

2000

Gods, Men and Their Gifts: a Comparison of the "Iliad", the "Odyssey", the "Aeneid" and "Paradise Lost"

Paul Norman Anderson
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation

Anderson, Paul Norman, "Gods, Men and Their Gifts: a Comparison of the "Iliad", the "Odyssey", the "Aeneid" and "Paradise Lost"" (2000). *LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses*. 7138.
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/7138

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

**Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600**

UMI[®]

GODS, MEN AND THEIR GIFTS:
A COMPARISON OF THE *ILIAD*, THE *ODYSSEY*, THE *AENEID* AND
PARADISE LOST

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 Interdepartmental Program in Comparative Literature

by

Paul Anderson

B.A., Concordia College, Ann Arbor, 1987
M. Div., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1991
M.A., Washington University, St. Louis, 1991
May, 2000

UMI Number: 9963933

Copyright 2000 by
Anderson, Paul Norman

All rights reserved.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 9963933

Copyright 2000 by Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

© Copyright 2000
Paul Norman Anderson
All rights reserved

ii

For Laura,

"My fairest, my espous'd, my latest found,
Heav'ns last best gift, my ever new delight."

Paradise Lost V, 18-19

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During my years at Concordia Seminary I learned the importance of the word "gift" from The Reverend Doctor Norman E. Nagel. I was pleased that Professor Robert J. Edgeworth at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge encouraged my interest in pursuing this topic in the context of epic poems. I thank him first of all for his guidance and oversight while I wrote my dissertation.

Many others have encouraged me during this period of my life. In order that I might finish this study, my wife, Laura, and my children, Jessica, Kristen, Rachel and Allan, have given of their time and the attention due them. My parents Allan and Lois Anderson have supported me in many and various ways during my time of study.

I wish to thank Mr. Jonathan Bradford for his editorial assistance and encouragement. Dr. Ray Allen provided production assistance, without which I never would have finished the dissertation.

My other committee members, Professors Emily Batinski, Carolyn Jones, Marchita Mauck, Robert McMahon and Anna Nardo provided suggestions for improving the manuscript that were enormously helpful.

The Reverends Bradley Drew and Gary Peterson listened for years as my thesis took form and as they continuously cheered me onward until its completion.

Finally, I wish to thank the members of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, of Baton Rouge, for giving me encouragement and the leisure necessary to complete my studies. In their midst I have learned more fully the meaning of the word "gift."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: THE <i>ILIAD</i>	15
CHAPTER TWO: THE <i>ODYSSEY</i>	65
CHAPTER THREE:THE <i>AENEID</i>	119
CHAPTER FOUR: <i>PARADISE LOST</i>	158
CHAPTER FIVE: COMPARISONS	214
CONCLUSION.....	256
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	262
VITA.....	269

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an examination of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid* and *Paradise Lost* based upon their similar depictions of gods and men, specifically in regard to their use of gifts. The procedure is lexical and thematic in approach.

The word group around which the majority of the evidence is centered is the noun 'gift' and the verb 'to give.' The nature and use of gifts is examined in the four works under consideration. However, the evidence for the notion of gift-giving is not limited by a strict positivistic approach. Evidence from the texts that clearly includes the notion of gift giving is also supplied, though the terms are lacking.

The themes which recur in this work are as follows: theodicy, the justification of God's ways and gifts; the obligatory nature of gifts versus a conception of free gifts; the nature of the epic description of the divine-human relationship.

The Introduction presents the challenge from Milton to compare his work to the ancient classical works. Each of the major works is then presented in an individual chapter. There then follows a chapter comparing the evidence from

each epic. A concluding chapter summarizes the comparisons and contrasts.

I acknowledge modern scholarship and often challenge the views of certain scholars, not only regarding some of their interpretations of these works, but most of all regarding the terms of discussion that are assumed when discussing epics. I assume that works which are given great reverence, such as these, must be allowed to guide the formulation of the questions we ask of them.

The terms 'gift' and 'giving' define the limits of classical epic and serve to explain the divine-human relationship which they all assume exists. I conclude that Milton has received the language and structure of gift-giving from classical epic and has transformed them by inserting his God into that language and structure. Gift-giving language and gift-giving structures must be transformed by Milton's action, for His God is far more consistent and rational than the gods of classical epic.

INTRODUCTION

The proem of *Paradise Lost* could easily lead on to conclude that the work was *primarily* a Christian theodicy, a justification of God's all-merciful and omnipotent attributes, despite the presence of evil in the world. Such a conclusion, however, is incomplete. For what there is of theodicy in this work should more properly be labeled a "theodical element." Furthermore, even that theodical element is not, in every respect, uniquely Christian.

First of all, *Paradise Lost* is not *primarily* a theodicy, because it is not a work *primarily* about God. Like all of the four epics considered by this study, *Paradise Lost* is about man. It also obviously speaks about God and the story of the way in which man lost the paradise that was given to him by God. However, if John Milton had intended to write a theodicy, the talented man certainly could have titled the work in some manner such as, "God's Good World Nevertheless," to forward his argument. Instead, Milton's title speaks with good cheer the dactyl "Paradise," followed by a slight pause, and a quite final "Lost." Like *μῆνιν* (*Iliad* I, 1), *ἄνδρα* (*Odyssey* I, 1) and

arma (*Aeneid* I, 1) before it, the opening words of this

epic speak with force:

Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
Sing Heav'nly Muse.¹ (I, 1-6)

This proem says nothing (yet) about God's ways and His goodness in relation to the presence of evil. These are the (modified) nouns: Man, Disobedience, Fruit, (Forbidden) Tree, Death, World, woe, loss, Eden, (greater) Man, (blissful) Seat. Milton's epic is *primarily* about man: what man eats, man's death, man's world, where man dwells and how man disobeys. God is not mentioned—not yet; but the proem does speak of "Fruit" that was "Forbidden;" in other words, "not allowed," "not given."

It is only at the end of the full proem that God's ways and their justification are mentioned. But the justification of God's ways to men will be only a part of the epic, a sub-theme to that of Man's First Disobedience. This is how the text of the prayer proceeds:

What in me is dark
Illumin, what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great Argument
I may assert Eternal Providence,

¹ All quotations from Milton's poetry are from John Milton, *The Complete Poetry of John Milton*, Ed. by John T. Shawcross (New York: Anchor Books, 1963).

And justifie the wayes of God to men.
(I, 22-26)

The poet prays for support, so that he "may assert Eternal Providence, / And justifie the wayes of God to men" throughout the epic, "*to the highth*" of the argument that is concerned with man's disobedience, Fall and the loss of Paradise. The plot of the epic will be about man and man's fall into sin. Then, with man as the focus of the work, as "high" as that argument reaches, when questions arise concerning the actions of God—and such questions always arise in epic poems—then the poet prays for support to do the work of theodicy at the same time.

It is crucial, for a proper reading of *Paradise Lost*, to recognize similarities and contrasts between Milton's work and the works of Homer and Vergil, those whom Milton strives to surpass. The present study emphasizes that one aspect of Greek, Latin and English epic that deserves greater attention is the use of the terms and structures of gift-giving. As this study will demonstrate, the four epics under consideration speak much about God, men and their gifts. Gifts, divine and mortal, define the way in which supernatural beings interact with men.

Milton scholarship has rightly taken notice of the importance, for Milton, of the gifts that God gives to men.

There are many ways in which one may study gifts in Milton's works. One might try to place the language of gifts in the context of the historical situation in which Milton wrote by studying the economics of seventeenth-century England. One might study gifts in Milton's work by trying to determine the influences from Milton's life that affected his use of gift terminology. For instance, the fact that his father was a notary, a financial official, certainly had effect on Milton's world-view and, thus, his poetry.

Another approach that takes into account biographical information about John Milton in order to interpret his works is found in those studies that deal with Milton's awareness of the gifts, talents and abilities he had been given. Milton writes in Sonnet XIX of "that one Talent which is death to hide / Lodg'd with me..." (Sonnet XXIX, 3-4). Milton was personally concerned with God's gifts and man's use or misuse of them, especially in regard to his own life.

In Sonnet XIX the poet laments that, although God had given John Milton literary abilities, his "Maker" had taken away the bard's eyesight. The poem concludes, however, by stating that "God doth not need / Either man's work or his own gifts" (9-10). That is why he states that those "who

best / Bear his mild yolk...serve him best" (10-11). It is clearly a comfort for Milton to learn that "They also serve who only stand and wait" (14). I interpret this to mean that Milton has discovered his God-given station in life. If God wants Milton to work as a blind man, that is God's business, the way God gives his gifts.²

In *The Reason of Church Government*, in the Introduction to the Second Book, Milton describes in detail the gifts that were given to him: the freedom he had, from his youth, to immerse himself in study; his European travel; his ability to write well.³ Milton acknowledges that these are gifts that were given to him. In *The Reason of Church Government*, he feels compelled to mention his appreciation of the gifts and to defend his use of those same gifts. It is no surprise then to find that gifts occupy an important place in *Paradise Lost*.

² For a careful interpretation of the vocabulary of Sonnet XIX and for a warning about mis-reading the poem, see Carol Barton, "'They Also Perform the Duties of a Servant Who Only Remain Erect on Their Feet in a Specified Place in Readiness to Receive Orders': The Dynamics of Stasis in Sonnet XIX ('When I Consider How My Light is Spent.')," *Milton Quarterly* 32 (Dec 1998), 109-122. See also Michael Lieb's article "*Talents*," in *A Milton Encyclopedia*, 9 Volumes, Ed. by William B. Hunter et alii. (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1978-83), Volume 8 (1980), 48-51.

³ John Milton, "The Reason of Church Government," in *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, Volume I (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 801-823.

Dayton Haskin's recent study, *Milton's Burden of Interpretation*,⁴ emphasizes Milton's position as a Protestant. Milton believed, as a Protestant, that each Christian has a duty to interpret the Scriptures for himself. Milton's burden also included the responsibility to interpret the literary tradition to which he was heir. Haskin studies the importance Milton placed on the Parable of the Talents (Saint Matthew 25:14-30) for his own life and how that affected his prose and poetry.

The use of gift terminology by Milton has been studied by way of an examination of Milton's life and times. These studies enhance our understanding of the ways Milton's works were read in Milton's day. That understanding then deepens further readings, by taking note of what gift terminology meant for Milton and his contemporaries. This approach guards readers of other ages from anachronistically imposing ideas about gift terminology upon Milton's work in an improper fashion.

A somewhat different but complementary approach toward appreciating *Paradise Lost* and the place of gifts in that poem, that has not received sufficient attention in scholarship, is presented in this study. The classical epics, namely, the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid*, also

⁴ Dayton Haskin, *Milton's Burden of Responsibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991).

present the gifts of gods and men in great detail. John Milton drew upon these works. In fact, he urges us to compare his work with the poems of Homer and Vergil. A comparison of these works in terms of their presentation of gifts is most rewarding.

In *Paradise Lost*, the poet can "take for granted" that there must be gifts of God in an epic. Gifts—their use and abuse—are a common foil in epics to tell the story of man and God. Man disobeys the voice of God regarding what He has given and what He has not given. Man disobeys by not using all the gifts given to him and by taking what was not his. God calls man's disobedience ingratitude.⁵ He gave man free will, plenty to eat and ample warnings regarding the one tree not given to him. Man misused all these gifts. In fact, he did not take them as "gifts," gratis; his sin is "ingratitude."

When one studies the theodical element of this work, it becomes clear that Milton does not truly solve the problem of theodicy. He asserts providence and God's ways. (I contend that we must never forget to add "and God's gifts.") Such an assertion is something we could say Milton learned from Vergil and, most of all, from Homer. For if John Milton had wished only to write an epic in

⁵ *Paradise Lost* III, 97.

unrhymed pentameter on the subject of a central Christian doctrine drawn from the Holy Scriptures, then it is remarkable that Milton first bows toward the Aegean.

Before the narrator prays for support in order to carry through his theodical effort as he sings about man, he first prays to the Muse to aid his

adventrous Song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursue
Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rime.
(I, 13-16)

Milton is not satisfied to write a verse production about the Fall of Man. It is not enough for him to assert his theodical element through the whole of his work. He also intends to accomplish this in a manner surpassing Homer. This is not the only reference to this intention in *Paradise Lost*. Milton claims that his subject matter is greater than Homer's. For example, he must sing about the Fall, a

Sad task, yet argument
Not less but more Heroic then the wrauth
Of stern Achilles on his Foe pursu'd
Thrice Fugitive about Troy Wall;

and greater than Vergil's subject too:

or rage
Of Turnus for Lavinia disespous'd,
Of Neptune's ire, or Juno's, that so long
Perplex'd the Greek, and Cytherea's Son.
(IX, 13-19)

Milton boasts that he will somehow surpass the great epic poets of the West. There is no more certain way to invite close comparison than to boast of superiority. Milton insists on drawing our attention to such a comparison.

In *Paradise Lost* the Greek gods will be displayed by Milton as demons of hell, whence come all false gods. Yet they are, conspicuously, last in the role call of demons. Milton's reasoning is (apparently) that the most important fallen angels were those like Moloch and Ashera, who lived nearer the Israelites and were more of a temptation. Thus, they are mentioned first. The Greek and Roman deities are almost brushed aside with a complaint, "The rest were long to tell...Th' Ionian Gods" (I, 507-8). However, they were "far renown'd" (507), so worth a dozen lines. The ultimate position of the Greek gods, far from diminishing their importance, only reasserts it for the alert reader.

Paradise Lost constantly (though not exclusively) draws the reader's memory and attention to the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*. The narrator's intention to surpass these other works invites the question, "Did he succeed?" The recurring use of Homeric and Vergilian conventions is so enmeshed in the text that one is impoverished in reading the work without a solid

referential dialogue with the past. Milton not only uses classical epic themes, simile structures, recurring epithets, etc.; he also dresses his characters in classical garb, develops their battles in Greek and Roman fashion, and constantly reflects the ways of Greek and Roman gods to men in the characters of the heavenly and infernal beings.

