

Summer 1972

To revitalize the flaccid garden : a study of Milton's Paradise regained

Daniel Clyde Bartges

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TO REVITALIZE THE FLACCID GARDEN:
A STUDY OF MILTON'S PARADISE REGAINED

BY

DANIEL CLYDE BARTGES, JR.

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
IN CANDIDACY
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

AUGUST 1972

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TO REVITALIZE THE FLACCID GARDEN:
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-I-

To walk the studious Cloister's pale,
And love the high embowed Roof,
With antic Pillars massy proof,
And storied Windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.¹

(156-60)

This passage from "Il Penseroso" illustrates the attitude of a majority of modern readers concerning John Milton. He is commonly swept into the musty corner reserved for "irrelevant" poets, philosophers, and theologians, all yellowed with age. His sonorous verse, sung from "some high lonely Tow'r," lights upon indifferent minds. He is considered to be pensive, devout, pure, and

¹ John Milton, "Il Penseroso," John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1957), p. 76. All subsequent quotations from Milton's poetry in this thesis are taken from this edition.

utterly dead. This is, indeed, an unfortunate development.

While studying such works as Paradise Lost, Samson Agonistes, or, in this case, Paradise Regained, the discerning student gradually sheds popular prejudice and begins to appreciate Milton's human attributes. He is not the pedantic, religious high-brow, but a learned man offering his insight and wisdom for the salvation of mankind. (Admittedly, he occasionally tends toward pontifical presumptuousness, but this should be excused as self-confidence and wholesome, religious zeal.)

Milton was not a member of the seventeenth century coterie-poets. His poetry was addressed to every literate man, not to a select group of mannered courtiers. More importantly, he was deeply devoted to his fellow man. Hanford, in John Milton: Poet and Humanist (1966), contends that Milton was primarily concerned with man and his relationship to God. Certainly, one can locate numerous passages to substantiate this statement. "I may assert Eternal Providence, / And justify the ways of God to men" (P.L.I.25-26) is, of course, the most familiar. In his preface to Christian Doctrine, "my best and richest possession," Milton states that he is filled with "a friendly and benignant feeling towards mankind."²

² John Milton, "The Christian Doctrine," The Works of John Milton, ed. James H. Hanford and W. H. Dunn, trans. C. R. Sumner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), XIV, 9.

Believing that to be a poet was his "elected" office, Milton took his poetry seriously. Willey rightly states that Milton wrote all his epic poetry with a "moral purpose."³ And following the classical example, he revered the poet as being "sacred to the gods and . . . their priest" ("Elegia Sexta"). It has been said that Milton aspired to be recognized as a poet, preacher, and Old Testament prophet. In "The Reason of Church Government," he elaborates on this role of the inspired poet:

These abilities, wheresoever they be found, are the inspired gift of God rarely bestow'd, but yet to some (though most abuse) in every Nation; and are of power beside the office of a pulpit, to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of vertu and publick civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind and set the affections in right tune, to celebrate in glorious and lofty Hymns the throne and equipage of Gods Almightynesse, and what he works, and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his Chruch, to sing the victorious agonies of Martyrs and Saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious Nations doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ, to deplore the general relapses of Kingdoms and States from

³ Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 223.

justice and God's true worship.⁴

Justice and truth: these are the basic terms which most concerned Milton in his great poems and in his religious and political tracts. His conception of each is Scripturally oriented. To Milton, justice refers to divine equity; truth denotes God and the precious fragments of that absolute truth found in Scripture. In Of Education, for example, he states that truth is "to know God aright."⁵ It is attained through interpretive reading and study of the Bible and literature in general. In Areopagitica, Milton contends that the knowledge of truth and virtue can be gained from books, both good and bad.⁶ Since these "fragments" are, to the general reader, inscrutable, one of the duties or obligations of the poet is to act as an interpreter and path-finder for the general public. He offers instruction; and because of his heightened insight, he is able to illuminate "meaning." To Milton, contact with Biblical material entails contact with ultimate truth.⁷

⁴ John Milton, "The Reason of Church Government Urg'd Against Prelaty," The Works of John Milton, ed. Harry M. Ayres et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), III.1, 238.

⁵ John Milton, "Of Education," The Works of John Milton, ed. Allan Abbott et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), IV, 277.

⁶ John Milton, "Areopagitica," The Works of John Milton, ed. William Haller et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), IV, 293-354.

⁷ Willey, p. 228.

Commenting on this assumed role as prophet, minister, and guide, Gilbert observes that "part of his work as a poet was to interpret the sacred volume containing the truth necessary to salvation."⁸

By 1654, Milton had partaken of misery, neglect, frustration, poverty; temptation, and disillusionment, as do all men; and it was his hope to "justify" (actually to "explain" since, to Milton, God's "ways" do not lend themselves to mortal justification) these plights to his fellow man. He shared the troublesome question of the Puritans: why is there evil in a world created by a beneficent God? A sincere Christian, he hoped to find a solution to this religious embarrassment through Biblical interpretation and subsequent enlightenment.

It is my belief that Paradise Regained constitutes Milton's most concentrated effort toward solving this baffling question. Areopagitica represents his preliminary engagement with the problem of evil, the thorn of the rose:

Good and evill we know in the field of this
World grow up together almost inseparably;
and the knowledge of good is so involv'd and
interwoven with the knowledge of evill, and
in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be
discern'd, that those confused seeds which
were impos'd on Psyche as an incessant labour

⁸ Allen H. Gilbert, "The Temptation in Paradise Regained," JEGP, 15 (1916), 610.

to cull out, and sort asunder, were not more intermixt.⁹

To Milton, the existence of evil is fact. And as we shall discover, he considers Satanic temptation to be the primary instigator of evil and vice. As minister, it is his endeavor to teach mankind to recognize, accept, withstand, and finally to overcome temptation. He also expresses the importance of gaining the correct knowledge and understanding of Christ: man's most powerful defense against evil and his door to salvation. In Paradise Regained, Christ assumes the roles of exemplar (model), teacher who clarifies his Messianic mission and burns away the haze of misinterpretation, King who will establish heaven on earth, and Savior and Redeemer who will re-establish Paradise on earth (miraculous horticulturist).¹⁰ As prophet, Milton conveys his opinion concerning the destiny of the faithful and of the infidel. Emphasizing this prophetic inclination is the apocalyptic conclusion of the poem. Milton's ultimate objective is to discover and then circulate "that Golden Key / That opes the Palace of Eternity" ("Comus").

⁹ Areopagitica, p. 310.

¹⁰ Similarly, Calvin taught that Christ's role is threefold: Prophet, Priest, and King.

