Developing Theological Patterns in John Milton's Poetry.

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DEVELOPING THEOLOGICAL PATTERNS IN JOHN MILTON'S POETRY

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DEVELOPING THEOLOGICAL PATTERNS IN
JOHN MILTON'S POETRY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

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May 1981
Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the following people: my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond McKinney; my husband, Tom Baker; my friend, Betty Duffy; my professors, Lee Ball, Jr., David S. Berkeley, J. H. Adamson; my readers, Donald Stanford, Anna Nardo; my dissertation director, Lawrence Sasek.
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Abstract

A study of John Milton's poetry reveals a pattern of developing theological concepts which in his later years result in unorthodox theological positions: *ex Deo* creation, mortalism, antitrinitarianism. This theology exists within the structure of free will and rests on the concept of God as Logos. Such theological conclusions as are voiced in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* reflect Milton's vision of man's relationship to God, the nature of God and God's creation, the nature of Sin, and the means whereby man may be saved.

Although unorthodox in the mainstream of seventeenth century English Protestantism on a number of doctrinal points, Milton's theology confronts the issues raised by the events of his lifetime, and confronts the issues raised by his heritage as a man of the Renaissance.
When in the seventeenth century John Milton wrote a body of poetry that was later to be termed "arrogantly supreme,″¹ he was, I believe, actively engaged in an examination of a most fundamental issue, man's personal relationship to his God, for the really Protestant thing about Milton was his desire for individual liberty in moral choice and more than that, his belief in the rightness of individual moral choice. By this individual liberty, Milton meant liberty for Milton himself; therefore, he charted a course involving at its core moral choice through the stormy seas of the Protestant rebellion and its attendant theological disputes, and then through the dangerous period of the early Restoration. It was partly because of his belief in individual moral choice, for example, that Milton publicly opposed various orthodox doctrines concerning the trinity and the resurrection of the soul, that he advocated divorce for incompatibility, that he supported so eloquently the Protestant cause. However, Milton stopped short of being either a romantic or a modern because he never
advanced his ideas purely and simply on the grounds that he felt them to be true; that is to say, although he always emphasized reason more than either faith or revelation, he never entirely discarded either; rather, he merely discarded those elements of both which were inconsistent with his own pursuit of individual liberty in this matter of choice.

To assume, however, that Milton was a lone rebel in a time of conformity is, of course, far from the mark. Indeed, during Milton's century and for the century before, dissent was in the air Englishmen breathed. Noted theologians as well as country parsons, kings, members of Parliament, and simple housewives such as Jenny Geddes of Scotland hotly disputed such matters as the power of good works, proper church vestments, railing off of the alter, music in churches and finer points concerning such things as transubstantiation, the trinity, the soul's immortality, and the nature of the creation. Milton appears at the end of a very troubled era, one that saw momentous changes and growth not only in the field of literature, but in the fields of politics and religion as well. If we consider only briefly what precedes Milton's final working years, the years that produced Paradise Lost (1667), Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes (published together in 1671), we see how the elements of change that his generation inherits and initiates become
increasingly significant in relation to this theme of individual moral choice throughout his poetry.

Political concepts and governing policies move rapidly and relentlessly from medieval to modern in the century preceding Milton, the Tudor years, so that the actions of individual men beneath the level of the peerage become somewhat more important and certainly more noticeable than in the preceding age of less complex class distinctions and roles. For example, the son of a Northamptonshire gentleman, Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley from 1571, wields great power as Elizabeth Tudor's chief minister, although his family had not previously been powerful. Such was his influence that later historians would question "whether queen or minister was responsible for the great successes of the reign."2

Certainly, the trend continues as England's sense of national identity gains substance and form, spawning a new generation of responsible citizen-counselors so that a patent of nobility is no longer an automatic guaranteed access to the councils of the great in real policy-forming functions.

In Elizabeth's England the power vacuum created by the declining power of the retainer system is filled by the increasing influence of the landed, responsible gentry, and as a consequence Parliament becomes not merely the voice of the rank and file, but a voice to be
reckoned with. J. H. Hexter says, "The great crisis of the seventeenth century is the consequence of a certain lack of empathy between the little piggies that went to Court and had roast beef and the little piggies that stayed home and had none." The crux of the issue lies in the structure of England's military reserve. Hexter points out that the retainer system is crippled (it is after all quite expensive, inflation is high, and nobles are generally on a fixed income from land holdings); therefore, the gentry (the rich independent gentry, neither Tawney's "small gentry" nor Trevor-Roper's "mere gentry") acts with greater independence to fill the power vacuum created by the peers' inability to control policy and elections. The power base then moves from arms ( retainers, castles as fortification bases) to law (Parliament). To put it simply, Parliament holds the purse strings since any tax must originate in the Commons. To wage war a king needs more than household money to pay armies; to raise money a tax must be imposed; to impose a tax the king must convene Parliament, because it did not sit on a regular basis; to handle that Parliament requires skills that the Stuarts seem to have lacked, for, of course, Parliament did not simply pass the tax bill and go home. Indeed, Charles I was so vexed by Parliament that for one twelve-year period, between 1628 and 1640, he contrived one way and another not to call
Parliament at all. The problem becomes clearer, and then the end result is finally a civil war concerned primarily with civil rights but entangled throughout with the skeins of religious dispute, because the Cavaliers, those of the King's party, generally were Anglicans and the Parliamentarians, Protestant Puritans.

So the history of the individual's influence in his own government in England can be charted to a significant extent in the growth of power of the House of Commons between 1558-1660. After the Restoration, the English monarch reigns only with and through Parliament. Consequently, one aspect of Milton's heritage and political milieu is the growing power and responsibility of men beneath the ranks of the nobility.

Another aspect of seventeenth century culture is, of course, the theological disputes of the time, which were legion. After the Reformation the Church is no longer dominated by Rome, but neither is it really unified. The Church in England becomes the Church of England with the monarch at its head, but in reality the church is split into many factions.

Basically the Reformation in its early years was concerned primarily with the question of church authority rather than doctrine. Henry, for various reasons, desired to be the head of the Church in England and this he became without reservation by 1532. Doctrinal issues were
highlighted later in the matter of Archbishop Cramer's Book of Common Prayer. As G. R. Elton says, "The 1549 Prayer Book had from the first been attacked by the protestants who abominated its attempts to compromise with the old religion. . . . The revised Prayer Book, published after much consultation in 1552 and enforced by an act of uniformity which appointed penalties for failure to use it as well as for positive attacks upon it, marked the arrival of the English Church at Protestantism. The various 'popish' remnants in doctrine, gestures, and vestments, which had still attached to the Communion service, were dropped, and even Hooper could be satisfied that the mass was abolished in England." Once differing opinions arose, they proliferated, most obviously in a group called the Marian exiles, those of the Puritan persuasion who during the reign of Mary had come under the direct influence of the Calvinists while in exile on the continent. These Marian exiles had lived and worked in such Calvinist communities as Geneva and were "eager to carry the reformation of their own Church to the conclusions reached in Geneva or the Rhineland cities." Such Puritan desire for reform both in doctrine and church government was a considerable danger to Anglicanism and as such was held in check during the reign of Elizabeth, but there was a growing body of Puritan opinion that was to continue to find
voice and gain audience in the seventeenth century.

This body of Puritan opinion was nurtured through the medium of the pulpit of the Church, which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries exercised, as Christopher Hill says, "a monopoly of thought-control and opinion forming." That is to say, the Church was a focal point for assembly and so, an exchange for information. On the Sabbath Anglican Church services were held in the morning and lecturers called by the congregation preached in the afternoon, an activity thought to be particularly Protestant: "Preaching had come to be thought of as a specifically protestant activity; and lecturers were the most advanced and independent of the protestant preachers." Indeed Laud made a serious attempt to end these lectures in 1633. But up until then, parishioners heard "Canterbury in the morning and Geneva in the afternoon."

There were also more radical religious groups which preached various unorthodox beliefs such as antitrinitarianism, mortalism, salvation through works rather than faith--groups which rejected predestination, infant baptism, and the private ownership of property; there were fifth-monarchists who believed the Kingdom of God to be at hand and people who thought they were Christ. Such reformist groups as Baptists, Socinians, Levellers, Ranters, and Familists attracted a good many followers
and published religious tracts that were widely distributed and debated.\textsuperscript{13} Such was the consternation that in 1646 the Presbyterian Thomas Edwards wrote and published \textit{Gangraena}, which listed the heresies then proliferating and registered horror that they should exist. Milton himself is grouped with other heretics not only by Edwards but by R. Baillie's \textit{A Disswasive from the Erroirs of the Time} (1645) and E. Pagitt's \textit{Heresiography} (1645).\textsuperscript{14}

What all of this means is that Milton breathed the air of conflict, political and theological. Inevitably, it seems to me, he was involved with the fundamental questions surrounding individual moral choice.

Milton brought his considerable talents as a poet to bear on the lively issue of individual moral choice. Although not perhaps his primary theme, this issue is a very important aspect of his work. Indeed, in various guises it is reflected from time to time throughout Renaissance literature, for example, in an ambivalence concerning loyalty. To whom is it owed: God, the State, the Church, one's self? It is certainly not a simple question and as such, created some complex situations for the Renaissance Man, as it still does for twentieth century man.

The complexity of this problem is due at least in part to the growth of the sense of self during the years between 1500 and 1660. Politically, as I have pointed
out, there is a shift of power to the House of Commons and theologically there is a shift in authority away from the Church as an entity to various factions within the Reformed Church and ultimately to the Scriptures and an individual's interpretation of them. There is also, of course, an intellectual shift.  

This shift is primarily due to the developing sense of power and place felt by the individual, not always the common man as such, but an increasingly literate, thinking body of Englishmen which is composed of landowners, university students, clergy, lower level government workers and others who, from 1477, had an increasing body of relatively inexpensive publications available often in English rather than Latin, the language of the intellectuals, or French, the language of diplomacy. Along with the growing availability of publications, there was also the infusion of humanism. Simply defined, humanism is an intellectual attitude which tends to exalt the human as opposed to the supernatural or divine elements which medieval literature emphasizes. More narrowly, the term humanism designates the revival of classical culture in the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries, but Erwin Panofsky says of humanism, "It is not so much a movement as an attitude which can be defined as the conviction of the dignity of man, based on both the insistence on human values
(rationality and freedom) and the acceptance of human limitations (fallibility and fraility); from these two postulates result—responsibility and tolerance."¹⁶

Such an understanding of humanism is germane, I think, to any study of Milton, for it is pervasive. Certainly one cannot point to any one year and label it the pivotal year of change, but there is little doubt that a gradual change comes about during which man is celebrated as a "glorious creature" subject only to the will of God. The trouble is, of course, that many people believe they personally know the will of God and are only too willing to impose it on everybody else.

Humanism is active in many rather indirect ways. It applies to theology, for example, in the argument about traditio since it encourages man's interpretation of scriptures rather than a reliance upon tradition. Because it exalts the human element, the individual matter of conscience, William Ames can say in The Substance of the Christian Religion (1659) that true faith is bred in us by word and promises, by preaching and knowledge of scriptures, not tradition or men's dreams and customs.¹⁷

This is a clear statement of position. However, Ames is a Calvinist, and Douglas Bush points out that "Lutheran and Calvinist dogmas were incompatible with the humanistic doctrine of the self-governing reason and dignity of man."¹⁸ Still it seems that the precepts themselves were pervasive.
There are many other applications of humanism. For example, in the area of statecraft, theories about the origins of political institutions and law move away from the discovery of God's law to the creation of man's laws. Plato's idea of the responsible citizen-counselor becomes a fundamental approach to government. Bush says, "The broad aim of Tudor humanism was training in virtue and good letters; the practical aim was training for the active Christian life, especially public life." Humanism also influences educational thought in many ways: man attains human happiness, it is taught, through virtue, which is achieved through control by reason, supported by education; nature becomes an educational tool, aided by the classics including rhetoric, logic, Greek, and Latin. By the latter half of the sixteenth century, tradition no longer imposes a rigid pattern in theology, politics, education, or literature.

Of course, literature too is affected by the availability of publication, humanism, and a growing reading audience. There is no sudden break in literary pattern; in 1485, for example, Caxton publishes Malory's Le Morte Darthur, showing that there is still much reliance on "old favorites." However, any cursory glance at the Pollard and Redgrave or the Wing Short Title Catalogue will show an enormous number of publications on many diverse subjects. In addition, there are numerous
translations of classics and publications of works from the continent between 1558-75; there are foundations of new colleges and a growing number of religious treatises and translations of the scriptures being published both in England and on the continent; and there is the surge of the drama both in publication and production.

This intellectual activity which is fundamental to the political shifts and religious dissent of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries creates a tense climate that results in a Civil War encompassing issues both civil and religious. Renaissance literature also reflects this lively climate, and Milton, living as he did at the end of an epoch faces the conflict squarely on the issue of integrity in individual moral choice.

As we are engaged in scholarly scrutiny of John Milton's work, as we bring all our scholarly cannons to bear on a point of doctrine here or a poetical device there, we forget that his works are also enjoyed by those who are not academicians. Waldock seems to feel it necessary to remind his readers "that the raison d'être of the whole poem [Paradise Lost] lies in its appeal to common human sensibilities."²⁰

This appeal is an important consideration in the poem; indeed this idea of a common human affinity is a note sounded throughout the body of Milton's work, a note sounded so strongly and consistently that it forms the
keynote upon which other chords are structured and to which various embellishments are ultimately resolved. Throughout Milton's works, man is presented as struggling to behave and react according to a sense of human ethics; obviously man reacts in any situation demanding choice and judgment as a created being, his judgments clearly being dictated by the ethics of a created being and by an innate affinity for those of his own kind.

God, as creator, is beyond the comprehension of His created being, man, and so the possibility of conflict arises when man is called upon to react in situations involving decisions concerning his relationship to God and his relationship to others created, like himself, by God. This conflict between man's relationship to God and his relationship to other created beings is central to a consideration of Milton's work. Indeed much of Milton's theology is related to this issue. The conclusions Milton reaches reflect his vision of the nature of God, man, and the created universe.

Milton's final creation theory is ex Deo, that God created from His own essence, thus investing created beings with the power of love and reason within the context of free will. Free will is based on possibility thereby creating value and dignity in individual created beings. The fall of man then is not inevitable, but only a possibility. Sin in Milton's later poetry is
separation from God which comes about because of rejection. This rejection on Satan's part is conscious denial of God, which is basic evil. Man, deceived by Satan, sins by disobeying God's will, which is not a rejection of God as fact. In Milton's epics, Christ, as the Son of God, offers salvation by displaying perfect obedience—again, the possibility of perfect conformity to the will of God by one created by God. However slight the subordination, Milton in his epics presents Christ as created by God; however brief, there was a time when Christ was not.

The basic assumption of free will is further emphasized by Milton's mortalism, the belief that the soul and body are one, die as one, and will be raised as one by Christ during the final judgment. The mortalist conclusion appears in the later poems and evolves from a concern with order and individual identity which is reflected in the early poems. Man's first disobedience damages his relationship with God because it clouds his perception of God.

This resultant gulf between creator and created is a major problem which Milton considers in his later poems. He presents his solution in large part in the role of Christ as redeemer of man as opposed to the role of Satan as seducer of man. Both characters in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained present possibility to man. The
possibilities are rejection and conformity on the part of created beings and their relationship to God.

Important to an understanding of Milton's theological development is a practical look at his positions in relationship to other seventeenth century religious writers, a chronological view of concerns reflected in his poetry, and a consideration of themes of choice and conflict in his works. Milton's theological positions include his creation theory, his conclusions about the nature of the soul, and his conclusions about the nature of the trinity.

The theology in Milton's poetry also reflects the judgment of a man who lived in an extraordinary era of religious controversy and transition. He is a Puritan, a Protestant, a rebel, a scholar, a nonconformist in an age when dissent finally results in civil war. For Milton and other Protestants, the rules of the Roman Church with priest as mediator and tradition as guide are no longer valid. The will of God becomes more and more a matter of individual study and interpretation of the scriptures, and the issues raised by such a study are thorny, to say the least.

As a Renaissance man, a Christian humanist, Milton believed in the nobility of individual man; as a Protestant and Puritan he believed in conformity to the will of God; as an Englishman caught up in the political
changes of his era, he declared for the Protestant cause and supported that cause for many years, thus demonstrating by his life his belief in the importance of liberty in thought and action on the part of individual man.

In Milton's work there is a complex, even tangled skein of ideas. His vision of man's relationship to God, however, reconciles the apparent disparities and in so doing presents a theological pattern that is a celebration of God as reason and love, a recognition of the possibilities within the mind of God unknowable to created man, and an affirmation of the value and dignity of the creation of such a God.
Notes


6 Hexter, p. 148.

7 Elton, pp. 211-213.


9 Dawley, p. 169.


11 Hill, p. 79.


13 For a discussion of such radical groups see Christopher Hill, Milton and the English Revolution, Chapter 8 "Milton and the Radicals" (N. Y.: Viking Press, 1977). Also see David Masson, The Life of John Milton,


19 Ibid., p. 78.

Chapter 2
Theological Positions:
Developing Images and Patterns

Since the time of the discovery and publication of De Doctrina Christiana in 1823, John Milton's theology has generated a considerable amount of scholarly activity, resulting in charges of heresy and careful evaluations to discover to what extent the theology of De Doctrina is reflected in Paradise Lost. Much of the heresy scholarship examines major theological positions concerning primarily the trinity, the creation, and the nature of the soul.

Milton's major unorthodox theological positions, creation ex Deo, mortalism, and antitrinitarianism are expressed clearly in De Doctrina and are present in his later poetry. They result partly from an attempt to resolve logically the conflict in the man/God relationship which is caused by the great gulf between Creator and creature. An examination of the early poetry reveals images and ideas about the nature of God that to some extent prefigure the later theological conclusions expressed in Paradise Lost.
The argument about Milton's trinitarian thought revolves around his possible Arianism, which is antitrinitarian theologically. Arianism held that

the Father alone is God; he alone is unbegotten, eternal, wise, good, unchangeable.... He is 'made,' not of 'the essence' of the Father, but 'out of nothing,' by 'the will' of the Father, before all conceivable time, yet in time. He is not eternal, and there 'was a time when he was not.' Neither was he unchangeable by creation, but subject to the vicissitudes of a created being. By following the good uninterruptedly, he became unchangeable. With the limitation of Christ's duration is necessarily connected a limitation of his power, wisdom, and knowledge. It was expressly asserted by the Arians that the Son does not perfectly know the Father, and therefore can not perfectly reveal him.²

Those who have charged Milton with heresy have done so, for the most part, since the discovery of De Doctrina, and so a good part of the issue hinges on the nature of the bonds between De Doctrina and Paradise Lost. Is the theology of De Doctrina reflected clearly in Paradise Lost? Is De Doctrina a prose statement of the theology in Paradise Lost? Maurice Kelley in This Great Argument says that the differences between the two are minimal and that Paradise Lost is Arian.³ C. A. Patrides, on the other hand, concludes that "Paradise Lost is far from 'an Arian document,'" and that "it does not even espouse the 'subordinationism' of the treatise."⁴ Such critics as Arthur Sewell,⁵ and A. S. P. Woodhouse⁶ do not see De
Doctrina as a 'blueprint' for Paradise Lost and Sewell believes that the treatise was not completed in time "to serve as a doctrinal guide in the composition of the poem." Some critics reject the notion that Milton was an Arian because of doctrinal inconsistencies—creation \textit{ex Deo} is presented by Milton whereas creation of the Son \textit{ex nihilo} is the Arian position—and also because of metaphorical traditions. J. H. Adamson says, "It appears, then, that Milton continuously images the Trinity in terms of the Athanasian metaphors that Arius had rejected; Milton's thought, as expressed in these metaphors, is unquestionably emanationist." W. B. Hunter says the Arian element is an extension of the subordinationism upheld by the early Christian writers to the Council of Nicaea and later revived by the Cambridge Platonists in Milton's era.

From these arguments about Milton's possible Arianism it seems that at the very least his theology, while not purely Arian, is antitrinitarian and is rather plainly stated in \textit{De Doctrina}, a work of prose possessing few metaphors. Paradise Lost, his great epic, however, is metaphorical and so allows more latitude in interpretation; in addition, it was published seven years after the Restoration, a dangerous time for any dissenter and especially so for the author of such works as \textit{Of the Tenure of Kings and Magistrates} and \textit{Eikonoklastes}. So
while the poetry does appear to contain some unorthodox theology, it does not present these positions so plainly as does De Doctrina.