The theodical element of *Paradise Lost*, therefore, is very profitably examined in the light of the theodical element found in the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*. Although the divine families are quite different in all four works, the questions about evil and the actions of the divinities concern the characters developed by Homer and Vergil, as well as the audiences they delighted, just as certainly as they concern Milton's characters and his readers. An examination of the theodical element in Homer's and Vergil's epics is an element of this study. I contend that this teaches us the place of theodicy in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. God's providential care is not proved, but asserted in contrast to the pagan gods. God's ways are justified by an assertion of God's actions, a display of His gifts, and a dramatization of man's lack of receptivity, his ingratitude.

Because of these facts, the entire matter of theodicy will be shown to be a subordinate, though vital element in

the work's greater concern. This was also the case for the great epics of the past. Theodicy for all these works is secondary to what we may call "androcity," an exercise that questions the righteousness of man's actions coram Deo. The gods may, in all instances, be proved or asserted to be right in their ways, generous with gifts. But more important than that, man is always shown to be obligated to the gods and responsible for his use of divine gifts.

This study proposes to compare these four epics in terms of gods, men and their gifts. An epic, it is generally agreed, must have certain elements. It must be poetry in a strict meter. There must be gods and men interacting in the work. Milton surely considered these elements as necessary. However, a close examination of Milton's work together with the other works teaches us that there must be at least one other item in an epic. There must be gifts.

In all of these works the gods give to men. They expect something in return. Sometimes men give in return. Sometimes they do not. Men give gifts to the gods. They also expect a return. Again, sometimes the gods reciprocate and sometimes they do not. These variations also occur between one god and another or one man and another.

Throughout each work, however, a pattern repeats. One character gives; but there are always "strings" attached. Gifts are payments to gain something: health, strength, life, death, revenge, blessing or obedience. If Milton intends to surpass the previous works, his success or failure will certainly show itself through his presentation of gift-giving. I will show that Milton does indeed surpass Homer and Vergil in his work, precisely in terms of God, men and gifts.

This study will demonstrate that Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, is thoroughly conversant with the pattern of gift giving set by the classical authors. This pattern is one important tool by which he will surpass Homer and Vergil. Milton presents a different heaven, a distinct God and men whom we might call superior in certain ways to the characters of the classical works. Those elements--Heaven, God, outstanding men--are the very elements Milton intended to use in order to surpass the classical works while writing about man and God.

My contribution to scholarship is to demonstrate the similarities between the four works under consideration in terms of gift-giving between divinities and men--similarities that have been overlooked in previous commentaries. In Chapter One on the *Iliad*, I will show

that the primary concern is with the gifts that men give to the gods. Homer's gods often also give gifts to men. But the *Iliad*, more than any of the other epics I will discuss, stresses the ways that men lay claim on the gods because of their gifts to the gods.

The *Odyssey*, by contrast, stresses the gifts of the gods to men, especially to Odysseus. I will show in Chapter Two that in this epic, man's response is the greater concern. The work also shows that the gifts from men to the gods are important. However, the focus is more on the ways in which men acknowledge divine gifts. In the *Iliad*, the focus was more on men and lesser deities trying to gain the gratitude of the (higher) gods.

Vergil, in the *Aeneid*, presents gods that are far more removed from men than they are in the Homeric epics. In Chapter Three, I will demonstrate that the gifts of men and the gifts of the gods are still prevalent in the Latin poem. Men still offer sacrifices to the gods and gods continue to give favors to men. But for the first time, as far as the epics under consideration are concerned, the "horizontal gifts," from god to god and from mortal to mortal, are far more prominent. One of the reasons for this is that Vergil presents the gods as being far more malignant towards men than they are in Homer. Gifts are

still exchanged between gods and men. But Vergil's epic is much more concerned with the behavior of man towards man than it is with the gifts and ways of inscrutable gods.

Paradise Lost does not abandon the epic terminology of gifts. In fact, Milton's poem focuses attention on the gifts of God and the gifts of men. In Chapter Four, I will demonstrate that it is precisely in terms of gifts that Milton intends to surpass Homer and Vergil. *Paradise Lost* does not present a greater number of gifts. The poem presents a Divinity who is far more consistent and more rational than the classical gods in terms of the way He rewards and punishes men.

Milton's effective handling of gift-giving terminology in epic is an important tool he used to surpass, or at least to transform, epic poetry. Milton clearly first absorbed the ways in which the classical authors used gift terminology. Then, in *Paradise Lost*, he wrote about the Christian God and His superiority to the pagan gods. Although Milton's God is more consistent and rational than the pagan gods, the gift terminology in his poem resembles that which is found in classical epic—all the while the poem asserts the superiority of its subject, Christian truth, over pagan fabling.

CHAPTER ONE: THE *ILIAD*

The *Iliad* is the one epic, of the four under consideration, that is most concerned with the gifts that men give to the gods. These gifts, the epic demonstrates, lead men to lay claims upon the gods of Olympus. When the expectations of the givers of gifts are not met, the work begins to question the relationship between gods and men. This is not surprising. It is a hallmark of epic that gods and men interact.⁶

This chapter examines the way in which men, in the *Iliad*, call upon the gods to make them respond. In the *Iliad*, when men pray, they also boast.⁷ Men are truly hoping that their gifts will be appreciated by the gods. When the gods do not respond in a manner that was hoped for

⁶ The text that is used in this study is contained in Homer, *Iliadis Libri*, Ed. by David Monro and Thomas Allen, 2 Vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1902). Two good resources for a discussion of the relation between Greek gods and Fate are B. C. Dietrich, *Death, Fate and the Gods: The development of a religious idea in Greek popular belief and in Homer* (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1967), and Jasper Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983). For a debate from the last forty years concerning the idea of justice in Homeric epic, see Arthur W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), and Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971). A general introduction to Homeric epic is presented in the excellent new resource edited by Ian Morris and Barry Powell, *A New Companion to Homer* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

⁷ In Homer's Greek, the word "pray" means both "to ask" and "to boast."

by men, or by other gods, the poem raises important questions about gods, men, and their gifts.

The *Iliad* displays all manner of ways the gods come to men and deal with them. George Calhoun states it nicely, that "[t]hroughout the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* the world of humankind is surrounded and interpenetrated by a supernatural realm, swarming with gods and other beings who influence the lives of mortal men in matters small and great."⁸

The first book of the *Iliad* gives us many examples. The theme of the work is the μῆνιν...Πηληϊάδεω' Ἀχιλῆος, the wrath of the son of Peleus, Achilles.⁹ Here we have, surely, the first distinguishing mark of an epic: the first character who is mentioned.

The choice of Peleus' son has influenced the other works here under consideration. The first person mentioned is closely related to whatever god (God) is in that poem's heaven. Peleus bore a son through Thetis, lest Zeus beget

⁸ George Calhoun, "Polity and Society: (i) The Homeric Picture," in *A Companion to Homer*, Ed. by Alan J.B. Wace and Frank H. Stubbings (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 442.

⁹ *Iliad*, I, 1.

through her a mightier son than he.¹⁰ Anchises begat Aeneas by Venus. Adam is the son of God.

The exception is Odysseus. Odysseus' father is Laertes, a mortal. His mother, also mortal, has died and he meets her in the underworld.¹¹ However, his true "champion and protector"¹² is divine Athena. She begins the action in this poem and ends the fighting at its close. She has qualities and abilities that are evident to a great degree in her charge and in his wife, Penelope.

The question of lineage is present throughout the poem, not only in the hero's dealings with fantastic peoples when he performs his many impersonations. Odysseus pretends to be many people throughout the work, a son of many different parents. It is not stretching the evidence too much to say that Athena is, in many ways, a figure of a mother for Odysseus. It seems that she has always been with Odysseus and continually helps him. Odysseus' mortal family relationships raise serious questions: Why does Odysseus hold the throne, not his father, Laertes? Why

¹⁰ This "near-miss" of the abandoned Zeus-Thetis romance is significant for this epic. Achilles is literally the son Zeus never had.

¹¹ *Odyssey* XI, 84ff.

¹² E. V. Rieu, "Introduction" to *The Odyssey* (New York: Penguin, 1946), 13.

does Telemachus question his parentage?¹³ In contrast to this, Athena's divine patronage of Odysseus is assumed.

The choice of Odysseus will be more carefully examined in Chapter Two. Let it suffice to say, for now, that the man who causes infatuation in mortal women and immortal goddesses, who is offered (and refuses!) immortality and is constantly the care of Athena (the favorite of Zeus) is certainly an intriguing choice for a central character—not at all an inappropriate one.

However, it is not the familial kinship between men and gods that is the most important factor that governs the ways of the gods with men—at least not in the *Iliad*. Though ties of family do affect the plot of the story, they are far from decisive. A different pattern emerges in Book I. The poet begins by asking and answering:

τίς τ' ἄρ σφωε θεῶν ἔριδι ξυνέηκε μάχεσθαι;
Λητοῦς καὶ Διὸς υἱός... (I, 8-9)

[Who then of the gods brought together these two to fight? The Son of Leto and Zeus...]

Who brought together Achilles and Agamemnon? Paris is not blamed, nor Helen. The poem does not blame the city of Troy, wise Priam, or any other mortal. The poet does not

¹³ *Odyssey*, I, 213-220.

even point to any form of fate. Instead, one of the immortals is the root cause.

In Book I, Chryses, the priest of Apollo and father of Agamemnon's captured concubine, comes to ransom his daughter. Agamemnon, lord of men, speaks harshly and sends the man away in fear, though the rest of the Achaeans voiced approval of the ransom the man had brought. Then comes the first instance of the ways of the gods with men. The gifts of men form strong bonds with the gods. As old Chryses walks down the beach, he prays:

κλῦθί μευ ἀργυρότοξ', ὃς Χρύσην ἀμφιβέβηκας
Κίλλαν τε ζαθέην Τενέδοιό τε ἱφί ἀνάσσεις,
Σμινθεῦ εἰ ποτέ τοι χαρίεντ' ἐπὶ νηὸν ἔρεψα,
ἢ εἰ δὴ ποτέ τοι κατὰ πῖονα μηρί' ἔκηα
ταύρων ἢδ' αἰγῶν, τὸ δέ μοι κρήνην ἐέλδωρ·
τίσειαν Δαναοὶ ἐμὰ δάκρυα σοῖσι βέλεσσιν.
ὥς ἔφατ' εὐχόμενος... (I, 37-43)

[Hear me, O Silver Bow, who stand over both Chryse and holy Cilla, and who rule mightily over Tenedos, O Mouse-god, if I ever put a roof upon a temple for you, making you glad, or if I ever truly burned to you the fat flanks of bulls or of goats, then bring this wish to pass: Let the Danaans pay for my tears with your arrows. So he spoke praying...]

The first prayer is a curse from a man in tears. The *Iliad* is made of these things: tears, pain, prayers, gods, payment and retribution. A word that is used from Books I through XXIV is ἀχνύμενος, "grieving." Agamemnon will be

the first to suffer such grief in this work (I, 103). For the prayer of Chryses is powerful and effective.

Immediately following the prayer comes this answer:

τοῦ δ' ἔκλυε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων,
βῆ δὲ κατ' Οὐλύμποιο καρήκων χωόμενος κῆρ...
(I, 43-4)

[...and Phoebus Apollo heard him and came down from the peaks of Olympus, full of wrath in his heart...]

The priest prayed to his god and the god answered immediately. Apollo struck the Achaean camp for nine days with a plague upon man and beast, until a gathering was called by Achilles, in which Calchas singled out Agamemnon's treatment of Chryses as the cause of Apollo's wrath. The girl must be given back. The god must be appeased. But Agamemnon wants another girl-Achilles' girl. This is the start of the wrath.

An early Greek commentary on Homer summarized the (initially) rational relationship between gods, men and their gifts. The Scholiast (T) states that Apollo heard Chryses' prayer for these reasons:

συνητίμαστο γὰρ τῷ ἱερεῖ ἐν τῷ ᾧ μή νύ τοι οὐ χραίσμη σκῆπτρον
καὶ στέμμα θεοῖο· καὶ ὅτι Τρωϊκός ἐστιν ὁ θεός. ἀπολίτευτον δὲ
τὸ πρὸ τῆς εὐχῆς ἐπικουρῆσαι. διδάσκει οὖν ὅσον ὀνίνησιν εὐχὴ
καθαρά, ὅσον δὲ ἀνωφελὴς ἡ μυσαρὰ θυσία Αἰγισθος.¹⁴

¹⁴ Hartmut Erbse, Editor of *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Iliadem* (*Scholia Vetera*), Volume I (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969), 22.

[For he was dishonored along with the priest by (Agamemnon's harsh reply) "lest your staff and the god's symbols do not protect you"; and because the god was pro-Trojan. Also answering this prayer was notably not in the interests of the community, rather of the individual. Thus it teaches how much a pure prayer accomplishes, and how much useless sacrifice, which profits nothing--Aegisthus comes to mind.]

The Scholiast states that Apollo heard the priest's prayer for three reasons: because Agamemnon had dishonored the badges of Apollo which the priest carried; because the priest's request was pure and so, presumably, was the priest; and because the god favored Troy and thus not the Achaeans. This arrangement is reasonable, even expected. The gods favor certain people over others. As long as the favorites of the gods do not transgress certain boundaries (unlike Aegisthus and Agamemnon), the gods will answer their prayers favorably. This appears to be a straightforward system in which mortals and immortals could work with one another.

However, the Scholiast left out one important factor that Homer mentioned: the gifts of Chryses to Apollo. The Scholiast has "spiritualized" the prayer of the priest. The priest knows the value of a sacrifice. He does not neglect to mention his past services to Apollo.

