is “enfolded in interdependence” when Adam concludes that Eve’s “frailty and infirmer sex” is “committed” to him and “exposed” in their relationship. Adam and Eve’s mutual awareness of each other’s non-knowing serves as the foundation for their postlapsarian commitment to guide each other in their new life. As Eve says shortly afterward, “from thee I will not hide / What thoughts in my unquiet breast are risen” (10.974-5). Satan denies his (as well as others’) relationship to others by denying space for uncertainty, which is the basis of knowledge.

### **Milton’s Self-Giving Son**

Through its portrayal of the Son and humanity, *Paradise Lost* reveals that God’s and creation’s original goodness is comprised of self-giving love, as revealed by the other self. Moreover, it shows that human selfhood is occasioned by communal inwardness because, just like the Son who will die for humanity, humans are only truly human when



the love that they have for themselves is turned outward in an interpersonal way.<sup>149</sup> I use the phrase self-giving love, rather than selfless love, because we are more ourselves when we give ourselves to others, not less. Because humans perform the Son's heavenly work on earth, in terms of contributing to God's and the world's good growth until heaven and earth are united, God and humanity's relationship is the most important in Milton's cosmos. God the Father needs both God the Son and humanity to become His more fully realized self and, therefore, humans participate in God's emerging, evolving selfhood by expressing His love. Žižek states the following about love: "in love, *I am also nothing*, but, as it were, a Nothing humbly aware of itself, a Nothing paradoxically made rich through the very awareness of its lack" (115). While God can never be completely realized, He, and human beings, might be "made rich," paradoxically, through their humble acceptance of their non-knowing, which they might know only together.<sup>150</sup> It is thus "only as a loving and loved 'nothing'" that individuals "can ... become a loving and loved something" (Cefalu 14; Žižek qtd.). Despite being omniscient, God does not "know ... the precise nature of the being or place from which he knows what he knows" (Cefalu 111). In the poem, God experiences the timelessness of eternity. He knows that humanity "will" fall. God says to the Son, "For man will hearken to his [Satan's] glozing lies, / And easily transgress the sole command, / Sole pledge of his obedience: so will fall" (3.93-

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<sup>149</sup> Shuger also uses the term "communal inwardness" in relation to the self; however, for her, Christian selfhood is not primarily self-awareness but a communal inwardness created by the inner activity of the Spirit on a more or less generic human nature. ... The Christianized Aristotelianism of Renaissance psychology views the interconnected functions of imagination and emotion as necessary for making the excellent object apprehensible and desirable. (*Sacred* 248)

<sup>150</sup> As we saw throughout this chapter, God is always evolving through His loving relationships (specifically, with the Son and with humanity).

95). Milton, however, shows that something other than time reigns. God's "subjectiviz[ation] by the very operation of love" illustrates that love "serves as an ontological first principle" (Cefalu 162) for all beings. I have demonstrated that, for Milton, as for Traherne, "love is in many respects the 'God of God'" (Cefalu 170). We saw God's investment in love throughout this chapter – in God's readiness to exalt others on account of true merit, in God's desire to show mercy when judging humanity, in God's need for humans to serve or honour Him freely, in God's investment in His own self-evolution (that is, toward becoming a being whose presence emits "joy entire" [3.265]), and in His commitment to empower humans by giving them the freedom to choose. The Son is the greatest gift that God sends – or, as Milton puts it, "heaven[']s charity so dear" (3.216) – because, by sending the Son to earth, the Father reminds humanity what the self is made of, namely, interpersonal Love.

## Chapter Two

### The Matter of “Substantially”:

#### Embodied Virtue in *Paradise Lost*

— LORD, shall we not bring these gifts to Your service?  
Shall we not bring to Your service all our powers  
For life, for dignity, grace and order,  
And intellectual pleasures of the senses?  
The LORD who created must wish us to create  
And employ our creation again in His service  
Which is already His service in creating.  
For Man is joined spirit and body,  
And therefore must serve as spirit and body.  
Visible and invisible must meet in His Temple;  
You must not deny the body. (T. S. Eliot, *Choruses from ‘The Rock’* 9.25-35)

#### Introduction: The Nature of the Human

During Milton’s time the human body was, in terms of salvation, usually conceived as something dangerous and uncontrollable, to the extent that both one’s own body and other bodies were threats to one’s salvation rather than constitutive of it.<sup>151</sup> Just as the other self is imagined as threatening to self-identity in our only model of the self (as we saw in chapter 1), the human body was usually conceived as something threatening and uncontrollable, in part because Aristotelian sensory ethics produced binary interpretations of objects. Objects were either “good and beneficial, or diabolical and vicious” (Milner 290).<sup>152</sup> Such an ‘either/or’ conception of the body does not lend

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<sup>151</sup> John Rumrich and Stephen M. Fallon note that before Milton’s and other writers’ works, the body was seen as “a prison to be escaped or a shell to be cast off by an immaterial soul” (19). Likewise, Gregory Chaplin observes, “Devout Protestants often saw the body as a nearly intractable obstacle to self-control and salvation” (“Milton’s Beautiful Body” 93).

<sup>152</sup> See 17<sup>th</sup>-century writers on the body, such as Sir John Davies’s *Nosce Teipsum* (1622) and *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Peter R. Anstey, Oxford UP, 2013.

well to Milton's portrayal of the body in *Paradise Lost*, where it is the means toward the expression of an increasingly spiritual self. For Brian Cummings,

Embodiment emerges perhaps as the deepest mystery in the poem [*Paradise Lost*], as intractable even as the problems of free will or of the existence of evil, which more obviously assail and threaten to overturn Milton's theology ... [Thomas] Hobbes denied the human being free will by making it dependent on the laws of mechanical motion, an automaton. For Milton, this is anathema. The human being is a living thing and therefore moves itself. The body is plastic and volatile ... The body in paradise is essentially ambiguous: poised between literal and figural, eros and agape, self and other, subject and object, it evokes from Milton both the most passionate of defenses and the most embarrassed of disavowals. (326)

The quotation above is of interest for a few reasons. First, because it suggests that embodiment in *Paradise Lost* is not yet understood, that the body remains “[perhaps] the deepest mystery in the poem”; second, because it implies that there is a relationship between free will, embodiment, and human agency (for Milton, the human being is “a living thing” that “moves itself”); and third, because it proposes that the body in paradise is defined by ambiguity, in the sense that it is positioned between (for example) self and other, and so it is both praiseworthy and blameworthy. Altogether, the quotation suggests that the body is mysterious *because* it occupies a liminal space and is thus vulnerable to change, for better or worse, depending on the will that propels it forward in time and space. I want to augment Cummings's position by pointing out that being human encompasses both body and soul. The active co-mingling of these individual parts makes up the larger whole. Indeed, early modern circles of Aristotelian natural philosophy viewed the human subject as “an embodied social being with physical and social as well as intellectual needs and capabilities, expressing its nature through the exercise of moral virtues” (Gowland 85). An Aristotelian professor of philosophy, Francesco Piccolomini

(1523-1607), said that “the supreme good must be suited to the entire man, not just to parts of him”; because man is comprised of a body and a soul, the supreme good “must arise from a harmonious combination of all those things which are conducive to the perfection of his composite being” (qtd. in Gowland 85).

In *Paradise Lost* there is a similar emphasis on “the coherence of body and soul”; for example, in Book 5, Adam informs Eve that within the soul are “lesser faculties that serve / Reason as chief” and this includes fancy, which originates from “all external things,” including the “five watchful senses” (5.101-2, 103, 104).<sup>153</sup> There is an Aristotelean sense of practical wisdom in Milton’s poem. Though the senses are labeled “lesser faculties,” they “serve” reason, function through physical parts of the body representing the external world, and work within – and so *with* – the soul to follow God’s Law.<sup>154</sup> Piccolomini’s view not only emphasizes the resonance between the inner and the outer parts of the human, but it also “undergirded humanistic ... conceptions of man as ‘a political animal,’ naturally suited to a life of socialized virtue rather than solitary contemplation” (Gowland 85). This idea that the human being is “naturally suited” to “socialized virtue” rather than “solitary contemplation” accords with one of the major threads of this dissertation – that when we are invisible to others, we are invisible to

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<sup>153</sup> Milton shared Piccolomini’s belief in the importance of the whole person rather than parts. See p. 25 [footnote 32] in my Introduction. In *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton discusses “the whole man” in relation to death:

Inasmuch then as the whole man is uniformly said to consist of body, spirit, and soul (whatever may be the distinct provinces severally assigned to these divisions), I shall first show that the whole man dies, and, secondly, that each component suffers privation of life. It is to be observed, first of all, that God denounced the punishment of death against the whole man that sinned, without excepting any part. (390)

<sup>154</sup> Diane Kelsey McColley observes that the sensuous is one of the three “ingredients of virtue,” which include “the sensuous, the active, and the contemplative” (*Milton’s Eve* 73). She emphasizes “[t]he need for harmony” among these ingredients (McColley, *Milton’s Eve* 73).

ourselves – while suggesting that virtue or the supreme good emerges through humans’ constructive interactions with other selves. John Rumrich and Stephen M. Fallon suggest that Milton’s “articulated conception of embodied human spirit” anticipates French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s view that the overlapping of self and the world is the *precondition* of the subjectivity that humans achieve, such that embodied experience involves constant interchange (10). Indeed, the necessity of interchange, between self and the world as well as self and others, is evinced in *Paradise Lost* by Adam’s and Eve’s origin stories. G. K. Hunter observes, “Adam’s desire for an Eve, and the cessation of his restless questioning about himself when she is created, even his willingness to ‘die’ with her rather than live alone, are all expressions not of his weakness but of his God-given nature” (190). Hunter’s observation that Adam’s restlessness ceases only when Eve is created becomes significant when we note that Eve, too, is restless until she interacts with Adam for the first time. “That day I oft remember,” she recollects,

when from sleep  
I first awaked, and found myself reposed  
Under a shade of flowers, much wondering where  
And what I was, whence thither brought, and how.  
...  
I yielded [to Adam], and from that time see  
How beauty is excelled by manly grace  
And wisdom, which alone is truly fair. (4.449-52, 489-91)

The day has such resonance for Eve because she begins to understand herself through the other, learning that Adam’s and, by association, her own grace and wisdom displace “that smooth watery image” because they, alone, are “truly fair” (4.480, 491).<sup>155</sup> While the

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<sup>155</sup> Eve says, “I oft remember” (4.449).

journey toward becoming a whole being involves body and soul, and their agreement with each other, it also necessitates correspondence between self and the world as well as self and other selves.

Crucially, in the poem beings with consistent shape – namely, the angels, the Son, and Adam and Eve – are powerful interpersonal creatures because they can actualize the supreme good in themselves, others, and creation through their bodies in action.<sup>156</sup>

Milton's beings substantiate themselves as selves – that is, their originally spiritual form (the body, which is the self) becomes *more* refined or spiritual – in their relationships with others.<sup>157</sup> In reaction to the often less than positive early modern conceptions of the body – Katharine Fletcher notes “popular mistrust of the body and the passions” (127), while Rumrich observes “the prejudice against the body” that historically accompanied “the conventional Christian dichotomy between body and soul” (256) – *Paradise Lost* invites us to view the body as an opportunity for humans primarily, but also other selves with bodily features, to make the spiritual self more spiritual.<sup>158</sup> In the past, critics have

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<sup>156</sup> McColley's citation of Milton's thoughts in *De Doctrina Christiana* about Actual Sin has important implications for our understanding of goodness. She writes (I use McColley's citation of Milton because she has the rare, complete edition of Milton's *De Doctrina Christiana*),

‘[Actual Sin] may be incurred, not only by actions commonly so called, but also by words and thoughts, and even by omission of good actions. It is called Actual Sin, not that sin is properly an action, for in reality it implies defect; but because it commonly consists in some act.’ (qtd. in *Milton's Eve* 191-2)

Just as sin “commonly consists in some act,” so does goodness. After all, for Milton, sin is “[the] omission of good actions.”

<sup>157</sup> By contrast, Karma deGruy focuses on soul and flesh in relation to substantial being: “Both soul and flesh are potentials of substantial being. . . . Humans may one day attain a more refined being in which their bodies become completely spiritual and the divisible parts – faculties, limbs, flesh, soul – coalesce into a more pure intelligential substance, no longer more vital in some parts than in others” (126).

<sup>158</sup> Rumrich and Fallon's collection of essays on the body in the early modern period notes that prior to writers such as Milton, the body was perceived “as a drag on the immaterial soul or a site of embarrassment” (from the prefatory abstract in their book, n.p.). The overarching argument in Rumrich and Fallon's collection is that “Milton and an unusual collection of fascinating and diverse contemporary writers, including John Donne, Margaret Cavendish, John Bunyan, and Hester Pulter, addressed the potency

focused on the material body – the physicality of humans and angels – in *Paradise Lost*: topics such as digestion and erotics have been of interest.<sup>159</sup> However, in this chapter, I argue that in *Paradise Lost*, virtuous relationship to other selves is expressed in the form of the body; more specifically, virtue is embodied when one's free actions reflect the correspondence between outer actions and appearance and inner dispositions and beliefs, and also correspond with God's will.<sup>160</sup> In this formulation, Satan is not virtuous when his looks and representation of himself as evil correspond to his evil actions because his will (to do evil) does not correspond with God's will (to do good). Beings with consistent shape embody virtue.<sup>161</sup> As I have been claiming throughout this dissertation, goodness

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of the body ... as an occasion for heroic striving and a vehicle of transcendence" (from the prefatory abstract in their book, n.p.). Differently, my chapter rejects the idea of the body as a means of transcending itself and, further, it focuses on embodiment – more specifically, embodiment as an action that can make the spiritual more spiritual (or, in the case of Satan, the spiritual *seemingly* more spiritual).

<sup>159</sup> For a discussion of human and angelic bodies in terms of digestion, see "Temperance and Temptation: The Alimential Vision in *Paradise Lost*," in Michael Schoenfeldt's book, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert and Milton*, pages 131-168. Kent R. Lehnhof also discusses digestion, but in terms of divine and demonic bodies. See Lehnhof, "Scatology and the Sacred in Milton's *Paradise Lost*," *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2007, pp. 429-49. For a discussion of the angelic body in terms of erotics, see Karma deGruy, "Desiring Angels: The Angelic Body in *Paradise Lost*," *Criticism*, vol. 54, no. 1, 2012, pp. 117-49. Generally, these critics discuss Milton's monism and its subtleties.

<sup>160</sup> Characters who embody virtue are transparent, since there is no distinguishing between what they are inwardly and outwardly. I want to thank Daniel Shore for helping me clarify chapter 2's major argument. In *Areopagitica*, Milton writes of virtue as being choice and act:

If every action which is good or evil in man at ripe years were to be under pittance, and prescription, and compulsion, what were virtue but a name, what praise could be then due to well-doing, what grammarcy to be sober, just, or continent? ... When God gave him [Adam] reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions. (116-7)

deGruy discusses the relationship between body and spirit in various species (humans and angels) rather than virtuous relationship to others as demonstrated in the form of the body, as I do. For her, "In this [*Paradise Lost*'s] cosmos, spiritual beings [the angels] are by definition also material, corporeal, beings because spirit and matter are inseparable, and corporeal beings [humans] are also spiritual because body and spirit are unopposed" (deGruy 120).

<sup>161</sup> The Father has consistent shape when the Son, angels and humans are able to "behold" Him (3.387). The Father has consistent shape, that is, when He is interacting with the Son. Animals, too, have consistent shape; however, unlike humans, they do not possess the potential to substantiate themselves as virtuous because they do not need to. Only humans (and angels, in heaven) must declare their dignity through daily work. In Book 4, Adam tells Eve,



requires assiduous maintenance. While Sin's shape is inconsistent, and Satan's and all of the fallen angels' shapes do not stay the same, Death lacks a consistent form in order to portend how death comes in a huge range of different ways that Adam cannot anticipate beforehand, as noted in Adam's vision of history (11.429-901).<sup>162</sup> Unlike previous

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other creatures all day long  
Rove idle unemployed, and less need rest;  
Man hath his daily work of body or mind  
Appointed, which declares his dignity,  
And the regard of heaven on all his ways;  
While other animals unactive range,  
And of their doings God takes no account. (4.616-22)

For Wendell Berry, "The wild creatures belong to place by nature, but as a man I can belong to it only by understanding and by virtue" (qtd. in Hiltner 53). Erica Fudge makes the distinction that animals are *naturally* virtuous while humans are not: "Animals remain lesser beings – their virtuous behavior is not willed; it comes from natural instinct rather than a process of moral decision-making, also known as reason – but the naturalness of an animal's virtue reinforces the need for humans themselves to be virtuous" (107). Ken Hiltner also observes an important difference between animals and humans, but in terms of their origins:

Milton is careful to join Eve's Creation with Adam's as both are directly 'formed' (Raphael informs Adam that 'he [God] formed thee, Adam' [7.514], while from a rib Eve was 'formed and fashion'd with his [God's] hands; / Under his forming hands a Creature grew' [8.470-1]) by God, *whereas* the animals emerge from Mother Earth's womb as 'perfect forms, / Limb'd and full grown' (7.455-56) without the need of God's direct handiwork. (131; italics mine)

Even at their origins, Adam and Eve must be formed through God's labour ("direct handiwork"). While Hiltner suggests that Berry's claim provides insight on "the relationship with place on the Earth that Eve lost [at the Fall in Book 9]" (53), I suggest that Adam and Eve's unique, shared origin demonstrates that humans' relationship to place was always-already different from the animals' relationship to place. For humans, labour was a part of life on Earth from the start.

<sup>162</sup> The narrator describes Sin's inconsistent shape as follows:

The one seemed woman to the waist, and fair,  
But ended foul in many a scaly fold  
Voluminous and vast, a serpent armed  
With mortal sting: about her middle round  
A cry of hell hounds never ceasing barked  
With wide Cerberian mouths full loud, and rung  
A hideous peal: yet, when they list, would creep,  
If aught disturbed their noise, into her womb,  
And kennel there, yet there still barked and howled,  
Within unseen. (2.650-9)

Satan, for example, disguises himself as (among other things during his passage to earth) a stripling cherub, which confuses Uriel, who expects him to be as he appears (3.634-734, 4.555-88). During Adam's vision of history, Michael says to him, "[there are] many shapes / Of death, and many are the ways that lead / To his grim cave, all dismal" (11.467-9). Death, like Sin, is also deformed. Here is the narrator's description of Death as he speaks with Satan: "So spake the grisly terror [Death], and in shape, / So speaking and so threatening, grew tenfold / More dreadful and deform" (2.704-6). I want to thank Daniel Shore for pointing

studies, which tend to focus on humans and angels, my dissertation examines other selves with bodily features, in addition to humans and angels.

### **Personhood: The Inter-Personal and Inter-Active Body**

When free actions are virtuous, they are comprised of embodied, productive social interactions, such as prelapsarian speech and pre- and postlapsarian prayer. Prior to the Fall, the body is virtuous (so long as the characters sustain it as such) because there is a natural correspondence between the inward or spiritual self, the outward or physical self, and free will as God ordained it. Adam and Eve are able to actualize the supreme good in themselves, others, and creation through the human form, which, though not fully subject to time until the Fall, reflects time in terms of its agency to change Adam and Eve and others through the human mind's educational experiences. Prelapsarian Adam and Eve become substantial expressions of God by educating themselves about virtue – through conversation with others – from various sources, including the Garden, each other, the obedient or good angels, the disobedient or evil angels, and the Son.<sup>163</sup> While the angels are imperfect, they are (as we will see) models for the kind of embodied virtue that human beings might learn to express. Adam and Eve educate and exercise their free will when they judge, through their embodied experiences, what will help or impede their

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out that Death's inconsistent form portends that he comes in a non-finite range of different ways to fallen human beings (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

<sup>163</sup> My interest in substantial expressions – and, more particularly, the very meaning of the word 'substance' – in the poem springs from the Son's and human beings' repeated associations with them. While the Father is "[s]ubstantially expressed" in the Son (3.140), "in his [God's] own image he / Created thee [Adam, but also all humans], in the image of God / Express" (7.526-8). As potentially substantial expressions of God, the Son and humans are analogous beings.

growth from self-love to self-giving love. The virtuous human form takes shape through free human agency and is necessary for God's purpose (sustained, good creation) because it expresses the basis of the self: God's interpersonal definition of love.

I concluded chapter 1 with the claim that Milton's self-sacrificing Son is God's greatest gift because through Him the Father gives humanity the definition of the self, namely, love. However, I want to take this idea further by arguing that the Son's personification as Love suggests that what it means to be a person necessarily involves one's embodied participation in loving, inter-personal relationships. I hyphenate the word 'inter-personal' to emphasize that selfhood is negotiated between selves. Just as the Son's substantial form produces a fuller expression of the Father, the embodied actions of Milton's human beings permit them to gain knowledge about themselves from significant others, including God.<sup>164</sup> In *Paradise Lost* the Son's role as Saviour is established through conversation with His Father. The Son says, "Behold me then, me for him [man], life for life / ... / Account me man" (3.236-8). His repeated "me" and "life for life" position Him as equivalent to – and importantly, involved in – humanity, while "[a]ccount me man" suggests that identity is formed through another person's perception of the self. The latter is further emphasized by the Son's use of the word "[b]ehold"; specifically, His invitation to the Father to observe Him as He makes His honest declaration of love for humanity highlights the possible correspondence between material and essence.<sup>165</sup> While the word

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<sup>164</sup> The narrator relates how "in him [the Son] all his father shone / Substantially expressed" (3.139-40).

<sup>165</sup> In the *OED*, "behold" is in one sense defined thusly: "To hold or keep in view, to watch; to regard or contemplate with the eyes; to look upon, look at (implying active voluntary exercise of the faculty of vision). *archaic*. This has passed imperceptibly into the resulting passive sensation" ("v.," def. 7a). I think that Milton is employing this archaic, more "active" connotation of the word "behold." The Son asks the Father to judge or evaluate His sincerity by beholding His luminous presence. It seems to me that the

“behold” suggests that the Son is asking the Father to regard His outward presence – that is, what can be seen with the eyes – in order to discern the sincerity or truth in His claim that He can and will become Man, the word “account” implies that the Son is asking the Father to consider Him in a new way, namely, as a thoroughly (also inwardly) *human* being, upon whom the Father’s “anger” might “fall” justifiably (3.237).<sup>166</sup> Accounting is an objective tallying; a rectifying examination. At the same time, the Son’s interaction with the Father in Book 3 draws the reader’s attention toward the Son’s eventual Incarnation as Jesus. Jesus’s body is not only the human part of Jesus, but His body also implies that embodiment in some way adds to divinity. In Book 12, Michael tells Adam that by the joining together of human and God, God’s love is incarnated in the actions of a human body:

The law of God exact he [the Son] shall fulfil  
Both by obedience and by love, though love  
Alone fulfil the law; thy punishment  
He shall endure by coming in the flesh  
To a reproachful life and cursèd death,  
Proclaiming life to all who shall believe  
In his redemption, and that his obedience  
Imputed becomes theirs by faith, his merits  
To save them, not their own, though legal works. (12.402-10)

The Son fulfills God’s law “by obedience and by love,” and He does so “by coming in the flesh.” The Son is “[b]eyond compare” because His goodness or love is “without end” or measure (3.138, 142). This love is, importantly, actualized through quasi-corporeal substance. The narrator relates, “He [the Father] said, and on his son with rays direct /

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passive sense of the word “behold” is used consistently in exclamations or the imperative (see the passive “Behold!” and “Behold” in the examples listed under “behold, *int.*” in the *OED*).

<sup>166</sup> I am not suggesting that the Son’s eventual Incarnation makes Him guilty of humanity’s sins, but rather that the Father must see the Son’s offering to take humanity’s place and accept its punishment as justifiable.

Shone full, he all his father full expressed / Ineffably into his face received” (6.719-21).

By receiving from His Father those “rays” that shine “fully,” the Son experiences and, in turn, emits the Father’s love.

Milton’s Son receives the Father’s love and expresses it to humans in part to illustrate that personhood encompasses not just inter-personal relationships, but also, and more specifically, embodied inter-actions between selves.<sup>167</sup> As the Father shines on the Son, the Son speaks to Adam and Eve. In *Paradise Lost* these interactions are productive, in the sense that some kind of provisional truth results. In chapter 1, I cited Nancy Selleck’s point that identity must not be constructed in opposition to context if we are to see other selves as essential to the self’s formation (2); now, I want to “restore its [the self’s] contexts” (Selleck 16) by showing how the early modern conception of personhood accounted for the composite being’s existence in a social world.<sup>168</sup> The sixteenth- and seventeenth century definition of the person as “more concrete, more exposed, and more about presence,” and the era’s fascination with “questions *between* and not just *about* persons” (Selleck 28, 34), illustrate that personal identity emerged and developed in the intimate and vulnerable space of cooperative, embodied inter-actions.

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<sup>167</sup> Hunter observes, “In the ideal model provided by the Father and the Son, love goes out as to the like (‘All hast thou spoken as my thoughts are’: III, 171) and returns as from the other, otherness rephrasing likeness, as Mercy rephrases Justice” (196). Where Hunter sees likeness in the way that the Son rephrases the Father, I see the Son’s individuality.

<sup>168</sup> ‘Person’ in *Paradise Lost* is, as Daniel Shore notes, also principally a legal and judicial term, in that Satan (for example) is described as an agent under and subject to the law (personal communication, November 11, 2022). For instance, Satan tells his comrades that the laws of heaven in part made him their leader:

Me though just right, and the fixed laws of heaven  
Did first create your leader, next free choice,  
With what besides, in counsel or in fight,  
Hath been achieved of merit, (2.18-21)

The value of “presence” as a means to affect others intimately – and in a healthy way – is seen in Book 11. Michael reassures Adam that God’s invigorating presence permeates earth and heaven, and it is found within Adam himself:

Adam, thou know’st heaven his [God’s], and all the earth,  
Not this rock only; his omnipresence fills  
Land, sea, and air, and every kind that lives,  
Fomented by his virtual power and warmed:  
All the earth he gave thee to possess and rule,  
No despicable gift; surmise not then  
His presence to these narrow bounds confined  
Of Paradise or Eden: (11.335-42)<sup>169</sup>

Michael provides Adam with an explanation for God’s presence that echoes a conversation had much earlier, in Book 4, between Adam and Eve, when Adam actually gives a similar explanation for the stars’ presence in the sky. Though “unbeheld in deep of night” (4.674), they, too, “foment and warm, / Temper or nourish, or in part shed down / Their stellar virtue on all kinds,” which are “made apter to receive / Perfection from the sun’s more potent ray” (4.669-71, 672-3). God and the stars are sometimes invisible; nonetheless, both God and the stars supply virtue to the earth’s creatures with their omnipresence. However, there is a ladder of knowledge, since Adam is able to teach Eve about earthly presences himself but must turn to Michael for greater understanding of a heavenly presence, namely, God. In both cases, knowledge of the spiritual is ascertained. Early modern selves – here, Michael and Adam are representatives – did not just interact with one another; rather, they provided personal illumination for each other.

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<sup>169</sup> There are interestingly intimate, bodily verbs in the line, “Fomented by his virtual power and warmed” (11.338).

Another problem in our reading of the body in *Paradise Lost* is that the body has been conceived in limiting ways in the past and continues to be read as such in the twenty-first century. Theories of the modern body still, in extreme accounts, “emphasise ways in which the will does not control the body” (Cummings and Sierhuis 5).<sup>170</sup> Early modern treatises on the passions were read in terms of the Latin *passio* (meaning suffering) (Tilmouth 28). This destructive view of not just the body, but also the self, made humans apprehensive about their identity and turned other selves into a threat. After the Fall, Milton’s human characters deny the goodness within and without themselves by choosing to focus on their potential for sin.<sup>171</sup> Indeed, Matthew Milner reflects on how in Elizabethan England “[e]ven the appearance of evil was to be shunned” (290). Milton’s poem observes fallen humans’ temptation to believe in the body’s capacity for sin, rather than virtue, when Adam accuses Eve of inborn sin, saying, “[I] understood not all was but a show / Rather than solid virtue, all but a rib / Crooked by nature, bent, as now appears” (10.883-5).<sup>172</sup> Adam is saying that Eve is beautiful only in show. Eve’s nature, her constitution, is warped.<sup>173</sup> Earlier, in Book 8, Raphael rebukes Adam, saying, “Accuse not

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<sup>170</sup> Conversely, McColley argues that in *Paradise Lost* “[t]he Fall ... is not the exploitation of weakness but the perversion of virtue. Satan has perverted simplicity to credulity, truth to corruptibility, ‘dauntless virtue’ to willful overreaching, courage to rashness, hope to discontent, right reason to false logic, love to the hunger to possess and exceed” (*Milton’s Eve* 208-9).

<sup>171</sup> Prelapsarian Adam and Eve also have the potential for sin. As Poole observes, “Based on a fresh notion of human potential yoked to human responsibility, Milton finds himself bound to develop a theory of virtue that promotes contact with evil” (*Milton and the Making* 138). We will see this “contact with evil” later in this chapter, when I discuss prelapsarian Eve’s experience at the lake.

<sup>172</sup> In chapter 1 I showed that all of God’s creation is originally, or firstly, good. See pp. 52-59.

<sup>173</sup> Adam’s misconception of Eve’s – and, ultimately, God’s – nature reflects the “dualistic habit of mind,” which McColley suggests that Milton’s time inherited:

The idea of Eve that Milton’s age inherited resulted from a dualistic habit of mind that he strove in all his works to reform: the supposition that nature and spirit, body and soul, passion and reason, and art and truth are inherently antithetical and that woman, the primordial temptress, represents the dark and dangerous (or rebellious and thrilling) side of each antithesis. ... To incline man,

nature, she hath done her part; / Do thou but thine, and be not diffident / Of wisdom, she deserts thee not” (8.561-3). It is Adam’s responsibility, as a free agent, to do his “part.” Adam refers to the common early modern conception of the impure subject as the source of contamination (Schoenfeldt 168) when he predicts that throughout time there will be “innumerable / Disturbances on earth through female snares, / And strait conjunction with this sex” (10.896-8). He portrays the postlapsarian belief that other bodies are threats to one’s salvation, rather than the means by which one’s virtue is expressed.<sup>174</sup> Because this is fallen Adam’s perception of woman, Milton considers it incorrect. He spends Books 1 through (the first half of) 9 showing that the human body is virtuous.

In *Paradise Lost* the body is not just a vessel for harboring the tissues, organs, muscles, and soul; rather, it expresses the being’s inward state in *physical* ways and, further, influences the world and other selves – positively or negatively – through its actions or embodiment of the will.<sup>175</sup> In terms of the latter, embodiment can make room for what was previously mysterious, such as God’s love.<sup>176</sup> Milton’s poem envisions what Nandra Perry calls “the dream of organic relation between words and things, insides and outsides, bodies and souls, and heaven and earth” (15).<sup>177</sup> The interchangeable nature of

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through woman, to sin and thence to pain and death would be unjust; to create for Adam’s meet help a mate unmeet and helpless would be improvident. (*Milton’s Eve* 3)

That Adam thinks Eve is inherently “crooked” *only* after the Fall shows that this understanding of Eve – both in *Paradise Lost* and elsewhere – is a misunderstanding, borne of fear of the other rather than love.

<sup>174</sup> Adam says, “[Women] infinite calamity shall cause / To human life” (10.907-8).

<sup>175</sup> In other words, the body can be a physical sign of the soul, which is the spiritual aspect of God’s creatures.

<sup>176</sup> I attend to God’s love later in this chapter.

<sup>177</sup> Perry does not explore *Paradise Lost*; however, her phrase “organic relation” is noteworthy, since the poem is invested in not just growing and changing individuals and relationships, but also, and more specifically, the dynamic relationship between “words and things, insides and outsides, bodies and souls, and heaven and earth” (15).



Eden or Paradise and humanity, for example, is foreshadowed early in the poem, when Satan's observation that Adam and Eve are "[e]mparadis'd in one another's arms / The happier Eden" (4.506-7) anticipates the couple's dismissal from Eden to earth, where they, as Michael states,

only add  
Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add faith,  
Add virtue, patience, temperance, add love,  
By name to come called Charity, the soul  
Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath  
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess  
A paradise within thee, happier far. (12.581-7)<sup>178</sup>

Physical Paradise will be realized spiritually within human relationships. Milton makes the virtuous life explicitly social by revealing the interchangeable nature of paradise as a physical place and an interpersonal space, where the latter is embodied in inter-actions that occur between persons.

Milton also uses the physicality of his angels in *Paradise Lost* as part of Adam and Eve's education in enacting virtue. While Raphael, "the sociable spirit" (5.221), educates Adam directly in Books 5 through 8, he also educates Adam indirectly by relating stories of the angel Abdiel, who demonstrates the kind of embodied virtue that humans might learn to express, and of the war in heaven, where the obedient angels triumph because they are faithful. The angels are not simply bearers of God's love to

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<sup>178</sup> McColley observes that there is no competition between the paradise without and the paradise within: But if Adam and Eve cultivate all the faculties of the mind *by means of* cultivating a real garden with real claims, and for its sake as well as their own – 'For the performance of good works' – then there is no rivalry between the Paradise without and the Paradise within, or faith and works, or nature and art. In their experience, 'inward' growth results from attention to 'outward' responsibilities, toward God, toward each other, toward future children, and toward the Garden; the 'Paradise within' is the result of 'answerable deeds.' (*Milton's Eve* 133)

Adam and Eve; rather, they illustrate their voluntary love for God both by vocalizing it in speeches and by acting on it in the spiritually sanctioned behaviour that occurs in the war in heaven. Indeed, most of what the reader hears about is told to Adam and Eve as part of their education.<sup>179</sup> For example, in Book 5, Raphael relates to Adam how Abdiel gave heartfelt reprimands to Satan for hating God (5.809-48). More importantly, Raphael emphasizes that Abdiel's words – so different from physical force, and yet, they are also an outward expression of the body – represent his inward preference for truth, namely, "his constant mind," which God finds "faithful":

So spake the seraph Abdiel faithful found,  
Among the faithless, faithful only he;  
Among innumerable false, unmoved,  
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified  
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;  
Nor number, nor example with him wrought  
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind  
Though single. From amidst them forth he passed,  
Long way through hostile scorn, which he sustained  
Superior, nor of violence feared aught; (5.896-905)

Here, Raphael paints Abdiel as a *model* angel whose embodied virtue humans might learn to express. "[O]nly he" is faithful, he singly has a "constant mind," and he is "[s]uperior" to the disobedient angels. Unlike Adam in Book 9, Abdiel neither permits his will to "swerve from truth" nor fears standing alone (that is, apart from the other angels). For God, "[t]he better fight" (6.30) is the spiritual fight, that is, the fight between Truth and Falsity, which is resolved through words rather than force. For Abdiel, all that matters is

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<sup>179</sup> In a sense, the angels act as mediators between humans and the Son. Marilyn Arnold observes, "when the Creation is completed, the Son, as God of earth, determines 'To visit oft the dwelling of just Men,' and provide 'frequent intercourse' by means of 'his winged messengers' (VII. 570-72)" (68). As the Son's "winged messengers," the angels provide humans "frequent intercourse" with the Son. In other words, the angels give humans an indirect way to communicate with the Son and, by association, the God of heaven.

“[t]o stand approved in sight of God” (6.36). Both God and Abdiel seek correspondence between the inward or spiritual self and the outward or physical self. In fact, because at the beginning of the war in heaven Abdiel cannot endure the sight of Satan’s “strength and might” when he knows that “faith and realty / Remain not,” he cries out,

O heaven! that such resemblance of the highest  
Should yet remain, where faith and realty  
Remain not; wherefore should not strength and might  
There fail where virtue fails, or weakest prove  
Where boldest; though to sight unconquerable?  
His puissance, trusting in the almighty’s aid,  
I mean to try, whose reason I have tried  
Unsound and false; nor is it aught but just,  
That he who in debate of truth hath won,  
Should win in arms, in both disputes alike  
Victor; though brutish that contest and foul,  
When reason hath to deal with force, yet so  
Most reason is that reason overcome. (6.114-26)

While Abdiel is initially confounded by Satan’s hypocrisy – the discrepancy between his outward actions and appearance and his inward dispositions and beliefs – he explores his heart and perceives that reason overcomes force when it must engage in that brutish and foul contest.<sup>180</sup> Abdiel’s model faithfulness and his discovery of the power of reason serve to educate Adam, another physical being, on his own capacity for such virtue.