Milton's mortalist doctrine, the belief that the body and soul are one, has also been the subject of dispute, a dispute which centers primarily on the question of external influences on the processes by which he reaches his conclusion. There are those critics who contend that Milton arrived at his mortalist views through the study of various contemporary theologians or philosophers. George Williamson, for example, says that Sir Thomas Browne's Religio Medici was popular and influential in Milton's day and in all likelihood was the primary influence in the formation of Milton's conclusions about the nature of the soul. Denis Saurat in Milton, Man and Thinker proposes that Mans Mortallitie was the source for Milton's mortalist theory and that Milton adhered quite closely to Overton's treatise in forming his own theological convictions. On the other hand George Newton Conklin in Biblical Criticism and Heresy in Milton calls Milton's "belief that the soul dies with the body . . . an exceedingly esoteric position" and supports this by pointing out the relative rarity of seventeenth century documents dealing with mortalism. He mentions, of course, a few groups and pamphlets but says "that Milton's espousal of a doctrine
condemned by contemporary theologians must result directly from his independent exegesis," concluding that "the starting point should likewise be neither theological nor philosophical but simply a point of rendition of Scripture."\[14\]

Basically, Milton's theological conclusion about the nature of the soul is treated in Book I, Chapter XIII, of De Doctrina. It is also present in Paradise Lost. Although Milton's espousal of the doctrine is clear, the influences that led to the conclusion are not so clear. For example, there are some similarities between De Doctrina and Mans Mortallitie, but Milton's mortalism is not solely the product of this treatise.\[15\] Rather, Milton may have taken from Overton those ideas and arguments which were compatible with his own philosophy and may have discarded those elements which he considered insignificant, a common procedure for scholars.

Most recently William Kerrigan has examined the development of Milton's belief in mortalism, which he says, in earlier poems is expressed by a muted fascination with "assumption" or "translation."\[16\]

Creation ex Deo, another of these theological conclusions, is the theory that God created the world from himself rather than from nothing, ex nihilo, or from formless eternal matter. Milton's God is eternal Logos. J. H. Adamson says of Milton's creation theory, "His
view of creation, it seems to me, must be understood as falling under the general emanationist theory that a potency existed in God, and that the potency was made actual, somehow through the process of emanation."\(^{17}\)

For Milton, the universe is part of this Logos, its creation flowing directly. Creation *ex Deo* is, however, unorthodox within the Christian tradition and is only one way of accounting for matter.\(^{18}\)

Creation in Milton's poems is a repeated subject, imaged in brilliance and awe. Obviously Milton found creation intriguing even at an early age, because he chose to paraphrase a Psalm about the creation when he was 15 years old. To a very limited extent Psalm CXXXVI prefigures the *ex Deo* creation that Milton presents in his later poetry. There is here a slender thread connecting his early thought to the fully developed description of the creation that Milton presents in Book VII of *Paradise Lost*. In his paraphrase of the Psalm Milton writes about God "That did the solid Earth ordain / To rise above the wat'ry plain."\(^{19}\) The picture Milton presents here is one of order. The earth is ordained or invested by God with the authority to form.

When in later years Milton presents the creation in *Paradise Lost*, he retains the image of the solid earth rising from a watery mass and he also retains the premise of order arising from disorder at the command of God.
However, his idea in the creation scene in *Paradise Lost* is framed in a vision of immensity and stresses a mastery of turbulence possible only by an all powerful God whose description is the product of a mature, intellectually disciplined mind:

On heav'nly ground they stood, and from the shore
They view'd the vast immeasurable Abyss
Outrageous as a Sea, dark, wasteful, wild,
Up from the bottom turn'd by furious winds
And surging waves, as Mountains to assault
Heav'n's highth, and with the Centre mix the Pole.
Silence, ye troubl'd waves, and thou Deep, peace,
Said then th' Omnific Word, your discord end. (VIII.210-17)

This description in *Paradise Lost* is, of course, powerful, vivid artistry. The early poem is a conventional paraphrase of the kind common in Renaissance Bible translation. However, it seems clear that Milton built on his early studies, as is natural, and returned in later life in the midst of writing his great epic to a point of departure that had obviously caught his imagination in his first attempt at writing about the creation and still interested him. Of course, Psalm CXXXVI is not the only source for Milton's creation scene, indeed not the principal one, but he does take an idea from the Psalm and in so doing magnifies a point he found worthwhile in his youth when first he considered the creation,
that of the imposition of order on disorder.

An inherent property of this idea of the imposition of order in *Paradise Lost* is the inherent dominance of the Creator over what has emanated from him, the ability of the Creator to mold what is his creation through the power of the Word: Logos. Psalm CXXXVI is, of course, a very early poem and to see its relationship to *Paradise Lost* as much more than embryonic is to obscure the issue, but that it is at least a starting point, an idea to which Milton returns, is clear.

This fundamental idea of God's imposing order becomes a theme in "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" when Milton presents the infant Christ as the first cause of peace. Rosemond Tuve says "this poem's subject is the Incarnation not the Nativity" and certainly the Incarnation unifies the poem, stressing the role of Christ as Savior. In emphasizing this aspect of the Nativity, Milton images the event in terms associated with the creation:

```
But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of light
His reign of peace upon the earth began:
The Winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kiss't.
Whispering new joys to the mild Ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While Birds of Calm sit brooding on the charmed wave. (11. 61-68)
```

In this stanza the Ocean has "forgot to rave," calmed by
the arrival of its Master. The lines are richly textured, alluding to the halcyons of Ovid, containing echoes of the creation scene of Genesis I, and previewing the action of the adult Christ in stilling the tempest in the story in Matthew when even the winds are struck with wonder as are the disciples who "marvelled, saying 'What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!'"23

Creation as Milton alludes to it in the Nativity Ode has some relation to the creation scene in Paradise Lost. The allusion to Genesis 1 is repeated: "but on the wat'ry calm / His brooding wings the spirit of God outspread" (PL, VII.234-34). Also repeated is the use of imagery concerning light. For example, Milton says of the stars in the Nativity Ode: "But in their glimmering Orbs did glow, / Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go" (VI.75-76). And of the sun:

          The Sun himself withheld his wonted speed
          And hid his head for shame,
          As his inferior flame,
          The new-enlight'n'd world no more should need;
          He saw a greater Sun appear
          Than his bright Throne, or burning
          Axletree could bear. (11.79-84)

In Paradise Lost, of course, the use of light imagery is magnified so that light is "first of things, quintessence pure" (VII.244) and is a part of the via negativa
presentation of God so that light is part of the *ex Deo* theory of creation Milton voices in *Paradise Lost*: "Of Light by far the greater part he took, / Transplanted from her cloudy Shrine" (VII.359-60). This cloudy shrine is the metaphorical image of God as light so pure that man perceives it as darkness. In this passage Milton presents God creating from Himself. In the Nativity Ode the dance of the universe is stilled at the approach of its creator. While this creation scene is not the *ex Deo* creation of *Paradise Lost*, it shares the premise of control imposed by the creator evident in the imagery of both poems. The waters are calmed by their Master; the stars stand fixed awaiting orders; the sun voluntarily withholds his speed in recognition of a greater power. Stasis, waiting for God to direct, is found in several places in Milton's poetry and is indeed the subject of a well known line: "They also serve who only stand and wait" (Sonnet XIX). This is, I think, an important element throughout Milton's poetry and articulates plainly Milton's search for order, which is to be found in the will of God.

This image of God imposing order on His creation is also presented within a *via negativa* context on Psalm LXXX. The Psalm reads:

That sitt'st between the Cherubs bright
Between their wings outspread,
Shine forth, and from thy cloud give light.
And on our foes thy dread. (11. 5-8)

Here the Psalmist is praying for protection that apparently will come from the cloud traditionally associated with the flight of the Israelites from Egypt, but Milton presents the light itself as protector, as a bringer of order. It is the manifestation of God that is comprehensible to His people.

Though in a different context this via negativa image of God is used again in Paradise Lost in the hymn to God in Book III:

Fountain of Light, thyself invisible
Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sit'st
Thron'd inaccessible, but when thou Shad'st
The full blaze of thy beams, and through a cloud
Drawn round about thee like a radiant Shrine,
Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear,
Yet dazzle Heav'n, that brightest Seraphim Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes. (ll. 375-382)

Here in Paradise Lost as in "Psalm LXXX" God embodies both light and darkness in essence so that in Him they are fused. Divine darkness, then, is light so bright that it cannot be seen, and this light has extraordinary power. In "Psalm LXXX" the poet prays for it to shine and bring dread to the foes of the Israelites. In
Paradise Lost the power of the Divine light is such that it dazzles Heaven so that even the angels closest to God cannot penetrate it. While not as fully developed as the image in Paradise Lost, of course, the imagery of "Psalm LXXX" presents the Creator as the orderer of the universe and His power as derived directly from His essence, as made manifest in Divine Light, an image that, again, prefigures the more powerful image presented in the Heavenly Hymn in Book III of Paradise Lost.

In "Psalm LXXX," of course, as in several of Milton's renderings of the Psalms the theme centers on the nature of God as Protector. It does preview to some extent, however, the nature of God as ex Deo Creator as presented in Paradise Lost, where the light is of divine essence, flowing from God and imposing order through original power of the Creator on what He has created from His own essence.

These early works do not express the ex Deo theory of creation fully. They are for the most part traditional translations of the Psalms, or in the case of "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," a celebration of the birth of the Savior. Although their subject is not creation as such, they do treat the nature of God and His relationship to the universe He creates. The images Milton uses in the early works present God as order, Logos, light. God imposes order on chaos; His creations instinctively recognize their master; God reveals himself as cloud and light.
These basic images are used later in the creation scenes in *Paradise Lost*, but are magnified and become a part of a more mature vision. Milton's *ex Deo* theory of creation presents the order of the universe flowing directly from God; His creation is emanationist in nature and so assumes form from His will.

Sin is presented in Milton's epic as a result of disorder that occurs when God's creations--Satan, man--reject God and His will and so are removed in a most fundamental sense from a perfect accord with the mind of God. The rebellious angels are exiled from Heaven because they follow Satan, whose first rejection of God begets Sin. Sin identifies herself in Book II and narrates the circumstances of her birth:

Has thou forgot me then, and do I seem
Now in thine eye so foul, once deem'd so fair
In Heav'n, when at th' Assembly, and in sight
Of all the Seraphim with thee combin'd
In bold conspiracy against Heav'n's King,
All on a sudden miserable pain
Surpris'd thee, dim thine eyes, and dizzy swum
In darkness, while they head flames thick and fast
Threw forth, till on the left side op'ning wide,
Likest to thee in shape and count'nance bright,
Then shining heav'nly fair, a Goddess arm'd
Out of thy head I sprung: amazement seiz'd
All th' Host of Heav'n; back they recoil'd afraid
At first, and call'd me Sin. . . . (11.746-60)
These lines present the first visible result of Satan's rejection of God: Sin. In these lines, then, Sin as an allegorical character is both a visible obstruction to Lucifer's perfect accord with the will of God, and, as an obstruction is a manifestation of disorder in Satan's rejection of God which is Logos.

Because of their rejection of God, the rebellious angels are exiled from heaven. They fall into hell, a frightful place, cursed by God, a place from which the harmony of God is absent:

Rocks, Caves, Lakes, Fens, Bogs, Dens, and shades of death,
A Universe of death, which God by curse
Created evil, for evil only good,
Where all life dies, death lives, and Nature breeds,
Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things,
Abominable, inutterable, and worse
Than Fables yet have feign'd, or fear conceiv'd,
Gorgons and Hydras, and Chimeras dire. (II.621-28)

It is not God's primary disorder then that his creations experience, but disorder that is the result of their own failure in loving conformity to God's will, disorder that is the result of exile from God. Likewise in the scene in Book IX when Adam sins, the result is disorder, a loss of harmony in Eden which is represented by the lust Adam now feels for Eve:
Carnal desire inflaming, hee on Eve
Began to cast lascivious Eyes, she him
As wantonly repaid; in Lust they burn:
Till Adam thus 'gan Eve to dalliance
move. (Il 1013-16)

This disharmony results in a barrier between man and God:

How shall I behold the face
Henceforth of God or Angel, erst with joy
And rapture so oft beheld? those heav'nly shapes
Will dazzle now this earthly, with thir Insufferably bright. (Il 1080-84)

Milton acknowledges the barrier in understanding on the part of man by presenting God in the via negativa. God understands man; man as God's creation, however, no longer enjoys a pure relationship with the order that prevails within the will of God.

Milton's portrait of God, then, is presented in such a way as to deal with this barrier in understanding. One of the techniques is via negativa, which may be found in several places in his work. For example, he says in De Doctrina, Book 1, Chapter 2, "When we talk about knowing God, it must be understood in terms of man's limited powers of comprehension. God, as he really is, is far beyond man's imagination, let alone his understanding: I Tim. VI.16: dwelling in unapproachable light." He also presents via negativa in Paradise Lost in Book III's hymn to God in conjunction with God as ex Deo creator,
"Author of all being, / Fountain of Light . . ." (11.375-76).

It seems possible, after an examination of the early poems in comparison to relevant passages in *Paradise Lost*, that Milton's espousal of the *ex Deo* theory of creation in *Paradise Lost* is the result of the development of an idea he worked with much earlier in his life, the idea of the imposition of order on disorder. In the early poems this idea is merely embryonic, a point of departure for simple Psalm paraphrases and later a multilevel celebration of the nativity. In the later work, however, Milton takes the idea and builds on it a framework of more complex images that present the dual nature of man as a created being barred from the perfect order existing within the mind of God by man's own exercise of human will that is granted him by God. This concept of sin as disorder will be treated more fully later in this study, but it is a natural evolution of the nature of God as *ex Deo* Creator who creates somehow from his own essence, which act imbues that creation with a natural order of its own as a part of the mind of God--*Logos*. Within this framework, sin originates from a rejection of the total relationship, and man's inability to comprehend God as well as man's disorderly existence result from the barrier formed when man sins. Milton's search for order, indeed his vision of an orderly universe in a time of civil and
religious upheaval, it seems to me, leads him to his own theological conclusions because the more orthodox theology does not provide for Milton acceptable answers to the questions raised by the religious debates of his time. The answers to some of the questions are to be found in the *ex Deo* creation presented in *Paradise Lost*. 
Notes


3 Maurice Kelley, This Great Argument (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1962), p. 119.


6 A. S. P. Woodhouse, review of This Great Argument by Maurice Kelley, Philological Review, 52 (1943), 206-08.

7 Sewell, p. 9.


13 Ibid., p. 75.

14 Ibid., p. 75.


18 Bright Essence, Studies in Milton's Theology offers in its various articles a review and discussion of these theories and Milton's possible relationship to them.


22 Ovid Metamorphosis XI, 745-46.

23 King James Version, Matthew 8:27.

Chapter 3
Milton's Mortalist Theology

A second theological position present in Milton's later poetry is his mortalism, the belief that the soul and body do not exist independently, but die together to be raised together by Christ during the final judgment. When one examines mortalism as the theory is reflected in his poetry, and as it bears on Milton's concern with the man/God relationship, it becomes apparent that two vital points recur throughout the poetry--identity and order. These are philosophical and practical problems posed by death and the decay of the body that are solved to a critical extent by the doctrine of mortalism. Additionally, Milton presents in Paradise Lost prelapsarian Adam and Eve as real beings who enjoy a harmonious relationship to God, both physically and spiritually. The mortalist doctrine provides for a renewal of this total relationship for the descendants of the first parents of man, even though fallen man experiences death and the decay of the body, because Christ as Savior will raise the dead at the final judgment to a perfect state within the new Jerusalem. Such a promise as this doctrine presents provides a rational solution to many of the mysteries surrounding death.
and the meaning of salvation with which Milton was concerned in both his prose and his poetry.

In a recent article William Kerrigan discusses this problem of Milton's mortalist argument. In his article he says, "We may be almost certain that Milton prepared his speech [Manoa's final speech in *Samson Agonistes*] with the knowledge, never to be shared directly with his readers that his Hebraic elegy demonstrated the experiential adequacy of a doctrinal choice." Kerrigan finds evidence of an early manifestation of mortalism expressed through an interest in assumption. He concludes that Milton's "early works express, in summary, a discernible hesitation over the severance of body from soul." This leads Kerrigan to point out that to the mortalist the Crucifixion is a necessary step to the really significant moment of the Apocalypse so that the sacrificial role of Christ gives way to the militant role of Christ as warrior and savior as significant event. Kerrigan says, "Milton's greatest companion poems record the physical and spiritual warfare for the territory of God that will culminate in the final campaign of the Apocalypse." Certainly this reading provides a fresh viewpoint from which to consider Milton's mortalist doctrine.

Generally, however, Milton is concerned with the nature of man's fundamental relationship to God, and his early poetry reflects an awareness on Milton's part of the barriers between man and God. His later poetry, I
believe, reflects the outcome of his struggle with these barriers—to identify them, to explore their nature, to explore their causes, to accept them as temporal but certainly not as eternal.

In his early poetry Milton's concern with issues that revolve about his relationship to God encompasses a number of problems: the death of acquaintances, Milton's own ambitions and duties, the welfare of England on the verge of a civil war. The problem on which this study is primarily centered is, of course, death, for Milton treats it, as do many major artists, throughout his career and to a significant extent resolves the philosophical problems death presents to God's created beings in his conclusions about mortalism. Much of the relevant material has been covered by Professor Kerrigan, and it is not the particular purpose of this study to reiterate or refute his argument. Rather this work will examine recurrent issues involved in Milton's development of his theory and in his later espousal of the mortalist doctrine. These issues are identity and order, and they seem to be the subjects of considerable anxiety throughout Milton's canon.

Milton is vitally concerned with these two aspects of death in "On the Death of a Fair Infant Dying of a Cough," probably written in 1628 on the occasion of the death of Anne, daughter of Milton's sister. Milton, at
age 19, is understandably stricken with the perplexity and grief that most people experience at such a death—why do these things happen? He provides various metaphorical answers: that winter loved the child and inadvertently killed her, which is mythic:

For he being amorous on that lovely dye
That did thy cheek envermeil, thought to kiss
But kill'd alas, then bewail'd his fatal bliss. (ll. 5-7)

Another metaphorical answer is that the child was a heavenly creature sent to the world to encourage men to aspire to heaven (ll. 61-63). These answers to the problem of early death present the possibility of some immortal identity that is separate from earthly identity and is also present in stanza V: "Oh no! for something in thy face did shine / Above mortality that show'd thou was divine" (ll. 34-45).

The answer that Milton provides in stanza X, however, pictures a human child who, retaining her identity after death, pleads man's cause in heaven: "To stand 'twixt us and our deserved smart? / But thou canst best perform that office where thou art" (ll. 69-70). The poet is concerned here with what happens to identity after death as well as the inherent disorder of death. Does the soul alone carry identity, making it immortal, or is identity bound to the body? Milton clearly sees
the possibility of doom represented by the decay of the body:

Or that thy corse corrupts in earth's
  dark womb,
Or that thy beauties lie in wormy bed,
  Hid from the world in a low delved tomb;
Could Heav'n for pity thee so strictly doom?
(11.30-33)

Milton also presents the soul as separate from the doom of the earthly body: "Tell me bright Spirit where 'er thou hoverest" (l. 38).

After a presentation of the various answers to the question of identity of the dead infant and the purpose of her death, Milton resolves the poem on a traditional note of comfort that can be found still today in many Christian funeral services; the infant was given by God to the parents and now has simply rejoined God and adds to the joy in heaven: "Think what a present thou to God has sent, / And render him with patience what he lent" (ll. 74-75).

Not only does this resolution provide traditional comfort but it also provides a traditional answer to questions about identity and the disorder of death. The child is a child of God, belongs ultimately in heaven, and so has been called back by God to heaven. Milton counsels acceptance in the line, "And wisely learn to curb thy sorrows wild" (l. 73), and reminds the mother
of hope for another child: "This if thou do, he will an
offspring give, / That till the world's last end shall
make thy name to live" (11.76-77). The death of the in-
fant as Milton treats the event in the poem is a part
of God's plan, and though the poet may offer conjecture
about purpose and identity, he finally offers an answer
orthodox and traditional. Milton is to ask the same
questions about identity and order again and again in
his poetry; but as he grows older, he turns for answers
away from the orthodox doctrine of his youth to explore
other possibilities about the nature of the soul.

About a year after writing the poem about the death
of his niece Milton presents the angels as being unified
physically and spiritually in "On the Morning of Christ's
Nativity":

When such music sweet
Their [the shepherds'] hearts and ears did greet,
   As never was by mortal finger struck,
Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringed noise,
   As all their souls in blissful rapture took.
(11.93-98)

Certainly the angels are not visually present to the shep-
herds, nor are they men, but they are God's created beings
and perform mortal functions such as singing with voices,
albeit in a heavenly fashion. Obviously Milton presents
them as having unified physical and spiritual existence.
This idea of physical and spiritual unity prefigures to
some extent the physical and spiritual unity of God's other created beings—men—which Milton presents much later within the context of his mortalist doctrine.