As Book I continues, the pattern seems to continue for men and for gods. When Athena keeps Achilles from attacking Agamemnon, promising future gifts, Achilles assents and sums up this theology with these words: "ὅς κε θεοῖς ἐπιπείθεται μάλα τ' ἔκλυον αὐτοῦ [Whoever obeys the gods, him do they hear willingly] (I, 218)." The gods are good to those who obey them.

The pattern is followed in another instance. When the Achaeans listen to Calchas, return the girl and offer sacrifices, Chryses prays again (I, 450ff.), this time for the Achaeans, not against them. The line is repeated, "ὥς ἔφατ' εὐχόμενος, τοῦ δ' ἔκλυε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων [Thus he spoke praying, and Phoebus Apollo heard him] (I, 457)." Two prayers by the same man are followed by two favorable responses, just as the soothsayer had promised.

The initially rational system of answered prayers continues. Achilles asks his mother, Thetis, to go to Zeus. She must ask him to help the Trojans. Thetis, the goddess, agrees to her son's requests.¹⁵

Thetis, in turn, kneels to make her requests to Zeus. But at this point—somewhat of a surprise—there is no quick

¹⁵ *Iliad* I, 364-427.

hearing or answering. Instead, Thetis makes her request and the poet continues: "ὥς φάτο· τὴν δ' οὐ τι προσέφη νεφεληγερέτα Ζεὺς, / ἀλλ' ἀκέων δὴν ἦ στο [but cloud gathering Zeus did not answer her a word, rather he sat long silent] (I, 511-512)." This is the first instance in which a prayer is not answered immediately, even though Thetis had good reason to hope for a favorable reply. As Achilles had stated (I, 396ff), Thetis had somehow helped Zeus when other gods were plotting against him. In other words, Zeus "owed her one." And yet, he sits there silent.

Thetis persists. Stroking his cheek and holding his knee, in the posture of a suppliant, she asks again, adding that Zeus can answer whatever he wants to answer, for "ἐπεὶ οὐ τοι ἐπι δέος [since there is no necessity laid on you] (I, 515)." Here is a new revelation for the reader of the epic. This god may or may not answer a request favorably, no matter how earnest or deserving is the being who makes the request. Thetis had been obedient. Her son, Achilles, had done his best to save the people, honor the gods and give respect to the holy men. But now Thetis adds the explanatory clause, "but you do not need to do anything I ask."

Thetis knows this and the Greeks are sophisticated enough to have heard of it. Sometimes they need to be reminded. The poet, at least, knows what Thetis knows: you may make requests of the gods, but they do not have to grant them.

Nevertheless, Zeus assents. It will cause him some grief from his wife, but he nods his head, shakes Olympus, solemnizing his promise to grant Thetis' request (I, 528-530). Perhaps Thetis' past behavior toward Zeus has gained her some sort of leverage with Zeus after all.

The pattern, though, is broken: the pattern of a pure suppliant, who has given to the god in the past, asking a pure prayer, which is granted by a god. Here, the prayer must be repeated. She holds his knee and strokes his chin and pleads. The god must consider the implications, even the god who needs not worry about consequences. Then there follows the scene on Olympus. Hera is not happy, as Zeus had expected. The quarrel becomes heated, but is calmed down by Hephaestus, who soothes his mother and turns the awkward moment into laughter, as he puffs around the hall serving the gods.¹⁶

The first book leads the unwary reader astray. For what have we learned about the gods to this point? One

¹⁶ *Iliad* I, 570-600.

could easily read the first book and come to this conclusion: the gods hear those who are worthy to be heard, who have previously given gifts to the gods. They may need some convincing or cajoling, but a pattern is revealed in the ways of the gods toward men in Homer's universe: the gods answer favorites favorably.

However, the events of the epic begin in such a way that will cause prayers to go unanswered, even prayers of favorites. These beginnings will cause quarrels to increase in heaven as they do on earth. There exists, in the Homeric scheme, no simple exchange of obedience and favor between men and gods. The relationship is far more complex than that. A misunderstanding of this relationship will prevent us from learning just what it is that Milton intends to soar over, at least in regard to the treatment of human-divine communication in these epics.

In William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, there is a phrase used to describe one man's estimation of religion and his duty to the spiritual world. One of the characters is described as maintaining a "demand balance of spiritual solvency." This phrase makes a fitting label for one reading of the human-divine relationship in epic also, beginning with Homer.

In Faulkner's novel, Miss Rosa is telling young Quentin, decades after the events she narrates, about Goodhue Coldfield, her father. When Miss Rosa's sister, Ellen, was preparing to marry Thomas Sutpen, Mr. Coldfield made plans to use the local church for the wedding. This is Miss Rosa's description:

He seems to have intended to use the church into which he had invested a certain amount of sacrifice and doubtless self-denial and certainly actual labor and money for the sake of what might be called a demand balance of spiritual solvency, exactly as he would have used a cotton gin in which he considered himself to have incurred either interest or responsibility, for the ginning of any cotton which he or any member of his family, by blood or by marriage, had raised—that, and no more.¹⁷

Mr. Coldfield did not expect a large wedding with a full church and all the ritual the church had to offer. In his own mind, Mr. Coldfield had not invested enough of himself to be able to demand such treatment. He had, however, sacrificed enough for the church, so that he could use the church, invite one hundred guests and retain the services of the clergy.

Miss Rosa states that ten people showed up for the service, including the wedding party. Already Mr. Coldfield (or at least the readers) could see that the spiritual realm does not give back what depositors demand.

¹⁷ William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (New York: Random House, 1936 [Reprinted, New York: Vintage Books, 1990]), 38.

There is no one to whom you can appeal if you believe your account was unfairly emptied.

The phrase "spiritual solvency" is used once again, to describe the end of Mr. Coldfield's life. When the war started, he refused to sell from his store to the rebel troops. He had supported secession, it seems, but then turned his back on the South. He locked himself and his family in their house, until his store was looted. Then Mr. Coldfield nailed himself into the attic, stopped eating and died. Miss Rosa says that what hurt him most was

not the loss of the money but the fact that he had had to sacrifice the hoarding, the symbol of the fortitude and abnegation, to keep intact the spiritual solvency which he believed he had already established and secured. It was as if he had had to pay the same note twice because of some trifling oversight of date or signature.¹⁸

The "hoarding" was Mr. Coldfield's exactness in running his small store to support his family through many years. In the end, though, he still clung to a "spiritual solvency" which mattered most to him. Somehow, by giving up on his livelihood, by not supporting rebellion even by honest commerce, he was maintaining, at least in his own estimation, a balance in the spiritual realm.

What Mr. Coldfield figured he had deposited with the current spiritual powers did not bring to him the return he

¹⁸ Faulkner, 66.

might have expected. Faulkner's novel questions any notion that a mortal can create a "demand balance of spiritual solvency" with God.

This questioning is as old as Homer. There are characters in the *Iliad* who do not use the exact words but who express the very notion that they have built up, or can demand from the gods, a balance. Their lives and devotion have kept them solvent. One does not need to read too far to find people becoming disabused of this notion. Yet the pattern is the only one the characters know. They must return to its safety. They understand that the gods are not required to grant requests. But they also understand that the only way to get requests granted is to give attention to the gods.

Agamemnon is the first to experience the illusion of his solvency with Olympus, thus teaching us how epic treats gods, men and their gifts. There is no candidate more fit to learn the lesson that laying up treasures in the heavens does not create a "demand balance of spiritual solvency." He is the leader of an expedition that could not start until a sacrifice was made. He constantly calls on the gods and offers sacrifices to them. The action that teaches Agamemnon the contingency of divine approval begins

in the heavens. It seemed that Zeus had gone to bed at the end of Book I with Hera of the golden throne. Book II tells us that Zeus climbed out of bed.

Zeus stayed awake to begin answering Thetis' prayer. He did this first by conjuring up a dream to send to the sleeping Agamemnon. For, says Achilles, "καὶ γάρ τ' ὄναρ ἐκ Διὸς ἔστιν [for a dream is also of Zeus] (I, 63)."¹⁹ What a dream it was! Zeus sent the dream to deceive Agamemnon, lord of men, into believing that Zeus had now decided to give Troy into his hands. Agamemnon woke up, called the leaders together, announced a ruse (which almost sent everyone home) that led to the fighting throughout the poem which sent the souls of so many brave heroes down to Hades while the birds and dogs feasted on their flesh. This was, states Homer, "Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή [how the plan of Zeus was brought to completion] (I, 2-5)."

It is a good thing to try "to balance the books" up to this point in the poem, from the viewpoint of the spiritual realm. Zeus sent a dream to Agamemnon, a lying dream, because Zeus is answering the request of Thetis, to whom he owes a debt. Thetis' request is that Zeus bring honor to

¹⁹ This line fits nicely into the plot which will develop in Book II, although Zenodotus rejected it.

Achilles. Achilles wants the Achaeans to suffer, because in a totally unrelated event (or so it seems) Agamemnon had slighted Apollo and then had taken Achilles' spoils of war—Briseis—in his anger.

Benardete states this very well when he writes "Although Homer seems to ask the Muse in the *Iliad* to start from the plan of Zeus, the Muse starts from Apollo...and there is no indication that Zeus was behind Apollo's actions." Thus, the "causal nexus of events is complicated through the actions of independent gods."²⁰ We are led to question who or what is ultimately behind these events.

Readers have been made uneasy by the gods of Homer since ancient times. The sixth century poet Xenophanes did not like the portrayal of the gods in Homer—or in Hesiod. He wrote

πάντα θεοῖς ἀνέθηκαν Ὀμηρός θ' Ἡσίοδος τε
δσσα παρ' ἀνθρώποισιν ὀνείδεα καὶ ψόγος ἐστίν,
κλέπτειν μοιχεύειν τε καὶ ἀλλήλους ἀπατεύειν.²¹

[Homer and Hesiod attribute to the gods all reproachful things, whatever is found among men—and it is a lie!: stealing and adultery and deceiving one another.]

²⁰ Seth Benardete, *The Bow and the Lyre: A Platonic Reading of the Odyssey* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 6.

²¹ Xenophanes, 11, in *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Ed. by H. Diels, with additions by W. Kranz (Berlin, 1952).

The gods act too much like mortals for this poet. Xenophanes has read closely enough to notice the message of the *Iliad*. The gods may indeed act like mortals, or in any way they please, for they will avoid death or any such final consequence.

Instead of making the epic something less or cheaper by this description of the gods, Homer has added to the understanding of his gods by his narrative. Burkert admits that the Olympian gods can be "chaotic."²² However, he also writes of a scene where Achilles fights with Memnon, and their mothers, Thetis and Eos, hurry to the battle.²³ "In this way a narrative is produced which unfolds on two levels, on a double stage as it were: divine action and human action influence one another. The gods are onlookers, but are quick to intervene if they consider their interest affected."²⁴

Do the gods act like mortals? Very much so, in this scene, watching the battle. Does such a scene enhance the poem or diminish it?

Armstrong sums up a recurrent criticism of Homer's depiction of the gods by saying that "It is a commonplace to

²² Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 119.

²³ This scene is in the lost work Aithiopis, which is not by Homer.

²⁴ Burkert, 121-2.

remark that the Old Hellenic gods were 'immoral' or 'amoral.'"²⁵ He, however, sees a richness where others see faults. Instead of seeing a diminishing of the divine by this portrayal of the gods, he would instead say that experience, or a narrative, may or may not give a reason for the action of the gods. Sometimes their deeds were simply "inexplicable." The actions of mortals are much the same.

The gods grant requests and give gifts to mortals, often for a specific, stated reason. In many instances a mortal or an immortal has given something to the gods. We then learn that the gods are not required to grant blessings to those who have given to them.

Although the gods act like mortals in negative ways, something is gained from a description of the gods who are so similar to men. Armstrong writes:

This simple sense of experienced divine care and kindness and the affection for the gods that responded to it was an important part of ordinary ancient piety. But there was also, of course, a strong element in it of fear of the gods. As has already been indicated, they were powerful and dangerous and their actions were unpredictable.²⁶

²⁵ A.H. Armstrong, *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 79.

²⁶ Armstrong, 79.

The first part of Armstrong's evaluation is sound, to a point. Even in the midst of sorrows and grieving, there may still be divine beings who show great care and affection. Yet the returned affection that Armstrong mentions does not appear in Homer. Nevertheless, the care that a god takes toward a mortal often binds mortals and immortals closely together.

So far as fear of the gods is concerned, George Calhoun is closer to the mark when he characterizes the religion of Homeric epic as "...comparative freedom from superstitious terrors and tabus, from fear of ghosts and demons...The general tone of humanism and self-reliance...pervades the worship and the prayers of the Homeric hero."²⁷ Men may back away from confrontations with the gods, knowing that the gods are superior in might and wisdom. Men dread suffering, dishonor and death. But the gods are only sources of dread inasmuch as the gods can bring suffering, dishonor or death. But the gods are most importantly, for Homer's heroes, the only source of gifts: victory, life, booty, fame.

It is necessary to return to Agamemnon's education about his "demand balance of spiritual solvency." The results of one insult to a priest of Apollo are these:

²⁷ Calhoun, 448.

Agamemnon loses his best soldier (Achilles), despairs a number of times in the poem,²⁸ and suffers personal injury and the loss of many brave warriors. This resembles an instance of having to "pay the same note twice because of some trifling oversight of date or signature," as Mr. Coldfield (or as Miss Rosa) would say.

Would a fair and impartial observer declare it just of the gods that, since mortals are bound to err sometime, they should thereby lose all their good standing with the gods in the sky? Homer's *Iliad* does not concern itself over what an impartial judge would say. The gods are in control; that much is clear from these events. Still, it would greatly interest mortals to learn whether or not they can build up credit with the immortals.