Raphael’s speech about the war in heaven shows, first, that the obedient angels triumph because they are faithful and, second, that physical beings can embody virtue when outer actions and appearance and inner dispositions and beliefs correspond, and

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<sup>180</sup> Abdiel is primarily confounded by Satan’s (mainly) unremitting brightness. John Hollander discusses the relationship between shadow, substance, the body, and light: “Dark falsities contend with truth’s light, but with enough radiance to dazzle” (22). Although Satan cannot overcome truth’s light, he can “contend” with it, for example, by eclipsing it momentarily. In Book 10, when Satan returns from ruining the human beings on earth, the disobedient angels are “amazed / At that so sudden blaze,” that is, Satan, even though the more discerning speaker tells the reader outright that it is nothing but “false glitter” (10.452-3, 452).

these also correspond with God's will. Similar to Abdiel's spiritual debate with the disobedient angels, the war in heaven is also meant to be a spiritual fight. Raphael alludes to this when he observes that the angels who had not sinned had "high advantages" over those who had sinned, since their inward spirituality could be witnessed outwardly in their ability to remain unwearied and undamaged during the fight:

Such high advantages their innocence  
Gave them above their foes, not to have sinned,  
Not to have disobeyed; in fight they stood  
Unwearied, unobnoxious to be pained  
By wound, though from their place by violence moved. (6.401-5)

Even though the obedient angels are forcefully moved from their place, "they stood." They are unwearied and unhurt because their will does not swerve, because they remain faithful to the end. The obedient angels' outward vigor and inability to be hurt are signs of their inward spiritual steadfastness. Indeed, on the third day, the Son of God tells the obedient angels that their warfare is "accepted" (6.804) precisely because it was faithful. The Son says, "Ye angels armed, this day from battle rest; / Faithful hath been your warfare, and of God / Accepted, fearless in his righteous cause" (6.802-4).<sup>181</sup>

The fundamental importance of the obedient angels' faithfulness is made explicit when the Son rides out on His chariot, which is "convoyed" by four angelic beings whose *bodies*, like the chariot itself, are "[i]nstant with spirit" or Truth. Their bodies are covered with "eyes," their wings are set with "eyes," and the wheels that they pull possess "eyes." In the following symbol of the chariot, the inward, outward, and embodied (self-

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<sup>181</sup> Hunter goes further, claiming that the battle itself is "a test of faithfulness for the good angels" (124).

willed, virtuous action) are harmonious because they are one and the same through and through:

forth rushed with whirlwind sound  
The chariot of paternal deity,  
Flashing thick flames, wheel within wheel undrawn,  
Itself instinct with spirit, but convoyed  
By four cherubic shapes, four faces each  
Had wondrous, as with stars their bodies all  
And wings were set with eyes, with eyes the wheels  
Of beryl, and careering fires between;  
Over their heads a crystal firmament,  
Whereon a sapphire throne, inlaid with pure  
Amber, and colours of the showery arch. (6.749-59)

The “sapphire throne” that rests upon the crystal firmament is another symbol of spiritual Truth because of the sapphire’s symbolic association with truth. The word “pure” also continues the theme of unadulterated faithfulness. Ultimately, the Son wins the war in heaven through spiritual Truth. The glaring eyes of Truth overcome hypocrisy, leaving the disobedient angels in an outward state that is *the opposite* of the obedient angels’ outward state while they were still in battle. Raphael tells Adam how

every eye  
Glared lightning, and shot forth pernicious fire  
Among the accursed, that withered all their strength  
And of their wonted vigor left them drained,  
Exhausted, spiritless, afflicted, fallen. (6.848-52)<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Milton’s earlier references to “[f]lashing thick flames” and “a crystal firmament” (6.751, 757) have associations with the early modern poetic metaphor of the eyebeam and vision’s link to the possibility of redemption. In regard to the latter, Eric F. Langley notes the following about Phineas Fletcher’s 1633 *The Purple Island*: “Vision becomes potentially redemptive, capable of ‘mounting up to that bright crystal [heavenly] sphere’ (I.vi.75) through congruence with the visual bright ‘clear’ (I.vi.66) crystal ocular spheres” (348). Further, “[o]nce ... the eye was a privileged curious inspector, prying into and finding out the natural order of all things” (Langley 342). Thus, the eyes of the cherubic shapes find the accursed and shoot forth fire that withers all their strength. Though eyebeams are most often found in erotic verse, Langley observes, “The tonal similarities between religious and erotic verse are often noted” (348). While, for Langley, “the eyebeam is left as a purely emotive truth [it is no longer an empirical fact]” (354), Milton’s poem suggests that the eyebeam represents spiritual truth, separating the accursed from the holy. For more about the significance of seeing in the period, see Eric F. Langley, “Anatomizing the Early-

That Milton's angels are "far more like humans than any other early modern angels," and yet also "equipped with an elasticity of body and mind toward which even unfallen man could only strive" (Poole, *Milton and the Idea* 101), suggests both that Milton wants us to compare human beings with angels and that, while angels are not perfect, they serve as examples for the kind of embodied virtue that human beings might learn to express.<sup>183</sup>

As early as Book 2, Milton's speaker compares the disobedient angels to humanity at large, implying that even the disobedient angels can teach humans how to embody virtue that results in concord or harmony. Milton's speaker humbles humanity when he observes, first, that the damned spirits do not lose all their virtue and, second, that, unlike human beings, the damned spirits hold agreement with each other about civil matters, such as orders and ranks. In the following quotation, the disobedient angels express generous praise to Satan because they believe he is foregoing his personal safety for "the general safety" of the damned spirits:

Nor failed they to express how much they praised [Satan],  
That for the general safety he despised  
His own: for neither do the spirits damned  
Lose all their virtue; lest bad men should boast  
Their specious deeds on earth, which glory excites,  
Or close ambition varnished o'er with zeal. (2.480-5)

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Modern Eye: A Literary Case-Study," *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2006, pp. 340-55. Langley's paper discusses how intromission displaces extramission in the literary history of the eyebeam.

<sup>183</sup> Arnold claims that Adam and Eve actually "envy the angels' more ready access to the Father" (65). She writes, "Even as Adam and Eve sing the Father's praises in the Garden, we can detect an undercurrent of alienation" (Arnold 65). And yet, "when the Father speaks, the angels cannot see him, but can hear only 'a voice / From midst a Golden Cloud' (VI. 27-28)" (Arnold 65). While the angels are models for the kind of embodied virtue that humans might learn to express, they, too, are imperfect beings.

In addition to Abdiel, the superior angel, we have here the presentation of inferior angels as models for “bad men,” who could learn virtue from them. However, a few lines later, the speaker widens his reproof to include humans – good and bad – *in toto*, crying,

O shame to men! Devil with devil damned  
Firm concord holds, men only disagree  
Of creatures rational, though under hope  
Of heavenly grace: and God proclaiming peace,  
Yet live in hatred, enmity, and strife  
Among themselves, and levy cruel wars,  
Wasting the earth, each other to destroy:  
As if (which might induce us to accord)  
Man had not hellish foes enough besides,  
That day and night for his destruction wait. (2.496-505)

Adam and Eve’s progeny could learn how to live among themselves harmoniously by observing how even the damned spirits hold concord with each other. Humans learn to embody virtue from listening to stories about both the most obedient angel and the disobedient angels. They learn that virtue must be embodied – that is, acted upon.<sup>184</sup>

### **Fashioning Form: Shape Versus Shadow**

I want to set Adam and Eve aside for the moment and turn to Milton’s portrayal of Satan and his offspring, Sin and Death, to show what happens when creatures that possess free will do not participate in the ongoing maintenance (and therefore creation) of

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<sup>184</sup> Indeed, Milton’s God does not restore His original plan (as He could) when Adam and Eve sin precisely because He wants to educate them. Tobias Gregory cites Bernard of Clairvaux’s perspective on God’s acceptance of the Son’s offer:

Bernard of Clairvaux’s take on the issue was that God chose the incarnation not as a necessity of procedural justice, but as an effective method of rendering mankind properly grateful: ‘But somebody will say: “Surely the Creator could have restored his original plan without all that hardship?” Yes, he could, but he chose the way of personal suffering so that man would never again have a reason to display that worst and most hateful of all vices, ingratitude.’ (90)

goodness, but instead relish selfish desire and, in particular, the destruction of other selves.<sup>185</sup> For Milton, Satan and his offspring partake in negative fashioning when they attempt to make human beings “mature” toward destruction (10.612). Since Satan believes that he cannot be good, but also in his misunderstanding of what good is wishes that he was good, he perverts his potential for goodness by attempting to take away what is good in the lives of other self-fashioning beings.<sup>186</sup> I employ the word “fashion” here because it means “the action or process of making,” and so encompasses both positive and negative forms of growth, and also because “it is in the sixteenth century that fashion seems to come into wide currency as a way of designating the forming of a self” (Greenblatt 2).<sup>187</sup> Significantly, it is Adam and Eve’s dexterity in fashioning themselves that makes Satan jealous. We see Satan’s inability to control his own fashioning in Book 4, when a light touch from Ithuriel’s spear causes Satan-in-the-toad to “start up in his own shape the fiend” (4.819). Satan “returns / Of force to ... [his] own likeness” (4.812-3). Satan attempts to take away what is good in the lives of other self-fashioning beings, as he convinces Eve to eat the forbidden fruit and soon after employs Sin and Death to infect

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<sup>185</sup> Death’s shapelessness reflects his insatiable desire because it, too, is *limitless*. Death says to Sin,  
To me, who with eternal famine pine,  
Alike is hell, or Paradise, or heaven,  
There best, where most with ravin I may meet;  
Which here, though plenteous, all too little seems  
To stuff this maw, this vast unhide-bound corpse. (10.597-601)

In their footnote for line 601, the editors, Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg, note that “unhide-bound” means “[s]hapeless, not bound or limited in size” (258).

<sup>186</sup> In Book 4, Satan decides, “all good to me is lost; / Evil be thou my good;” (4.109-10).

<sup>187</sup> *Paradise Lost*, in fact, uses a variation of the word ‘fashion’ in the scene where Adam recollects Eve’s creation. Adam recalls, “The rib he [God] formed and fashioned with his hands; / Under his forming hands a creature grew” (8.469-70). Here, Milton explicitly connects the act of fashioning with the “forming” or emerging self. However, Eve’s fashioning does not stop at her creation. Afterward, her selfhood is continuously emerging. In this way, “God ... provides the matter and it is up to the creature to give it form” (Danielson 49). Humans have the purpose of giving proper form to themselves for perpetuity.



all of humanity with negative fashioning. Sin elaborates, “I in man residing through the race, / His thoughts, his looks, words, actions all infect, / And season him thy [Death’s] last and sweetest prey” (10.607-9). The language of her last line is very bodily. Sin plans to reverse the positive self-fashioning that humans regain after the Fall by making them “for destruction to mature” (10.612).

Sin and Death are able to corrupt humanity’s self-fashioning through what Sin describes as a sort of infection because, though Sin and Death are personified entities, Death is never actually shaped into a substantial being. This is why Milton’s speaker refers to him mainly as a shadow. When Death first appears to the reader, the speaker struggles to describe him precisely because he has neither shape nor substance.<sup>188</sup> The speaker says that while Death “might be called” a shape, this would be a lie, for it “had none” (2.667). He then observes that while Death “might be called” a substance, this would also be a lie, for he “[a] shadow seemed” (2.669). The speaker’s description of Death is painstakingly made: “what seemed his [Death’s] head / The likeness of a kingly crown had on” (2.672-3). “[S]eemed” and “likeness” tell the reader that Death is hardly comparable to human beings. Death cannot be called a “shape” because he does not match the definition for it.<sup>189</sup> Death can, however, be understood in terms of “shadow” (10.264). The speaker is, tellingly, only certain that Death is “black ... as night” (2.670).

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<sup>188</sup> That Death has neither shape nor substance is partly emblematic of death’s mystery to us: “For man also knoweth not his time” (*Authorized King James Version*, Eccles. 9.12).

<sup>189</sup> In the *OED*, the sense that agrees with Milton’s uses of the word is, “The manner in which a thing is fashioned (by nature or art); make, structure, arrangement of parts; visible” (“shape, *n.*1,” def. 3a). Death is not natural, it cannot be described in terms of “parts,” and it is hardly “visible.” Indeed, in *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton asserts, “therefore that bodily death from which we are to rise again, originated in sin, and not in nature” (389).

That Death is some sort of shadow is significant. Without shape, it is nearly impossible for one to give form or substance *to oneself* through embodiment or action. As opposed to Adam and Eve, who seek actualization through mutually constructive inter-actions with others, Death attempts to find actualization through selfish, destructive actions with others.<sup>190</sup> Death is very hungry before he comes into the world because his existence in history depends on his maintaining at least a semblance of shape.<sup>191</sup> Similarly, in Book 10, when the disobedient angels are transformed into serpents as punishment for their league with Satan, they are “plagued / And worn with famine” (10.572-3). They are constrained by hunger and thirst and, significantly, they are unable to speak intelligibly<sup>192</sup>:

And the dire hiss renewed, and the dire form  
Caught by contagion, like in punishment,  
As in their crime. Thus was the applause [for Satan] they meant,  
Turned to exploding hiss, triumph to shame  
Cast on themselves by their own mouths. (10.543-7)

It seems that because Satan sinned by leaving his God-given shape and giving expression to his serpent shape (during his temptation of Eve), Satan and his followers are punished

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<sup>190</sup> Sin and Death’s constant opposition to Adam and Eve demonstrates that Milton continues the “ancient opposition” between shadow and substance (Hollander 15). For Hunter, “Just as Death, a non-shape (II, 666-70), acquires substance only by what he feeds upon, so the other inhabitants of hell are mental constructs waiting for the will of the malign believer to give them reality, history and the right to their own episodes” (35). I disagree with Hunter’s claim. Death is unable to acquire substance because goodness requires assiduous maintenance.

<sup>191</sup> In Book 2, Satan promises to bring his children, Sin and Death, to a place (earth) where they can eat their fill, and Sin and Death respond joyously. Satan observes, “there ye [Sin and Death] shall be fed and filled / Immeasurably, all things shall be your prey” (2.843-4), and Milton’s narrator continues,

He ceased, for both seemed highly pleased, and Death  
Grinned horrible a ghastly smile, to hear  
His famine should be filled, and blessed his maw  
Destined to that good hour: no less rejoiced  
His mother bad, and thus bespake her sire. (2.845-9)

<sup>192</sup> The narrator observes, “Hunger and thirst constraining,” (10.568).

in the same shape, but they change form by gaining “the sound / Of public scorn” (10.508-9) (hissing) rather than eloquence.<sup>193</sup> While hissing is still an expressive action, it is a meagre one, for Satan and his followers can no longer communicate with each other. They also have no power to reform their temporary shape.

### **Virtue and the Body**

Importantly, in *Paradise Lost* virtue and substance are mutually dependent when the body is substantiated as virtuous through the self’s proper relations with others. Milton’s poem suggests that virtue is embodied when, in Book 4, Satan observes the “awful goodness” and lovely shape of virtue in the angel Zephon, who has just reprimanded Satan for tempting Eve:

So spake the cherub [Zephon] and his grave rebuke  
Severe in youthful beauty, added grace  
Invincible: abashed the devil stood,  
And felt how awful goodness is, and saw  
Virtue in her shape how lovely, saw, and pined  
His loss; but chiefly to find here observed  
His lustre visibly impaired; yet seemed  
Undaunted. (4.844-51)

While Zephon might be one of the Virtues, a rank among the obedient angels, the phrase “Virtue in her shape,” as well as Zephon’s outward and inward expressions of virtue (his “grave rebuke,” “youthful beauty,” and “grace”), suggest that Zephon actually *embodies* virtue by giving it form through his body or shape.<sup>194</sup> Although originally good, the

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<sup>193</sup> In Book 9, Satan uses persuasion to make Eve believe that she should eat the forbidden fruit.

<sup>194</sup> For Bryan Adams Hampton,

while the original unformed matter from which human beings and all of creation were fashioned was perfect in itself, Milton asserts that the granting of ‘form’ to that matter renders it ‘beautiful’: ‘matter was not, by nature, imperfect’ and the ‘addition of forms ... did not make it more perfect

human being is not as actualized as an angel like Zephon. Adam and Eve are not only sensitive to the world around them, but they are also more susceptible to harm. For example, in Eve's origin story, found in Book 4, she approaches the lake "[w]ith unexperienced thought" (4.457) because she is newly created; she risks failing to learn that she can only really know herself by knowing her other self, namely, Adam.<sup>195</sup> Fortunately, *Paradise Lost* uncovers for both the human couple and the reader the "equipment for living"; in particular, it "foster[s] ... the willingness to persevere in the field of this world [not Eden] that he [Milton] believed essential to the constitution of human virtue" (Rumrich 265). Milton's poem, in other words, provides humans with the tools that are necessary for them to achieve the supreme good. But what are these tools? The answer lies in the many connotations of the word 'substantial.' When a being interacts with another through some kind of action, the identities of both are affected.<sup>196</sup> In *Areopagitica*, Milton asserts that "all opinions, yea, errors, known, read and collated, are of main service and assistance toward the speedy attainment of what is truest" (110). Milton continues,

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but only more beautiful' (*CPW* 6:308). Form here implies design and *telos*, and the beauty of the human form more precisely finds its most eloquent articulation in the virtuous figure of the Son, not the angels. (129)

<sup>195</sup> Eve's "unexperienced thought" is evinced when she thinks that the lake is "another sky" (4.457, 459).

<sup>196</sup> While Satan and Zephon do not have human bodies per se (they are angels after all), they certainly have bodily features, such as senses – Raphael tells Adam as much in Book 5:

Therefore what he [God] gives  
(Whose praise be ever sung) to man in part  
Spiritual, may of purest spirits be found  
No ingrateful food: and food alike those pure  
Intelligential substances require,  
As doth your rational; and both contain  
Within them every lower faculty  
Of sense, whereby they hear, see, smell, touch, taste,  
Tasting concoct, digest, assimilate,  
And corporeal to incorporeal turn. (5.404-13)

For those actions which enter into a man and then issue out of him, and therefore defile not, God uses not to captivate under a perpetual childhood of prescription, but trusts him [man] with the gift of reason to be his own chooser; there were but little work left for preaching, if law and compulsion should grow so fast upon those things which heretofore were governed only by exhortation. (*Areopagitica* 110)

God trusts individuals to choose *for themselves*, rather than forcing them through “law and compulsion” to obey Him. To return to the quotation from *Paradise Lost* (found above), Satan’s confrontation with Zephon makes him feel “abashed” and, further, he experiences a “loss” or discrepancy in his sense of self because he “find[s] here observed [by Zephon] / His lustre visibly impaired.” Zephon clearly states that Satan’s appearance has been altered by his “sin and place of doom”:

Think not, revolted spirit, thy shape the same,  
Or undiminished brightness, to be known  
As when thou stood’st in heaven upright and pure;  
That glory then, when thou no more wast good,  
Departed from thee, and thou resemblest now  
Thy sin and place of doom obscure and foul. (4.835-40)

In other words, Satan’s matter has been reshaped by his new form, that is, his sinfulness. Though Satan “seemed / Undaunted,” his “loss” cannot be denied, since Zephon’s recognition of Satan’s impaired lustre makes Zephon’s subsequent claim that Satan is “weak” (4.856) ring true. Indeed, Satan is “overcome with rage” (4.857). The ability of other selves either to solidify or upend a creature’s sense of self is seen throughout the poem; the poem serves to stress that a constant negotiation of selfhood takes place not just within the self, but also, and primarily, between embodied, interacting selves. This negotiation of selfhood is necessary for the self to achieve the supreme good.

The body in *Paradise Lost* also gains substantiation as virtuous – again, the spiritual form of the body becomes more spiritual – through inward and outward service, such that truly virtuous beings “mature” into “solid virtue” (10.882, 884) rather than mere seeming virtue.<sup>197</sup> Belial, for example, just “seemed / For dignity composed and high exploit: / But was all false and hollow” (2.110-2). In the *OED*, the word ‘substantial,’ sense four, has the following meaning: “Firmly or solidly established; of solid worth or value; of real significance, weighty; reliable; important; worthwhile” (*adj., n., and adv.*). “[E]stablished,” “of solid worth,” and “of real significance” all suggest that substantial might refer to the correspondence between outer actions and appearance and inner dispositions and beliefs, as well as God’s will. When the Father states that the Son “hast been found / By merit more than birthright Son of God, / Found worthiest to be so by being good” (3.308-10), Milton shows not only that the Father believes the Son is “worthiest,” but also that the Son *is* “worthiest” because He is truly (that is, outwardly and inwardly) good. His “being” good means that He embodies goodness as an action consistently.<sup>198</sup> The Son achieves merit through being good. Adam and Eve are virtuous when they partake in embodied inter-actions, such as their morning and night duets praising God.<sup>199</sup> The pair’s inward spirituality is expressed outwardly through eloquence, and the coalescence of spiritual movement and outward embodiment in prelapsarian

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<sup>197</sup> I am not suggesting that the body exists prior to being a substance but that that substance expresses what it truly is (divine) more and more.

<sup>198</sup> Hampton, summarizing Paul of Samosata’s adoptionist model of the Incarnation, observes, “Jesus is the ‘Word of God,’ not because he is a member of the preexistent Trinity, but because he *becomes* the fulfillment of the Father’s commands and ordinances through the performance of his virtuous life; thereby, he is adopted through the Spirit of grace” (116; italics mine).

<sup>199</sup> But, of course, not all embodied interactions are virtuous. The hymns of praise are found in Book 5, lines 144-210 (morning), and Book 4, lines 720-735 (night).

Adam and Eve is made clear when the narrator notes that Adam and Eve “neither various style / Nor holy rapture wanted they to praise / Their maker” (5.146-8).

Milton’s humans are similar to not just the Son, but also the Father; this likeness implies human beings’ potential merit as God’s virtuous creatures, while also pointing out the need for them to “declare their dignity” (Danielson 182), as the Son does, by communicating this image to others through their bodies and souls within the created world.<sup>200</sup> Prelapsarian Adam and Eve “declare their dignity” in part by maintaining their obedience over time. Raphael stresses that Adam and Eve’s “bodies may at last turn all to spirit” (5.497) if they keep God’s spiritual commands. He observes that “time may come when men / With angels may participate,” notes that human bodies may be “[i]mproved by tract of time,” and advises, “Meanwhile enjoy / Your fill what happiness this happy state / Can comprehend, incapable of more” (5.493-4, 498, 503-5).<sup>201</sup> For Milton, humanity must not simply stay good; rather, it must take active responsibility for its *potential*, which means learning both how to remain upright and how to improve itself. By the word ‘upright,’ I mean physically erect and spiritually honourable.<sup>202</sup> Adam and Eve, we are told, are “of far nobler shape erect and tall, / Godlike erect” and, further, they

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<sup>200</sup> The Father says to the Son, “Let us make now man in our image, man / In our similitude” (7.519-20). I am continuing my distinction between Father, Son, and amalgamated God, which I made in chapter 1.

<sup>201</sup> Interestingly, how humans will participate with angels is open-ended.

<sup>202</sup> Stuart Curran argues that for Milton potentiality takes precedence over achievement:

It may be that the conspicuous, non-biblical presence of Chaos in the poem, as Joan Webber long ago argued (seconded since by numerous others), is there to ensure that we readers understand God’s creation as always foregrounding potentiality over mere achievement, with no end in sight for eternity, in the same way that there are always more words possible in the vocabulary of the divine Logos than have yet been uttered. But the kinetic energy driving this ceaseless creativity is self-sacrifice. (531-2)

For Curran, Chaos is associated with endless creativity. Indeed, Milton’s speaker observes how God can “ordain / His dark materials to create new worlds” (2.915-6).

“worthy seemed, for in their looks divine / The image of their glorious maker shone” (4.288-9, 291-2). Adam and Eve are “like” God and “seem” worthy because God has “poured” “his gifts” on them, “[i]nward and outward both, his image fair” (8.220, 221). Their physical and spiritual uprightness are in accord, created as they were “upright with front serene / [To] Govern the rest, self-knowing, and from thence / Magnanimous to correspond with Heav’n” (7.509-11). As God’s “nobler” creatures, it is Adam and Eve’s turn to guide their God-given beauty toward virtuous ends.

While Milton’s Adam and Eve are physically and spiritually equipped to deal with any adversity they encounter, Milton expects his creatures to grow, and he shows this growth by linking the state of the physical body – that is, of health or malaise – with the development of inward virtue. Specifically, he juxtaposes pre- and postlapsarian human beings. In doing so, Milton reveals another way in which humans substantiate themselves as virtuous selves, namely, by not just maintaining, but also continuously and progressively strengthening, through labour, their physical and corresponding spiritual capabilities. In an essay that focuses on the separation scene in Book 9 of *Paradise Lost*, Diane Kelsey McColley observes that the couple is “in the process of healthful growth” (“Free Will” 103 [abstract]).<sup>203</sup> By Book 9, readers are three-quarters of the way through the poem, and yet it is here that they see the couple still “facing difficulties and learning”

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<sup>203</sup> Hugh MacCallum also stresses growth during the separation scene, writing, “The separation does not make the Fall necessary, but reveals in a striking fashion that unfallen man learns by trial and error. Of the argument that follows, [Joseph] Addison observed long ago that ‘it is such a dispute as we may suppose might have happened in Paradise, had Man continued happy and innocent’” (152). MacCallum continues, “The present scene shows them [Adam and Eve] growing in awareness of the separateness that makes their voluntary love meaningful. The catalyst of this growth, the argument, is in itself distressing, but its final outcome should have been an increase in joy” (152).



(McColley, “Free Will” 103 [abstract]).<sup>204</sup> Milton stresses the necessity of continuous learning as a natural part of God’s creatures’ growth through his emphasis on “change,” a word that occurs forty-three times in the poem and that has positive connotations in its various contexts.<sup>205</sup> Indeed, Adam and Eve are continually evolving creatures. The couple does not just tend to the Garden; the anthropomorphized Garden (Crosman 98) also educates the couple, caring for Adam and Eve by providing them with learning experiences.<sup>206</sup> In this way, the Garden is truly, as John Leonard argues, “a nursery” (*Faithful Labourers* 572). In Book 8, for example, Adam recollects one of his first memories of life in the Garden. He says, “[I] sometimes went, and sometimes ran / With supple joints, as lively vigour led” (8.268-9). Not only does the Garden provide space for Adam to exercise his nimble limbs, but it also permits him room, as it were, to transform his liveliness into a virtuous reflection of divinity. In Book 4, Milton ties the body and virtue together with the word “lively” (4.363). He writes, “so lively shines / In them [the human couple] divine resemblance” (4.363-4). Adam and Eve’s liveliness permits the

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<sup>204</sup> Edwards argues that “learning, as represented in *Paradise Lost*, is ongoing and incremental and ... inseparable from loving” (“Learning and Loving” 240). She points out, “‘Education’ suggests something to be obtained, while ‘learning,’ as a gerund, has process and the passing of time built into it” (Edwards, “Learning and Loving” 240).

<sup>205</sup> For instance, in Book 5 Raphael tells Adam that even in heaven the day is divided between evening and morning – though, in that case, “for change delectable, not need” (5.629). For Milton, change is attractive. MacCallum observes that Eden itself is replete with change: “There is nothing static about life in Eden; its pleasures require energy, concentration and poise. ... They [Adam and Eve] trim erring branches, prop flowers that are in danger of being overcome by their own weight, clear paths of gum and blossoms, and wed the vine to the elm” (112). Further, “As J.M. Evans argues, such activity suggests how they must also control their own development, supporting feeling with its proper object and pruning excessive curiosity or desire” (MacCallum 112).

<sup>206</sup> See footnote 218 on page 161 (this chapter) for one of Crosman’s examples. I explore a specific instance of Adam and Eve learning in the Garden later in this chapter.

“divine resemblance” within them to shine, and they harness both through their education in the Garden.

After the Fall, however, humans no longer revere God’s image, and this error results in “loathsome sickness” (11.524). Michael gives Adam a vision of a lazar-house

wherein were laid  
Numbers of all diseased, all maladies  
Of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms  
Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,  
Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,  
Intestine stone and ulcer, colic pangs,  
Demoniac frenzy, moping melancholy  
And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,  
Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence,  
Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums. (11.479-88)

The long list of ailments and lengthy final line in the quotation above reflect the extensive reach of the “wide-wasting pestilence” that will be brought on by Eve’s “inabstinence” (11.476). Further, polysyndeton in the last line emphasizes the connection between humans’ lack of respect for God’s spiritual image and physical illness. When Adam asks why man “should not ... / Retaining still divine similitude / In part, from such deformities be free” (11.511-3), Michael says,

Their maker’s image ... then  
Forsook them, when themselves they vilified  
To serve ungoverned appetite, and took  
His image whom they served, a brutish vice, (11.515-8)

He continues, “Therefore so abject is their punishment, / Disfiguring not God’s likeness, but their own, / Or if his likeness, by themselves defaced” (11.520-2). These lines emphasize the outward alteration resulting from the inward change. The descendants of Adam disfigure themselves outwardly because of their inwardly ungoverned appetite.

Thus, Michael thereafter states, “While they pervert pure nature’s healthful rules / To loathsome sickness, worthily, since they / God’s image did not reverence in themselves” (11.523-5). The precise correspondence between cause and effect, sin and corruption, is evinced by the transition from the word “healthful,” in the first quoted line, to the word “sickness,” in the second quoted line. Michael’s use of the word “worthily” is also important, since it emphasizes that these humans from a future time get what they deserve. They are sick inwardly and outwardly (though Adam is focused on what happens outwardly) because they did not respect God’s image, which they could have reflected within and without themselves. Milton’s juxtaposition of healthy prelapsarian Adam and Eve with postlapsarian Adam and Eve’s unhealthy progeny stresses the correspondence between the physical and the spiritual, as well as the necessity of change in God’s plan.

### **The Human Body as Mediator via the Senses**

In Milton’s poem the body’s five senses usefully mediate between the outside world and inward reason. For Milton, the senses can lead to, even inspire, thoughts. Since thoughts are located within the mind, and the understanding – the place where God rests – is, in turn, within the mind, the senses contribute to the understanding.<sup>207</sup> In order for the

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<sup>207</sup> In the introduction to his edition of *Paradise Lost*, Merritt Y. Hughes cites the philosophical poet Davies of Hereford’s *Mirum in Modum* (1602) as an example of Milton’s image of “man’s spiritual root and perfecting character,” which “are both said to end in heaven” (xxxix). Since Milton’s image of “man’s spiritual root and perfecting character” is relevant to my argument, I will employ Hughes’s citation of Davies of Hereford here:

The *Body* in the elements is cloz’d;  
The *Bloud* within the body is confin’d;  
The *Spirits*, within the Bloud; the Soul’s dispoz’d  
Within the *Spirites*, which *Soule* includes the *Minde*.  
The *Understanding* in the *Minde*’s repoz’d,  
And God in th’*Understanding* rest doth find:

senses to aid the mind through meaning making, as they are meant to, the will must be both active and temperate. During the early modern period, it was, in fact, generally accepted among writers on the soul that “the mind cannot think without the images of sensation” (Shuger 209). The continuity between the body and thought is made explicit in the Aristotelian belief that “perception was a continuum from the object to the ‘gaze of thought’ within the individual” (Milner 14 [footnote 3]). Milton illustrates this way of thinking when he positions the body’s senses as sentries, more specifically, mediators, between the external world and reason. In Book 5, Adam explains to Eve, consoling her after she wakes from the bad dream Satan forged in her while she slept:

But know that in the soul  
Are many lesser faculties that serve  
Reason as chief; among these fancy next  
Her office holds; of all external things,  
Which the five watchful senses represent,  
She [fancy] forms imaginations, airy shapes,  
Which reason joining or disjoining, frames  
All what we affirm or what deny, and call  
Our knowledge or opinion; (5.100-8)

The “five watchful senses” represent “all external things,” and information from the senses permits reason to “frame” “[a]ll what we affirm or what deny.” Satan had used his “devilish art” to try to influence sleeping Eve, through her fancy,

Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve;  
Assaying by his devilish art to reach  
The organs of her fancy, and with them forge  
Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams,  
Or if, inspiring venom, he might taint  
The animal spirits that from pure blood arise

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So this Worlde’s made for *Man*, Man for the Soule,  
*Soule* for the *Mind*, and *Minde* for God her Gole. (qtd. in “Introduction” xl)  
‘Man’s’ spiritual root, when nurtured, can grow into its divine identity and, in the process of doing so, become more and more substantial.

Like gentle breaths from rivers pure, thence raise  
At least distempered, discontented thoughts,  
Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires  
Blown up with high conceits engendering pride. (4.800-9)

Eve's fancy, through Satan's invasion, creates false sensations. Eve, when she wakes up, knows they were false. She says that in her dream she encountered "offence and trouble, which my mind / Knew never till this irksome night" (5.34-35). Eve's senses are illusory in her dream, and she cannot use her reason as she is dreaming. However, when she is awake, her will is both active and temperate, and so she is able to discern that her experience was "but a dream" (5.93).

Both before and after the dream episode, Milton provides examples of Adam and Eve's unfallen senses working with reason toward understanding. Specifically, Adam and Eve's awakenings into being and their hymns demonstrate that the physical is an expression of the spiritual.<sup>208</sup> When Adam awakes into being, he uses his sense of sight to gaze in wonder at the sky, the landscape, and the creatures about him, and, in so doing, he discerns the harmonious relationship between these three, which fills his heart with joy:

Straight toward heaven my wondering eyes I turned,  
And gazed awhile the ample sky, till raised  
By quick instinctive motion up I sprung,  
As thitherward endeavouring, and upright  
Stood on my feet; about me round I saw  
Hill, dale, and shady woods, and sunny plains,  
And liquid lapse of murmuring streams; by these,  
Creatures that lived, and moved, and walked, or flew,  
Birds on the branches warbling; all things smiled,  
With fragrance and joy my heart o'erflowed. (8.257-66)<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> For my analysis of Eve's experiences soon after her awakening, see pp. 179-83.

<sup>209</sup> There is an interesting alignment of sense and passion in the final line: "With fragrance and joy my heart o'erflowed" (8.266).

Adam recognizes that the hills, dales, shady woods, and sunny plains provide homes for the creatures – in the woods, he sees birds warbling on the branches – and his heart fills with joy to see that “all things smiled.” When none of the creatures answers his questions about his origin, Adam’s “untroubled” senses (they are unfallen) become drowsy and he dreams:

On a green shady bank profuse of flowers  
Pensive I sat me down; there gentle sleep  
First found me, and with soft oppression seized  
My drowsèd sense, untroubled, though I thought  
I then was passing to my former state  
Insensible, and forthwith to dissolve:  
When suddenly stood at my head a dream,  
Whose inward apparition gently moved  
My fancy to believe I yet had being,  
And lived: (8.286-95)

Though Adam thinks he might be passing to his “former state / Insensible,” the “inward apparition” of his dream gently moves his fancy “to believe I yet had being, / And lived.” Similar to Eve’s dream in Book 5, Adam’s senses are illusory while he dreams, and he cannot use his reason. When Adam awakes, he discerns, through reason, that the dream, though a “lively shadow,” is not “all real” (8.311, 310). When he sees the real world before his eyes, and then God’s “[p]resence divine,” “[i]n adoration at his [God’s] feet I fell / Submiss” (8.314, 315-6). Adam’s unfallen senses work with reason toward understanding the created world and its Creator.

In Adam and Eve’s hymns, their understanding of the senses and physical actions is developed and carries their virtuous connection to the world. Adam and Eve realize that, though God is to them “invisible or dimly seen” because they are His “lowest works,” it is their responsibility, and great purpose, to declare His “goodness beyond

thought, and power divine” (5.157, 158, 159). Once Adam and Eve realize that their physical bodies allow them to declare God’s goodness, through hymns and prayer, they address all the creatures on earth, inviting them “to extol / Him first, him last, him midst, and without end” (5.164-5). At the end of their hymn, Adam and Eve, through their senses and physical actions, realize that there is a connection between good and evil, light and dark – namely, that both evil and darkness can disappear through God’s grace and their own actions:

Witness if I be silent, morn or even,  
To hill, or valley, fountain, or fresh shade  
Made vocal by my song, and taught his praise.  
Hail universal Lord, be bounteous still  
To give us only good; and if the night  
Have gathered aught of evil or concealed,  
Disperse it, as now light dispels the dark. (5.202-8)

Further, Adam and Eve learn that they can make the hill, valley, fountain, and shade vocal by their song, teaching them God’s praise. These parts of the landscape echo their praise of God. Indeed, in Book 5, lines 153 to 208, there are 11 strophes in which all of creation is pictured by Adam and Eve and exhorted to praise God through the movement, often circular, of their existence. The circularity suggests order and harmony in God’s originally good creation.