-II-

Thematically, Paradise Regained can be easily recognized as an extension of, or sequel to, Paradise Lost; and the full significance and thrust of the poem cannot be appreciated if treated as a separate entity from its progenitor. Having composed Paradise Lost, a moving poem concerned with the Fall of man and his partial alienation from the Creator, Milton must have felt obliged to depict the more merciful aspects of God's nature and divine plan, namely the Redemption. This was his basic motive in preparing Paradise Regained:

I who erewhile the happy Garden sung,
 By one man's disobedience lost, now sing
 Recover'd Paradise to all mankind.
 (P.R.I.1-3)

To do justice to the reconciliation, he dealt with this weighty theme, separately. As Northrop Frye states, Paradise Lost would have become "too top heavy" if Milton had attempted to incorporate in it to full extent and significance the Incarnation and Last Judgement.¹¹

"Recover'd Paradise" is attainable for all mankind, and this fact substantiates the benign, merciful aspects

¹¹ Northrop Frye, The Return of Eden (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 118.

of Milton's God. In addition, Milton's concept of unlimited redemption places him in opposition to Calvinistic doctrine. Milton must have felt that his evaluation of salvation denotes a more merciful God than Calvin's.¹² In opposition to the popular Calvinistic doctrine of salvation, Milton believes that God's gift of Christ to man and the possibility for salvation is universally proffered. God's grace and mercy are available to all men, not only to the "elect." In Paradise Lost, God states that "Man shall not quite be lost, but sav'd who will, / Yet not of will in him, but grace in me" (III.173-74). Milton rejects Calvin's idea of the privileged elect, especially in Christian Doctrine where he writes, "It seems then that there is no particular predestination or election, but only general — or in other words, that the privilege belongs to all who heartily believe and continue in their belief . . . and that thus the general decree of election becomes personally applicable to each particular believer, and is ratified to all who remain stedfast in the faith."¹³ Again, he bases this assumption on Scripture as he says, "This is most explicitly declared by the whole of Scripture, which offers salvation

¹² This is not to insinuate that Calvin considered God to be unmerciful, or inclement. Dr. Donald Dawe, of Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, states that to Calvin the appropriation of Christ's merits exemplifies God's beneficence. But to Milton, who tended toward Arminianism (used generically), Calvin's doctrine of limited salvation implies uncharacteristic prejudice. (June 28, 1972)

¹³ Christian Doctrine, XIV, p. 107.

and eternal life equally to all, under the condition of obedience."¹⁴ The concept of the predestined reprobate is dismissed by Milton, also.

According to McDill, "Calvin would agree with Milton that Christ came to save all who were lost, but would deny that he does save the reprobate as well as the elect."¹⁵ Milton declares, "let us be contented to know nothing more than that God, out of his infinite mercy and grace in Christ, has predestinated to salvation all who should believe," and that "reprobation forms no part of what is meant by the divine predestination."¹⁶

Tillyard seems correct, however, in categorizing Milton as a "nominal Calvinist."¹⁷ Although he believes that saving grace is bestowed upon all, Milton goes on to state, "That an equal portion of grace should not be extended to all, is attributable to the supreme will of God alone; that there are none to whom he does not vouchsafe grace sufficient for their salvation, is attributable to his justice."¹⁸ In

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Joseph M. McDill, Milton and the Pattern of Calvinism (Nashville: The Joint University Libraries, 1942), p. 336.

¹⁶ Christian Doctrine, XIV, pp. 125, 101.

¹⁷ E. M. W. Tillyard, Studies in Milton (London: Chatto and Windus, 1951), p. 159.

¹⁸ Christian Doctrine, XIV, pp. 147, 149.

other words, he seems to be saying that all may be saved, but some more easily than others. Calvin, on the other hand, insists that only a select group can be saved through God's mysterious, discriminating mercy.

In addition to displaying God's beneficence, Paradise Regained exhibits Milton's continuity of thought, welling from Paradise Lost. Woodhouse writes that Paradise Regained develops two fundamental ideas established in Paradise Lost: "the idea of obedience to God as the beginning and end of virtue and the idea of Christian heroism."¹⁹ The poem also foreshadows the fulfillment of God's promise to Adam through the Second Adam, or Christ.²⁰ That the serpent's head will be bruised is one of the promises repeatedly made to Adam and Eve in Paradise Lost, and in Paradise Regained the angels sing hymns of praise for Christ's initial attack which foreshadows the fulfillment of that promise. Satan's defeat at the end of the poem represents his taste of the "last and deadliest wound" (P.L.IV.622), the final blow to be administered at Armageddon, or the Last Judgment. Similarly, Woodhouse states that the "essential relation of Paradise Regained to Paradise Lost" occurs when "Satan attacked the Second Adam and met, instead of his former victory, defeat."²¹

¹⁹ A. S. P. Woodhouse, "Theme and Pattern in Paradise Regained," UTQ, 25 (1956), 167.

²⁰ It should be noted that the idea of Christ as Second Adam is not at all original with Milton. This popular analogy is made, for example, in I Corinthians 15.

²¹ Woodhouse, p. 167.

It is evident that the poem's theme of the merciful Redemption is based upon the wilderness episode as found in Luke and Matthew. But why did Milton choose this particular episode in Christ's life? The Crucifixion offers itself as a likely alternative upon which to base this same theme since each episode shares similar conditions and inference. In both the Crucifixion and the wilderness episodes, Christ is in need of bodily nourishment and his sufferings emphasize his humanity. More importantly, his death on the cross constitutes the vindication of mortal sin and nullifies the possibility of eternal death. In Paradise Regained, Christ's triumph on the tower suggests man's emancipation from Evil and promises eternal life. In each case, Adam's progeny are exculpated — one by suggestion, the other in actuality. As we shall discover, Milton deals with these same themes in Paradise Regained, but represented through the wilderness episode instead. There seem to be two principal reasons for this particular choice of plot.

First, Milton must have recognized the fact that his readership would be able to identify more closely with the Christ of the wilderness than with the Christ of Calvary. The wilderness-Christ is exposed to hardships and threats familiar to men such as hunger, thirst, frightening storms, and especially appealing temptations instigated by Satan. Therefore, the reader gains a certain amount of empathy with him. In addition, man is able to comprehend more easily the personality of the wilderness-Christ since he is presented

in various situations. Many facets of his mortal life and nature are exhibited. Obviously, Milton intentionally emphasizes the human aspects of Christ, not the divine, in order to establish this identity bond between reader and subject.

Second, the poet must have recognized the appeal of the desert imagery as opposed to Golgotha, a summit or hill. The elevation of Golgotha implies final achievement with ethereal connotations (for example, Christ's reunion with the Father). The association of the Crucifixion is with the supernatural ascension and Christ's divine nature. Presumably, man would have to raise his eyes to view Christ in this elevated position. Therefore, aloofness is implied. In contrast, the wilderness-Christ is viewed on the normal plain of vision, implying Christ's human involvement and mortal nature. The association is with the humanity of Christ and with his exposure to those forces which affect man such as avarice, presumptuousness, and pride. Death, it should be noted, cannot be included as one of the associative links in the identity bond between man and his Savior since Christ's "death" is unique. Man does not associate death with a third-day resurrection; it is a divine phenomenon which tends to weaken, or sever, the bond. This situation of Christ is more readily identifiable with man's earthly problems and struggle against evil. To Hanford, this struggle represents "the true theme" of the poem.²²

²² James Holly Hanford, John Milton: Poet and Humanist (Cleveland: The Press of Western Reserve University, 1966), p. 250.