The *Iliad* teaches mortals that such credit cannot be guaranteed. There are many examples that show how the gods make events happen and suffer no consequences, at least not consequences which endure past the next feast or outburst of affection, lust or laughter. The gods answer one part of a prayer but not another. They flatly refuse prayers, no matter how devout the suppliant. They fulfill prayers in ways which are not at all requested.

²⁸ For example, IX, 26ff.

Hector prays to Zeus and the other gods that his son may be as great a soldier as he himself and one day rule Troy (VI, 475-78). There is an eerie silence at this point of the poem, except for the lamentation which the women make for Hector (VI, 500-502), since they do not think he will ever return to the city alive. He does not. The readers already know that the city and Hector are doomed at this point, because it is the will of the gods and because it will be the fulfillment of Achilles' and Thetis' prayers. Then, when Hector is dead and brought back to the city for his funeral (Book XXIV), Andromache knows the true fate of her son: he will not reach manhood.²⁹

When Patroclus goes into battle in Book XVI, in Achilles' armor and stead, Achilles prays to Zeus, with great ceremony, that Patroclus be able to push back the Trojans and return safely. The narrator tells us how this prayer was heard:

ὥς ἔφατ' εὐχόμενος, τοῦ δ' ἔκλυε μητίετα Ζεὺς.
τῷ δ' ἕτερον μὲν ἔδωκε πατήρ, ἕτερον δ' ἀνένευσε·
νηῶν μὲν οἱ ἀπώσασθαι πόλεμόν τε μάχην τε
δῶκε, σόον δ' ἀνένευσε μάχης ἐξαπονέεσθαι.

(XVI, 249-52)

[Thus he spoke praying, and Planning Zeus heard him, and gave one part to him but denied the other; that he would drive away war and battle from the ships he gave him, but denied his safe return from battle.]

²⁹ XXIV, 727-28.

Achilles had one prayer answered in full, that the Achaeans would be forced back to their ships. This prayer was granted. But this produces trouble for others. We may be tempted to look for some sort of sin, or error at least, on Achilles' part, to explain the trouble his actions produced.

The poem points us in another direction. A god kills Patroclus. Apollo strikes Patroclus on the back, knocking off his helmet and his armor; Euphorbus strikes him with a spear in the back; and he is finally slain by the Trojans (XVI, 786ff.). Patroclus is stunned and disarmed by the god, so that Hector can kill him and take his armor. Of course, this will bring Achilles back into the fight. It will bring great victory in battle to Achilles, with its attendant glory. It will also mean the death of Hector.

However, before Patroclus is killed, another scene takes place that must not be left out. Zeus' own son, Sarpedon, is fated to die that day. Zeus and the other gods discuss the fact that he is the son of Zeus himself, loved by Zeus. He clearly wants to spare this man. But he finally consents to the opinion of the other gods, and lets his own son die. Aphrodite had saved Paris from death. Apollo had saved Aeneas from death. But Zeus does not save

his own son. It is Sarpedon's fate to die. It is the lot of mortals to die and be buried.³⁰

Then, when Sarpedon is dead, Glaucus prays to Apollo to give him the ability to save the corpse from the Achaeans. Then comes the repeated and, by now, well-known phrase, "ὥς ἔφατ' εὐχόμενος, τοῦ δ' ἔκλυε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων [thus he spoke praying, and Phoebus Apollo heard him] (XVI, 527)." One prayer is heard amid half-answered, unanswered and denied prayers. What is the determining factor deciding whose prayer is heard? This poem gives many answers.

The will of Zeus is being done. Fate decrees certain events. The gods are free to act in many different ways. All these answers are given in the *Iliad*. And as they connect to one another, they provide a complex system of gods to which men must relate, daily, in many aspects of their lives.

At this early stage we can state some conclusions. First of all, the gods are free to grant requests. They may give gifts or they may refuse. For their part, men sacrifice and make vows to the gods in order to gain the attention of the gods. Nevertheless, men are always

³⁰ Zeus also wishes to avoid setting a bad example, XVI, 439-458.

deceived when they assume that they have amassed a "demand balance of spiritual solvency" that infallibly moves the gods to action.

The real question of theodicy, in the *Iliad* at least, does not arise from the position of the gods. Instead, the issue of theodicy is centered on man. The issue, however, as we have seen, is not simply the worthiness or unworthiness of any particular mortal, although this affects gods and men. The issue of theodicy takes an entirely different direction in the *Iliad*.

The theodical and "androdical" questions that arise and are answered in the work are the following. Where are mortals left, now that we know how the gods can act? What is man's response to what he hears and experiences about the gods? Since there is no "balance" which a mortal can depend upon to anticipate the gods, what does that teach mortals about their life?

One who has ultimately learned and can speak quite clearly about the life of men and the gods is the man of wrath, Achilles. At least he is the one who speaks the most about the ways of the gods with men. Achilles knows a number of facts about the gods. He states that

ὥς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι
ζῶειν ἀχινυμένοις· αὐτοὶ δέ τ' ἀκηδέες εἰσί.

(XXIV, 525-6)

[For thus the gods have woven matters for wretched mortals, that we live grieving; but they themselves are free from care.]

The first book has taught us this much. The mortals ended up in strife and bitter words that will last the entire poem. The immortals laughed off their quarrels and all went to their respective homes and beds. We readers learned this from Homer. Achilles has learned much!³¹ He knows more.

Perhaps Thetis taught him this lesson when he was growing. Or, more likely, there is more to Achilles than wrath. Achilles the theologian, the comforter, the observer, tells this to Priam:

δοιοὶ γάρ τε πίθοι κατακείαται ἐν Διὸς οὔδῃ
δώρων οἷα δίδωσι κακῶν, ἕτερος δὲ ἐάων·
ὦ μὲν κ' ἀμμίξας δῶη Ζεὺς τερπικέραυνος,
ἄλλοτε μὲν τε κακῶ ὃ γε κύρεται, ἄλλοτε δ' ἐσθλῶ.
(XXIV, 527-30)

[For there are twin jars lying at Zeus' threshold of gifts which he gives, of evils, and the other of blessings; to whom Thunder Hurler Zeus mixes and gives, that one sometimes meets with evil and sometimes with good.]

Achilles goes on to say that there are those to whom Zeus gives only from the jar of evils. Such a person is

³¹ The history of scholarship concerning Book XXIV is in C. W. Macleod, *Homer: Iliad, Book XXIV* (Cambridge, 1982), 8-35.

reviled, driven around the earth by madness and wanders, honored neither by gods nor men. (This "wandering" naturally makes one think of Odysseus and his trouble getting home.) This episode warrants careful evaluation.

Charles Beye missed one crucial word when he evaluated Achilles' speech to Priam. As so many others have noticed, Book XXIV of the *Iliad* has much in common with Book I of the *Odyssey*.³² Expanding upon this commonality, Beye states:

In the *Iliad* is Achilles' story of the two jars of Zeus, one filled with evil, the other with good from which Zeus indifferently makes a mix to sprinkle on humans (24.527ff.). In the *Odyssey* is Zeus's complaint that mortals blame the gods for miseries they bring upon themselves (1.32ff.), a quite contrary view suggesting that in the long run the good and prudent man will triumph over adversity, that the universe does not condemn him to random misfortune.³³

The number of misreadings in this text is difficult to untangle. First of all, Zeus does not complain in the *Odyssey* that mortals blame the gods for miseries they bring upon themselves. Instead, he says specifically, "...οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ/ σφῆσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὑπὲρ μέρον ἄλγε' ἔχουσιν,/ ὥς καὶ νῦν Αἰγισθος... [but they also, themselves, by their own folly,

³² For the relation between *Iliad* XXIV and this speech in *Odyssey* I, see Jenny Strauss Clay, *The Wrath of Athena: Gods and Men in the Odyssey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 215-216.

³³ Charles Rowan Beye, *Ancient Epic Poetry: Homer, Apollonius, Virgil* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 72.

have woes beyond what is needed, as even now Aegisthus...]
(I, 34-35)." Zeus does not deny that the gods send evils.
He simply adds that *ἄποροι*, mortals, "also...by their own
folly, bring woes upon themselves."

Beye misreads another element. Achilles does not say that Zeus "indifferently" mixes from the two jars and sprinkles them on mankind. Achilles states that some men, like Priam, and his own father Peleus, have received from Zeus a mixture. There are others, far worse off, to whom Zeus portions out only from the jar of evil.³⁴ The proem of the *Iliad* is the first of many instances in which we hear that Zeus has plans he wants fulfilled. Zeus almost always has a reason for what he does, even if that reason remains inscrutable to mortals.

Finally, in contrast to Beye, I read that the effect of Zeus' complaint in the *Odyssey* is not that "the good and prudent man will triumph over adversity." On the contrary, as a complement to Achilles' consolation to Priam in *Iliad* XXIV, Zeus' speech does not offer hope to mortals. As

³⁴ Moreover, it is not clear what is in the jars. The verb for what the gods do to mortals, in XXIV, 525, means "spin out for weaving." The notion is related to the Fates (and Clotho in particular) who spin the thread around a man, or during his life. This passage seems to support a tight connection between Zeus and the Fates, not one in which Zeus is subordinate.

matters stand in the *Iliad*, mortals have suffering and should count their blessings when they receive them.

West's commentary on the *Odyssey* at this point is quite good, pointing out how the well-deserved punishment of Aegisthus serves to highlight Odysseus and his unmerited woes.³⁵ The simple effect of Zeus' speech is that mortals should be as ready to blame themselves as they are to blame the gods. Mortals only deceive themselves if they think that their solvency with the gods will cover foolish deeds.

Zeus' comment on the judgment of man will be examined in Chapter Two. Achilles' consolation to Priam concludes the theodicy for the *Iliad*. Gods have no cares. Mortals have cares and woe. Some mortals have nothing but cares and woe. The gods have many dealings with mortals, but no one can manage the gods. Men can be thankful for any blessings given by the gods or for any choices that the gods allow them to make. Even then one never knows what the gods will do.

There are two other aspects of the divine working among men that need to be mentioned. First is the way in which gods seem to be unfair in the epic, doing tricks or miracles that change the plot of the story. These events

³⁵ More of this in Chapter Two. See especially Alfred Heubeck, Stephanie West, and J.B. Hainsworth, eds., *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 77ff.

are, again, examples of how the inexplicable and chaotic gods are closely bound to mortals. The presence or absence of the gods is vital to the lives of mortals.

Oliver Taplin reviews the decisive battle in Book XXII. Zeus puts the fate of each man on the scales and Hector is doomed. A modern reader may wonder about the many concerns that seem to be condensed into this seemingly arbitrary action. We may wonder about the ultimate cause of Hector's doom, where the cause lies. Taplin concludes that

This is not some kind of decision by a higher power. The outcome is already settled beyond doubt by Achilles' prowess and passion, by divine determination, and—for the audience though not the characters—by the whole shape of the narrative. The scales do not decide *who* will win, but show *when* Achilleus will win.³⁶

The question of merit or solvency does not arise. There is nothing anyone can do. Hector must die; Achilles must follow him soon afterwards.

That is why

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ τὸ τέταρτον ἐπὶ κρουνοὺς ἀφίκοντο,
καὶ τότε δὴ χρύσεια πατὴρ ἐτίταινε τάλαντα,
ἐν δ' ἐτίθει δύο κῆρε τανηλεγέος θανάτοιο,
τὴν μὲν Ἀχιλλῆος, τὴν δ' Ἑκτορος ἵπποδάμοιο,
ἔλκε δὲ μέσσα λαβῶν· ῥέπε δ' Ἑκτορος αἵσιμον ἥμαρ,
ῥάχετο δ' εἰς Ἀΐδαο, λίπεν δὲ ἔ Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων.
(XXII, 208-213)

³⁶ Oliver Taplin, *Homeric Soundings: The Shaping of the Iliad* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 239.

[But when at last they came for the fourth time to the wells, just then the father held out golden scales and placed in them two fates of long dreaded death, one of Achilles and the other of horse-taming Hector. And he took the scales in the middle and lifted them, and the day of Hector fell down to Hades, and Phoebus Apollo abandoned him.]

Hector's death is determined by all of these elements: Zeus, fate, answers to prayers, the abilities of the combatants, the individual gods on the field. Yes, Apollo leaves the field when the scale falls to signify Hector's doom. But that is all that the words say. They do not say that Apollo was ordered off the field. He simply leaves the field at that very moment. His abandonment of Hector binds together man and the gods, rather than making them more distant. Apollo must leave for Hector to die. Hector must die. But he will not die if Apollo is there. So Apollo must leave.

When Steven Lowenstam compares the events in the heavens with the events on the earth, he writes of a "divine analogue" between Achilles-Agamemnon and Hera-Zeus. "This dispute between Zeus and Hera clearly echoes the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, but the differences in the disputes are as important as the similarities... Unlike Agamemnon, Zeus is not only the leader but also the strongest of the gods."³⁷ Again, although Zeus is

³⁷ Steven Lowenstam, *The Scepter and the Spear: Studies on Forms of Repetition in the Homeric Poems* (Lanham, Maryland:

omnipotent in his arena while Agamemnon is impotent in so many of his scenes, the comparison or "analogue" between the two scenes clearly shows that, for this poem, the ways of the gods, no matter how different, are in constant communication with the ways of men.

C.A. Trypannis displays the close contact between gods and men and how readers of every age have been able to take the characters and scenes of this great poem as they are written. He writes,

The supernatural element, which makes such an inept appearance in Virgil [sic!] and is lifeless in most of the later epics, has a quality of spontaneous charm in Homer, a naivety which captivates the modern reader. Just as Achilles, in I, 194, feels no surprise at seeing Athena standing behind him at the moment when he is quarrelling with Agamemnon, equally the modern reader does not feel that the appearance of the goddess is something impossible or odd.³⁸

There is an ease of movement between heaven and earth that reminds one of the visits of the angels to Adam and Eve in Paradise before it was lost.³⁹ The gods in Homer may care less for mortals than the angels of the more recent epic. But they cannot stay away.