While unfallen senses are beneficial and good in themselves, the human couple chooses how to use the information that they provide (for example, toward virtuous ends). The human being is given the delicate but crucial task of judging its intake of both knowledge and food – for Milton they are similar in that they lead equally to death if temperance is forgotten. Raphael makes the relationship between knowledge and

sustenance clear to Adam. He states that “knowledge is as food, and needs no less / Her temperance over appetite,” and afterward warns, it “[o]ppresses else with surfeit, and soon turns / Wisdom to folly, as nourishment to wind” (7.126-7, 129-30). Since food is obviously related to taste, and we already saw that for Milton the senses work with reason toward understanding, it makes sense that Adam and Eve must govern their appetite. Raphael explicitly links food with human mortality when he says that “in the day thou eat’st [of the forbidden tree], thou diest; / Death is the penalty imposed, beware, / And govern well thy appetite” (7.544-6). Just as the tree of life is located beside the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – truly, it is the tree of death – too little food weakens the body while too much food results in death.<sup>210</sup> The proximity of life and death in relation to both food and the trees suggests not only that eating is “a source both of physiological and ethical speculation,” as Michael Schoenfeldt puts it (in Cummings 321), but also, and more specifically, that how well human beings take care of their bodies is analogous to the kind of life that they lead. We saw this earlier, when the bodies of fallen humans are racked by sickness, inwardly and outwardly, because they did not revere God’s image in themselves. Food and trees are both directly associated with growth, and Milton emphasizes that Adam and Eve’s growth – physical and spiritual – must be a gradual, temperate process through the measured education that takes place in the Garden. Milton encapsulates this belief when Michael advises Adam, “Nor love thy life, nor hate; but what thou liv’st / Live well” (11.553-4). While the reader might object that Michael makes this statement after the Fall, Milton prioritizes temperance from start to finish in

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<sup>210</sup> The speaker relates how “next to life / Our death the tree of knowledge grew fast by” (4.220-1).



his poem. For example, in Book 7, the Father tells the Son that human beings will be “raised” “by degrees of merit” (7.157) over time. The Father expects humans to ascend toward their spiritual or heavenly potential in steps or stages, as part of the larger process of transitioning earth to heaven and heaven to earth.<sup>211</sup> Adam and Eve have free will primarily in the sense that they judge, through their embodied experiences, what will help or impede their growth. We see this when Raphael dines with the human couple and Adam discerns that the angel “hast vouchsafed / Gently for our instruction to impart / Things above earthly thought” because they “yet concerned / Our knowing” (7.80-82, 82-83). Adam sees that knowledge (food) is “for ... instruction” rather than “gluttonous delight” (11.533). His equating of knowledge with food suggests that the spiritual, which includes God’s creatures’ pursuit of divine understanding, and the physical are analogous in terms of the significance of personal judgement for appropriate progression of the divine plan.

However, Adam and Eve’s outward and inward states must not only correspond with each other, but also with God’s will. In Book 9 (after the Fall), the narrator relates how Adam is “estranged in look and altered style” because “understanding ruled not” between him and Eve:

Their inward state of mind, calm region once  
And full of peace, now tossed and turbulent:  
For understanding ruled not, and the will  
Heard not her lore, both in subjection now (9.1125-8)

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<sup>211</sup> The Father anticipates, “And earth be changed to heaven, and heaven to earth” (7.160). However, the Son’s role as Redeemer also demonstrates that humans are meant to ascend toward God. Arnold writes, “By his [the Son’s] descent he becomes physically accessible; by his death he gains victory over the grave and opens the way for man’s return to a higher realm. God descends to meet man so that man may ascend to meet God” (69).

Adam's "estranged" outward appearance and embodiment – he also has "altered style" (9.1132) – reflect his inward state, which is tempestuous, because the will is now in subjection "[t]o sensual appetite" (9.1129).<sup>212</sup> While Adam's outward and inward states correspond with each other – both express turmoil – they are not in correspondence *with* God's will. Adam's overall tumultuous state represents an absence of the good. Both correspondences are necessary for humans to progress toward their more spiritual selves.

Under certain conditions outward gestures can cause inward spiritual changes.<sup>213</sup> In Book 10, Milton demonstrates "the period's Aristotelian belief in the power of external gestures and habits to stimulate internal change," which was seen in its "descriptions of the mutual dependence of body and soul in generating pious devotion" (Targoff 10).

Though Adam turns from Eve, she,

Not so repulsed, with tears that ceased not flowing,  
And tresses all disordered, at his feet  
Fell humble, and embracing them, besought  
His peace, (10.910-3)

Eve uses her physical being to prompt Adam's interpersonal response to her, which revives his love, reason, and faith:

soon his heart relented  
Towards her, his life so late and sole delight,  
Now at his feet submissive in distress,  
Creature so fair his reconciliation seeking,  
His counsel whom she had displeased, his aid;  
As one disarmed, his anger all he lost,  
And thus with peaceful words upraised her soon. (10.940-6)

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<sup>212</sup> McColey observes that "[t]he divorce between the tongue and the heart occurs at the Fall" (*Milton's Eve* 168). Indeed, according to Hughes, Adam's "altered style" means "changed manner (of speech)" ([footnote for 9.1132] 233).

<sup>213</sup> This is true metaphorically speaking at least. These metaphors suggest that the physical and spiritual are integrally related.

Eve's outward gesture of falling at Adam's feet and embracing them stimulates an inward change in Adam: he loses all his anger and regains a sense of peace. Also in Book 10, the speaker says that Adam and Eve "prostrate fell" (10.1099). They

forthwith to the place  
Repairing where he [God] judged them prostrate fell  
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. (10.1098-1104)

Adam and Eve are now choosing to align their inner and outer selves – and also to align both with God. Adam and Eve's tears and sighs are called signs from their hearts. In the poem as a whole, prayer unites the Son and humans through their similar creative potential to give expression to others and themselves. Just as Confusion "[s]tood ruled" (3.711) at the Son's Word, Adam and Eve's physical actions restore order between themselves and God when their prostrate bodies, sighs and tears correspond with their hearts and words. This prayer of contrition creates order in their relationship with God, the way that the Son created order out of Chaos. Though prevenient grace gave Adam and Eve the possibility of this action, they, like the Son, choose to act of their own free will.

After Adam and Eve fall prostrate in Book 10, the narrator observes how

[p]revenient grace descending had removed  
The stony from their hearts, and made new flesh  
Regenerate grow instead, that sighs now breathed  
Unutterable, which the spirit of prayer  
Inspired, (11.3-7)

Prevenient grace has descended from God to help them be contrite. That spiritual aid is manifested through the growth of "new flesh," which removes the "stony" from Adam

and Eve's hearts. Only after God has made that happen can Adam and Eve pray. Sighs, that is, the physical act of breathing heavily, are inspired by the spirit of prayer, even when Adam and Eve cannot actually speak the prayers. God is accepting the physical act as a spiritual intention.

Later in the poem, Michael tells Adam that in the future, imperfect – because imposed – earthly law will give way to perfect – because freely chosen – acceptance of grace:

So law appears imperfect, and but given  
With purpose to resign them [men and women descended from Adam] in full time  
Up to a better covenant, disciplined  
From shadowy types to truth, from flesh to spirit,  
From imposition of strict laws, to free  
Acceptance of large grace, from servile fear  
To filial, works of law to works of faith. (12.300-6)<sup>214</sup>

The repeated words “from” and “to” emphasize that human beings transition from the earthly to the heavenly. Evolving “from flesh to spirit,” humans will transition from “servile fear / To filial,” from disciplining themselves and their bodies to accepting the grace that will permit them to be faithful and obedient without external impositions. The phrase “[f]rom shadowy types to truth” suggests the understanding of “shadow” as “a prefiguration ... [or] mode of ‘foreshadowing’” (Hollander 33). The use of the adjective “shadowy” rather than ‘shadow’ emphasizes both the plurality of types as shadows and the uncertainty of the transition from shadow to truth, which is contingent on humans’

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<sup>214</sup> Arnold observes that “the Law is chiefly a training device,” for “[t]he ultimate goal posits a man who obeys because of faith more than mandate” (69). She continues, “When man becomes disciplined by ‘Truth’ instead of ‘shadowy Types,’ by ‘Spirit’ instead of ‘Flesh’ (XII. 302-03), then will he be nearing the heavenly realm, and then, surely, will God be more accessible to him” (Arnold 69). Again, Milton emphasizes Adam and Eve’s continuous education, inside and outside the Garden.

active participation in God's divine plan. When, in Book 5, Raphael proposes to Adam, "what if earth / Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein / Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?" (5.574-6), he evokes what John Hollander refers to as "some of the shadow/substance paradoxes" (60). Though shadows in *Paradise Lost* tend to represent the absence of form, as is the case with Death, the earth is a "shadow" of heaven not in the sense that it is without substance, but rather, in the sense that God's creatures can make it more than a semblance of heaven by becoming increasingly spiritual over time.

### **The Body's Virtue and Nature**

Milton further persuades his readers of the body's original goodness by naturalizing its virtue through depictions of nature. Not only does the narrator draw significant and consistent parallels between the Son, human beings, and plants, in order to show that the Son and humans are connected to nature, but he also discloses how the Son and human beings support each other's growth as virtuous beings, just as the Father and the Son do.<sup>215</sup> The Son encourages us to compare not one but two relationships when He says to the Father, "All my redeemed may dwell in joy and bliss, / Made one with me as I with thee am one" (11.43-44). Here, we are invited to compare the Son's relationship to His redeemed with the Son's relationship to the Father. Both are defined by unity or oneness; however, what is significant about the first relationship is that the Son and humans are constantly spoken of in relation to nature. Milton presents "the nature of

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<sup>215</sup> See pages 47-49 (chapter 1).

[prelapsarian] man” as “not unharmonious with Aristotle’s conception of nature as growth, nor with St. Paul’s belief that ‘the human body is sown a natural body’ but ‘raised a spiritual body’” (Hughes, “Introduction” xxxix). When, in Book 5, Adam asks Raphael how earthly fruits compare to “heaven’s high feasts” (5.467), Raphael explains that angels and human beings are “of kind the same,” “[d]iffering but in degree” (5.490), and therefore nourished by the same matter. Raphael uses the image of a tree to depict humans’ potential to grow closer toward heaven and God by becoming increasingly spiritual creatures:

O Adam, one almighty is, from whom  
All things proceed, and up to him return,  
If not depraved from good, created all  
Such to perfection, one first matter all,  
Indued with various forms, various degrees  
Of substance, and in things that live, of life;  
But more refined, more spiritous, and pure,  
As nearer to him placed or nearer tending  
Each in their several active Spheres assigned,  
Till body up to spirit work, in bounds  
Proportioned to each kind. So from the root  
Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves  
Most airy, last the bright consummate flower  
Spirits odorous breathes: flowers and their fruit  
Man’s nourishment, by gradual scale sublimed  
To vital spirits aspire, to animal,  
To intellectual, (5.469-85)<sup>216</sup>

Raphael explains that while in the chain of being creatures “nearer to him [God] placed” are “more refined, more spiritous, and pure,” there is equal room for growth, which is dependent upon creatures’ virtuous exercising of their free will. Had Adam not sinned, he

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<sup>216</sup> Daniel Shore pointed out to me how in this plant metaphor, corruption at the root is allowed as well (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

would have remained in Eden and had “pre-eminence” (11.347) over his sons. However, because Adam freely chose to disobey God, he is “brought down / To dwell on even ground” (11.347-8) with his progeny. Fortunately, Adam’s children’s situation can and will be changed, since the Son’s “root” (3.288) will replace Adam’s and permit humans to be transplanted or removed to a new, life-giving soil. In Book 3, the Father tells the Son, “As in him [Adam] perish all men, so in thee / As from a second root shall be restored, / As many as are restored, without thee none” (3.287-9). The Son’s “second root” makes possible, once again, the potential for humans to cultivate “in bounds / Proportioned [to their kind]” (5.478-9) their spiritual nature.<sup>217</sup> Raphael continues, “So from the root / Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves / Most airy,” (5.479-81). The stalk is “lighter” than the root from which it springs, and the leaves that sprout from the stalk are even lighter, being “[m]ost airy.” While the Son’s second root permits human beings to grow again toward their heavenly God, humans support the Son by rising with Him – that is, in unity or wholeness – as His redeemed.

The reciprocal relationship between the Son and humans that is expressed through nature in *Paradise Lost* is also seen in regard to Adam and Eve’s relationship. Adam and Eve are repeatedly likened to the flowers and fruits in Eden because both are, to apply Milton’s own phrase, “worthy of Paradise” (4.241); they are fallible creatures with great

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<sup>217</sup> Hampton also stresses the significance of human potential in Milton’s poem:

‘Creation does not strive through its gradual scale toward something that it *lacks*, but rather toward what it truly *is*: a profound (because divine) identity runs through the whole plane of creation’ [Kendrick qtd.]. ... [Christopher] Kendrick may well be right regarding this particular episode [5.469-78], but the angelic ‘gloss’ does not sufficiently clarify the *means* by which humanity ascends. (128)

My chapter clarifies “the *means*” by exploring the various meanings of the word ‘substantial.’

potential to grow. The Garden is not only worthy of Adam and Eve's "tendance" (8.47), indeed, needs it, but Adam and Eve are also, significantly, worthy to live in the Garden – at least until the end of Book 9, when they have both fallen. Though Adam and Eve are not mortal until they eat the fruit in Book 9, they experience time in two senses. They are created and then expected to grow and ripen in the Garden. The latter is made evident to us through Milton's pairing of the human couple's activity in the Garden with Eden's burgeoning flowers and fruits. While Robert Crosman notes that "Eden is conveyed in a series of active, humanizing verbs" (98), we might take this idea further by recognizing that Adam and Eve's own nature, as embodied, virtuous beings, is naturalized through nature imagery.<sup>218</sup> Leonard asserts that critics neglect to realize that Eve "is not too grand to be 'taught'" (*Faithful Labourers* 572). Milton employs nature imagery and parallel syntax in both Books 4 and 5 to demonstrate that *neither* Eve nor Adam is beyond learning. Eve's "unadornèd golden tresses" are,

Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved  
As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied  
Subjection, but required with gentle sway,  
And by her yielded, by him [Adam] best received,  
Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,  
And sweet reluctant amorous delay. (4.305-11)

Three hundred lines later, the word "wanton" is used to describe the exuberant growth of the Garden, which Adam says they must attend to as part of their labour.<sup>219</sup> They must

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<sup>218</sup> Crosman observes, "Everywhere there is purposeful, solicitous, *nurturing* activity: the 'Sun first warmly smote,' 'the unpierc't shade [/] Imbrown'd' [4.244, 245-6]. We *feel* these images as much as we see them, and the impression they give is one of humanized, *active* benevolence toward mankind, supplying direct intuitions of the kindness of the unseen Creator, visible in these works" (98).

<sup>219</sup> Urvashi Chakravarty reads Adam and Eve's increasing labour as Sisyphean: "Labor is, it seems, a trap that leads not to resolution but to the multiplication of toil, intended not for the end of work but for the progress of service and even servitude – in effect, a form of bondage. Performing obedience in their own



reform  
Yon flowery arbours, yonder alleys green,  
Our walk at noon, with branches overgrown,  
That mock our scant manuring, and require  
More hands than ours to lop their wanton growth: (4.625-9)

Similar to Adam and Eve's relationship to the arbors and alleys, Eve's "modest pride" permits her to accept the "gentle sway" that she requires from Adam, who is, as she acknowledges, "my guide / and head" (4.442-3). Their daily labour among the flowers and fruits mirrors the continuous labour that is involved in the relationship between husband and wife. They likewise "reform" each other, "check[ing] / Fruitless embraces" (5.214-5). Yet another description of their gardening is also a representation of their relationship:

they led the vine  
To wed her elm; she spoused about him twines  
Her marriageable arms, and with her brings  
Her dower the adopted clusters, to adorn  
His barren leaves. (5.215-9)

Each of them, like the elm and the vine, brings different gifts to their union, which must, like the Garden, be cultivated with love. Similar to the flowers and fruits in the Garden, Adam and Eve are fallible creatures with an incredible potential to grow.

### **Humility and Humiliation: The Body, Agency, and Virtue**

One way for humans to aspire to spiritual love is through humility, which is an ennobling or virtuous trait in both the Son and human beings. Embodiment, as an action

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dominion, Adam and Eve are both indebted and redeemed, both indentured and free" (158). While I agree that Milton's poem contains mysterious paradoxes, my reading of *Paradise Lost* is much more positive than Chakravarty's.

in *Paradise Lost*, is bound up with humility. The Father tells the Son, “thy humiliation shall exalt / With thee thy manhood also to this throne” (3.313-4). The word “humiliation” captures nicely the crux of existence as a being with a body, for humans can either express humility like the Son and prelapsarian Adam and Eve or be humiliated like Satan, his followers, and his offspring, whose forms are reduced because their will does not correspond humbly with God’s.<sup>220</sup> That humility is linked with humiliation necessarily mirrors the early modern conception of the body as ambiguously situated between “the most passionate of defenses” and “the most embarrassed of disavowals” (Cummings 326).<sup>221</sup> Adam and Eve’s humility about their fleshly nature is a spiritual strength, seen not just in their self-willed restraint and acknowledgement of personal limitations, but also in their conscious decision to make reason or understanding the motivator of their actions (rather than the senses or will alone). In Adam’s origin story, he recalls to Raphael his humble recognition of his inability to name God, who far surpasses such naming. Significantly, Adam’s incapacity to name God is what leads him to ask how he might adore God, which in turn leads him to realize that he can only properly enjoy God’s gifts and adore Him by partaking in Eden with a human partner.<sup>222</sup> Soon after, God

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<sup>220</sup> Richard S. Ide refers to the Son’s “humiliation” (3.313) as “loving condescension”: “The Son, ‘thus reduc’t,’ becomes ‘one of our number,’ says Abdiel [5.843], and on the third day the angels, in turn, will be exalted in him, with him, and through him. This loving act of condescension at the begetting in heaven thus reflects on the loving act of condescension at the Nativity on earth, when Christ will take on a human nature in order to redeem fallen man (see Heb. 2:9)” (149). The Son experiences humiliation because He puts off His Godhood temporarily in order to become Man.

<sup>221</sup> Rumrich and Fallon observe Milton’s “Christian trans-valuation of bodily experience” in his reading of St. John Chrysostom, where he “illustrates . . . that the weakness and humility of the flesh can be the phenomenological basis of soaring human achievement” (14). They suggest that “Milton presents his body not as an implacable generator of internal rebellion but as disposed to restraint and regulation, a site of successful volitional discipline” (Rumrich and Fallon 16).

<sup>222</sup> Adam says to God,

O by what name, for thou above all these,

reveals to Adam that, though He originally said He brought the creatures before Adam so that he could name them, His actual and only reason for bringing the creatures to Adam was for him to undergo a specific trial:

I, ere thou spak'st,  
Knew it not good for man to be alone,  
And no such company as then thou saw'st  
Intended thee, for trial only brought,  
To see how thou couldst judge of fit and meet:  
What next I bring shall please thee, be assured, (8.444-9)

Through the embodied speech-act of naming, Adam is able to understand the natures of the various creatures and is saddened by his apprehension that none of these natures are similar enough to his own. God praises Adam's judgement, observing how He finds him

knowing not of beasts alone,  
Which thou hast rightly named, but of thyself,  
Expressing well the spirit within thee free,  
My image, not imparted to the brute,  
Whose fellowship therefore unmeet for thee  
Good reason was thou freely shouldst dislike,  
And be so minded still; (8.438-44)

Through the process of naming, Adam discovers what he lacks, namely, a fit mate. This fit mate would help him understand his own human nature, which is what he “wanted still” (8.355) after naming the creatures.<sup>223</sup> Adam's communication of self-knowledge

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Above mankind, or aught than mankind higher,  
Surpassest far my naming, how may I  
Adore thee, author of this universe,  
And all this good to man, for whose well being  
So amply, and with hands so liberal  
Thou hast provided all things: but with me  
I see not who partakes. In solitude  
What happiness, who can enjoy alone,  
Or all enjoying, what contentment find? (8.357-66)

<sup>223</sup> For Linda Gregerson, the subject is “the product ... of discourse” (156). Regarding this scene in *Paradise Lost*, she observes, “Adam comes to know himself by knowing what he wants or lacks. Desire constitutes him, and while he arguably also ‘discovers’ desire in the sense of inventing it, this invention is

through speech is, as God states, an expression of “the spirit within ... [him] free.”

Indeed, Adam recollects how he found “acceptance” and “answer from the gracious voice divine” after he “emboldened spake, and freedom used / Permissive” (8.435, 436, 434-5).

Importantly, Adam’s boldness is grounded in deep humility. He “lowly” answers God’s questions (8.412), admitting twice, in the span of fewer than fifty lines, that he is far beneath God in degree. First, he says that because human thoughts are insufficient for measuring up to God’s single perfection, he needs a human partner to help him through conversation and to comfort him about his human weaknesses (8.418-9). Second, Adam observes that, unlike God, he needs companionship but does not possess the power to raise the other creatures from their lower station:

Thou in thy secrecy although alone,  
Best with thyself accompanied, seek’st not  
Social communication, yet so pleased,  
Canst raise thy creature to what height thou wilt  
Of union or communion deified;  
I by conversing cannot these erect  
From prone, nor in their ways complacence find. (8.427-33)

Adam’s understanding of, and humility about, his human nature is what makes him confident and courageous enough – “emboldened” – to engage in “that celestial colloquy sublime” (8.455). Indeed, at the end of Adam and God’s discussion, God’s heavenly presence actually “overpowered” Adam’s body:

He [God] ended, or I heard no more, for now  
My earthly by his heavenly overpowered,  
Which it had long stood under, strained to the height  
In that celestial colloquy sublime,  
As with an object that excels the sense,

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rather a recursive process than a linear exercise of willful ‘self-fashioning’: subject formation is always in *Paradise Lost* the product – and the process – of discourse; desire is mediated” (Gregerson 156).

Dazzled and spent, sunk down, and sought repair  
Of sleep, which instantly fell on me, called  
By nature as in aid, and closed mine eyes. (8.452-9)

Adam's body is physically exhausted by the spiritual conversation that it has *endured*.

Nature gives sleep to Adam as a reward for the physical expression of his spiritual will.

Eve likewise demonstrates that recognizing and accepting one's limitations is virtuous because it is the means toward interpersonal harmony and spiritual ascension. In Book 10, Eve tells Adam that "thy gentle looks, thy aid, / Thy counsel in this uttermost distress" (10.918-9) are her "only strength" (10.920) to live in the fallen world. All these things are outward manifestations (facial expressions, physical help, and speech-acts) of the inward accord between husband and wife. Eve's speech of reconciliation in Book 10 is reminiscent of the Son's speech in Book 3, when He offers to take the blame for humanity's sin by becoming human and dying in its place.<sup>224</sup> Both the Son's and Eve's speeches ring of martyrdom, the self-sacrificing association of the word "me" predominating. Eve pleads to Adam,

on me exercise not  
Thy hatred for this misery befallen,  
On me already lost, me than thyself  
More miserable; both have sinned, but thou  
Against God only, I against God and thee,  
And to the place of judgment will return,  
There with my cries importune heaven, that all  
The sentence from thy head removed may light  
On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe,  
Me me only just object of his ire. (10.927-36)

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<sup>224</sup> The Son says to the Father, "Behold me then, me for him [man], life for life / I offer, on me let thine anger fall; / Account me man" (3.236-8).

The word “me” is repeated several times in Eve’s speech, but not as a sign of self-promotion; quite the opposite effect is achieved. Grammatically speaking, “me” is an object, not a subject. Eve’s humility here removes her from the subject position. Eve humbly recognizes that she has sinned not just against God, but also against her human partner. Further, Eve understands that it is just for God to be angry with her. After Eve’s speech, the narrator observes that her “lowly plight” (10.937) – that is, her inwardly dejected mental state, which is manifested outwardly in her words and, as the narrator relates a few lines later, in her body, which is “at his [Adam’s] feet submissive in distress” (10.942) – is “[i]mmovable till peace obtained from fault / Acknowledged and deplored” produces sympathy in Adam (10.938-9). Once Eve deplores her past behaviour, she becomes Christ-like and is able to discipline herself toward an approximation of the unfallen submission that made her the fit body to Adam’s fit head. Eve’s humility about her fleshly nature, seen in her recognition of personal limitations, is a spiritual strength.

### **Bodily Pleasure in the Virtuous Life**

Significantly, in *Paradise Lost* bodily pleasures, such as lovemaking, are a necessary part of the virtuous life rather than a hindrance to it. In both Milton’s other writings and *Paradise Lost*, he openly sanctions temperate pleasure as virtuous. For example, in *Areopagitica*, Milton writes, “Wherefore did he [God] create passions within us, pleasures round about us, but that these rightly tempered are the very ingredients of virtue?” (117). This quotation suggests that virtue can be embodied in certain forms of pleasure, such as lovemaking. When “rightly tempered,” inner passions and outer

pleasures “are the very ingredients of virtue” because one chooses to balance passions and pleasures – in a word, desire – with the spiritual in one’s actions rather than self-indulge. In Book 4, Milton sanctions lovemaking as virtuous because Adam and Eve’s reason for lovemaking and their behaviour are temperate. Adam and Eve “[h]anded ...

went; and eased the putting off  
These troublesome disguises which we wear,  
Straight side by side were laid, nor turned I ween  
Adam from his fair spouse, nor Eve the rites  
Mysterious of connubial love refused:  
Whatever hypocrites austere talk  
Of purity and place and innocence,  
Defaming as impure what God declares  
Pure, and commands to some, leaves free to all. (4.739-47)

Adam and Eve, in their nakedness, are in their purest state, where outer appearance concurs with inner beliefs, which are both “[p]ure.” God leaves the rites of lovemaking “free to all.” Dennis Richard Danielson asserts that sex in *Paradise Lost* is “at once delightful and purposive” (184), and Milton’s speaker makes this clear when prelapsarian Adam and Eve make love:

By thee [wedded love] adulterous lust was driven from men  
Among the bestial herds to range, by thee  
Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,  
Relations dear, and all the charities  
Of father, son, and brother first were known.  
Far be it, that I should write thee sin or blame,  
Or think thee unbefitting holiest place,  
Perpetual fountain of domestic sweets,  
Whose bed is undefiled and chaste pronounced,  
Present, or past, as saints and patriarchs used.  
Here Love his golden shafts employs, here lights  
His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings,  
Reigns here and revels; (4.753-65)

Wedded love is joyful, present in harmonious relationships, a source of truth, and a “[p]erpetual fountain of domestic sweets.” Further, even the angels partake in sex, for Raphael says, “Whatever pure thou [Adam] in the body enjoy’st / (And pure thou wert created) we enjoy” (8.622-3). In the poem and his tract, Milton insists that lovemaking that proceeds from wedded love and is temperate in its fulfillment is virtuous.

However, after the Fall in Book 9, Adam and Eve have sex and it is no longer virtuous. This absence of virtue results primarily from Adam and Eve’s degraded senses. Adam and Eve’s outer appearance and inner beliefs no longer match (9.1008-36 and 9.1042-58). Though they “fancy that they feel / Divinity within them breeding wings,” “that false fruit / Far other operation first displayed” (9.1009-10, 1011-2). Instead of becoming angelic, Adam and Eve become sinful, for “in lust they burn” (9.1015). Further, now Adam wishes to “play” (9.1027) with his wife. He says to Eve that, though she was “adorned / With all perfections” (9.1030-1) when they wedded, “never did thy beauty ... / ... / so inflame my sense / With ardour to enjoy thee [as now]” (9.1029-32). Significantly, it is not that Adam and Eve did not enjoy sex before the Fall, but rather that each of them is selfish in their enjoyment after the Fall. Adam’s sense is inflamed with passion rather than softly aglow from Love’s “constant lamp” (4.764). Imagery of play rather than spirituality continues, for Adam “forbore not glance or toy / Of amorous intent” (9.1034-5) and Eve’s eye, understanding Adam’s sinful desire because she is also fallen, “darted contagious fire” (9.1036) in return.<sup>225</sup> Adam “seized” (9.1037) Eve’s hand, instead of the

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<sup>225</sup> Milton was writing of Adam not forbearing “glance or toy / Of amorous intent” (9.1034-5) in the context of a licentious Restored court.



couple holding hands harmoniously, as they did before the Fall. Their “amorous play” (9.1045) continues still, since Adam and Eve “their fill of love and love’s disport / Took largely” (9.1042-3). The word ‘disport’ can mean “[d]iversion from serious duties” (“*n.*,” def. 1). Adam and Eve’s engagement in “love’s disport” means that they play wantonly and occupy themselves pleasurably (“disport, *v.*,” def. 2). Indeed, we might go so far as to say that they make a sport *of* spiritual love (“disport, *n.*,” def. 4). The spiritual rites of lovemaking are degraded to physical play because Adam and Eve’s inner beliefs no longer agree with their outer appearance. Indeed, “the force of that fallacious fruit” (9.1046) corrupts spiritual powers. The narrator relates how the fruit’s force “with exhilarating vapour bland / About their spirits had played” (9.1047-8). The fruit’s force causes Adam and Eve’s “inmost powers” to “err” (9.1048, 1049), which, in turn, causes their outer appearance to change. After Adam and Eve wake up from their amorous play, and each the other views, they “[s]oon found their eyes how opened, and their minds / How darkened” (9.1053-4).<sup>226</sup> Their just confidence, native righteousness, and honour depart, leaving them “naked” (9.1057) and intensely aware of what remains, namely, “guilty shame” (9.1058). Milton stresses the absence of virtue in postlapsarian sex. After fallen sex, Adam and Eve know neither themselves nor each other:

so rose the Danite strong  
Herculean Samson from the harlot-lap  
Of Philistean Dalilah, and waked  
Shorn of his strength, they [Adam and Eve] destitute and bare  
Of all their virtue: silent, and in face  
Confounded long they sat, as stricken mute, (9.1059-64)

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<sup>226</sup> David Loewenstein suggests that Adam and Eve’s physical changes are a direct sign of their psychological change: “The postlapsarian lovemaking of Adam and Eve is perfunctory, and Milton, diverging again from the Bible, emphasizes their psychological nakedness and unrest (9.1054-63) by focusing on their faces rather than their genitals (9.1077-8)” (152).

We saw earlier how prelapsarian Adam and Eve embody virtue through ready speech-acts. For example, they praise their Maker with poetic song. Now, however, they are “silent” and sit confounded for a “long” time.

Because they are “destitute and bare / Of all their virtue,” they must re-form themselves as virtuous beings by restoring their innocence, faith, and purity. Essentially, the Fall does not simply bring Sin and Death into the world; rather, the Fall also dehumanizes Adam and Eve. According to Kenneth Borris,

Whereas inner rule of reason was especially definitive for humanity, the powers of love to effect change include theriomorphic metamorphosis, as it were. Impassioned loss of reason, the allegory indicates, can inwardly savage or devour specifically human qualities; bestial transformation through indulgence of appetite and desire was a topos of Renaissance moral philosophy, psychology, theology, and literary allegory. (120)

Fallen Adam and Eve’s “[i]mpassioned loss of reason” consumes their specifically human qualities, such as their previous interpersonal identities, their understanding, and their love. In Adam’s origin story, God was pleased with Adam’s knowledge of himself; however, later, God scolds fallen Adam because he does *not* know himself:

adorned  
She [Eve] was indeed, and lovely to attract  
Thy love, not thy subjection, and her gifts  
Were such as under government well seemed,  
Unseemly to bear rule, which was thy part  
And person, hadst thou known thyself aright. (10.151-6)

Adam has forgotten his own nature, namely, as the head of Eve. Further, Adam’s discord with the outer world is made explicit when he mindlessly eats his fill of the fruit, without regard for nature’s “second groan,” the “muttering thunder,” and the “sad drops” that the

sky weeps (9.1001, 1002, 1002).<sup>227</sup> He neither says anything nor moves to stop Eve when she eats the fruit a second time:

Adam took no thought,  
Eating his fill, nor Eve to iterate  
Her former trespass feared, the more to soothe  
Him with her loved society, (9.1004-7)

Likewise, when Eve first eats the fruit, the speaker observes, “Intent now wholly on her taste, naught else / Regarded, such delight till then, as seemed, / In fruit she never tasted” (9.786-8). Eve is “wholly” absorbed by “her” experience; she “[r]egard[s]” nothing because she is using one of her senses (taste) to the exclusion of everything else. Eve eats the fruit a second time as a form of “loved society,” in order to “soothe” Adam. However, the act of eating the fruit is the opposite of “loved society,” as it will cause disharmony between Adam and Eve and also mark a cessation in Adam and Eve’s “loved society” with God. Eve’s motives for convincing Adam to eat the fruit and for soothing him are clearly selfish, as earlier she worried about the possibility of her extinction and the idea that God might make Adam another Eve:

This may be well [to keep knowledge in my power]: but what if God have seen,  
And death ensue? then I shall be no more,  
And Adam wedded to another Eve,  
Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct;  
A death to think. (9.826-30)

Eve’s loved society is impure because, though Adam is not deceived, selfish desire propels her behaviour. She inwardly desires to remain Adam’s only and eternal wife,

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<sup>227</sup> William Poole points out the significance of nature’s “second groan” (9.1001): “It is ... noteworthy that nature feels the Fall twice, once for each sex. Milton therefore treats both the feminine and the masculine falls as equally damaging, despite God’s habit of talking solely about ‘man’” (*Milton and the Making* 182).

rather than the love that she is showing outwardly to Adam.<sup>228</sup> Taken together, virtue's absence in postlapsarian sex is made clear through the lack of correspondence between Adam and Eve's outer actions and appearance and inner dispositions and beliefs, which the couple's unharmonious relationship, the chaos in nature, and the couple's newfound ignorance evince.

### **Self-Love and Self-Giving Love: "Trial ... by what is contrary"**<sup>229</sup>

Perhaps the most important way in which Milton's human beings substantiate themselves as virtuous persons is through self-giving love. In chapter 1 of this thesis, I introduced the phrase 'self-giving love,' arguing that the transition from self-love to self-giving love plays a crucial part in the process of an individual becoming a fully realized human, that one is only truly human when love is interpersonal. Milton's God asks human beings not just to turn to themselves for personal self-growth, but also to turn this self-growth outward, toward other selves, in a humble, giving way. We saw this briefly in chapter 1, in the way that the Son's quasi-physical form expresses the Father's and the

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<sup>228</sup> Stephen B. Dobranski also finds fallen Eve selfish: "When Eve in *Paradise Lost* returns to Adam after eating the forbidden fruit, she tells her first lie: 'Thee I have misst' (ix. 857). In truth, Eve has been too busy thinking about herself to yearn for Adam's company" (480). Dobranski then suggests that Milton links fallen Eve to Satan:

Eve's sibilant response in this passage, 'Thee I have misst', momentarily echoes the serpent's seductive hiss and helps to dramatize her fall: just as she begins to act like the serpent, she also begins to sound like him. Readers of both the first and second editions of *Paradise Lost* might have also noticed that the archaic spelling 'misst' enhances this subtle resemblance; it punningly associates Eve with the rank, 'rising Mist' that Satan uses to re-enter Paradise (ix. 75). (480)

<sup>229</sup> This quotation is from Milton's *Areopagitica*: "that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary" (111). For Edwards, Milton's "'What is contrary' points to whatever seems to slow us down, and surely this means our mistakes, misperceptions, misunderstandings. ... The poem [*Paradise Lost*] makes it clear that the process [of learning by slowing down and re-examining earlier assumptions] is a cause for celebration" ("Learning and Loving" 249).

Son's – thus God's – love for humanity. There, I cited Paul Cefalu's claim that "God's essence ... [is] self-communicative love" (28). Now, I want to demonstrate that Milton's God ultimately desires this self-communicative love in human beings and that His Son models for humanity this self-giving kind of love through His loving relationship with the Father and humanity. In the poem, God "assumes the necessity of God's self-humiliation," where "'Love has to give, for it is only in the act of giving that it truly possesses, and finds bliss'" (Cefalu 58; Moltmann qtd.). We see that "God desires or finds pleasure in communicating himself" (Cefalu 58) in one of Milton's descriptions of the Son: "His words here ended, but his meek aspect / Silent yet spake, and breathed immortal love / To mortal men" as "a sacrifice / Glad to be offered" (3.266-8, 269-70). Not only does the Son "breathe immortal love," offering to give up His own living body so that Death will be defeated, but He is also "[g]lad" to offer it – it is a voluntary sacrifice. Earlier, we saw that the Spirit is "with" (8.165) the Son; however, later in *Paradise Lost* we learn that the Spirit will be with humanity.<sup>230</sup> Michael reassures Adam that, though the Son will "resume / His seat at God's right hand" (12.456-7), God

to his own a comforter will send,  
The promise of the Father, who shall dwell  
His spirit within them [humans], and the law of faith  
Working through love, upon their hearts shall write, (12.486-9)<sup>231</sup>

Michael proceeds to state that "the law of faith" will "guide them in all truth" (12.490).

For Milton, one of humans' greatest virtues is self-giving love because, in order for

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<sup>230</sup> During the war in heaven, the Father says to the Son, "My overshadowing spirit and might with thee / I send along," (7.165-6).

<sup>231</sup> I am not saying that Adam and Eve were not self-giving prior to the Fall; rather, after the Fall, God helps Adam and Eve substantiate themselves a second time by sending them His Spirit.

humans to give love willingly to others, they must first know what is worthy and unworthy of their love. For example, Eve's image of herself in the lake is, she learns, unworthy of her affection because, unlike Adam, it cannot partake with her in a relationship – a reality that she learns only through a trial undergone in the world. Hugh MacCallum also reads Eve's experience with the lake as playing a role in her positive self-development:

To view Eve at the pool only as an ironic anticipation of the Fall is to misread the poem badly. The humour, irony and charm of the story are qualities of the storyteller, and her articulate speech stands in contrast to the silence of the childlike nymph she describes. Eve is looking back at an earlier period of her life, a time when she lacked her present maturity, and the effect of the story is thus to emphasize the degree to which she has developed. Her recreation of the past event shows how fully she has mastered its implications. The original narcissistic impulse was of necessity innocent, since until the voice speaks she does not realize that she is looking at herself. (137)

Eve's experience at the lake causes self-development, as she transitions from self-love (her "first impulse") to self-giving love, where she can express love interpersonally.