Milton's desert imagery serves to complement the theme of Redemption in other respects. It symbolizes the post-lapsarian world and low state of fallen man. In stark contrast to the paradisaical world of "Flow'rs of all hue, and without Thorn the Rose" (P.L.IV.256), a virtual "Heaven on Earth" (P.L.IV.208), Milton presents "A pathless Desert, dusk with horrid shades" (P.R.I.296), a "waste Wilderness" (P.R.I.7). Similarly, the topological difference between Eden and the wilderness strengthens the theme of man's state. In Paradise Lost, Eden is described as being situated on top of a mountain, God's "Garden mould high rais'd" (IV.226). Proximity and likeness to heaven are implied. In contrast, the wilderness is a rugged wasteland, devoid of resplendent verdure.

It was Milton's objective to illustrate Christ's ultimate miracle, the revitalization of this desert world — the flaccid garden. It was his desire to praise "Eden rais'd in the waste Wilderness" (P.R.I.7), a horticultural miracle conceived of by God and executed by Christ. We shall discover how Milton artistically achieves this objective in section V.

-III-

In approaching the wilderness episode, Milton was forced to contend with one of the great theological stumbling blocks — the perplexing problem of Christ's identity. Was

he a hybrid man, a condescending god, or a composite of both? Milton, as teacher conveys his conceptual understanding of Christ's identity and mission on earth through Paradise Regained. And because an awareness of Milton's understanding of Christ and his mission is imperative for one to perceive the didactic elements of the poem, we shall attempt to comprehend Milton's Christology and discover how he conveys his beliefs through Paradise Regained.

The problem of defining Christ's identity and his mission, as depicted in Paradise Regained, has opened the gates to a scholars' free-for-all in the twentieth century. For our discussion, it may prove helpful to cite important, interpretive contributions.

Among others, Barbara Lewalski, in Milton's Brief Epic (1966), contends that Christ undergoes a mental awakening from man to Son of God during the course of the poem. Her interpretation of Paradise Regained can be summarized in this brief quotation: "Principally, it indicates that Christ's action of overcoming the Satanic temptations in the wilderness is inextricably linked with his emerging understanding of his nature and his mission. The 'identity motif' . . . is of the very substance of the dramatic action, for only if Christ comes to understand himself and his work perfectly can he withstand the temptation of Satan. . . . The temptation process itself serves as a stimulus to Christ's growth toward complete understanding."²³

²³ Barbara Lewalski, Milton's Brief Epic (Providence: Brown University Press, 1966), p. 133.

Her central idea is heroically defended, but I am convinced that her conception of an evolutionary Christ is ill-conceived. Woodhouse, Grace, and Allen abide in her camp, but each displays slight differences in interpretation. Allen is almost identical in his criticism when he writes that "Christ's sense of his own divinity increases and the human side of his nature becomes more obscure" as the poem progresses.²⁴ He does, however, slightly shift his posture when he states that Christ's consciousness oscillates between the human and divine: "When Christ is alone, he is human; when he is confronted by Satan, he assumes divinity or, at least, is raised above humanity."²⁵ Grace declares that Christ is suffering from "amnesia" and must "learn everything from the beginning" of his wilderness experience.²⁶

Let us center our attention on Lewalski, for the moment, since her publications on this subject have attracted widespread interest, if not agreement. Commenting on Christ's self-awareness, she states that Jesus and Satan begin on the same level of ignorance concerning the true identity, meaning, and mission of Jesus. For both, the existence of one who is at once a mortal man and the Son

²⁴ D. C. Allen, The Harmonious Vision (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), p. 120.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 119.

²⁶ William J. Grace, Ideas in Milton (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. 150.

of God is paradoxical and incomprehensible.²⁷ She imagines that Satan is speaking for both when he says, "In what degree or meaning thou art call'd / The Son of God, which bears no single sense" (IV.516-17).²⁸

It seems to me that to view Paradise Regained as a poetic device simply to represent an individual's struggle to gain self-awareness would be to greatly demean Milton's overall intentions and to devaluate, perhaps contradict, the theology of the work itself. I am sure that Milton would have considered Lewalski's interpretation of his objective in Paradise Regained to be "too mean pretense" for writing such a work. The scope of Milton's genius is far broader than that. Perusal of the poem reveals an entirely different emphasis than that which we have considered and illuminates the complexity of Milton's intentions.

Milton outlines the essence of Christ's mission for the sake of mankind in Paradise Lost when he writes of eternal salvation through Christ, the manifestation or personification of Grace:

As my Eternal purpose hath decreed:
 Man shall not quite be lost, but sav'd who will,
 Yet not of will in him, but grace in me.
 (III.172-74)

²⁷ Lewalski, p. 161.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 134.

God goes on to declare that man, because of his sin, must meet eternal death "unless for him / Some other able, and as willing, pay / The rigid satisfaction, death for death" (III.210-12). The Son accepts the burden and proclaims that "man shall find grace" (III.227) through him.

Christ, in Paradise Regained, does not recollect this pre-existence with the Father in heaven. Yet, he does possess a keen knowledge of his basic mission on earth and of his heavenly self. These ideas are carefully developed by Milton in the first half of the poem, prior to the Satanic temptations. During Christ's baptism by John, the Spirit descends "in likeness of a Dove / . . . while the Father's voice / From Heav'n pronounc'd him his beloved Son" (I.30-32). This pronouncement is audible to Christ's ears since he retells the story later in the same Book:

The Spirit descended on me like a Dove;
 And last the sum of all, my Father's voice,
 Audibly heard from Heav'n, pronounced me his,
 Mee his belov'd Son, in whom alone
 He was well pleas'd; by which I know the time
 Now full, that I no more should live obscure,
 But openly begin, as best becomes
 The Authority which I deriv'd from Heav'n.

(I.282-89)

Note that this is not the first occasion in which Christ recognizes his true identity. Mary, his mother, explains to him his divine origin:

For know, thou art no Son of mortal man; . . .
 Thy Father is th' Eternal King, . . . he foretold
 Thou shouldst be great and sit on David's Throne,
 And of thy Kingdom there should be no end.