Trypannis sums up the ways of the gods to men in Homer this way:

Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), 69.

³⁸ C.A. Trypannis, *The Homeric Epics* (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1977), 94.

³⁹ *Paradise Lost*, Book V.

Thus the Homeric epics operate on two planes, the divine and the human, and this gives the narrative a curious double aspect. Every event is looked at from two standpoints, according to whether it unfolds on earth or in the sky. The significance of this double aspect is that it reveals the limitations of all human action and the impotence of man, because in the final count he is dependent on the unfathomable decisions of powers which are over him and remote from him.⁴⁰

One remark must be added to complete the evidence from the text of the *Iliad*. Action occurs on two levels, on earth and in the sky. But this "double aspect" is better understood with this important reminder. The earth is the location where suffering ends in more suffering: quarrels lead to fighting, to death and then the funeral and grieving. Quarrels and threats also happen in the sky, on Olympus. Suffering can even go up from earth to heaven, as in the persons of the wounded immortals, Aphrodite and then Ares.⁴¹ But in the sky, all hurts are healed and all arguments are finally settled or dismissed. The sky is the place where any sort of suffering can be taken away by food and drink or laughter.

A more complete comparison of theodicy in Homer to theodicy in Milton will appear in Chapters Four and Five. However, we should begin to look for one important element

⁴⁰ Trypannis, 96.

⁴¹ *Iliad*, V, 363ff., 864ff.

in Homer, Vergil and Milton: the similarities of the divinities in all the epics.

John Cowper Powys makes a slip in an otherwise fine article on the men and gods of the Homeric epics. He states his preference for *Iliad* XXI, in which the gods battle, while "the great Zeus himself, Heavneley Father of both gods and men, regards this fighting among the gods with humorous amusement."⁴² This observation supports the view of this chapter, that the gods are ultimately untroubled by the agonies of men, though they often create woes for men and even enter the woes. What is strange, though, is the distinction Powys tries to make between the states of affair in the Battle of the Gods and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. For he asks if we can imagine the Heavenly Muse "chuckling with ribald amusement at the silly quarrels going on in both Heaven and Earth?"⁴³

What an unfortunate question. Perhaps no "Muse" chuckles in Milton, but the Father and the Son enjoy a joke about their security, now that Satan has his army (*PL* V, 719ff.). Belial knows (*PL* II, 191) that the Almighty "derides" their plans and actions. And is there no cause

⁴² John Cowper Powys, "Preface to Homer and the Aether," in *Homer: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Ed. by George Steiner and Robert Fagles (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 143.

⁴³ Powys, 143.

for smiles and chuckles, at least, for these scenes: Satan changing himself into a "stripling Cherub" (*PL* III, 636); or Gabriel sitting outside Eden while the "unarmed Youth of Heav'n" exercise themselves in "Heroic Games" (*PL* IV, 549ff)—for what purpose? Milton's view of the Divine is not foreign to Homer's view of the divine in the matter of laughter.

As this study moves toward the next work, this is a fitting place to hear from a critic on the question of the authorship of the Homeric epics. George Steiner confesses ignorance of any writer who produces "two masterpieces that look to each other with that mixture of awe and ironic doubt that the *Odyssey* displays toward the *Iliad*."⁴⁴ For Steiner, this leads him to imagine a single author writing at the two extremes of maturity. Regardless of the identity of the author, the phrase "awe and ironic doubt" leads us well into a consideration of the *Odyssey* after an examination of the *Iliad*.

The *Odyssey* will be the first critique of the events and the world-view of the *Iliad*. That the story about the man, Odysseus, will respect yet question the ways of the

⁴⁴ George Steiner, "Introduction: Homer and the Scholars," in *Homer: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Ed. by George Steiner and Robert Fagles (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), 13.

gods to men in the other epic is consistent with what we have already found in Homer.

Homer is not a teacher of morality. Bassett correctly reminds us that Homer is "oblivious of his office;" whose "mind is on other things" rather than on moral teachings.⁴⁵ "Both Vergil and Milton at the outset mention a 'greater argument.' But there is no evidence of this in Homer." What is Bassett's conclusion? That "there are many indications that Homer, like the Creator in Genesis, saw only that his poems were 'very good'."⁴⁶

One thing that no critic has studied closely enough is the pattern of gift giving in this epic. A study of the text is illuminating. We have already heard about a basic pattern, the "demand balance of spiritual solvency." This pattern runs throughout the work.

Paris is a fitting person to speak about the gifts of the gods. We might say that the one who took the forbidden fruit Helen caused the Trojan War. However, we would be only half-right to say that. For Helen was also a gift from Aphrodite. Helen was given to Menelaus; but, then

⁴⁵ Samuel Eliot Bassett, *The Poetry of Homer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1938), 8.

⁴⁶ Bassett, 8. Bassett has much good commentary on the difference between Homer's and Milton's epics.

again, she was given to Paris. No mortal caused this war. The gods directed these events.

Yet Paris clearly knows about the gods and their gifts. When the gods give gifts, it is only right to enjoy them. In Book III we read that the Trojan and Greek armies have come together in order to have Menelaus battle Paris for Helen and her possessions. Paris is bold until he sees Menelaus come forward. Then Paris slinks back into the mass of Trojans.

His brother Hector chides him. He tells him that he talks well about battle, but actual fighting is another thing. Hector's final taunt is that Aphrodite's gifts, his pretty hair and good looks (line 55), will not help him. Paris recites the Iliadic belief about gods, men and their gifts when he responds to his brother's taunts by saying

οὐ τοι ἀπόβλητ' ἐστὶ θεῶν ἐρικυδέα δῶρα
δυσσά κεν ἀντοὶ δῶσιν, ἐκὼν δ' οὐκ ἂν τις ἔλοιτο.
(III, 65-6).

[Not to be flung aside are the glorious gifts of the gods, whatever they themselves give, but which no one could gain for himself.]

Paris teaches us the gulf between mortals and immortals. The gods have gifts to give that men could not gain for themselves. It is wrong to cast aside these gifts when the gods give them. In his own way, Paris is quite devout. He does not "look a gift horse in the mouth."

Paris is not alone in his recognition of the gods and their gifts. When Paris and Menelaus are about to fight, the people pray this prayer:

Ζεῦ πάτερ Ἰδηθεν μεδέων κύδιστε μέγιστε
ὁππότερος τάδε ἔργα μετ' ἀμφοτέροισιν ἔθηκε,
τὸν δὸς ἀποφθίμενον δῦναι δόμον Ἄϊδος εἰσω,
ἡμῖν δ' αὖ φιλότῃα καὶ ὄρκια πιστὰ γενέσθαι.
(III, 320-24)

[O Father Zeus, Who rules from Ida, most glorious, greatest, whoever of these two has caused all these deeds grant that he perish and go into the house of Hades and that we may again have friendship and oaths of faithfulness. *Emphasis added.*]

The Trojans and the Greeks would like to see an end to the war. Men may fight. They may live or die. Only the gods have the power to grant these things. So, consistent with the epic gift-giving pattern, they pray and ask Zeus to give.

In the same battle, as he hurls his spear at Paris, Menelaus prays to Zeus, "Ζεῦ ἄνα δὸς τίσασθαι... [Zeus above, grant that I may avenge myself...] (III, 351)." This prayer contains two elements of giving and receiving. He wants Zeus to give. What he wants Zeus to give, however, is the ability to give back, to avenge himself, literally to 'get back at.' This is the word that Chryses used to ask Apollo to harm the ruthless Greeks: repay them!

Menelaus will pray again. In Book Five, when he is wounded, he prays:

κλύθι μεν αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς τέκος ' Ατρυώνη,
εἴ ποτέ μοι καὶ πατρὶ φίλα φρονέουσα παρέστης
δηῖω ἐν πολέμῳ, νῦν αὖτ' ἐμὲ φίλαι' Αθήνη·
δὸς δέ τέ μ' ἄνδρα ἐλεῖν...
...τοῦ δ' ἔκλυε Παλλὰς Αθήνη,
γυῖα δ' ἔθηκεν ἐλαφρά, πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὑπερθεῖν·
(V, 115-18, 121-2)

[Hear me, aegis-bearing child of Zeus, unwearied one. If you ever stood by my father's side with kindness in the fury of battle, even so now be kind to me, Athena. Grant that I may slay this man... Pallas Athena heard him and made his limbs light, his feet and hands above. *Emphasis added.*]

He has prayed to Zeus. Now he prays to Athena. He prays to a different god, but the same prayer: Give! Grant!

Other mortals know this pattern. When Sarpedon has fallen in Book XVI, Glaucus the Lycian is wounded also. Since he wants, at least, to protect the body of his fallen comrade, he prays to Apollo, "Grant me might [δὸς δὲ κράτος] (524)," and Apollo hears him and takes away his pains (526ff.).

Ajax knows in Book XVII that Zeus is helping the Trojans. Nevertheless, he prays that Zeus would clear away the darkness that is hindering the Achaeans, and "grant

that they see with their eyes [δὸς δ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδέσθαι.] (646)." Zeus grants the prayer.

Mortals know how to ask for gifts. The gods also know about giving and receiving gifts that require repayment. When Hera wants the god Sleep to work her wiles upon Zeus, so that she may help the Greeks while her husband sleeps, she offers to give him something to make his risk worthwhile. The payment will be this: "δῶρα δέ τοι δώσω καλὸν θρόνον ἀφθιτον αἰεὶ/χρύσειον... [Gifts I will give you, a throne, good, always imperishable, golden] (XIV, 238-9)."

This sounds like a good bargain. The god Sleep, though, bargains for more. An offered gift does not need to be accepted immediately. We must remember how the gods work. Sleep wants Hera to give (δώσειν, 275) him one of the Graces. Hera accepts the counter-offer. There is room for negotiation in the manner of gift giving among the gods.

It is remarkable that the gods are as familiar with the pattern of gift giving as humans. One gift produces a reciprocal gift. The word "gift" or "give" is often used where we would expect "pay" or "pay back," as in the example cited about the negotiations between Sleep and Hera. I propose that we should be aware that the notion of

payment may at any time govern the practice of giving gifts in the epics. The notion of payment runs throughout Homer, Vergil and Milton.

For example, in the *Iliad*, Poseidon saves Aeneas' life. Why? For Aeneas, "κεχαρισμένα δ' αἰεὶ / δῶρα θεοῖσι δίδωσι τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν [He always gives acceptable gifts to the gods who hold broad heaven] (XX, 298-99)." Aeneas gives to the gods. Can the gods forget this? These gifts are payments. The gods must, sooner or later, remember these gifts.

The main character of the epic knows about gifts. Achilles complains to his mother in Book XVIII. Zeus has indeed granted the prayers of Thetis from Book I. But his dear comrade Patroclus is dead. So what does Achilles want? He wants to be repaid. Hector is the debtor. Achilles only wants to go on living if Hector will pay back, ἀποτίση, what he took from him: his friend's life. Hector must pay for what he has done.⁴⁷

Achilles lives his life surrounded by gifts—gifts that are bound up with payments. Achilles who drives horses that are called those that the gods gave as glorious gifts

⁴⁷ *Iliad*, XVIII, 93.

to Peleus, οὗς Πηληϊ θεοὶ δόσαν ἀγλαὰ δῶρα (XVI, 867).

Peleus did Zeus a great favor by marrying Thetis and having the son greater than his father. So Peleus is rewarded. Gifts are payments in matters of marriage, inheritance, family—even life and death.

Book XIX is a treasury of information about gifts and payments. Homer emphasizes the theme of giving with his repetition of the word "bringing, bearing, φέροι, φέρουσα":

Ἡὼς μὲν κροκόπεπλος ἀπ' Ὠκεανοῖο ῥοάων
ὄρνυθ' ἱν' ἀθανάτοισι φάωσ φέροι ἡδὲ βροτοῖσιν·
ἦ δ' ἐς νῆας ἵκανε θεοῦ πάρα δῶρα φέρουσα.
(XIX, 1-3)

[On the one hand Dawn with her saffron robe rose up from the streams of Ocean, in order to bring light to immortals and to mortals; on the other hand, she (Thetis) came to the ships bearing the gifts of the god (Hephaestus).]

This sets the theme for this book. The gods bring gifts, as promised. They were paid for in some manner. The sun rises and Achilles receives new armor. Men too will give gifts, to achieve their ends.

Book XIX is a book of reconciliation. For it is a book of gifts. Agamemnon makes amends with Achilles with gifts. He states that Zeus had blinded him to act the way that he did. He now realizes this. Agamemnon continues:

ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἀασάμην καὶ μευ φρένας ἐξέλετο Ζεὺς,
ἀψ' ἐθέλω ἀρέσαι, δόμεναί τ' ἀπερείσι' ἄποινα·
ἀλλ' ὄρσευ πόλεμον δὲ καὶ ἄλλους ὀρνυθι λαούς.
δῶρα δ' ἐγὼν ὅδε πάντα παρασχέμεν ὅσσά τοι ἐλθὼν
χθιζὸς ἐνὶ κλισίῃσιν ὑπέσχετο δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς.
εἰ δ' ἐθέλεις, ἐπίμεινον ἐπειγόμενός περ' ἼΑρηος,
δῶρα δέ τοι θεράποντες ἐμῆς παρὰ νηὸς ἐλόντες
οἴσους', ὅφρα ἴδῃαι ὃ τοι μενοεικέα δώσω.

