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Milton's Christ, as Seen by the Critics of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained Since 1900

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MILTON'S CHRIST, AS SEEN BY THE CRITICS OF
PARADISE LOST AND PARADISE REGAINED SINCE 1900

being

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Fort Hays Kansas State College in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts

by

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Fort Hays Kansas State College

Date July 26, 1962

Approved Roberta C. Stout
Major Professor

Approved Ralph J. Coates
Chairman, Graduate Council

PREFACE

My idea for this thesis grew out of a term paper written for Dr. Roberta Stout's Milton Seminar. The idea developed into a thesis which has an over-all purpose of presenting the primary investigations and commentaries of the twentieth century critics upon Milton's Christ and to arrive at conclusions which pertain to these critical findings.

Difficulties encountered in the writing of this paper centered around the fact that almost all of the research material was gathered through interlibrary loans. This difficulty was compounded because the loans came to Forsyth Library only to be forwarded to my home in Scott City, Kansas. Unfortunately, some of the requests for photo-copied material were missed and several sources had to be ordered twice. However, Mr. Campbell's diligent efforts contributed greatly to the success of this paper.

I wish to thank my graduate committee, Miss Alice Morrison, Dr. Ralph V. Coder, Dr. Raymond Youmans, Dr. Samuel J. Sackett, and Dr. Roberta Stout, for their constructive criticisms. Added acknowledgment goes to Dr. Sackett for his aid to my composition, and special acknowledgment goes to Dr. Roberta Stout, my committee chairman, not only for creating the idea of a Milton thesis, but also for giving me incentive along with careful, constructive guidance.

A final note of gratitude goes to my wife, Marthann and to my daughter, Jennifer, who know what they have patiently endured.

MILTON'S CHRIST, AS SEEN BY THE CRITICS OF
PARADISE LOST AND PARADISE REGAINED SINCE 1900

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Robert Granger Wright

(An Abstract)

The over-all purpose of this thesis is to present the primary investigations and commentaries of the twentieth century critics upon Milton's Christ and to arrive at conclusions which pertain to these critical findings.

Because Milton himself is constantly shifting his religious beliefs, His Christ is a complex literary character. This complexity affects the critics of the twentieth century as they attempt to establish a critical basis for the treatment of Milton's Christ.

The duality of Milton's Christ in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained is a source for potential controversy, but the scholarship in this area is undeveloped. Agreements and disagreements among the critics are presented with the primary idea being that the criticisms are so widely scattered as to present little common ground for comparison.

Milton is accused of being an Arian by some of the critics of the twentieth century while other critics say he is not. Their arguments are presented and one of the final concepts, among others, is that Milton is not an Arian in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained because he never explicitly denied the divinity of Christ.

Within the actual text of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, Christ is accepted without question by the twentieth century critics. Christ is discussed by them as He carries out His assigned tasks. The most notable feature of this area of consideration is the over-all accord of the critics that Christ is a successful literary creation.

The conclusion is drawn that the critics of the twentieth century have overlooked the dual nature of Christ as the possible source for the answer not only of the duality of Christ but also of whether or not Milton was an Arian. Furthermore, Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained are not systematic theologies but self-sufficient literary works in which Christ is an unquestioned, successful literary character. Finally, then, the theological approaches become irrelevant because Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained are literary works and Christ is an accepted literary creation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

By the average person today, John Milton may be remembered for only one reason, and that is, "he made the devil irresistibly attractive."¹ Samuel Johnson has said, "Paradise Lost is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again."² Many readers, after reading perhaps only the first two books of Paradise Lost, have done just that. If this is the situation, Satan is viewed in the grandeur of Pandemonium as being the unchallenged champion of the power of evil; but if the reader continues, and does "take up" Paradise Lost again, he will see Satan decline in power before the antithesis of all evil, the exalted Son of God.

Certainly, that Milton uses the Son of God in the fight against Satan and all he objectifies, is nothing new or unique; but upon closer examination, it is possible to discover that Milton's Christ is not the popular concept; rather He is a unique Being, Who represents much of Milton's independence from conventional religious attitudes. In this sense, Milton's Christ is

¹Ernest Boyd, Literary Blasphemies (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1927), p. 73.

²Samuel Johnson, Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1960), p. 464.

not clearly defined, and the historical facts of His life are not very important.³ Then, if Milton's Christ is uniquely his, how is the reader to interpret Christ's status and existence in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained?

To begin to understand Milton's Christ, we must first attempt to understand some phases of Milton's literary and theological personality. Since Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained are based primarily upon a religious foundation, the area of consideration would necessarily be Milton's own religion with its accompanying theological connotations. It is possible to begin realizing the complexities of Milton's religious thought when we examine Fiore's statement that

Milton's theology is remarkable for its independence. Although he has something in common with the Fathers, the Protestant reformers, the chief heretical sects of the reformation, and Catholic orthodox teaching, among them all we can nowhere find a parallel for his system.⁴

Or Summers' statement that

Almost any religionist finds himself left behind by Milton's own constant progression to the left, from

³Malcolm Mackenzie Ross, Poetry and Dogma (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1954), p. 188; Denis Saurat, Milton: Man and Thinker (New York: The Dial Press, 1925), p. 177.

⁴A.P. Fiore, "Problems of 17th Century Soteriology in Reference to Milton," Franciscan Studies, XV (September, 1955), 270.

Episcopalianism, to Presbyterianism, to Congregationalism, to his final position as the sole member of his own church.⁵

In The Christian Doctrine, Milton, in his assertive individualism, states:

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.⁶

Milton also has the following to say:

Since I enroll myself among the number of those who acknowledge the word of God alone as the rule of faith, and freely advance what appears to me more clearly deducible from the Holy Scriptures than the commonly received opinion, I see no reason why anyone who belongs to the same Protestant or Reformed Church, and professes to acknowledge the same rule of faith . . . should take offense at my freedom . . . as I impose my authority on no one, but merely propose what I think more worthy of belief than the creed in general acceptance. I only entreat that my readers will ponder and examine my statements in a spirit which desires to discover nothing but the truth, and with a mind free from prejudice. For without intending to oppose the authority of Scripture . . . I only take upon myself to refute human interpretations . . . conformably to my right, or rather to my duty as a man.⁷

⁵J.H. Summers, "Milton and Conformity," The Yale Review, XLVI (June, 1957), 513.

⁶Frank Allen Patterson, The Student's Milton (New York: F.S. Crofts & Company, 1945), p. 1020.

⁷John Milton, "The Christian Doctrine," The Works of John Milton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), XIV, 177-179.

It is now possible for the reader to see that the critics of Milton are faced with the interesting task of determining just what Milton's religion is before they can have a secure critical base from which to begin their criticism. The over-all purpose of this thesis is to present the primary investigations and commentaries of the twentieth century critics upon Milton's Christ and to arrive at conclusions which pertain to these critical findings.

Milton was theologically independent, and it is with the view of this in mind that the reader of this paper may approach the first two chapters. These deal with the interpretations by modern critics of the theological concepts of Milton's dualistic Christ and with their opinions regarding Milton's alleged Arianism, which involves the charge that Milton questioned the divinity and subordinated the figure of Christ, as opposed to the figure of God, primarily in Paradise Lost but also in Paradise Regained.

The third chapter of this paper departs from the realm of theology into the descriptions by the critics of Christ as He is shown in action in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained.

CHAPTER II

CHRIST'S DUAL NATURE

Christ's duality is a concept unquestioned in contemporary religious belief. That Christ was a perfect man while yet retaining His divinity also is not challenged. Milton's treatment of Christ's two natures in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained presents a potential source of controversy, such as the questions: To what extent is Christ God and to what extent man? How fallible is Christ as man? and, How are the two natures joined? Unfortunately, the twentieth century critics have dealt with the topic of the duality of Christ in such a scattered and incomplete way as to leave it undeveloped. For this reason there is very little common ground for comparison among the critics, and Milton scholarship needs to fill in the undeveloped areas.

Milton himself, in dealing with the incarnation in Book Three of Paradise Lost, wrote:

Thou therefore, whom thou only canst redeem
Their nature also to thy nature join;
And be thyself man among men on earth,
Made flesh, when time shall be, of virgin seed
Nor shalt thou, by descending to assume
Man's nature, lessen or degrade thine own
. . . thy humiliation shall exalt
With thee thy manhood also to this throne;
Here shalt thou sit incarnate, here shalt reign
Both God and man

(P.L., III, 281-316)¹

¹John Milton, Paradise Lost and Selected Poetry and Prose (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1958), pp. 66-67.

According to Milton, then, mankind can only be redeemed by Christ Who will become "man among men on earth." By assuming man's nature, Christ will not degrade His own nature and when He is exalted to His throne, Christ will reign both as God and as man. In this way Milton joined the two natures of Christ in Paradise Lost.

In The Christian Doctrine Milton also considered the "nature" of Christ to be dualistic: "twofold; divine and human."² Interestingly enough, the term Christ's "natures," as opposed to "persons," was also used in the formulation of the Dogma of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 which stated that Christ is

known in two natures, without confusion, without conversion, without severance, and without division; the distinction of the natures being in nowise abolished by their union, but the peculiarity of each nature being maintained, and both concurring in one person and hypostasis.³

This same dogma later became the general dogma in England, and the Second of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England dealt with this same phase of the incarnation.

This duality of Milton's Christ, then, is based upon the accepted principles of orthodox theology and the interpretations by the critics of the twentieth century, beginning with Saurat in 1925, are presented in the remainder of this chapter.