(I.234-41)

Later, as a young student, Jesus gains further insight into what his meaning is in relationship to his fellow man by studying and listening to Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming Messiah. He comes to realize that "of whom they spake / I am" (I.261-62). His youthful suspicions are confirmed and verified at his baptism with the declaration of the Divine Voice and of John. Christ recalls, "He / Straight know me, and with loudest voice proclaim'd / Me him (for it was shown him from Heav'n)" (I.274-76). Even as child-Jesus, Christ recalls, "myself I thought / Born to that end, born to promote all truth" (I.204-05). His boyish dreams attain a romantic, adventurous mood as he says,

To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke,
 Then to subdue and quell o'er all the earth
 Brute violence and proud Tyrannic pow'r,
 Till truth were freed, and equity restor'd.

(I.217-20)

Of course, it could be argued that Jesus, as a boy, was simply brimming with puerile exuberance and spiced visions of grandeur. All of these day-dreams, however, coalesce into concrete form and clear cognizance at his baptism, which

preceeds the wilderness scene. Jesus becomes aware that he is God's "purpose" to "declare his Providence" (I.445).

Milton makes it clear that Christ is not only aware of his basic mission and purpose, but of the manner in which it is to be carried out.

In his first encounter with Satan in the wilderness, Christ, now fully aware of his divine nature, immediately apprehends Evil, despite its disguise. Unlike Eve, Christ, through divine intuition, is not deceived for a moment. He says to Satan, "I discern thee other than thou seem'st" (I.348), and shortly thereafter, "I know who thou art" (I.356). Fortified with self-assurance and awareness, Christ keeps complete control of each encounter with Satan. His answers are quick and precise, his manner restrained. Satan falters and is uneasy: "Here again / Satan had not to answer" (III.145-46), and "Satan stood / A while as mute confounded what to say" (III.1-2). Throughout the poem, Christ never gains further understanding of himself or his mission as a result of his conversations with Satan as suggested by Lewalski. The only insight he acquires during his wilderness experience is in regard to the "rudiments," or details, of his mission. And this knowledge, it should be noted, is gained through solitary introspection, early in the poem:

Sole, but with holiest Meditations fed,
 Into himself descended, and at once

All his great work to come before him set;
 How to begin, how to accomplish best
 His end of being on Earth, and mission high.

(II.110-14)

In essence, he understands his mission to be to educate mankind spiritually, to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, and to expel evil from the world. In Milton's words, Christ is to "teach the erring Soul" (I.224); "sit on David'd Throne" (I.240); and to "Expel a Devil" (I.125), the root of all earthly ills.

We recognize Christ's awareness, throughout the poem, of his dual (God-man) nature. But it is extremely difficult to arrive at an inclusive definition of Milton's Christological beliefs since his statements on the subject are not always consistent. Certainly, he did not adhere to Calvin's idea about the Trinity. Calvin's Trinitarianism insists that "the trinity consists of three persons subsisting in the divine essence and inseparably connected with it."²⁹ Milton, on the other hand, states that "the Father and the Son differ in essence."³⁰ But he carefully injects God-like qualities into the figure of Christ throughout Paradise Regained in addition to those which we have cited. He is defined as the "Savior to mankind" (I.187); and later Christ declares,

²⁹ McDill, p. 318-19.

³⁰ Christian Doctrine, XIV, p. 311.

. . . I the promis'd Kingdom can attain,
 Or work Redemption for mankind, whose sins'
 Full weight must be transferred upon my head.

(I.265-67)

In Christian Doctrine, Milton states that Christ has the divine power to perform miracles and forgive sins, powers which he owes to the Father.³¹

It is unmistakably evident, however, that Milton puts greater emphasis on the human aspects of Christ in Paradise Regained in order to establish the identity bond between reader and subject and, as we shall see, to convey a "lesson" efficaciously. At the onset of the poem, Milton refers to Christ's wilderness experience as "one man's firm obedience fully tried / Through all temptation" (I.4-5). Christ is the "Son of Joseph" (I.23) and "man born" (I.140). Milton's God declares that he has produced "a man / Of female Seed, [but] far abler to resist / All his sollicitations" (I.150-52). God presents his Son anthropomorphically to assimilate Christ to mankind. Pope informs us that this attempt of God to establish the identity bond was recognized and commented upon by ancient scholars such as St. Ambrose, Cassiodorus, and St. Hilary.³² Milton

³¹ Ibid., pp. 321-25.

³² Elizabeth M. Pope, Paradise Regained: The Tradition and the Poem (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1947), p. 14.

goes to great pains to emphasize this alliance of Christ with man. The most obvious connection is, of course, with Adam: Christ will win "by Conquest what the first man lost" (I.159). References to other mortals are numerous and strengthen this alliance. In one instance, for example, Christ accuses Satan of having tested the faith of "righteous Job" by torture and "all inflictions" (I.425-26). He is closely associated with the important God-fearing men of the Old Testament. Christ claims that a man endowed with virtue, valor, and wisdom can often ascend from "lowest poverty to highest deeds: / Gideon and Jephtha, and the Shepherd lad" (II.438-39). Shortly thereafter, he states that he esteems "those names so poor / Who could do mighty things" under the auspices of God (II.447-48). Christ considers his wilderness trial to be very similar to the trials of Moses and Eliah, also:

Moses was forty days, nor eat nor drink,
 And forty days Eliah without food
 Wander'd this barren waste; and same I now.
 (I.352-54)

In Christian Doctrine Milton observes, "Under the definition of Christ are also comprehended Moses and the prophets who were his forerunners."³³

³³ Christian Doctrine, XIV, p. 19.

In view of the fact that Milton stresses the human and divine aspects of Christ, especially the human, in Paradise Regained and in Christian Doctrine emphasizes the difference between Christ and the Father, it is safe to conclude that Milton tends toward an Arian Christology. J. M. McDill, in commenting on Milton's Christological view, states that "his opinions lean most strongly" toward Arminianism and Arianism, "but they are confused and uncertain."³⁴

As mirrored in his works, Milton finds the Biblical statements concerning Christ's nature puzzling and, at times, paradoxical. He often uses the vague term "his divine nature" to define Christ's double identity.³⁵ He states that Christ, "the mediator, though not purely human, is purposely named man, by the title derived from his inferior nature, lest he should be thought equal to the Father, or the same God."³⁶ Indicating frustration in the matter, Milton writes that Scriptural study "can never prove that the Son, whether of man or of God, is of the same essence with the Father; but only that the Son of man came down from heaven at the period of his conception in the womb of the Virgin, that though he was ministering on earth in the body,

³⁴ McDill, p. 326. It should be noted that McDill finds evidence, especially in the latter part of Christian Doctrine, that Milton moves progressively toward Calvinistic doctrines. But this trend, it is conjectured, did not occur until after the completion of Paradise Regained. p. 338.