In "An Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester" (1631) there is a presentation of a soul separated from the body after death. After her death, the Marchioness is pictured in heaven seated in glory, a "new welcome Saint" (l. 71), while earlier in the poem Milton expresses a wish for rest for the body:

Gentle Lady, may thy grave
Peace and quiet ever have:
After this thy travail sore
Sweet rest seize thee evermore. (ll. 47-50)

Like the comfort offered in "Death of a Fair Infant," this too is traditional and orthodox theologically, and Milton presents the Lady as retaining her identity spiritually after death. There is also another link between these two poems in the imagery. In "Death of a Fair Infant," Milton says that possibly Winter found the child so fair that "his cold-kind embrace" (l. 20) accidentally killed her. In the "Marchioness of Winchester" Milton further laments the apparent lack of pattern in death by continuing the winter image he employed in "Death of a Fair Infant":

So have I seen some tender slip
Sav'd with care from Winter's nip,
The pride of her carnation train,
Pluck't up by some unheedy swain,  
Who only thought to crop the flow'r  
New shot up from vernal show'r. (11. 35-40)

This imagery not only links the two poems but in so doing also shows that Milton was consistently aware of the apparent lack of order or pattern in both deaths. For, if one escapes the killing embrace of winter, clearly some other seemingly harmless action may result in death. Once again, then, in a poem written on the occasion of a death Milton confronts the question of order and identity and turns at the end of the poem to tradition and orthodox theology for comfort, for the soul of the Marchioness finds glory in heaven while at the same time her body is at rest.

Milton seems consistently aware of the soul as it bears on identity or being. He refers, for example in "Il Penseroso" to "Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes" (1. 40) as the essence of thought in Melancholy that is concentrated on heaven, and yet it is a part of the physical image he presents of Melancholy as well:

There held in holy passion still,  
Forget thyself to Marble, till  
With a sad Leaden downward cast,  
Thou fix them on the earth as fast. (11. 41-44)

While Melancholy is not a real figure to Milton, of course, he presents the allegorical figure as possessing a soul and body; both are treated in the poem, and both
are a part of the identity of Melancholy.

Milton also considers this problem of identity, briefly, in Sonnet VII, "How Soon Hath Time":

Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth
That I to manhood am arriv'd so near,
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.

(11.5-8)

Here Milton says that he looks younger than he feels himself to be in ability, insight, perception. He says then that his identity is somewhat belied by his appearance. Once again, however, Milton resolves this problem by turning to the traditional idea that such problems have their solutions only within "the will of Heav'n" (1.12).

In Comus Milton once again presents the soul as the seat of identity, but the identity is also visible in the body. The Elder Brother in Comus makes this point when the brothers return from seeking refreshment for their lady sister and find that she has disappeared. He offers as comfort the idea that inner virtue is a protective force and a part of identity:

He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i'th' center, and enjoy bright day,
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts Benighted walks under the midday Sun;
Himself is his own dungeon. (11.381-85)
These lines suggest that in life the soul and body are bound together in identity and that Milton certainly considers both important. Later in the poem he says that indeed the chaste soul may influence the body so that it partakes of the soul's essence and therefore partakes of immortality:

So dear to Heav'n is Saintly chastity,  
That when a soul is found sincerely so,  
A thousand liveried Angels lackey her,  
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,  
And in clear dream and solemn vision  
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear,  
Till oft converse with heav'nly habitants  
Begin to cast a beam on th'outward shape,  
The unpolluted temple of the mind,  
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence  
Till all be made immortal. (11. 453-63)

Also, the unchaste soul may rob the body of this immortality.

William Kerrigan views these lines as a part of Milton's "muted fascination" with assumption in his early poems; however, there also recurs in these lines his idea about identity—that the soul and body have one identity, in the Virgin's case a chaste one, and the ultimate destiny of the person should in some way be influenced by this identity. This concept, of course, is not mortalism, but these lines do suggest that Milton is concerned with the fate of the body as well as that of the soul and he presents the fates of both in these lines as one because of the virtue of the Lady. Comus is problematical for
the reader who looks for clear orthodox theology in all of Milton's early poetry, but it does show what happens when Milton treats an imaginative situation in which the poet is in control of events. The earlier works are based on the deaths of real people, but in Comus Milton creates the character, her dilemma and her rescue, and so he calls the tune. Kerrigan says that "on the basis of Comus especially . . . one would guess that his discomfort with orthodox mortality arose in part from a sense of theological injustice." In the example of the Lady in Comus, Milton not only may provide a consolation for her plight, which is the intention of the orthodox comfort he offers in "On the Death of a Fair Infant" and the "Marchioness of Winchester" surely, but he is also encouraged to do so by the art form itself and to provide a rescue which accrues to the Lady because of her own human virtue, which is after all the virtue of his patrons. The situation is altogether a happy event but more significantly an orderly one. Milton's search for pattern, for order, may be served in the imaginative situation of Comus because he is in control not only of the style and language but also of the subject matter.

Such is not the case in Lycidas, which mourns the death by drowning of Edward King, a school acquaintance of Milton's. King's body was not recovered and Milton not only mourns his death but is also concerned with the
fate of King's body. Milton is obviously affected by the thought that the body of King is not at rest: "Whilst thee the shores and sounding Seas / Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd" (ll. 154-55). These lines indicate that Milton associates identity, in this case, not only with the soul as he has done previously, but also with the body, the thee of line 154. He also speaks in the poem of Lycidas in heaven: "With nectar pure his oozy Locks he laves, / And hears the unexpressive nuptial Song" (ll. 175-76). This image does not present a soul enjoying a destiny entirely separate from that of its body. "Oozy Locks" are surely locks that appear to be dripping with sea water. Either Lycidas has been raised from the sea to heaven both body and soul, or his soul still partakes to some extent of the doom, the physical experience of the body. Rosemond Tuve calls Lycidas "the most poignant and controlled statement in English poetry of the acceptance of that in the human condition which seems to man unacceptable." What seems unacceptable is "the immutable fact of death . . . the center and heart of the matter: the questioning of a justice that would take the young and leave the ripe, take the devoted and leave the self-indulgent, so too would take the shepherd and leave the destroyer."6 Once again, Milton confronts in this poem problems of identity and order and goes to orthodox theology for consolation in that the pain of Lycidas is
stilled by the angels and he is made "the Genius of the shore" (1.183). However, it seems clear that in this poem Milton associates the identity of King very strongly with his physical body and at least images his soul as retaining physical attributes after being raised to Heaven. The disorder that Milton laments in this poem is the disorder manifested by death that is a result of man's sin, man's separation from God, Logos.

Milton's marked interest in the disorder of death and its violation of physical identity runs consistently throughout his early poems. For example, this problem of identity comprises a part of Milton's lament for Charles Diodati in "Epitaphium Damonis" when he says:

Sicine nos linguïs, tua sic sine nomine
virtus
Ibit, et obscuris numero sociabitur umbris?

(And do you leave us in this way and shall your virtue go down without a name to be numbered with the company of the unknown dead?) (11.21-22)

And again the identity problem appears in the poems, such as "Epitaphium Damonis," Lycidas, Comus, that present heavenly rewards for physical chastity to the chaste person, the subject of the poem, who retains his identity after death. A similar belief is reflected in sonnets such as Sonnet IX, "Lady That in the Prime":

Lady that in the prime of earliest youth,
Wisely hast shunn'd the broad way and the green,
And with those few art eminently seen
That labor up the Hill of Heav'nly Truth.
(11. 1-4)

Apparently God is at the crest of the hill and will reward those who have struggled to keep to the moral path.

In Sonnet XIV there is a clear division of body and soul, but Milton presents the conceit that the earthly good works of Mrs. Thomason will follow her to heaven and speak for her so that she may be rewarded:

Thy Works and Alms and all thy good
Endeavor
Stay'd not behind, nor in the grave were trod;
And spake the truth of thee in glorious Themes
Before the Judge, who thenceforth bid thee rest
And drink thy fill of pure immortal streams.
(11. 5-6,12-14)

This, of course, is a fairly common form of Christian consolation, but Milton seems quite sure that Mrs. Thomason will retain her identity, rather than be absorbed into a heavenly congregation, a concern he voiced in "Epitaphium Damonis."

The "late espoused Saint" of Sonnet XXIII (whether she is Mary Powell or Katherine Woodcock) clearly retains her identity after death. She is a Saint or a soul in heaven, and so there is a division between soul and body
because a mortalist's position is that the soul remains as one with the body in the grave. However, though the subject of the poem is his wife's soul, the image Milton presents is of Alcestis, who is brought back alive from the grave by Hercules and exists physically. Also, she does stoop to embrace him. Then in lines 7 and 8 Milton says: "And such, as yet once more I trust to have / Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint." Whether or not Milton is a mortalist when he writes Sonnet XXIII is simply not clear, for mortalism is not clearly present, nor in any event would it have been politic for Milton to express such a belief in 1658. However, Milton does present a soul who has retained her physical identity and appearance, and apparently he expects after dying not only to retain identity but also to be made whole again, to regain his sight, which is, of course, a physical quality. Therefore Milton presents in Sonnet XXIII a synthesis of expectations about spiritual existence after death and retention of physical identity. Milton, like most seventeenth century Christians, believed literally and specifically in a real God, a real and local Heaven, and in individual existence in Heaven after death. Mortalism includes these expectations within its doctrine, as does orthodox Christianity.

It is not, however, until Milton writes *Paradise Lost*, which by its nature is broad in scope, that he
presents his mortalist argument, for the nature of the epic provides space for such an effort, as does its subject matter.

The major prose source for Milton’s Christian doctrine is, of course, De Doctrina Christiana, which is useful in this study in identifying the basic elements of Milton’s mortalism, elements that are also present in the three major poems of his later years.

In various chapters of De Doctrina Milton states his mortalist position quite clearly. The core of demonstration of the mortalist argument is in Book I, Chapter XIII. Here Milton states that death occurred through man’s sin: "Therefore that bodily death which precedes resurrection came about not naturally but through man’s sin." Milton declares his position: "Man is always said to be made up of body, spirit and soul, whatever we may think about where one starts and the other leaves off. So I will first prove that the whole man dies, and then that each separate [sic] part dies." From John 14: 2, 3, Milton concludes that Christ "quite openly declares that, before the resurrection, there is no dwelling place in heaven even for the saints." Milton argues then that in the Bible "there is not so much as a word about any intermediate state," and concludes that men "will not attain that heavenly existence before their resurrection."

After having supported his idea that the whole man
dies, Milton argues that the three components, body, spirit, and soul, also die. In the beginning of this part of his argument Milton refers to an earlier chapter wherein he shows "that the spirit is not divine but merely human." He says quite clearly in Chapter VII that "the whole man is the soul, and soul man." Having accepted this idea, says Milton, "It must also be conceded that no cause can be found why, when God sentenced the whole sinful man to death, the spirit alone should have been exempted from the punishment of death. . . . So, then before sin came into the world, all man's component parts were equally immortal, but since the advent of sin they have all become equally subject to death, as a result of God's sentence."

Another significant aspect of Milton's mortalism in light of his early works is his concern with the resurrection of individual men. He says, "But in the new spiritual life the intellect is to a very large extent restored to its former state of enlightenment and the will is restored, in Christ, to its former freedom." There are, then, three main components of Milton's mortalist theology that are pertinent to the issue of man's relationship to God: (1) there is no heavenly existence before resurrection; (2) death is a punishment resulting from man's sin and is visited on the whole man, body and soul; and (3) men will be resurrected as
individuals, retaining their unique identities.

Milton's conclusions about the nature of the soul differ, of course, in many respects from the conclusions reached by others who have addressed the issue, and his place in the controversy may be better understood in light of their arguments.

Plato and Aristotle, for example, were concerned about the nature of the soul. Plato says: "The essential nature of the soul is to live. That is, she participates in the Idea or principle of life. But this Idea logically excludes its opposite, which is death." For Plato, the soul is immortal, independent of the body and may be reincarnated.

Aristotle believes, however, in the unity of the soul and body:

If, then we have to give a general formula applicable to all kinds of soul, we must describe it as the first grade of actuality of a natural organized body. That is why we can wholly dismiss as unnecessary the question whether the soul and the body are one: it is as meaningless as to ask whether the wax and the shape given to it by the stamp are one or generally the matter of a thing and that of which it is the matter. Unity has many senses (as many as "is" has), but the most proper and fundamental sense of both is the relation of an actuality to that of which it is the actuality.

Aristotle also defines this unity in the sense of a unified active intellect for all men. He says: "Mind is not at one time knowing and at another not. When mind is set
free from its present conditions it appears as just what it is and nothing more: this alone is immortal and eternal (we do not, however, remember its former activity because, while mind in this sense is impassible, mind as passive is destructible), and without it nothing thinks."¹⁹

Averroës sees this universal, unified, active intellect as a forceful agent acting on that part of man which is intellectually open to suggestions and imagination so that man is the passive receptacle of this cosmic intellectual force. Knowledge exists in man only as it is received. Averroës says in the commentary In Aristolelis De Anima Librum Tertium:

\[
\text{Si enim recipiens esset de natura recepti, tunc res recipiet se, et tunc movens esset motum. Unde necesse est ut sensus recipiens colorum careat colore, et recipiens sonum careat sono. Et hoc propositio est necessaria et sine dubio. Et exiis duabus sequitur quod ista substantia que dicitur intellectur materialis nullam habet in sui natura de formis materialibus istis. Et quia forme materiales sunt aut corpus aut forme in corpore, manifestum est quod ista substantia que dicitur intellectus materialis neque est corpus neque forma in corpore; est igitur non mixtum cum materia omnino.}²¹
\]

Man then does not exist of himself as an individual, intellectual force, but rather exists as a passive receiver of intellect.

Thomas Aquinas felt that this theory of a passive, receptive soul in man was in direct opposition to the
Christian concept of an immortal soul. In various arguments Aquinas always reaches the conclusion that "the human soul retains its own being after the dissolution of the body."21 He says in direct refutation of Averroës' commentary on Aristotle's De Anima: "But the intellectual principle, since it is incorruptible . . . remains separate from the body after the dissolution of the body. Therefore the intellectual principle is not united to the body as its form."22 In regard to Aristotle's concept of the unified active intellect Aquinas concludes "that it is altogether impossible and unreasonable to maintain that there exists one intellect for all men."23

In answer to Aristotle's argument of unity Aquinas replies:

Everything has unity in the same way that it has being. Consequently we must judge of the multiplicity of a thing as we judge of its being. Now it is clear that the intellectual soul, by virtue of its very being, is united to the body as its form; yet after the dissolution of the body, the intellectual soul retains its own being. In like manner the multiplicity of souls is in proportion to the multiplicity of bodies; yet, after the dissolution of the bodies, the souls remain multiplied in their being.24

Thomas Aquinas sets up several arguments proving the immortality of the soul, but says basically that man must believe because of faith: "Other things than God are known because of God, not as if He were the first known thing, but because He is the first cause of our power of
knowledge." These arguments of Plato, Aristotle, Averroës, and Thomas Aquinas briefly outline the problem of attempting to understand the nature of the soul and illustrate the various conclusions they reached.

Milton's place in the seventeenth century mortalist controversy can be better defined in relation to two documents dealing in relative thoroughness with mortalism. One of these documents is the *Racovian Catechisme* (1652), a manual of doctrines in question and answer form whose primary purpose is to prove that the doctrine of the trinity is fallacious. The mortalist argument appears as an integral principle of the general antitrinitarian theory in that, only through Christ as the link between God and man, may man attain immortality. Another of these documents is Richard Overton's *Mans Mortalitie* (1644), which is a treatise that presents supporting arguments for mortalism, the belief that the soul and body exist as one.

Within the framework of the varying mortalist philosophies, the *Racovian Catechisme* is probably closer in thought to Averroës than it is to Richard Overton. As Thomas Aquinas pointed out, the Averroist denial of individual man's spiritual ability to know denies him personal immortality. The *Racovian Catechisme* seems to deny man's personal immortality on much the same basis in that its doctrine denies man's spiritual ability to exist in
individual form after being raised during the final judgment. In the section entitled "Of Christ's Kingly Office" the catechism says: "yet neither did Zedekiah, if you speak properly, burn the city nor doe those that suffer death for the Word of God, properly keep their Soul," meaning the soul as an individual entity. Specifically the question is raised:

Question What bodies shall those that believe in him have?
Answer Such as are like unto his glorious body, Phil. 3 last verse.

The proof text reads: "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." According to the catechism then, the essence of individual souls will be absorbed into the general glory of God and exist within general heavenly excellence without maintaining unique properties.

It seems to me that in Racovian thought Christ raises man to partake of His eternal glory in a much less personal sense than in orthodox concepts of immortality or even in Overton's theory that man will be resurrected at the last judgment by Christ, a notion which the Racovian Catechisme does not discuss. As in Averroës' interpretation of Aristotle's separated intellect, God, through Christ, acts on men who have nothing
of immortality themselves and endows them with the Holy Spirit, a divine spark, so to speak. Then, when resuscitated, men's souls become a part of the glory of Christ and partake of a general immortal splendor. Those who have not believed in and obeyed Christ are punished "with eternal death and damnation,"\textsuperscript{28} a phrase which seems to indicate an absence of spiritual being rather than an eternal suffering of personal torment.

Milton's mortalist conclusions are not those of the \textit{Racovian Catechisme}. It is clear, however, that those who examine the nature of man's soul are vitally concerned with this matter of identity, as is Milton. There is also a more subtle but discernible interest in order, both intellectual and moral, that is apparent throughout the \textit{Racovian Catechisme}. The author reaches conclusions logically drawn from scriptural evidence, states them directly, and then uses those conclusions to build other arguments. Often the questions are posed as if to meet the objections of a third party in a debate, and the author uses rhetorical devices such as analogy to unify and clarify the argument.

Such is the case of a line of argument presenting the role of Christ as an agent of God in a section of the catechism dealing with the person of Christ.

The catechism states that Christ does not have a divine nature but is more than mere man in that he is
the son of God. In the discussion of divine nature a
direct analogy to mortalism is made:

| Question | But when they alledge that Christ is
so constituted of a divine and human
nature, as a man is of a body and
Soul, what answer must we make to
them? |
| Answer | That in this case there is a wide
difference; for they say that the
two Natures in Christ are so unified
that Christ is both God and Man.
Whereas the soul and body in a man
are so conjoined, as that a man is
neither soul nor body. For neither
dothisoulnorthebodyseverally
constitute a Person. But as the
divine Nature doth by itself constitute
a Person, so must the humane by
itself of necessity also constitute.

The catechism establishes, then, that the soul and body
are so joined as to be one unit and that Christ's nature
is not divine. Through the juxtaposition of these two
ideas the suggestion that they are involved one with the
other is strengthened. Reinforcing the idea of Christ as
agent the catechism says that Christ may be called the
Father of Eternity or everlasting father in accordance
with Isaiah 9:6 because he is the author of eternal life
for those who obey him and he lives forever to protect
and shelter them.

In Mans Mortallitie Overton deals for the most part
with the definition of the soul and concludes that there
is no such thing as a separated soul or, indeed, a soul,
but that man exists as a totally unified essence. Because
of Adam's sin man is totally mortal, so that he is absolutely dependent upon Christ who, during the last judgment, will resurrect those who deserve eternal life in God and condemn the wicked. Overton, using both allegory and ridicule from time to time, supports his theories by interpretations of Biblical prooftexts and reason. Unlike Averroës and the Racovian Catechisme, which support a belief in a general intellect or soul, \textit{Mans Mortallitie} is concerned with the unity of the body and soul in the individual. There is no such thing as an oversoul for Overton. In the title page Overton describes his work as: "a treatise wherin 'tis proved, both theologically and philosophically, that whole man (as a rational creature) is a compound wholly mortal, contrary to that common distinction of soul and body: and that the present going of the soul into heaven or hell is a mere fiction; and that at the resurrection is the beginning of our immortality, and then actual condemnation and salvation, and not before."\textsuperscript{31} Here the purpose is quite obviously to prove the oneness of soul and body and to emphasize the resurrection of both as one entity during the last judgment.

In the first few pages Overton sets up his argument that Adam's immortality was dependent on his innocence and was made mortal by sin. He says: "That what of Adam was immortall through Innocency, was to be mortallized
by Transgression: but whole Adam (quatinus Animal ratione) was by Innocency immortal: Ergo, all, and every part, even whole Man was lyable to Death by Sinne."32

This is based on Genesis 2.17 and presents the idea of corporate guilt through sin wherefore Adam would pass on to his descendants his total mortality, because his descendants could inherit only his corruptness, not his innocence. Overton supports this further with his concept of punishment. He says basically that if a body is only an instrument for the soul (a house so to speak) then punishment by death of the body makes no sense "as if a magistrate should hang the Hatchet, and spare the Man that beate a man's braines out with it."33

Overton continues to reason that God does not assist in this matter of a soul because God gave creatures being and set up nature to proceed in due course: "So man in his kind begets man, corruptable man begets nothing but what is corruptable, not halfe mortall, halfe immortall; halfe angel, halfe man, but compleat man totally mortall; for through mortall organs immortallity cannot be conveyed, or therein possibly reside."33 From this he concludes that only through Christ's power can an incorruptible body be raised, basing his conclusions on I Corinthians 15.36: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." He says that the question of the disposition of souls in such forms as would result from miscarriages
is a mystery that will be taken care of by Christ. As for the strange births of such creatures as apes and satyrs, Overton says that it is not possible to procreate out of kind according to Genesis and that "Christ dyed not for the rational part separated from the material, nor the material from the rational . . . but for the natural production by the conjunction of both Sexes legitimate from Adam, and not such unnatural by-blows." Other creatures, however, says Overton, citing Biblical prooftexts, will be delivered from death at the Resurrection because death came on all creatures by Adam's sin.