While I have already suggested that the Son is the Father's other self, and that human beings are the Father's other other self, I want to emphasize now that this specific kind of relationship – mutual friendship – is what makes *humans* spiritual.<sup>232</sup> In Selleck's book, one of her major claims is that it is "only as the result ... of the involvement with one's 'other self' ... that one *has* a substantive 'self'" (38). Gregory Chaplin asserts that "Milton enlists the classical friendship tradition to help him recast the sacrifice as an ethical decision" – both to "shift our attention from Christ's suffering on the cross to the Son's heroic offer to die for Man" and to "provide a new model for the bond between

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<sup>232</sup> For my argument that the Son is the Father's other self, see p. 54 (chapter 1).

redeemer and redeemed” (“Beyond Sacrifice” 355-6). We begin to see this “new model” of mutual friendship, which is spiritual because it is found in God the Father and God the Son’s relationship, between Christ and humanity when the Father says to the Son,

[A]ll power  
I give thee, reign for ever, and assume  
Thy merits; under thee as head supreme  
Thrones, principdoms, powers, dominions I reduce: (3.317-20)<sup>233</sup>

When the Son assumes His merits, He not only assumes a human body, but He also assumes *the* body – that is, created humanity *in toto*. John Wall notes that Christ’s sacrifice has “associations with human love of other humans” (158). Milton stresses this idea through the image of the body. Each part, or human, contributes to the whole that is humanity. This body, with the Son as head, places every human in relationship to the Father, making them all one with God.<sup>234</sup> Because the Son is the “head supreme” (3.319), and He is both God and humanity, humans who accept their relationship with Him are, as Jerrold E. Seigel states in another context, “able to recognize their universal nature in human, material form” (402). This is “the Self that is at the same time this individual, and also the universal Self” (Seigel 402). We see this doubling in effect when the Father says,

His [Adam’s] crime makes guilty all his sons, thy [the Son’s] merit  
Imputed shall absolve them who renounce  
Their own both righteous and unrighteous deeds,  
And live in thee transplanted, and from thee  
Receive new life. So man, as is most just,

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<sup>233</sup> I want to thank Daniel Shore for pointing out to me just how puzzling the lines “assume / Thy merits” (3.318-9) are: “If I’ve merited something, the actions are mine and I don’t need to assume anything. If I assume merit granted by someone else, it isn’t actually merit, since it isn’t for things I’ve done” (personal communication, November 11, 2022). Personally, I believe that this puzzle attests to the webs of relation between self and other, here, the Father and Son.

<sup>234</sup> This oneness is the case because of the proposition that I made in chapter 1, namely, that God is comprised of Father and Son, that God is made visible through the Father and Son’s loving relationship. In the same way that the Son is head of humans on earth, the Son is head of angels in heaven. Ide argues that when the Son is begotten before the angels in Book 5, “such a community or spiritual body politic, with Christ as ‘head’ over the angelic ‘members,’ is announced at this moment in heaven” (150).

Shall satisfy for man, be judged and die,  
And dying rise, and rising with him raise  
His brethren, ransomed with his own dear life. (3.290-7)

When the Son “rise[s],” humanity is not “raise[d]” passively; human beings actively rise “with” the Son, because they are a part of Him. The Son’s birth in the created world offers humans a second chance to substantiate themselves as virtuous beings. He “offers a way out of the echo chamber of the fallen (that is, self-loving) language of history and political rhetoric and back to the founding first principles of human nature” (Perry 51-52).<sup>235</sup> Adam, Eve, and their children have the agency to change human history. Humans’ relationship to the Son, whose sacrifice is “charity so dear” (3.216), reminds them not just of God’s love for humans and humanity’s love for God, but also of humans’ love for other humans. Charity’s link to all three types of love elucidates Milton’s assertion that “God shall be all in all” (3.341).<sup>236</sup>

Eve’s experience at the lake serves as a stepping-stone in the transition from self-love to self-giving love, as the lake might be read as a metaphor for the early modern ‘mirror’ of self-improvement.<sup>237</sup> The poem suggests that Eve’s encounter with the lake is an educational experience, the first the reader encounters in the narrative and one of the

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<sup>235</sup> For Perry, these “first principles of human nature” include (for example) incorporation in the body of Christ and healthful involvement in the body politic (see 51-52). Also, see McColley’s *Milton’s Eve* for the history of criticism on this scene up to the publication of her book. Her reading of this scene with Eve – by far the closest to my own reading – is found on page 75.

<sup>236</sup> According to the *OED*, “charity” is applied in six ways (that is, in relation to Christian love) – of these, the first three are relevant: 1) “God’s love to man. (By early writers often identified with the Holy Spirit)”; 2) “Man’s love of God and his neighbour, commanded as the fulfilling of the Law, Matt. xxii. 37, 39”; and 3) “*esp.* The Christian love of one’s fellow human beings; Christian benignity of disposition expressing itself in Christ-like conduct: one of the ‘three Christian graces’, fully described by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii” (“charity, *n.*,” def. 1a, b, c).

<sup>237</sup> For a metaphorical discussion of the lake as book and Eve as reader, rather than the lake as mirror and Eve as subject or viewer, see pages 151-152 and 159-160 in Gregerson’s book, *The Reformation of the Subject: Spenser, Milton, and the English Protestant Epic*.



most significant. Significantly, both Adam and Eve are in the process of learning and “yet sinless” (7.61). Imperfection or incompleteness of knowledge and of education is not necessarily sin or even lack. Eve recollects, “It [the reflection] started back, but pleased I soon returned, / Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks / Of sympathy and love” (4.463-5). Here, it is important to observe that Milton both distinguishes Eve’s experience from Narcissus’s by describing it as pleasant (“pleased”) rather than pleasurable and suggests that, while Eve is not meant to stay with her reflection, she is still able to gain from it a basic understanding of the process of interpersonal reciprocity.<sup>238</sup> Eve’s seeing herself in the lake and finding the experience “pleasant” provides a necessary context for how she will learn to see and interact with others. Eve’s relationship with Adam will show her that an otherness to one’s self is an essential component of the emerging self.

Indeed, Adam has an experience that is analogous to Eve’s with the lake, which suggests that both characters are undergoing a similar education. When Adam is speaking with Raphael, the narrator observes that Adam desires knowledge

as one whose drought  
Yet scarce allayed still eyes the current stream,  
Whose liquid murmur heard new thirst excites,  
Proceeded thus to ask his heavenly guest. (7.66-69)

Here, Adam “eyes” the “current stream” which is Raphael’s speech (or “liquid murmur”), just like Eve bends to see the lake that makes “a murmuring sound / Of waters issued

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<sup>238</sup> McColley also suggests that Eve’s experience with the lake reveals her strengths: “Each prelapsarian scene, from her [Eve’s] choice of love for Adam over self-love at the lake to her faithful attention to the Garden as Satan approaches, reveals in Eve virtues directly opposed to the weaknesses usually cited” (*Milton’s Eve* 29). Different from McColley, I show that Eve’s experience with self-love is a *prerequisite* for self-giving love. It is important, however, to acknowledge how other critics, such as Colin Burrow, have suggested that Eve’s experience with the lake demonstrates the possibility of something sinister, since Milton always emphasizes potential for good and bad in his poem (see 278-9).

from a cave and spread / Into a liquid plain” (4.453-5). Adam’s experience is virtuous. Raphael only imparts to Adam that which “concerned / ... [his] knowing” (7.82-83). The same goes for Eve, since, according to Faye Tudor, the mirror “is not just for gazing at one’s own beauty but can be a practical tool for self-improvement” (189). Not only might it function as “[a] warning against vanity and sinfulness,” but it also might “both expand and limit the possibilities of the gaze” (Tudor 187, 197).<sup>239</sup> We see that this is the case in the poem when Eve says that “a voice ... warned [her]” (4.467) and, in response, she shifts her gaze from the image of herself to Adam, “[w]hose image [God states] thou art” (4.472).<sup>240</sup> It is worthwhile to note, too, that Eve first sees herself not in a mirror, but in “[what] seemed another sky” (4.459), namely, a body of water. Water’s innate formlessness – its power to take on *any* form – is mirrored in the poem’s attention to the form of the characters in order to show the similar agency that God’s creatures possess to determine their own moral trajectory. Indeed, I want to go so far as to suggest that in *Paradise Lost* water is symbolic of free will, in particular, choice or choosing. According to Karen L. Edwards,

We might say that equivocation, ambiguity, syntactical fluidity, what [Christopher] Ricks calls ‘liquid texture’ – all the qualities of Milton’s poetry, in short, which prevent a reader from settling on a single, paraphrasable meaning – are the stylistic equivalent of Arminianism: choice always remains. (“The ‘World’” 504)

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<sup>239</sup> Importantly, the possibilities of the mirror motif were of particular interest to Renaissance poets. Gregerson observes, “The likeness in a glass is never mere redundancy, say the poets; to read it rightly is enlargement; to love it merely is diminishment” (153).

<sup>240</sup> In his discussion of the spaces in which heroic adventures occur, Dean A. Miller observes that the sea is “an intrinsically ‘other’ space or extension” (133). As a body of water, the lake in which Eve gazes is an intrinsically ‘other’ space, specifically, one in which she can learn about the self in relation to other selves.

It is significant that Eve gazes into a lake that is “spread / Into a *liquid* plain” (4.455; italics mine) because the water represents her ability to make choices for herself.

However, when Eve approaches the lake as a newly created creature, she risks failing to understand herself through the other, just as Adam risks gaining impractical knowledge when he prolongs Raphael’s stream of speech.<sup>241</sup>

Eve needs a relationship with Adam in order to see beneath the surface of the lake – to see, that is, beneath her outward beauty, which is also “fair” (4.478), to her inward capacities. Notably, McColley suggests that “the mirror in which Eve beholds herself” is the same mirror presented earlier, in Book 4 (see 4.236-42) (*Milton’s Eve* 78). McColley cites this passage from *Paradise Lost*:

mean while murmuring waters fall  
Down the slope hills, disperst, or in a Lake,  
That to the fringed Bank with Myrtle crown’d,  
Her chrystal mirror holds, unite thir streams. (4.260-3 qtd. in *Milton’s Eve* 78)

McColley also claims that the lake represents the four cardinal virtues:

The lake into which Eve looks is one in which many waters unite their streams. Milton’s ‘fit audience’ was prepared to find figurative meanings in the waters of Eden by the similitude of the four rivers of Genesis as the four cardinal virtues. His own best gloss for his description of them is the comment in *Areopagitica* that ‘truth is compar’d in Scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetuall progression, and [sic] they sick’n into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition’ (4.333). It is this sense of process, and not dark hints of primordial deviousness, that accounts for the constant and varied motion of the divergent streams that spring from the great river which unchanging in its course, passes beneath the Mount of Paradise. (*Milton’s Eve* 77)

In scholastic philosophy the cardinal virtues are justice, prudence, temperance, and fortitude. They are considered the four chief ‘natural’ virtues as distinguished from the

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<sup>241</sup> Gregerson reaches the same conclusion as me (regarding Eve) through a different, Lacanian model (see pp. 156-8).

‘theological’ virtues (faith, hope, and charity). Milton’s use of a lake to represent ‘natural’ virtues would certainly be apt. Moreover, Eve easily represents all four virtues in this scene. Justice, when she displays moral rightness by choosing Adam’s image over her own; prudence, when she actively turns back to Adam and joins him; temperance, when she restrains her affection for her self-image in the lake; and fortitude, when she chooses the uncertainty of her other self over the sameness of her own reflection. And finally, Adam implicitly associates Eve with virtuous water when he remarks to Raphael,

So much delights me as those graceful acts,  
Those thousand decencies that daily flow  
From all her words and actions mixed with love  
And sweet compliance, which declare unfeigned  
Union of mind, or in us both one soul;  
Harmony to behold in wedded pair  
More grateful than harmonious sound to the ear. (8.600-6)

Eve’s words and actions, which are “mixed with love / And sweet compliance,” and that “declare” harmony in the couple, “flow” from her, just as water from “the sapphire fount” in Paradise flows in four virtuous streams (4.237, but also see 4.223-263 for a full description of the fountain). However, Eve’s acknowledgement of her outward beauty allows her to begin to understand her strengths and weaknesses, which provides a foundation for her inner beliefs about how to relate properly to the world and others.

Such improvement, however, is not without difficulty. If Eve is interpreted as narcissistic, as she has often been in the past, this is not because she is actually so, but

because Milton's poem shows that it is a challenge, for all selves, to turn self-love outward or toward others rather than inward or toward the self.<sup>242</sup> Danielson observes,

[I]t is at least conceivable, I would suggest, that soul making might require only possible evil, not actual; and I will argue that *Paradise Lost* provides a model of an environment in which neither is inevitable – in which, to make the distinction *Areopagitica* does not make, there is 'matter of sin' without sin itself. (179)

Adam and Eve are virtuous when they temper their natural desires. Self-knowledge results when the will remains upright despite its mutability or capacity to swerve. Indeed, according to MacCallum,

Perfection is consistent with limitations, incompleteness, and mutability. The likeness to God is not static and definitive: man's creation in the image of God leaves lots of room for growth. This, too, is both a traditional view and a common Reformed one. Calvin, for example, admits that the image of God was only shadowed forth in man until he should arrive at perfection. (125)

We see, first, that narcissism is always a threatening possibility in a search for self-knowledge, and second, that there is initial unease when one views one's other self. When "a voice" directs Eve away from the lake and toward Adam, it tells her, "I will bring thee where no shadow stays / Thy coming, and thy soft embraces, he [Adam] / Whose image thou art, him thou shall enjoy" (4.467, 470-2). Earlier, Eve refers to her reflection as "[a] shape" (4.461); however, in the quotation above, God refers to it as a "shadow" – something that "[was] used so often in classical and Renaissance scepticism as the

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<sup>242</sup> For example, see Cummings, p. 309, where he refers to "Eve's narcissism"; James W. Earl, p. 13, where he argues that Eve is seduced by Satan because of "her residual narcissism"; and Roberta C. Martin, p. 58, where she writes,

While I agree that Adam's uxorious difficulties are rooted in a sense of incompleteness, I think that his narcissism originates not in his own psychological configuration alone, but in the overwhelming – and repressive – narcissism of the 'omnipotent God' himself. If this contention is valid, then Adam and Eve are part of a much larger web of 'family dysfunction' in the poem, and *the complex weave of narcissistic elements* suggests more pessimistic conclusions about the prospects of Edenic autonomy and the kind of redemption involved. (italics mine)

location where problems are experienced” (Wiseman 139). God highlights that self-love is only *potentially* something that “stays” Eve’s “[self-be]coming” or personal growth. Eve’s lack of experience with the world and others means she mistakenly believes the reflection has both form and substance, that she can relate to her own reflection as if it were another being.<sup>243</sup> Milton’s handling of her misunderstanding of what she is seeing supports my argument in this chapter that Milton invests the prelapsarian body, that is, matter, with virtue and coherence. Eve must choose to love an illusion, the mere outward image of herself as a human, or turn self-love outward. She decides to listen to God’s voice and join Adam. Milton’s emphasis on free will throughout the poem, in addition to Eve’s mentioning that she is “led” by an invisible “voice” (4.467), reveal that Eve makes nothing less than an active, free choice either to obey or disobey, just as she is also able to choose or reject Adam. Eve recalls, “I yielded [to Adam], and from that time see / How beauty is excelled by manly grace / And wisdom, which alone is truly fair” (4.489-91). She transitions from the self-love that the lake represents to the self-giving love that she can share with Adam.

To conclude this section on Milton’s presentation of the transition from self-love to self-giving love, I want to emphasize the poem’s attention to love as something created and formed in and through humanity’s actions specifically. We cannot forget that it is the Son and the human couple who, through their physical bodies, make the Father’s, and therefore also God’s, love visible in the created world. This is not to assert that without

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<sup>243</sup> Eve confuses shadow with substance, as Narcissus does. Hollander observes “the ancient opposition” between shadow and body: “One feels the terms should comprise a venerable couple, but the ancient opposition is between shadow and body, Latin *umbra* and *corpus*. Ovid’s Narcissus ‘loves an insubstantial hope, and believes shadow to be body’ [*Metamorphoses*, III.417 qtd.]” (15).

humanity the Father does not love; rather, it is to contend that the Father's love can be and is expressed through the substantiated, virtuous human form. Milton stresses the role that humans have in making love known in the created world through not just what I have termed self-giving love, but also through a unique, human kind of love that emerges after the Fall, namely, charity.<sup>244</sup> In Book 12, Michael advises Adam and Eve,

only add  
Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add faith,  
Add virtue, patience, temperance, add love,  
By name to come called Charity, the soul  
Of all the rest: (12.581-5)

The significance of human charity, as something potentially different from the love shared between humans and the Son, who is both Man (sic) and God, is that it stresses humanity's task *on postlapsarian earth*, as creatures that become virtuous again by constructing the "happier" (12.587) Paradise that exists between interpersonal, loving humans, until heaven and earth are one. The significance of the body for the instantiation of this divine task is made clear in the final lines of the poem, which are, "They [Adam and Eve] hand in hand with wandering steps and slow, / Through Eden took their solitary way" (12.648-9). The image of the couple "hand in hand," paired with the image of their "wandering steps and slow," recalls Book 4, where they are also "hand in hand" (4.321), and Adam's and Eve's origin stories, where they are wondering and wandering in search of themselves. The union of these two images in the final lines of the poem stresses that this time Adam and Eve will discover the world and themselves from the very beginning

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<sup>244</sup> Even though "the creative presence of divinity within man ... [is] defaced and weakened by sin," it is "still potential" and "capable of achieving, through Charity, a high degree of conformity with the will of its Maker" (Martz 150). Michael stresses that self-renewal is possible for Adam and Eve: "one bad act with many deeds well done / Mayst cover" (11.256-7).

together, through their loving relationship. The word “solitary” might make us recall that Adam and Eve were created alone. Now, they make their way from Eden to earth as one.

### “Reflectivity” in *Paradise Lost*

*Paradise Lost* is invested in not just the body, but also, and more specifically, the inter-personal body in time, and thus within history, which makes it a poem about human reflectivity.<sup>245</sup> By the term ‘reflectivity,’ I am referring to an activity that takes place in relation to humans’ existence as corporeal, relational, and *thinking* beings. This sort of reflection provides us with “[t]he capacity to objectify and in part determine our relation to the competing conditions of our existence as a prerequisite for surviving the complexity of being human” (Seigel 18) when God suggests that Adam’s absence of reflectivity contributed to the Fall:

adorned  
She was indeed, and lovely to attract  
Thy love, not thy subjection, and her gifts  
Were such as under government well seemed,  
Unseemly to bear rule, which was thy part  
And person, hadst thou known thyself aright. (10.151-6)

Adam failed to determine his proper relation to Eve. It is through reflectivity, the “complex examination” of “our role as agents” that encompasses “the world in ourselves

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<sup>245</sup> Indeed, in *Areopagitica*, Milton compares the body’s constitution, of vital and rational faculties, to a city – and later, even a nation – that can become a young, strong man again through knowledge and new light:

For as in a body, when the blood is fresh, the spirits pure and vigorous, not only to vital, but to rational faculties, and those in the acutest and the pertest operations of wit and subtlety, it argues in what good plight and constitution the body is, so when the cheerfulness of the people is so sprightly up, as that it has not only wherewith to guard well its own freedom and safety, but to spare, and to bestow upon the solidest and sublimest points of controversy and new invention, it betokens us not degenerated, nor drooping to a fatal decay, but casting off the old and wrinkled skin of corruption to outlive these pangs and wax young again, entering the glorious ways of truth and prosperous virtue destined to become great and honourable in these latter ages. (134-5)



and ourselves in the world” (Cummings 45), that Adam, and readers, might not just survive but flourish again. According to McColley, the contemplative is one of the three “ingredients of virtue” (*Milton’s Eve* 73), and this chapter concerns what it means for bodies to be virtuous. Milton’s preoccupation with reflectivity is evinced by not just the content of the poem, but also its shape, for as Hunter observes, “The amount of attention Milton’s poem gives to retrospect (Books 5-8) and prophecy (Books 11-12) establishes these as of comparable weight to present-tense narrative” (36).<sup>246</sup> Half of the narrative consists of self-reflexive storytelling rather than immediate action, suggesting that humans’ reflections on past and future events are just as important as the actions that happen in real time, or even that reflection is action. Further, Milton’s “art of repetition and variation,” seen, for example, in the fact that “the crucial moment in the Fall of Eve is played over twice, once in dream and again in reality” (Hunter 27), which creates a palimpsest of potential meanings for events, implies that *the act of interpreting* is important work that we perform as humans. Adam and Eve as well as readers give form to their lives by learning from themselves and others, and by exchanging and comparing stories.<sup>247</sup> This process permits a more complete vision of who we are and what we might become, together.

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<sup>246</sup> For Hunter, *Paradise Lost* offers an examination of the meaning of events rather than a delivery of central action (81). While I ultimately agree with Hunter’s claim, I think that action, notwithstanding, plays a key role in the poem – in terms of characters and readers learning what kinds of actions are proper versus improper and how to nurture those actions that are acceptable to God.

<sup>247</sup> Without using the word ‘reflectivity,’ as I do, Edwards asserts, “To think about learning, it is first necessary to think about thinking” (“Learning and Loving” 240). For Edwards, the fallen angels’ “flamboyant indulgence in not thinking” means that they “cannot learn” (“Learning and Loving” 240, 242).

### Chapter Three

“[T]he better fortitude / Of patience and heroic martyrdom”:

#### *Paradise Lost* and the Choice to Trust in God’s Love

— O weariness of men who turn from GOD  
To the grandeur of your mind and the glory of your action,  
To arts and inventions and daring enterprises,  
To schemes of human greatness thoroughly discredited,  
Binding the earth and the water to your service,  
Exploiting the seas and developing the mountains,  
Dividing the stars into common and preferred,  
Engaged in devising the perfect refrigerator,  
Engaged in working out a rational morality,  
Engaged in printing as many books as possible,  
Plotting of happiness and flinging empty bottles,  
Turning from your vacancy to fevered enthusiasm  
For nation or race or what you call humanity;  
Though you forget the way to the Temple,  
There is one who remembers the way to your door:  
Life you may evade, but Death you shall not.  
You shall not deny the Stranger. (T. S. Eliot, *Choruses from ‘The Rock’* 3.59-75)

#### Introduction: A Psychological Reading of Milton’s Epic Heroes

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton posits three prerequisites for true heroism: first, that all heroism develops through relationships with others; second, that heroism is always a becoming; and third, that all the characters (other than fixed allegorical abstracts) have free will.<sup>248</sup> In chapters 1 and 2, I have demonstrated the existence and importance of these qualities for Milton’s epic. Adam and Eve possess free will not only because God says so in the poem and we see them making choices (5.236, 8.636, 9.1174, 10.9, 10.46),

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<sup>248</sup> However, it is important to note that long before *Paradise Lost*, in Homer’s archaic usage, “‘hero’ is used for ‘any free man’ or, possibly, any significant man or ‘gentleman’ prominent in the epic or not” (Miller 3). That is to say, freedom – the will is not specified here – defined the hero since the beginning.

but also because “[b]y 1644 at the latest Milton would declare himself a believer in free will in respect of salvation and the significance of human free will” (Smith, “The Anti-Episcopal Tracts” 172). Tobias Gregory asserts that *Paradise Lost* differs from previous epics because its dramatic tension arises from its “emphasis on creaturely free will”:

It [the poem’s dramatic tension] lies not in epic conflict between two sides, each side with supernatural assistance, but in the struggle of each individual creature, angel and human, to maintain obedience to the God who created and rules the poem’s fictional universe. The temptations to disobedience are real, the consequences horrific; and it is because the poem’s theodicy requires absolving God of blame for these consequences that it places such emphasis on creaturely free will. (192-3)

Heroism is connected to relationships, self-identity, and the will to choose. At the time of the poem’s composition in the mid-seventeenth century, “the absolute freedom of the creaturely will” was a rare doctrine in Puritan circles, but not in the Church of England:

The doctrines Milton has God express in his first dialogue with the Son in book 3 – conditional election, unlimited atonement, the absolute freedom of the creaturely will – run contrary to the teachings of Luther, Calvin, Beza, and Perkins, to the Westminster Confession, and to influential Puritan divines of his own generation such as William Prynne, Robert Baillie, Samuel Rutherford, William Twisse, and John Owen, all of whom published anti-Arminian treatises between 1629 and 1653. (Gregory 201-2)<sup>249</sup>

Milton’s beliefs about predestination are rooted in a belief in free choice.<sup>250</sup> Moreover, for Milton, “the person as a freely choosing center of intelligence constituted by the jointly operative faculties of reason and will” “is ... definitively what it means to be human”

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<sup>249</sup> While “Milton’s Arminian position was a minority view among the godly, ... his attempt at theodicy is not in itself idiosyncratic, since debates about God’s justice were much in the air” (Gregory 209-10).

<sup>250</sup> Regarding Milton’s beliefs around predestination, Burrow concludes the following:

To take the theological overtones first, in the *De Doctrina* Milton tended towards the Arminian belief that God does not predestinate his Elect in a purely arbitrary fashion, but offers grace to all those who will believe in him; he then uses his foreknowledge to determine whether each person would choose to be faithful. He accordingly saves or damns people for their future free choice of faith or otherwise, rather than freely and arbitrarily electing or condemning people as an expression of the absolute power of his decrees. (261)

(Borris 225). Kenneth Borris argues that “the capacities of rational choice” are what “Milton considers fundamental to any meaningful human identity” (233). In chapter 2, we saw that Milton’s God trusts individuals to choose for themselves, and that Adam and Eve correspond outer actions and appearance and inner dispositions and beliefs, and also correspond these with God’s will (for example, Eve chooses Adam over her self-reflection), which makes them virtuous. Milton’s God gives humans the agency to choose because it is fundamental for shaping who they are.

Both Adam and Eve act commendably and, unlike other characters in the poem, develop throughout the epic because they are in the process of learning that self-identity is relational. In chapter 2, we traced the process of Adam and Eve’s education, which advances through correspondence with God’s other creatures. Nancy Selleck distinguishes an “objectified self” from a “subjective self”:

an objectified self has its origins in an external or secondary perspective, as the object of another’s perception, understanding, recognition. A subjective self, in contrast, comprises only its own *experience* – its activities of knowing, seeing, feeling, desiring, etc. To speak of the self as an object is at least to imply a second or ‘reflected’ perspective, a point of view decentred from the self’s own *present* experience. It can become part of that experience, but in doing so it becomes one of *two* simultaneous modes of selfhood – subject and object – and the latter always has reference to some other perspective, always exists in the world. Thus, whereas a subjective self stands on its own terms and as its own authority, an objectified self knows another locus of authority. More or less subtly, it represents the social sources of selfhood. (8)

Both Adam and Eve “know another locus of authority.” While Adam’s law is God, Eve’s law is God and God-in-Adam. The narrator observes, “He for God only, she for God in him” (4.299). Eve confirms that Adam is her law when she says to him, “God is thy law, thou mine” (4.637). By contrast, in chapter 1, we saw how Satan’s actions are contrived

so as to exclude the perspective of other selves. As a result, he does not know another locus of authority and is a subjective self. Satan slyly takes away the fallen angels' freedom to choose.<sup>251</sup> Whereas Satan creates the illusion that he is accepting guidance from his fellow devils, Adam's and Eve's true deferral to God's and Adam's authority, respectively, grants them a reflected perspective with which they can view, assess, and, if necessary, reform their actions. We saw this in chapter 2 as well, in Milton's characterization of Adam and Eve's nature as embodied, virtuous beings through nature imagery. Now, in this chapter, we will see that Adam and Eve are introspective – that is, psychological – beings who make moment-to-moment choices in the created world which can either still unfold or collapse all of God's created good. We will also see that the most important choice that Adam and Eve make is trusting in God's love moment-to-moment and eternally. Not only does this continuous choice make them psychological heroes, as I will show, but it also enables them to become Selleck's "objectified self" (8) – a self that knows another site of authority – which contributes to their developing self-identity.

Heroism in the poem has been discussed at length, but critics tend to neglect the relationship between the heroic characters in the poem and the modern reader, for whom *the epic* can be a "social source[] of selfhood" (Selleck 8). Borris summarizes the criticism on the hero/es of *Paradise Lost*: "aside from the discredited nomination of

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<sup>251</sup> See p. 110 (chapter 1). William Poole observes how Milton, unlike reformed commentators, denied the belief "that the good angels remained faithful because they couldn't, by constitution, do otherwise – God held them in grace" (142-3): Milton "rejected this because it removed the capacity of choice from the angels – or at least the capacity to choose the good" (143). For Milton, the capacity of choice was significant not just for humans, but also for angels. While angels are expected to sustain heaven by making consistently good choices, humans are responsible for sustaining earth by making consistently good choices.

Satan, now rarely taken seriously by Miltonists, the poem's hero has been diversely identified as Adam; Adam and Eve together; humanity or 'every man'; Christ himself; or the created humans and their regenerate progeny, including the narrator and Christ" (235).

However, for Borris,

These proposals are either too specific or too general, for the heroism of Milton's 'heroic song,' as he calls *Paradise Lost* (IX, 25), is at once individualized and communal: as humanly defined in the poem, it is focused in the God-man, yet thus also in particular regenerate individuals, and the community of the regenerate within Christ. The poem's opening signals this unique heroic formula in the joint proposition of 'man' and 'greater man,' and thus introduces the diversified heroism of Milton's God-man who restores humanity in a way that is collective yet recognizes and nurtures individuality. (235-6)

Borris's claim for Milton's "unique heroic formula" is closest to my argument for the importance of "communal, inward rule," which I discuss in chapter 1. However, unlike Borris, who argues that the heroism of Milton's heroic poem "is focused in the God-man," in this chapter I argue that the poem contains multiple heroes because characters demonstrate different types and degrees of heroism.<sup>252</sup> More specifically, Milton transforms the traditional militant heroes of epic into relational heroes (heroism is in steadfast faith and love of God), with various characters demonstrating this new kind of heroism, and Adam and Eve exemplifying a different kind and degree of this heroism, such that their heroism is only a potential until after the Fall, when they learn to be fallen heroes who might be fully heroic in an imperfect world.<sup>253</sup> Before the Fall, Adam and Eve's heroism is a potential because there is no opportunity for them to display heroism

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<sup>252</sup> I want to thank Daniel Shore for helping me realize that my chapter demonstrates the presence of multiple, qualitatively different heroes rather than a central hero (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

<sup>253</sup> I want to thank Dr. Mary V. Silcox for helping me think through Milton's reconfiguration of heroism in *Paradise Lost* (personal communication, November 22, 2022).

until they are tried. The small trials that occur beforehand are used in the creation of a new type of heroism because Milton is reconfiguring heroism in his poem.<sup>254</sup> Over the course of *Paradise Lost*, the reader observes Adam and Eve's heroism in the process of being formed. For Milton, the traditional epic hero is unjust and untypical for real human life. The little tests continue, but Adam and Eve are not fully heroic until after *Paradise Lost* ends.<sup>255</sup> Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve display qualitatively different kinds of heroism: while Adam is for valour and contemplation, Eve is for love and compassion. Adam and Eve, unlike other heroic characters in the poem, develop into – indeed, learn to become – heroes, and eventually *fallen* heroes, and, as such, they are the models for Milton's fallen readers, who are also learning to shape their self-identities. Milton's Adam and Eve possess psychological depth not only because their virtue results from the continuous choice to act in accordance with God's will, but also because they are the earliest modern-day examples of fallen man and woman.

### **Milton's Critique of Traditional Epic Heroism**

At the start of Book 9, Milton redefines heroism explicitly as “the better fortitude / Of patience and heroic martyrdom” (9.31-32). What does “heroic martyrdom” mean, in general and specifically for Milton's epic? In the context of the Christian Church, it

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<sup>254</sup> Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve undergo small trials, such as their argument about working separately at the beginning of Book 9 (9.205-384). In this small trial, Adam avoids authoritarianism (or being a Nimrod) by not absolutely forbidding Eve to work alone. Later, fallen Eve reprimands fallen Adam with these words: “Being as I am, why didst not thou the head / Command me absolutely not to go, / Going into such danger as thou saidst?” (9.1155-7). Another small trial is Eve's test in the dream, which she describes to Adam in Book 5 (5.28-93).

<sup>255</sup> Full heroism cannot happen in Eden because it is paradise.

means “[t]he sufferings and death of a martyr; the act of becoming or the condition of being a martyr,” while in non-Christian contexts it means “the killing or sacrifice of a person in defence of a belief, cause, etc.” (“martyrdom, *n.*,” def. 1a, b). A martyred person is someone who does not agree with the dominant voice. In popular or modern-day usage, martyrdom is still typically associated with the hero-figure. For Dean A. Miller, the hero takes a risk that is life threatening (1). Miller stresses this point, writing that the hero “put[s] his or her life at risk,” and that their heroic resolve is “almost always at the serious risk of life” (1). By this definition, the Son (rather than unfallen Adam and Eve) is clearly associated with “heroic martyrdom.” As I noted in chapter 1, the Son says to the Father that He, “for his [man’s] sake will leave / Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee / Freely put off, and for him lastly die” (3.238-40). However, after the Fall, Michael elaborates on what Jesus, who is *fully* human, just like fallen Adam and Eve, will endure: “For this [His faith] he shall live hated, be blasphemed, / Seized on by force, judged, and to death condemned” (12.411-2). Jesus (though untainted by sin), like fallen Adam and Eve before Him, must suffer for truth’s sake because He is born into a fallen world. While Jesus performs the act of heroic martyrdom, Adam and Eve perform a different type of fallen heroism that is not defined by martyrdom – namely, both physical and spiritual suffering – but that is thus the model directed to *Paradise Lost*’s fallen readers.<sup>256</sup> Further, as Michael tells Adam, Jesus will appear at certain times to His disciples to prepare them for the heroic martyrdom that might be required of them:

them who shall believe

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<sup>256</sup> I want to thank Daniel Shore for helping me think through how fallen Adam and Eve’s heroism differs from the Son’s heroic martyrdom (personal communication, November 11, 2022).



Baptising in the profluent stream, the sign  
Of washing them from guilt of sin to life  
Pure, and in mind prepared, if so befall,  
For death, like that which the redeemer died. (12.441-5)

Very few fallen humans will exhibit the heroic martyrdom that the Son did. Milton's focus on heroic martyrdom alerts the reader to his epic's turn inward, more specifically, toward an epic that is more spiritual than physical. This poem is about the beginning of Christianity and how fallen humanity can still be heroic.

In unfallen Adam and Eve, the heroic characteristic that we see is patience, but Milton also notes heroic martyrdom because his poem accounts for change due to human action and, therefore, at the same time that he defines heroism, he looks forward to a new heroism. Here, "heroic martyrdom" is a looking forward to the Son's martyrdom, as well as a manifestly fallen type of martyrdom which Adam will introduce in Book 12 as "suffering for truth's sake" (12.569).<sup>257</sup> From Books 1 through 8, Milton is preparing the reader for the redefinition of epic heroism in Book 9 and then, after the Fall, for an alteration to this Miltonic heroism in Book 12. Adam, rather than the narrator, gives a speech about this new heroism because he addresses his future progeny: the narrator and the poem's readers (though few), who are Milton's "fit audience" (7.31), namely,

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<sup>257</sup> I do not mean to suggest a more literal 'looking forward' to the event of the Son's heroic martyrdom. Rather, I seek to emphasize *Paradise Lost's* simultaneous focus on the present and commitment to the future – a decisively human future. Epics are linear and have purpose, as they "shape a master narrative of history" (Quint 43). Quint gives the following example of order in Milton's universe: "When the Son steps in to end the fighting, He thus embodies a *principle of ending* – 'none but thou / Can end it' (702-3), His father tells Him. ... Otherwise the War in Heaven would always be plunged *in medias res*, without a before and after" (43). For my argument in this chapter, it is significant that Quint articulates the Son's intervention in the war in heaven as a *choice* that informs the plot. Not only Adam and Eve, but also the Son makes choices that position Him as one of the poem's heroes. Quint observes, "Both Achilles and the Son decide their respective wars, and both introduce closure into a narrative whose means or middle have threatened to expand indefinitely and to engulf its end" (48).

Christians.<sup>258</sup> The Miltonic heroism presented in Book 12 is addressed to the reader because it is the same heroism that the narrator shows singularly as he raises the argument of his “heroic song” (9.25) and perseveres in his creative purpose: fallen heroism. Milton’s redefinition of epic heroism is centred on Adam and Eve and the reader. Milton directs the entire poem, as we will see, to the fallen reader, who can express heroism in the fallen world. Most of *Paradise Lost* is about Adam and Eve because they are the models for all of us. We cannot build on ourselves through the Son, who is God, because His actions as the fully human Jesus are not depicted in the poem (only foreseen), but we *can* do so through Adam and Eve.<sup>259</sup> Modern readers can actually learn from and imitate postlapsarian Adam and Eve. Thus, *Paradise Lost* is a fallen but divinely inspired man’s (Milton’s) heroic undertaking to demonstrate to readers how fallen heroes can be heroic.