Saurat maintained that for Milton, Christ is Intelligence coming down into man to control the passions by incarnation. Milton,

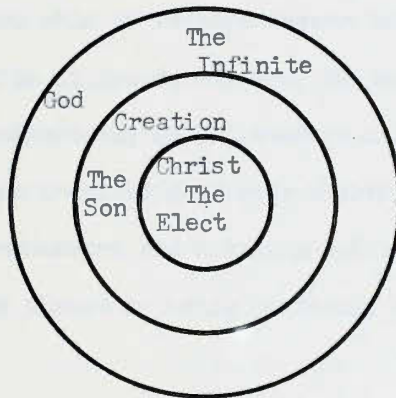
²As quoted in William B. Hunter, "Milton on the Incarnation: Some More Heresies," JHI, XXI (July-September, 1960), 351.

³As quoted in Hunter, p. 350.

Saurat said, shows the place of Christ in this way:

In order to reach His ends, God causes a second creation to concentrate in the first one: within the Son, who had created, and out of whom had been created, the World, is formed Christ, who creates and out of whom are created the elect: He creates them out of himself: they are "members of Christ"; he is incarnated in them, as the Son had materialized into a World. And as the "Greater Man," the assembly of all men who alone deserve the name "man."⁴

A diagram of Being may be constructed thus:⁵



Furthermore, according to Saurat, Milton very carefully makes a differentiation between the word "Christ" and the word "Son." Christ is used to refer to the Savior of men whereas the Son is used for the Creator of the World. In this way, Saurat

⁴Denis Saurat, Milton: Man and Thinker (New York: The Dial Press, 1925), pp. 172-174.

⁵Saurat, p. 172.

asserted, Milton was able to make a distinction concerning Christ when He was in His "human" element.

This process of creation, which Saurat mentions, deals not only with the creation of the Son, but also with the recreation or restoration of divine power, which is brought about through the defeat of evil, or in this situation, Satan. Likewise, because Adam lost man's resistance to evil, Christ endured the Temptation to restore this resistance; and, in this way, Christ, representing Divine Reason, was able to restore reason to mankind.

According to Tillyard, however, Milton had no profound belief in the incarnation; he believed in a form of spiritual regeneration which involves a process whereby certain mortals could overcome their weaknesses and attain a sublime degree of virtue, and the incarnate Christ by being partially human fits into this belief.⁶

By Hutchinson it is said that the human part of Christ seems to create the greatest difficulty for Milton. According to Hutchinson, that part of the incarnate Christ which touches His manhood is inferior, while that part of Christ which touches the Godhead is equal to God. Thus, in one sense, Christ is inferior to God.⁷

⁶E.M.W. Tillyard, Milton (London: Chatto and Windus, 1930); Reprinted in Milton Criticism: Selections from Four Centuries (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1950, pp. 178-210).

⁷F.E. Hutchinson, Milton and the English Mind (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 159. The over-all problem of Christ's being inferior will be discussed in the next chapter.

The human or "inferior" part of Christ was also treated by Schultz, who said that this element of His nature causes this uncertainty about His purpose and even about His own divinity when He is shown in His human character. Further uncertainty results since the human segment of Christ has a yet imperfect knowledge of God's plan for the Kingdom.⁸

In the opinion of Ross, Milton's symbolization of Christ was never incarnational because Milton was unable poetically to imagine the humanity of the God-Christ.⁹ This does not mean that Milton denied the doctrine of the incarnation, according to Ross, but that the distinction remains between what may be a question of dogma and what may be a question of poetic presentation. In other words, Milton was unsuccessful in bridging the gap between doctrine and poetry. Ross's point that Milton could not poetically imagine the humanity of Christ agrees with Hutchinson's that the human part of Christ caused Milton the greatest difficulty.

It was likewise the conclusion of Allen that Milton failed in his attempt to make a distinction between the human and divine natures of Christ while yet retaining the unifying qualities of which a divine character would supposedly be capable.¹⁰ Allen said

⁸Howard Schultz, "Christ and Antichrist in Paradise Regained," PMLA, LXVII (September, 1952), 794.

⁹Malcolm Mackenzie Ross, Poetry and Dogma (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1954), p. 188.

¹⁰Don Cameron Allen, The Harmonious Vision (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1954), p. 118.

that when Christ is in His divine nature, He is certain, not only of His identity but also of His course; when he is in His human nature, however, He seems uncertain of both. In Book One of Paradise Regained, for instance, He says:

that I no more should live obscure,
 But openly begin, as best becomes
 The authority which I derived from Heaven.
 And now by some strong motion I am led
 Into this wilderness, to what intent
 I learn not yet, perhaps I need not know;
 For what concerns my knowledge God reveals.
 (P.R., I, 287-293)¹¹

Although this uncertainty seems readily apparent in Christ's early existence as He progresses in His contacts with evil, He has a more intense consciousness of His mission; and, as His divinity increases with this consciousness, the human uncertainty becomes less noticeable. Yet, out of this lessening uncertainty comes a very dramatic conclusion as Christ begins to realize His full power.¹²

Although Allen maintained that Milton failed in his attempt at showing the duality of Christ, he admitted that there was a positive aspect to this failure when he stated:

we can hardly expect him to succeed where almost two thousand years of theology had failed; nonetheless, he comes closer to explaining this concept poetically than any other poet--for that fact, almost any divine--who had attempted it before.¹³

¹¹Douglas Bush (ed.), The Portable Milton (New York: The Viking Press, 1949), p. 557.

¹²Allen, pp. 117-120.

¹³Allen, p. 118.

Watkins agreed with Saurat's assertion that Christ endured the Temptation to give mankind the resistance to evil that Adam had lost.¹⁴ He added that this concept is the result of a medieval tradition which has been modified by the Renaissance and the Reformation. Watkins asserted further that even through the third temptation of Paradise Regained, "Christ is clearly any wise and good man armed with God's Revealed Truth"¹⁵

For Stein, the increasing divinity of Milton's Christ was the result of His thinking back to His original creation.¹⁶ This idea that Christ thought back to His creation is reminiscent of the Platonic theory that as one learns one merely remembers what one knew in the state of pre-existence but forgot in the experience of birth.

Irene Samuel concurred with both Allen and Schultz when she said that in Paradise Regained Christ has no foreknowledge of His resurrection, Hell, or the final judgment of doomsday.¹⁷

In Kurth's view, the chief artistic problem facing Milton was that he was unable to present Christ as "just" a human being.¹⁸

¹⁴W.B.C. Watkins, An Anatomy of Milton's Verse (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955), pp. 103-114.

¹⁵Watkins, p. 114.

¹⁶Arnold Stein, Heroic Knowledge (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957), p. 204.

¹⁷Irene Samuel, "The Dialogue in Heaven: A Reconsideration of Paradise Lost, III. 1-417, PMLA, LXXIII (September, 1957), 607.

¹⁸Burton O. Kurth, Milton and Christian Heroism (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 128-132.

Therefore, Christ became the "exalted man" or the "perfect man."

God, through Milton, said it this way:

He now shall know I can produce a man
 Of female seed, far abler to resist
 All his solicitations, and at length
 All his vast force, and drive him back to Hell,
 Winning by conquest what the first man lost
 By fallacy surprised. But first I mean
 To exercise him in the wilderness;
 There he shall first lay down the rudiments
 Of his great warfare, ere I send him forth
 To conquer Sin and Death, the two grand foes,
 By humiliation and strong sufferance:
 His weakness shall o'ercome Satanic Strength
 And all the world, and mass of sinful flesh;
 That all the angels and ethereal powers,
 They now, and men thereafter, may discern
 From what consummate virtue I have chose
 This perfect man, by merit called my Son,
 To earn salvation for the sons of men.

(P.R., I, 150-167)¹⁹

Even at this, in Paradise Regained Milton deliberately chose to challenge Christ with tasks that human endeavor could accomplish. This line of thought agrees with Watkins. However, Kurth maintained that as the temptations became increasingly evil, the more divine Christ became. Kurth extended this reasoning to the point where he asserted that when Christ is alone, He is human; when faced by evil or the devil, He becomes divine.²⁰

In agreeing with Stein, Kurth stated that man, in gaining self-knowledge and in preparing for the great task ahead, will engage in the process of searching in his mind for the past. It

¹⁹Bush, pp. 553-554.

²⁰Kurth, p. 129.

was during this inner search that Christ began to realize His purpose and divine nature. As Christ became greater and greater in the face of Satan's devices, this process became clearer. Satan's final desperate measures were defeated in the final indictment, both calm and damning: "Tempt not the Lord thy God."²¹

Kurth concluded his treatment of Milton's Christ and the incarnation by saying that Milton had portrayed Christ as the perfect model for human heroism in the face of the most dangerous worldly temptations. By portraying Christ in this way, Milton was able to show that it is possible for man to take part in his own salvation.²²

Somewhat in contrast with the preceding ideas is Hunter's assertion that the actual conception of Christ brought about both the human and divine in His nature, the word "predominance" being the guidepost.²³ Since the divine nature is obviously superior to the human, the God-man Christ derives His personality from the divine, and in some way, the human nature survives. In this manner the human nature is not confused with the divine and also manages to remain somewhat independent. Hence we may say that the divine predominates over the human. Even within this divine predominance, however, according to Hunter, Milton accepts the fact that both

²¹Bush, p. 607.

²²Kurth, p. 132.

²³William B. Hunter, "Milton on the Incarnation: Some More Heresies," JHI, XXI (July-September, 1960), 359-365.

natures died on the cross and in this way the whole person of Christ was raised. Then the Crucifixion would restore Christ to Heaven and complete the cosmic cycle.

As can be seen from the evidence of this chapter, Milton's critics tend to go in different directions as they react to the problems raised by the dual nature of Christ. The argument of Tillyard that Milton did not have a profound belief in the incarnation of Christ is the only point around which a controversy might have developed; yet, although no one else agreed with Tillyard, no one troubled to refute him or came to make an issue of disagreement.

There were, however, some minor disagreements on details. Saurat said that Milton's use of the words "Christ" and "Son" allowed Milton to make a distinction concerning Christ when He was in His "human" element, but Allen said that Milton failed to make the distinction. Another instance of disagreement is that Watkins and Kurth asserted that Christ accomplished tasks of which any man is capable, yet according to Allen, it was the divinity in the Man-God Christ that created the certainty of Christ's rejecting the temptations.