Overton states his mortalist doctrine quite clearly in *Mans Mortallitie*. He does not accept orthodox interpretations of Biblical scriptures that support a belief in the immortality of a separated soul, saying basically that these interpretations are influenced by Christians' having adopted Plato's invention of the soul. Like Aristotle, Overton believes in the unity of soul and body as a total essence. To Overton, however, the Averroëian idea of a separated possible intellect is not acceptable, for it would preclude the concept of a totally ethical God from whom imperfections cannot proceed. There is no such thing as a "divine spark" bestowed upon man in Overton's philosophy.

Undoubtedly Overton's treatise occupies a special
place in seventeenth century religious argument. It voiced a serious threat to orthodox doctrines, a threat that the orthodox had been feeling for some time, for in 1579 John Calvin wrote *An Excellent Treatise of the Immortalitie of the Soule* in defense of the orthodox position. Then after *Mans Mortallitie* was published in 1643 the mortalist heresy was attacked in a number of documents in England: 1) Thomas Edwards' *Gangraena: or, a catalogue and discovery of the errours, Heresies, Blasphemies ... vented and acted in England in these last four years, 1645*; 2) Walter Charleton's *Immortality of the Human Soul, 1657*; and Richard Baxter's *Of the Nature of Spirits, Especially man's soul, 1682*. About 1699 a document that supported Overton's theory was published, Henry Layton's *An Argument Concerning the Human Souls Seperate [sic] Subsistance*, but the treatise actually contributed very little that was new to the controversy.

Milton's position as a mortalist, then, is not unique. What sets Milton apart from those polemicists who espoused the doctrine is his stature as a poet, the reflection of his theological doctrines in his later poetry, and his reputation as one of the leading puritans of his time. His conclusions about the nature of the soul that are set down in *De Doctrina* may be found in part in his last three major poems, primarily in *Paradise Lost*, and they offer, to some extent, solutions to the problems related
to death that he confronted in his earlier poetry, the problems of order and identity, with which other philosophers struggled.

The first of these elements of Milton's mortalism in *Paradise Lost* is that death is a punishment resulting from man's sin and is visited on the whole man, body and soul. The first thing to consider, of course, is that in *Paradise Lost* death is not a result of natural process but a result of Satan's lustful union with Sin:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{such joy thou took'st} \\
\text{With me Sin in secret, that my womb} \\
\text{conceiv'd} \\
\text{A growing burden. (II.765-67)}
\end{align*}
\]

The burden, of course, is Death, and in the allegory of Book II Satan acknowledges Death as his "fair Son" (II. 818). Therefore, death results from Satan and partakes of Satan's evil and sterility. An opposing idea in the thematic structure of the poem is, of course, that God creates life which is fertile and abundant, and all of God's creatures partake of life. Death is not a part of the natural process of the created world. But since its nature, in allegorical terms, is to be eternally ravenous, Death waits, so to speak, for the hunger to be satisfied (II.847). Through his own sin, not through natural process, man becomes food for death, because a bond or bridge between man and death must be furnished by Satan's followers:
Sin and Death amain
Following his track, such was the will of Heav'n
Pav'd after him a broad and beat'n way
Over the dark Abyss, whose boiling Gulf
Tamely endur'd a Bridge of wondrous length
From Hell continu'd reaching th' utmost
Orb
Of this frail World; by which the Spirits
perverse
With easy intercourse pass to and fro
To tempt or punish mortals, except whom
God and good Angels guard by special grace.
(III.1024-33)

Milton presents this philosophical concept in allegory so
that the relationship between man and Satan, Sin and Death
is clearly pictured as a result of man's choosing sin.
For prelapsarian man, in Paradise Lost, there simply is
no relationship between man and death, physical or spir­
itual, although the possibility of such a relationship
exists.

In Satan's promise to furnish prey to appease Death's
famine, the prey is man, "A race of upstart Creatures"
(II.834) whose creation is foretold in heaven. No men­
tion is made in this passage of the method by which man
will be delivered to Death.

I believe that the first cause of disorder in death,
an issue with which Milton is most concerned even in his
early poetry, is presented at the end of Book II, Satan's
journey through chaos. The first cause is Satan's pact
with Chaos. Satan proposes the terms of their agreement:

direct my course;
Directed, no mean recompence it brings
To your behoof, if I that Region lost,
All usurpation thence expell'd reduce
To her original darkness and your sway
(Which is my present journey) and once more
Erect the Standard there of ancient Night;
Yours be th' advantage all, mine the revenge.

(II.980-87)

Chaos answers:

If that way be your walk, you have not far;
So much the nearer danger; go and speed;
Havoc and spoil and ruin are my gain.

(II.1007-09)

So, where these elements exist, Satan and Chaos are at work. The proposed result, of course, is that with Satan's victory in gaining man, the structured area around earth will become once again chaotic and Satan will have his revenge. What happens, of course, is that evil and chaos become interdependent and interrelated. From this point in Paradise Lost the promise that Satan makes to Death to supply Death's food is irrevocably expanded to include method, and so disorder becomes a part of the experience of death.

This irrevocable unity of evil and disorder is imaged in Book X, after the fall of man, when Satan is involuntarily transformed to the shape of a serpent. Chaos as a power is obviously as strong as evil and linked with evil:

His Visage drawn he felt to sharp and spare,
His Arms clung to his Ribs, his Legs entwining
Each other, till supplanted down he fell
A monstrous Serpent on his Belly prone,
Reluctant, but in vain: a greater power
Now rul'd him, punish'd in the shape he sinn'd,
According to his doom: he would have spoke,
But hiss for hiss return'd with forked tongue
To forked tongue, for now were all transform'd
Alike to Serpents all as accessories
To his bold Riot. (X.511-21)

It is clear here that the pact with Chaos entered into by Satan is now involuntary and is binding on Satan's followers. Because Death is an offspring of Satan and one of his followers, the pact is also binding on Death.

Adam, in Book XI, is granted a vision of the future and sees for the first time the consequences of his sin, disorder and death. Michael shows him death by violence (XI.429-49), by disease (XL.477-94), and by old age (XI.535-37) and points out that though there are many ways of death, all men must die. Horrified by what he has seen, Adam asks:

Why should not Man,
Retaining still Divine similitude
In part, from such deformities be free,
And for his Maker's Image sake exempt?
(XI.511-14)

Surely the reader hears echoes here of the young Milton lamenting the deaths of his niece, his friends, the
Christian martyrs. It is also possible that this "In part" is a reference to the separated soul, the traditional theology of the nature of the soul reflected in his earlier poetry. In Paradise Lost, however, in the work of his maturity, Milton supplies an answer that differs from the traditional consolation of the early poems:

Thir Maker's Image, answer'd Michael,
then
Forsook them, when themselves they vilifi'd
To serve ungovern'd appetite, and took
His image whom they served, a brutish vice,
Inductive mainly to the sin of Eve.
Therefore so abject is their punishment,
Disfiguring not God's likeness, but their own,
Or if his likeness, by themselves defac't
While they pervert pure Nature's heathful rules
To loathsome sickness, worthily, since they
God's Image did not reverence in themselves.

(XI.515-25)

Milton's answer in these lines is basically, of course, that man brought the punishment on himself and so in embracing sin, became subject to death and inevitably subject to the chaos that is the manner of deliverance to death. Man, like Death in Book II, after he first sins has an "ungovern'd appetite" that disfigures, disorders his likeness. So it is clear in this passage that Milton is commenting on the nature of death and the nature of sin.
Sin, not natural process, brings man to death, and sin is chaotic. All that is good exists within the mind of God, the Logos, and is naturally orderly. All that is evil exists exiled from God's presence. The order that is God, however, permeates the universe and Death becomes a part of this order, not voluntarily, but because of his nature which is ravenous. Death becomes a blessing to man who has embraced Sin and therefore would decay eternally without total death of body and soul. Milton presents this vision of God as order in Book X in God's comment to the angels as they observe the "goings on" in Hell:

See with what heat these Dogs of Hell advance To waste and havoc yonder World, which I So fair and good created, and had still Kept in that state, had not the folly of Man Let in these wasteful Furies, who impute Folly to mee, so doth the Prince of Hell And his Adherents, that with so much ease I suffer them to enter and possess A place so heav'ny, and conniving seem To gratify my scornful Enemies, That laugh, as if I transported with some fit Of Passion, I to them had quitted all, At random yielded up to their misrule; And know not that I call'd and drew them thither My Hell-hounds, to lick up the draff and filth Which man's polluting Sin with taint hath shed On what was pure, till cramm'd and gorg'd, nigh burst With suckt and glutted offal, at one sling Of thy victorious Arm, well-pleasing Son, Both Sin, and Death, and yawning Grave at last Through Chaos hurl'd, obstruct the mouth of Hell For ever, and seal up his ravenous Jaws. Then Heav'n and Earth renew'd shall be made pure To sanctity that shall receive no stain: Till then the Curse pronounc'd on both precedes. (11.616-640)
Man then exists chaotically after he sins, and only God can restore or resurrect him. "Thir Maker's Image" which "Forsook them" is, in this mortalist context, order, Logos.

Michael also emphasizes that life is a gift from God and that man must be responsible for the quality of life. Such things as the span of his life must be left to God. Obviously life and order come from God, for Satan can give only sin and chaos. Michael says: "Nor love thy Life, nor hate; but what thou liv'st / Live well, how long or short permit to Heav'n" (XI.553-54). In these lines Milton offers consolation that is dependent on mature theological conclusions about God, the nature of salvation and the nature of the promise of salvation, all of which rest on the efficacy of God.

This consolation is presented more fully in Book XII within the mortalist context that the soul and body die together to be raised together and it is clearly stated in the lines that refer to "a death like sleep, / A gentle wafting to immortal Life" (XII.434-35). This consolation differs, of course, from the traditional comforts Milton offers in his early works--that though the body dies, the soul goes immediately to heaven--in that the consolation of Paradise Lost supplies causes for the apparent lack of pattern and purpose in death and assurance that God will save both body and soul in time and preserve
individual identity. Milton presents answers in various guises in *Paradise Lost* to questions he had confronted as a younger poet.

Milton's beliefs about identity after death do not appear to change a great deal. In his earlier poems he presents the souls of his niece and friends in heaven as individuals. In *De Doctrina* he says that men will be resurrected as individuals. In *Paradise Lost* he is still concerned with identity and presents its loss as the ultimate calamity in the great consultation of Book II. Belial, who seems the intellectual fallen angel and certainly the most subtle, voices this most profound fear as he counters Moloch's plan for open war:

Thus repuls'd, our final hope
Is flat despair: we must exasperate
Th' Almighty Victor to spend all his rage,
And that must end us, that must be our cure,
To be no more; sad cure; for who would lose,
Though full of pain, this intellectual being. (II.142-47)

In succeeding lines Belial points out that nothing is worse than this loss of identity and in the final decision, Satan and the fallen angels take no action which will endanger their existence. Instead they decide to engage in a sort of guerrilla warfare for dominion of newly created man. There is, even for Satan, no prize worth the risk of being atomized.
Milton treats this identity issue more positively in his mortalist doctrine. Adam and Eve, like their descendants, will be restored or resurrected at the final judgment to their prelapsarian relationship to God. Paradise is compared to Eden at the time of resurrection:

for then the Earth
Shall all be Paradise, far happier place
Than this of Eden, and far happier days.
(XII.463-65)

Men die as individuals, possessing intellect, reason—identity in short—and will be raised as whole men, body and soul, possessing identity, to a pure relationship to God, conforming to His will. Thus Paradise after the final judgment will be the new Eden. This is a major premise of Milton's mortalism.

Milton's mortalist theology reflects his mature conclusions about the nature of man's relationship to God, and these conclusions solve problems that had troubled the younger poet. This relationship is personal and individualizes in that the resurrection will raise and make whole individual men. The purity of the relationship after the final judgment when the whole man is raised is a restoration of the order that existed before the Fall of man so that, for example, physical sight is restored to the blind. Because sin has resulted in a barrier in understanding and acceptance of God's will,
man must constantly work toward the goal of heaven and a restored conformity to the will of God. Within this context, also, man is not inherently evil. He has rather an affinity for his own kind, and when Adam chooses to sin with Eve, Adam rejects perfect conformity to the will of God. The effect is a kind of spiritual blindness with which man must struggle until Christ as God's agent restores sight at the final judgment.

The mortalist position is at least partly a result of Milton's lifelong concern with the questions of order, including the order of abstract justice, which belongs to God, and personal identity. It seems likely that the mature Milton, after his experiences with the Civil War, Cromwell's administration, and the restoration of Charles II, concluded that meaningful answers to the philosophical questions surrounding death, suffering, and the realization of individual potential were to be found, ultimately, not in the relationship of man to other men or in the unquestioning acceptance of traditional theological concepts, but in man's personal relationship to God. His mortalist theory grew out of his concern about the nature of this relationship and his mature perception of its restitution after the resurrection at the final judgment.
Notes


2 Ibid., p. 142.

3 Ibid., p. 161.

4 Ibid., p. 127.

5 Ibid., p. 143.


8 Ibid., pp. 400-01.

9 Ibid., p. 402.

10 Ibid., p. 403.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., p. 404.

13 Ibid., p. 318.

14 Ibid., p. 404.

15 Ibid., p. 478.


17 Ibid., p. 151.

19 Ibid., p. 592 (Bk. III: Ch. 5).

20 Averroës, "In Aristolelis De Anima Librum Tertium" in *Commentarium Magnum in Libros De Anima*, ed. Henricus Austryn Wolfson, David Baneth, Franciscus Howard Fobes (Cambridge, Mass.: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953), p. 385 (3.4). Averroës translation: "For if the thing which is receiving should be of the nature of the thing received, then the thing would receive itself; and then, the moving thing would be the thing moved. This idea necessitates that the senses receiving color lack color, and senses receiving sound lack sound. Without doubt this proposition is necessary. From these two things it follows that that substance, which is called the material intellect, has nothing in its own nature from the material forms. And because material forms are body or forms in body, it is manifest that that substance which is called material intellect is neither body nor form in body; therefore, it is not mixed with material at all."


22 Ibid., p. 386.

23 Ibid., p. 390.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., p. 473.


27 Ibid., p. 158.

28 Ibid., p. 147.

29 Ibid., p. 28.

30 Ibid., p. 62.

31 Richard Overton, *Mans Mortallitie or a Treatise*
Amsterdam: by John Canne, 1644) title page (STC 0641 under Robert Overton).

32 Ibid., p. 22.
33 Ibid., p. 6.
34 Ibid., pp. 46-47.
35 Ibid., pp. 48-49.
36 Ibid., p. 49.
37 Ibid., p. 50.
Milton's third, and perhaps most significant, theological conclusion involves the concept of the trinity. In *De Doctrina* and in his later poems, Milton is, I believe, antitrinitarian though not purely Arian, because Milton considers the creation *ex Deo* rather than *ex nihilo*, which is Arian. Christ, however, in Milton's presentation is a being created by God in time, so there was a time when Christ was not. Milton's vision of Christ is very like that of Arius. Critics disagree, of course, about this problem, much of the discussion examining the degree of Milton's unorthodoxy.

That Milton expresses antitrinitarian views both in *De Doctrina* and more subtly in *Paradise Lost* is fairly clear. His Arianism is not so clear because there are doctrinal variations, such as the dissimilar creation theories. After 1660 Milton could not, for safety's sake, openly espouse so unorthodox and, in powerful court circles, so unpopular a doctrine as antitrinitarianism. Belief in the doctrine, however, was widespread in England during Milton's lifetime, and in the various groups that
espoused the doctrine there are points of common interest. Such interests appear in Milton's later work in his concerns with order and identity and his presentation of Christ in the role of mediator between God and men. Christopher Hill makes this point: "A desire to exalt the dignity of man is traditional in the popular anti-Trinitarian heresy of Familists and Socinians." Hill names several antitrinitarian groups and individuals, contending that "Wherever Milton got his anti-Trinitarianism from, there was plenty of it about in the England of the sixteen-forties--and indeed in the two preceding generations." Hill also points out that some of the antitrinitarians were also mortalists, as was Milton.

An examination of Socinianism provides a context from which Milton's position may be better understood in light of seventeenth century theological argument. Earl Morse Wilbur says in A History of Unitarianism that the beginnings of Socinianism "were only a few years later than those of Protestantism itself." Socinians, of course, follow the tradition of those who throughout history have advocated the use of reason in religion. Indeed, the leading principles of Socinianism are those of an intellectually based movement rather than an emotional fanaticism. These three leading principles are: "first, complete mental freedom in religion rather than bondage to creeds or confessions; second, the unrestricted
use of reason in religion, rather than reliance upon external authority or past tradition; third, generous tolerance of differing religious views and usages rather than insistence upon uniformity in doctrine, worship or polity." Socinianism's appeal to reason in religion was doubtless the major factor that drew such men as Paul Best, John Biddle, and John Milton into the controversy surrounding it.

This controversy was based primarily on one doctrine, antitrinitarianism. Other Socinian doctrines, such as mortalism, were thought by establishment theologians to be heretical and were denounced; however, these other beliefs were not as influential as antitrinitarianism. It becomes apparent, too, when reading Wilbur's historical account that the Socinian movement survived and acquired followers not only because of its appeal to reason but also through the personal force of its several leaders.

The first of these leaders was a Spaniard, Michael Servetus. Wilbur says, "While the Protestant Reformation began in 1517 when Luther posted his theses at Wittenberg, it was only fourteen years later that Servetus in 1531, by publishing his first book in criticism of the doctrine of the Trinity, initiated the [Socinian] movement." Servetus says in *De Trinitatis erroribus* that there is in the Bible "not one word about the Trinity, nor about its Persons, nor about an Essence, nor about a unity of
Servetus was concerned about the corruption in the Church and went to Basel to work with the reformists. Because of his views Servetus disappeared, probably into France, for twenty-one years. Eventually he returned to Geneva where he was tried for heresy, with Calvin acting as prosecutor. Among other unorthodox positions, Servetus said that infant baptism was an invention of the Devil. In line with the practices of the time, Servetus was found guilty in 1553 and burned with his heretical book tied to his thigh.\(^11\)

Another man who was to be influential in the Socinian movement was Laelius Socinus, an Italian. He also became concerned with corruption in the church, interested himself in reform, and persuaded that the belief in the trinity was not scriptural, wrote about it. Soon regarded as a heretic, he eventually wrote a confession of faith that satisfied his persecutors. Wilbur calls this confession "an exceedingly interesting document"\(^12\) because in it Laelius Socinus neatly sidesteps the heretical questions. Wilbur says of the confession: "While veiling the subject in vague and equivocal phrases, he studiously refrains from revealing either what he believes or what he disbelieves on any of the disputed points."\(^13\) In 1562, when he was only 37 years old, Laelius Socinus died, and his manuscripts and books came into possession of his nephew.
Faustus Socinus. It is generally believed by scholars that the writings of Faustus were taken directly from his uncle's library and as such exerted a major influence in the movement that took its name from the uncle and nephew.

Faustus Socinus was fourteen years younger than his uncle and reared in a Catholic family. He spent twelve years in the Medicean Court and after the death of his patron left Italy. He spent some three years in Basel, where he wrote *De Jesu Christo Servatore*. Sixteen years later this work was published in Poland, where Faustus was then living. Wilbur says: "The thesis of this work was, in brief, this: that Christ is called our Savior not because he suffered the penalty that was justly due to us, thus appeasing the wrath of an offended God; but because he made known to us the way of eternal salvation, which we may attain by imitating him." In Wilbur's opinion this was Faustus' most original work and his most valuable contribution to theology. Among other things, Socinus denied a belief in predestination and envisioned Christ as a sort of heavenly mediator between man and God. It was the constant aim of Socinus to reduce and simplify the fundamentals of Christianity. Socinus spent the last years of his life in a small village in Poland and died in 1604, after which his writings were gathered and published separately. Finally, in 1668, a complete
collected works was published in Amsterdam.