(XIX, 137-143)

[But since I was blinded and Zeus robbed me of my senses, I want now to make amends and to give ransom without bounds. Now, rouse yourself for battle and the rest of your people. Gifts I am here ready to offer you, all that Odysseus promised you the other night when he came to your tent. Or, if you rather, stay a while, though you are eager for war, and the gifts servants will take and bring you from my ship so that you will see that what I give you will satisfy your heart. *Emphasis added.*]

When Achilles responds he appears to be indifferent in his attitude toward gifts! He says, "δῶρα μὲν αἶ κ' ἐθέλησθα παρασχέμεν, ὥς ἐπεικές, / ἢ τ' ἐχέμεν παρὰ σοί [It rests with you to give gifts or to withhold them, as it is fitting...]
(XIX, 147ff). The implication is this: But now it is time for battle.

This is a strange change for such a central character in the work. Achilles seems to have forgotten that gifts are vital for mortals. Gifts are not to be discarded. Gifts should not be overlooked.

Odysseus knows that gifts matter now, even if Achilles has forgotten. He follows up Achilles' speech by stating

that the gifts should be brought forward, so that everyone can see them (172ff.).

Despite Achilles' objections, they bring the gifts, δῶρα φέρον (248) for all to see. Now, when Achilles has begun to be reconciled to the rest of the Achaeans, he rises to give a speech. The gifts have been delivered, the sacrifice has been thrown into the ocean and Achilles prays. The fact that he prays is no surprise at all at this point of the epic. However, what he prays is a surprise. He says "Ζεῦ πάτερ ἡ μεγάλας ἄτας ἀνδρεσσι διδοῖσθα (270) [Father Zeus, truly great is the blindness you have given to men] (270)." He blames the matter on Zeus.

Without Zeus, Agamemnon would not have acted the way he did. Then Achilles would not have been so angry. Then so many men would not be dead at Hector's hand. His conclusion is that Zeus must have some sort of plan in all of this (273-274).

This is another clear example of how gods, men and their gifts are related in Homer. The gods often give good gifts to men in exchange for good sacrifices made by men. However, the gods are not always required, in Homer, to give a rational explanation for what they do. All that mortals are left to say, many times, is that the gods must

be working out a plan of their own. One way in which John Milton will differentiate the God of his epic from pagan gods is his insistence on God's rational explanation of His ways.

However, one point on which Milton agrees fully with the classical writers is that men cannot move outside the view of the gods. The gods are greater than mortals. Mortals must remember this, especially in regard to the gifts of the gods or God. To make this point Homer adds commentary throughout the poem. Mortals can forget the gods and their gifts, though they should not.

For instance, Achilles holds his shield far in front of him when Aeneas throws his spear at him, thinking that if the spear pierces the shield, it would be better to be far from the shield. The poet must remark:

νήπιος, οὐδ' ἐνόησε κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμὸν
ὥς οὐ βῆιδι' ἐστὶ θεῶν ἐρικυδέα δῶρα
ἀνδράσι γε θνητοῖσι δαμήμεναι οὐδ' ὑποείκειν.
(XX, 264-6)

[Fool, who did not know in his heart that the glorious gifts of the gods are not easy for men to master nor to make give way.]

This is the Achilles who drives god-given horses, wears god-given armor and considers events and signs to be gifts of the gods. The shield, "gift of god, δῶρα θεοῖο," will save him again from one of the two spears thrown by

Asteropaeus (XXI, 165). Mortals may forget what the gifts of the gods are all about, what they can do, how important they are. But if you can consider the situation for a moment, as the poet can, you will remember.

This is true for the conclusion of the *Iliad* as well. In fact, it is of the highest importance. Some see the denouement of the work as the point at which Achilles regains his humanity in some form. I see Achilles change when he reverts to the scheme of gifts and gain.

In XXII, when Hector is dying at Achilles' feet, Hector falls into the familiar pattern. His father and mother will give gifts, gold and bronze, to ransom his corpse (XXII, 340ff.) Achilles refuses (345ff.). It seems that he will not be satisfied, that no amount of gift giving will satisfy him. However, this will not continue. I contend that it cannot continue. This society is based upon barter and trade, giving and receiving. 'Everyone has his price' may be a cynical expression. But it fits the *Iliad* very well.

Priam makes use of what he knows. He asks Zeus to grant, *δοῦναι*, that he may arrive safely at Achilles' tent with his gifts (XXIV, 308ff.). Zeus wants that very thing.

He sends Hermes to guide Priam. In fact, as Kevin Crotty observes, "Priam's supplication is ultimately Zeus's answer to Thetis' prayer in Book I that he honor her son."⁴⁸

Speaking to Hermes, who is in disguise, the king says

ὦ τέκος, ἦ ῥ' ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἐναίσιμα δῶρα διδοῦναι
ἀθανάτοις, ἐπεὶ οὐ ποτ' ἐμὸς παῖς, εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε,
λήθηε' ἐν μεγάροισι θεῶν οἱ Ὀλύμπῳ ἔχουσι·
τῷ οἱ ἀπεμνήσαντο καὶ ἐν θανάτῳ περ αἴση.

(XXIV, 425-28)

[Child, it is a good thing truly to give to the immortals such gifts as are due; for never did my son (if there was ever any one like him) become forgetful in our halls of the gods who hold Olympus. That is why they have remembered him, though he has died. *Emphasis added.*]

Hermes is fully in agreement with this sentiment. For he had already told Priam that it was the gods who were keeping Hector's body from decaying in the dust (411ff.).

The most important exposition of gods, men and their gifts is, of course, the homily of Achilles in Book XXIV. There are two urns on (or in) the floor of Zeus, full of gifts that he gives, δῶρων οἱ αἰ δίδωσι, (528). The urns have good and evil gifts. To some people he gives a mixed lot. To some he gives just evil.

⁴⁸ Kevin Crotty, *The Poetics of Supplication: Homer's Iliad and Odyssey* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994), 96.

Achilles must admit that the gods have given his father Peleus a mixed lot (534ff.). Achilles speaks about gifts. It is a language with which he is familiar. It is no surprise that, finally, we see that Odysseus was right about the importance of gifts. Hector was right too, to speak of ransom by way of gifts. For Achilles accepts the gifts of Priam. The final communication from Achilles to (now deceased) Patroclus is when Achilles has placed the body of Hector in Priam's wagon for transport home. He groans and calls out the name of his friend and says, in manner typical of the *Iliad*,

μή μοι Πάτροκλε σκυδμαινέμεν, αἶ κε πύθῃαι
εἶν ᾿Αἰδός περ ἐὼν ὅτι ᾿Εκτορα δῖον ἔλυσα
πατρὶ φίλῳ, ἐπεὶ οὐ μοι ἀεικέα δῶκεν ἄποινα.
(XXIV, 592-4)

[Don't be angry with me, Patroclus, if you hear in the house of Hades that I have given back splendid Hector to his dear father, seeing that the ransom he has given me is not at all unfitting.]

Achilles has sworn that he will never accept gifts sufficient to allow Hector's body to be ransomed. But the structure in which he lives assumes that "everyone has his price." Achilles returns to the pattern of "giving in" when the "giving-to" is sufficient. We must imagine that Patroclus would understand.

The following conclusions are drawn from an examination of the *Iliad* and its portrayal of gods and the life and death of mortals. First, the gods are taken seriously in the epic. Indeed, there would be no epic, from Alpha to Omega, if the gods were not constantly involved in the affairs of men. Second, the utter distinction between mortals and immortals is clearly made in the poem. Mortals suffer, while the gods are care-free. Third, woes and evils come from the gods. The gods inflict individual acts of woe upon men as well as concocting plans to bring men woe.

What finally brings peace or comfort to the poor, suffering mortals is this: that the mortals recognize their plight, how bound they are to suffering and death, even bound to their codes and customs. The gods have no such plight and cannot be thwarted. However, men hear of the plans of the gods, fight against their plans, and invent their own opinions about what the plans and motivations of the gods are.

Gifts are central to the relationship of men and gods. Gods give to men. They expect recognition-gifts too: sacrifices, prayers, temples and good conduct. Men give to the gods. They want gifts in return. The only difference is that gods are so much more powerful than men, that it is

perilous for men to neglect the gifts of the gods. It is less important when one god neglects the gift of another god. When a god does not take into account the gifts of men, it is not perilous at all for the god.

One message of Homer's work, in its entirety, is this: When mortals bring together revelation, experience and speculation, they produce tales of their own, in which they may see their place. This is where comfort finally comes to mortals: not in death; not in an after life of a soul; but, rather, in a story well told. Comfort comes to mortals in story,⁴⁹ in poetry and in song.

The comforting song is more fully developed in the *Iliad*'s contemporary critique: the *Odyssey*. The *Iliad* is made from scenes of the gifts of the gods to men and the obligation of men to remember and give gifts to the gods. The *Odyssey* contains such scenes. There are a few scenes of giving gifts to the gods. But, more than the *Iliad*, it tells the story about the gifts given to men.

The pattern of gift-giving between men and gods is very important to the *Iliad*. As we have seen, men (and lesser deities) give gifts to the gods and hope that their gifts will secure the favor of the (higher) gods. This

⁴⁹ For example, Achilles tells the story of Niobe to Priam when he urges the old king to put aside his grief (XXII, 602ff.).

does not always happen. The *Iliad* teaches an important lesson. Men may hope that they have created a demand balance with the gods, an account from which they may withdraw when they want to. But this hope is unfounded.

Sometimes the gods do what they are asked to do. Sometimes they grant half a prayer. Sometimes they ignore the suppliant. The gods, it seems, act from many, different motives. Their actions seem to mortals to be arbitrary. Why the gods answer one prayer and not another is a mystery.

However, the poem also tells men that they should not forget the gods, nor neglect offerings and prayers. A gift to a god is something that may prompt a god to favor the gift giver. The fact that the gods are not always favorable to gift givers is problematic.

The *Odyssey*, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, presents us with men whom the gods favor in special ways. The pattern set by the *Iliad*, however, will continue. Men should sacrifice and give gifts to the gods. The gods, in turn, may respond favorably. The *Iliad* emphasizes men (as all epics do) giving gifts and then hoping for good results. The *Odyssey* shows us men to whom the gods have given gifts and who are grateful for those gifts.

CHAPTER TWO: THE ODYSSEY

At the conclusion of the *Iliad* the gods show concern for the disposition of Hector's corpse, which Achilles was mistreating:

τὸν δ' ἐλεαίρεσκον μάκαρες θεοὶ εἰσρόωντες,
(XXIV, 23)

[But the blessed gods pitied him as they looked at him.]

The mass of corpses that filled the plain and choked nearby Scamandros (Book XXI, 218ff.) do not receive such attention. Yet the gods have great concern for Hector. Zeus had promised Thetis that he would increase the glory of Achilles by aiding Hector to great glory himself, only to be killed by Achilles with the help of the deception of Athena. Perhaps, as always, the greater the glory Hector receives, the greater will be Achilles' glory. But it is not Zeus who remembers Hector's funeral rites. It is Apollo.

Apollo, the son of Leto and Zeus (I, 9), was a great part of the cause of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, by acting according to a "demand balance" relationship that existed between the priest Chryses and himself. The priest, who had sacrificed many bulls to

Apollo and had roofed over many temples to him, made a 'withdrawal' from his account. And Apollo heard him.

Throughout the epic the gods do not always consider themselves bound by this arrangement. They have their favorites, whom they hear and give second chances. There are other mortals who make only one (recorded) mistake and suffer the consequences. Zeus, at times, cancels the will and plans of gods and goddesses in regard to their own favorites. Moreover, always behind the scenes, there is Fate, with which Zeus and the other gods seem to have worked out a relationship that suits them.

But at the end of the *Iliad* Apollo returns to the themes of justice, propriety, even a "demand balance" of the dead. He reminds Zeus of Hector:

οὐ νό ποθ' ὑμῖν
Ἔκτωρ μηρί' ἔκθε βοῶν αἰγῶν τε τελείων;
(XXIV, 33-34)

[...did Hector never burn the thighs of cows and perfect goats for you?]

To this Zeus declares that Hector was, of all Trojans, dearest to the gods: " ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἔκτωρ/ φίλτατος ἔσκε θεοῖσι βροτῶν οἱ ἐν Ἰλίῳ εἰσὶν (XXIV, 66-67)." He will not steal away Hector's corpse, as Apollo had suggested. Instead, he will persuade Thetis to speak to Achilles; he will send

Hermes to lead Priam to Achilles' tent; and he will provide more glory to Achilles by his acceptance of the ransom while providing for a proper burial for the body of Hector, "dearest to the gods."

Achilles assents to these arrangements, although, as we read further in Book XXIV, his theology, which he preaches to Priam, consists of Zeus in heaven who dispenses either a mix of good and evil things, or all evil things to a man. What a man owes to the gods is not the prime concern in Achilles' final analysis of the ways of the gods with men. But there is closure for almost everyone, men and gods, with the possible exception of the three implacable divinities, Hera, Athena and Poseidon. They, however, will be satisfied in Vergil's work.

When the *Odyssey* begins, it can be read as a sequel of sorts to the *Iliad*. If so, the theology carries over. So it seems at first.⁵⁰

After the proem, it is another immortal—this time Athena—who brings up a man and what this man means to the

⁵⁰ The text of the *Odyssey* is Homer, *Odysseae Libri*, Ed. by Thomas Allen, 2 Vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1908). For a discussion of Homeric gods and justice, see the volumes by Adkins and Lloyd-Jones listed above in note 6. For a study of Athena's presence in this epic, see Jenny Strauss Clay, *The Wrath of Athena: Gods and Men in the Odyssey*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

gods. Apollo pleaded for dead Hector. Athena pleads for Odysseus, who "longs to die," θανέειν ἰμείρεται (I, 59)." She speaks of what Odysseus has done for the gods:

οὐ νότ' Ὀδυσσεύς
' Ἀργείων παρὰ νηυσὶ χαρίζετο ἱερὰ ῥέζων
Τροίῃ ἐν εὐρείῃ; (I, 60-61)

[Did not Odysseus beside the ships of the Argives win your favor by making sacrifices in the Trojan plain?]