Certainly the importance of Christ in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained makes the question of how Milton treated Christ's dual nature one of the most central in understanding

the theological backgrounds of the poems. Yet twentieth century scholars have failed to explore this question with any degree of adequacy; until they do so, major issues in understanding Milton will remain unresolved.

CHAPTER III

MILTON'S ARIANISM

Numerous critics have accused Milton of Arianism, a belief which denies the divinity of Christ. This is not simply another theological term, but rather it is a term of invective bound up in the realm of "heretic" and "heresy." Even as late as 1611, Bartholomew Legate, who was described in the contemporary records as an "obstinate Arrian (sic.)," was burned in Smithfield.¹ In an age contemporary with Milton's very early youth, the charge of "Arian" was serious, while even today the charge strikes at the very core of the characterization of Christ in Milton's Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained.

The Arian Heresy was named for Arius, who was condemned at the Council of Nicaea in 325 for subordinationist teaching about the person of Christ. According to Le Comte,

The Arian and Socinian are charged to dispute against the Trinity: They affirm to believe the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, according to Scripture and the Apostolic Creed; as for terms of Trinity, Triunity, Coessentiality, Tripersonality, and the like, they reject them as scholastic notions, not to be found in Scripture. Arianism, used rather loosely as a synonym for anti-trinitarianism, became the favorite label for De Doctrina Christiana.²

¹William B. Hunter, "Milton's Arianism Reconsidered," Harvard Theological Review, LII (January, 1959), 10.

²Edward S. Le Comte, A Milton Dictionary (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1961), p. 28.

In ecclesiastical history, Arianism occupies a large place. Arius and his followers were excommunicated sometime between 318 and 323, but the issue was far from being settled. In 330 Arius was actually re-instated and religious as well as political intrigue centered around Arianism for many years. The adoption of the Nicene Creed by the Second General Council in 381 put the Arians out of the state church. Arianism did remain in existence among the barbarians, though more for political rather than doctrinal purposes, but its final existence as any kind of potent force was ended before the eighth century.³

Arianism, today, is defined as "an Eastern attempt to rationalize the creed by stripping it of mystery as far as the relation of Christ to God was concerned."⁴ Arius himself, "described the Son as a second, or inferior God, standing midway between the First Cause and creatures. . . ."⁵

In the Arian controversy, as it pertains to Milton, the main issue seems to be whether or not Christ repeated in His own nature the precise essence of the Father.⁶ Most Christians today

³William Barry, "Arianism," The Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, Inc., 1907), I, pp. 707-710; Gustav Kruger, "Arius," The Encyclopedia Britannica (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), II, pp. 542-544.

⁴Barry, pp. 707-710.

⁵Barry, pp. 707-710.

⁶John Crowe Ransom, God Without Thunder (London: Gerald Howe, Ltd., 1931), pp. 140-149.

would probably state their position more definitely than even the Council of Nicaea, which said in effect that Christ is the very essence and identity of the Father. Prior to 325 Christ was considered to be a secondary figure in the Christian Godhead, whereas in the twentieth century, He is considered nearly, or even entirely, equal to the whole Godhead. What the moderns have done is to reverse the role of Christ to the point where there is no longer a plurality of persons in the Godhead, but one God, Who is represented as being simply the Man-God Christ. In this way God has been superseded by the Man-God Christ, Who was once held subordinate to God.

That we should believe on Christ, which is what the Church "likes," is not necessarily an idea with which we should disagree, but, as Ransom asserted in God Without Thunder, the Church sometimes fails to go further and state that we should believe on Him as He directed. To believe on Him as He directed is to believe that Christ, Who was Incarnate Reason, was inferior to the God Who sent Him.

A relevant doctrine which Milton treated in Paradise Regained is that Adam worshiped Satan's reason and consequently fell, but that Christ refused to worship Satan and honored the God of Israel instead.⁷ Opposed to this idea is the one preferred by Christian theologians that because the men of old worshiped Satan, they therefore fell, but Christ is now available for us to worship. Christ

⁷Ransom, p. 146.

is represented as being Incarnate Reason, who not only disclaims the complete Godhead but also points us to the real God (I. Corinthians 15:28). Thus from the point of view of Christian theologians, Christ is supposedly "willing" to subordinate Himself but is not forced to do so by anyone including God.

Where, then, does Milton's Christ enter the scene? Is Milton's concept of Christ one which would have been acceptable to orthodox Christian theologians of his day--that Christ was, though subordinate to God, a divine Being and a member of the Triune Godhead--or was it the Arian idea that Christ was a supernatural being, the Son of God, but not a divine one? This question is not easy to answer, and twentieth-century critics have been arguing it with vigor. Beginning with Ames in 1909, this chapter presents the positions of the critics in the twentieth-century on the question of Milton's Arianism.

Ames argued that Christ is subordinate because He is capable of being defeated in Paradise Regained; and even if the reader is unable to accept the possibility of His defeat, His inability to fail comes from His virtue and not from the Godhead, in which Christ was never equal to the Father.⁸

Saintsbury used the term "Semi-Arian" when referring to

⁸Percy W. Ames (ed.), Milton Memorial Lectures (London: Henry Frowde, 1909), p. 193.

Milton's Christ in Paradise Regained.⁹ This term is especially applicable as Saintsbury viewed the contingency of Christ's fall after His being tempted. Because Milton shows Satan as persistent and seemingly unconquered even after past defeats and more certain future defeats in the face of the resistance shown by Christ, Saintsbury said that Milton weakened Christ; therefore, he concluded Milton's Christ was not of the same essence as the Father.

Paradise Lost and The Christian Doctrine are held by Larson to contain complementary parts of the same belief instead of contradictory views.¹⁰ According to Larson, there was no Son in the pre-Gospel state but only the Word, which existed as an idea in the mind of God. With the coming of the Gospel state, Christ became incarnate; but Larson said that Paradise Lost concerns the Trinity in the pre-Gospel state, in which situation, when the word "Son" appears in the epic, it must be interpreted Platonically, for He existed then only as an idea. On the other hand, The Christian Doctrine deals with the Son in the Gospel State when He actually existed as a person.

That Milton has Christ born on a certain day, said Bøgholm, points toward Arianism; but when Christ is described as "Equal to

⁹George Saintsbury, "Milton," The Cambridge History of English Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), VII, 121.

¹⁰M.A. Larson, "Milton and Servetus: A Study in the Sources of Milton's Theology," PMLA, XLI (December, 1926), pp. 891-934.

God" (P.L, III, 305),¹¹ it suggests an orthodox standpoint. Although Milton is an Arian in his religion, at times he apparently is at variance with his own Christian Doctrine when he assumes the "approximately" orthodox point of view. For Bøgholm, then, Milton is an inconsistent Arian.¹²

Maurice Kelley wrote in 1937 that in spite of his emphasis on the role of Christ, Milton's ultimate feeling was that the final redemption was through God, and thus the strength of Christ is subordinate to the strength of God.¹³ Lovejoy, in the same year, and Taylor, in 1959, also agreed with this idea.¹⁴

In 1939, Sewell found that Paradise Lost was more orthodox concerning the Trinity than was The Christian Doctrine.¹⁵ This conclusion is almost the exact opposite of that at which Kelley arrived in This Great Argument, which further developed the

¹¹John Milton, Paradise Lost and Selected Poetry and Prose (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1958), p. 67. Hereafter this edition will be cited as Paradise Lost.

¹²Niels Bøgholm, Milton and Paradise Lost (London: Williams and Norgate, 1932), pp. 55-57.

¹³Maurice Kelley, "The Theological Dogma of Paradise Lost," PMLA, LII (March, 1937), 78.

¹⁴A.O. Lovejoy, "Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall," ELH, IV (Fall, 1937), 161-179; Dick Taylor, Jr., "Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall Once More," Tulane Studies in English, IX (1959), 51.

¹⁵Arthur Sewell, A Study in Milton's "Christian Doctrine" (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), pp. 193-194.

position he had taken four years previously. That Paradise Lost is an Arian writing is argued in Kelley's primary statement:

Miltonists . . . should cease to question the anti-Trinitarianism of Paradise Lost. The De Doctrina and the epic have the same ultimate purpose; both belong to the same period of Milton's literary activity; and in both, we should consequently assume, the views of the Father, Son, and Third Person are the same. This assumption, a comparison of the treatise and the poem amply justifies; and we ought therefore to conclude not only that Paradise Lost is an Arian document, but also that in matters touching the Father, the Son, and the Third Person, the De Doctrina can and should be used as a gloss upon the poem.¹⁶

Because the evidence depended upon is inconclusive, Kelley argued, the case for the trinitarianism of Paradise Lost is untenable. The evidence presented by the trinitarian faction must also be faced with a definite Arian statement in Book Eight of Paradise Lost which reads

No need that thou
Should'st propagate, already infinite,
And through all numbers absolute, though one
(P.L., VIII, 419-421)¹⁷

Adam's preceding statement concerning the freedom of the Father has a parallel in The Christian Doctrine, which says

that however the generation of the Son may have taken place, it arose from no natural necessity, as is generally contended For questionless, it was

¹⁶Maurice Kelley, This Great Argument (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 122.