Socinian groups in Poland were persecuted by the Catholic government, and various groups fled into Germany, Transylvania, Holland, and eventually into England. In England Socinianism experienced new growth through the widespread but secret distribution of tracts, and after the middle of the seventeenth century such tracts were readily available. In 1640, when the Presbyterians had gained ascendancy in the Parliament, they generally condemned the Socinian doctrines. One of the more prominent opponents of the Socinians was Rev. Francis Cheynell, who published *Rise, Growth and Danger of Socinianisme* in 1643, and *The Divine Triunity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* in 1650. The Rev. Thomas Edwards published in 1645 *Gangraena: or, a catalogue and discovery of the errors, Heresies, Blasphemies . . . vented and acted in England in these last four years*. A number of the errors, heresies and blasphemies named in this work were Socinian. In 1645 Paul Best, a member of Parliament, was charged with denying the trinity and the deity of Christ and sentenced to be hanged. Two years later he was released, after making a conciliatory statement that was not, however, a retraction.

About this time John Biddle began to be influential in the Socinian movement. Biddle, a student at Magdalen Hall, Oxford, received an M. A. degree in 1641. Because
of his writings, he was called before the Magistrates and charged with heresy in 1644, after which he wrote a confession of faith and was released. Later, however, he was jailed again and the case dragged on for over five years. He appealed to the younger Sir Henry Vane, who had also been a student at Magdalen Hall, but Vane's intervention was ineffectual. Biddle, trying to draw attention to his case, published XII Arguments together with his letter to Vane, but his book, after causing a great sensation, was burned. However, a second edition was printed within the year because of the demand for it. Biddle published a number of works and through them exerted widespread influence among Socinians in England and in Holland, constantly urging that reason be used in the interpretation of scriptures and advocating mutual religious toleration.17 Among his works is a catechism which Wilbur says "presents the Christian faith in simple terms in the very language of the Scripture."18

For a time Biddle was free, but he was once again arrested for heresy. Cromwell handled the case and finally banished Biddle to St. Mary's Castle in the Scilly Islands. After three years Biddle was freed and once again began to meet with his followers on Sunday afternoons. These meetings were held privately after the restoration of Charles II in 1660. Eventually, however, Biddle was arrested and imprisoned for being unable to pay his fine.
Because of the unhealthy conditions in the prison, Biddle fell ill and died two days after being removed from the prison. After Biddle's death in 1662 and the death of his disciple Thomas Firmin in 1697, the strength of the Socinian movement in England declined, not to be revived until almost a century had passed.

Servetus, Laelius and Faustus Socinus, and John Biddle were all convinced that reason should be applied to religion. This appeal to reason was the major note sounded by the Socinian movement, and its most consistent doctrine was antitrinitarianism. Leaders differed slightly in stressing attacks on infant baptism and predestination, and in supporting mortalism, but it seems that the differences were mutually tolerated. As time passed, mutual religious toleration was advocated by this group that had suffered persecution for over 100 years. Possibly it was because of this tolerance and reason that Socinianism relied so heavily on its leaders for unity. Individual fanaticism is not the reaction of a man dedicated to reason, nor was strict doctrine imposed upon Socinian followers by a religious hierarchy. The personal force of men like Laelius and Faustus Socinus and John Biddle held the movement together in a time of persecution, but without such leaders the movement languished.

In 1605 the first Polish edition of the Racovian Catechism was published. This is a Socinian manual of
doctrines in question-and-answer form for which scripture serves as the final authority. The English Parliament ordered that this document be burned because of heresy, and it was burned in 1614. However, other editions were later published.

The Racovian Catechism plainly sets forth the doctrine of antitrinitarianism in the title page affirmation and in so doing, emphasizes the human nature of Christ: "That no other save the Father of our Lorde Jesus Christ, is that one God of Israel, and that the man Jesus of Nazareth, who was born of the virgin, and no other betides [sic], or before him, is the only begotten Sonne of God." In Chapter II the catechism says that those Christians who "commonly hold, that not onely the Father, but also the Son, and the Holy Spirit are persons in one and the same Deitie" are "grievously mistaken, producing arguments for it out of the Scriptures ill understood." In

The catechism also argues quite clearly for the interdependence of two of its major doctrinal issues, antitrinitarianism and mortalism:

Question. But when they alledge that Christ is so constituted of a divine and human Nature, as a man of a body and Soul, what answer must we make to them?

Answer. That in this case there is a wide difference; for they say that the two Natures in Christ are so unified that Christ is both God and Man. Whereas the soul and body in a man
are so conjoin'd, as that a man is neither soul nor body. For neither doth the soul nor the body severally constitute a person. But as the divine Nature doth by it self constitute a Person, so must the human by it self of necessity also constitute.  

Here the structure of the argument as well as its premise of comparison underlines the strong bonds between antitrinitarianism and mortalism.

The Racovian Catechisme treats a number of points of doctrine and church practices widely disputed by seventeenth century polemicists and so provides something of an opportunity for comparisons in context. For example, tradition in church practices was under attack by diverse groups. The Racovian Catechisme says that tradition is totally unnecessary, and even a "great hazard to the Christian Faith." William Ames, whom the Dictionary of National Biography names a "champion of Calvinistic views in opposition to Arminians" who supported tradition, also rejects its authority. He says, "True faith is bred in us by Word and Promises, by preaching and knowledge of word of God, not traditions or men's dreams and customs."  

Protestants as diverse as Ames and the Socinians did agree in rejecting church tradition as doctrinal authority and replacing it with individual interpretation of the scriptures. Each believed, however, that his interpretation was the correct one and that different interpretations
were false, as we have seen. On other questions there are widely differing opinions. For example, Ames, as a Calvinist, supports the doctrines of original sin, grace, and election. The Racovian Catechisme rejects these doctrines, saying there is "no such thing as original sinne" or predestination and that redemption means "freeing from sins so that we no longer serve them and freeing from the punishment of those sins," which is "eternal death and damnation." There are, however, some fundamental agreements: one is the belief that death came on man through his own fault, although, of course, within Calvinism this fall was predestined; another is the insistence on hierarchy. In one of his works, Ames devotes a good portion of the lecture for the 13th Lord's Day to setting up a heavenly analogy for civil hierarchy and concludes that "Magistrates and Commonwealths are only by Gods institution keepers of the lives of their subjects under them, in order to the publick good of all." The Racovian Catechisme also supports the idea of hierarchical obedience, likening the duty owed to one's parents to the duty owed by citizens to magistrates.

This Puritan concept of hierarchy is based on man's direct obedience to the will of God, which man ascertains by individual exegesis of the scriptures. The individual's interpretation is then imposed on those subordinate to him, such as his wife, children, and household retainers.
This paternal structure of obedience is extended in civil matters to magistrates or agents of the government, so while the seeds of civil disobedience are clearly present, there is a distinct support of civil order so long as adherence to it does not contravene God's will. Within this framework there is no priestly mediator between man and God, such as exists in the Roman Catholic tradition, and so the role of Christ as mediator is enhanced. A case may be made that while the restoration of Charles II to the throne of England reestablished the central authority of the Anglican Church and its system of church government, the Puritan legacy of hierarchical paternal obedience within the social structure was maintained to a large degree and later manifested in independent congregational sects both in England and in the colonies of the new world. Many of the Socinian principles of the seventeenth century surface later, for example, in the Unitarian Church—and Calvinism survives in Presbyterianism. Both denominations have congregational forms of church government while maintaining separate doctrines.

Central to this Puritan concept of hierarchy is the role of Christ. It is as though these independent religious thinkers came to a fork in the road. One path leads to Calvinism and the emphasis on Christ as divine savior, coeternal with God. The other path leads to
antitrinitarianism, which emphasizes the human nature of Christ as the son of God and his role as mediator between God and man. Both sects, however, recognize the immense gulf between God and man and provide a bridge. For the Calvinist this bridge is God's gift of grace to the elect; for the antitrinitarian the bridge is the person of Christ, who as God's agent during the final judgment will raise man. It is apparent, after an examination of Milton's work, that to some extent he too traveled this doctrinal road and when he arrived at the fork, joined the antitrinitarians. The disavowal of traditio, and by extension the Church of England, and the concern with order he shared with both Protestant groups, but his rejection of predestination, man's innate depravity, and election as the means of salvation precluded his joining with the Calvinists. It may be significant also that Calvinist doctrine by Milton's lifetime was clearly defined and theologically limited in the sense that its major tenets had been set down and supported by a number of brilliant and thorough scholars--Calvin, Knox, Ames, for example--so that there was not much opportunity for individual theological theorizing in such an established body of doctrine. Such was not the case with the antitrinitarians, for whom the antitrinitarian stance was the only central doctrine. On other doctrinal matters there was disagreement and a resulting alignment with
various independents. To say, then, that Milton was antitrinitarian is not to bind him to the acceptance of other doctrines or to the theology of any one particular group. He acted as an independent agent, accepting, rejecting, working out his own theories, and following his own path. This path led him eventually to the theory of ex Deo creation, a belief in mortalism, and antitrinitarianism.

The theological conclusions at which Milton arrived are reflected in his poetry. In his early poetry Milton is clearly orthodox in his views of the trinity. However, his poetry reflects a strong concern with order and identity, as I have argued in previous chapters. This concern with identity and order, along with his belief in the efficacy of reason, leads Milton to the antitrinitarian view. Aware of the gulf that separates man from God and aware of man's inability to bridge this gulf, Milton in his later poems defines the role of Christ in the man/God relationship as that of mediator and savior and emphasizes the unique nature of Christ by establishing the continuity of his role. Satan's role also is continuous and significant, for it clearly presents the dark side of man's dual nature, the attractiveness of evil and the ease with which man succumbs to its blandishments. If Satan were less attractive in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, the triumph of good and the glory of man
confronted with such choice would be diminished. In this sense then, the roles of Christ and Satan are not only theologically sound within Milton's doctrinal argument but also dramatically sound within the context of epic poetry.

Milton's concern with the gulf between God and man and man's inability to bridge this gulf unaided is reflected to a large extent in his via negativa presentation of the character of God in *Paradise Lost*. God is not presented in a material sense, but rather Milton emphasizes His attributes. In the hymn of Book III, God is: "Omnipotent, / Immutable, Immortal, Infinite" (l. 372-73). In this passage also God is presented in the negative way:

*thyself invisible
Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sit'st
Thron'd inaccessible, but when thou shad'st
The full blaze of thy beams, and through a cloud
Drawn round about thee like a radiant Shrine,
Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear.

(III.375-80)

God is presented in this passage as dwelling in light so bright that it appears as darkness.

A number of other passages in *Paradise Lost* voice this via negativa image of God. In Book V, for example, God "Amidst as from a flaming Mount, whose top / Brightness had made invisible, thus spake" (ll. 598-99). And in Book VI He addresses Abdiel: "Before the seat supreme;
from whence a voice / From midst a Golden Cloud thus
mild was heard" (11. 27-28).

In Book VII when Raphael relates the story of the
creation to Adam, Raphael points out the inability of
Adam to comprehend:

And thus the Godlike Angel answer'd mild.
This also thy request with caution askt
Obtain: though to recount Almighty works
What words or tongue of Seraph can suffice,
Or heart of man suffice to comprehend?
(11. 110-14)

And again in Book X God speaks "from his secret Cloud"
(1. 32).

It is apparent from these selective examples and
other passages in Paradise Lost that Milton was concerned
with this incomprehensible gulf between God and man. It
is the nature of Christ within the antitrinitarian con­
text and also in Paradise Lost to bridge this gulf.

The role of Christ is most dramatically presented in
Book III of Paradise Lost. I believe that the first few
lines establish the relationship of Christ to God as sub­
ordinate; however brief, there was a time when Christ
was not. Christ is presented as the beam of light emanat­
ing from the source of light, God, as the stream flowing
from the fountain source:

Hail holy Light, offspring of Heav'n first-born,
Or of th' Eternal Coeternal beam
May I express thee unblam'd? since God is Light
And never but in unapproached Light
Dwelt from Eternity, dwelt then in thee,
Bright effluence of bright essence increate.
Or hear'st thou rather pure Ethereal stream,
Whose Fountain who shall tell? before the Sun,
Before the Heavens thou wert. . . . (III.1-9)

Later in Book III, Milton again refers to Christ as being a creation of God: "Thee next they sang of all Creation first" (1. 383). A trinitarian would more clearly present Christ as being coeternal with the Father.

Thus in Paradise Lost Milton presents a subtle anti-trinitarian view of the Father and the Son. Then he clearly establishes the role of Christ as the savior of mankind whom God created "Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall". (III.99). This free will is also possessed by the fallen angels:

Such I created all th' Ethereal Powers
And Spirits, both them who stood and them
who fail'd;
Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell. (III.100-02)

However, man will have available to him a grace not applicable to the fallen angels:

Man falls deceiv'd
By th' other first: Man therefore shall find grace,
The other none. (III.130-32)

In this pivotal book of Paradise Lost, Milton makes it clear that the sacrificial role of Christ as savior is
voluntary. God says that Man "with his whole posterity must die" (III.209) unless some being will die that mankind be saved. "Dwells in all Heaven Charity so dear?" God asks (III.216). There is a silence in heaven and man would have been lost, says Milton,

had not the Son of God,
   In whom the fulness dwells of love divine,
   His dearest mediation thus renew'd.
   (III.224-26)

There follows a speech by Christ indicating his willingness to die and his absolute faith that in God he will live again. In this speech, I believe, are two subtle theological allusions, one to antitrinitarianism and a second to mortalism. Christ declares his trust in God as his creator: "thou hast giv'n me to possess / Life in myself for ever, by thee I live" (III.234-44), indicating that he is of God and emphasizing his role as willing sacrifice. Christ says:

Thou wilt not leave me in the loathsome grave
   His prey, nor suffer my unspotted Soul
   For ever with corruption there to dwell.
   (III.247-49)

and indicates that as warrior he shall triumph over Death and redeem man from the grave, body and soul:

While by thee rais'd I ruin all my Foes,
Death last, and with his Carcass glut the Graves:
Then with the multitude of my redeem'd
Shall enter Heav'n long absent, and return.
   (III.258-61)
The multitude that Christ will lead to heaven seem to be those who, within the mortalist context, sleep in the grave until raised by Christ during the final judgment.

Christ's role here is clearly unique both theologically and dramatically. He is obviously closest to God in power, in love, in time and yet is not God, is not coeternal. Because of his position of standing closest to the throne of God, the sacrifice of Christ embodies perfect mercy, perfect love, perfect faith. His role as mediator between man and God is also defined precisely because Christ volunteers willingly to give up that for which man sins:

Man disobeying,
Disloyal breaks his fealty, and sins
Against the high Supremacy of Heav'n,
Affecting God-head, and so losing all,
To expiate his Treason hath naught left.

(III.203-07)

In his role as mediator then, Christ is unique, and juxtaposed to the perfect love of Christ is the hate manifested in Satan. In this struggle "Heav'nly love shall outdo Hellish hate" (III.298).

In God's reply to Christ's speech the role of Christ as judge and mediator is further explained. God grants power to Christ to fulfill Christ's role:

all Power
I give thee, reign for ever, and assume
Thy Merits. . . . (III.317-19)
There is a clear suggestion of a line of authority. Continuity is also present and in this continuity is order. This continuity is manifested, of course, in the various roles of Christ first as created being, mediator, warrior, sacrifice, and then as triumphant judge and finally as the embodiment of joyful harmony in the "New Heav'n and Earth, wherein the just shall dwell" (III.335).

Clearly, Milton removes God, the supreme power who has predestined Satan's defeat, from the struggle, allowing a deputy, His Son, to battle the adversary and foil, Satan. The emphasis on the foil, thereby focuses attention on the deputy role of the Son.

Like the role of Christ, the role of Satan is also continuous, so that dramatically and theologically Satan acts as foil to Christ, underscoring by his own evil the perfection of Christ as good incarnate. The very nature of Satan's role in Paradise Lost necessitates a certain splendor, mistaken, I believe, by the pro-Satanist critics as heroic splendor. Rather than heroic virtue, Satan's major characteristics are deceit, cunning, limited vision, and obsessive desire to revenge the defeat in heaven precipitated by his own overwhelming pride in presuming on the power of God. Contrasted to these twisted energies of evil is the simple goodness manifested in Christ: humility, love, mercy.

The first few books of Paradise Lost supply numerous
examples of Satan's characteristics. After awakening in hell Satan himself refers to "that fixt mind / And high disdain, from sense of injured merit" (I.96-97) that define his proud fanaticism, surely not an admirable trait. His obsession with revenge is clearly present because he never considers repentance:

To do aught good will never be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight,
As being the contrary to his high will
Whom we resist. (I.159-62)

Satan, also, in contrast to the voluntary sacrifice of Christ for man, is quite willing to sacrifice others for himself. "What matter where, if I be still the same?" asks Satan (I.256), and declares:

Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n.
(I.261-63)

In addition to these specific characteristics, the portrait of Satan in these first two books is in part that of a military dictator who leads his troops by dread:

and up they sprung
Upon the wing; as when men wont to watch
On duty, sleeping found by whom they dread.
(I.331-33)

That Satan's rhetoric is filled with deceit and half-truths is evident in his address to the fallen angels:
For who can yet believe, though after loss,  
That all these puissant Legions, whose exile  
Hath emptied Heav'n, shall fail to re-ascend  
Self-rais'd, and repossess thir native seat?  
(I.631-34)

Heaven is hardly empty, because Raphael tells Adam that two-thirds of the angels remain loyal to God (V.710) and still enjoy heaven, so at best this claim of Satan's is a half-truth. Satan also suggests that through their own will and because of their angelic nature the angels will rise again to heaven. This, of course, is untrue because they are created beings subject to the will of God, who has indeed exiled them.

Satan then attempts to fix the blame on God for the plight of those fallen angels:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Monarch in Heav'n, till then as one secure} \\
\text{Sat on his Throne, upheld by old repute,} \\
\text{Consent or custom, and his Regal State} \\
\text{Put forth at full, but still his strength conceal'd} \\
\text{Which tempted our attempt, and wrought our fall.} \\
(I.637-42)
\end{align*}
\]

This too is false rhetoric, because the reader learns later in Book III that the angels have free will and rebelled undeceived. It is quite clear also that God does not tempt; rather, God is manifest justice. Satan also suggests in this passage that God rules through tradition or custom. This, of course, is another lie that Milton puts in Satan's mouth. God rules in Milton's universe
through the power of *logos* and creates from it. The fact that two-thirds of the angels choose to remain with God in loving harmony with His will supports the superior nature of His presence and certainly indicates the desirability of heaven and life with God as opposed to hell, which is in essence exile from God and harmony.

In Book III God prophesies a universe restored to order, its beings after judgment raised to heaven or consigned to hell, which is then eternally sealed. Clearly, after the drama has been played out, Christ will be triumphant, death will lose power, and Satan will be sealed in hell, subject to Christ:

All knees to thee shall bow, of them that bide
In Heaven, or Earth, or under Earth in Hell;
When thou attended gloriously from Heav'n
Shalt in the Sky appear, and from thee send
The summoning Arch-Angels to proclaim
Thy dread Tribunal: forthwith from all Winds
The living, and forthwith the cited dead
Of all past Ages to the general Doom
Shall hast'n, such a peal shall rouse thir sleep,
Then all thy Saints assembl'd, thou shalt judge
Bad men and Angels, they arraign'd shall sink
Beneath thy Sentence; Hell, her numbers full,
Thenceforth shall be for ever shut. Meanwhile
The World shall burn, and from her ashes spring
New Heav'n and Earth, wherein the just shall dwell
And after all thir tribulations long
See golden days, fruitful of golden deeds,
With Joy and Love triumphing and fair Truth.

(III.321-38)

This passage, it seems to me, clearly indicates an orderly
resolution of the problems posed by Satan's continuing role in *Paradise Lost*: Satan's subversive temptation of man, man's fall from grace, and the subsequent gulf between man and God that results from the fall. Satan's role as tempter in the epic and his theological role obviously put him in direct opposition to the will of God, manifested in the perfection of Christ. Satan is, therefore, a foil for Christ and in every instance serves to emphasize the qualities of good in Christ. The struggle between Satan and Christ for the souls of men plays out on a universal scale that interior struggle in man between evil and good.

In the last book of *Paradise Lost*, after Adam has seen a vision of the future, he voices what he has learned, "that to obey is best, / And love with fear the only God . . ." (XII.561-62). Adam sees the world's history as a conflict between good and evil until the final judgment. The Angel tells Adam:

```
Truth shall retire
Bestuck with sland'rous darts, and works of Faith
Rarely be found: so shall the World go on,
To good malignant, to bad men benign,
Under her own weight groaning, till the day
Appear of respiration to the just,
And vengeance to the wicked, at return
Of him so lately promis'd to thy aid.
(XII.535-43)
```

So Adam has been granted a vision of the struggle that will be played on earth. The role of Satan, the embodiment
of evil, and the role of Christ, the embodiment of good, represent clearly the aspects of this struggle.