³⁵ Christian Doctrine, XIV, p. 331.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 207.

his whole spirit and mind, as befitted a great prophet, were in the Father, or that he, who when made man was endowed with the highest degree of virtue, is by reason of that virtue, or of a superior nature given to him in the beginning, even now in heaven."³⁷ Beating a rather hasty retreat to Christian generalities, Milton concludes the discussion by declaring that all man must believe is that Christ is "the Son of God, sent from the Father for our salvation."³⁸

-IV-

Just as God has chosen Jesus, "This perfect Man, by merit call'd my Son, / To earn Salvation for the Sons of men" (I.166-67), so God will select and save those mortal men who acknowledge Christ as the Messiah and seek to follow Christ's virtuous example. Christ repeatedly demonstrates a virtuous spirit, but should man attribute this fact to his divinity? If so, then man might conclude that a virtuous life is beyond his capabilities and that it is futile to aspire toward it. But Christ reveals himself in the flesh, and Milton, by stressing Christ's humanity, emphasizes that virtue is not unattainable. Through force of will and trust

³⁷ Ibid., p. 315.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 335.

in God, Christ (and man) is able to withstand physical torment and wicked enticements. Unerring faith and trust in God fortifies man against temptation and fear, as exemplified by Christ.

In Paradise Regained, Milton implies that Christ embodies, or illustrates, truth, virtue, and right thought and action. Christ is the avatar of perfection, and it should be man's desire to imitate, or emulate, him. Man should strive toward an empathic understanding of Christ and conduct himself accordingly. As Patrides writes, Christ is God's "most perfect exemplar of the conduct expected of all men."³⁹ And according to Milton, "Truth indeed came once into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look at."⁴⁰

In Christian Doctrine, Milton devotes a chapter to the listing of those virtues which should attract the Christian and to those vices which should repel him. It will be pointed out that Christ, as teacher, model, and guide, exhibits these prescribed virtues while Satan promotes the vices. Each temptation constitutes an object-lesson for man's benefit.

Milton defines temperance as that virtue which limits

³⁹ C. A. Patrides, Milton and the Christian Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 146.

⁴⁰ Areopagitica, p. 337.

"the desire of bodily gratification. . . . Under temperance are comprehended sobriety and chastity, modesty and decency."⁴¹

When scheming to undermine Christ's faith in God and to dissuade him from moral virtue, Belial suggests that Satan "Set women in his eye" (II.153) as a means toward wantonness and perversion. Belial is rebuked for this suggestion by Satan, and he accuses Belial of judging "All others by thyself" (II.174). Satan realizes that it would be an impossible task to find a woman who could create the "eye / Of fond desire" in Christ (II.210-11). Satan is aware that "Beauty stands / In th' admiration only of weak minds / Led captive" (II.220-22). He correctly attributes chastity, modesty, and decency to Christ's character. But, ironically, he misreads Christ's fortitude as he decides to "try / His Constancy" (II.225-26) with visions of worth, "honor, glory, and popular praise" (II.227-28). Opposed to decency, Satan attends the banquet dress in "seemlier clad, / As one in City, or Court, or Palace bred" (II.299-300). Milton writes that "indecorum or lasciviousness in dress or personal appearance" is in opposition to decency.⁴²

During the banquet scene (fabricated by Milton), Satan

⁴¹ John Milton, "The Christian Doctrine," The Works of John Milton, ed. James H. Hanford and W. H. Dunn, trans. C. R. Sumner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), XVII, 213.

⁴² Ibid., p. 223.

attempts to lure Christ into the sin of "gluttony." It is also a subtle attempt to weaken Christ's trust in God. If Christ had satisfied his hunger by partaking of the lavish meal, the act would have represented disbelief in God's promise to provide. The first temptation, to "Command / That out of these hard stones be made thee bread," entails a similar lesson. Christ realizes that each of these temptations is intended to promote "distrust" (I.354). As Gilbert states, the bread-stone temptation is "not of hunger but of lack of faith."⁴³ According to Pope, these two are "temptations by necessity."⁴⁴ Christ admits his hunger but declares that "God / Can satisfy that need some other way, / Though hunger still remains" (II.253-55). And in a general sense, he satisfies Milton's definition of Sobriety by refusing to eat a meal which would more than fulfill his immediate needs. Christ displays a "temperance invincible" (II.408).

Satan then offers monetary wealth in order for Christ to finance his "campaign." He mockingly reminds Christ that he is "unknown, unfriended, low of birth" (II.413). Satan boasts that for Christ to obtain wealth would not be "difficult, if thou hearken to me, / Riches are mine, Fortune is in my hand" (II.428-29). Throughout this temptation,

⁴³ Gilbert, p. 602.

⁴⁴ Pope, p. 101.

Satan seeks to instill in Christ "anxiety respecting the necessaries of life, . . . covetousness, . . . [and] murmuring against the wisdom of God in making provision for the wants of this life."⁴⁵ But Christ withstands this temptation, also, by dismissing outward wealth and by extolling the man who "reigns within himself" (II.466). He declares,

Extol not Riches then, the toil of Fools,
The wise man's cumbrance if not snare, more apt
To slacken Virtue and abate her edge,
Than prompt her to do aught may merit praise.
(II.453-56)

Christ's concern is with "the inner man, the nobler part" (II.477). His Kingdom will encompass man's heart, not his purse. Christ shows no hint of irritation or discomfort as a result of his impecunious state. Thus, he satisfies Milton's definition of "Contentment," or to be "inwardly satisfied with the lot assigned him by divine providence."⁴⁶

Satan tempts Christ with military victories, intellectual preeminence, fame, and glory. But Christ answers that "glory is but the blaze of fame" (II.47) and that he seeks, not the glory of men, but of God. True glory is attained "By deeds

⁴⁵ Christian Doctrine, XVII, pp. 227,229,231.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 223.

of peace, by wisdom eminent, / By patience, temperance" (III.91-92). And they that applaud God's glory, "not thir own, / Them he himself to glory will advance" (III.143-44). According to Woodhouse, there is a "union of humility with magnanimity" in Christ resulting from the fact that he is God-centered, not self-centered.⁴⁷ As illustrated by Christ's responses, he personifies what Milton calls "Lowliness of Mind" which opposes "arrogance, . . . a desire for vain glory, . . . boasting, . . . a crafty or hypocritical extenuation of our own merits, for the purpose of extorting greater praises, . . . [and] a glorying in iniquity and misdeeds."⁴⁸

Milton declares, "Magnanimity is shown, when in the seeking or avoiding, the acceptance or refusal of riches, advantages, or honours, we are actuated by a regard to our own dignity, rightfully understood."⁴⁹ Christ's rejections of Satan's offerings is in perfect accordance with magnanimity and right reason. Having been offered a crown, riches, and might by Satan, Christ's reply is perhaps the best example of his magnanimous spirit:

. . . a Crown,
Golden in show, is but a wreath of thorns, . . .

⁴⁷ Woodhouse, p. 180.

⁴⁸ Christian Doctrine, XVII, pp. 235, 239.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 241.