¹⁷Paradise Lost, p. 189.

in God's power consistently with the perfection of his own essence not to have begotten the Son, inasmuch as generation does not pertain to the nature of the Deity, who stands in no need of propagation¹⁸

After presenting these statements as proof of Milton's Arianism, Kelley lead up to his final conclusion on Paradise Lost by saying,

Thus, Paradise Lost clearly contains at least one Arian statement; and champions of Milton's orthodoxy are consequently faced with the choice either of abandoning their Trinitarian theory of Paradise Lost or of admitting that the epic contains two contradictory views on the Son and the Father, and that John Milton set out to vindicate the ways of God and yet was unable to present a single and unified concept of his deity. The Trinitarianism of Paradise Lost, therefore, can be retained only at the expense of either Milton's logical consistency or his literary skill; and the unsatisfactory nature of the two arguments offered to prove the poem's orthodoxy makes such a price too high to pay¹⁹

Bush searched for a middle ground while yet basically agreeing with Kelley. Bush's main statement of his position is as follows:

The Arian or anti-Trinitarian view of the inferiority of Christ and the Holy Spirit to the Father, while clearly set forth in the treatise, is less distinct and obvious in the poem (which did not disturb generations of orthodox readers), but no doctrinal passage in the poem is inconsistent with the Arianism of Milton's formal theology.²⁰

¹⁸John Milton, "The Christian Doctrine," The Works of John Milton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), XIV 185-187. Hereafter this edition will be cited as Works.

¹⁹Kelley, p. 122.

²⁰Douglas Bush, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century: 1600-1660 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945), pp. 380-382.

Rajan disagreed with Kelley as to the extent that Milton is an Arian and referred to one of the passages previously cited by Kelley (P.L., VIII, 419-421) as being "deviously interpreted." Although agreeing somewhat with Bush, Rajan answered the question of how a reader should approach the Arianism in Paradise Lost in light of The Christian Doctrine as follows:

Collate Paradise Lost with the "De Doctrine" and it is Arian. It could hardly be otherwise in the nature of Milton's integrity. But read it as it was meant to be read, by itself, as an epic poem, not a systematic theology, and the heresy fades in a background of incantation. The scriptural reminiscences reverberate orthodoxy. The assimilation of image after image of encyclopaedic science and hexaemeral commentary, the pivoting of the entire action on the stock responses of Elizabethan belief, control the epic and dominate its decorum. Milton's mind is too fixed for him to succeed entirely. He cannot make his heresy irrelevant. But he tries very hard to make it incidental. He makes no denial of coessentiality. He makes only one statement that is explicitly Arian and even that has been deviously interpreted VIII: 419-421. For the rest, he confounds would-be exegetes with a series of allusions which can be manipulated as evidence of Trinitarianism, Anti-Trinitarianism, a Trinity of Modes or one of manifestations. But he does not wish his dogma to obtrude. It did not obtrude with Newton, or with Todd, or with that long tradition of eighteenth century imitation which took Milton as its matrix in sentiment and style. If it obtrudes on us it is because of our excessive concern with possible connections between Milton's prose and his poetry. Yet surely Paradise Lost should be sufficient unto itself. Our criticism needs to be subordinated to its finality. For Paradise Lost, as Grierson points out, is not a theological poem, and Paradise Lost, as Saurat points out in differing from Grierson, is a poem and not a theology.²¹

²¹B. Rajan, "Paradise Lost" and the Seventeenth-Century Reader (London: Chatto and Windus, 1947), p. 25.

Certainly, as Rajan has said, the problem is one of theology involved within poetry. Hutchinson stated the difficulty that Milton had in poetically evoking the Trinity. According to Hutchinson, the ultimate surrender of Christ's earthly kingship automatically denotes the subordination of the Son, and any concept of unity within the Trinity was abandoned by Milton: therefore, Milton's views came to be "approximately" Arian.²² Woodhouse also recognized the difficulty of unity within the Trinity as he mentioned that Milton never poetically reached the position that Christ was the true image of the Father, but that Milton realized the full "implications" of Christ's character with the aid of poetry.²³

In an earlier article, Woodhouse related how the writings of Eusebius anticipate Milton's subordination of the Son.²⁴ Eusebius is the most ancient writer of Church History extant, and his Historia Ecclesiastica was used extensively by Milton.²⁵ As quoted in Woodhouse, Eusebius wrote:

²²F.E. Hutchinson, Milton and the English Mind (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 162.

²³A.S.P. Woodhouse, "The Historical Criticism of Milton," PMLA, LXVI (December, 1951), 1042.

²⁴A.S.P. Woodhouse, "Notes on Milton's Views on the Creation: The Initial Phases," PQ, XXVIII (January, 1949), 220.

²⁵Edward S. Le Comte, A Milton Dictionary (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1961), p. 121.

There is one principle of the universe (i.e., the Son), nay, one before the principle . . . and greater than every name (i.e., the Father), . . . the good, the cause of all, the Creator, . . . the prescient, the one and only God, from whom are all things and for whom are all things Wherefore, having both the will and power, he hath ordained for himself everything . . . in the visible and invisible world, making his own will and power, as it were, a kind of matter and substratum of the genesis and constitution of the universe, so that it is no longer reasonable to say that whatever exists must come from the non-existent; for that which came from the non-existent would not be anything. For how could that which is non-existent cause something else to exist? Everything that has ever existed . . . derives its being from the One, the only existent and pre-existent Being²⁶

As Woodhouse used Eusebius to solidify his contention that Milton was an Arian, Dickson turned to other Church Fathers and Church Reformers to support his point of view. Milton's use of light imagery and the derivation of this imagery is the key idea that Dickson uses in his argument that Milton is "sufficiently orthodox."²⁷ Two of the many examples in *Paradise Lost* shows Christ's intimacy with the light of the Father. Raphael tells Adam about the brilliance of the Godhead on the morning of the Son's exaltation:

when in orbs
Or circuit inexpressible they stood,
Orb within orb, the Father Infinite,

²⁶Woodhouse, PQ, p. 220.

²⁷David W.D. Dickson, "Milton's 'Son of God': A Study in Imagery and Orthodoxy," Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science Arts and Letters (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1952), XXXVI, 276-281.

By whom in bliss embosomed sat the Son,
 Amidst, as from a flaming mount, whose top
 Brightness had made invisible
 (P.L., V, 594-599)²⁸

In Paradise Regained, moreover, Milton acclaimed Christ, after His victory over Satan, as "True Image of the Father" and "Light of light" (P.R., IV, 596-597).²⁹

Within Milton's use of this imagery are definite suggestions of Augustine; Athanasius; Albertus Magnus, who was a champion of orthodoxy in the later Middle Ages; and John Calvin, whom Milton echoes with similar phraseology. With these men in mind, Dickson concluded his argument as follows:

If Milton seemed sufficiently orthodox to Christian readers for some one hundred and fifty years, part of the reason is his use of language that had long been associated with stout defenders of the conservative essentials of the faith. For Milton's metaphors of light for Divinity inevitably reflect the thought as well as the phraseology of the orthodox past, and all his laborious and extended rejections of Trinitarianism in the bare and explicit prose of the Doctrine remain less memorable than the poetic figures of his epic, which are his hostages, willy-nilly, to accepted Christianity.³⁰

Shifting back to Milton's being an Arian, Ross said that to be able to identify the Christ of Paradise Lost and Paradise

²⁸Milton, Paradise Lost, p. 124.

²⁹Douglas Bush (ed.), The Portable Milton (New York: The Viking Press, 1949), p. 608.

³⁰Dickson, p. 281.

Regained with the simple Arian Christ of The Christian Doctrine is pointless.³¹ According to Ross, Arianism provides a means whereby Milton may establish a freedom of technique which would be impossible for a poet who held a Trinitarian belief. Milton apparently has no qualms about giving a free hand to his rhetoric in order to develop the dramatic and aesthetic possibilities of his personal adaptation of the Christ symbol. Even though the Son is inferior to the Father from the standpoint of His being "conceptually" subordinate, Milton is not going to limit himself aesthetically.

Milton's free hand allowed him to detach his symbol of Christ from traditional concepts and from previously understood techniques of communion and participation.³² This is demonstrated by the fact that despite the apparent or at least verbal acceptance of the doctrine of the Incarnation, which was definitely modified by Arian heterodoxy, Milton's poetry does not express the incarnational and operative sense of Christ as found in "Christian theology from St. Paul to St. Thomas Aquinas and which is still present in part to Anglicanism." Ross argued further that

³¹Malcolm Mackenzie Ross, Poetry and Dogma (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1954), p. 221.

³²Ross, pp. 188-189.

The outright condemnation of the sacramental system in the De Doctrina, and the bitter repudiation of the whole visible church from the Apostolic Age to the Second Coming of Christ in Paradise Lost, Book XII,

also demonstrates that Milton had detached his figure of Christ from traditional concepts.³³

This detachment creates implications in Christ's character that cause Fiore to maintain that Milton's errors on Christ's origin, Christ's relation to the Father, the Trinity, and Mortalism, would never be accepted in the Catholic deposit of faith.³⁴ That Milton is an Arian in his religion is also stated definitely by Fiore; however, Fiore does maintain that Milton sincerely professes to believe in a "uniquely" divine Christ.

Curry referred to Christ as a properly represented derivative from God.³⁵ In Curry's opinion, the process of derivation would automatically make Christ a secondary person through Whom God would manifest His glory and power. Book Six of Paradise Lost states the position of Christ as follows:

Effulgence of my glory, Son beloved,
Son in whose face invisible is beheld

³³Ross, p. 189.

³⁴A.P. Fiore, "Problems of 17th Century Soteriology in Reference to Milton," Franciscan Studies, XV (September, 1955), 271.

³⁵Walter Clyde Curry, Milton's Ontology Cosmogony and Physics (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957), p. 45.

Visibly, what by Deity I am,
 And in whose hand what by decree I do³⁶
 (P.L., VI, 680-683)

Hunter, in his article "Milton's Arianism Reconsidered," attempted to refute Kelley. The refutation began with a basic premise that the so-called Arian passages in The Christian Doctrine are actually reflections of a tradition that even antedates the Council of Nicaea.³⁷ Milton supposedly followed a "two-stage" idea of the generation of Christ as opposed to the more traditional "one-stage" idea. God begat the Son from a "special internal efficiency" as compared with an "external efficiency." To argue that the internal Son or Logos had existed from all eternity would then be possible.