### **Milton’s Critique of Traditional Epic Heroism: Patience and Heroic Martyrdom Instead of War**

Milton redefines heroism at the beginning of Book 9 in terms of patience and heroic martyrdom and openly denigrates pagan epics for neglecting this subject matter. Because wars have hitherto been “deemed” “the only argument / Heroic,” the narrator tells us that “the better fortitude / Of patience and heroic martyrdom” has been “[u]nsung” (9.29, 28-29, 31-32). Nevertheless, the “higher argument / Remains, sufficient of itself to

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<sup>258</sup> Of course, Milton would not consider all Christians to be his appropriate audience. He would most likely exclude Catholics, Presbyterians, and Royalists, as well as Ranters and other radicals. I want to thank Daniel Shore for pointing this out to me (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

<sup>259</sup> Jesus’s death and Resurrection, a momentous event, is related in a mere two lines: “so he dies, / But soon revives,” (12.419-20).

raise” “that which justly gives heroic name / To person or to poem” (9.42-43, 40-41).<sup>260</sup>

Milton is here, as Merritt Y. Hughes observes, “challeng[ing] comparison with the pagan epics,” as he does in the invocations found in Books 1 and 7 (202 [footnote for 1.15]).

Unlike the pagan epic, whose song partakes in the “middle flight” (1.14) because it does not soar “above the Olympian hill” (7.3), Milton’s argument is so high that it is

“sufficient of itself to raise / That name [of epic]” (9.43-44).<sup>261</sup> Further, while his muse is “heavenly,” Calliope (the “muse of [traditional] epic poetry and mother of Orpheus”

[Orgel and Goldberg 169 (footnote for 7.37)]) is “an empty dream” (7.39). Thus, in Book 9, Milton states the characteristics of heroism and challenges the authority of pagan epics.

Indeed, in the opening to Book 9, Milton is reforming the idea of the epic hero by suggesting that it is not based on aggressive and war-like behaviour, but, as I will show, peaceful and trusting behaviour. He essentially redefines heroic feats in terms of unwavering trust between self and the “ultimate Other” (Rambuss 523).<sup>262</sup> Milton makes a point of characters’ epic courage in acting alone in order to stress that when it comes to Miltonic heroism, it is not significant whether a character acts alone or with another

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<sup>260</sup> Milton’s rejection of warfare is significant. According to Claude Rawson, “Erasmus’s condemnation of militarism and war had been a minority view in his time. ... Changing attitudes to war played a part in the gradual extinction of the idea that heroic poems were the greatest work that the soul of man was able to perform” (para. 8). Milton rejects the subject of war or fierce battles that is present in Greek, Latin, and romance epics again in Book 11, when Adam experiences Michael’s vision of the future, which is horrifically destructive (11.638-73).

<sup>261</sup> It is worth considering what *Paradise Lost* does share with Homer and Virgil, such as some attribution of virtue to the classical hero.

<sup>262</sup> This change was part of a larger, ongoing revision brought on by Christianity, as Miller observes, as the late antique world moved, shook, and melded into an early medieval Europe, the view, elite or popular, of the traditional hero as warrior had to be subjected to serious revision. Christianity, after all, was introduced into an imperial world defended by a strong army, some of whose soldiers ... had jocularly and brutally assisted with the Crucifixion (Matt. 27.27). (10)

For example, “Religion-based heroism, self-sacrifice and martyrdom, and the recovery of certain scriptural images of God-justified ‘heroic’ violence, are part of this historical shift” (Miller 15).

character, but whether a character acts with their trust in God's love – specifically, their relationship – in mind. Indeed, patience and martyrdom are heroic because they result from the characters' decision to trust in and defend God's love. While Adam and Eve do not show the degree of patience or heroism that the Son does, they are, at first, on the path to doing so. Adam and Eve's contentment with the happiness that God has given them and their temperate ascent toward the heavenly realm shows their heroic patience because they choose to trust in God's love – that is, they trust in God's care for His creatures and His universe's order – rather than desiring more or seeking explanations.

Milton redefines epic heroism in terms of unwavering trust between self and Other; however, we need to explore what he means by his far greater epic being based not on earlier epics' wrath, ire, brutality, and war and its trappings, but instead on “the better fortitude / Of patience and heroic martyrdom” (9.31-32). Adam and Eve are heroic in a psychological – that is, inward – sense that is recognizable to modern-day readers.<sup>263</sup> There are several places in the poem where Milton emphasizes qualities within his heroic characters and actually draws attention *away* from their outward features. He does this because unwavering trust between self and Other is not something that we can see in a tangible way (though its effects might be tangible), but something that we either feel as a guiding principle or do not. The narrator portrays outward or physical qualities as merely

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<sup>263</sup> Significantly, *Paradise Lost*'s focus on heroic identity that is not a matter of inactivity but of continuous personal agency – more specifically, on rounded and active characters – contrasts with previous imperial epics, where “the flatness and passivity of Aeneas became the virtuous traits of other hero-leaders of the imperial epic [such as Tasso's Goffredo]” (Quint 95): “Heroic identity in this perspective seems a matter of chance, and in the epic struggle between imperial destiny and Fortune, even this residue of individuality becomes contested ground. For the poets of lost political causes, a Lucan or a Milton, this inner realm of identity is indeed the last line where a successful resistance can be waged” (Quint 95-96).

symbolic of the character's inner nature rather than heroic. He continues his overview of what is traditionally seen as heroic, noting the work of earlier epic poets who sought

to describe races and games,  
Or tilting furniture, emblazoned shields,  
Impresas quaint, caparisons and steeds;  
Bases and tinsel trappings, gorgeous knights  
At joust and tournament; (9.33-37)

Indeed, David Loewenstein asserts,

Milton diverges strikingly from both classical and Renaissance models of epic achievement – Virgil, Spenser, and the sixteenth-century Portuguese poet Luis de Camões, and others – by choosing not to write his epic on a more traditional national and imperialistic theme, and instead giving his long narrative poem more universal subject matter and much greater interior emphasis. The character in *Paradise Lost* who embodies the old-style martial virtues and heroic ideology of the epic tradition – as he manifests the rage and impulse for revenge of Homer's Achilles and the skill and cunning of Odysseus – is Satan in his unwavering pursuit of personal glory and imperial ambitions. (148)

Loewenstein reads Milton's inward focus specifically in terms of his Protestantism: "As *Paradise Lost* swerves away from the older heroic values of outward trials and warfare, it transforms the epic into a much more interior mode of spiritual trial and visionary poetry. As it does so, it revises the epic genre, giving it a much more interior Protestant character" (149). I read Milton's inward focus as a means to make his characters more realistic and easier to identify with, so that when Adam and Eve fall, readers can learn from them how to become better Christians. Moreover, the narrator refers to these knights as "fabled" and their battles as "feigned" (9.30, 31), suggesting that Milton's epic is real in some other sense.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> For a discussion of how Milton's epic might be real in another sense, see my conclusion to this chapter.

The claim for Adam and Eve's psychological depth is not new; however, while critics such as David Quint and Christopher Bond investigate the human couple's psychological depth in terms of the politics of the period (theology and gender, respectively), I consider Adam and Eve's psychological depth in terms of inter-species relationality, by arguing that psychological depth arises from the human couple's continuous choice to trust in their loving relationship with the Other. The act of trusting in another being's love is both psychological and social. Consider Quint's claim that Adam and Eve's psychological depth is linked to religious politics:

the poem's depiction of the psychology of Adam and Eve attempts to understand the reasons not only for their sin but for this political failure [of the Commonwealth] as well; the characters' psychological motives are linked ... to a contemporary theological dispute over the doctrine of assured predestination and its significance for religious politics. (269)

While Bond acknowledges in *Paradise Lost* "a degree of psychological complexity," arising "principally by the introduction of a heroine [Eve] whose loving intercession on behalf of the lesser hero [Adam] to the greater [the Son] resolves the poem's spiritual crisis" (69), he interprets Eve as Adam's helper rather than heroic herself. For Bond, Milton "combin[es] the best and worst of femininity in a single character [Eve] of extraordinary psychological complexity" (81-82). The problematic tendency to focus on Adam rather than Eve as heroic traces back to the "maleness" that, according to Colin Burrow, the 'epic' connotes (1).<sup>265</sup> This reading excludes not only the female characters, but also the poem's female readers, from the heroism that Milton's poem presents as a

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<sup>265</sup> Gregory examines Milton's "psychologically nuanced Satan" (29). Alternatively, for a discussion of Milton's "richly imagined psychological portrait of his principal character [God]" (132), see Bernard J. Paris's book, *Heaven and Its Discontents*.

responsibility (and opportunity) for all humans.<sup>266</sup> Thus, even though there are many different critical assessments of who is heroic in the poem, they tend to neglect the possibility of the joint heroism of the male and female protagonist (and male as well as female readers, by extension).

The largest change made to the genre of epic in Milton's poem is his depiction of heroes with a psychological depth that is recognizable to modern readers. Milton focuses on heroic identity that is not a matter of passivity but of continuous personal agency.<sup>267</sup> Again, Milton's redefinition of the epic hero turns us inward. There are places in the poem where Milton emphasizes aspects within his heroic characters and draws attention away from outward features and public approbation.<sup>268</sup> The narrator's attention to Adam's valour is an example of Milton's interest in the psychological. Milton writes that Adam is "formed" for valour, not that he is valorous, or what that valour will consist of:

though both  
Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;

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<sup>266</sup> It is important to consider who might be excluded from Miltonic heroism (just as Shore does with Miltonic freedom in *Paradise Lost*). For example, non-Christians would, at the very least, need to suspend their beliefs or, at the other end of the spectrum, forsake them for belief in Christianity. In Michael's vision of the future, Abraham forsakes false gods, family, and everything he once knew – indeed, believed – to follow, both literally and figuratively, the Christian God (see 12.120-34). In his article, Shore "prioritizes solidarity with those who have suffered unfreedom under racial liberalism ahead of either personal attachment or interpretive charity to Milton himself" ("Was Milton White?" 259). Similarly, Reginald A. Wilburn notes how the narrator in Ishmael Reed's novel *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972) "criticizes Milton as an Atonist, meaning Milton acknowledged only the God of Christianity as a supreme being instead of respecting the validity of other religions" (272).

<sup>267</sup> Events do not happen *to* the characters (in a word, fate); rather, characters choose their trajectory in life.

<sup>268</sup> According to Burrow, "[George] Chapman's *Odysseys* follows – and to an extent anticipates – the major developments of the English epic in the seventeenth century. Its emphasis on 'the mind's inward, constant and unconquered Empire' in response to the injustice of external circumstances, rather than on 'the outward fashion of fortitude', is typical of early seventeenth-century epic" (233). Further, Milton's poem's turn inward is part of a larger shift in the heroic model:

The heroic model shifted from martial valour, the cardinal virtues, and relative self-sufficiency toward accommodation of Christian spirituality, the theological virtues, and divine grace. A corresponding cultural turn inward, so that personal behavior appeared to express inner states and conflicts of spiritual forces, tended to interiorize epic and fostered the literary expression of psychic conditions through external actions. (Borris 79)

For contemplation he and valour formed,  
For softness she [Eve] and sweet attractive grace,  
He for God only, she for God in him: (4.295-9)

Adam and Eve will need to *learn* how to become heroes. Milton's narrator observes that Adam is "[f]or contemplation ... and valour formed" in the same line in order to emphasize that valour is linked to the inward or mental capacity for contemplation, which is required to make active choices. Eve is "[f]or softness ... and sweet attractive grace" because these traits lend well to compassion, which, as we will see, becomes significant for the human couple after the Fall, not only for their reconciliation as husband and wife but also for human charity. Eve's traits will help Adam and her learn to become fallen heroes. For Bond, "The imperative of narrative poetry – and of heroic poetry above all – is to allow as much room as possible for human intellect, courage, and compassion" (132). And further, "any definition of human heroism necessarily must begin with man's proper relationship to God" ([endnote 5] Bond 134). At the same time, Milton removes public approbation from his new definition of heroism in Book 5, when Adam approaches Raphael "without more train / Accompanied than with his own complete / Perfections, [for] in himself was all his state" (5.351-3). Milton even reveals through poetic form that the retinue that waits on princes is all show rather than sincere. The "tedious[ness]" of the "pomp" is seen in Milton's careful enjambment, which suggests the winding of the prince's long, opulent entourage: "More solemn than the tedious pomp that waits / On princes, when their rich retinue long / Of horses led, and grooms besmeared with gold" (5.354-6). Further, the narrator's description of the attendants "besmeared with gold" and his use of the word "Dazzles" at the beginning of the next line (5.357) draw attention to



them as a satirical critique of the prince's golden grooms. Likewise, Eve is "[u]ndecked, save with herself more lovely fair / Than wood-nymph, or the fairest goddess feigned / Of three that in Mount Ida naked strove" (5.380-2). That Adam and Eve, unlike the princes Milton condemns, are not meant to set the crowd "all agape" (5.357) is seen again at the climax of the poem, when Satan lauds public approbation, asserts that Eve lacks it, and then uses it, through imagery of sight and seeing, to entice her to sin against God.<sup>269</sup> Satan tells Eve that she is

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 shouldst be seen  
A goddess among gods, adored and served  
By angels numberless, thy daily train. (9.541-8)

Because the narrator praises Adam and Eve's inward perfection while condemning the outward extravagance of princes, and Milton uses Satan to entice Eve toward those very features he has censured (public approbation), the poem presents a new kind of heroism: one that is private, but also conceived of interpersonally, and psychologically based.

Other critics argue for a central heroism in *Paradise Lost*, more specifically, that the Son is the hero of the poem. For Borris, "The basic issues of Christian heroism, such as the relative significance of human capacities and divine grace, are uniquely concentrated in its exemplar, Jesus Christ, and the Incarnation functions as the ground and epitome of human relations with God in Milton's poem" (222). Borris focuses on the

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<sup>269</sup> Though there is a sense that Adam and Eve are naturally powerful and glorious in their persons: the original biblical patriarch and matriarch, commanding admiration. Thus, Milton gets it both ways.

Son as heroic exemplar, whereas I trace Adam and Eve's developing heroism – from their potential for heroism in prelapsarian Eden to their education about a uniquely human, and fully heroic, fallen heroism that can only be realized beyond the final page of *Paradise Lost*. For Borris, “The way in which the Son comes to assume human characteristics determines the way in which he can serve humanity as a model for Christian heroism, and that is the central subject of both poems [*Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*]” (222). Hugh MacCallum similarly argues, “[The Son's] progress repeatedly demonstrates the nature of the filial relationship to the Father, providing a touchstone for true responses and a model for imitation” (6). I suggest, however, that if we consider the climax of *Paradise Lost* (Book 9), that is, the major turning point in the poem, we will see that Adam and Eve are not only this poem's major protagonists, but their actions are described in detail, which suggests that they shape the narrative in a momentous way, either as the poem's heroes or villains – in this sense, it is surprising that Adam and Eve swiftly return to their place among the poem's various heroes. They are, of course, not heroic in the act of Falling. Indeed, as noted at the outset of the poem, Adam and Eve “Brought death into the world, and all our woe, / With loss of Eden” (1.3-4). *Paradise Lost* is a poem directed toward human action: “OF MAN's first disobedience” (1.1).<sup>270</sup> Heroism is an act, even if it is just the act of being patient when beset by trials. Further, Adam and Eve's main purpose as co-creators with God, and continued perpetuators, of the good in creation permits them to be heroes. Their trust in God reflects their faith in a fundamentally good

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<sup>270</sup> The narrator's characterization of the Fall as humanity's specifically “first” disobedience reveals, forebodingly, that humans will disobey numerous times in the future.

creation that possesses meaningful order. I show that God and humanity's relationship is the most important in Milton's cosmos. A *change* in God and humanity's perfect but developing relationship in Book 9 is the climax of the poem and causes creation to be forever changed through the Fall. Good can nevertheless continue even after the Fall because God and humanity both want to preserve their relationship, which is the very source of continued good in the created world.<sup>271</sup> However, the continuous decision to depend solely on God is difficult (lest we forget, the human pair chooses to distrust God in Book 9) for not just Adam and Eve, but also for readers, whom Satan-in-the-serpent and Milton himself tempt to think 'otherwise' about God's loving intentions. Adam's and Eve's constant reliance on their faith in God's love above all else allows them to practice heroism.<sup>272</sup> The couple's moment-to-moment and, ideally, eternal choice to trust in their relationship with God – to keep it always in mind when they act – allows them to practice

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<sup>271</sup> Quint demonstrates the significance of the connection between "a divine, cosmogonic order" and "a human political order" – that is, of the relationship between God and humanity – by noting, interestingly, what Milton's universe "would look like without God":

But Milton's attempt to divorce a divine, cosmogonic order from a human political order allows us to see just what is at stake in the Virgilian equation of the two. By holding the divine power of His Son in reserve until the third day of battle, Milton's God produces a temporary power vacuum and enables the poet to depict an alternative model of the universe, what it would look like without God: a state of perpetual civil warfare between the good and bad angels, in theological terms a Manichaean struggle in which neither side can gain ascendancy. (42-43)

<sup>272</sup> For Milton, each and every individual's spiritual belief matters for salvation:

But since it is only to the individual faith of each that the Deity has opened the way of eternal salvation, and as he requires that he who would be saved should have a personal belief of his own, I resolved not to repose on the faith or judgment of others in matters relating to God; but on the one hand, having taken the grounds of my faith from divine revelation alone, and on the other, having neglected nothing which depended on my own industry, I thought fit to scrutinize and ascertain for myself the several points of my religious belief, by the most careful perusal and meditation of the Holy Scriptures themselves. (*De Doctrina Christiana* 360)

Milton ascertained for himself the various points of his religious belief through careful study of the Holy Scriptures. It is also significant that in *Paradise Regained*, "Milton's Jesus resembles much more a hero of faith following the guidance of the Spirit than he resembles any kind of traditional epic hero or national deliverer" (Loewenstein 159). Though Adam and Eve are unsuccessful in remaining faithful to God in Book 9, Milton, I suggest, shows us Adam and Eve's – that is, humanity's – genuine attempt to be "hero[es] of faith."

heroism before the Fall and to become fully heroic after the Fall, when they live in an imperfect world that requires both God's grace and humans' active choice to do good.

### **Milton's Critique of Traditional Epic Heroism: Enter Fallen Man and Woman**

Milton places his critique of epic heroism at the start of Book 9 instead of at the beginning of *Paradise Lost* because he is making way for the postlapsarian human as the new epic hero, who is first introduced after the Fall. Book 9 is the climax of the poem not just because it marks the transition from pre- to postlapsarian life, as well as unalterable changes to God's firstly and fundamentally good creation, but also because it introduces an epic hero unlike any other: fallen man and woman. Milton's poem traces the development of Adam and Eve for eight books before briefly (at least comparatively speaking) relating the Fall and its associated changes in one long book, and then proceeding to describe fallen Adam and Eve's altered – but nonetheless heroic – life in the remaining three books. Book 3 foreshadows the possibility of continued heroism after the Fall through its depiction of the narrator's song as heroic despite his status as a fallen, blind man.<sup>273</sup> Glenda Jacobs notes how Milton links the fallen narrator to fallen Adam:

Milton here [the section at the beginning of Book 3] elaborates on his fallen human status, pointing at the similarity between himself and post-lapsarian Adam. His blindness, for instance, he equates with Adam's spiritual blindness after the fall: his eyes, he claims, like Adam's (in Book XI, ll. 414ff.) need 'purg[ing]' in order to attain the wisdom from which, in his sinful condition, he has been 'quite

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<sup>273</sup> In the first book, Milton's speaker exemplifies, in his address to the Holy Spirit, the spiritual inwardness and humility that Michael commends to Adam in Book 12:

what in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support;  
That to the height of this great argument  
I may assert eternal providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men. (1.22-26)

shut out' (III, 50). Like Adam on the mountain, he feels endowed with vision beyond the capacity of ordinary mortals. (97)

Just as Michael instructs Adam to “possess / A paradise within thee, happier far” (12.586-7), Milton’s narrator, a descendant of Adam, prefers spiritual to physical sight: “So much the rather thou celestial light [the Holy Spirit] / Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers / Irradiate, there plant eyes” (3.51-53). Furthermore, the narrator’s poetic gift is an example of God’s grace, which is necessary – that is, in tandem with active choice – for human heroism after the Fall.<sup>274</sup> In the invocation to the muse in Book 7, Milton links the narrator, Adam, and the reader through their (in Adam’s case, eventual) fallenness:

More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchanged  
To hoarse or mute, though fallen on evil days,  
On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues;  
In darkness, and with dangers compassed round,  
And solitude; yet not alone, while thou [Urania, his muse]  
Visit’st my slumbers nightly, or when morn  
Purples the east: still govern thou my song,  
Urania, and fit audience find, though few. (7.24-31)

Like fallen Adam and the reader, the narrator is mortal, fallen, and surrounded by dangers and evil (for instance, degraded language). The narrator emphasizes through chiasmus, a form of repetition which is found in lines 25-26, that he can still sing heroically, despite living in a fallen, evil world. The narrator can continue his heroic song, which “[h]alf yet

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<sup>274</sup> The narrator asserts that his poetic argument is high enough to raise the name of epic itself unless his fallenness weighs the heroic argument down, which it may very well without the aid of his muse Urania, who signifies God’s grace:

Me of these  
Nor skilled nor studious, higher argument  
Remains, sufficient of itself to raise  
That name, unless an age too late, or cold  
Climate, or years damp my intended wing  
Depressed, and much they may, if all be mine,  
Not hers who brings it nightly to my ear. (9.41-47)

remains unsung” (7.21), so long as Urania still governs his song through God’s grace. And finally, it is notable that during his invocation the narrator asks Urania to find a “fit audience” since this suggests a specific, heroic role for the reader in Milton’s redefinition of heroism. I contend that the first eight books are meant to convince readers gradually that Adam and Eve are the protagonists of this story, so that when readers reach Book 9 and read Milton’s redefinition of heroism, they will not only already have pictures of true heroism in their mind (the actions of admirable characters, such as the Son), but they will also have learned enough about Adam and Eve’s development – there are little trials in prelapsarian Eden – to be more accepting of Milton’s presentation of the human couple and themselves as capable of fully heroic postlapsarian heroism. Further, the Fall of Adam and Eve in Book 9 becomes all the more climactic when readers realize that the characters who are about to lose it all are among the heroes of the poem. At the start of the poem, we know that Adam and Eve will fall. However – and this is crucial – we do not know who the hero/es of the poem might be until Book 9, when Milton supplies us with his criteria. Indeed, critics still debate about who is the hero of *Paradise Lost*. Many, as I noted above, cite the Son, but the Son’s act of heroic martyrdom is only foretold – the event never happens in the poem. On the other hand, the only characters whose admirable actions we see, *and* whose heroism develops from a potential to a full-fledged heroism over the course of the story (who, in short, are rounded characters), are Adam and Eve.

### **Characters Who Act Without Developing: The Admirable Versus Non-Admirable**

Before we turn to Adam and Eve, whose actions and development readers see throughout the poem, it is first necessary to analyze characters described as performing admirable action but whose development we do not see, so that through this examination we can add up what the characteristics of Miltonic heroism are. Through his descriptions of the Son and Abdiel, whose actions are both described as admirable, Milton shows what his definition of heroic means.

Milton emphasizes these characters' courage – indeed, their epic courage – in acting alone in order to demonstrate that when it comes to Miltonic heroism, it is not significant whether a character acts alone or with another character, but again, whether a character acts with their trust in God's love – in their relationship – *in mind*, that is, as the primary motivator for their actions. It is the choice to trust that is key. For Borris, “The poem promotes a heroism that is both individual and participatory: discovered in chosen adherence to a standard of godly social relations that is to sustain a positive individuality and yet also subsume it within the communal whole” (219). While I agree with Borris's claim, this chapter focuses on what the heroic characters are thinking, namely, of God's loving relationship with them. Again, my focus is on Milton's poem's turn inward. For example, the Son is heroic in isolation. The Son expresses heroic martyrdom in isolation when He says to the Father,

Behold me then, me for him, life for life  
I offer, on me let thine anger fall;  
Account me man; I for his sake will leave  
Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee  
Freely put off, and for him lastly die  
Well pleased, on me let Death wreak all his rage;  
Under his gloomy power I shall not long  
Lie vanquished; thou hast given me to possess





And with retorted scorn his back he turned  
On those proud towers to swift destruction doomed. (5.897-907)

Raphael also draws attention to the word “single” – Abdiel is the only angel of the North who maintains a “constant mind” – by placing it at the end of a sentence. Line 900 in particular stresses through the threefold repetition of “his” that Abdiel’s decision to remain faithful to God was a conscious, spiritual choice that he made as an individual. Abdiel’s heroism is striking because he is heroic in isolation; however, heroism in isolation is not *necessary* for Miltonic heroism. Rather, Abdiel is heroic because his trust in God’s love motivates his actions, and he chooses to defend God. The anaphora at the start of the quotation above shows that Abdiel stands apart from the other angels because he is faithful to truth. His mind is “constant” in terms of his unceasing trust in God’s love.

Abdiel’s faith or trust in God’s love permits him to choose his relationship with God over the relationship that he has with his fellow angels who are about to rebel against God. Abdiel faces shame when he parts ways with the angels in the north of Heaven, but he demonstrates heroism in spite of this, refusing to advocate the cause demanded by the fallen angels:

Thus far his [Satan’s] bold discourse without control  
Had audience, when among the seraphim  
Abdiel, than whom none with more zeal adored  
The Deity, and divine commands obeyed,  
Stood up, and in a flame of zeal severe  
The current of his fury thus opposed. (5.803-8)

Raphael’s choice of the phrase “without control” to describe Satan’s discourse stresses the absence of order and logical sense in Satan’s discourse. Prior to Abdiel’s departure “through [the] hostile scorn” of Lucifer’s followers, “[n]one seconded [his zeal for God],

as out of season judged, / Or singular and rash” (5.904, 850-1). Abdiel is not afraid to turn his back on the disobedient angels because he is confident about God’s love for him. He does not need any of the disobedient angels to second what he has said to Satan because he trusts in his loving relationship with God above all else. Raphael tells Adam how God praised Abdiel for his heroism with these words:

Servant of God, well done, well hast thou fought  
The better fight, who single hast maintained  
Against revolted multitudes the cause  
Of truth, in word mightier than they in arms;  
And for the testimony of truth has borne  
Universal reproach, far worse to bear  
Than violence: for this was all thy care  
To stand approved in sight of God, though worlds  
Judged thee perverse: (6.29-37)

As a reward for Abdiel’s sole “care / To stand approved in sight of God,” he will be “aided by this host of friends” (6.38) to subdue the disobedient angels. Though Abdiel loses his relationship with the fallen angels when he chooses God, he gains a “host of friends” that makes him “more glorious” (6.39).<sup>275</sup> Abdiel’s heroism, as God defines it, consists of acting on his belief in truth, though “single ... / Against revolted multitudes”; the defense of one’s choice to trust in God’s love is emblematic of the hero, not a reliance upon a crowd of followers or upon military might. The Father’s emphasis upon “the testimony of truth” in this quotation reminds the reader that Abdiel did not just silently slip away from the rebellious angels to return to the faithful. Instead, he testified to God’s truth by opposing Satan’s lies, publicly arguing against Satan’s twisted logic.

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<sup>275</sup> Daniel Shore observes that “ethics may require severing relations, not trusting, being in non-relation as well as the opposite” (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

Before we turn to Adam and Eve, it is also essential to analyze those characters described as performing non-admirable action but whose development we do not see, so that through this examination we can determine what characteristics (traditionally heroic and otherwise) Milton opposes to his redefinition of heroism. Through his portrayal of Satan and Nimrod, whose actions are both described as non-admirable, Milton reveals what heroism does not mean.

Satan is the typical hero who quickly fades as a false start, not only because his actions are described as non-admirable, but also specifically because he does not choose to trust in God's love and, moreover, he is angry that Adam and Eve choose to do so. As noted earlier, Satan, in contrast to Adam and Eve, refuses to recognize another locus of authority and, as such, is a subjective self. Indeed, in Book 4, Satan says in his soliloquy, "Yet all his [God's] good proved ill in me, / And wrought but malice; lifted up so high / I 'sdained subjection" (4.48-50). Satan refuses or rejects social sources of selfhood out of feelings of pride or superiority, thinking that "one step higher / Would set me highest" (4.50-51). He also, again in contrast to unfallen Adam and Eve, chooses to act against God's will. After first suggesting that God's love is accursed, Satan suddenly changes his tune, admitting, "Nay cursed be thou; since against his thy will / Chose freely what it now so justly rues" (4.71-72). Satan acknowledges that he has free choice. Later, when Satan views Adam and Eve in Eden, he is overcome with jealousy because he believes that he cannot partake in love as they do. In response to Adam smiling at and then kissing Eve, the narrator tells us that "aside the devil turned / For envy, yet with jealous leer malign / Eyed them askance" (4.502-4). For Satan, the sight is both "hateful" and "tormenting"

(4.505) because he thinks he can possess “neither joy nor love, but fierce desire” (4.509).

When Satan chooses not to love Adam and Eve – he says that he “could love” them (4.363) – he chooses not to trust in God’s love, which the human pair signifies. As Satan observes himself, “so lively shines in them / divine resemblance” (4.363-4).

Subsequently, Satan’s consistent failure to make choices (he does not act on his revenge until Book 9) aligns him more with the heroic genre of tragedy rather than epic. As Miller observes, “These two kinds of heroism, tragic and epic, are drastically different, the more so when we understand that Greek tragedy, as [Jean-Pierre] Vernant correctly insists, shows the hero as *problem* rather than as *model*” (8). Satan is “the hero as *problem*” in the epic *Paradise Lost* when his actions align with the characteristics of the traditional hero rather than Miltonic heroism. For example, Satan “[r]aised ... war in heaven and battle proud” (1.43), which Milton’s narrator describes as an “impious” and “vain attempt” (1.43, 44). Another instance is when Gabriel addresses Satan and states that the other angels do not approve of his example of transgressions:

Why hast thou, Satan, broke the bounds prescribed  
To thy transgressions, and disturbed the charge  
Of others, who approve not to transgress  
By thy example, but have power and right  
To question thy bold entrance on this place [Eden]; (4.878-82)

Gabriel makes it evident that Satan is a problem rather than a model. Further, Gabriel empowers the other angels while, at the same time, disqualifying Satan’s entrance into Eden. Through both Satan’s rejection of Miltonic heroism and the narrator’s description of Satan’s actions as non-admirable, Milton shows by contrast what true heroism is.

Similarly, in Book 12, Michael tells Adam that there will live a man, not named in *Paradise Lost*, but recognizable from his actions as Nimrod, who shall “derive his name” from rebellion against God through his tyranny over his equals (12.36).<sup>276</sup> This man achieves renown not from true Christian heroism, but from rebellion, for Michael says,

one shall rise  
Of proud ambitious heart, who not content  
With fair equality, fraternal state,  
Will arrogate dominion undeserved  
Over his brethren, and quite dispossess  
Concord and law of nature from the earth,  
Hunting (and men not beasts shall be his game)  
With war and hostile snare such as refuse  
Subjection to his empire tyrannous:  
A mighty hunter thence he shall be stiled  
Before the Lord, as in despite of heaven,  
Or from heaven claiming second sovereignty;  
And from rebellion shall derive his name,  
Though of rebellion others he accuse. (12.24-37)

Nimrod, though a descendant of Adam and Eve, is much like Satan, since he is “not content / With fair equality” and “fraternal state,” but seeks “dominion undeserved / Over his brethren.” Just like Satan, Nimrod is “[o]f proud ambitious heart” and pursues the very thing that he claims to hate, namely, unmerited dominion. One of Satan’s major arguments is, as we saw in chapter 1, that the Son was raised above the other angels without deserving it, and yet Satan and now Nimrod seek dominion over their brethren or equals.<sup>277</sup> The anti-heroic nature of this man’s ambition is seen in the dispossession of concord and the “law of nature” as well as the reference to war, which, in Book 9, the speaker condemns as “hitherto the only argument / Heroic deemed” (9.28-29). Further,

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<sup>276</sup> The name Nimrod is incorrectly etymologized from the Hebrew word for “to rebel.”

<sup>277</sup> See pp. 99-102 (chapter 1).

the word “hostile” links Nimrod to the fallen angels, since this word is used to depict the scorn that the fallen angels heap on Abdiel in Book 5 (5.904). The depiction of Nimrod agrees with (my earlier discussion of) the martial heroism of traditional epic. Like Satan, this man is a hypocrite, since he “derive[s]” his name from rebellion, though he “accuse[s]” others of rebellion. For God, “human [is] left from human free” (12.71). This man “[o]f proud ambitious heart” disobeys God by imposing his will on others, whose will is meant to be free – this man’s actions are unjust. In Book 12, Adam exclaims,

O execrable son so to aspire  
Above his brethren, to himself assuming  
Authority usurped, from God not given:  
He gave us only over beast, fish, fowl  
Dominion absolute; that right we hold  
By his donation; but man over men  
He made not lord; such title to himself  
Reserving, human left from human free. (12.64-71)

Nimrod, like Satan, is what Selleck refers to as “a subjective self” (8) because he stands on his own terms and as his own authority rather than acknowledging another locus of authority. Indeed, Nimrod *usurps* authority from God, which was not freely given. As such, Nimrod not only denies God and abuses liberty, but he also neglects his own self-development. Neither Satan nor Nimrod develops throughout the poem because they refuse to partake in – indeed, they do not even acknowledge – social sources of selfhood, which, as we saw throughout chapters 1 and 2, are essential to the self. As shown in the characters other than Adam and Eve, the characteristics of heroism are constantly acting with one’s trust in God’s love in mind, exhibiting patience and heroic martyrdom, and choosing to defend one’s choice to trust in God’s love by publicly testifying to God’s truth. By contrast, the characteristics of non-heroism are refusing another locus of

authority (and, by association, all social sources of selfhood), willfully choosing to act against God's will, seeking unjust dominion over one's brethren or equals through over-ambition, and relying upon a crowd of followers or upon military might.

### **The Actions and Development of Adam and Eve: Before the Fall**

While Adam and Eve do not demonstrate the kind of heroic martyrdom that the Son does – indeed, I will show later in this chapter that the Fall teaches them the importance of (various kinds of) martyrdom through the *example* of the Son incarnated as Jesus – they demonstrate human patience until Eve, and then Adam, commit sin in Book 9.<sup>278</sup> As part of their Miltonic heroism, Adam and Eve need to be content with their full measure of happiness and refrain from seeking more. Their contentment with both the happiness that God has given them in Eden and their temperate ascent toward the heavenly realm shows their heroic patience because they choose to trust in God's love – that is, they trust in God's care for His creatures and His universe's order – rather than desiring more or seeking explanations. In Book 5, Adam learns from Raphael that his and Eve's active choice to obey God by trusting in His love will result in temperate, spiritual ascent toward God if they sustain it over time. God thus rewards humans for the virtue of persevering in their choice to trust in His love continuously and despite doubts. Adam, paraphrasing what Raphael has advised, responds,

O favourable spirit, propitious guest,  
Well hast thou taught the way that might direct  
Our knowledge, and the scale of nature set

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<sup>278</sup> Adam and Eve's patience is different in kind than the Son's, for it is Adam and Eve's sole responsibility to change earth to heaven over a long period of time.

From centre to circumference, whereon  
In contemplation of created things  
By steps we may ascend to God. (5.507-12)

Adam is saying in this speech that Raphael has taught him to see how he and Eve may be refined in order to ascend to God. Raphael uses examples from nature to show that created things can be refined. Further, Adam comprehends that their ascent to God must be “[b]y steps” rather than leaps or bounds.<sup>279</sup> These steps toward God take place, according to Raphael, through Adam and Eve’s continued obedience, which is founded on their trust in God’s love:

Son of heaven and earth,  
Attend: that thou art happy, owe to God;  
That thou continuest such, owe to thyself,  
That is, to thy obedience; therein stand. (5.519-22)

Raphael observes that both God and Adam have a role to play in the human race’s happiest state. While God placed Adam in absolute bliss, Adam must maintain this bliss if he wishes to continue living in complete happiness. Significantly, Adam’s responsibility for his and his progeny’s happiness rests in his obedience, which permits him to “stand.” While Adam’s firm obedience through time’s changes is heroic because it demonstrates his continuous choice to trust in God’s love, this heroism also gradually takes on new meaning: Adam’s persistent decision to obey God, despite any doubts that Adam might

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<sup>279</sup> Indeed, Milton suggests that too much awareness or knowledge is bad when he uses the word “conscious” to describe both Sin’s constant terrors and the devils’ nightly machinations. Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg note that the word “conscious,” in the context of Book 6, means “[b]oth aware and guilty” ([footnote for 6.521] 157). Sin tells Satan of the “yelling monsters that with ceaseless cry / Surround me” and “with conscious terrors vex me round, / That rest or intermission none I find” (2.795-6, 801-2). Sin is guilty of the knowledge that Death is the product of Satan’s lustful, incestuous copulation with her. When the devils devise the first cannons, they are similarly said to work “under conscious night” (6.521), which suggests that they are bad because they are guilty of “found[ing] their engines and their balls / Of missive ruin” (6.518-9). That is, the devils are guilty of bringing knowledge of how to create gunfire to humans.



have, raises him “by degrees of merit” (7.157) toward another dwelling place, namely, heaven. Just as the Son is the Son of God because of His merit rather than birthright (“By merit more than birthright Son of God” [3.309]), so Adam is raised by God by degrees toward heaven according to his merit.