Chryses had sacrificed to Apollo many times in the past. Apollo heard him and fulfilled his prayer. Odysseus offered sacrifices in front of Troy. We might expect his case to be heard favorably. The *Odyssey* begins as the *Iliad* did. Zeus hears and fulfills Athena's prayer.

Why will Zeus remember Odysseus? Again, the "demand balance of spiritual solvency" seems to be at work:

πῶς ἂν ἔπειτ' Ὀδυσῆος ἐγὼ θείοιο λαθοίμην,
ὅς περὶ μὲν νόον ἐστὶ βροτῶν, περὶ δ' ἰρὰ θεοῖσιν
ἄθανάτοισιν ἔδωκε, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν;
[I, 65-67]⁵¹

[How should I, then, forget godlike Odysseus, who is beyond all mortals in his ability to think, and beyond all has paid sacrifice to the immortal gods, who hold broad heaven?]

⁵¹ Plutarch writes that this shows a "love of mankind," in Plutarch, *Essays on the Life and Poetry of Homer*, Ed. by J.J. Keaney and Robert Lamberton (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 116.

Zeus cannot forget Odysseus for two reasons: first, because of his cleverness; secondly, because of his sacrifices beyond all. Odysseus claims at least the notice of the gods, most importantly Zeus. Without hesitation the plan of Athena is put into action. This occurs, as the text makes clear, because Poseidon is away at a feast with the Ethiopians.⁵² He had been the trouble all along.

Thus the theodical element of the *Odyssey*, so prominent, is not originally problematic. Odysseus has been kept from Ithaca because of the hatred of Poseidon toward him. He has been stranded with Calypso, apparently forgotten by gods and men. But that is not the case. Now that Poseidon is out of sight for a while, Odysseus' champion, Athena, can easily persuade the gods. Odysseus suffered for a while, but the gods will set matters right.

If this were the full extent of explaining the ways of gods and men in regard to suffering and justice, the events of the epic would have an ample background of heavenly intervention to deepen the significance of the events among mortals. Telemachus can still use the help of Athena. Poseidon will, no doubt, show up and cause some sort of trouble for Odysseus. There are still dangers to overcome on land and sea and, most of all, back home.

⁵² *Odyssey* I, 22-23.

Even if the gods have not regarded Odysseus' plight for some years, they do remember his sacrifices, eventually. As the epic unfolds, we read how Odysseus is helped by Athena and Zeus, despite Poseidon's return. Telemachus has his own adventures and is kept safe from the assassination plot of the suitors. Odysseus is disguised and aided by gods and men until he kills the suitors in his home and regains the rule of Ithaca.

In fact, this appears, at first, to be a much more consistent theology and a simpler theodicy than that presented in the *Iliad*. In the former epic the gods sometimes helped those who were faithful in sacrifice and sometimes did not. In the *Odyssey*, at first glance, it is the god-fearing family of Odysseus, Telemachus, Penelope and faithful slaves who are heard by the gods while all those who break the rules are punished. Examples of such people are given in Book I. Aegisthus is a case that Zeus brings up for discussion.⁵³ The suitors too deserve punishment. Even Odysseus' companions are blamed, in the proem, for their own destruction, the reason they did not reach home as Odysseus did.⁵⁴

⁵³ *Odyssey* I, 35ff.

⁵⁴ *Odyssey*, I, 7-9.

Odysseus does not carry the epithet *pious* that Aeneas will when Vergil writes. But as far as the main outline of the action in this epic is concerned, Odysseus is as faithful toward the gods as any man, and the gods care for him as much as they care for anyone.

However, the theology of this epic is not that straightforward. The theodicy, especially the consistency of theodicy in the *Odyssey*, is truly problematic. This is a major point of contention in modern criticism of the epic. There are those who see the theology and theodicy of the *Odyssey* as consistent throughout, even in complete contradiction to that of the *Iliad*. Then again, there are those who contend that the ways of gods with men in the *Odyssey* are not consistent and not written to be systematic or unified.

This chapter will review the scholarship in regard to this discussion. The consistency of the picture of the gods inside the *Odyssey* is one issue. Another is the way this picture of the gods compares to that in the *Iliad*. I conclude that the picture of the gods is closely mirrored in both works. There is one picture of the gods, a complex picture. I agree more with those who see a 'double theodicy' in the *Odyssey*, as opposed to those who go to great length to show that the gods act consistently under

some idea of justice. However, I contend that the two types of ways in which the gods deal with men are embedded in the text.

Considerations of multiple authors or redactions of the story are not dealt with at all. Instead, I treat this work as it stands: how the gods work with men is not, in the last analysis, something mortals or immortals can 'get their heads around.' In other words, gods always, and men until they die, live their lives, with full emphasis on the word 'live.'

The *New Companion to Homer* is a welcome addition to that of Wace and Stubbings. In the chapter on Homeric Ethics, what is particularly welcome is the simplicity with which the issue of ethics is stated. For instance, the section entitled "Homeric Ethics and the Gods" begins this way:

Homer's mortal characters need to avoid actions which will bring the wrath of the gods on them. Whether a god is angry or not is an empirical question: there is no punishment after death in Homeric belief, and all important good and bad things, signifying the approval or anger of deity at what one has done, must happen in this life.⁵⁵

Professor Adkins goes on to write that the gods are "respecters of persons," which is certainly true. On that basis, the ethics of mortals in view of the gods takes

⁵⁵ Morris and Powell, *A New Companion to Homer*, 708-9.

shape. Achilles has a greater claim than Hector, as Hera responds to Apollo in *Iliad* XXIV, because he had a goddess for a mother.⁵⁶ Zeus counters that Hector, of all mortals, sacrificed most generously. Thus, he will be buried and Achilles will receive ransom. Everyone gains in this episode. For the gods, as always, the *Iliad* has a happy ending. For mortals, the epic ends with a funeral and the foreshadowed doom of Troy.

Adkins' conclusion is splendid as a summary for the *Iliad* because of its simplicity: "This is the best that can be done for Hector. The worshipers of these gods cannot hope for an even-handed justice impartially administered."⁵⁷ There are degrees of claims on the gods, competing claims on the gods. Thetis had a claim on Zeus because of past help given. Is a response to this claim worth the trouble Hera will give him? Only Zeus can answer that question. But when it comes to the point of the gods arguing over mortals, Hephaestus pleads that they not upset their happy lives over the miserable mortals.⁵⁸

This is a simple understanding of the gods and their ways toward men in these epics. Its strength is its simplicity. An ancient who wrote in Greek and was, until

⁵⁶ *Iliad*, XXIV, 58-61.

⁵⁷ Moris & Powell, 710.

⁵⁸ *Iliad*, I, 573-574.

recently, taken to be the prolific author Plutarch, read Homer in much the same way. In an essay on the interpretation of Homer, this writer, who lived within a generation or two of Plutarch, addressed the topic of gods and men in Homer.

The first issue that this Pseudo-Plutarch points out, in his essay on Homer, is that the gods in epic are close to men:

πῶς δὲ καὶ αὐτοῖς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ὁμιλοῦντας καὶ συμπονοῦντας
ποιεῖ τοὺς θεοὺς ' ἐν πολλοῖς ἔστι καταμαθεῖν ὥσπερ καὶ τὴν
' Ἀθηνᾶν ποτὲ μὲν τῷ ' Ἀχιλλεῖ ἀεὶ δὲ τῷ ' Ὀδυσσεῖ

[In many passages one sees how he makes the gods mingle with men and work alongside them. Athena helps Achilles occasionally and Odysseus constantly...]⁵⁹

There is, in Homer, a proximity of gods and men which seemed remarkable to Pseudo-Plutarch, though he wrote nineteen centuries closer to Homer than we do. The close relationship of gods and men may be extraordinary for readers of the first or twentieth centuries. But for this religious man, the gods are recognizable in their intentions:

τῆς δὲ προνοίας τῶν θεῶν ἰδίον ἐστὶ τὸ βούλεσθαι δικαίως τοὺς
ἀνθρώπους βιοῦν· καὶ τοῦτό φησιν ὁ ποιητὴς ἐναργέστατα
οὐ γὰρ σχέτλια ἔργα θεοὶ μάκαρες φιλέουσιν,
ἀλλὰ δίκην τίουσιν καὶ αἵσιμα ἔργ' ἀνθρώπων (χ 83-4)
καὶ

⁵⁹ Plutarch, 54B, 117.

Ζεὺς, ὃς τ' ἄνδρεςσι κοτεσσάμενος χαλεπήνη
δι βίη εἰν ἀγορῇ σκολιάς κρίνωσι θέμιστας (π 386-7)

[One inherent aspect of the providence of the gods is their desire for men to live justly, and the poet expresses this very clearly:

The gods do not like wicked deed,
rather, they honor justice and the seemly acts of
men (Od. 14.83-4),
and,

Zeus becomes enraged and punishes men
who enforce crooked judgment in council.
(Il. 16.386-87)]⁶⁰

The Pseudo-Plutarch gathered from Homer a consistent picture of the gods and their concerns. The gods are concerned with justice, approving of upright men and disapproving and punishing wicked men. This understanding of the gods fits well with a simple evaluation of the theology and theodicy of the *Odyssey*. The upright man, Odysseus, who has a claim on the gods because of his intelligence and sacrifices, is approved by the gods while many others, because of their own fault, are rightly punished.

Likewise, men in Homer speak a great deal about the gods. Plutarch writes:

ὥσπερ γὰρ τοὺς θεοὺς προνοομένους τῶν ἀνθρώπων
εἰσάγει, οὕτω καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους μεμνημένους αὐτῶν ἐν πάσῃ
τύχῃ· καὶ ὁ μὲν εὐήμερῶν στρατηγός φησιν
ἐλπομαι, εὐχόμενος Διὶ τ' ἄλλοισιν τε θεοῖσιν
ἐξελάαν ἐνθένδε κύνας κηρεσιφορήτους (θ 526-7).

⁶⁰ Plutarch, 54B, 118.

[Just as he shows the gods to be providentially concerned with mankind, he also shows men thinking of the gods in every situation. The fortunate general says,

I hope and pray to Zeus and the other gods
that I may drive away these dogs whom their fate
has brought here. (Il. 8.526-7)]⁶¹

That is the language typical of god-fearing mortals. They have the gods on their minds and on their lips in prayers and oaths and the reading of signs.

This ancient can write in a more scholarly as well as a moralistic manner about the gods. He writes that Homer is in agreement with the philosophers, such as Plato, Aristotle and Theophrastus. He writes that they all hold the opinion that

οὐ πάντα καθ' εἰμαρμένην παραγίνεσθαι, ἀλλὰ τι καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς
ἀνθρώποις εἶναι, ὥ ὑπάρχει μὲν τὸ ἐκούσιον, τούτῳ δέ πως
συνάπτειν τὸ κατηναγκασμένον, ὅταν τις πράξας ὃ βούλεται εἰς ὃ
μὴ βούλεται ἐμπέσῃ. καὶ ταῦτα σαφῶς ἐν πολλοῖς δεδήλωκεν,
ὥσπερ καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς ἑκατέρας τῆς ποιήσεως, ἐν μὲν τῇ
'Ιλιάδι λέγων τὴν ὀργὴν τοῦ 'Αχιλλέως αἰτίαν τῆς ἀπωλείας
τῶν 'Ελλήνων γενέσθαι καὶ τότε τὴν Διὸς βούλησιν
ἐκτελεσθῆναι, ἐν δὲ τῇ 'Οδυσσεΐα τοὺς ἐταίρους τοῦ 'Οδυσσεύς
διὰ τὴν αὐτῶν ἀβουλίαν ὀλέθρῳ περιπεσεῖν· ἐξήμαρτον γὰρ
ἀψάμενοι τῶν ἱερῶν τοῦ 'Ηλίου βοῶν, ἐξὸν ἀποσχέσθαι αὐτῶν
καὶ γὰρ ἦν προειρημένον

τάς εἰ μὲν κ' ἀσινέας ἐάας νόστου τε μέδῃαι
καὶ κεν ἔτ' εἰς 'Ιθάκην κακά περ πάσχοντες ἴκοισθε·
εἰ δέ κε σῖνῃαι, τότε τοι τεκμαίρομ' ὄλεθρον

(λ 110-2=μ 137-9) .

⁶¹ Ibid.

οὕτως τὸ μὲν μὴ ἀδικῆσαι ἐπ' αὐτοῖς, τὸ δὲ ἀδικήσαντας
ἀπολέσθαι ἐκ τῆς εἰμαρμένης ἀκόλουθον ἦν.

[...that everything does not come about through fate, but a certain amount falls under the control of men, who have freedom of will, though an element of necessity is somehow attached to this, whenever they do as they want but consequently fall into situations they do not want. He has shown this clearly in many passages, as in the beginnings of both poems, for in the *Iliad* he says that the anger of Achilles was the cause of the destruction of the Greeks, and then that the will of Zeus was accomplished, and in the *Odyssey* the companions of Odysseus met with disaster through their own folly, for they made the mistake of touching the cattle sacred to the sun, when they could have kept away from them. It had been predicted:

If you leave them unharmed and think of your homecoming, you might yet come to Ithaca, though after much suffering, but if you harm them, then I predict ruin. (Od. 11.110-12 = 12.137-39)

So, on the one hand, it was their duty not to do wrong, but, on the other hand, if they did wrong and were destroyed, that followed because of fate.]⁶²

Pseudo-Plutarch's reading of Homer is no longer simple. Many modern critics would write that the "reader knows" about the will of Zeus at the beginning of the *Iliad* and of the doom of Odysseus' comrades at the beginning of the *Odyssey*. Plutarch writes, rather, as one who leaves all the possibilities open as he reads, no matter what he has read before.⁶³ Though Zeus has a plan, the anger of Achilles generates no less interest for him.