Furthermore, since Christ had existed in God's mind, He would not be subordinate because of His relatively short span of life, as compared with eternity, and He would not have been created out of subordinate materials as opposed to being created out of that which is God the Father. From these concepts Hunter argued that Milton was not an Arian. While Milton himself observes that his view of the Son agrees with the Apostles' Creed, as would those of Arius, Hunter asserted further that Milton might have added that he also agrees with the Nicene Creed, as Arius would not.

³⁶John Milton, Paradise Lost and Selected Poetry and Prose (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1958), p. 152.

³⁷William B. Hunter, "Milton's Arianism Reconsidered," Harvard Theological Review, LII (January, 1959), 34.

Although Milton's view of the Trinity would not be in complete agreement with the orthodox concepts, both in Milton's own time and in our own, subordinationism as such has not been branded as heresy. Concluding his argument, Hunter stated:

Like his Cambridge contemporaries, Milton was doing his best to present a theory of the Trinity which would harmonize with reason, with a historical and respected philosophy, with the utterances of the primitive Christian church which have always been held in high respect by most Protestants, and with the Bible. These seventeenth century thinkers were grappling with ideas, not with dogma; and they refused to agree blindly with Christian assertions no matter how venerable if they were not supported by biblical texts and reason . . . Milton places perhaps more emphasis upon the Bible as authority, but he must to some degree be included in the group. Creeds alone did not suit his needs. To arrive at an understanding of the most difficult mystery of Christianity, the Trinity, he relied upon scriptural authority interpreted in the light of patristic and philosophical formulations presented by reason.³⁸

Patrides concurred with Hunter at this point in the argument when he stated that Milton's treatment of Christ and the Atonement was not just personal emphasis but was in the "mainstream of contemporary Protestant thought."³⁹

Continuing the support of Hunter's thesis, Frye, after having studied thoroughly the trinitarian formulations of Protestantism, thought that John Milton, if ever tried before a fair and competent theological court, would never be convicted of anti-trinitarian heresy

³⁸Hunter, pp. 34-35.

³⁹C.A. Patrides, "Milton and the Protestant Theory of Atonement," *PMLA*, LXXIV (March, 1959), 13.

in Paradise Lost.⁴⁰ Frye was very pleased to be in agreement with Hunter, especially since the agreement had been reached independently. Remarkable for its clarity, Frye write, Hunter's argument has clearly demonstrated that the theology of Milton was not Arian. Furthermore, Frye said, Hunter has shown that although Milton's views of the Trinity were different from those usually held, these views were not in discord with either the Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed. Frye also added that the most important influences on the Trinitarian opinions held by Milton were the early Church Fathers and the Bible.

Adding one qualification and giving additional support to Hunter, Adamson in his article, "Milton's Arianism," wrote that Hunter has shifted very effectively the burden of proof of Milton's Arianism.⁴¹ How Milton constantly refers to the Trinity with the use of Athanasian metaphors is the supporting evidence. Athanasius (293?-373) was a Patriarch of Alexandria who is referred to as the "Father of Orthodoxy" and was a lifelong opponent of Arianism.⁴² Further support to Hunter is given by Adamson when he mentioned that Arius held the Son had been created out of nothing while Milton declared that

⁴⁰Roland Mushat Frye, God, Man, and Satan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 76.

⁴¹J.H. Adamson, "Milton's Arianism," Harvard Theological Review, LIII (October, 1960), pp. 269-273.

⁴²Edward S. Le Comte, A Milton Dictionary (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1961), p. 34.

God imparted to the Son as much as he pleased of the divine nature, nay of the diving substance itself, care being taken not to confound the substance with the whole essence⁴³

Adamson then asserted that "It is clear that Milton is no Arian and that the term Arianism cannot accurately be applied to his doctrine of the Godhead."⁴⁴

Also, as a qualification of Hunter's thesis, Adamson said

I believe that Mr. Hunter is obviously right in finding an ultimate source of Milton's views on the Trinity in the long tradition of Platonic and Neoplatonic theories and particularly in the "trinitarian" discussions of Philo Judaeus. But I think that he does not sufficiently recognize that it was the early Greek Fathers who were central to the thought of the Cambridge Platonists and other liberal thinkers of the seventeenth century, including Milton himself; that it was these Fathers who provided the nexus between Biblical Christianity and Alexandrian Neoplatonism.⁴⁵

Although the source of Milton's trinitarian concepts may lie ultimately with the Neoplatonic writers, Adamson thought that neither Milton nor his seventeenth-century contemporaries thought that they had used sources of this type. They thought rather that they had "rediscovered" the original and therefore "true" doctrine of the Trinity from the Greek Fathers. For that reason, these seventeenth-century thinkers conceived of Neoplatonism not as a source but as a support.

⁴³John Milton, "The Christian Doctrine," The Works of John Milton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), XIV, 193.

⁴⁴Adamson, p. 275.

⁴⁵Adamson, p. 273.

Referring to a series of portraits placed in the west oriel of Christ's College, Adamson said that as the portraits run in a series; Perkins was the last Calvinist and Milton, More, and Cudworth, among others, were placed there. The general movement of mind from Perkins to Cudworth was also the movement from a Latin to a Greek theology, and Milton's trinitarian thought arose out of this same movement.⁴⁶

Finally, the last word in the controversy goes to Maurice Kelley as he replied both to Hunter and to Frye. Answering Hunter, Kelley attacked the idea that Milton's writing would not contradict the Nicene Creed.⁴⁷ Two tests of the Nicene Creed, as given by Kelley, are whether or not the Son is of the same essence as the Father and whether or not there was ever a time when the Son did not exist. To the first of these, Milton persistently holds that the Son is not the same essence as the Father. Citing one of the many passages that Kelley used to illustrate his argument:

Now it is manifest that those who have not the same will, cannot have the same essence. It appears however from many passages, that the Father and Son have not, in a numerical sense, the same intelligence or will Those therefore whose understanding and will are not numerically the same, cannot have the same essence.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Adamson, p. 276.

⁴⁷Maurice Kelley, "Milton's Arianism Again Considered," Harvard Theological Review, LIV (July, 1961), 196-197.

⁴⁸Milton, Works, p. 231.

Concerning the second test of the Nicene Creed, Kelley gave this "Arian" statement of Milton's from The Christian Doctrine.

The Son was begotten of the Father in consequence of his decree, and therefore within the limits of time, for the decree itself must have been anterior to the execution of the decree.⁴⁹

Again, said Kelley, Milton disagrees with the Nicene Creed.

In order to justify the fact that he has used The Christian Doctrine to assert Milton's Arianism in Paradise Lost, Kelley insisted that The Christian Doctrine and Paradise Lost were produced as "synchronous compositions" and that if the historical method has any validity, Paradise Lost must be recognized as a poem written by an Arian and containing Arian views.⁵⁰ Kelley stated further that "contrary to Mr. Frye's opinion, any theological court denying that fact must indeed be considered incompetent."

Kelley showed what may be the "reason" for the attempts to restore Milton to the position of an "almost" orthodox trinitarian when he said,

I am not privy to the motives behind Messrs. Hunter's and Frye's attempts--or those of earlier scholars--to return Milton to Trinitarian orthodoxy, but I suspect that two of them are a high admiration for Milton counterbalanced by a feeling that something basically irreligious inheres in Arianism

⁴⁹Milton, Works, p. 189.

⁵⁰Kelley, pp. 197-204.

By protestant standards, we must grant Milton his right to search for the truth as he sees it; and if his quest ends in an answer that we cannot accept, we must at least accord Milton the respect due any man who has conscientiously and laboriously endeavored to re-unite the scattered members of that hewed virgin of which Milton writes in Areopagitica If the Arian errs, he errs in his zeal to assert the simplicity and supremacy of a single self-existent deity and to preserve inviolate the metaphysical unit of the Godhead. We should consequently cease feeling embarrassed because our greatest English religious poet held and expressed views on the Trinity that are considered errors and heresy. We should accept these views for what they are--products of a pious search, the precious life blood of a master spirit. By so doing, we realize a prime ideal of tolerance for which Milton so powerfully pleaded during the greater part of his active life.⁵¹

Now that I have carefully weighed all the evidence, my final stand is with Rajan: upon comparing Paradise Lost with The Christian Doctrine, it is possible to perceive that Paradise Lost is an Arian poem; since Paradise Lost was meant to be read by itself, however, and not in the light of The Christian Doctrine, any heresies found, if any are, are of no consequence. Milton's phraseology strongly suggests the orthodox point of view; nowhere does he explicitly deny the divinity of Christ; and, while the heresy revealed in The Christian Doctrine is not completely extraneous to the poem, it is not significant to our understanding or appreciation of it. Paradise Lost, as Rajan says, "should be sufficient unto itself."

To me, Kelley's arguments for Milton's Arianism seem to be the most appealing because it is for precisely the reasons that

⁵¹Kelley, pp. 204-205.

Kelley has given that I had been unable to accept that Milton might be an Arian--because if he were, I would feel that he was irreligious. My point of view before I wrote this thesis was definitely that Milton was trinitarian; now while Kelley has changed my thinking, I believe he pushed his reasoning too far. At first, Kelley's insight into my own thinking placed me in a position of feeling obligated to agree with him; now, however, from a somewhat paradoxical stand, I am no longer aware of this obligation. This stand is that although I accept Kelley's assumption that Arianism can be a legitimate religious position, the fact that Milton can still be, as Kelley says, "our greatest English religious poet," freed me of my prior feeling of obligation because it enabled me to view the whole question more objectively and open-mindedly without any emotional commitment to either side.