Humanity’s task of sustaining its happiest state is a heroic feat because happiness can only be sustained when humanity makes the active choice to trust in God’s love continuously. Further, Adam and Eve’s happiness is connected to their innocence because they are happy so long as they choose to trust in God’s love moment-to-moment and, as a result of that faith, do not seek more knowledge than what God and Raphael have given them. After prelapsarian Adam and Eve enjoy sex in their bower and fall asleep together, the narrator observes, with a hint of warning in his words, “Sleep on / Blest pair; and O yet happiest if ye seek / No happier state, and know to know no more” (4.773-5). The speaker’s use of the word “yet” is significant, for it suggests not that Adam and Eve are yet to be “happiest,” but rather that they will still be “happiest” – ideally, for an eternal present – if they seek no “happier state,” which, given that they are “happiest” presently, would be impossible. Indeed, Adam recognizes that he and Eve already possess bliss to the greatest measure possible for their species. He is completely aghast when Raphael utters the conditional, “If ye be found obedient” (5.501) and thus responds with the following wondering words:

But say,  
What meant that caution joined, *If ye be found*  
*Obedient?* Can we want obedience then  
To him, or possibly his love desert  
Who formed us from the dust, and placed us here  
Full to the utmost measure of what bliss

Human desires can seek or apprehend? (5.512-8)

As early as Book 5, Adam recognizes and is grateful for the “[f]ull ... measure of ... bliss” that God has bequeathed him, Eve, and his progeny. What is more, he understands that to “seek or apprehend” more bliss is beyond those “desires” proper to the human. To have the “desire” to “seek or apprehend” more “bliss” than “the utmost measure” would be anti-heroic for Adam and Eve; not only would it be a futile adventure, but it would also mean sacrificing the eternal present, which is “happiest” to their human nature. The future, representative of “desires” beyond which the human “can seek or apprehend,” essentially creates mortality. Adam and Eve’s happiness is true happiness not despite their innocence (usually associated with ignorance, but not here), but *because* of it. Their innocence is a sign of their moment-to-moment trust in God’s love. However, we might wonder how Adam and Eve can have free will and really be happy if they are innocent.<sup>280</sup>

Indeed, Milton, through Satan, highlights Adam and Eve’s prelapsarian innocence as naivety to the point that we wonder, as readers, how they can be happy and free. What Adam and Eve’s innocence really shows, however, is that their continuous trust in God’s

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<sup>280</sup> If we think that Adam and Eve do not actually possess free will, then we also question Milton’s God’s loving intentions. However, Gregory points to the difficulties presented to Renaissance poets who “set out to reinvent epic divine action in monotheistic terms,” specifically, how “Christian theological problems ... emerged as problems of narrative” (9). Gregory helpfully sums up the problem of evil in Milton’s poem, in particular, the moral objections to Christianity:

The serious objections to Milton’s God are not points of decorum or tone; they emerge inevitably from the Christian interpretation of the expulsion myth, despite Milton’s best efforts. How is it just for God to punish all of Adam’s and Eve’s descendants for their single mistake? Why ‘die he or justice must’ [3.210]? Why does God allow Satan to get away with as much as he does, before and after the fall? Why will God be satisfied by having the Son tortured to death? How heroic really is the Son’s offer of death, since he knows, and freely admits before the assembled angels, that the Father will promptly resurrect him? Why does God make postlapsarian life as painful as he does, and as unequally painful? How is it just for God to reduce each individual’s morally complex lifetime of actions, good, bad, and mixed, to a thumbs up/thumbs down final judgment? How is it just for God to create countless souls, knowing that he would end up damning most of them? (213)

love – their free choice – results in happiness and supersedes knowledge.<sup>281</sup> Similar to how human freedom must be contingent in order for it to be free (Quint 300), happiness has an element of contingency: “A pun on ‘happy’ and ‘happiness’ runs through *Paradise Lost*. ... Milton emphasizes the ‘hap’ in happiness: the element of fortune, chance, and contingency” (Quint 300). This “element of contingency” refers to Adam’s and Eve’s continuous choice to trust in God’s love. Because their innocence is a sign of their moment-to-moment decision to trust in God’s love for them, a heroic strength, rather than a marker of Adam and Eve’s limitations, it reflects their inward happiness.<sup>282</sup> Further, for Quint, “The problem for Adam and Eve, as has often been pointed out, is that they cannot *know* the full precariousness of their happy state until they have lost it: this is the real knowledge they receive from the forbidden fruit” (300). Do they live according to a false happiness because they do not have knowledge of good and evil?<sup>283</sup> How can Adam and

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<sup>281</sup> Notably, what Gregory says about the Son’s heroic characteristics in Milton’s *Paradise Regained* also applies here, to Adam and Eve:

As soon as one imagines the Jesus of *Paradise Regained* as omniscient like his Father, his declarations of faithful ignorance – ‘For what concerns my knowledge God reveals’ (1.293) – become plain lies, and the drama of the poem evaporates, as does the exemplary value of its hero, which depends precisely on his combination of imperfect knowledge and perfect faith. There is no point in telling people to imitate Christ’s omniscience, but Christ’s perfect faith is something that believers can profitably aim at, if not achieve. (88-89)

The Son’s “exemplary value” in *Paradise Regained* arises precisely from His “combination of imperfect knowledge and perfect faith,” which are qualities that Adam and Eve can also possess.

<sup>282</sup> In Book 6, Raphael tells Adam how the obedient angels’ innocence is a heroic strength because it gave them “[s]uch high advantages” in the war in heaven (6.401, but also see 6.402-5). The obedient angels’ innocence is, as it is for Adam and Eve, a sign of their active, continuous choice to trust in God’s love.

<sup>283</sup> Part of Eve’s argument for working separately in Book 9 is that God has endowed each of them with sufficient defence:

If this be our condition, thus to dwell  
In narrow circuit straitened by a foe,  
Subtle or violent, we not endued  
Single with like defence, wherever met,  
How are we happy, still in fear of harm?  
But harm precedes not sin: only our foe  
Tempting affronts us with his foul esteem  
Of our integrity: his foul esteem

Eve be expected to make choices – a major part of free will – let alone the right choices, without complete knowledge?

By emphasizing Adam and Eve's innocence as naivety, Milton tempts readers to see the couple's innocence as a limitation and, perhaps, sign that they are not really free, even though free will is essential to Milton's ordered universe. For example, Milton's Satan frames Eve's innocence as ignorance, which is a lack of knowledge:

Why then was this [fruit] forbid? Why but to awe,  
Why but to keep ye low and ignorant,  
His [God's] worshipper; he knows that in the day  
Ye eat thereof, your eyes that seem so clear,  
Yet are but dim, shall perfectly be then  
Opened and cleared, and ye shall be as gods,  
Knowing both good and evil as they know. (9.703-9)

Satan argues that God willfully keeps Eve from growing into a more developed or perfect version of herself, to which Eve agrees. After the Fall, Eve addresses the tree with these words: "Experience, next to thee I owe, / Best guide; not following thee, I had remained / In ignorance, thou open'st wisdom's way" (9.807-9). Some critics argue that Adam and Eve's prelapsarian innocence enables growth, as it is a possible strength. For MacCallum,

Unlike Augustine, Milton allows Adam and Eve to feel uncertainty, doubt, even the play of contrary impulses, while at the same time insisting that they are still

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Sticks no dishonour on our front, but turns  
Foul on himself; then wherefore shunned or feared  
By us? who rather double honour gain  
From his surmise proved false, find peace within,  
Favour from heaven, our witness from the event. (9.322-34)

Abdiel's ability to remain constant "[t]hough single" (5.903) suggests that Eve is, in fact, likewise able to remain constant to God on her own, just as she surmises. The point of the debate between Adam and Eve is not that either of them is right or wrong in their words or their actions. Rather, the point is that each of them has open choice *and* each of them is sufficient to stand. Throughout this dissertation, I show that Milton's God *expects* Adam and Eve to be active participants in the world and, moreover, in control of their own lives. Quint claims, "Happiness, for Milton, is always contingent and uneasy, conditioned by the terrifying possibility for failure – the drop before Jesus' feet – but maintained by the human will whose free exercise is in itself the source and essence of happiness" (301).

unfallen. As A.S.P. Woodhouse argues, he permits an unusually wide range of experience, including inner conflict, to man in the state of innocence, and he clearly means us to see in this variety the potential for further growth and evolution. (110)

In other words, Adam and Eve's unfallen innocence holds the possibility of evolution by permitting access to a wide range of experience. While I agree that unfallen innocence holds the possibility of evolution, I show that this stems not from access to a wide range of experience (as Woodhouse suggests), nor from the feelings of uncertainty, doubt, or contrary impulses (as MacCallum argues), but from Adam and Eve's perseverance in their continuous choice to trust in God's love as they develop. Their growth results not from the "variety" of experiences or feelings that Adam and Eve encounter in their innocence, but in their decision to keep trusting in God's love *despite* these experiences and feelings (such as doubt), which arise from the natural development of self-identity.

Moreover, Satan's first observation of Adam and Eve in Book 4 emphasizes that the human couple is undeserving of Satan's revenge (for example, they are gentle creatures that did nothing to merit Satan's revenge) rather than their ability to contend with his wrath *through* their innocence. Satan interprets Adam and Eve's innocence as merely sweet or touching rather than a veritable source of defense against his ire.<sup>284</sup> Satan remarks that the sight of Adam and Eve's innocence makes him melt and he is "loath to this revenge," which, were circumstances different, he "should abhor":

Thank him [God] who puts me loath 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,

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<sup>284</sup> Shortly, we will see, however, that Adam and Eve's innocence is a sign of their constant, active choice to trust in God's love, which serves as their inward armour against Satan.

Honour and empire with revenge enlarged,  
By conquering this new world, compels me now  
To do what else though damned I should abhor. (4.386-92)

The narrator says something similar in Book 9, but regarding the effect of Eve's innocence alone on Satan:

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; (9.455-66)

The repetition of the word “innocence” in Book 9 is emphatic, and it serves to tempt readers to see the human couple's innocence as a weakness rather than a sign of their unwavering, active choice to trust in God's love, which makes them the poem's heroes. Satan is only for a moment distracted from his evil: the “hot hell that always in him burns” “soon ended his delight, / And tortures him now more, the more he sees / Of pleasure not for him ordained” (9.467-70). Further, “soon / Fierce hate he recollects” (9.471). Here, Adam and Eve's innocence seems like a limitation because it can neither change Satan's mind about his decision to seek revenge nor protect them from Satan when he finally puts his revenge in motion. Satan is only in awe of Adam and Eve's constant choice to trust in God's love momentarily. As readers, we might wonder how Adam and Eve's “harmless innocence” can be useful to them when it does not prevent Satan in his attempts to remove the good. Like Satan, we might believe that their

innocence is naïve or just simple (it is “harmless”), when in reality it is a sign of their continuous choice – veritable labour – to trust in God’s love and, by extension, their heroism. If Adam and Eve choose to trust in God’s love even when, in Book 5 and then in Book 9, Satan preys upon their feelings of doubt, desire, and so forth, Satan’s stabs at revenge will do no lasting harm.

Worst of all, in terms of Adam and Eve being able to make an informed choice, they are completely naïve about Death. Adam says that they do not know what death is:

he [God] who requires  
From us no other service than to keep  
This one, this easy charge, of all the trees  
In Paradise that bear delicious fruit  
So various, not to taste that only tree  
Of knowledge, planted by the tree of life,  
So near grows death to life, what e’er death is,  
Some dreadful thing no doubt; for well thou know’st  
God hath pronounced it death to taste that tree,  
The only sign of our obedience left  
Among so many signs of power and rule  
Conferred upon us, and dominion given  
Over all other creatures that possess  
Earth, air, and sea. (4.419-32)

How can Adam and Eve grasp the gravity of the single prohibition not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil when they do not know what Death would mean for them?

How can they choose right from wrong when they do not know exactly what they are choosing? These are the questions that Milton’s poem tempts readers with because they make us view Adam and Eve’s ignorance as a limitation that impinges on their free will.

The narrator stresses Eve’s naivety again when she follows Satan-in-the-serpent to the forbidden tree, which will make her mortal. As readers, we pity Eve and wonder if her innocence is a limitation, since it causes her to trust Satan readily: “So glistered the dire

snake, and into fraud / Led Eve our credulous mother, to the tree / Of prohibition, root of all our woe” (9.643-5). The narrator’s description of Eve as “our credulous mother” not only stresses that Eve is naïve and trusting – the latter being part of the thing that makes her heroic – but also makes readers care about her and her future. Indeed, what happens next will cause “all our woe.” The careful enjambment in lines 643 and 644 reflects Eve’s inclination to follow Satan-in-the-serpent. Eve’s innocence appears as naivety, which looks like a limitation to readers who live in the fallen world where guile such as Satan’s is the norm. If Eve had some experience with evil, she would not be so trusting and not allow herself to be led “to the tree / Of prohibition,” which will ruin all human life.

What Adam and Eve’s innocence really shows, however, is that their trust in God’s love supersedes knowledge. They will choose rightly so long as they choose to trust in God’s love continuously – even when it does not make sense. Milton shows us that choosing well does not require a lot of knowledge. What choosing well requires is trust in the Other’s love and the greater order of the universe.<sup>285</sup> Milton’s narrator presents Adam and Eve’s innocence as a strength rather than a weakness – true purity instead of seeming purity – in the following quotation about their lovemaking:

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<sup>285</sup> Bond observes that in Book 3 Milton stresses the Son’s “superhuman faith” rather than “superhuman knowledge or intelligence”: “The repetition [in the Son’s speech, at 3.242-3 and 3.247] suggests the Son’s need for reassurance that his Father will not abandon him, rather than any confidence in his own resurrection. Thus, Milton emphasizes not the Son’s superhuman knowledge or intelligence, but instead his superhuman faith” (182). Further, “[T]he lines may hint at something like the vulnerability of the incarnate Son, and at the extraordinary degree of trust that the Son places in the care of the Father” (Bond 182). In one potential reading of the Son’s understanding of “the outline of his future career” (182), Bond considers the Son’s “extraordinary degree of trust” in the Father. I, instead, look at Adam and Eve’s attempt to trust God throughout *Paradise Lost* and show that an analysis of trust, or the lack thereof, is crucial for our understanding of the workings of free will, decision-making, and heroism in the poem. It is also notable that my reading is in keeping with what Deborah Kuller Shuger asserts about the Christian grand style’s pivotal role in the religious culture of the Renaissance, namely, that it “creates a ‘method’ that could bring man and God into a relationship based on love rather than knowledge” (250).



Nor those mysterious parts were then concealed,  
Then was not guilty shame, dishonest shame  
Of nature's works, honour dishonourable,  
Sin-bred, how have ye troubled all mankind  
With shows instead, mere shows of seeming pure,  
And banished from man's life his happiest life,  
Simplicity and spotless innocence.  
So passed they naked on, nor shunned the sight  
Of God or angel, for they thought no ill:  
So hand in hand they passed, the loveliest pair  
That ever since in love's embraces met,  
Adam the goodliest man of men since born,  
His sons, the fairest of her daughters Eve. (4.312-24)

Man's "happiest life" is "[s]implicity and spotless innocence"; indeed, Adam is "the goodliest man of men since born" and Eve is the "fairest of her daughters" because they are innocent. Their innocence means that "they thought no ill" of God, themselves, or others. It seems that their innocence is what allows them to trust in God's love so easily. Importantly, this readiness to trust the Other is not borne of a lack of knowledge (specifically, of evil), but of an implicit knowledge that they possess, namely, knowledge of good. The association of innocence with trust in the Other's love is made clear in the succeeding image of Adam and Eve passing before our eyes "hand in hand."

We see the importance of trust rather than complete knowledge again when Abdiel trusts in God's love and the greater order of the universe.<sup>286</sup> Abdiel says to Satan,

Shalt thou give law to God, shalt thou dispute  
With him the points of liberty, who made

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<sup>286</sup> Even Jesus, who is Bond's "perfect hero" in Milton's *Paradise Regained*, does not possess complete knowledge (xiv): "Although Jesus does not initially know or understand everything about himself, he is nonetheless always powerful and virtuous to a superhuman degree. Jesus cannot be tempted because he is already perfect; but the belief that Jesus is always possessed of a complete knowledge and understanding is no less mistaken than the belief that a genuine temptation occurs" (196). Adam and Eve, like Jesus, I will show, must "contentedly leave mysteries to be revealed by God" (Bond 196). For Bond's discussion of Jesus's "genuine unmasking of Satan [only] in book 4" (197), which is the final book in Milton's *Paradise Regained*, see pp. 197-198 in Bond's book, *Spenser, Milton, and the Redemption of the Epic Hero*.

Thee what thou art, and formed the powers of heaven  
Such as he pleased, and circumscribed their being?  
Yet by experience taught we know how good,  
And of our good, and of our dignity  
How provident he is, how far from thought  
To make us less, bent rather to exalt  
Our happy state under one head more near  
United. But to grant it thee unjust,  
That equal over equals monarch reign:  
Thyself though great and glorious dost thou count,  
Or all angelic nature joined in one,  
Equal to him begotten son, by whom  
As by his word the mighty Father made  
All things, even thee, and all the spirits of heaven (5.822-37)

Abdiel states that it would be wrong to “dispute / With him [God] the points of liberty.”

While Abdiel simply trusts in God’s love, he urges Satan to see that God’s love is made manifest in the greater order of the universe, within which He has “circumscribed” the powers of heaven, made it so that angels are “under one head more near / United,” and used the Son’s Word to “ma[k]e / All things, even thee [Satan].” Abdiel’s trust in God’s love is evident in the final example of God’s ordered universe because he admits that God’s creation of Satan – the very angel that Abdiel is disputing with here – is a sign of His endorsement of liberty, as well as His love.

Furthermore, God shows that He trusts in Adam and Eve’s ability to make good choices when He has Raphael warn Adam about the temptation to disobey and then depart. Raphael does not stay with Adam to ensure that he follows God’s commands. Rather, Raphael *educates* Adam so that the human couple can be active agents in the world on their own, but still in accordance with God’s Laws. God tells Raphael explicitly that he is meant to give Adam advice rather than linger on earth with the human couple:

such discourse bring on,

As may advise him of his happy state,  
Happiness in his power left free to will,  
Left to his own free will, his will though free,  
Yet mutable; whence warn him to beware  
He swerve not too secure: tell him withal  
His danger, and from whom, what enemy  
Late fallen himself from heaven, is plotting now  
The fall of others from like state of bliss;  
By violence, no, for that should be withstood,  
But by deceit and lies; this let him know,  
Lest willfully transgressing he pretend  
Surprisal, unadmonished, unforwarned. (5.233-45)

Continued happiness is in Adam's power, since he is "[l]eft to his own free will" when Raphael departs from Eden. He gives Adam enough knowledge to make good choices. More knowledge than this is excessive. Thus, it is not that the hero needs no knowledge, but that the content and quality of that knowledge is important. An implicit knowledge of good makes it easier for Adam and Eve to trust in God's love, while knowledge of evil makes Adam and Eve lose their innocence, which was a sign of their heroism.

Indeed, Adam and Eve's decision to curb their desire for knowledge is a part of Miltonic heroism because, in doing so, they acknowledge that their happiness stems not from knowledge that they might accrue, but from exercise of their free will through the continuous choice to trust in God's love.<sup>287</sup> For Milton, prelapsarian knowledge – true purity – is Adam and Eve's recognition of their non-knowing, together. Far from being a limitation, the realization of their non-knowing contributes to Adam and Eve's heroism

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<sup>287</sup> Elsewhere, Milton rejects the unrestrained indulgence of desires that is typical of romance. According to Burrow, "In *Poems* (1965) Milton develops canny methods of stealing the energy of romance without implicating himself in its indulgences" (249). For example, in Milton's "L'Allegro" "[r]omance is there – a Lady of Shalott tucked away in the privy reaches of imagination [see *ll.* 77-80] – but is there for other people" (Burrow 249).

because they control their desire for knowledge and, as such, depend solely on their trust in God's love for them. The narrator states that the "desire to know" is in itself sinless:

Whence Adam soon repealed  
The doubts that in his heart arose: and now  
Led on, yet sinless, with desire to know  
What nearer might concern him, how this world  
Of heaven and earth conspicuous first began,  
When, and whereof created, for what cause,  
What within Eden or without was done  
Before his memory, (7.59-66)

Adam's temperance is seen in his ability to discern what is proper for him to "search and know" (7.125). He possesses the faculty "to know / In measure what the mind may well contain" (7.127-8).<sup>288</sup> When Adam asks Raphael to disclose how heaven first began and what caused the Creator "to build / In chaos" (7.92-93), Raphael returns approvingly,

This also thy request with caution asked  
Obtain: though to recount almighty works  
What words or tongue of seraph can suffice,  
Or heart of man suffice to comprehend?  
Yet what thou canst attain, which best may serve  
To glorify the maker, and infer  
Thee also happier, shall not be withheld  
Thy hearing, such commission from above  
I have received, to answer thy desire  
Of knowledge within bounds; beyond abstain  
To ask, nor let thine own inventions hope  
Things not revealed, which the invisible king,  
Only omniscient, hath suppressed in night,  
To none communicable in earth or heaven:  
Enough is left besides to search and know.  
But knowledge is as food, and needs no less  
Her temperance over appetite, to know  
In measure what the mind may well contain,

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<sup>288</sup> G. K. Hunter observes, "What is not always noticed is that the mind is not conceived to move naturally against these limits" (174). He continues, "Raphael, immediately after the assertion of secret knowledge ... goes on to point to man as a vessel with limited capacity" (Hunter 174). I suggest that because "the [human] mind is not conceived to move naturally against these limits," Adam and Eve's conscious decision to curb their desire for knowledge is a feat of Miltonic heroism.

Oppresses else with surfeit, and soon turns  
Wisdom to folly, as nourishment to wind. (7.111-30)

Raphael answers Adam's questions because his desire for knowledge is "within bounds"; indeed, Adam says, "we, not to explore the secrets ask / Of his eternal empire, but the more / To magnify his works, the more we know" (7.95-97). At this point, Adam's desire for knowledge is selfless and grounded in his obedience and trust in God's love. Adam and Eve are heroic when they limit their knowledge because this displays their willful temperance of desires so that they can trust in God's love, the source of their heroism.

In Book 9, Adam agrees to Eve's parting ways with him so that more work can be done, and he remains sinless for doing so because, as Adam reminds Eve, she is equipped with her native innocence – again, her continuous choice to trust in God's love – which is her greatest virtue:

But if thou think, trial unsought may find  
Us both securer than thus warned thou seem'st,  
Go; for thy stay, not free, absents thee more;  
Go in thy native innocence, rely  
On what thou hast of virtue, summon all,  
For God towards thee hath done his part, do thine. (9.370-5)<sup>289</sup>

Adam must at times be taught by experience what is good versus evil rather than simply avoid evil at all costs. His and Eve's heroism rests in part on their acceptance of unsought trials where the outcome cannot be known beforehand.<sup>290</sup> Adam's trust in Eve's love is, at

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<sup>289</sup> Miltonic virtue requires choice.

<sup>290</sup> Though my argument focuses on trust in one's relationship with the Other, MacCallum similarly argues that Eve's "appeal to the individual conscience is ... not irrelevant" (154). Regarding the separation scene, he asserts, "Are we to condemn her [Eve] for seeking to realize such inward perfection? ... Orders and degrees do not jar with liberty, and Eve's virtue is no less free and interior than that of Adam, her superior and head" (MacCallum 154). Further, for MacCallum, "We do less than justice to this awakening individualism in Eve if we fail to see it as her response to what she has experienced and been told in the preceding books. Their lives are to develop in complexity, and the rhythm of short retirement and sweet

this point, analogous to his trust in God's love. He has no experience that can reasonably lead him to question Eve's words, which so far, he has deemed "best" (8.550). However, in the separation scene Eve reveals to Adam that she suspects he *distrusts* her:

His [Satan's] fraud is then thy fear, which plain infers  
Thy equal fear that my firm faith and love  
Can by his fraud be shaken or seduced;  
Thoughts, which how found they harbour in thy breast  
Adam, misthought of her to thee so dear? (9.285-9)

Again, issues of trust – between humanity and God, as well as between Adam and Eve – lie at the heart of the Fall. Eve's suspicion that Adam does not trust her "firm faith and love" in God surely makes her trust Adam less, since her and Adam's trust in God serves as a template for their own relationship. Even after Eve eats the forbidden fruit, Adam could express heroism by helping Eve regain her trust in God's love and then approaching God repentantly with Eve. As a result of these choices, perhaps Adam and Eve could thwart the Fall. However, we will see that because Adam either trusts overmuch in Eve's love or is too needy, he does not consider heroic action as a means to prevent his own fall.

### **The Actions and Development of Adam and Eve: During and Directly After the Fall**

At the start of Book 9, the narrator equates the Fall with a change in the *relationship* between God and humanity:

I now must change  
Those notes to tragic; foul distrust, and breach  
Disloyal on the part of man, revolt,  
And disobedience: on the part of heaven  
Now alienated, distance and distaste,

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return will undoubtedly bring moments of solitude" (154-5). Both MacCallum and I contend that individual conscience is relevant to Miltonic heroism.

Anger and just rebuke, and judgment given,  
That brought into this world a world of woe,  
Sin and her shadow Death, and Misery  
Death's harbinger: sad task, yet argument  
Not less but more heroic than the wrath  
Of stern Achilles on his foe pursued  
Thrice fugitive about Troy wall; or rage  
Of Turnus for Lavinia disespoused,  
Or Neptune's ire or Juno's, that so long  
Perplexed the Greek and Cytherea's son; (9.5-19)<sup>291</sup>

The narrator asserts that heaven's "[a]nger and just rebuke, and judgment given, / That brought into this world a world of woe, / Sin and her shadow Death, and Misery" is an "argument" or subject "[n]ot less but more heroic" than "the wrath / Of stern Achilles" on Hector, whom he pursued and took victory over; the rage of Turnus for Lavinia, whom he was supposed to wed for peace between the Rutuli and the Trojans; or the rage of Neptune or Juno for Ulysses and Aeneas, respectively. Milton's subject is the change in the relationship between man and heaven, specifically, heaven's "distance and distaste" in response to man's "foul distrust, and breach / Disloyal." Milton's poem traces humanity's distancing of itself from God and, later, its process of returning to Him. At the start of Book 9, the narrator states that Adam and Eve will fall because they "distrust" God.

Indeed, Eve does wrong when she chooses to doubt whether the Other self, that is, God, can be trusted; specifically, she decides to view God as withholding knowledge and

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<sup>291</sup> Gregory asserts,

*Paradise Lost* is closer to the *Christiad* [‘Not for him (Milton) the classicized deities of the *Africa* or the *Lusiads*; not for him the magical adventuring of romance, “the skill of artifice or office mean”; not for him a God beyond the representational horizon of the poem, as in Dante or Spenser, or a God who intervenes and then disappears from the poem for long stretches, as in Ariosto or Tasso’] in its biblical subject and direct approach to divine action, and it restores the relationship between gods and mortals to the central importance it held in classical epic. (178)

For Borris, Tasso, Spenser, and Milton “used Christian ecclesiology and soteriology to reinterpret the relationships of humans, divinities, and cultures in Homeric and Virgilian epics” (89).

prestige from her instead of appreciating how God has bequeathed her queenly status, among many other signs of His love. Selleck observes that during the early modern period, “selves are everywhere ‘beheld’ – only by others” (104). Selleck’s interest lies in the epistemological question of whether the ‘mirror’ can be trusted (108). Though the Eve of Book 9 seems to have forgotten or dismissed her queenly status, Milton makes it clear that she already possesses it in full measure. After Adam expresses his interest in astronomy to Raphael, the narrator relates,

So spake our sire, and by his countenance seemed  
Entering on studious thoughts abstruse, which Eve  
Perceiving where she sat retired in sight,  
With lowliness majestic from her seat,  
And grace that won who saw to wish her stay,  
Rose, and went forth among her fruits and flowers, (8.39-44)

When Eve rises from her seat with “lowliness majestic” and “grace,” all who see her desire to remain in her presence. Furthermore, a few lines later, the narrator continues,

[w]ith goddess-like demeanour forth she [Eve] went;  
Not unattended, for on her as queen  
A pomp of winning graces waited still,  
And from about her shot darts of desire  
Into all eyes to wish her still in sight. (8.59-63)

Satan, however, suggests that Eve cannot be majestic without an audience of beings whose status is below hers. The idea is that the Other, the audience of God alone (or Adam alone), is not enough (see 9.541-8). Eve is tempted into not trusting in God’s love. She “muse[s]” that the fruit of the forbidden tree possesses the “virtue to make wise,” which knowledge (as Satan muses earlier) “might exalt [her] / Equal with gods” (9.744, 9.778, 4.525-6). For Loewenstein, “Satan’s extravagant language – such as when he addresses her [Eve] with the daring oxymoron ‘Goddess humane’ (9.732) – is meant to



provoke the vulnerable Eve (who tends towards vanity, while Adam tends towards uxoriousness) to aspire beyond her human condition” (152). Indeed, when Eve “with darkened judgment puts the fruit to ‘use’ [see 9.798] as she construes it and thus perverts its purpose, the fruit of her act is mortality: the end of innocence, the scripted end of every subjectivity, death and dissolution for her and all her kind” (Gregerson 186). I concur with Linda Gregerson’s assertion about the “true usefulness of the fruit”: “The true usefulness of the fruit is a demanding paradox, one that exacts not passive obedience but resourceful submission. It is the paradox that Patience delineates in Milton’s nineteenth sonnet: the strenuous service of ‘stand and wait’” (186). Patience is one of the two key characteristics of Milton’s hero.<sup>292</sup> Satan actually says to Eve,

and wherein lies  
The offence, that man should thus attain to know?  
What can your knowledge hurt him [God], or this tree  
Impart against his will if all be his?  
Or is it envy, and can envy dwell  
In heavenly breasts? (9.725-30)

Satan, in this quotation, plays to Eve’s *trust* in God’s love. In essence, Satan says here, ‘If all of this is His, how can the tree impart anything against God’s will? How can the tree be evil if God is good?’ Satan tells Eve that nothing bad can happen because God wills everything. At the same time, Satan’s use of the conditional “if” suggests – it plants the

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<sup>292</sup> In Book 4, Satan’s words foreshadow that Eve will eat the forbidden fruit in part because of his suggestion that God’s command not to eat the fruit arises from God’s envy of Eve’s new knowledge:

O fair foundation laid whereon to build  
Their [Adam and Eve’s] ruin! Hence I will excite their minds  
With more desire to know, and to reject  
Envious commands, invented with design  
To keep them low whom knowledge might exalt  
Equal with gods; aspiring to be such,  
They taste and die: what likelier can ensue? (4.521-7)

seed in Eve's heart – that God is not to be trusted. Fallen Eve, who trusts in God's love far less than she used to, will take Satan's claim further, pondering whether God's command not to eat from the forbidden tree is given to her because of God's envy of *the tree* that bequeaths knowledge that He Himself cannot give. In this case, Eve not only doubts God's love, but also, crucially, transfers her trust in God to trust in a tree (9.795-807)! Of course, the issue in this temptation is not actually knowledge, but faith in God.

Eve falls when she turns to her fallible senses and reason instead of the continuous choice to trust in God's love.<sup>293</sup> Before we review the precise moment when Eve's senses and reasoning lead her astray, it is important to observe just how well Eve uses her senses and reason to evaluate what Satan-in-the-serpent tells her about the forbidden fruit, not only because it underscores my claim in chapter 2 that the body is good, but also because it shows that Eve parries Satan's persuasive words much better than we might initially think. Further, Satan takes his revenge on God not by physically possessing mortals (here, Adam and Eve), as previous poetic versions of Satan had done, but by physically possessing a serpent.<sup>294</sup> The implication of this change is that Adam and Eve's wills are

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<sup>293</sup> Alternatively, Aaron P. Cassidy and others suggest that Eve falls because she is not reasonable enough. For Cassidy, Eve does not discern "deceptive paradiastole" in Satan's rhetoric (145). He suggests, "The opportunity is present – not only for Eve, but for any readers who are concerned – to show rational resistance, to test whether Satan's logic, actions, or authoritative evidence can sustain his claim to virtue" (Cassidy 144). Cassidy shows how "Milton's principles for evaluating the authority of a testimony [found in Milton's *Areopagitica*, *Of Education*, and *Artis Logicae*] and Aristotle's doctrines of the mean and of enacting virtue in a particular *kairos* ['an awareness of the present occasion' (Cassidy 129)] help readers to see ... how one may possibly uncover the deception" (146). I, however, disagree. I do not think Milton is leading us in this direction. In my reading, Eve does not need to use her reason – all she has to do is love. Milton demonstrates how good Satan's rhetoric is, since Satan even tricks the angels more than once. In Book 4, Gabriel observes that Uriel's sight is "perfect": "Uriel, no wonder if thy perfect sight, / Amid the sun's bright circle where thou sitt'st, / See far and wide:" (4.577-9). However, even with his perfect sight, Uriel does not catch Satan's hypocrisy until after Satan has entered Eden's gate without notice. Satan is disguised as "a stripling cherub" (3.636), so sight – a sense – can be deceived.

<sup>294</sup> Gregory, in his comparison of classical and Renaissance epics, emphasizes that *Paradise Lost's* mortals are neither physically possessed by a supernatural force nor "predisposed to do hell's bidding" (193).

too strong for Satan to control them. There are four instances where Eve reasons well – her heroic choice to trust in God’s love guides reason – in the episode with Satan-in-the-serpent. First, Satan-in-the-serpent speaks to Eve using human language and she reflects,

What may this mean? Language of man pronounced  
By tongue of brute, and human sense expressed?  
The first at least of these I thought denied  
To beasts, whom God on their creation-day  
Created mute to all articulate sound;  
The latter I demure, for in their looks  
Much reason, and in their actions oft appears. (9.553-9)

We see Eve reasoning well when she asks questions and assimilates new information within the framework of her partial knowledge. After noting the discrepancy between what she “thought” and what she experiences now through her senses, she reasons that human sense in the brute might be entirely possible, “for in their looks / Much reason, and in their actions oft appears.” There is nothing wrong with Eve’s line of thought and her senses actually *help her* consider possibilities that she had never entertained before. Further, Eve’s active choice to trust in God’s love is apparent, since she mentions “God” in her reply. The second instance where Eve reasons well is after Satan-in-the-serpent speaks to her about the wisdom-giving power of the fruit:

But say, where grows the tree, from hence how far?  
For many are the trees of God that grow  
In Paradise, and various, yet unknown  
To us, in such abundance lies our choice,  
As leaves a greater store of fruit untouched,  
Still hanging incorruptible, till men  
Grow up to their provision, and more hands  
Help to disburden nature of her birth. (9.617-24)

Yet again, Eve is content with the partial knowledge she possesses, in this case about the trees in Paradise. This statement of her knowledge is still replete with reason and truth

since Eve frames her knowledge in terms of her choice to trust in God's love. She speaks of "abundance" rather than limitation. Eve implicitly acknowledges that she does not need to know all of the trees in Paradise because God has provided Adam and herself with ample choice. She continues to speak of the abundance of love in the Garden when she mentions that "more hands" will help "to disburden nature of her birth." Adam and Eve's love will result in children, who will help them further cultivate the love that they have for God. The third instance where Eve reasons well is when Satan-in-the-serpent leads her to the forbidden tree and she says in response,

Serpent, we might have spared our coming hither,  
Fruitless to me, though fruit be here to excess,  
The credit of whose virtue rest with thee,  
Wondrous indeed, if cause of such effects,  
But of this tree we may not taste nor touch;  
God so commanded, and left that command  
Sole daughter of his voice; the rest, we live  
Law to our selves, our reason is our law. (9.647-54)

Again, Eve reasons well, since she perceives the tree is "[f]ruitless," "though fruit be here to excess." Eve is still thinking about God, and the love that He has for her and Adam, when she says, "God so commanded" that they not eat from this tree, though otherwise "the rest, we live / Law to our selves, our reason is our law." Eve chooses to trust in God's love, which makes her virtuous and heroic, rather than the fruit, which the serpent credits as virtuous. The final time when Eve reasons well is her response to Satan's query about whether God has made the human pair "lords ... of all in earth or air" (9.658):

Of the fruit  
Of each tree in the garden we may eat,  
But of the fruit of this fair tree amidst  
The garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat  
Thereof, nor shall ye touch it, lest ye die. (9.659-63)

The narrator's use of "yet" in the phrase "yet sinless" not only stresses that Eve is sinless, but also that she has, up until this point, *persisted* heroically in her defense of God's love.