Besides, to give a Kingdom hath been thought
 Greater and nobler done, and to lay down
 Far more magnanimous than to assume.

(II.458-59,481-83)

In desperation, Satan takes Christ to the top of "that high mountain" which overlooks all the wealth and power of the world. Claiming proprietorship, he offers Christ the position of King of the World if Christ "wilt fall down / And worship me as thy superior Lord" (IV.166-67). Christ, of course, is outraged by this preposterous offer and by Satan's blatant presumptuousness:

. . . wert thou so void of fear and shame,
 As offer them to me the Son of God,
 To me my own, on such abhorred pact,
 That I fall down and worship thee as God?
 Get thee behind me.

(IV.189-93)

We have discussed two reasons for subjecting Christ to temptation. First, Christ's wilderness experience enables man to appreciate Christ as a participant in the human condition, not as a spectator. Thus, the concept of the mortal-Messiah helps to establish the identity bond between man and his Savior. Second, Christ must set an example for man and demonstrate how evil and temptation should be combatted.

But what of man? Why must he be exposed to temptation

in a God-created world? Is not the only purpose of worldly temptation to lure one into sin and, eventually, into Hell itself? Historically, this plight stems from Original Sin. According to Calvin (and Milton, but to a lesser degree), postlapsarian man is totally depraved, saturated with sin and guilt. Thus, temptation is nothing more than a perverted response to beauty. It is only after the Fall that the abundance and availability of material wealth induce, or invoke, sinful responses such as gluttony, avarice, and pride. Calvin asserts that "Original sin, therefore, appears to be an hereditary pravity and corruption of our nature" which encourages "'works of the flesh'."⁵⁰ Similarly, Milton writes, "ye cannot make them chaste, that came not thither so."⁵¹

Regardless of the fact that man must bear the oppressive burden of Original Sin, it is necessary for his salvation that he preserve his faith in God's judgment. By resisting temptation and remaining virtuous and loyal to the Good, man follows Christ's example and becomes sanctified. Temptation affords man the opportunity to demonstrate his faith in God or to demonstrate his infidelity. Therefore, man

⁵⁰ John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. John Allen (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1936), I, 274.

⁵¹ Areopagitica, p. 319.

must utilize reason and will. Milton states that when God gave man "reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing."⁵² Man must decide for himself if he desires the "waste Wilderness" by submitting to temptation, or if he desires "Eden rais'd." If the garden is desired, man must guard his faith against evil and seek virtue.

Ironically, temptation can fortify one's faith and virtue, and this is its purpose with regard to the Christian. In Christian Doctrine, Milton states that "Temptation is either for evil or for good. . . . A good temptation is that whereby God tempts even the righteous for the purpose of proving them, not as though he were ignorant of the disposition of their heart, but for the purpose of exercising or manifesting their faith or patience, as in the case of Abraham and Job."⁵³ Elsewhere, he declares, "the knowledge and survey of vice is in this world so necessary to the constituting of human virtue, and the scanning of error to the confirmation of truth."⁵⁴ He writes that as much as we "expel of sin, so much we expel virtue: for the matter of them both is the same; remove that, and ye remove them both alike."⁵⁵ Virtue, therefore, is dependent on temptation.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ John Milton, "The Christian Doctrine," The Works of John Milton, ed. James H. Hanford and W. H. Dunn, trans, C. R. Sumner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), XV, 87.

⁵⁴ Areopagitica, p. 311.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 320.

Milton believes in a "God, who though he commands us temperance, justice, continence, yet powrs out before us ev'n to a profuseness all desirable things, and gives us minds that can wander beyond all limit of satiety."⁵⁶

With this in view, we can better appreciate the full significance for man of Christ's successful resistance against temptation: it establishes him as the primary teacher, guide, mediator, and model. Milton's God makes certain that this confrontation with Evil and subsequent illumination will occur:

. . . henceforth I expose
 To Satan; let him tempt and now assay
 His utmost subtlety . . .
 But first I mean
 To excercise him in the Wilderness.
 (I.142-44,155-56)

With regard to theme in Paradise Regained, Hanford writes that the "trial of faith becomes essential."⁵⁷

It is interesting to note that Luther, when commenting on temptation, uses the word "excercise," also:

We must accept temptation as nothing else
 but an incentive and admonition to prayer,

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Hanford, p. 257.

fasting, watching, laboring, and to the other disciplines to subdue the flesh, especially to the practice and exercise of faith in God. For that is no great chastity which enjoys peace and quiet. Real chastity is the kind which does battle with impurity, struggles against it, and unceasingly drives out all the poison injected by the flesh and the devil.⁵⁸

Thus, Milton recognizes the difficulty of man's assignment: to follow the mortal-Messiah's example by retaining faith in God even in the face of temptation. And this difficulty is compounded with the addition of disguised evils. (In Paradise Regained this problem is illustrated by Satan's disguises and his deceptive beneficence.) Nevertheless, Milton would have agreed with Calvin when he declares that "the chief good consists in the practice of righteousness, in obedience to the commands of God," as exemplified by Christ.⁵⁹ Milton also appreciates the paradoxical nature of temptation: that it can encourage virtue if contended with correctly.

The mortal-Messiah concept facilitates the vital identity bond between Christ and man and encourages man to

⁵⁸ Martin Luther, "Treatise on Good Works," Selected Writings of Martin Luther: 1517-1520, ed. T. G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 188.

⁵⁹ Calvin, p. 270.

follow Christ's virtuous example. But Milton also recognized that the concept of the mortal-Messiah invites erroneous interpretations of Christ's significance and objectives. In addition, the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah can prove misleading. Therefore, Milton implies that part of Christ's mission as teacher is to clarify the significance of his existence to man.

We have noticed that Satan, throughout the temptation scenes, repeatedly "misreads," or misinterprets, Christ's character as well as his mission. From the beginning of his quest to discover Christ's role in God's cosmic plan, Satan is betrayed by his own warped sense of judgment and subsequent misinterpretation. He falls into the grave error of judging Christ by himself, the same mistake for which he reprimanded Belial for committing. As a result of his shallow understanding of the Old Testament prophecy, Satan fails to grasp the important meaning of the word "kingdom." And in debate with Satan, Christ is careful not to divulge the intricacies of his divine endeavor. In regard to the manner by which he is to attain his goal, Christ conveys the attitude of "for me to know and you to find out," as reflected in this quotation:

My Kingdom there shall be no end:
 Means there shall be to this, but what the means,
 Is not for thee to know, nor me to tell.

(IV.151-53)

Christ's reticence in this matter can be explained by the fact that Satan is ineligible to enter the "Kingdom." God's decree of salvation does not pertain to him. Therefore, Satan's knowledge of "the means" could only lead to espionage and attempted sabotage.