On the one hand Satan, as evil, is deceitful, cunning and perverted. He must constantly incite his followers, twist the truth, and disguise himself in order to gain ground. Christ's way, on the other hand, is simple and direct; his absolute faith in the rightness of God's will leads him to triumph. God is, after all, omnipotent and invests in Christ power to render the final judgement, close hell, burn the world and enter the "New Heav'n and Earth." Satan, for all his trouble, is sealed into hell by this same power of good. It is then self-deceit that defeats Satan and though man is at first deceived by Satan and falls, God provides a way out of his difficulties, a cure for his spiritual blindness in the person of Christ as mediator.

This I believe is a critical point in Milton's anti-trinitarianism. His recognition of the gulf between God and man, his presentation of Satan as a foil for Christ in the epic conflict between evil and good, his presentation of Christ as mediator all support an antitrinitarian theology that espouses free will and that not only presents God as all powerful and immutable, but also presents Christ as unique in creation, not merely a very superior angel, or a very superior man.

In at least one respect Milton's antitrinitarian
theology as it appears in *Paradise Lost* is close to that of Arius, and that is Milton's vision of the Christ as mediator between God and men. Milton presents man's need for a mediator after the Fall quite clearly in the *via negativa* images of God in *Paradise Lost*, and these images support, of course, his statements about God's being unknowable to man in *De Doctrina*. That Milton presents his theology in a subtle fashion is surely to some degree political. The fate of John Biddle is indicative of the dangers of religious dissent in the era after the Restoration, and Milton was first and always a poet, not a martyr. The development of Milton's concepts about the relationships within the trinity is, obviously, both complex and subtle. Given the things we know about Milton--the depth and extent of his scholarship, his dedication to the idea of free will in religious matters, his integrity of purpose in his art, his experience in the ways of men during England's civil war, his commitment to God--it is not surprising that in his later years he came to unorthodox theological conclusions. Religious theories and theological argument were commonplace with the great thinkers of the time; indeed the seventeenth century was an era in which religious debate thrived even among the common people. Milton in joining argument was a man of his time. His proposals in the argument were his own, arrived at through study and observation and
exegesis of scripture. His vision transcended the time's polemicists because he explored what was for him the most significant of subjects, man's relationship to God, in the most significant form for him, the epic poem.
Notes

1 See p. 20 above.


4 Ibid., p. 286 [Chapter 23 provides a discussion of seventeenth century antitrinitarianism and the various sects that espoused the doctrine].

5 Ibid., p. 287.

6 Ibid., p. 289.


8 Ibid., p. 5.
9 Ibid., p. 3.
10 Ibid., p. 53.
11 Ibid., p. 181.
12 Ibid., p. 244.
13 Ibid., p. 245.
14 Ibid., p. 392.
15 Ibid., v. II, p. 186.
16 Ibid., p. 191.
17 Ibid., p. 193-208.
18 Ibid., p. 203.
19 Ibid., p. 207.
20 Anon., The Racovian Catechisme (Amsterdam: for Brover Janz, 1652), title page [STC #R121].
21 Ibid., pp. 18-19.
22 Ibid., pp. 28-29.
23 Ibid., p. 8.
26 Ibid., p. 16.
27 Ibid., pp. 142-44.
28 R. Catechisme, p. 142.
29 Ibid., p. 135.
30 Ibid., p. 147.
31 Ames, Doctrine 3, 13th Lord's Day, p. 89.
32 R. Catechisme, p. 92.

Chapter 5
Conflict and Choice

Coming as it does at the end of the English Renaissance, John Milton's poetry voices fully and expressively many of the themes that grew out of this Renaissance experience. The changes that came about in English life during the years between 1500 and mid-seventeenth century were diverse and pervasive, so much so that man's perception of himself in his relationship to his world and his religion underwent significant and even dramatic modification. One of these modifications was his gain in political power and increasing sense of national identity. The Englishman gained voice and authority in Parliament so that to some degree he participated in shaping his country's political destiny, and in so doing, the Englishmen increasingly came to rely on the strength of his own judgment rather than to accept that of the church or the state in the person of king or pope.

Discoveries made in astronomy, geography, and the new sciences raised questions about the ordering of the universe, and a concept of natural law eventually replaced a belief in the powers of the supernatural which had been
current in the Middle Ages. Growth in commerce and developing opportunities in economics made possible various achievements for the middle class in areas such as politics, social mobility, and education. The university system, renewed and energized by the discovery and interest in the classics, offered increasing depth and breadth in learning, and for a number of reasons much of this learning focused on religion. Milton's theological conclusions, expressed fully in De Doctrina and reflected more subtly in the epic poetry of his later years, are unorthodox but not unusual in relation to seventeenth century Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Calvinism. The Renaissance was, after all, an extraordinarily vital era.

This vitality infused the literature of the time and the religious quest of the Puritans. John Milton combines the art and energies of these two arenas of imagination and thought with the result that his poetry epitomizes the concerns of his culture, and expresses from a special viewpoint man's struggle in this quest for individual autonomy and reconciliation with the will of God. At the heart of Milton's search is conflict and choice. Milton returns to these issues again and again, creating a body of poetry that is richly crafted—artistically, philosophically, and theologically—so that, as Douglas Bush has pointed out, "its deceptively smooth surface covers
abundant and subtle complexity.\(^1\)

Conflict, of course, is an integral part of imaginative literature, appearing in various guises and creating tensions, the stuff of which drama is made. These conflicts between man and nature, society, an antagonist, or himself--all appear to some degree in Milton's poetry. The conflict with which this study is primarily concerned is an interior conflict, a struggle within to discover the nature of man's relationship to God. Milton pursued this theological matter on his own, using the scholarly resources available to him, his own experiences and observations, and the questions that grew out of those experiences and observations, which should be considered in context.

This seventeenth-century context from which Milton wrote is complex, including, as I have pointed out, political, social, economic, scientific, artistic, and literary currents of thought begun in the sixteenth century and earlier. More pervasive though than any of these is seventeenth-century religious controversy. It reached into every aspect of English life. For example, the trades that grew up around the Roman Catholic practice of fasting on Friday suffered some economic decline after the English break with Rome because many Protestants rejected Catholic tradition. Thus, most businesses having to do with fish--fisherman, shopkeepers, the boat guilds,
netters, dock workers, and their apprentices—were affected, in this case economically, by religious controversy. The Civil War itself is permeated with religious argument, motivation, and power plays. Religious argument, then, and especially Protestant argument, characterizes Milton's era and his poetry reflects that, not only in his choice of subject, but also in its treatment.

This Protestant view is characterized also by a desire to reform. Of course, reform was not peculiar to Renaissance England. Reform movements also proliferated in Medieval England, but after the Reformation and into the seventeenth century, the efforts to purify the church increasingly fragmented the congregations, and new sects formed, disintegrated, and reformed in all parts of England. Thus evolved a rich trove of polemic literature. Polemic works by Overton, Ames, the Socinians, works which have been discussed in previous chapters, provide a perspective from which to view Milton's theology. From this context, one can conclude that Milton did not fully align himself with any specific group, although he did espouse unorthodox positions held by some of the "underground" sects. ²

The question of heresy inevitably crops up when one examines Milton's theology. Was John Milton a heretic? The answer to that question is both yes and no.

After Constantine declared for Christianity in the
fourth century, "unity of faith in the Christian Church came to be viewed as the bond of unity in the empire, and every deviation from orthodoxy—which was fixed through imperial synods—was regarded as a deviation from public order. All spiritual, theological controversies within the imperial church were thus subject to strict imperial laws against heresy." The imperial laws of the Roman Church were, of course, not laws which applied to Milton in the seventeenth century because of Henry VIII's earlier break with Rome. In this strict sense, then, Milton was not a heretic except in the general sense that all Protestants were heretics in the eyes of Rome. The spirit of the laws, however, survived Henry Tudor's break with Rome, and those in authority in seventeenth century England continued to equate civil order with religious conformity. Within this context of unity of church and state that applied especially after 1660, within which conformity meant conformity to the Church of England, Milton as a dissenting and unorthodox theologian would have been heretical.

In addition to his Protestant desire to purify the church, to ascertain the will of God through individual exegesis of the Bible, and to live in accordance with the will of God, Milton was also a man of the Renaissance—learned, complex, proud. Indeed, Milton's view of man has much in common with Hamlet's well known portrait:
"What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties; in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals!" (II.ii.300-04). This vision of man, this idealization of the individual, is as much a part of Milton's heritage as is the Protestant impulse to seek conformity with the will of God.

Milton benefited educationally from the Renaissance study of the Greek and Latin classics and languages. He knew and appreciated music and drama. He studied the sciences and was acquainted with new discoveries and their authors, such as Galileo, whom it is believed he met while in Italy. He had at his call a Renaissance education, and his works reflect this in richly textured, sometimes baroque, patterns of allusion.

Inevitably, it seems to me, this concept of the noble individual conflicts with the Protestant ideal of conformity to the will of God. In addition to these two principles, Milton was involved in England's civil war and believed intensely in individual liberty of thought and action. There is then a third ingredient in an already heady brew--Renaissance idealization of the individual, conformity to the will of God, individual liberty. There is involved here an extraordinary ego and an extraordinary humility, and an extraordinary belief in the ultimate
value of human identity. Milton's struggle to reconcile these three ideas is reflected in his poetry by his treatment of conflict and his presentation of choice. The reconciliation he presents is, I believe, peculiarly his own. It involves his concept of creation, which in his mature works is creation *ex Deo*; it involves his conclusions about personal identity, which are voiced in his mortalist doctrine; it involves his conclusions about the nature of the trinity; and, the reconciliation involves his vision of Christ's role as man's redeemer. The poems of his later years reflect these conclusions by presenting conflict and choice within the structure of epic poetry. God, Christ, Satan, and Adam play out on a grand scale Milton's vision of man's relationship to God.

At issue first is this fundamental idea of conflict in art. One encounters it in music, in drama, in painting, in sculpture. It is present in a symphony from the most elemental expression of percussive instruments to the subtle melody drawn from a violin. Painters call upon conflicting patterns and sculptors produce energy and tension in their works through the use of conflict. It is surely reasonable that Milton dealt so thoroughly with man in conflict with himself about his relationship to God, because in so doing, he manifested his century's interest--one might almost call it obsession--with this matter. At the heart of this struggle is very simply
rejection or acceptance of the will of God, as the single person perceives the will of God.

Milton, in his early poems, treats this struggle about acceptance or rejection of the will of God as a matter of recognition of destiny. That is to say, he does not present man confronted with decisions so much as with acceptance of what has already occurred.

In "Elegia Prima, Ad Carolum Diodatum" the young Milton writes to Charles Diodati of Milton's "rustication" from Cambridge. Although meant to be a punishment--suspension from school--the rustication, Milton finds, is in reality no burden: "But if this be exile, to have returned to the paternal home and to be carefree to enjoy a delightful leisure, then I have no objection to the name or to the lot of a fugitive and I am glad to take advantage of my banishment" (11. 24-30). Indeed this particular experience, meant to be a disgrace, is not only acceptable, but even pleasurable. Of course, this is a rather minor event in Milton's life but one whose intent was certainly not pleasure, and surely the proud young Milton was stung by the action to some extent. Too, Milton was "rusticated" to London, his home, and was therefore able to control the experience to a much greater degree than he might have managed in a truly severe exile. In this case, Milton was able to accept the event and even to turn the situation to his own
advantage.

In another early poem "In Obitum Procancellarii Medici," Milton counsels acceptance of destiny: "Learn obedience to the laws of destiny and lift supplicant hands to the Goddess of Fate" (ll. 1-3). In this poem Milton also salutes the talents of the Vice-Chancellor and wishes him rest and comfort in an afterlife. This is a poem written by a sixteen-year-old student; it is filled with classical allusions and conventions about a person he seems to have known only indirectly. While it does not voice the emotional response that one finds in Milton's later poems, it does recognize the implacability of destiny and death. Thomas Wheeler makes a point about Milton's treatment of real people in some of his later poems that, indeed, lends credence to this reading of a much earlier poem: "Milton's habitual practice in writing about real people is to present them in idealized forms. He sees in them the embodiment of learning, piety, chastity, wisdom, or whatever. This is not to say that the real person is lost. . . . But Milton raises these real people above the level of reality and makes them symbols of his own ideals."^4

When Milton was only a year older he wrote "On the Death of a Fair Infant Dying of a Cough," and he once again counsels acceptance.
Then thou the mother of so sweet a child
Her false imagin'd loss cease to lament,
And wisely learn to curb thy sorrows wild;
Think what a present thou to God has sent,
And render him with patience what he lent.
(11. 71-75)

"On the Death of a Fair Infant," however, voices a personal sorrow, for this poem seems to be about the death of Anne, the daughter of Milton's sister. In addition, Milton offers a Christian consolation, rather than the Greek and Latin allusions of "In Obitum Procancellarii Medici." He suggests that God has a higher purpose for the infant--that the child came in human guise to earth

As if to show what creatures Heav'n doth breed,
Thereby to set the hearts of men on fire
To scorn the sordid world, and unto Heav'n aspire.
(11. 61-63)

This emphasis on Christian purpose and comfort is much more personal than the somewhat removed classical approach of the earlier poem, pointing up Milton's close involvement with these people and his own need for consolation, which for him could have been found only in Christian thought. In this poem Milton seems to recognize that such tragedies are a part of the will of God, which man cannot comprehend.

Elegy 5, "In Adventum Veris," written by Milton when he was twenty, reflects the gaiety and optimism of youth. This poem does not treat the darker side of destiny, but
rather its more joyful manifestation in the return of spring: "Time— as it turns in its perpetual cycle— is calling back the Zephyrs afresh" (11.2-4). Here Milton does not struggle to accept destiny's temporal cycle; instead, he celebrates the arrival of spring and is uplifted by it. While optimistic, however, the subject of the poem still touches on the irrevocable nature of time and destiny, in this case the cycle of the seasons.

Milton's famous companion poems "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" are based on two conflicting ways of life— one cheerful and social, one melancholic or contemplative. These poems present no real necessity for making a choice between the two ways of living. Milton simply presents their different aspects. These aspects, however, are very clearly drawn, which indicates that the poet was certainly aware of the advantages of both. While indeed the two poems may owe a good deal to the student exercises in contrast then current in university studies, they anticipate to some extent the course that Milton's life took: first he served Cromwell's cause among and for men, then, after the restoration of Charles, he led a much more secluded, contemplative life while writing the great epic poetry. This idea of choice as a part of life is one to which Milton returns when writing those epic poems.

"L'Allegro" presents the cheerful man at leisure in
the country enjoying simple pleasures of landscape, the farmer's work, the "savory dinner set / Of Herbs, and other Country Messes" (ll. 84-85), "Dancing in the Checker'd shade" (l. 96), and tales told in the evening of fairies and goblins. At night, the cheerful man may then return to the city "And the busy hum of men" (l. 118), where he may enjoy wit, feasting, and the delights of the English stage. Milton presents here the advantages of life lived in association with other men, enjoying one's own talents and those of others. It is a picture of the delights available in and around London.

"Il Penseroso" presents the advantages of the contemplative life. Living removed from men, one may in solitude observe the earth and heavens, be open to the inspiration of the muses, enjoy classical dramas and poetry. This solitary life leads one to study and contemplation of God:

There let the pealing Organ blow
To the full voic'd Choir below,
In Service high and Anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into eactasies,
And bring all Heav'n before mine eyes.
(ll. 161-66)

These lines present the man, whether he is inside or outside the church, envisioning heaven. He also approaches God through a solitary study of God's work:
Where I may sit and rightly spell  
Of every Star that Heav'n doth shew,  
And every Herb that sips the dew."

(II. 170-72)

These two poems clearly present two very different possibilities. One way of living will certainly lead one further and further into the concerns of man, his pleasures; his perceptions, the products of his work. The other way of living will lead one to a vision of God. I believe that this basic conflict, this contrast of possibilities in these early companion poems is a theme to which Milton returns in his later years when writing Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. By that time the conflict itself is more complex because it involves choice in a way in which choice is not a part of the early poems. That is to say, destiny ceases to be all powerful and the choices one makes in life exert more influence on one's relationship with other men and with God.

The inexorable nature of time and trust in the will of God provide an element of conflict in Sonnet VII. In this sonnet time is "the subtle thief of youth," and Milton feels his lack of visible success keenly: "My hasting days fly on with full career, / But my late spring no bud or blossom show' th." He ends the poem, however, by voicing his trust in God's will: "All is, if I have grace to use it so, / As ever in my great
task-Master's eye." The conflict in this poem between a desire for worldly accomplishment and acceptance of the will of God in his life is an early (1631) treatment of the struggle between pride and conformity that in his later poems becomes a more complex study of man's relationship with other men and with God.

Something of this same concern is found in "On Time," but in this poem, written in 1633, worldly time obviously pales before God's eternity. Worldly time is "false and vain, / And merely mortal dross," while with God "Joy shall overtake us as a flood." "On Time" does not present a conflict between the delights of the world as opposed to the joy of heaven. Rather it is a reaffirmation of trust that joy is to be found in heaven.

Milton's belief in himself, in his own destiny as a poet is expressed in "Ad Patrem." The dating of this poem is a problem. It may have been written at about the same time as Sonnet VII (1632) or even as late as 1645. In any case, it reflects Milton's belief in his own greatness—and in the distinction of his calling. For example, he compares himself to Orpheus "who by his song—not by his cithara—restrained rivers and gave ears to the oaks, and by his singing stirred the ghosts of the dead to tears. That fame he owes to his son" (11. 52-55). This comparison to Orpheus is one that Milton used consistently, because it reflects the power of the poet,
who may even move gods.\textsuperscript{5} His interest in worldly fame and his confidence that he will achieve fame is evident here. Later, he says, "Therefore, however humble my present place in the company of learned men, I shall sit with the ivy and laurel of a victor" (11. 101-2). Indeed, he says his work will insure "the name of the father whom my song honors" (11. 119-20). This belief in his own destiny is as strong an element in Milton's poetry as is his faith in God and his wish to live within the will of God. It is surely in part a result of that Renaissance belief in the individual to which Milton was heir, and as such plays an important part in his developing theology and art.

This confidence seems to have been severely shaken by the death of Edward King in 1637. Several passages in \textit{Lycidas} are thought to be autobiographical, and they are intensely serious about this sudden death of a promising young man:

\begin{quote}
But the fair Guerdon when we hope to find,  
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
Comes the blind Fury with th' abhorred shears,  
And slits the thin-spun life.  
\end{quote}

This outcry against the young man's death is colored with horror. Atropos, one of the Greek Moerae, personifies inescapable fate. Here Milton refers to her as "blind Fury." She does not merely cut the thread of...
life; she "slits the thin-spun life." These lines occur after Milton has posed the question:

Alas? What boots it with uncessant care
To tend the homely slighted Shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
(11. 64-66)

The reader is then reminded that true fame is to be found only in heaven.

Clearly, this passage in *Lycidas* reflects some degree of struggle in accepting the will of God. Edward King was not, as far as we know, an intimate friend of Milton's and still, there is a deeply emotional tone in these lines. Surely it is only natural that Milton was shaken by this event, confronted as he was by proof of the precarious nature of human life. Edward King was a young strong man, neither a distant aged figure nor a fragile young child.

Significant also, in the poems dealing with death and the poet's struggle to accept death as a part of the will of God, is the concern with the retention of individual identity after death. As I have pointed out, this concern is present in most of these poems, and this belief remains a part of Milton's theology.6

The years after the composition of *Lycidas* were for Milton a time of transition. He traveled to Italy and then in 1639 returned to England and began teaching.
With the outbreak of the English Civil War, Milton joined with the Protestant rebels and began his service for the Commonwealth. During the forties, Milton published a number of his prose works, for example, Of Reformation in England and Animadversions upon the Remonstrant's Defense against Smectymnuus in 1641, The Reason of Church Government Urged against Prelaty in 1642, The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce in 1643, Of Education and Areopagitica in 1644, The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates and Eikonoklastes in 1649, and Defensio pro Populo Anglicano in 1651. During these ten years, Milton used his talents in defense of the Protestant cause; except for occasional sonnets and Latin verse and Psalms, Milton's literary energies were channeled into these political publications.