Eve's senses and reason only begin to lead her astray when they are no longer tempered with her decision to trust in God's love. Now, she is desirous:

He [Satan] ended, and his words replete with guile  
Into her heart too easy entrance won:  
Fixed on the fruit she gazed, which to behold  
Might tempt alone, and in her ears the sound  
Yet rung of his persuasive words, impregned  
With reason, to her seeming, and with truth;  
Meanwhile the hour of noon drew on, and waked  
An eager appetite, raised by the smell  
So savoury of that fruit, which with desire,  
Inclinable now grown to touch or taste,  
Solicited her longing eye; yet first  
Pausing a while, thus to her self she mused. (9.733-44)

That Satan's words are "replete with guile" emphasizes, again, Eve's innocence. Eve has held out against Satan-in-the-serpent four times already, but now all five of her senses are aroused. Furthermore, "in her ears the sound / Yet rung of his [Satan-in-the-serpent's] persuasive words." Within sight of the fruit, and with the sound of Satan-in-the-serpent's words ringing in her ears, hungry Eve attempts to continue reasoning well, but it becomes difficult. This difficulty is expressed in the narrator's use of the phrase "to her seeming" (9.738). Satan-in-the-serpent's words seem to be "impregned / With reason" and "with truth" because her reason is clouded with the message from her senses. Despite this, we see Eve "yet first / Pausing a while," so that she can reflect on her experience. Eve's senses and reason lead her to sin near the end of the following passage, where she muses,

For us [humans] alone  
Was death invented? or to us denied  
This intellectual food, for beasts reserved?

For beasts it seems: yet that one beast which first  
Hath tasted, envies not, but brings with joy  
The good befallen him, author unsuspect,  
Friendly to man, far from deceit or guile.  
What fear I then, rather what know to fear  
Under this ignorance of good and evil,  
Of God or death, of law or penalty?  
Here grows the cure of all, this fruit divine,  
Fair to the eye, inviting to the taste,  
Of virtue to make wise; what hinders then  
To reach, and feed at once both body and mind? (9.766-79)

Eve reasons poorly for the first time when she claims that the fruit will be “the cure” for her “ignorance of good and evil.” Eve falls for accepting the temptation that Milton has dangled before his readers: to see prelapsarian innocence as a limitation rather than the strength that it is, namely, a sign of humans’ profound choice to trust in God’s love. Eve wonders how she can possess fear (and after, what she would fear) when she is “[u]nder this ignorance of good and evil, / Of God or death, of law or penalty.” However, Eve does not need complete knowledge in order to make good decisions. She does not need to fear something or someone in order to know which decision is the right one. Eve needs only to choose to trust in God’s love – everything else will begin to make sense. Satan’s aim “to instigate Eve’s presumption to Godhead” (Hillier 134) is successful because she has been tricked into thinking that her human innocence is a limitation. Russell M. Hillier further observes, “Even while Eve plucks and eats, Milton’s reader learns that ‘nor was Godhead from her thought’ (9.790)” (134). Adam too will make the claim that it would be beneficial for them to become gods. Their senses and reason lead them astray by causing them to commit a “breach / disloyal,” which is “foul distrust” (9.6-7, 6).

Likewise, we see that Adam chooses not to trust in God’s love, despite having no

reason not to trust in it.<sup>295</sup> Adam's first impulse after Eve eats the forbidden fruit is to follow her to his death rather than turn to God for guidance and offer his life in place of Eve's, which would be an enactment of the heroic martyrdom that Milton's epic esteems. Once Eve has told her story of sin, Adam responds,

some cursed fraud  
Of enemy hath beguiled thee, yet unknown,  
And me with thee hath ruined, for with thee  
Certain my resolution is to die;  
How can I live without thee, how forgo  
Thy sweet converse and love so dearly joined,  
To live again in these wild woods forlorn? (9.904-10)

Adam willfully chooses "to die" with Eve because he cannot imagine living "forlorn," that is, alone, in the woods again. Indeed, in a subsequent speech, Adam repeats, "However I with thee [Eve] have fixed my lot, / Certain to undergo like doom, if death / Consort with thee, death is to me as life" (9.952-4). Adam's repeated "[c]ertain" is used to demonstrate the strength of his bond with Eve, but he could have chosen not to die with Eve. Essentially, Adam permits his feelings for Eve to cloud his faith in God, which would have him trust in and possibly speak directly with God rather than simply guess at God's response.<sup>296</sup> We see this speculative Adam when he says to Eve,

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<sup>295</sup> As the narrator laments near the start of Book 9:

For still they [Adam and Eve] knew, and ought to have still remembered  
The high injunction not to taste that fruit,  
Whoever tempted; which they not obeying,  
Incurred, what could they less, the penalty,  
And manifold in sin, deserved to fall. (9.12-16)

The repetition of "still" emphasizes Adam and Eve's need for perseverance in their continuous choice to trust in God's love, while the word "remembered" suggests the psychological aspect of Milton's heroism. Adam and Eve must always keep their decision to trust in God's love in mind when they act.

<sup>296</sup> Quint goes so far as to claim that Eve seduces Adam to do evil: "epic features a series of Oriental heroines whose seductions are potentially more perilous than Eastern arms: Medea, Dido, Angelica, Armida, and Milton's Eve" (29). I, however, contend that Adam's active choice to place greater trust in Eve's love for him than God's is at fault here.

Nor can I think that God, creator wise,  
Though threatening, will in earnest so destroy  
Us his prime creatures, dignified so high,  
Set over all his works, which in our fall,  
For us created, needs with us must fail,  
Dependent made; so God shall uncreate,  
Be frustrate, do, undo, and labour lose,  
Not well conceived of God, who though his power  
Creation could repeat, yet would be loath  
Us to abolish, (9.938-47)

Adam's words are unusually and strikingly pompous. He dares to say that all of God's works must fail with him and Eve because they are "[d]ependent made" and, moreover, that the decision to abolish him and Eve would be "[n]ot well conceived of God." The lines that follow reveal that Adam's estimations result from his over-attention to his deep feelings for Eve rather than his trust in God's love: "So forcible within my heart I feel / The bond of nature draw me to my own, / My own in thee [Eve], for what thou art is mine" (9.955-7). Here, we see Adam's possessiveness of Eve, which is not the same thing as love. Adam ultimately listens to Eve's voice – the last words spoken before he eats the forbidden fruit are Eve's: "On my experience, Adam, freely taste, / And fear of death deliver to the winds" (9.988-9). Adam chooses Eve in place of God, but he is not *obeying* her. Adam chooses Eve knowing that it is wrong. The narrator makes Adam's knowledge clear in the succeeding description of the human couple:

So saying, she embraced him, and for joy  
Tenderly wept, much won that he his love  
Had so ennobled, as of choice to incur  
Divine displeasure for her sake, or death.  
In recompense (for such compliance bad  
Such recompense best merits) from the bough  
She gave him of that fair enticing fruit  
With liberal hand: he scrupled not to eat  
Against his better knowledge, not deceived,



But fondly overcome with female charm. (9.990-9)

We should not interpret these lines as an instance of heroic martyrdom on Adam's part.

Though Adam is joining her in death, he is not acting through love, but through fear for himself and ownership of Eve. In Book 10, Adam says to Eve,

But for thee  
I had persisted happy, had not thy pride  
And wand'ring vanity, when least was safe,  
Rejected my forewarning, and disdained  
Not to be trusted, longing to be seen  
Though by the devil himself, him overweening  
To over-reach, but with the serpent meeting  
Fooled and beguiled, by him thou, I by thee,  
To trust thee from my side, imagined wise,  
Constant, mature, proof against all assaults, (10.873-82)

Adam not only confirms that the devil enticed Eve by appealing to her “longing to be seen,” though only Satan – *still* “one man except” (9.545) – sees her, but he also realizes the significance of the persistent choice to trust in God's love for continuous happiness.

Adam falls because his emotions lead him to choose Eve's love for him instead of God's, which would result in continuous joy.<sup>297</sup> Similar to Eve, Adam reasons very well for a while. He only does wrong when he focuses on his own needs or knowingly chooses his trust in Eve's love over his trust in God's love.<sup>298</sup> Similar to how Satan-in-the-serpent amazes Eve, Adam is “amazed” and “[a]stonied” when he hears Eve speak of “[t]he fatal

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<sup>297</sup> In *Paradise Lost*, Raphael tells Adam to “love, but first of all / Him whom to love is to obey, and keep / His great command” (8.633-5). However, for Paris, “Adam will love Eve more than God, of course, which God finds unforgivable” (67).

<sup>298</sup> According to Poole, “Augustine had discussed sin as a turning away from God and towards the self, an inherently unstable thing to do, as the self is made from nothing” (150). From this perspective, Adam's selfishness plays a part in his fall. Taking this idea further, I show that Adam and Eve turn away from God because of neediness: Adam, because he thinks he needs Eve's love more than God's, and Eve, because she thinks she needs public approbation, in addition to Adam's love. In this thesis, I am defining neediness as intemperate, self-serving desire that causes a character to neglect their responsibility to others. I, of course, do not agree that “the self is made from nothing.”

trespass done” (9.888-90). He questions what has happened and tries to assimilate it with the knowledge that he possesses, using the word “how” repeatedly:

O fairest of creation [Eve], last and best  
Of all God’s works, creature in whom excelled  
Whatever can to sight or thought be formed,  
Holy, divine, good, amiable or sweet!  
How art thou lost, how on a sudden lost,  
Defaced, deflowered, and now to death devote!  
Rather how hast thou yielded to transgress  
The strict forbiddance, how to violate (9.896-903)

At this point, Adam still reasons well, since he recognizes Eve’s free choice and says that she is not lost, but “Rather how hast *thou* yielded to transgress / The strict forbiddance” (italics mine). Instead of returning to his trust in God’s love, however, Adam becomes fixated on Eve’s value to him: “How can I live without thee [Eve], how forgo / Thy sweet converse and love so dearly joined, / To live again in these wild woods forlorn?” (9.908-10). Adam does not talk about Eve possibly suffering or dying. His attention is wholly fixed on himself. Adam never talks in terms of helping Eve, but in terms of what it means for him (that is, living without her). Adam’s reason becomes clouded when he wrongly thinks that God would forsake him, and he would therefore be alone in the woods again.

Adam errs only when his thoughts come to fixate on Eve rather than on his trust in God’s love for him and Eve. Adam’s decision to choose his love for Eve over his love for God shows that, while he trusts God to some extent, he does not trust Him enough to go to Him directly and plead on Eve’s behalf. Adam could have professed Eve’s wrongful deed before God – a humble recognition of his own fault as well since it was Adam’s responsibility to protect Eve – which would have illustrated his continuous, heroic choice to trust in and defend God’s love. However, Adam says to Eve,

But past [the event of Eve eating the fruit] who can recall, or done undo?  
Not God omnipotent, nor fate, yet so  
Perhaps thou shalt not die, perhaps the fact  
Is not so heinous now, foretasted fruit,  
Profaned first by the serpent, by him first  
Made common and unhallowed ere our taste;  
Nor yet on him found deadly, he yet lives,  
Lives, as thou saidst, and gains to live as man  
Higher degree of life, inducement strong  
To us, as likely tasting to attain  
Proportional ascent, which cannot be  
But to be gods, or angels demigods. (9.926-37)

Adam passively accepts Eve's choice, claiming, "who can recall, or done undo?" Further, he wrongly suggests that Satan-in-the-serpent's "[h]igher degree of life" is "inducement strong / To us, as likely tasting to attain / Proportional ascent." Adam is wrong to aspire toward godhead because, in doing so, he neglects his ability to choose otherwise, more specifically, to trust in God's love. When Adam chooses to trust in God's love, he shows active patience because this decision will make everything else make sense. Adam does not consider the idea that he might save Eve. As Hillier asserts: "When Adam is confronted with the choice whether to disobey for Eve's sake or obey for God's sake, he falls short on both counts, and neither exemplifies sacrificial love on behalf of his spouse nor uses right reason to devise a saving solution for Eve" (138). In Book 5, however, Milton demonstrated that if humans make an appeal to God, He will intervene and help:

the dream continues to have repercussions, for it is in response to their [Adam and Eve's] prayer [see 5.205-8] that God sends Raphael down to instruct them. ... The process established, by which a problem is worked out on the human level to the point at which an appeal can be made to God, is neglected during the scenes leading to the Fall, but revived thereafter. (MacCallum 140)

Though God does not explicitly state that He sends Raphael down to instruct Adam and Eve in response to their prayer, His words to Raphael lend support to MacCallum's claim:

God observes that Satan-in-the-toad has “disturbed / This night the human pair” and then says to Raphael, “Go *therefore*, half this day as friend with friend / Converse with Adam” (5.226-7, 229-30; italics mine). Adam and Eve could have worked out the problem of Eve’s fall on the human level “to the point at which an appeal can be made to God,” something they learned how to do, and even benefitted from, back in Book 5. Adam and Eve could have persisted heroically in their defense of God’s love, despite the serpent’s and then fallen Eve’s claims about the fruit’s supposed virtue.

### **The Actions and Development of Adam and Eve: After the Fall During the Reconciliation With God and Education of Books 11 & 12**

Even after the Fall, Adam and Eve can become heroes again, but with important changes. When Adam and Eve sin, they do not observe God’s “sovereign will” (7.79). In Book 10, Adam laments to God that he was “unable to perform / Thy terms too hard, by which I was to hold / The good I sought not,” but then he continues, “To the loss of that, / Sufficient penalty, why hast thou added / The sense of endless woes?” (10.750-2, 752-4). Adam and Eve’s purpose – of continuously choosing to trust in God’s love despite any doubts, so that His firstly and fundamentally good creation is sustained for all time, rather than disappearing altogether – changes and becomes more complicated in the sense that it is, as God observes from His throne to the angels, made much more difficult:

See with what heat these dogs of hell [Sin and Death] advance  
To waste and havoc yonder world, which I  
So fair and good created, and had still  
Kept in that state, had not the folly of man  
Let in these wasteful furies, who impute  
Folly to me, so doth the prince of hell

And his adherents, (10.616-22)<sup>299</sup>

Now there is sin, and Adam and Eve are mortal, which means that they will die. Despite these impediments, they can still choose to return to their heroic purpose because God's mercy exceeds His anger. The enjambment in lines 618-619, despite the preceding "had" in the past tense, suggests that there is still hope for the wasting world. Though humanity creates a fallen world, Milton's repeated "had" (618, 619) links Adam and Eve to both the world's destruction and its eventual restoration. Indeed, for Quint, "[t]he sublime close of the epic [12.646-9] describes a world of almost infinite, contingent possibility" (304). Adam and Eve "choose / Their place of rest" in the world that "was all before them" (12.646-7, 646). This infinite possibility, though by no means representative of a Fall that is fortunate, means that Adam and Eve are still free to make choices and, as a result, to be the heroes of Milton's epic once again, if they return to their God-given purpose.<sup>300</sup>

After the Fall, Adam, within what I want to suggest is an address to the reader, rephrases the narrator's description of Milton's epic hero:

Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,  
And love with fear the only God, to walk  
As in his presence, ever to observe

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<sup>299</sup> Quint says something similar, noting Milton's pun on the word 'happier':

For all that Adam and Eve receive an inner paradise, 'happier far' [12.587] than the Eden they have left, the tragic sense of loss that accompanies the Fall at the very least counterbalances the official theological conclusion that it was a Fortunate Fall, all for the best. 'Happier' yes, if the punning, secondary sense of 'happy' [as 'hap,' meaning chance] is kept in mind: as death comes into the world under the curse of original sin, human existence becomes that much more contingent; men and women must work all the harder to achieve their salvation. (308)

In this section, I expand on what Quint says by analyzing the specific ways in which "men and women must work all the harder to achieve their salvation."

<sup>300</sup> John Leonard observes, "Critics still debate the question of whether Milton saw the Fall as fortunate" (483). Edwards asserts that the theory of the Fortunate Fall, *felix culpa*, "gets left behind over the course of the poem" ("Learning and Loving" 246). For her, and for me, "[o]ne of the problems with *felix culpa* is that it too easily skips over the experience of human woe" (Edwards, "Learning and Loving" 246). Edwards further argues that the Fall is misnamed because it actually "allows Adam and Eve to become fully human" through the process of learning that it inspires ("Learning and Loving" 248).

His providence, and on him sole depend,  
Merciful over all his works, with good  
Still overcoming evil, and by small  
Accomplishing great things, by things deemed weak  
Subverting worldly strong, and 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;  
Taught this by his example whom I now  
Acknowledge my redeemer ever blessed. (12.561-73)<sup>301</sup>

This speech from Adam in response to the lessons he has learned in Books 11 and 12 sets up as potential heroes not only fallen Adam and Eve, but also all humans who choose to follow God's will.<sup>302</sup> Adam has learned what true heroism looks like from the vision of biblical history, but he has yet to demonstrate this true heroism himself. For example, he

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<sup>301</sup> Milton is interested in not only his characters' trajectory toward moral virtue, but also his readers': That interest [in these early 1640s tracts] which has been regarded as most significant is Milton's treatment of the role of poetry and the poet, often taken to be commentary on his chief preoccupation during the 1630s and a record of his ongoing intentions as he began to think about writing a great epic poem: the origins of *Paradise Lost*. (Smith, "The Anti-Episcopal Tracts" 159) Just prior to writing his epic, Milton's "chief preoccupation" was with "the role of poetry and the poet," which suggests that he, like Sir Philip Sidney before him, was concerned with the edifying purposes of poetic writing, for individuals and religious faith. When Milton's speaker esteems "the better fortitude / Of patience and heroic martyrdom / Unsung" (9.31-33), he is enlightening both characters and readers about what it means to be truly heroic. Bond argues that "Spenser and Milton, in common with almost every other epic poet of the Renaissance, wanted to educate their readers" (xvii):

More specifically, they wanted to make their readers into better Christians: that is, men and women who understood and enacted the essential precepts of Christianity – love, obedience, 'Holiness,' – and who thought more or less as the poet did on matters such as predestination and Christology. Spenser and Milton, again in common with their poetic precursors, believed that the best way to educate a reader in moral and religious doctrine was to show him or her a character engaged in an action that illustrated the good consequences of following that doctrine and the bad consequences of ignoring it. (xvii)

Essentially, Milton wanted to educate his readers so that they could become better Christians. It is also noteworthy that, according to Gregory, epics with one God "became endowed with an intrinsic *moral significance* not present in a polytheistic context" (12; italics mine): "With the movement from many gods to one came not only a series of new narrative challenges for epic poets, but a sea change in the genre's representation of difference. Heroes and adversaries were now distinguished along religious lines" (12).

<sup>302</sup> While Nigel Smith does not connect choice and acts of choosing to heroism in *Paradise Lost*, he similarly stresses the significance of Milton's free will theology throughout the poem:

At the heart of *Paradise Lost* is Milton's free will theology, the belief that man can choose between good and evil; Satan rebelled of his own free will, Adam chose fatally the wrong way, and although postlapsarian man is much reduced on that account, we still have the obligation through our faith to choose good from evil. ("*Paradise Lost* and Heresy" 521)

has not subverted worldly strong.<sup>303</sup> Compare “the better fortitude / Of patience and heroic martyrdom / Unsung” (9.31-33) with Adam’s words: “that suffering for truth’s sake / Is fortitude to highest victory, / And to the faithful death the gate of life” (12.569-71). The reference to “suffering for truth’s sake” suggests a form of persecution, while “to the faithful death the gate of life” implies patience. Both components of Miltonic heroism – persecution and patience – are connected by faith. Now, fallen Adam and Eve must choose not only to trust in God’s love, but also to defend it. In this case, “truth” refers to “[t]he quality or character of being true to a person, principle, cause, etc.; steadfast allegiance; faithfulness, fidelity, loyalty, constancy” and “[c]onduct or actions characteristic of devotion to God and in accordance with true religious belief” (“*n.* and *adv.* [and *int.*],” def. A.I.1, A.II.9). And significantly, Adam’s rephrasing of Milton’s earlier description of epic heroism transforms it into a kind of epic heroism that Adam, Eve, and their progeny can all take part in – one that is not limited to the Son’s “heroic martyrdom” (9.32). In the *OED*, “martyrdom, *n.*” also, in extended use, refers to “sufferings and penalties involved in maintaining a particular (usually moral or ethical) position or point of view,” as well as “[t]orment, agony; extreme or severe pain or suffering, esp. when protracted or prolonged” (def. 1c, 3). These two definitions of “martyrdom” apply to fallen Adam and Eve, who, as believers in a world overturned by evil, must defend their faith until the second coming. We also know that the pain or suffering of the fallen Adam, Eve, and their progeny will be extreme and protracted, since

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<sup>303</sup> I want to thank Daniel Shore for pointing out the possibility that fallen Adam, while more knowledgeable about true heroism, has not yet practiced true heroism in the poem (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

Michael reveals to Adam the long woes of the future. After showing Noah's son, Ham, to Adam, Michael observes, "Thus will this latter, as the former world, / Still tend from bad to worse" (12.105-6). Just like the previous world Michael showed Adam, this world will also become increasingly bad. However, that Milton's redefinition of the epic hero is not only repeated, but also rephrased by fallen Adam, who in turn receives praise from Michael ("This having learned, thou hast attained the sum / Of wisdom" [12.575-6]), shows that fallen Adam and Eve can remain the story's heroes.

Adam and Eve's purpose, however, is made more difficult because Sin, Death, Satan, and his adherents actively work against the human couple's purpose, mixing bad with good (as we will see), and mocking the Christian faith through imitation and the rise of false gods. Further, for Milton, faith must not only be consistent, but also true – that is, attested to through virtuous action that exemplifies responsibility and care for one's self-chosen, Christian belief. In *Areopagitica*, Milton disparages "an implicit faith":

A man may be a heretic in the truth; and if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or the assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds, becomes his heresy. There is not any burden that some would gladlier post off to another, than the charge and care of their religion. (127)

Here, "the truth" refers to "[t]rue religious belief or doctrine; orthodoxy," with *the* "denoting a particular form of belief or teaching held to be true" ("truth, *n.* and *adv.* [and *int.*]," def. 8a). According to Milton, a person's beliefs can align with Christian teachings, but the very truth they hold becomes contrary to true faith if they give the responsibility and care of their religion to another. In *Areopagitica*, Milton, as Blair Hoxby notes, argues that truth may have more than one shape:



A central aim of *Areopagitica* is to persuade Parliament ‘to foregoe this Prelaticall tradition of crowding free consciences and Christian liberties into canons and precepts of men’ (*CPW*, ii. 554). It strives to expand the realm of ‘things indifferent’ and to argue that subjects should be left to make choices in these matters, not made to obey a particular protocol in the name of church discipline. (221)

Indeed, Milton asserts that God “trusts him [man] with the gift of reason to be his own chooser” (*Areopagitica* 110). God trusts humans’ ability to choose the good, just as humans need to trust in God’s love. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton draws a link between truth and virtue when Satan, standing abashed before Zephor, “felt how awful goodness is, and saw / Virtue in her shape how lovely, saw, and pined / His loss” (4.847-9). Milton describes both truth and virtue as having more than one shape, and the *OED* states that in early use “truth” referred to “honesty, uprightness, righteousness, virtue, integrity” (“*n.*, and *adv.* [and *int.*],” def. A.I.3). Since truth is virtue only when subjects are left to make choices in religious matters and “not made to obey a particular protocol in the name of church discipline” (qtd. in Hoxby 221), both truth and virtue come in a variety of shapes. The connection between truth, virtue, and heroism, though made evident early in the poem, does not take on its full significance until Books 11 and 12.

Indeed, in Book 11, Adam tells Michael (and reveals to us) that the heroic means to overcome evil is suffering – he will turn away from evil and ‘arm’ himself by suffering:

to the hand of heaven [I] submit,  
However chastening, to the evil turn  
My obvious breast, arming to overcome  
By suffering, and earn rest from labour won,  
If so I may attain. (11.372-6)

By Book 12, Adam is cleared of any doubt because he realizes that everything else will begin to make sense as long as he continuously chooses to trust in God's love. This peace of mind makes Adam and Eve better equipped to fulfill their now altered human purpose, namely, of continuously choosing to trust in God's love so that in this fallen world good repeatedly overcomes evil, with which it contends. Prior to the Fall, this mixture was impossible.<sup>304</sup> Though prelapsarian Adam and Eve ultimately fail to trust continually in God's love (they are disloyal in Book 9 when they choose otherwise), fallen Adam learns that Jesus's example of heroic martyrdom translates, for them, to "suffering for truth's sake" (12.569), which is how they and their progeny – including modern day readers – can be heroes in postlapsarian life, where every day is a struggle against evil in the fallen world.<sup>305</sup> Adam's praise for "suffering for truth's sake" is, as Milton's endorsement of "heroic martyrdom" was in Book 9 (9.32), a looking forward to what heroism consists of well into the future. Indeed, from Books 10 to 12, readers witness (as we will see next) the process by which Adam and Eve become Milton's representative heroes for humanity.

### **After the Fall During the Reconciliation With God and Education of Books 11 & 12:**

#### **Post-Fall but Pre-Reconciliation With God**

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<sup>304</sup> After Raphael tells the story of the war in heaven, the narrator describes Adam and Eve's wonder at war so near the peace of God in bliss  
With such confusion: but the evil soon  
Driven back redounded as a flood on those  
From whom it sprung, impossible to mix  
With blessedness. (8.55-59)

Before the Fall, evil can only come "so near" to blessedness.

<sup>305</sup> In prelapsarian life, the act of suffering for truth's sake was not a part of Adam and Eve's heroism because it was not needed in God's firstly and fundamentally good creation.

The first example of *human* heroism is in Book 10, in Eve's heroic martyrdom and patience, which begins fallen Adam and Eve's restoration. When Adam turns from Eve, she is not so repulsed but falls to his feet, embraces them, and then says that she

to the place of judgment will return,  
There with my cries importune heaven, that all  
The sentence from thy head removed may light  
On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe,  
Me me only just object of his ire. (10.932-6)

As I noted in chapter 2, Eve's speech of reconciliation is reminiscent of the Son's speech in Book 3, when He offers to take the blame for humanity's sin by becoming human and dying in its place: "Behold me then, me for him [man], life for life / I offer, on me let thine anger fall; / Account me man" (3.236-8). And again, both the Son's and Eve's speeches ring of martyrdom, the self-sacrificing association of the word "me" predominating. Eve's offer to beg heaven to place the sentence on her alone, to endure suffering and death in defense of her trust in God's love, inspires heroic martyrdom in Adam. Adam says to Eve that if prayers could change high decrees,

I to that place  
Would speed before thee, and be louder heard,  
That on my head all might be visited,  
Thy frailty and infirmer sex forgiven,  
To me committed and by me exposed. (10.953-7)

Like the Son and Eve before him, Adam repeats the word "me" in his speech. Adam claims that he deserves the blame because he failed to do his part in their relationship, which was not to leave Eve exposed to the enemy. Adam recognizes the truth of his guilt and offers to profess it before God. Eve and then Adam are transformed into relational heroes once again in Book 10 because when they offer to give up their lives, they are

defending the truth and attempting to take away the suffering of another, similar to how the Son dies the death that, as Michael says, Adam should have died (12.428).

Though Adam and Eve possess moral character before the Fall, they develop compassion afterward. As Diane Kelsey McColley recognizes, Adam and Eve need solace from each other even before the Fall: “*Healing words*; can there be wounds in innocence? These free beings, yet unfallen, express a full range of feeling; the peace of Paradise is neither nocent nor innocuous, but includes vulnerability, compassion, and remedy, and love’s sensitivities want solace even there” (167).<sup>306</sup> Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve were chiefly gentle: Eve accepts “gentle sway” from Adam, she recollects that Adam’s hand was “gentle” when they touched for the first time, and she describes his voice as “gentle” (4.308, 4.488, 5.37).<sup>307</sup> Also, both prelapsarian Adam and Eve have “gentle” purpose in Eden (4.337). Adam and Eve are more compassionate than gentle after the Fall because the fallen world necessitates compassion for fellow fallen humans. Charles Martindale notes fallen Adam and Eve’s “capacity for change” or adaptability:

‘Domestic’ Adam (ix. 318) and Eve, who represent a non-militaristic model of heroism (that anticipates features of the novel), have shown an ability to grow and develop and engage in varied activity (lovmaking, gardening, education through conversing, creating new forms of prayer and love poetry) even in their short time in Paradise; after the Fall they again display their continued capacity for change through repentance (a process pioneered by Eve). (452)

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<sup>306</sup> I am not suggesting that Adam and Eve exhibit no compassion, no care for others, before the Fall. McColley’s quotation is in reference to Book 9, line 290: “To whom [Eve] with healing words Adam replied” (9.290). In this scene, Eve suggests that Adam doubts her firmness in God and in him. Paris also remarks, “many critics have noted that they [Adam and Eve] seem emotionally vulnerable before their downfall” (64).

<sup>307</sup> I should note that in this scene Eve thinks that Satan’s voice is Adam’s because it is “gentle” (5.37).

Even before the Fall, Adam and Eve show “an ability to grow and develop and engage in varied activity.” Thus, it is no surprise that postlapsarian Adam and Eve’s gentleness gradually shifts into compassion. Adam and Eve’s shared traits change over time, in response to the events that occur. Some traits are weakened while others are strengthened, as befits their need.

Compassion develops more after the Fall because Adam and Eve know what their disloyalty to God means for others, namely, that it causes great suffering for God, huge waste in the world, and misery for their unborn progeny. Unlike gentleness, compassion *insists* on the other, and the other’s entanglement in the self. Jerrold E. Seigel maintains that the self that feels the pains of others “as if they were its own” “set[s] limits to personal interests and passions” (264). Selves with self-imposed limits are “not merely individuals but moral persons, committed to the well-being of others” (Seigel 264). The negative consequences of the Fall cause Adam and Eve to think less about themselves and more with the other in mind, thus leading to compassion. In Book 10, Eve demonstrates compassion with Adam, which enables him to display compassion in his dealing with guilt-ridden Eve. Eve beseeches Adam’s peace and then, in her plaint, says to him, “Between us two let there be peace, both joining, / As joined in injuries, one enmity / Against a foe by doom express assigned us” (10.924-6). The peace obtained from Eve’s acknowledgement and deploring of her fault “in Adam wrought / Commiseration; soon his heart relented / Towards her” (10.939-41). Adam upraises her, just as Eve “upstays” her drooping flowers in prelapsarian Eden (9.430): “As one disarmed, his anger all he lost, / And *thus* with peaceful words upraised her soon” (10.945-6; italics mine). Eve’s

expression of compassion teaches Adam compassion. Soon after, in his response to Eve, Adam considers how fallen Eve must feel and bewails the woes that their unborn children will have to face because they sinned:

let us no more contend, nor blame  
Each other, blamed enough elsewhere, but strive  
In offices of love, how we may lighten  
Each other's burden in our share of woe;  
Since this day's death denounced, if aught I see,  
Will prove no sudden, but a slow-paced evil,  
A long day's dying to augment our pain,  
And to our seed (O hapless seed!) derived. (10.958-65)

Burrow emphasizes how Milton, uniquely, has Adam choose to feel compassion for Eve, which makes him heroic:

When Adam falls, Milton makes him willingly choose to be able to feel a kind of Homeric fellow-feeling for Eve, which is founded on a shared mortality. This is indeed the ultimate overgoing of Homer: his central motive is not simply accepted as a necessary consequence of being mortal; it is chosen by a Christian hero. The form of mortal sympathy that runs through Homer's poems [that is, Homeric fellow-feeling] is consequently made to appear as though it is enabled by the pivotal action of Milton's poem. (6)

By "the ultimate overgoing of Homer," Burrow does not suggest "that Milton revived a Homeric form of sympathy," but rather "that he broke out of many of the clichés of the romance tradition, in a way that enabled him constructively to transform Homer" (6).

Adam, a Christian hero, chooses to feel compassion for Eve. Adam's emerging moral character is seen above in his observation that he and Eve can lighten each other's burden through love, that they can share each other's woe, and that their progeny will experience "a slow-paced evil" by no fault of their own. Eve, too, recognizes the self's entanglement with others, when she says that it is "miserable" "To be to others cause of misery, / Our own begotten, and of our loins to bring / Into this cursèd world a woeful race" (10.981,

982-4). Fallen Eve sees that her deeds will cause misery not only to Adam, but also to the entire race, and further, that the world itself is cursed because of her and Adam's actions.

However, in another example of emerging moral character, Adam teaches Eve that truly moral action must be tempered with hope, patience, and justice – the second is, as I have noted, a major component of Miltonic heroism:

No more be mentioned then of violence  
Against ourselves, and wilful barrenness,  
That cuts us off from hope, and savours only  
Rancour and pride, impatience and despite,  
Reluctance against God and his just yoke  
Laid on our necks. (10.1041-6)

When Eve proposes suicide as a means to prevent misery to others, she is trying to act morally but her thoughts are too despairing.<sup>308</sup> The metaphor of Adam and Eve as God's eager oxen, pulling together on a load, on the other hand, suggests not only the humility that Adam recognizes as heroic (Book 12), but also the heroic patience that is required to endure the approach of that "slow-paced evil" (death) in a fallen world. Adam asserts that it would be morally wrong to refuse God's "just yoke." Bond argues that the secondary heroes (Adam and Eve because they are imperfect) are selfish when they are irresolute and selfless when they are resolute (12). I agree with Bond because when Adam and Eve are resolute, they are firm in their choice to trust in God's love, which enables them to show compassionate care to others, through Christian fellow-feeling. Adam and Eve's

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<sup>308</sup> For an alternate reading of Adam and Eve's fallen rhetoric (in Book 11 and Book 10, respectively) as anti-natalist rather than advocating for suicide, see Chakravarty's book (2022), where she argues, "Adam, like Eve, advocates for anti-natalism on ethical grounds, that it is better to spare 'miserable Mankind' their inevitably 'wretched state' [11.500, 501]. If, as David Benatar argues, we have an obligation to spare future generations pain, Adam and Eve's anti-natalism signals not despair but rather a radical ethics of compassion" (165).

increasing awareness of the other through the development of compassion after the Fall helps them avoid the neediness that contributed to the Fall, while also laying emphasis on their ethical responsibility to choose to trust in God's love continually for the sake of the world, each other, and their progeny. More is at stake after the Fall because Adam and Eve are no longer simply sustaining God's good world but contending with "wasteful furies" (10.620), as well as Satan and his adherents.

Adam and Eve are able to choose to return to their human purpose of continuously choosing to trust in God's love, so that good repeatedly overcomes evil in the fallen world, because God wants to continue His loving relationship with humanity and has sent prevenient grace to help them to that turning point (11.1-8). They also heroically choose to return to their purpose (which is more difficult now) not long after the Fall. In Book 10, Adam says to Eve,

What better can we do, than to the place  
Repairing where he [God] judged us, prostrate fall  
Before him reverent, and there confess  
Humbly our faults, and pardon beg, with tears  
Watering the ground, and with our sighs the air  
Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite, in sign  
Of sorrow unfeigned, and humiliation meek.  
Undoubtedly he will relent and turn  
From his displeasure; in whose look serene,  
When angry most he seemed and most severe,  
What else but favour, grace, and mercy shone? (10.1086-96)

Adam's words for how, exactly, they should go about their prayer read like a recipe in order to emphasize Adam and Eve's intentional action and virtue; the words are linked together with commas and conjunctions, such as "and" and "with." It is also important that lines 1086-1091 are all enjambed, as this suggests that Adam possesses a newfound



easy flow of thought – *now* he knows how to respond to God. Indeed, Adam’s reference to “humiliation meek” anticipates his speech in Book 12, where he says he has learned the importance of being “simply meek” (12.569). Further, Adam’s assertion of God’s favour, grace, and mercy, even when He appeared most angry and severe, anticipates the grace from God that is necessary for the good after the Fall. These anticipations reveal that fallen Adam and Eve have already returned to the process of developing their heroism.

For MacCallum, the self achieves definition precisely through such trial:

The catalyst in the process is trial, for Adam is required to adjust to the perspectives and pressures of shifting contexts and a widening pattern of relationships. The problems he confronts are perfectly real, and cannot be solved by the automatic appeal to a formula: they require fresh responses, a willingness to make discoveries, an alert but open stance towards experience. (111)

With this renewed confidence, Adam can be more loyal to God and, in turn, participate more effectively in his relationship with Eve. Both relationships allow the human couple to contribute in a positive way to Milton’s ordered universe.<sup>309</sup> God’s interest in continuing His relationship with humanity, seen in the grace that He offers it before, during, and after the Fall, in tandem with Adam and Eve’s active choice to return to their heroic path (albeit an altered one), exemplifies humanity’s enduring capacity for heroism.

## **After the Fall During the Reconciliation With God and Education of Books 11 & 12:**

### **Post-Fall and Post-Reconciliation With God**

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<sup>309</sup> Milton’s concern with “[dis]order” (3.713, 4.663, 5.334, 5.587, 5.591, 6.74, 6.388, 6.548, 6.696, 6.885, 8.377, 9.402, 10.615, 10.911, 11.736) came just after the early period of the English Revolution, when “[i]nstitutions – the church, Parliament, marriage – were under scrutiny” (Achinstein 176). Adam and Eve’s ability to partake effectively with each other as husband and wife would have been significant during Milton’s time. According to Sharon Achinstein, “Since the Reformation, marriage had been de-sacralized; but it was still the unacknowledged basis of much social and political order” (176).