With this freedom came the conclusion that while The Christian Doctrine is a recognized theological document, the poem, Paradise Lost, is nothing of the sort; for, as both Bush and Dickson have pointed out, Paradise Lost has been read by several generations of orthodox readers without offending them. Obviously, then, even if Milton's Arianism does reveal itself in Paradise Lost, it is of such minute consequence that it has made no difference to the vast majority of the poem's readers for three centuries.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROLE OF CHRIST IN PARADISE LOST AND PARADISE REGAINED

Milton's Christ has been previously discussed in relation to two specialized theological ideas; however, the difference between Milton's Christ considered from a theological point of view and Christ considered as a literary creation is great. The question here is not one of duality or of Arianism, but of how Milton's Christ appears to the reader, especially the reader who has his own personal concept of his own personal Christ. The reader of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained might be oblivious of the theological problems and yet might arrive at some of the same conclusions which will be given in this chapter. In other words, the chapter will deal with Milton's Christ in the way that He is described by the critics as He is carrying out the commands of God, first in Paradise Lost and then in Paradise Regained.

The Son is first introduced in Book Three of Paradise Lost as He is seated beside "the Almighty Father," and shares with God "high collateral glory."¹ Milton writes:

¹F.E. Hutchinson, Milton and the English Mind (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 161.

After Christ has fulfilled his mission on earth, He shall judge "dead of all past ages" and lay down his sceptre:

Then thou thy regal sceptre shalt lay by;
 For regal sceptre then no more shall need;
 God shall be all in all. But all ye Gods
 Adore him who, to compass all this, dies;
 Adore the Son, and honor him as me.
 (P.L., III, 339-343)⁶

When reading all of Book Three of Paradise Lost, in addition to the preceding dialogue, note the distinction between the Father, who is characterized as the austere guardian of Divine Law, and the Son, who offers Himself freely out of love in order to quiet the anger of God.⁷ Milton's epic, when compared to the forensic theory of the Atonement put forth by the Reformers, shows that the theory looks somewhat like a commentary on Paradise Lost. The Atonement as used by Milton is "legal,"⁸ and His God will still be pictured by some as a dictator and tyrant; but Milton's contemporaries and immediate predecessors in Protestantism are equally as guilty of portraying God in this fashion. Although the distinction that Milton makes between Christ and God is necessary for dramatic, not necessarily theological, purposes, this same distinction is suggested in the English and European Protestant commentaries on the Atonement.⁹

⁶p. 68.

⁷C.A. Patrides, "Milton and the Protestant Theory of Atonement," PMLA, LXXIV (March, 1959), 10, 13.

⁸Patrides, p. 13.

⁹Patrides, p. 13.

As the reader considers the dramatic purposes of the dialogue, God's severity is the correct response to Satan's action, and out of God's sternness comes the concept of man's hope. More than this is shown, however, in that Milton uses God's severity to heighten the sense of Christ's love.¹⁰ God's justice is the reason for Christ's mercy, and God's severity gives the love of Christ the opportunity to manifest itself in splendor. Exhibiting a conscious mutual deference, the pattern of the speeches between the Father and the Son shows a form of perfect love. Moreover, the clear contrast between Satan and Christ seems further to exalt Christ's glory.

Furthermore, the Father, as the Son speaks to Him is not listening to an echo, but rather, He is encouraging the distinctive tones of the Son.¹¹ To take the difference as showing the amiability of the Son at the expense of the cold, rigorous Father is to mistake Milton's point. The compassion, love, and grace observed in the Son are definitely balanced with the expression of the Father. In this way the Son's compassionate tone is made possible by the passionless logic of the Father.

Care must be taken at this point to understand that the redemptive process is not a result of a vulgar opposition between

¹⁰H.V.S. Odgen, "The Crisis of Paradise Lost Reconsidered," Philological Quarterly, XXXVI (January, 1957), 10.

¹¹Irene Samuel, "The Dialogue in Heaven: A Reconsideration of Paradise Lost, III. 1-417," PMLA, LXXII (September, 1957), 603.

the love of the Son and the hate or wrath of the Father. Milton has repeatedly emphasized that the Son is the fullest revelation of the Father; therefore, the atonement cannot be regarded "as an independent propitiation of God's hate."¹² Ultimately, then, as Frye put it, the Atonement is an appeal directed toward man

to love God, rather than for God to love man. It is, indeed, the statement that God does love man. The Atonement is God's action, God's decision, and Christ is no humanly-offered sacrifice to appease a remote and merciless God, but, on the contrary, the deity's self-initiated manner of reconciling man to God and to himself.¹³

Introducing Himself to man, God uses a supreme gesture, personified by the Son, Who is the self-expression and objectification of God. Moreover, the Son, Who represents the ultimate accomodation of the divine to human need, reveals God in terms of love turned outward toward mankind.

After having offered Himself, Christ must subdue the forces of the rebel angels. Since the overthrow of the rebels is assigned in the Book of Revelation not to Christ at all but to the Archangel Michael, Milton's attitude toward Christ is all the more striking.¹⁴ To Milton the power of a stern and relentless judge seems to be the

¹²Roland Mushat Frye, God, Man and Satan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 71.

¹³Frye, p. 76.

¹⁴Alden Sampson, Studies in Milton and an Essay on Poetry (New York: Moffat Yard and Company, 1913), p. 46.

over-riding characteristic of the Son of God, and Milton's virile admiration for Christ is noticeable.

As the two opposing forces of angels have fought to a virtual stand-off, it is Christ, in the presence of the two exhausted armies of angels, who singly defeats Satan and his army.¹⁵ As the Son first comes forth to do battle against the rebel angels, the scene is of the same type as Hesiod's Jupiter going forth against the Titans.¹⁶ However, Christ comes forward not to fight Satan in single combat, not to lead the loyal angels, nor to give the loyal army added strength, but rather to say:¹⁷

Stand still in bright array, ye Saints; here stand,
Ye Angels armed; this day from battle rest.
Faithful hath been your warfare, and of God
Accepted, fearless in his righteous cause
Therefore to me their doom he hath assigned,
That they may have their wish, to try with me
In battle which the stronger proves--they all,
Or I alone against them

(P.L., IV, 801-804, 817-820)¹⁸

As the reader examines Christ from the Hellenic point of view, His actions here are both annoying and disappointing. Physical glory, which is usually accompanied with recognized leadership,

¹⁵Merritt Y. Hughes, "Milton's Celestial Battle and the Theogonies," Studies in Honor of T.W. Baldwin (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1958), p. 238.

¹⁶Hughes, p. 240.

¹⁷William R. Herman, "Heroism and Paradise Lost, CE, XXI (October, 1959), 16.

¹⁸p. 156.

is missing at this point in the character of Christ.¹⁹ Rather, Christ's main characteristic is moral strength, which permits Christ to be voluntarily submissive to God when all others have rejected, or are under necessity to be obedient to, God. While the Hellene gains glory through defiance, the Biblical hero gains glory through submission to God.

In Paradise Lost Christ does represent the incarnation of God's military might, and his countenance is filled with wrath and terror, "gloomy as night," as He drives the rebel angels.²⁰ In harmony with Milton's only fundamental hope for the salvation of society, the picture of the military Christ in Paradise Lost is one of Christ riding with the armies of the just against tyrants and sinful rebels.

The actual battle itself was brought about because of Satan's jealousy of the exaltation of the Son, whose rage is centered on Satan.²¹ Jesus of the gentle brow and meek regard is now the dreadful foeman whose arrows and chariot wheels overwhelm the rebel host.²² Satan and his army are consequently routed by Christ,

¹⁹Herman, p. 16.

²⁰Don M. Wolfe, "The Role of Milton's Christ," Sewanee Review, LI (October-December, 1943), 470-471.

²¹Hughes, p. 239.

²²Percy W. Ames (ed.), Milton Memorial Lectures (London: Henry Frowde, 1909), p. 193.

who uses only half His strength. The warrior Christ, then, is the Redeemer; by the use of the war in heaven, Milton shows the kingly aspect of his mediation, whereby Christ subdues and conquers the enemies of man. This defeat in turn brings about the restoration and return of harmony in heaven.²³ However, the final analysis shows that

Christ, in Paradise Lost, is the warrior-victor whose prize is in the end much less than had been anticipated. The Pauline-Augustinian image of Head and Body, developed by the Christian tradition into a mystical symbol of union and communion, is transformed gradually in Paradise Lost into the exterior and quite unmystical image of the leader and the led, the captain and the broken ranks.²⁴

Christ is not only the vanquisher of rebelling angels in Paradise Lost but also the judge and advocate for fallen mankind.²⁵ Pronouncing the sentence of Adam and Eve, Christ in his dual role of both "judge" and Savior shows that the condemnation itself predicates the redemption.²⁶

Finally the role of Christ in Paradise Lost is of a nobility almost unparalleled in the lore of myths because Christ, the

²³J.H. Adamson, "The War in Heaven: Milton's Version of the Merkabah," JEGP, LVII (October, 1958), 703.

²⁴Malcolm Mackenzie Ross, Poetry and Dogma (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1954), p. 190.

²⁵Burton O. Kurth, Milton and Christian Heroism (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959), p. 111.

²⁶Frye, p. 78.

Demi-God, refuses to set up as God.²⁷ Furthermore, Christ

represents the power of reason and restraint against the chaos of passion represented by Satan and the sinning Adam. He is the instrument by which Milton judges and rebukes the upsurging of his instincts. He is the theological embodiment of Milton's philosophy of life²⁸

Set off against each other, Christ and Satan have been antagonists throughout Paradise Lost, and Book Ten shows Michael as he prophesies of later antagonism between Christ and Satan, some of which will be shown in Paradise Regained:²⁹

So spake this oracle--then verified
 When Jesus, son of Mary, second Eve,
 Saw Satan fall like lightning down from Heaven,
 Prince of the air; then, rising from his grave
 Spoiled Principalities and Powers, triumphed
 In open show, and, with ascension bright,
 Captivity led captive through the Air³⁰
 (P.L., X, 182-188)

Milton selects one somewhat limited experience of Christ, the Temptation, around which to center his action in Paradise Regained.³¹ Adam and Christ are placed in parallel situations in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, for both are tempted by Satan

²⁷John Crowe Ransom, God Without Thunder (London: Gerald Howe, Ltd., 1931), p. 144.