Earlier in the poem, Satan is puzzled by the proclamation which affirmed Jesus' divine origin. He dedicates himself to discover "whate'er it meant" (I.83) that John should proclaim a mortal man the Son of God. According to Gilbert, "Satan is not in the habit of associating perfection with humanity, nor can he understand that divinity may be simple."⁶⁰ Inwardly, he fears that Christ may intend "To end his Reign on Earth so long enjoy'd" (I.125).

Forever outside God's grace and subjoining illumination, Satan can only associate "kingdom" with carnage, accumulation of riches, dominance, and mundane glory. Blinded by evil, he is never able to comprehend the powers of forgiveness, faith in God, charity, humility, and servitude resulting from love.

Satan is not the only one who mistakes the meaning of the word "kingdom." Simon and Andrew fail to grasp the implications of this word, too:

Now, now, for sure, deliverance is at hand,
The Kingdom shall to Israel be restor'd:

⁶⁰ Gilbert, p. 608.

. . . Arise and vindicate .

Thy Glory, free thy people from thir yoke!

(II.35-36,47-48)

They view Christ as a partial leader who will show favor to the Jewish people, a leader who will trample the Roman Empire and establish an earthly kingdom. This error should be viewed sympathetically, however. One might easily fall victim to this interpretation of the role of the Messiah if the Old Testament prophecies are taken literally, not figuratively. In numerous passages, the Messiah is depicted as a great warrior, wielding a gleaming sword. According to Frye, this conception of the Messiah adheres to the Knight-Errant and Dragon-Killer tradition of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.⁶¹ Bowie reflects this same idea when commenting on the Jews' pre-Christian conception of the coming Messiah: "For centuries the Jews had been ground under the heel of foreign conquerors — Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and then Roman. In much popular eschatology the Messiah was expected to reverse the situation. The oppressed would rise under his leadership, overthrow pagan rule, and establish Jewish hegemony over the world."⁶² Simon and Andrew anticipate the Jewish hegemony. Only Mary is char-

⁶¹ Northrop Frye, "The Typology of Paradise Regained," MP, 53 (1956), 227.

⁶² W. R. Bowie, ed. of exposition, Interpreters' Bible, ed. Nolan B. Harmon et al. (New York: Abington Press, 1952), VIII, 86.

acterized as being a little closer to the true meaning of Christ's mission. She recalls that Jesus

. . . went about
 His Father's business; what he meant I mus'd,
 Since understand; much more his absence now
 Thus long to some great purpose he obscures.
 (II.98-101)

In view of these representative misunderstandings, Christ attempts to abolish misinterpretation and clarify his true role as he declares,

God hath now sent his living Oracle
 Into the World to teach his final will,
 And sends his Spirit of Truth henceforth to dwell
 In pious Hearts, an inward Oracle
 To all truth requisite for men to know.
 (I.460-64)

With these words, Christ assumes the role of the Wise and Authoritative Prophet, the man of God. It is his duty to declare to mankind God's "Providence" (I.445). Thus, he fulfills the Prophet-Priest portion of his mission. Milton emphasizes this role as he writes that Christ "is the one mediator between God and man."⁶³ As Prophet-Priest, his

⁶³ Christian Doctrine, XIV, p. 191.

heightened wisdom, insight, and miraculous powers transcend those of his forerunners, the Old Testament prophets.

Christ's primary role, however, is as the Redeemer and King. Milton's God expounds on this office most explicitly in Paradise Lost:

And be thyself Man among men on Earth,
 Made flesh, when time shall be, of Virgin seed,
 By wondrous birth: Be thou in Adam's room
 The Head of all mankind, though Adam's Son.
 As in him perish all men, so in thee
 As from a second root shall be restor'd,
 As many as are restor'd, without thee none.
 His crime makes guilty all his Sons, thy merit
 Imputed shall absolve them who renounce
 Thir own both righteous and unrighteous deeds,
 And live in thee transplanted, and from thee
 Receive new life. So Man, as is most just,
 Shall satisfy for Man, be judg'd and die,
 And dying rise, and rising with him raise
 His Brethren, ransom'd with his own dear life.
 So Heav'nly love shall outdo Hellish hate,
 Giving to death, and dying to redeem,
 So dearly to redeem what Hellish hate
 So easily destroy'd, and still destroys
 In those who, when they may, accept not grace. . . .
 Anointed universal King; all Power
 I give thee, reign for ever, and assume
 Thy Merits; under thee as Head Supreme
 Thrones, Princedoms, Powers, Dominions I reduce:
 All knees to thee shall bow, of them that bide
 In Heaven, or Earth, or under Earth in Hell.

(III.283-302,317-22)

Correspondingly, Milton presents the same idea in Paradise Regained. God states to Gabriel that Christ, as Savior and Redeemer, shall "earn Salvation for the Sons of men" (I.167), and the angels sing that he shall "save mankind" (IV.635). Christ realizes that he is to "work Redemption for mankind, whose sins' / Full weight must be transferr'd upon my head" (I.266-67). Concerning the Kingdom, Christ says to Satan:

But what concerns it thee when I begin
 My everlasting Kingdom? . . .
 Know'st thou not that my rising is thy Fall,
 And my promotion will be thy destruction?
 (III.198-99,201-02)

According to Saurat, "After the Fall, man may have the will, but he has no longer the power to carry out his will" to achieve salvation. Christ becomes that saving power.⁶⁴ Therefore, it is imperative that man learn to understand, through the teacher-Christ and the Scriptures, Christ's role as Savior and Redeemer. Christ is "that Golden Key."

-V-

The significance of the tower episode is perhaps the most controversial issue in the poem to critics. We began this paper by noting Lewalski's popular interpretation of

⁶⁴ Denis Saurat, Milton: Man and Thinker (London: Jonathan Cape, Ltd., 1925), p. 179-80.

the poem — that it represents an individual's struggle to gain self-awareness. Lewalski believes that this thematic drive reaches its climax and resolution in the tower sequence: "The action advances through a series of revelations and understanding until at length the grand climax of full understanding and total victory is achieved on the tower."⁶⁵ Patrīdes conforms to the critical mold cast by Lewalski as he states that the climax involves Christ's self-realization in the tower temptation.⁶⁶ Woodhouse adapts himself to the pattern when he concludes that "Christ achieves full knowledge of himself" in the tower scene.⁶⁷ Allen inserts an interesting contribution to this idea. He believes that Satan knows who Christ is all along, but he feigns ignorance in order to sew the seeds of distrust in Christ's consciousness.⁶⁸ "Satan alone," Allen contends, "knows the nature of the mission from the beginning."⁶⁹ Subsequently, "when Satan sets Christ 'on the highest Pinnacle,' it is poorly concealed murder and nothing else that he has in mind."⁷⁰ Similarly, Pope states that this last temptation is "temptation by violence."⁷¹

⁶⁵ Lewalski, p. 163.

⁶⁶ Patrīdes, p. 147.