I began this chapter with a discussion of free will and its importance for Miltonic heroism, but free will is forever changed after the Fall, which means that fallen Adam and Eve's heroism must also change. In Book 12, Michael informs Adam about the specifics:

yet know withal,  
Since thy original lapse, true liberty  
Is lost, which always with right reason dwells  
Twinned, and from her hath no dividual being:  
Reason in man obscured, or not obeyed,  
Immediately inordinate desires  
And upstart passions catch the government  
From reason, and to servitude reduce  
Man till then free. (12.82-90)

Because Adam sinned, not only is God's firstly and fundamentally good creation lost until the second coming ("till fire purge all things new" [11.900]), but true liberty is also lost. Adam separated true liberty from reason, so now desires and passions govern humans instead of reason, and humans are therefore reduced to servitude. Subsequently, Michael makes a distinction between outward and inward liberty, informing Adam that outward liberty might be deprived (through violent lords or justice), while inward liberty is irrevocably lost (12.90-101).<sup>310</sup> However, despite this loss of true liberty, Adam and

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<sup>310</sup> In his analysis of this part in *Paradise Lost* (12.97-104), Shore discusses penal slavery, "a variety of what Justin E. H. Smith terms 'degenerationism,' which ascribes racial differences not to original differences in essence or nature ... but to a decline from an ideal initial state as a result of 'immoral cultural practices'" ("Was Milton White?" 256). For Shore, "The claim that 'no wrong, / But justice ... / Deprives' nations 'of their outward liberty' [12.98-100] exhibits this conception of penal slavery, as does the assertion that Ham was cursed 'for the shame / Done to his Father' [12.102-3]," since "the seemingly irrevocable loss of 'outward liberty,' 'virtue,' and 'reason' is the consequence of forfeiting 'inward' liberty [12.100, 98, 98, 101] through the commission of a crime" ("Was Milton White?" 256). Shore argues that these eight lines in *Paradise Lost* "carve out the exception to universal individual liberty" by demonstrating "a causal process by which crime leads inexorably to unfreedom" ("Was Milton White?" 259, 256). For a discussion of slavery in *Paradise Lost*, see Mary Nyquist, "Antityranny, Slavery, and Revolution," in *Arbitrary Rule: Slavery, Tyranny, and the Power of Life and Death*, U of Chicago P, 2013, pp. 123-61. Nyquist argues that Milton delays the story of Noah's curse until after Michael shows Nimrod's tyranny to Adam – an ordering that is opposite to the Bible's – because Milton seeks "to safeguard political freedom, conceived as political slavery's antithesis" (140).

Eve and their progeny receive occasional blessings from God, such as visions – in a word, grace – which help them make the choice to trust in God’s love, despite their impaired liberty and the havoc all around them. God’s ample forgiveness is seen when Michael relates to Adam,

yet him [Abraham] God the most high vouchsafes  
To call by vision from his father’s house,  
His kindred and false gods, into a land  
Which he will show him, and from him will raise  
A mighty nation, and upon him shower  
His benediction so, that in his seed  
All nations shall be blest; he straight obeys,  
Not knowing to what land, yet firm believes:  
I see him, but thou canst not, with what faith  
He leaves his gods, his friends, and native soil  
Ur of Chaldaea, passing now the ford  
To Haran, after him a cumbrous train  
Of herds and flocks, and numerous servitude;  
Not wand’ring poor, but trusting all his wealth  
With God, who called him, in a land unknown. (12.120-34)

God works through Abraham, but Abraham must also do his part: he obeys immediately, believes in God firmly, and with faith leaves his gods, friends, and place of birth – despite the lack of knowledge he possesses. God showers Abraham with his benediction, but it is Abraham who actively chooses to trust in God’s love. After the Fall, this combination of God’s grace – seen when the hardness in fallen Adam and Eve’s hearts is removed through the combination of sincere prayer and God’s grace – and human action (choosing to trust in God’s love) is required for Miltonic heroism.

While the Fall results from Adam and Eve’s failure to choose to trust in God’s love continuously, Michael advises Adam and Eve and their progeny to choose to place complete trust in their relationship with the incarnated Son after the Fall:

thy punishment  
He [the Son] shall endure by coming in the flesh  
To a reproachful life and cursèd death,  
Proclaiming life to all who shall believe  
In his redemption, and that his obedience  
Imputed becomes theirs by faith, his merits  
To save them, not their own, though legal works. (12.404-10)

And further, according to Michael, the Son

nails thy enemies,  
The law that is against thee, and the sins  
Of all mankind, with him there crucified,  
Never to hurt them more who rightly trust  
In his satisfaction; (12.415-19)

The enjambment in lines 418-419 demonstrates through language that, for those of Adam and Eve's progeny who continuously choose to trust in God's love, the Son's Crucifixion will put an end to suffering. Michael, in effect, gives Adam some hope by projecting a terminus to the "endless woes" (10.754) that the Fall created. Subsequently, Michael details the Son's "heroic martyrdom" (9.32) to Adam:

Thy ransom paid, which man from death redeems,  
His death for man, as many as offered life  
Neglect not, and the benefit embrace  
By faith not void of works: this Godlike act  
Annuls thy doom, the death thou shouldst have died,  
In sin forever lost from life; this act  
Shall bruise the head of Satan, crush his strength  
Defeating Sin and Death, his two main arms,  
And fix far deeper in his head their stings  
Than temporal death shall bruise the victor's heel,  
Or theirs whom he redeems, a death like sleep,  
A gentle wafting to immortal life. (12.424-35)

From Michael's description of the Son's martyrdom, it is clear that for Milton heroic martyrdom is a chosen action of forceful good. Martyrdom is also 'death for life.' In this case, the Son dies the death that Adam should have died so that not only can Adam enjoy

immortal life, but also all who trust in His satisfaction. Michael's invitation to choose to trust continuously in God's love again shows that Adam and Eve have learned from their error and have chosen to be heroic despite the unknowns that relationships entail.<sup>311</sup>

Another change after the Fall is that there is an element of fear because now Adam and Eve and their progeny can suffer – even when they choose to trust in God's love continuously – because Sin, Death, and Satan wreak havoc in the world. This is why Abel, though faithful to God, is killed (11.454-60). In characters' interactions with other selves after the Fall, there is love and fear rather than just love, as there once was. When fallen Adam and Eve conclude their prayers, the narrator observes that the couple “found / Strength added from above, new hope to spring / Out of despair, joy, but with fear yet linked” (11.137-9). Now, all joy – including even the happiness that accompanies love – is coupled with fear because Adam and Eve's choice to trust in God's love is no longer a sign of innocence or true purity, but of their experience with good continually contending with evil in a world removed from God. Adam's speech comes not just after the Fall, but almost at the end of *Paradise Lost* and all that Adam has experienced and learned since the Fall (12.561-73).<sup>312</sup> “As in [His] presence” (12.563) means ‘As if in his presence,’ which emphasizes that Adam and Eve must learn to live well, as they did before the Fall, despite being removed from God. Adam's inclusion of the phrase “love with fear the only

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<sup>311</sup> For Edwards, “the Fall is not a fall: it is the way to grow into intellectual maturity. Without failures, the rethinking that is the basis for learning is not possible” (“Learning and Loving” 250). By analogy with puberty, she explains the significance of the Fall: “To be a fully adult human being, the evil, the error, must be approved, leaving a stain behind. Then, if one is to grow in wisdom, the approval of error must be acknowledged, reconsidered, and learned from, the whole experience providing strength for facing the next experience” (Edwards, “Learning and Loving” 248).

<sup>312</sup> See pp. 246-7 to re-read Adam's speech. Now I am using this quotation for a different purpose.

God” (12.562) is another direct result of the Fall. Not only is there fear in love, but with the Fall also comes the rise of false gods and “idol worship,” such as humans’ “own work in wood and stone” (12.115, 119). Accordingly, as stated in the Bible, the first of the Ten Commandments is “Thou shalt have no[ne] other gods before me” (*Authorized King James Version*, Exod. 20.3; Deut. 5.7).<sup>313</sup> Significantly, “Michael’s account of Christ turns Adam, the first of men, into the first of Christians” (Paris 123). Adam concludes his speech by saying he recognizes the Son as his ever-blessed redeemer. Further, Adam asserts that by faith death is the means to eternal life. The Son taught Adam, but now Adam teaches readers that “suffering for truth’s sake” (12.569) – defending the Christian faith – is required for them to be heroes.

### **The Reader’s Understanding of Fully Heroic Heroism via Fallen Adam and Eve**

Early in this chapter, I noted that Milton’s narrator refers to knights from previous epics as “fabled” and their battles as “feigned” (9.30, 31), and how this might suggest that Milton’s epic is real in some other sense. By way of conclusion to this chapter, I want to propose one way in which Milton would see his version of heroism as real, namely, in its real-life applicability. Adam and Eve, unlike previous epic heroes (such as Achilles, who was born of a goddess and human king), and unlike the Son in *Paradise Lost* (who is God), are central to the reader’s understanding of fully heroic heroism. In Milton’s poem,

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<sup>313</sup> The second and third of the Ten Commandments also condemn the act of creating and/or worshipping other gods: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me” (Exod. 20.4-5, but also see Deut. 5.8-9).

we see neither the development of admirable characters like the Son and Abdiel nor the development of non-admirable characters such as Satan and Nimrod, but we do see the development of Adam and Eve – painstakingly drawn – whose narrative takes up most of the poem (before the Fall, during the Fall, and after the Fall).<sup>314</sup> Throughout this chapter, we traced Adam and Eve’s psychological development as the poem’s heroes, which revealed that heroism is a potential in Adam and Eve until the Fall. Then they learn how to become fallen heroes, which Milton’s fallen readers can, in turn, learn from, since both Adam and Eve and fallen readers live in a world that demands a fully heroic heroism. We can mimic Adam and Eve – as individuals living in the twenty-first century world – because Milton shows us how fallen heroes can be heroic. As we read about Adam and Eve developing their potential for heroism through various kinds of education, this brings me back to an earlier point, about knowledge, in connection with education. We share in the experience and learn about what it takes to be heroic in Eden, then in fallen Paradise, and finally, in the fallen world. Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve need to sustain God’s good creation through patience; during the Fall, Adam and Eve need to solicit God humbly for His grace; and after the Fall, Adam and Eve need to suffer for truth’s sake or live as the first faithful Christians. In today’s world, we can also choose to suffer for truth’s sake, as Christians. However, we can also implement what Adam and Eve learned

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<sup>314</sup> My argument that Satan does not change is in line with Edwards, who claims that in order to learn, one must be able to change one’s mind, which is something Satan and the fallen angels do not do (“Learning and Loving” 242), in contradistinction to Adam and Eve, who (as we have seen) are constantly learning about themselves and their relationship to others in the Garden. Edwards observes, “Over the course of the poem, Satan changes his shape, and he changes his tune, but he does not change his mind. *He* does not change his mind. His mind is changed, or, more accurately, progressively damaged, over time, but he is not in control of the change” (“Learning and Loving” 242).

both before and during the Fall by accepting God's grace when He offers it (through trust and humility) and being patient (tempering morality and love with justice). Milton's poem builds pictures of what heroism looks like not just for his readers' entertainment, but much more importantly, for their spiritual edification. Milton's Adam and Eve are 'real' because they serve as models for readers who want to become epic heroes – for Milton, better Christians – in real life.



## Conclusion

### Free Will: Personal Agency and Responsibility in *Paradise Lost*

— Then came, at a predetermined moment, a moment in time and  
of time,  
A moment not out of time, but in time, in what we call history:  
transecting, bisecting the world of time, a moment in time  
but not like a moment of time,  
A moment in time but time was made through the moment: for  
without the meaning there is no time, and that moment of  
time gave the meaning.  
Then it seemed as if men must proceed from light to light, in the  
light of the Word,  
Through the Passion and Sacrifice saved in spite of their negative  
being;  
Bestial as always before, carnal, self-seeking as always before,  
selfish and purblind as ever before,  
Yet always struggling, always reaffirming, always resuming their  
march on the way that was lit by the light;  
Often halting, loitering, straying, delaying, returning, yet  
following no other way. (T. S. Eliot, *Choruses from 'The Rock'* 7.18-25)

By way of conclusion, I will restate my definition of relationships and identity with which I began this dissertation. In my reading of *Paradise Lost*, relationships and identity are integral to one another since identity is constituted by relationships. In contrast to modern critical theory, which has, and often continues to, read self-other relationships as self-serving and ultimately negative, I have demonstrated that Milton's poem shows us not only interdependent and positive self-other relationships, but also a mutual, constructive, and enduring relationship between humans and God. Milton's poem reveals that love is the 'God' of God, since love is at the very centre of creation and proper relations. Further, humans' relationship with the Son reminds them of not just God's love for man, and man's love for God, but also man's love for man. Charity, a

word that emerges after the Fall, and that is associated with all three types of love, elucidates Milton's major assertion that "God shall be all in all" (3.341). For Milton, plurality constitutes the self, both earthly and divine, because selfhood is embedded in multiplicity, or the ongoing negotiation of self and others. God is manifested through the Father's relationship with the Son because selfhood is predicated on one's reciprocal involvement with other selves. Moreover, plurality in *Paradise Lost* does not remove individual subjectivity, but rather nurtures it through the reciprocal growth that is the principal feature of loving, interpersonal relationships. The self is a self through webs of inter-relation. In this thesis, the word 'identity' thus has an inherently social register.

Two research questions motivated my study on God and humanity in *Paradise Lost*, and they were: first, what is the place of the human in Milton's epic, and what does this tell us about the position of the human in the universe; and second, how does Milton portray the relationship between human beings and the central power in Creation? In this dissertation, I show that self-identity emerges and becomes fully realized only through relationships with others. Indeed, creation (and its proper perpetuation) has a relational basis. Moreover, God and humanity's relationship is the most important in Milton's cosmos because humans perform the Son's heavenly work on earth, contributing to God's and the world's good growth until heaven and earth are one. Humans possess the agency to substantiate and make virtuous the human form, which is indispensable to God's purpose because it expresses His interpersonal definition of love, and humans choose to cause a change in their once perfect but still developing relationship with God – hence, the Fall (out of relationship with God) – which causes creation to be forever altered.

However, the good can continue after the Fall because God and humanity want to protect their relationship, which is the source of continued good in the world.

In Milton's epic, then, the human is a major participant in, and sustainer of, the created good that God first ordained. Unique aspects of the human condition, such as the human form, are the means to realize God on earth, for the human is the source of God's actualization. Further, humans play an essential role in the conversion of earth into heaven, for while God will change heaven to earth at the Final Judgement, in the interim humans will sustain God's good creation through physical and spiritual labour and, in so doing, make a heaven of earth. Both actions are required to fulfill God's plan. In *Paradise Lost* God seems bad, even though He is inherently good, because His true nature cannot be revealed without the aid of the Son and humanity, whose purpose it is to illuminate and augment all that is good in Him. God needs both the Son and humanity to actualize His creative purpose, and prelapsarian humans would achieve this by populating the earth, holding dominion throughout the earth, and subduing the earth. After the Fall, the emergence of human charity stresses fallen humanity's task on earth, namely, as creatures that can become virtuous again if they construct the happier Paradise that exists between interpersonal humans. In the universe, then, fallen humanity maintains its relationship with God and continues to influence the created world, in ways both good and bad (or sometimes mixed), through human agency. Milton's epic portrays the relationship between humans and God as the basis of all proper relations. When Adam and Eve fall out of relationship with God, they also fall out of relationship with each other, nature, and God's other creatures. They understand neither themselves nor each other because

identity is constituted by relationships. However, Milton's epic also shows that the link between identity and relationships works in the other direction, since an improved sense of self leads to healthier relationships with others. This positive feedback loop suggests that human beings learn the significance of relationships through their relationships and, further, that they can actualize other selves via relationships.

My analysis began in Chapter One with an exploration of God's need for the Son and humanity for His self-identity and the process of His self-actualization in *Paradise Lost*. In Milton's epic, the other self exemplifies God's and creation's fundamental and original goodness, as it seeks to glorify the self by perceiving and augmenting what is best in it. Milton's God is vulnerable and incomplete, which means that He is not a static entity. Accordingly, God's relationship with humanity is more dynamic and meaningful than has been previously suggested. While my study reveals that God and humanity's relationship is the subject of the poem from beginning to end because God is vulnerable, it does not so much refute Robert Crosman's claim that "[t]he true conflict in Milton's epic is ... between Man and God" (58) as assert that there is an important change in God and humanity's relationship. God gives Adam and Eve free will, so their choice to choose someone or something other than Him is not the result of a conflict with God per se, but rather a reflection of the difficulties associated with sustaining one's relationships as the self grows and changes. My study raises questions about whether the 'conflict' in the poem can be localized to a few characters, or if it is more about the difficulty of maintaining good relationships in general, as well as whether Adam and Eve's turn away from, and subsequent return to, God can be interpreted in terms of the Renaissance

movement toward a more individually focused, secular society. Might Adam and Eve's return to God after the Fall advocate a theologically-grounded, 'post-secular' modernity?

Chapter 2 shows that Sin, Satan and the fallen angels, and Death lack consistent shape because they are not virtuous, and this physical representation of their inward lack coincides also with the absence of proper relations and self-identity. Contrary to Adam and Eve, who seek substance through mutually constructive interactions with others, Death attempts to gain substance by devouring others. *Paradise Lost* invites readers to see the body as an opportunity for God's creatures to correspond outer actions and appearance and inner dispositions and beliefs, and also correspond these with God's will (to do good). Beings with consistent shape are powerful interpersonal creatures because they actualize the supreme good in themselves and others through their bodies. The body expresses a being's inward state in outward, *physical* ways and, further, it participates in the created world and other selves' personal growth through its embodiment of the will. That Adam and Eve's education on how to achieve the supreme good through the human form advances via conversations with God's creatures demonstrates the importance of storytelling rather than action for accessing the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of others that can nurture self-identity in a mutually productive way. This stress on dialogue raises questions about the extent to which Milton is using the genre of epic to deliver the central meaning of his poem (the importance of relationships), and whether storytelling is the primary or even exclusive way for humans to connect with others and self-educate.

In chapter 1, I showed that identity must not be constructed in opposition to context if we are to see other selves as essential to the self's formation in *Paradise Lost*.

During the early modern period, persons were described with reference to their physical and social context (Selleck 3), which supports my major claim that the poem illustrates how God and humanity are involved in each other's (self-)creation. Chapter 2 furthers this analysis because it restores the self's contexts by showing how the early modern conception of personhood accounted for the composite being's existence in a social world. I explore the full gamut of Adam and Eve's education, from stories about the most obedient angel's relationship with God to recollections of the most disobedient angels' relationships with each other, to show that no context is without some bearing, whether positive or negative, on the self's formation in *Paradise Lost*. The Son is the Father's other self, just as Eve is Adam's other self, but the Father identifies humans as His *other* other self because they, like the Son, embody His inward and outward image. While I discuss the Son in chapter 1, I examine humanity as the Father's other other self in chapter 2, where I show that when there is a correspondence between outer actions and appearance and inner dispositions and beliefs, and also with God's will, the human body is a source of continued good in the created world. In this case, "the body is the self through and through," despite specific parts, such as the spirit, being more refined and "airy," as Raphael puts it (5.481), than others.<sup>315</sup> Milton's conception of the human body as potentially good transforms other selves (and bodies) into familiar rather than threatening beings. Only Sin and Death are threatening to humanity, and that is because they represent what happens when active material does not shape itself with divine

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<sup>315</sup> I want to thank Daniel Shore for his articulation of the virtuous body as being, for Milton, the self through and through (personal communication, November 11, 2022).

intention(s) but instead relishes selfish desire and the destruction of others. Sin and Death are personified rather than persons because they deny the self's social contexts, which I identify as a pre-requisite for self-identity in chapter 1. Milton's God asks His creatures not just to turn to themselves for self-growth, but also to turn this growth outward, toward others. Just as the Son's quasi-physical form expresses the Father's and the Son's – God's – love for humanity (chapter 1), God desires this self-communicative love in humans (chapter 2).

My analysis concluded with Chapter Three's exploration of different types and degrees of heroism in the poem, more specifically, my claim that Milton reconfigures the usual militant heroes of epic into relational heroes, such that heroism is steadfast faith and love of God. Various characters demonstrate this new type of heroism, but Adam and Eve exemplify a different kind and degree of this heroism, such that their heroism is only a potential until after the Fall, when they learn how to be fully heroic in a fallen world. Throughout the poem, Adam and Eve's heroism develops. Prelapsarian Adam and Eve display qualitatively different kinds of heroism: Adam is for valour and contemplation, while Eve is for love and compassion. When Adam and Eve learn how to become fallen heroes, they are the models for Milton's fallen readers, who are also learning to form their self-identities. This chapter demonstrates that Milton's epic sustains the Christian grand style's pivotal role in the religious culture of the Renaissance, as a "method" that could bring man and God into a relationship based on love rather than knowledge" (Shuger 250). However, this chapter also raises questions about the consequences of free will, since Adam and Eve have the power, through choice, to upend God's created good at any

moment. Milton's poem highlights the huge responsibility that comes with the power to choose and, in doing so, raises the question of how fallen humans might choose responsibly, in the poem and in the world.

In chapter 2, I restored the self's contexts by applying the early modern conception of personhood – that the composite being exists in a social world – to *Paradise Lost*. Adam and Eve accept their education through storytelling from a variety of other selves. Chapter 3 continues this exploration of the necessity of others for the characters' developing self-identity, but in terms of humanity's relationship with God, which develops and changes, naturally, in response to Adam and Eve's continuous education in the Garden. The chapter's focus on Adam and Eve's moment-to-moment choice to trust in their relationship with God emerges out of the previous chapter's attention to the other choices Adam and Eve make, such as learning from others and committing to a temperate lifestyle. While chapter 2 examines the nature of humanity's relationship with God – specifically, how the human form can proclaim God's love in the world and sustain His created good – chapter 3 explores why Adam and Eve fall out of relationship with God and how it becomes possible for them to restore this relationship. My discussion of Sin and Death as representations of a lack of self-identity due to the absence of proper relations (chapter 2) informs the subject matter of chapter 3, because Adam and Eve's sense of self and their relationships deteriorate as soon as they fail to recognize their relationship to God. Chapter 3 also furthers chapter 2 through its analysis of whether humanity's purpose on earth is, by Milton's redefined standards of epic, heroic. Because Adam and Eve's purpose is, in fact, a feat of heroism, humanity is



analogous to the Son (who is heroic in heaven) in this additional regard.<sup>316</sup> Thus, Milton links heroism not only to relationships, identity formation, and free will, but also to divinity. Just as the Son must choose to trust the Father when He offers to die for man, Adam and Eve must choose to trust in God's love and the order of the created world in order to sustain the good. As they grow into themselves, there is always the chance that they will choose badly; however, Milton's poem shows that because God is good, and He loves humanity, humans possess the ability, through personal agency, to return to God.

There are four major threads across the three chapters of this thesis – namely, religion, conversation, patience, and the good – and all are integral to how self-identity and relationships work in *Paradise Lost*. As I state at the outset of this study, the two Latin origins of the word 'religion' – "*religare* meaning 'to retie,' to reconnect, to put back together what has been broken" and "*relegere*, meaning 'to reread,' to change and renew understandings, to question old readings and make them new" (Wall 4) – are crucial for my reading of Milton's poem. In chapter 1, I show that Milton 'rereads' our understanding of God, and God and humanity's relationship, by showing how the Son and Satan offer humans the choice between two very different understandings of God; in chapter 2, I question the dominant reading that God's kingship in *Paradise Lost* is tyrannous and propose a new understanding; and in chapter 3, I show how Milton's poem traces the change in God and humanity's once perfect relationship and, subsequently, the work involved in their reconnection. Thus, my study illustrates how the poem

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<sup>316</sup> In chapter 1, I show that Adam and Eve are analogous to the Son because they are the Father's other other self.

reintroduces and reinforces the Latin meaning of ‘religion’ as rereading and reconnection. The second major thread of my study, conversation, shows how relationships function in Milton’s poem, since characters learn about themselves primarily through dialogue with others. I show that the Son is the Father’s major interlocutor and discuss how their conversations engage distinct, but integrally connected, identities (chapter 1), that Adam and Eve’s education advances through their correspondence with God’s creatures (chapter 2), and that heroism manifests itself in intimate interactions between self and other rather than in public approbation (chapter 3). A third major thread of my thesis is the importance of patience. In chapter 1, I show how God’s goodness is sustained through Adam and Eve’s patience for heaven and earth to become one; in chapter 2, I discuss the necessity of temperance or self-discipline (patience with oneself) for God’s plan; and in chapter 3, I show that patience is one of the two major characteristics that Milton uses to define the Christian epic hero. The final major thread of my study is the good. I show that God and His creation are fundamentally and firstly good (chapter 1), that the supreme good is achieved through proper use of the human form – mutual relationships with others – (chapter 2), and that the good can continue even after the Fall because God and humanity want to protect their relationship (chapter 3). My project argues for the relational basis of creation, which is inherently and firstly good; however, because humans are mutable, Adam and Eve must work hard to sustain their primary relationship (with God) while also forming other relationships (with each other, the Earth or nature, and God’s creatures).

Significantly, the term ‘person,’ much like the term ‘other self,’ has a specific

meaning in the sixteenth-century.<sup>317</sup> The person is seen as “more concrete, more exposed, and more about presence” than ideas like ‘character’ or ‘function’ (Selleck 28), suggesting that self-identity emerges and develops in a physical, vulnerable, and intimate space. The early modern period’s fascination with “questions *between* and not just *about* persons” (Selleck 34) suggests a bodily and dialogic dimension to personhood. Persons exist *in relation* rather than outside of relation. Indeed, Nancy Selleck observes that the Renaissance usage of the word ‘person’ means “not something private, but a social role, often in the sense of *authority* or *office*” (23). As Selleck suggests, and *Paradise Lost* shows, there is a moral dimension to personhood, where every person has a responsibility to others because all persons are part of a larger community.<sup>318</sup>

A relational ethics for *Paradise Lost* was proposed as a means to provide a more complete picture of a poem that has been read in terms of Milton’s ostensible position as a self-government theorist (for example, by Bryan Adams Hampton). While self-governance can be demonstrated alone, the relational ethics that I applied to the poem necessitates the other self for self-identity because the self is not itself on its own. My reading does not negate the importance of Inward Government theory for the poem, but rather shows that a relational ethics provides a fresh reading of the epic and, just as Fudge notes the coexistence of Inward Government theory and Montaigne’s new ethics during the early modern period (109), it can coexist with Inward Government theory. It is possible, I think, that Milton was a self-government theorist who, in an effort to reconcile

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<sup>317</sup> I discussed the term ‘other self’ in my Introduction to this thesis.

<sup>318</sup> My study suggests that God and humanity’s changing relationship is symptomatic of the Renaissance itself, namely, its evolving debates about God’s nature and His providence, its shifting conception of the self in relation to the collective, and its interest in the precise nature of the body-soul relationship.

individualism with a spiritual community, reconfigured individuals' understanding of what it means to be a self through the other self – that is, Milton could have it both ways.

My thesis not only explores the most important relationship in the poem, but it also considers and evaluates other relationships (for example, Satan, Sin, and Death's relationship versus the Father and Son's relationship) in terms of Milton's representation of improper versus proper relations. A major difference between my study and other recent studies on *Paradise Lost* is that I analyze the poem's meaning as it is conveyed through conversations that take place between characters who share a mutual relationship. While critics have studied gender relations in the poem at length, my study shows that Milton presents the positive and negative potentials of relationships for all beings, indiscriminate of gender and species. Rather than obedience to male authority, obedience to God is significant for Milton's God. However, Milton's poem reveals that it is not enough simply to be in relation; rather, one must maintain proper relations over time. More specifically, God and humanity's relationship sustains God's firstly and fundamentally good creation until God's plan is fully realized.<sup>319</sup> However, improper relations upend God's good creation.

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<sup>319</sup> My dissertation focuses specifically on God and humanity's relationship in order to test John Leonard's passing but significant claim that there might be "a special relationship between God and humankind":

[Thomas] Keightley stretches a point when he claims that Milton 'nowhere' says that God created the angels in his image. God calls them 'my Sons' (VI.46) and the Son implies that they are Adam's older siblings when he reminds the Father that man is 'thy youngest Son' (III.151). But it is true that Milton does not elsewhere use the specific word 'image' in reference to angels, and both Raphael and Michael use that word *as if* it signified a special relationship between God and humankind. It matters whether angels were created in God's image. Satan's envy of Adam and Eve, 'favour'd more / Of him who rules above' (II.350-1), would gain added point if they were created with a status Satan never had. (427-8; emphasis mine)

Claire Colebrook contends that relationships are the very source of the good in Milton's poem (53), but she does not explicitly link proper relations to God's good creation (and its perpetuity), as I do in this thesis.

My project also demonstrates how *Paradise Lost* shows that the individual and individuality are necessary for proper, mutual relationships. My reading of Milton's Son as an individual – an entity that possesses agency separate from the Father's will – is not often discussed. Each other-self encounter reveals indivisible plurality rather than self-sameness. In *Paradise Lost*, the Son does not simply help the Father grow; the Father also helps the Son mature as an individual, rewarding Him for His true merit. In chapter 1, I show that Milton does not scorn hierarchy or distinction because difference is the source of relation rather than division – hence, God's praise for the Son's and Abdiel's personal merit. Milton rejects traditional hierarchy (based on birthright) and upholds a more modern vision of hierarchy (based on merit). The distinctly early modern shift in emphasis toward self-government and individuality acquires significance in *Paradise Lost* insofar as Adam and Eve, though placed in absolute happiness, are mutable creatures, and each possesses individual responsibility in his or her relationship with God, as seen through the 'double' Fall.<sup>320</sup> Further, *Paradise Lost* reveals Milton's attention to the unique individual *and* the ideal Christian community, since Adam and Eve undergo individualized, but equally significant, forms of education in the Garden. While Eve learns to abandon her reflection in the lake in order to relate properly to another human, Adam learns that he must trust solely in his relationship with God in order to temper his thirst for knowledge. Both Adam's and Eve's educations rest in an understanding of how proper relations work because relationships are the basis of self-identity and the good.

Milton's God is, I suggest, representative of "the unpaintable icon of the

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<sup>320</sup> Eve is not punished immediately; rather, the Fall is only complete when both Adam and Eve commit sin.

creatable-creature-creator” (Keller 105), in that He requires the Son and humans to help Him actualize His self-identity. In opposition to other critics, I argue that Milton’s God is active and dynamic, that He changes. My study does not simply place humanity front and centre; rather, it reveals that, for Milton, humanity *is* front and centre because of its great agency to act, either constructively or destructively, in the world. Instead of discussing the Father and Son in relation to Adam and Eve, which has been done countless times already, I discuss God and humanity in relation to the Father and Son.<sup>321</sup> I suggest that Milton depicts human and divine natures as much more similar than earlier writers had done, in order to stress that humans have more agency than was previously supposed. Indeed, my thesis shows the supreme agency of the human being, whose purpose it is to perpetuate God’s good creation through their relationships with others. *Paradise Lost*’s attention to the form of its characters illustrates the agency that God’s creatures possess to determine their own moral trajectory. Further, Milton’s poem emphasizes love as something that is created and formed in and through humanity’s actions specifically. Milton stresses the role that humans have in making love known in the created world through ‘self-giving love’ and a unique, human kind of love called charity. Adam and Eve’s capacity to fall, as well as their ability to repair their relationship with God after the Fall, reveal that humans have tremendous agency in relationships.

By showing how Milton’s poem reveals humans’ social potential and agency in the world, my project contributes to the research area of literary epic. Since identity

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<sup>321</sup> For an example, see Diane Kelsey McColley, p. 110. Critics often view the Father and Son’s relationship as a model for Adam and Eve’s relationship.

formation is ongoing, and identity is constituted by relationships in *Paradise Lost*, human agency has a potentially beneficial effect on self-identity. Specifically, interactions between self and other have a positive or negative effect on a human's position between physical and spiritual realms. Milton's human characters have the potential to become more than what they are. However, at the same time, they can become less than human if they fail to participate in cooperative interactions. Ideally, humans are meant to progress by degrees toward becoming more divine than human.<sup>322</sup> By showing how Milton's epic is the first to begin with protagonists that are fully human, and to reveal how the more-than-human – the divine – arises primarily from loving, interpersonal relationships that seek to magnify other selves rather than diminish or subsume them, my thesis contributes new knowledge to the study of literary epic. Lee Morrissey suggests that Milton begins 'the disappearance of God' narrative that J. Hillis Miller perceives as happening subsequently (101), whereas I show that God withdraws from, and then returns to, His relationship with humanity. Milton's God withdraws to allow His creatures complete freedom to choose. God's further withdrawal in response to humans' willful disloyalty suggests that they possess immense agency. Further, God and humanity's relationship is truly reciprocal because He gives Adam and Eve the power to accept or reject their relationship with Him at any time. Thus, God experiences, and shares in, the vulnerability of relationship that humans and angels know.

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<sup>322</sup> Different from non-Christian epics, such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, vulnerability in love makes Adam and Eve more divine rather than more human (as it does for Gilgamesh). Therefore, the progression of identity is different in Milton's poem. Adam and Eve *begin* human and work toward divine actualization through their relationships with others. Gilgamesh, on the other hand, starts off as two-thirds divine and one-third human, and he becomes increasingly human from interacting with another human (Enkidu).

My reading of *Paradise Lost* reveals how the poem solves the major dilemma of theodicy, as “that which attempts to account for the existence of evil given the proposition that God the creator is good” (Stocker 70), through its insistence on free will, which simultaneously makes space for personal agency and necessitates personal responsibility for all relationships and (un)creative acts. God’s withdrawal is a result of His mandate that all shall possess free will, and free will permits the gift of choice, of divergence, from original goodness. Humans’ and angels’ ability to choose for themselves reveals that evil is a result rather than a cause. God cannot inflict evil upon the self because evil is grounded in an individual’s personal choices. Additionally, not only does God confront and punish evil in the created world, but He also re-instates goodness when evil removes the good in original creation. To answer the question of how evil can exist when God the creator is good, Milton displaces responsibility for the good from God alone to God and His creatures, in that God and His creatures must *share* the labour of sustaining the good. Evil results when humans or angels choose to abuse their personal agency and avoid their responsibility to creation. While Adam’s exclamatory claim about God’s infinite goodness (Book 12) reveals an important circularity to the problem of good and evil – goodness is the first and final end of God’s creation – Satan’s fall from heaven and alienation show that the problem of evil is an interpersonal problem: it is a rebuff of the necessity of other selves, of creation and creativity, and of love. Like Augustine’s ontology of evil, in *Paradise Lost* evil is an absence of good rather than a separate reality.

This dissertation also contributes to larger sets of ideas – in particular, critical discussions of education and ethics in relation to *Paradise Lost* – and the direction they



are heading in now, in the twenty-first century. For example, in Karen L. Edwards's article on education (2020), she argues, "Loving does not obliterate the self in *Paradise Lost*; loving puts the self in relation to another, which is what is required in order to learn" (242). My study adds to this conversation by showing how in the poem other selves are not only necessary to the self's formation, but also, and more specifically, additions rather than subtractions to the self. Edwards also points out the following: "Education' suggests something to be obtained, while 'learning,' as a gerund, has process and the passing of time built into it" (240). In chapter 2 of this dissertation, I trace the process of Adam and Eve's education, which advances through correspondence with God's other creatures, while in chapter 3 I show that Adam and Eve's heroism is a potential that develops into the possibility of fully heroic heroism as they grow and learn over the course of the poem. Further, my claim that fully heroic, fallen heroism can only be realized beyond the final page of *Paradise Lost* demonstrates the unboundedness of learning, which is stopped neither by time (as Edwards asserts) nor by the accumulation of knowledge (such as a book-length poem, as I show). Another example of a recent critical discussion is Urvashi Chakravarty's article on ethics (2022), where she argues, "Adam and Eve's anti-natalism [at 11.500-502] signals not despair but rather a radical ethics of compassion" (165). In addition to my dissertation's overall proposal of a relational ethics for *Paradise Lost*, I demonstrate in chapter three how Adam and Eve's gentleness shifts into compassion – Michael reintroduces compassion (or love) to Adam as "Charity" (12.584), a word that has not yet come into existence – because compassion insists on the other, a response which is needed more after the Fall, since Sin, Death,

Satan, and his adherents enter into the world. In these ways, my study on *Paradise Lost* contributes to current Milton studies, more specifically, those on education and ethics.

To put it broadly, interpersonal relationships and the other self are, and always were, important for self, society, and creativity, but cultural and historical differences influence their meaning. Interpersonal relationships and the other self in *Paradise Lost* are, more particularly, the source of God's, and creation's, continued good. The poem reminds us of our perpetual purpose as God's co-creators and caretakers of the Earth, even after Adam and Eve's fall and the rise of the anthropocene. While ecocriticism is not part of what I explored in my chapters, my study on inter-relationships in the poem can be extended, so that it is not just about bodies but the world. For instance, *Paradise Lost's* emphasis on active creaturely agency suggests that environments improve less through passive "waves of empathy" (Marcus 104) and more through active efforts to live and be in relation. Part of humanity's work is to sustain God's sources of goodness, that is, to let them – or actively help them, as needed – continue in their natural state rather than abuse them through carelessness or oppression. Thus, Milton's poem reveals the importance of tempering one's agency in the world by showing us that human freedom which imposes on the freedom of others – not just people, but also living places, which perpetuate God's goodness by sustaining it – is an abuse of human agency because it is a denial of our relationality to not only God and the Earth (part of good God's creation), but also our very selves. *Paradise Lost* shows that it is *never* too late to be in good relation.

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