²⁸James Holly Hanford, John Milton, Englishman (New York: Crown Publishers, 1949), pp. 196-197.

²⁹Isabel Gamble MacCaffrey, Paradise Lost as "Myth" (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 63.

³⁰p. 235.

³¹Ransom, pp. 145-147.

in a like manner; but whereas Adam accedes to the blandishments of Satan in Paradise Lost, Christ, in Paradise Regained, stands firm. In this contrast and difference lies the significance of the relationship between Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. Further contrast is illustrated as Christ in Paradise Regained is tempted in the desert, while in Paradise Lost Adam is tempted in the idyllic happiness of the Garden of Eden. Adam is not faced with economic, social, or political problems, while Christ is faced with many problems of this type. If Christ desires it, the openings in the political and military intrigues present vast opportunities; but Christ in Paradise Regained, after considering the prospect for some time, rejects it. In this sense Milton has created an Alexander-Christ but one who declines to conquer. For Milton's Christ, political power is not a substitute for the Messiahship.

The personality of Jesus was the means whereby Milton could plan to regain the earthly Paradise in Paradise Regained. However, the way that Milton conceived this personality for the redemption of earth is oddly diversified.³² The first picture of Christ's personality to appear shows him as self-disciplined, temperate, a master of His own emotions, a resister of glory and riches, and a man who is at peace with Himself. Secondly, Christ is characterized as being a punisher, a judge, and a subduer by

³²Wolfe, pp. 467-468.

force, if force is necessary. Finally, Christ is presented as a mild, persuasive being who is capable of infinite patience and who believes in the slowly advancing, peaceful redemption of all mankind.

Each of the preceding concepts of Christ represents a different way of regaining Paradise, a different type of philosophy, and a reflection on Milton's own concept of personality and intellectual behavior. In the Puritan attempt at reform in England under Cromwell, Milton had justified all three, yet there are contradictions of philosophy and method which point directly to the difficulties Milton experienced in his portrayal of Jesus in Paradise Regained. Because of these philosophies, the critics have found the characteristics of Milton's Christ to be inharmonious within Paradise Regained.³³

Many readers of Paradise Regained have questioned the reason or reasons for Milton's use of the Temptation of Christ, which was a relatively minor phase of Christ's ministry upon earth. One reason for Milton's choice of the Temptation instead of the Crucifixion or some other phase of Christ's ministry is that Milton usually preferred working in the tradition of the Puritans, to which he generally belonged. Because of the military aspects of their beliefs, the

³³Wolfe, p. 468.

Puritans looked with more favor upon a strong, unrelenting Christ, as shown in the Temptation, instead of a passive, submissive Christ, as shown in the Crucifixion.

A second reason is that the temptation created the "state of mind" which guided all of the later acts of Christ including the Crucifixion.³⁴ This "state of mind," according to Mahood, is gained by Christ in the following way:

By means of a romance setting, Milton portrays Christ as the postulant to knighthood, strengthening himself through vigil for the feats of arms that he is to perform. Heroic action, Milton says in effect, has its springs in contemplation, for only there can the mind gain the self-knowledge which will prevent it arrogating to itself the glory of future achievements.³⁵

"Self-knowledge," which is the "state of mind" desired by Christ, is elaborated on by Stein:

. . . the wisdom which is a vision of the highest good is reinforced by the allied and inseparable intuitions of temperance, justice, and fortitude, and by their executive functions. Temperance, as the special virtue of discipline, purges; and by its positive vision orders and unifies the self into a proper balance of selfless response to vision, which determines by self, the true self. The condition of purification is self-knowledge. Recovery of self by knowledge is the recovery of being which was never absent. The Christ of Paradise Regained is the great exemplum of this doctrine of Plotinus. He is more, but we must learn to see this much at least.³⁶

³⁴E.M.W. Tillyard, Milton (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1952), p. 38.

³⁵M.M. Mahood, Poetry and Humanism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950, p. 237.

³⁶Arnold Stein, Heroic Knowledge (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957), p. 34.

Christ's subsequent victory in the wilderness, after having acquired this "state of mind," was won in the light of the fact that the "state of mind" involved the knowledge that everything would take care of itself or rather, God in heaven would take care of it. That the state of mind comes first and results are subordinate is symbolized by Christ's victory in the wilderness.³⁷

A third reason for Milton's use of the Temptation is possibly that Milton, embarrassed intellectually and emotionally by the humiliating agony of the crucified God-man, chose rather to picture the Scriptural Christ as a dramatic, psychological, and ethical image.³⁸

As Christ begins His meditative development and begins to become conscious of His own life story, it is possible to trace the changes in His understanding. Christ once conceived of Himself as being a man-at-arms who was ready to curtail world-wide tyranny and to create an Isreal that was free from the Roman yoke.³⁹ Then, turning his wisdom to the field of public teaching, Christ contemplates fulfilling Himself

³⁷Tillyard, p. 223.

³⁸Ross, p. 223.

³⁹Don Cameron Allen, The Harmonious Vision (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1954), p. 118.

By winning words to conquer willing hearts,
 And make persuasion do the work of fear . . .⁴⁰
 (P.R., I, 222-223)

Christ, with feelings of both security and perplexity about the strange incidents that accompanied His birth and affected his growth to maturity, is as uncertain about His true nature as Satan.⁴¹ To accept the sins for all mankind is His lot, but the event of mercy, as previously revealed to Him in heaven, has been forgotten. He understands only that he is on the verge of a great undertaking and that the time is

Now full, that I no more should live obscure,
 But openly begin, as best becomes
 The authority which I derived from Heaven.
 And now by some strong notion I am led
 Into this wilderness, to what intent
 I learn not yet, perhaps I need not know;
 For what concerns my knowledge God reveals.
 (P.R., I, 287-293)⁴²

As Christ is confronted by Satan in Book One of Paradise Regained, His uncertainty changes into certainty, and he remembers the long history of antagonism. This same process is repeated again in Book Two, where uncertainty reigns upon His heart and mind, but when Satan comes forward with his great feast, Christ again becomes the representative of God and says:⁴³

⁴⁰The Portable Milton, ed., Douglas Bush (New York: The Viking Press, 1949), p. 555.

⁴¹Allen, p. 119.

⁴²Portable Milton, p. 557.

⁴³Allen, p. 120.

I can at will, doubt not, as soon as thou,
 Command a table in this wilderness
 (P.R., II, 383-384)⁴⁴

Satan, whose motive is to test the divinity of Christ, not his humanity, is impotent from the start in Paradise Regained and realizes it, while Christ, in this ritualistic trial, seems almost bored with the situation.⁴⁵ But Christ does remain a model of human intellect that has been elevated.⁴⁶

Introducing the temperate Christ, Milton shows Him as He refuses appealing delicacies after several days of hunger. In this way Christ demonstrates the mastery of reason over appetite. Likewise, the temperate Christ is not responsive to the life of luxury represented by an elevation in the social scale. As Milton himself has often repeated, Christ explains to Satan the principle of His self-mastery:

Yet he who reigns within himself, and rules
 Passions, desires, and fears, is more a king;
 Which every wise and virtuous man attains:
 And who attains not, ill aspires to rule
 Cities of men, or headstrong multitudes,
 Subject himself to anarchy within
 Or lawless passions in him which he serves.
 (P.R., II, 466-472)⁴⁷

⁴⁴Portable Milton, p. 44.

⁴⁵W.B.C. Watkins, An Anatomy of Milton's Verse (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955), pp. 110-112.

⁴⁶Stein, p. 206.

⁴⁷Portable Milton, p. 577.

Although Christ is the undisturbed master of His feeling, He is no stoic athlete in a passionless existence even if He does represent pure intelligence.⁴⁸ He actually feels ambition, fervency, and hunger, and He is provided many opportunities by Satan to demonstrate His control and self-discipline over Himself.

The leanness of Christ's speech as He answers Satan's request for access to "holy things" also suggests that Christ is not a "stoic athlete," but rather that Christ has the leanness of a well trained athlete who, by careful preparation, has conditioned his body to the point that it is free of any extra fat. This is illustrated as follows:

To whom our Savior, with unaltered brow:
Thy coming hither, though I know thy scope,
I bid not or forbid; do as thou find'st
Permission from above; thou canst not more.

He added not

(P.R., I, 493-497)⁴⁹

Further resemblance to the body of an athlete is suggested by Christ's nature, which is gentle but with a hidden capacity for violent action, if this should become necessary.⁵⁰

The antagonism continues as Satan, aware by now of Christ's inner thoughts concerning the freeing of Israel and the world either by arms or by political agreement, includes the temptations

⁴⁸Stein, p. 207.

⁴⁹Portable Milton, p. 563.

⁵⁰Tillyard, p. 39.

of worldly wealth and power so as to get Christ back to his more "human" side. However, the spectacular scene of Satan's tempting world also comes to nothing as Christ becomes intensely aware of his mighty mission. Exhausting the source of his temptations, Satan becomes more afraid as the human characteristics of Christ dwindle and the divine characteristics expand. Christ, at this point in the conflict, knows that His kingdom is eternal.

Out of Satan's uneasiness comes the outlandish demand that Christ worship him, to which Christ, having now a full understanding of His "extra-human" nature, replies scornfully:⁵¹

And dar'st thou to the Son of God propound
To worship thee accurst, now more accurst
For this attempt, bolder than that on Eve
And more blasphemous?

(P.R., IV, 178-181)⁵²

Another career, learning, which appears to be innocent as Satan presents it, and which moreover appealed very greatly to Milton himself, was next considered by Milton's Christ. Not just common knowledge was offered, but learning in its purest sense; however, Christ was able to conceive of the dangers involved with the problem of sinful pride in knowledge and decided that the benefits of knowledge did not offer Him a sufficient life.⁵³

⁵¹Allen, p. 121.

⁵²Portable Milton, p. 595.

⁵³Ransom, p. 148.