⁶⁷ Woodhouse, p. 181

⁶⁸ Allen, p. 111.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 116.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 115.

⁷¹ Pope, p. 101.

Gilbert, Hanford, and Frye offer an alternative conclusion. To Gilbert, the tower episode depicts Satan's amazement upon realizing Christ's true identity.⁷² To Hanford, the fall of Satan and the fact that Christ remains standing on the pinnacle constitutes the "manifestation of God's approval" of his Son's response to temptation.⁷³ Frye perceives deus ex machina in this final scene. In the first two temptations, he maintains, a virtuous mortal could have performed equally well. But in the third, "his human will has been taken over by the omnipotent divine will at the necessary point."⁷⁴ In contrast to Allen, Frye states that "at this point, perhaps, Satan for the first time recognizes in Jesus his old antagonist of the war in heaven."⁷⁵ In an earlier criticism, Frye declares that the tower scene becomes an epiphany. It is a manifestation of Christ in his divine capacity to others, specifically to a horrified Satan and to jubilant angels.⁷⁶

I am in general agreement with the Gilbert-Hanford-Frye school of interpretation which emphasizes "manifestation," not "self-realization," as climax in Paradise Regained; but

⁷² Gilbert, p. 607.

⁷³ Hanford, p. 258.

⁷⁴ Frye, The Return of Eden, p. 140.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Frye, "The Typology of Paradise Regained," p. 238.

I must insist that there exists a significant, underlying theme as well. The conclusion stresses Milton's eschatological view of history with apocalyptic import and portends the ultimate objective of God's cosmic plan — to restore man to his blissful, prelapsarian state. According to Patrides, Milton maintains "the Christian view of history."⁷⁷ Like the renaissance audience, Milton "was trained to view the Old Testament as a foreshadowing of the New, and secular history an imitation of sacred."⁷⁸

Evidence of Milton's apocalyptic orientation is not limited to Paradise Regained. The importance of man's ultimate destiny permeates most of his major works. In Areopagitica, for example, Milton claims that at the "Master's second coming; he shall bring together every joynt and member" of disembodied truth "and shall mould them into an immortall feature of loveliness and perfection."⁷⁹ Emphasis on the apocalypse can be traced to an even earlier work, "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity." In this poem, Milton declares that the birth of Jesus portends the entrance of "the world's last session" when the "dreadful Judge in middle Air shall spread his throne" and "Hell itself will pass away." The

⁷⁷ Patrides, p. 258.

⁷⁸ Robert Kellogg and Oliver Steele, ed., Edmund Spenser: The Faerie Queene, The Mutability Cantos, and Selections from the Minor Poetry (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1965), n.39. 1-2, p.356.

⁷⁹ Areopagitica, p. 338.

Last Judgment, according to Milton, will involve numerous, awesome occurrences. For example, McDill cites, in Christian Doctrine, "Milton's peculiar belief that the whole man, body, spirit, and soul, dies in each component part, and that there is no intermediate state between death and resurrection."⁸⁰

Milton's interest in "the world's last session" is revealed in Paradise Lost. For the sake of analogy, let us consider the following declarations made by Milton's Michael:

Last in the Clouds from Heav'n to be reveal'd
 In glory of the Father to dissolve
 Satan with his perverted World, then raise
 From the conflagrant mass, purg'd and refin'd,
 New Heav'ns, new Earth, Ages of endless date
 Founded in righteousness and peace and love,
 To bring forth fruits Joy and eternal Bliss.
 . . . for the Earth
 Shall all be Paradise, far happier place
 Than this of Eden, and far happier days.
 (XII.545-51,463-65)

With regard to Milton's Christ, it has been established that he is aware of his identity before the tower temptation. Therefore, self-realization as climax becomes invalid. The dramatic prediction of the demolition of Evil, of Christ's typological fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, and especially of the re-establishment of Paradise constitutes the climax of the poem in this final episode.

⁸⁰ McDill, p. 333.

Concerning Satan's defeat at the tower, the angels sing:

But thou, Infernal Serpent, shalt not long
 Rule in the Clouds; like an Autumnal Star
 Or Lightening thou shalt fall from Heav'n trod down
 Under his feet: for proof, ere this thou feel'st
 Thy wound, yet not thy last and deadliest wound.

(IV.618-22)

The final blow will be struck at Armageddon. In the poem, the climactic defeat of Satan represents a dress rehearsal for the concluding play at the Last Judgment. Note that the future tense is used in this segment from the poem's conclusion. This change in tense fortifies the eschatologically oriented theme.

The angels are conscious of the fact that "A fairer Paradise" is foreshadowed by this glorious triumph where man "shall dwell secure, when time shall be / Of Tempter and Temptation without fear" (IV.613,616-17). As the angels proclaim, Christ will revitalize the flaccid garden:

. . . now thou hast aveng'd
 Supplanted Adam, and by vanquishing
 Temptation, hast regain'd lost Paradise.

(IV.606-08)

Typologically, Christ fulfills his messianic role as Second Adam, in toto. He is the instrument by which the sins of man, initiated by the transgressions of Adam and Eve, will

be absolved. He is the "inward Oracle" whose powers transcend those of the Old Testament prophets.

As mentioned at the onset of this paper, Milton's basic motive is to praise "Recover'd Paradise to all mankind." It is Christ's objective to transform the "waste Wilderness" into a new and more glorious Eden. By the fact that Christ maintains his position "There on the highest Pinnacle" (IV.549), Milton symbolically conveys the achievement of that objective. In the person of Christ, "Supplanted Adam" is restored to his prelapsarian, elevated position. Through the use of symbolic elevation, man, through the Savior, is restored to Edenic height. To reinforce the transformation and elevation theme of wasteland to garden, Christ (now symbolic of man redeemed) is swept up by angels to a paradisiacal setting, surrounded by flowers and "Celestial Food:"

. . . Angels on full sail of wing flew nigh,
 Who on their plummy Vans receiv'd him soft
 From his uneasy station, and upbore
 As on a floating couch through the blithe Air,
 Then in a flow'ry valley set him down
 On a green bank, and set before him spread.
 A table of Celestial Food, Divine,
 Ambrosial, Fruits fetcht from the tree of life,
 And from the fount of life Ambrosial drink.

(IV.582-90)

Thus, heavenliness is approximated; the Redemption is complete. The conclusion marks the consummation of the Miraculous Horticulturist's endeavor.

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Dan Bartges was born in Florida in 1948 and spent his childhood in Coral Gables, Florida. After graduating from John Marshall High School (Richmond, Virginia), he attended Hampden-Sydney College and is a member of Chi Phi Fraternity. He received his B. A. with a major in English in 1971. The M. A. in English was received from the University of Richmond in 1972.

He has traveled throughout the United States, Mexico, and the Caribbean, and has visited Europe and the Near East while working on board foreign cargo ships.