Then, by early 1652, Milton was almost totally blind. In this year also his wife Mary Powell and their infant son, John, died. In November 1656 Milton married again, this time to Katherine Woodcock. Katherine died only fifteen months later. These years were clearly tragic ones for Milton, and still he continued to write in the service of England, publishing Defensio Secunda in 1654 and A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes in 1659. From this period of his life also come several sonnets, three of which deal directly with these tragic events.
The first of these, Sonnet XIX, deals directly with Milton's blindness. This sonnet's composition date is uncertain; however, it was written sometime between 1652 and 1655. Because of its tone of acceptance I believe the earlier date is the more likely time of composition. This tone derives from the element of stasis in the poem. That is to say that Milton presents his cause for murmuring against the will of God in the octet and then, in the sestet of the sonnet, turns his thought to the greatness of God, who does not need man's work. Milton ends the poem with the thought "They also serve who only stand and wait." This acceptance of the will of God, this belief that one's fame or talent is only valuable in God's service is similar to the fame passage in *Lycidas*. In that poem too, fame is significant only if it is true heavenly fame gained in the eyes of God. *Lycidas* is the poem of a young man confronted with accidental death and horrified at its arbitrary nature. Sonnet XIX, conversely, reflects the touch of a man who has considerable knowledge and experience of patience both in the affairs of men and statecraft, and in the fulfillment of his own destiny. Their similarity lies in the trust in God's will, the trust in the plan God has and Milton's place in that plan.

Such trust in his own destiny is somewhat subdued in Sonnet XXII, written in 1655, some three years after his blindness had become complete and, I believe, three
years after the composition of Sonnet XIX. In this poem Milton says he is supported in his blindness by thoughts of his past accomplishments and the nobility of their cause:

What supports me, dost thou ask?  
The conscience, Friend to have lost them overplied  
In liberty's defense, my noble task,  
Of which all Europe talks from side to side.  
This thought might lead me through the world's vain mask  
Content though blind, had I no better guide.  

(ll. 9-14)

This last line suggests, of course, that the "better guide" is God or God's will and that too supports him. While he says he does not argue against heaven's will, in Sonnet XXII Milton seems comforted in large part by his worldly fame; he refers to a European fame that certainly may have existed but hardly to the extent expressed in the poem. This is a departure, I believe, from his earlier expressions of comfort and faith in the efficacy of God's will. Time has passed, his condition has not changed.

Here then is one manifestation of that conflict between the Renaissance man, proud and talented, and the English Puritan seeking to merge with, to live humbly within the will of God.

This same tension appears in a third poem from the 1650's which presents the issues of the conflict clearly
and poignantly. Sonnet XXIII presents the idea of individual identity being retained in heaven, a consistent belief in Milton's poetry and a reflection of his Renaissance idealization of the individual as well as his personal belief in the value of individual, created man. Whether the person in the poem is Mary Powell or Katherine Woodcock, the poet clearly expresses his expectation of seeing her in heaven: "And such, as yet once more I trust to have / Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint." These lines voice the trust in God's promise that the faithful Christian must possess in order to accept the will of God. The struggle to accept, to submit to God's will, is also treated in this poem when the poet awakens from the dream to bitter reality: "I wak'd, she fled, and day brought back my night." The poet is once again alone, dependent only on God and God's promise of paradise to the faithful. While at least one critic has suggested that this poem reflects some self-pity on Milton's part, surely it is only realistic to expect that the poet would be affected by his experiences. By 1658, Milton has seen the deaths of close friends and beloved family members; the cause in defense of which he believed he had lost his sight was faltering; his own destiny as a poet had not as yet been fulfilled.

These events also must naturally have affected his perception about the community of man and man's relationship
to God, because the poems of his later years, the great epics, reflect theological and philosophical positions about the nature of man and his relationship to other men and to God that simply were not present in major ways in the poetic vision of the younger Milton. Much of this vision, these mature conclusions, is manifested in Milton's treatment of choice--one may call it free will--in the later poems. Choice is a theme that sounds consistently in *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*. This theme presents the complexities of relationships, human and supernatural; it embraces the issue of integrity, human and religious; it examines motivations; it presents reconciliation.

It would seem that most often the choice is a simple one between good and evil, but Milton rarely presents characters so perfect in understanding that they are able to see the issues at stake. While the situations themselves often seem simple, the nature of the beings involved causes them to focus too narrowly on some aspect or another and lose sight of the larger situation. The action of the characters both divine and human is presented within the context of Christian humanism which Douglas Bush discusses in *Paradise Lost in Our Time*:

Right reason is not merely reason in our sense of the word; it is not a dry light, a non-moral instrument of inquiry. Neither is it simply the religious conscience. It is a
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Kind of rational and philosophic conscience which distinguishes man from the beasts and which links man with man and with God. This faculty was implanted by God in all men, Christian and heathen alike, as a guide to truth and conduct. Though its effectual workings may be obscured by sin, it makes man, in his degree, like God; it enables him, within limits, to understand the purposes of a God who is perfect reason as well as perfect justice, goodness, and love.10

Thus, often a failure in reason leads created beings astray.

Such a situation prevails with Satan and the rebel angels in Paradise Lost. Clearly, created beings possess free will in Milton's epic. In Book III, God says of the angels:

I form'd them free, and free they must remain,
Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change
Thir nature, and revoke the high Decree
Unchangeable, Eternal, which ordain'd
Thir freedom: they themselves ordain'd thir fall.
The first sort by thir own suggestion fell,
Self-tempted, self-deprav'd. (11. 124-30)

These lines tell the reader that not only did the angels have freedom of choice, but also they were "Self-tempted, self-deprav'd." Helen Gardner points out in an essay comparing Satan to Elizabethan tragic characters that in both cases "The initial act is an act against nature, it is a primal sin, in that it contradicts the 'essential fact of things,' and its author knows that it does so. It is not an act committed by mistake, it is not an error of judgment,
it is an error of will. The act is unnatural and so are its results; it deforms the nature which performs it. With this in mind the reader may then see that in *Paradise Lost* evil is a possibility, neither necessary nor foreordained, but simply a possibility. Raphael explains this idea of free will to Adam in Book V:

Our voluntary service he requires,  
Not our necessitated, such with him  
Finds no acceptance, nor can find, for how  
Can hearts, not free, be tri'd whether they serve  
Willing or not, who will be but what they must  
By Destiny, and can no other choose?  
Myself and all th' Angelic Host that stand  
In sight of God enthron'd, our happy state  
Hold, as you yours, while our obedience holds;  
On other surety none; freely we serve  
Because we freely love, as in our will  
To love or not; in this we stand or fall.  
(ll. 529-540)

This matter of choice, then, centers on love, the nature of which is free, voluntary. Satan, narrowly focusing his energies on pride in himself, gives himself up to self-love rather than love of God. Satan denies God, and so sin is born. Evil in *Paradise Lost* is manifested in Satan, who is totally absorbed in self-love, a perversion of love. All of the rebel angels are subject to this self-love, as may be seen in their motivations and their actions.

The great consult in Pandaemonium presents a vivid picture of Satan and his fallen angels considering various ways of dealing with their current, fallen situation.
The dominant theme of this book is pain—how it may be avoided, endured, or lessened to some extent. Each major devil, according to his personality, has some plan that reflects his priorities. Of course, the priority of each, including Satan, is his own comfort or salvation.

Satan's own superior position is secure because of this pain. He says,

for none sure will claim in Hell
Precedence, none, whose portion is so small
Of present pain, that with ambitious mind
Will covet more. (ll. 32-35)

Satan's position, then, as leader is safe, and his powerful position is his priority.

Moloch counsels open war and says that even if they lose they will cease to be and so be released from pain:

What fear we then? What doubt we to incense
His utmost ire? which to the highth enrag'd,
Will either quite consume us, and reduce
To nothing this essential, happier far
Than miserable to have eternal being.
(l. 94-98)

In the event, he says, that they are truly immortal, then at least they will have had some revenge. Moloch's solution is simplistic; he is quite willing to lead them all to destruction to satisfy his own desire for one last blaze of glorious battle. Belial doesn't think this is such a good idea. Any existence at all, he says, is better than none, and Belial reminds them that their plight
could be worse. Belial's priority is his own comfort; he thinks revenge a waste, and says that the best thing to do is live quietly and not bring on more trouble. Belial believes they will grow used to hell: "Familiar the fierce heat, and void of pain; / This horror will grow mild, this darkness light" (ll. 219-220).

Mammon is a technological devil whose priority is luxury, and Mammon wants to create luxury in hell. He says,

\[
\text{cannot we his Light} \\
\text{Imitate when we please? This Desert soil} \\
\text{Wants not her hidden lustre, Gems and Gold;} \\
\text{Nor want we skill or art, from whence to raise} \\
\text{Magnificance. (ll. 269-73)}
\]

Like Belial, Mammon counsels peace and believes that the possibility of adapting to their current situation is better than the possibility of worsening it. Most of the fallen angels agree with Mammon:

\[
\text{Such applause was heard} \\
\text{As Mammon ended, and his Sentence pleas's,} \\
\text{Advising peace: for such another Field} \\
\text{They dreaded worse than Hell: so much the fear} \\
\text{Of Thunder and the Sword of Michael} \\
\text{Wrought still within them; and no less desire} \\
\text{To found this nether Empire, which might rise} \\
\text{By policy, and long process of time,} \\
\text{In emulation opposite to Heav'n. (ll. 290-98)}
\]

Beelzebub, acting as Satan's spokesman, then speaks and convinces the angels that revenge may be had by seducing man to evil. Thus the motivation to deceive man to evil
is "to spite / the great Creator" (11. 384-85), and Satan is its author.

In Book II, the selfish interests of Satan and his followers are clearly presented. Satan is motivated by malice and his followers are manipulated by his spokesman to follow him rather than their own wishes.

Raphael recounts to Adam in Book V how Satan "with lies / Drew after him the third part of Heav'n's Host" (11. 709-10). The angel also tells, in the story of the confrontation between Abdiel and Satan, how Satan denies creation by God and claims self-creation and thus equality with God:

> When this creation was? remember'st thou
> Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?
> We know no time when we were not as now;
> Know none before us, self-begot, self-rais'd
> By our own quick'ning power, when fatal course
> Had circl'd his full Orb, the birth mature
> Of this our native Heav'n, Ethereal Sons.
> 
> (V.856-63)

This kind of specious reasoning, of course, appeals to self-love rather than love of God; and of the angels with Satan, Abdiel is the only one to deny the appeal. In his argument Satan plays on his position in heaven as a leader, on the very hierarchy that he denies, to lure the angels to join him:

> but all obey'd
> The wonted signal, and superior voice
Of thir great Potentate; for great indeed
His name, and high was his degree in Heav'n;
His count'nance, as the Morning Star that guides
The starry flock, allur'd them. . . .

(11. 704-09)

What is involved in all of this, of course, is
choice, the angels' choice to remain loyal to God or to
throw in their lot with Satan. The basis for their deci­sion in large part is familiarity or custom. That is to
say that the argument scene between Satan and Abdiel
presents these angels as a part of a hierarchy; they are
accustomed to Lucifer's guidance. In addition to this,
Lucifer presents them with an argument that they seem
readily to understand and accept. He speaks to them from
a common understanding, the understanding of a created
being, of their beginning. He says: "We know no time when
we were not as now." Lucifer also speaks to them from a
mountain top:

far blazing, as a Mount
Rais's on a Mount, with Pyramids and Tow'rs
From Diamond Quarries hewn, and Rocks of Gold. . . .
(11. 757-59)

While this position may suggest the throne of God, its
brilliance is artificial and Lucifer, unlike God, is visible
to the angels. Earlier, God spoke to the angels "from a
flaming Mount, whose top / Brightness had made invisible"
(11. 598-99).

Satan's appeal to the angels, then, is from one
created being to another. He plays on the possibility of self-love, love of what one can understand triumphing over love of God, which is, after all, faith. Obviously this appeal is very strong, because it wins over a part of heaven's host and begins the war in heaven.

I believe that Milton presents this same sort of appeal as the basis of the temptation of Adam and Eve. That Eve is susceptible to this sort of temptation to love one's self and what one can readily understand is clear in the account not only of the temptation itself, but also of the events leading up to the temptation.

Eve's first act after awakening from the sleep of creation is to gaze upon herself in a still pool. She speaks of her creation to Adam in Book IV:

As I bent down to look, just opposite,
A shape within the wat're gleam appear'd
Bending to look on me, I started back,
It started back, but pleas'd I soon return'd,
Pleas'd it return'd as soon with answering looks
Of sympathy and love. (11. 460-65)

This immediate attention to self is clearly indicative of Eve's character, as is Adam's immediate impulse to seek his creator after his creation. Adam says that after awakening, "Straight toward Heav'n my wond'ring Eyes I turn'd" (VIII.257).

Eve's character is not flawed, but it is susceptible to Satan's blandishments, which are based on self-love.
Indeed it is a kind of vanity that leads her to separate from Adam, and this separation leaves her vulnerable to temptation. Eve proposes that they separate to work in the garden and when Adam suggests that such a plan is unwise, Eve replies, "And what is Faith, Love, Virtue unassay'd / Alone, without exterior help sustain'd?" (IX. 335-36). Faith, trust in the strength of God, is a kind of exterior help. This eagerness, then, to prove her strength is a kind of love of self, perhaps mirroring the self-confidence of Renaissance man, and it results in Eve's being alone when confronted with temptation.

The temptation itself begins on a note of flattery when Satan asks, "Who sees thee? (and what is one?) who shouldst be seen / A goddess among Gods" (IX.546-47). The temptation then proceeds by analogy, Satan saying "That ye should be as Gods, since I as Man" (I. 710). Eve, of course, eats the fruit and so the stage is set for Adam's fall.

There is in these scenes the appeal made from one created being to another. Satan, who has a thorough knowledge of created beings, knows just how to appeal to Eve's vanity, how to turn her innocent self-confidence into pride, how to reason by analogy that seems to be logical. There is also in the scene between Adam and Eve before they separate a clear indication that created beings may also draw strength from one another. Adam
sends to Eve when asking her to stay with him,

\[\text{I from the influence of thy looks receive}
\text{Access in every Virtue, in thy sight}
\text{More wise, more watchful, stronger...}
\]

(IX.309-11)

This affinity of one created being for another and the inability of created beings to comprehend the creator are, I believe, fundamental issues in Milton's theology as well as dramatic forces in his epic poem. This affinity, this kinship, is not the innate evil of Augustine or Jean Calvin, nor is it a part of God's predestined plan for man. It is rather a part of God's love, a reflection as it were of heavenly love.

Milton makes clear the strength of this bond of human love in Adam's fall from grace. When Eve returns to Adam and tells him about her sin, his first response is a horrified recognition of the consequence of her action and a resolve to share in her fate. Even though his relationship to God is unimpaired at this point, Adam feels that life without Eve is unbearable. He says,

\[\text{And mee with thee hath ruin'd, for with thee}
\text{Certain my resolution is to Die:}
\text{How can I live without thee, how forgo}
\text{Thy sweet Converse and Love so dearly join'd,}
\text{To live again in these wild Woods forlorn?}
\text{Should God create another Eve, and I}
\text{Another Rib afford, yet loss of thee}
\text{Would never from my heart; no no, I feel}
\text{The Link of Nature draw me: Flesh of Flesh,}
\text{Bone of my Bone thou art, and from thy State}
\text{Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe.}
\]

(IX.906-16)
These lines clearly state the necessity for human companionship. Adam's response is anguished; he has no wish to return to his solitary state, referring to it as forlorn, although he had enjoyed a relationship with God. His love and need for Eve is also personal; no other newly created woman will take her place. He refers to "The Link of nature," which indicates that this bond of love is theirs by their nature.

This sort of natural affinity of one created being for another is not in *Paradise Lost* a manifestation of evil, although Satan as a created being may exploit it. It is simply a possibility within the context of free will in that love may be freely given by created beings to other created beings as well as to God. In *Paradise Lost* Milton presents love as a very real force. The force of love may be perverted and channel itself into self-love as it does in the case of Satan and his followers; it may express itself in human terms; it may manifest itself as it does with the angels as love of God.

This bond between created beings is an important part of Milton's epic pattern and significant to his theology. It is, I believe, a premise upon which much of the action of the poem is structured and upon which many of the theological conclusions are based.

For example, the possibility, not the necessity,
of sin is a part of God's creation because of free will, the force of *logos* or reason, and love. That is to say that God in some way created from himself, imparting like qualities to his creation. However, only God is immutable and infallible. His creatures have powers of reason, the ability to love, and free will; they also, being less than God, are subject to error. Indeed, Milton makes the existence of this possibility very clear in Book IV, when Satan, in the guise of a toad whispering in the sleeping Eve's ear, is discovered by two angels. They question which of the rebel spirits he is, and Satan replies, "Not to know me argues yourselves unknown" (1. 830). While this may in part be a reference to Satan's fame in heaven as Lucifer, it also suggests that the darker possibilities of evil exist in all created beings. Such is the case with Satan and the fallen angels as is evident in their actions, their motivations, their plans of revenge. In their case the powers of love and reason have been perverted by self-deceit, self-interest. That free will is involved in this is evidenced by the refusal of Abdiel to be tempted from his loving loyalty to God and, of course, Raphael also explains the idea to Adam.

Not only is the theology of *Paradise Lost* structured in part on this premise of a bond between created beings, but much of the action of the epic is also built on this foundation. The power of Satan, for example derives in
large part from his understanding of others created like himself by God. This power is evident in his manipulation of the angels in hell as well as in heaven, where he uses their traditional veneration of him, their sense of hierarchy to lure them to the North and then incite them to rebellion. Satan's successful temptation of Eve is also based on this understanding, and she is, as Milton presented her, the key to Adam. Adam, indeed, chooses to fall from grace in order to retain his relationship with Eve. And the cost is, significantly, his pure, loving relationship with God and his pure, loving relationship with Eve.

It is clear, too, in Paradise Lost that this relationship between created beings is not necessarily evil nor necessarily causal in a fall from grace. Adam speaks of the combined strength he and Eve possess before they separate in the garden in Book IX. That their relationship is, however, very important to them, perhaps even necessary, is indicated when Adam refers to Eve as "Part of my Soul" and "My other half" (IV.487-88).

The significance, then, of human relationships, the natural bond between created beings, is an important element in the overall design of Paradise Lost. Juxtaposed with this idea is Milton's via negativa image of God in Paradise Lost, an image which points out the inability of a created being to comprehend the creator. The relationship between God and man is quietly presented
in Book V in Adam and Eve's prayer, which parallels Psalm 138:

These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty, thine this universal Frame,
Thus wondrous fair; thyself how wondrous then!
Unspeakable, who sit'st above these Heavens
To us invisible or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works, yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and Power Divine.
(11. 153-59)

These lines indicate that God's goodness is reflected in His creation to be perceived by beings who will look upon it. This echoes the idea of the much earlier poem, "Il Penseroso." Also present in these lines is the awareness of distance between creator and created. In man's original state of grace this distance is bridged by prayerful love and trust, by the pure relationship.

Man's sin, however, in disobeying God's command flaws this perfect conformity to God's will and the gulf between man and God ceases to be bridged by the purity of the relationship. Another force, then, must bridge the gulf.

This force is Christ as the son of God, savior of mankind. A number of scholars have examined the nature of Milton's trinitarian theology, among them C. A. Patrides who maintains that in "Paradise Lost, Milton achieved the proper balance between matter and manner by preserving the unity of the Godhead even when for dramatic purposes, he differentiated between the Father and the Son."
I believe, however, that in *Paradise Lost*, Milton's antitrinitarian stance is fairly clear. It is also clear that Christ, as created in time by God, exerts a strong attraction for man. The affinity between created beings exerts a force for good as well as for evil. Much of the imagery in the passages concerning Christ is military: for example in Book VI, the battle in heaven when Christ is sent by God to restore order. Christ is described as follows:

> into terror chang'd
> His count'nance too severe to be beheld
> And full of wrath bent on his Enemies.
> At once the Four spread out their Starry wings
> With dreadful shade contiguous, and the Orbs
> Of his fierce Chariot roll'd, as with the sound
> Of torrent Floods, or of a numerous Host.
> (11. 824-30)

Christ here is able to lead the angels to victory through force of good, and on the third day, he throws the rebel angels out of heaven.

These military associations surely underline Christ's appeal to created beings and are comparable, though in the cause of good, to Satan's identification as a military leader who leads through energies of cunning and deceit. Also, whereas Satan is able to tempt man because of Satan's appeal to the possibilities of the created nature, Christ may save man because of this affinity of one created being for another. That is, because of Christ's
unique nature, he may lead man back to God. Christ will bridge the gulf. His position is unique.

The nature of Christ is more fully presented in *Paradise Regained*. In this work Christ is tempted, as was Adam, to disobey God. Unlike Adam, however, Christ displays full obedience and thereby redeems man. Christopher Hill, in a discussion of *Paradise Regained*, points out that "Jesus' refusal, his rejection of the miraculous, stresses his humanity: where Adam and Eve fell by aspiring to be gods, the Son of God triumphs by staying human." The mystery of Christ is admitted by Satan who says in effect this is the one who drove us out of heaven, but we must learn about him because he seems like a man:

His first-begot we know, and sore have felt,  
When his fierce thunder drove us to the deep;  
Who this is we must learn, for man he seems  
In all his lineaments, though in his face  
The glimpses of his Father's glory shine.  
(I.89-93)

These lines establish the identity of Christ and also the mystery of his incarnation.