Christ, here, is not rejecting knowledge per se, but He is rejecting the devil's offer to supply Him with that knowledge.⁵⁴ By His use of a stern but just statement, which is worded in terms of the entire poem, Christ expresses His final renunciation of learning:

That rather Greece from us these arts derived;
 Ill imitated, while they loudest sing
 The vices of their deities, and their own,
 In fable, hymn, or song, so personating
 Their gods ridiculous, and themselves past shame.
 Remove their swelling epithets, thick laid
 As varnish on a harlot's cheek, the rest,
 Thin sown with aught of profit or delight,
 Will far be found unworthy to compare
 With Sion's songs, to all true tastes excelling,
 Where God is praised aright, and godlike men
 As men divinely taught, and better teaching
 The solid rules of civil government
 In their majestic unaffected style
 Than all the oratory of Greece and Rome
 In them is plainest taught, and easiest learnt,
 What makes a nation happy, and keeps it so,
 What ruins kingdoms, and lays cities flat;
 These only with our Law best from a king.
 So spake the Son of God; but Satan now
 Quite at a loss, for all his darts were spent

(P.R., IV, 338-349, 357-366)⁵⁵

Throughout Paradise Regained Christ has made no attempt to outreason Satan; rather, to each of the temptations, Christ has merely quoted a verse from Deuteronomy.⁵⁶ To the first temptation, of turning stones into bread in order to satisfy His hunger Christ replies:

⁵⁴Mahood, p. 241.

⁵⁵Portable Milton, pp. 601-602.

⁵⁶Watkins, pp. 106-107.

Man lives not by Bread only, but each Word
 Proceeds from the mouth of God
 (P.R., I, 349-350)

To Satan's offer of worldly power and riches if Christ will only
 worship him, Christ answers:

Thou shalt worship
 The Lord thy God, and only him shalt serve
 (P.R., IV, 176-177)

To the final temptation of dashing Himself from the temple,
 Christ says:

Tempt not the Lord thy God
 (P.R., IV, 561)⁵⁷

With the final refusal, Christ has withstood a series of
 temptations greater than any other man has had to face. To tempt
 the God-in-Man was futile, and the temptation rebounds on the tempter
 Satan. Repeating his defeat of Paradise Lost, Satan falls before
 Christ who now recognizes His divine nature and ultimate mission.⁵⁸
 Christ's quiet action as He disposes of Satan's propositions is not
 only in the form of recognition of His divine nature and final mission
 but also in the direction of the ultimate return to the source of all
 being.⁵⁹

There is a certain incongruity in using the name Paradise
Regained for a poem that concludes with Christ still at the beginning

⁵⁷Frank Allen Patterson, The Student's Milton (New York:
 F. S. Crofts & Company, 1945), pp. 371, 395, 402.

⁵⁸Allen, p. 121.

⁵⁹Stein, p. 12.

of his earthly ministry with his crown of thorns and cross yet to bear.⁶⁰ Yet, Christ does regain Paradise and He does so by obedience, loyalty to God, and fidelity to the righteous Father. The strength of Christ is not found in pagan self-dependence but rather in Hebrew self-devotion to the Eternal One; but regardless of all this, Christ's victory over Satan seems rather hollow, especially since it is achieved in an indecisive way. The defeat of Satan seems almost unrealistic, and it certainly is not of the type common with most epics and romances. Sending Christ to stop Satan after many generations of suffering left Satan intact even after Christ had gone again. As Ransom has said, for the reader who expected a great victory for Christ,

The fact is, unfortunately, that Satan in his true function of benevolent Demigod pretending to be the God was far from having been put out of business by his encounter with Christ. For he has won some grand triumphs since then, and the most extensive of all was the setting up on earth of the vast historic polity which we may describe as Occidentalism--the polity by which men have assumed self-sufficiency, and undertaken to effect the conquest of nature

This was the Christ who did not intend, by taking thought, by shrewdly planning to make much of an attempt to overcome or to understand the world whose nature is half evil in its incidence upon man. Evil would continue to rage on earth. Christ did not claim to stop it. He did not make even the natural motions of self-defence in warding it off his own person. Within three years he was to be hauled to his crucifixion. This was a very extreme degree of submission to the will of God--an extremity

⁶⁰Edward Dowden, Transcripts and Studies (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Truber and Company, Limited, 1910), p. 467.

which is incredible to modern Western minds, as something which is monstrous, antique, and simply Oriental.⁶¹

Leaving Christ and Satan in their as yet unresolved conflict, what is the final description of Milton's Christ as given by the critics of Paradise Regained?

First of all, Christ is a hero in unique circumstances which are, in a metaphorical sense, relevant to every man. He is God's "official" champion, who is to restore and to repair the ruin brought about by Adam and Eve. A picture of obedience combined with pessimism, Christ is filled with strong zeal, much like the ancient heroes of the Jewish race. Moreover, the Christ of Paradise Regained is the embodiment of Milton's faith in the efficacy of reason coupled with the experience necessary to produce happiness for all mankind. Finally, Milton is writing about a composite, generalized being whom he calls the Son of God.⁶²

Secondly, although he remained hovering in the background of Milton's thought, the militant Christ of Paradise Lost has given way, through reluctantly, to the patient reformer of Paradise Regained. As Wolfe says,

⁶¹Ransom, pp. 148-149.

⁶²Stein, p. 75; Harris Francis Fletcher (ed.), The Complete Poetical Works of John Milton (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1941), p. 390; E.M.W. Tillyard, "Paradise Lost: Conscious and Unconscious Meanings," Milton Criticism: Selections from Four Centuries (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1950), p. 210; Hanford, pp. 124-125; Louis L. Martz, "Paradise Regained: The Meditative Combat," ELH, XXVII (September, 1960), 231.

The militant Christ executing God's wrath was nearer to Milton's heart than the peaceful Jesus, whose gaze was fixed on far centuries and the slow acceptance of human brotherhood. Now that the Good Old Cause had failed, Milton placed his hope in the gradual persuasiveness of this compassionate Christ. Milton's heart, it is true, was too militant to believe wholeheartedly in such a power. He was disillusioned, frustrated, bitterly courageous, a prisoner among the Philistines. Gladly would he have grasped the sword again to strike down the worshippers of Dagon and raise the standard of a free commonwealth. But the persuasive Jesus was at least a powerful hope.⁶³

Thirdly, the Christ of Paradise Regained is a projection of the earlier images of Milton's Christ when Milton thinks of Him as being the exponent of infinite love and the example of the ultimate in sacrifice. In Paradise Regained, Wolfe says, Milton pictures

. . . a Christ who prefers justice to mercy, accountability to forgiveness, self-discipline to compassion. Though all these attributes appear in the portrait, though he recognizes the persuasive Christ, Milton cannot believe in the redemption of the world by knowledge and love alone: there must be a judgment and punishment.⁶⁴

Milton's portrait of Christ resolves itself, then into a "reflection" of Milton himself. This has been illustrated by Ross as follows:

Here is the adopted Son of the Father, symbol of the strenuous, wayfaring moral life and the ultimate "paradise within," who saves only those whom Milton will have saved, and who scorns, as Milton scorns, the wholly unmystical body of man in history. Here, surely, is the voice not of the Savior but of the defeated and disillusioned revolutionary.⁶⁵

⁶³Wolfe, pp. 471-472.

⁶⁴Wolfe, pp. 472-473.

⁶⁵Ross, p. 222.

And what the people but a herd confused,
 A miscellaneous rabble, who extol
 Things vulgar, and well weighed, scarce worth the praise?
 They praise and they admire they know not what,
 And know not whom, but as one leads the other;
 And what delight to be by such extolled,
 To live upon their tongues and be their talk,
 Of whom to be dispraised were no small praise?
 His lot who dares by singularly good.

(P.R., III, 49-57)⁶⁶

What then is the final picture of Milton's Christ? Milton's Christ is a generalized being composed of all the experiences and concepts of Milton's own life. Within the realm of that which is specifically stated in the Gospels, Milton's idea of Christ is "legal" and orthodox, but once outside that realm, Christ becomes Milton's own unique product. That is not to say that Milton's Christ becomes, of all things, "unChristian," but rather it means that his Christ is ultimately just that, "his" Christ.

That Milton has created his own literary figure in the person of Christ, meets with very little disagreement from the critics. They agree among themselves about Christ as a literary character while they do not about Christ as a theological concept. This acceptance points to the strength of the poetry of Milton and to the danger of considering Milton's Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained more as theology than as poetry.

⁶⁶ Portable Milton, pp. 579-580.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Twentieth century critics have not developed the problem surrounding Milton's use of the dual-natured Christ. They have, however, questioned extensively whether or not Milton was an Arian in his belief. An Arian denies the divinity of Christ. Now, does Milton portray Christ as being a man and hence not divine, thus destroying the assertion that Milton's Christ had a dual nature; as being part man and part divine, thus destroying the point of view that Milton was Arian; or as being wholly divine, which would destroy both positions?

If these questions are to be answered, the answers would appear to be in Milton's treatment of the dual nature of Christ. Therefore, the critics of Milton's Arianism are overlooking the fact that Milton's development of the dual-natured Christ may hold the answer to the enigma of whether or not his Christ is divine. In other words, the core of the argument over Milton's Arianism rests not in Arianism but in duality, and Milton's use of Christ's duality has not been thoroughly explained.

Furthermore, anyone raising a question of theology with regard to Milton, whether it be Arianism, dualism, or any other, is faced with the fact that Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained,

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while having obvious Christian theological foundations, are not, nor were meant to be, systematic theologies, but rather, are works of literature complete within themselves. This is shown by the fact that Christ, as a successful literary character, is accepted without question by the vast majority of critics. This means that if we accept Milton's Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained as self-sufficient literary works and accept the characters within them as creations of literature, the theological considerations become irrelevant and the entire spectrum of theological criticisms becomes so much wasted effort.

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