Later God speaks of Christ, calling him "This perfect Man, by merit call'd my Son" (I.166). This line establishes not only Christ's identity but also his relationship to God.

In *Paradise Regained* Christ is aware of his special
relationship to God the Father even at an early age. He says that he believed he was "born to promote all truth" (I.205). After Christ is baptized he is led into the wilderness and states his trust in God:

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.

(I.290-93)

This trust in God is a basic component of the total obedience of Christ as Milton presents him.

The point of the temptations is to lure Christ as man to aspire to worldly accomplishments or lure him to exercise divine powers or to call down divine intervention, rather than trust totally in God. Warner G. Rice says of Paradise Regained that "its conflicts are carried on within; its tensions are psychological and moral; it presents no physical encounters, but the shock of will against will."¹⁴ Satan then is tempting Christ to a perversion of his power as the son of God. Each of the temptations is designed to appeal to a created being—luxury, riches, power and glory, learning, fear of death. Because these are all temptations to a created being, Christ in overcoming them provides redemption by possibility, again the bridge between created being and the unknowable creator.

When first Satan encounters Christ, Satan is
disguised as an old man and suggests that the son of God might turn stones to bread to feed them both. This is a temptation to distrust God's purpose and Christ replies, "Why dost thou then suggest to me distrust, / Knowing who I am, as I know who thou art?" (I.355-56). Though this seems a simple temptation, it reflects the thought in some of Milton's earlier poems, in which he ponders the matter of one's destiny, God's purpose, and trust in that purpose. It is a temptation most common in difficult times and so, more dangerous than it might seem.

Satan's banquet is also a temptation to reject the will of God. Christ, though hungry as a mortal, points out to Satan that had he so wished he too could have provided a banquet. Christ says, "I can at will, doubt not, as soon as thou, / Command a Table in this Wilderness" (II.383-84). Thus Christ dismisses Satan's effort and says he considers Satan's "specious gifts no gifts but guiles" (I. 400). Again, in this instance, Christ accepts the will of God.

This same acceptance of the will of God, this obedience to God, is the premise upon which Christ remains firm when confronted with the next series of temptations. These temptations are of the world and appeal to the created being's affinity for those created like himself by God. For example, the temptation of riches for power is the temptation to dominate other men, to win their
service. Satan says, "Money brings Honor, Friends, Con­quest, and Realms" (II.422). Christ counters this offer by saying that ruling one's self is more important: "Yet he who reigns within himself, and rules / Passions, De­sires, and Fears, is more a King" (ll. 466-67). Even more important than this, says Christ, is his redemption of man within the will of God. Christ replies to Satan:

But to guide Nations in the way of truth
By saving Doctrine, and from error lead
To know, and knowing worship God aright,
Is yet more Kingly; this attracts the Soul,
Governs the inner man, the nobler part;
That other o'er the body only reigns.

(II.473-780)

Thus once again, Christ states his willingness to forgo physical kingship for the more important spiritual king­ship that he trusts will be his. Milton here emphasizes the superiority of inner peace, an idea he presents consistently.

This kingly domination is a powerful temptation. It was a major element of life in England, indeed in the world, not only in Milton's lifetime, but also in all the power struggles before Milton's life about which he knew. This desire to dominate, to impose one's will upon other created beings, was something Milton had witnessed and he knew its power. Thus the appeal of this temptation too is a strong one. It is Christ's trust in his Father's purpose that counters the temptation to kingship. It is
Christ's willingness to live in trust within the will of God.

The temptation to earthly glory is much the same. When confronted with this temptation, Christ rejoins that true glory exists only in heaven. Christ says,

This is true glory and renown, when God
Looking on th' Earth, with approbation marks
The just man, and divulges him through Heaven
To all his Angels, who with true applause
Recount his praises. . . . (III.60-64)

Christ's words here restate the conclusions about glory and the will of God which the younger Milton had voiced in such poems as Lycidas. By the time of the composition of Paradise Regained, however, Milton was somewhat more experienced in the realities of fame and glory and has Christ denounce fame on Earth among men as "false glory, attributed / To things not glorious, men not worthy of fame" (ll. 69-70). Christ also points out in this book that "All things are best fulfill'd in their due time" (l. 182), which would seem to reflect Milton's own conclusions about suffering, pride, independence and conformity to the will of God. Indeed Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes reflect a concern with inner peace after long struggle, a concern that indicates a significant conclusion on the part of the mature Milton.

In Paradise Regained, Satan tempts Christ to
disobedience by a number of strategems. One of these is a temptation to possess wisdom. Satan says,

Be famous then
By wisdom; as thy Empire must extend
So let extend thy mind o'er all the world,
In knowledge, all things in it comprehend.
(IV.221-24)

For the Renaissance humanist this temptation is certainly a powerful one. The wisdom of which Satan speaks here is the heritage of the best of which man is capable in the eyes of the humanist. This is the wisdom of Greece, of Plato, Homer, and Socrates, and as such it exerts a strong appeal. Once again, this temptation plays on man's affinity for his own kind, for their discoveries and philosophies about the experience of created man, the accumulated wisdom of the past. Christ, however, remains obedient to God and points out the failure of such learning from men who did not know the true God. He also suggests that such learning is inferior to learning inspired by God, saying,

But herein to our Prophets far beneath,
As men divinely taught, and better teaching
The solid rules of Civil Government
In thir majestic unaffected style
Than all the Oratory of Greece and Rome.
(IV.356-60)

Human learning, then, is not of itself evil, but true learning is inspired by knowledge of the true God in
Milton's poem; this is a Christian humanist's view. Douglas Bush says in his discussion of Milton's Christian humanism, "Though even the highest pagan wisdom, like Plato's, was the product of only the natural reason, and must be fortified and illuminated by Christian revelation and love, that natural reason was itself a divine gift and it sought the true light."\(^{15}\)

The final temptation of Christ by Satan occurs when Satan places Christ on the highest pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem. In overcoming this temptation to save himself, Christ trusts in God and stands, while Satan falls in amazement. Clearly in this temptation, Christ relies entirely on God to save him, rather than on his own nature. Like the other temptations which have appealed to his nature as a created being, the final temptation also appeals to Christ as a being created by God. However, because of his unique position as the Son of God, his trust in God is perfect, and he is obedient, thereby redeeming mankind. The poet says,

\begin{verbatim}
now thou has aveng'd  
Supplanted Adam, and by vanquishing  
Temptation, hast regain'd lost Paradise.  
(IV.606-08)
\end{verbatim}

Paradise Regained presents a good deal of information about the nature of Christ in Milton's theology. Christ in Paradise Regained is neither God nor man, but a unique
being, as he is in *Paradise Lost*. Satan tempts Christ by appealing to the nature of a created being. In this, then, *Paradise Regained* furthers the idea of Christ as a bridge or a bond between created and Creator. Satan confronts Christ with all the temptations of the world and, with the last temptation, tempts Christ with his own divine nature, bestowed upon him by God. Christ, however, unlike Satan or Adam and Eve, exhibits perfect obedience to the will of God and triumphs. Christ's triumph is primarily one of obedience in perfect faith. Clearly man's belief in Christ as the Son of God can lead man to heaven, just as man's rejection of Christ can lead man to Satan and hell. *Paradise Lost* presents Christ as the way to God and as a triumph in the war of the spirit. Christ is possibility.

In *Samson Agonistes* Milton presents a man whose struggle is to reconcile his will to God's will. It is Samson's faith in his own power and his love for another created being that lead him to enslavement by the Philistines. For Samson, however, there is no Christ; and finally, alone and forced to face his own created condition, he submits to God. God renews His gift and Samson pulls down the pillars, killing his tormentors and himself. His ultimate triumph is one of reconciliation. The chorus comments in the first stasimos of *Samson*:
Just are the ways of God,
And justifiable to Men;
Unless there be who think not God at all:
If any be, they walk obscure;
For of such Doctrine never was there School,
But the heart of the Fool,
And no man therin Doctor but himself.

(11. 293-99)

Reconciliation, then, is possible within free will, in obedience.

Samson accepts the responsibility for his own actions. He says,

Appoint not heavenly disposition, Father,
Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me
But justly; I myself have brought them on,
Sole Author I, sole cause.

(11. 373-76)

Clearly Samson recognizes his failure in obedience. Indeed in several places Samson admits the depth of his own sin. He says,

like a petty God
I walk'd about admir'd of all and dreaded
On hostile ground, none daring my affront.

(11. 529-31)

The possibility of obedience, however, still exists for Samson.

Manoa reminds Samson of this possibility of obedience when he comments on Samson's remaining strength: "His might continues in thee not for naught, / Nor shall his wondrous gifts be frustrate thus" (11. 598-99).
Then in the exchange with the giant, Harapha, Samson reaffirms his faith in God:

I know no spells, use no forbidden Arts;  
My trust is in the living God who gave me  
At my nativity this strength, diffus'd  
No less through all my sinews, joints and bone,  
Than thine, while I preserv'd these locks unshorn,  
The pledge of my unviolated vow.  
(11. 1139-1144)

This obedience, this trust, is once again a matter of faith. Samson has clear choices. He may continue to live by serving his conquerors, or he may obey God whatever the consequences. Samson, unlike the rebel angels, obeys God and so dies.

Milton presents the idea of choice quite clearly in Samson's response to a message from the Philistines. He says,

If I obey them,  
I do it freely; venturing to displease  
God for the fear of Man, and Man prefer,  
Set God behind.  
(11. 1372-75)

Then he seems to see a possibility in his situation:

Be of good courage, I begin to feel  
Some rousing motions in me which dispose  
To something extraordinary my thoughts.  
(11. 1381-83)

This is a turning point, for Samson leaves with the messenger, and later Manoa hears a great noise which, of course, is Samson pulling down the pillars on the
Philistine assembly.

When Manoa hears the news, finally he too recognizes the reconciliation. Manoa says of Samson,

With God not parted from him, as was fear'd
But favoring and assisting to the end.  
Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail.  

(11. 1719-21)

The reconciliation of Samson with God results in Samson's physical death, but the death is a noble one and Samson no longer is separated from God. In this poem Milton presents once again the separation of man from God as a result of an action or attitude of man, in this case Samson's pride. God is available to man; salvation is available to man in all of Milton's poetry. In conquering his pride, Samson has given himself up to God and paradise. Physically blind, Samson gains spiritual sight and uses the gift of strength that God restores to him.

This war of the spirit, man's inner struggle with pride and obedience to the will of God, seems to me to account for a good deal of the religious controversy of the seventeenth century. The twentieth-century reader lives at a far distance from the pervasive religious attitude of England and Europe in the mid-seventeenth century and the earlier Renaissance years. This individual religious fervor surely derived in part from the English Reformation in the sixteenth century, because
at that time priests, mediators between God and man, lost that mediating function of office.

To the Medieval and Renaissance man, hell was a real place, a local and vast region where grinning devils waited to torment the sinner with eternal punishment. This vision of hell is represented in art, in sermons, in literature. One has only to consider the popularity of Medieval pilgrimages to ascertain the power of hell's reality. While the religious pilgrims may have enjoyed their travels, pleasure alone cannot account for the large numbers of ordinary people who ventured out in a hostile world to visit religious shrines both in Europe and England. They were assuring their souls' places in paradise.

Also during the Medieval era, in an otherwise often dreary existence, the church offered the one bright spot in its promise of an afterlife where there would be no wars, no taxes, no famine, no plague. Much of this remained true into the seventeenth century, during which England was wracked by a civil war that disrupted family life, economy, political structures, and the credibility of the church as an authority in religious matters. Archbishop Laud was considered by the Protestant rebels to be as great a villain as any political figure, and his execution in 1645 predated the execution of Charles I by four years. The rebels wanted his head, because
he had come to represent the corruption of the church rather than the salvation that was so important to all of them.

Rather than stilling man's religious search in any way because of a breakdown in formal and familiar structure, the Reformation in Henry's time loosed formal restrictions, and individual religious activity in the form of preaching and publishing increased. Individual efforts to approach God became very important because there was no priest, however imperfect, to act as a go-between. With that in mind, one can understand Milton's concern with the nature of the soul, creation, and the trinity: the rules of the Roman Catholic Church were simply no longer valid, the Anglicans had retained much of the Roman Catholic system without its authority of a (theoretically) holy Pope mediator, and the Presbyterians and Independents had become entangled during the Civil War with politics and power struggles, depending too heavily on the person of Cromwell. The answers to religious questions were obviously not to be found by Milton in established religious institutions or groups, but only in his own conclusions based upon study and experience. His concerns are reflected in his early poetry. He is naturally concerned about death and the decay of the body. This is apparent in a number of early poems. One also sees an identification of God with order,
which is again quite natural. In Lycidas Milton confronts the question of worldly fame and destiny and identifies what seems to be the arbitrary nature of life.

In Milton's later work, especially Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, I believe he presents the conclusions he has reached about theological matters and in so doing reflects, in his epics, conclusions about the nature of the relationship between God and man that are mythic, Protestant, and a result of his Renaissance English experience.

The first conclusion is the matter of mortalism, the belief that the soul and body exist as one, die as one, and will be raised to heaven as one. In his early poems, Milton is clearly concerned with order and individual identity and in his later poetry these ideas are resolved in the mortalist doctrine. Milton is dealing here with a most basic mystery of human existence--the mystery of death. The idea that the destiny of the soul is bound to the destiny of the body is, after all, not new with Milton. Studies of ancient burial sites tell us that man in diverse parts of the world in all time eras has buried his dead with ritual, recognizing at the very least the mystery of death and in most cases providing for the needs of the dead in some kind of afterlife. Possibly the most famous example is the ancient Egyptian burial practices which for the wealthy
included preservation of the body and burial accompanied by articles to be used in the afterlife--furniture, jewelry, games, tools. In very early tombs, the remains of people believed to be retainers have been discovered; apparently they were sacrificed in order to accompany the dead noble and serve him in the hereafter.\textsuperscript{18} It is fairly clear in this case that the Egyptians believed that the destiny of the soul was bound to the destiny of the body because of the careful preservation. Even much earlier, during the Old Stone Age the dead were given ritual burial: "Weapons and tools were buried with them, and survival in an afterlife was provided for by the magic of smearing the body with red ochre to give it the appearance of life and vitality."\textsuperscript{19}

For Milton, of course, the ultimate destination of heaven was limited to Christians and to Christians who accepted the Protestant salvation offered by Christ, not the salvation offered by the Roman Catholic Church. Still, in his poetry is reflected the belief in retention of identity, body and soul. The relationship of man to God is a personal relationship in Milton's canon, and the personal nature of this relationship will be continued and enhanced in heaven.

Milton's theological conclusion about creation, that God created from His own essence, invests created beings with the power of love and reason. Because of free will,
liberty of thought and action, this love may be channeled away from God or freely given to God. So it is with reason. Reason may be inspired by God, of God; or, like love, the power of reason may be perverted from the path of truth. It is the nature of created beings that perversion of love and reason is not inevitable, but it is possible because of free will.

This perversion of love and reason is reflected in *Paradise Lost* in the self-love of the rebel angels and Satan. Love between human beings may be either negative or positive. The power of reason and the perversion of reason is reflected not only in *Paradise Lost*, but also in *Paradise Regained* in which the difference between specious reason, originating with created beings, and true reason, originating from God, is pointed up in the temptations. Sin in Milton's theology, as it appears in his poetry, is separation from God which manifests itself through Satan's denial and man's disobedience. Salvation is to be experienced by conformity to the will of God, conformity which Christ displays by his perfect obedience.

God the Father in *Paradise Lost* is by His nature unknowable to His creatures, hence Milton's consistent use of the *via negativa* image of God in the poem. Conformity to God's will, then, is ultimate faith in the creator by the created. When Adam separates himself from God by his disobedience, the free flowing harmony of the
relationship between God and man is disrupted, and Christ is the means by which the harmony will be restored in the new Eden. Milton's antitrinitarian theology presents Christ as unique in creation in that only Christ will lead man, of his own choice, back to God. In *Paradise Regained* Christ is tempted as a created being by the things that appeal to created beings. Because of Christ's rejection of Satan's appeals and Christ's obedience to God, Christ manifests the possible—again, not the necessity of, but the possibility of perfect conformity to the will of God. Christ acts, then, as a bridge between man and God. The very passivity of Christ in *Paradise Regained* underscores his representation of possibility within free will.

Not only does Milton present a coherent, though subtle, theological pattern in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, but he also presents the theological conclusions within epics of awesome power. The struggle for the souls of men is carried out on a universal scale, producing a vision of the relationship between creator and created that is mythic in nature.

All cultures as far as our studies show contain some form of religious practice, some structure to formalize man's relationship to that which he does not understand, to the mystery of his creation and his death. Milton presents Satan as evil incarnate in that Satan refuses
to recognize and obey a power obviously greater than himself; he separates himself from God by rejecting God, by rejecting the possibility of creation by something other than himself. Satan's rejection of God is basic evil in Milton's canon.

Recognition in some form of a supreme power is apparently a natural impulse of man and his attempts to act, to live within that reality create his myths, the symbolic narratives that evoke awe and wonder and deal with the deepest concerns of the culture. Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained are mythic in this context. The deepest concerns of Milton's culture deal with multiple issues that are manifestations of a society in transition from medieval to modern. On a very basic level, the role of the individual in government, education, commerce, religion gains in power and influence; his perception of himself in these spheres of power changes and this transition is reflected in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. What this study is concerned with, of course, is how these cultural issues are a factor in Milton's presentation of man's relationship to God.

The first thing to consider is that this relationship is founded on free will. Creation ex Deo endows God's created beings with the ability to love, to reason, and thus to achieve harmony in existence. Free will necessitates possibility. That is, one may love or reason in
more than one direction. In the character of Satan Milton presents ultimate evil which is self-love to the exclusion of love of God—Pride. Thus, sin is born.

When Eve sins, she sins deceived by Satan, and Adam chooses to sin in order to remain with her. The root of man's sin is disobedience—not conscious rejection of God, as in Satan's case, but disobedience. Man's relationship with God is then rendered impure, but because mankind, in the person of Eve, sins deceived by Satan, salvation is possible. Milton makes this difference very clear in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained.

Because man sins, he experiences death and in this case again, Milton exalts the individual in his mortalist conclusions. In Milton's mortalist theology, the body and soul die together to be raised together by Christ during the final Judgment. I believe that Milton's mortalism is clear in Paradise Lost and that it is a conclusion of earlier interests in identity and order within the will of God.

A third element to consider is that a major part of the argument in Paradise Lost is based on man's inability to comprehend God because of man's created nature. This idea resonates throughout the epic in the via negativa images of God, the appeals by Satan to the rebel angels, the speeches of the fallen angels in Pandemonium. It manifests itself theologically in Milton's antitrinitarian
stance in *Paradise Lost* and his presentation of Christ's triumph over temptation in *Paradise Regained*. Because of man's inability to know God, some means must exist for him to approach God. Within Milton's antitrinitarian context, Christ is unique, neither God, nor angel, nor man, but rather a bridge or mediator between God and God's creatures—a created being who exerts the appeal of one created being for another and yet, one special in all the universe, admitted to God's presence and sight.

This too, it seems to me, reflects a good deal of the religious argument of the seventeenth century. After the Reformation, the priest as mediator no longer functions in any pervasive way in England. Likewise, the intercession of saints and the Virgin is not a Protestant approach to God. For the antitrinitarian, Christ fulfills the function of mediator between man and God without the Catholic tradition of reliance on priest or saint. It is a conclusion that is Protestant and individual in that Milton's antitrinitarianism recognizes the possibility of man's salvation through his affinity for those of his own kind, in the person of Christ as an agent of God fully possessed of created identity, love of God and man, and the willingness to make known the possibility of total conformity to the will of God through sacrifice.

Milton's theological conclusions are to be found in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, and although
unorthodox in the mainstream of Christian argument, confront the issues raised by the events of his lifetime and the issues raised by his heritage as a man of the Renaissance. Clearly Milton saw the possibilities of human learning and endeavor. Just as clearly he saw the results of misdirected, even perverted, energies on the part of man. In his later years Milton was more and more concerned with inner peace, if we are to identify his poetic concern with inner peace as a personal interest. His observations and conclusions, I believe, are manifested to some degree in the examination of man's relationship to God in his poetry. The theology in that poetry, its development, and conclusions, is a vital expression of an extraordinary man who combined poetical, theological, and philosophical energies to produce a body of poetry concerned with man's relationship to God. The Renaissance man, the Protestant, the Puritan found a mythic voice in John Milton.
Notes


2 See Chapter 4, above.


6 See Chapter 3, above.

7 See Chapter 3, above.


9 See Sonnet XXII.


17 Ibid., p. 34.


19 Ibid., p. 10.
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Title of Thesis: DEVELOPING THEOLOGICAL PATTERNS IN JOHN MILTON'S POETRY

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Date of Examination: May 1, 1981