⁶² Plutarch, 54B, 120.

⁶³ The very picture of an open-minded scholar.

Though the comrades are doomed, Plutarch writes, and seems to read, with the assumption that the companions of Odysseus had real choices before them that would have produced real, positive benefits.

Finally, Plutarch respects the realistic, down-to-earth interaction of the gods with men. What a man could not possibly perform or complete can be done with a divinity alongside.

121. ἔνεστι δὲ καὶ τὸ ἄλλως συμβαῖνον ἐκ προνοίας διαφυγεῖν, ὅπερ ἐν τούτῳ παρίστησιν·

ἔνθα δὲ καὶ δύστηνος ὑπὲρ μόρον ὤλετ' Ὀδύσσευς,
εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ φρεσὶ θῆκε θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη·
ἀμφοτέρησι δὲ χερσὶν ἐπεσσύμενος λάβε πέτρης,
τῆς ἔχετο στενάχων, εἰὼς μέγα κῦμα παρήλθεν

(ε 436, 427-9).

ἐνταῦθα γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου κινδυνεύων ὑπὸ τύχης ἀπολέσθαι, ἐκ προνοίας ἐσώθη.

[121. It is also possible, through divine providence, to escape what would otherwise inevitably occur, as Homer shows in the following passage:

Then wretched Odysseus would have been destroyed against fate, if bright-eyed Athena had not put a thought in his head. He quickly grabbed the rock with both hands and held tight, groaning, until the great wave passed. (Od. 5.436, 427-29)

In this instance, conversely, when he was in danger of being destroyed by chance, he was saved by providence.]⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Plutarch, 54B, 121.

Plutarch has resolved (at least for himself) a question about Homer's works that troubles modern critics. It is the question of the relationship of the gods and fate. Plutarch writes about fate as something separate from the gods, in relation to the gods, which does not force men to act to their own detriment. Fate just knows what will be.

On the other hand, Plutarch writes about the Homeric gods as beings that can alter fate, or at least modify fate. At this point Pseudo-Plutarch has become confused regarding the textual evidence. The text does not say that fate, or chance would see Odysseus dead but Athena intervened. On the contrary, the text says that the death of Odysseus would be something against what was fated. Athena did not overcome fate by her providence. Instead, she ratified it.

Nevertheless, Plutarch shows us an ancient manner of appreciating Homer that is foreign to our day, to a great extent. While modern authors speak of fate and the gods as two opposing entities battling for control of the scene of action, Plutarch does not imagine them as separate in any way.

Pseudo-Plutarch wrote in Greek, not seven centuries removed from the first standardized texts of Homer produced

at Athens. We may now summarize what such an admirer of Homer teaches us about the gods and their ways with men. The following observations and assertions from the quotes above:

- 1) The gods who interact with men in the epics are Homer's picture of the gods, and thus acceptable representations even to those who object to a story of gods who have bodies much like men and with the same concerns as men.⁶⁵
- 2) The gods are concerned that men act with justice. They bless just men and punish unjust men.
- 3) The gods work with fate, not as employees with an employer, but actively, as fate unfolds.
- 4) Reverent men are displayed in the epics, as they speak about the gods. Irreverent men are also shown to us, as well as their punishment.

Pseudo-Plutarch's writing on this topic is lamentably too short, for surely a longer exposition would have given us more insight into ancient criticism. But from what we do have from him, we can only read Plutarch as on the side of those who claim that Homer presents a unified picture of the gods. Everything basically revolves around whether a man is just or unjust, reverent toward the gods or

⁶⁵ See especially 54B, 112-113.

irreverent. The gifts of the gods are dependent upon the actions of mortals.

Pseudo-Plutarch does not write about instances in these epics that test the unity of a theodicy which judges mostly in favor of those who are most deserving and against those who sin and are most deserving of the anger of the gods. There is nothing in Plutarch about this. But there is an abundance of material on just this topic written nineteen centuries later, in Bernard Fenik's important work *Studies in the Odyssey*.⁶⁶

Fenik's work concentrates on the pairings or "doublets" as he calls them. But his chapter on Helios and Poseidon is also a very text-based consideration of issues of theodicy. It deserves the wide attention it has received. Doublets are scenes that are similar in substance and/or accidents. Examples would be the landing when Odysseus' men approached the queen of the Laestrygonians and the landing when Odysseus approached the queen of the Phaeacians. The two scenes show many similarities, such as first meeting the princess; but their outcome is drastically different. The Laestrygonians grab Odysseus' men and make dinner out of them, while Odysseus is treated well by the Phaeacians.

⁶⁶ Bernard Fenik, *Studies in the Odyssey* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1974).

One doublet Fenik explores is the anger of the gods against Odysseus and against his comrades. He writes:

Odysseus and his men suffer from the anger of two divinities: Poseidon intervenes because of the blinding of Polyphemos, Helios because the crew eats some of his cattle....both angers are grounded in a motif that plays an important role in the *Odyssey*: the failure to follow good advice.⁶⁷

To understand this major doublet in the work, we must review the words of Zeus which Fenik considers determinative for the entire work.

At the very beginning of the *Odyssey* Zeus lays down the ethical norms that will underlie the central story: men frequently come to grief because of their own transgressions, which they commit despite the gods' best efforts to ward them off.⁶⁸

The proem of the *Odyssey* and the words of Zeus in the council of the gods in Book I need to be read together.

The poem begins:

ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ
πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσεν·
πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω,
πολλὰ δ' ὃ γ' ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν,
ἀρνύμενος ἥν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἐταίρων.
ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὧς ἐτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἰέμενός περ·
αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο,
νῆπιοι, οἳ κατὰ βοῦς Ὑπερίονος Ἡελίοιο
ἦσθιον· αὐτὰρ ὃ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ.
τῶν ἀμόθεν γε, θεά, θύγατερ Διός, εἰπὲ καὶ ἡμῖν.

⁶⁷ Fenik, 208.

⁶⁸ Fenik, 209.

[Tell me, Muse, of the man of many devices, driven far astray after he had sacked the sacred citadel of Troy. Many were the men whose cities he saw and whose minds he learned, and many the woes he suffered in his heart upon the sea, seeking to win his own life and the return of his comrades. Yet even so he did not save his comrades, for all his desire, for through their own blind folly they perished—fools, who devoured the cattle of Helios Hyperion; whereupon he took from them the day of their returning. Of these things, goddess, daughter of Zeus, beginning where you will, tell us in our turn.]

It is not the entire truth to say that Helios Hyperion took away the day of their returning from the comrades of Odysseus. Zeus destroyed their ship with a blast of his thunder (a foreshadowing of the last scene in Book XXIV). He did this after the threat of the Sun to go down and not come up again. Zeus needs the Sun. Thus, Helios makes a demand on Zeus for his special cattle.

Homer says that it was the foolishness of the men that doomed them—a phrase which Zeus will use in just a few verses. Zeus is introduced as speaking after we hear how Odysseus is stranded and his enemy, Poseidon, is off with the Ethiopians. This begins the action of the poem. Zeus laments:

“ὦ πόποι, οἷον δὴ νῦν θεοὺς βροτοὶ αἰτιόωνται·
ἐξ ἡμέων γάρ φασι κάκ' ἔμμεναι, οἳ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ
σφῆσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὑπὲρ νόρον ἄλγε' ἔχουσιν,
ὥς καὶ νῦν Αἰγισθος ὑπὲρ νόρον Ἀτρεΐδαι
γῆμ' ἄλοχον μνηστήν, τὸν δ' ἔκτανε νοστήσαντα,

εἰδὼς αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον, ἐπεὶ πρό οἱ εἶπομεν ἡμεῖς,
'Ερμείαν πέμψαντες, εὐσκοπον ἀργεῖφόντην,
μήτ' αὐτὸν κτείνειν μήτε μνάσθαι ἄκοιτιν·
ἐκ γὰρ Ορέστιαο τίσις ἔσσεται Ἀτρεΐδαο,
ὅππότε ἂν ἠβήσῃ τε καὶ ᾗς ἱμεῖρεται αἵης.
ὥς ἔφαθ' Ἑρμείας, ἀλλ' οὐ φρένας Αἰγίσθοιο
πεῖθ' ἀγαθὰ φρονέων· νῦν δ' ἄθρόα πάντ' ἀπέτισεν."

(I, 32-43)

["It's astonishing how ready mortals are to blame the gods. It is from us, they say, that evils come, but they even by themselves, through their own blind folly, have sorrows beyond that which is ordained. Just as now Aegisthus, beyond that which was ordained, took to himself the wedded wife of the son of Atreus, and slew him on his return, though well he knew of sheer destruction, seeing that we told him before, sending Hermes, the keen-sighted Argeiphontes, that he should neither slay the man nor woo his wife; for from Orestes shall come vengeance for the son of Atreus once he has come to manhood and longs for his own land. So Hermes spoke, but for all his good intent he did not prevail upon the heart of Aegisthus; and now he has paid the full price for it all."]

τίσις, vengeance or payback, will come from Orestes to Aegisthus. The conclusion of the speech is that he has paid the price in full, νῦν δ' ἄθρόα πάντ' ἀπέτισεν. The emphasis is on the man, Aegisthus. The gods had given him his warning.

There are points in Zeus' words that need to be remembered in our reading:

- 1) Zeus cares about blame put on gods.
- 2) He does not say that mortals are only to blame, versus the view that gods are only to blame.

3) "Blind folly" was in the proem, referring to the holy cattle, and the suitors.

4) "Beyond what is ordained" is problematic.

5) Aegisthus paid the price. The gods knew; the gods warned; man disobeyed; man was punished. This point is good to remember at the end of the work. There Odysseus renews the attack on the families of the suitors who had come for battle, though he had heard Athena's warning [XXIV, 531-32]. He listens only to the thunderbolt of Zeus and Athena's second warning. However, we need to mark the words used by Homer.

When Athena told Odysseus again to stop, "ὥς φάτ' Ἀθηναίη, ὃ δ' ἐπείθετο, χαῖρε δὲ θυμῷ (XXIV, 545) [So spoke Athena, and he obeyed, and was glad at heart.]"

It is just this "obeying," which marks the difference between people with whom the gods treat. Odysseus obeyed, he was "persuaded" by the goddess, ἐπείθετο.

Aegisthus did not obey, Hermes could not "persuade the heart of Aegisthus," ἀλλ' οὐ φρένας Αἰγίσθοιο/ πεῖθ' (I, 42-43).

In his work, Fenik reviews Zeus' account of Aegisthus, who was warned by Hermes, but who still killed Agamemnon by

way of pre-meditated murder and married his widow.

Likewise, the suitors follow the same path. They are warned, repeatedly, that their actions will lead them to destruction. Telemachus speaks openly about his prayer to the gods to be rid of them (I, 378-80); a sign comes from Zeus; Halitherses, Noemon, Theoclymenus and Odysseus all warn the suitors that their actions will bring destruction. Their foolish ways, reckless deeds of folly, ἀτασθαλίες, doom them.

Thus, Fenik concludes much as Pseudo-Plutarch did:

The gods' concern for human behavior, and the ethical categories which the story of the hero's return will exemplify, and in terms of which the suitors' catastrophe is to be judged, are thus established right from the start.⁶⁹

Just as Aegisthus disobeyed the warnings of the gods, the suitors will perish because they will not heed warnings from all sides. Their foolish deeds will bring them punishment. Again, Fenik:

The ethical and moral standards of the story seem as clear as we could wish them. The suitors' refusal to listen to the words of elders and seers is thus of fundamental importance; this is what burdens them with guilt and justifies their slaughter. They suffer as a result of their own deliberately chosen actions, as did Aegisthus, who had, like them, other alternatives and plenty of time for deliberation..⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Fenik, 210.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

But for Fenik, this is where the theodicy of this work loses its consistency. For the word "foolishness" used to describe the suitors and Aegisthus is the same word which is used of the folly of Odysseus' crew, the reason for their destruction and why they did not reach home as Odysseus did.

This is the point at which problems arise as far as unity of theme is concerned in this work. Fenik sees a doublet in the cases of Odysseus' crew who eat the cattle of the Sun, and Odysseus, who incurs the wrath of Poseidon by blinding Polyphemos and calling out to him in mockery in Book IX. Fenik argues that Odysseus' taunt of Polyphemos as they are sailing away is not on the same level as that of Aegisthus and the suitors, nor even of his companions. The others all fail to heed good advice from the gods and therefore perish. Odysseus 'gives in,' as it were, to an outburst after escaping seemingly certain doom. And still, Odysseus suffers at the hands of Poseidon, though he has not given way to the folly, the *ἀτασθαλίαι*, the direct challenge to a god, of which the others who suffer are accused.

Fenik sees here a two-fold and inconsistent picture of the gods. The sufferings of Odysseus do not flow from the

theodicy expressed by Zeus at the beginning of Book I. Instead, Odysseus suffers simply because of the wrath of Poseidon. This is in complete agreement with the theological outlook of the *Iliad*. The gods often give favor to those who are faithful in sacrifice and service to the gods. But, then again, there is always the possibility that a mortal has angered a god. Then he cannot count on fair treatment.

Fenik asserts that there is a general agreement between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in their approach to the ways of the gods to men. The theology of both works does not resemble an equation or machine. There are no guarantees from gods to men, except in the case of some theophanies. But both works are quite similar in their presentations of the gods.

It is on this point that Edwin Cook objects to Fenik's work. He sees the theology of the *Odyssey* as a corrective to the *Iliad* rather than as a repetition. He writes:

The speech in which Zeus announces the metaphysics of his rule takes the form of a polemic. Ruter believes that Zeus directs his remarks against claims made by the human actors in the *Iliad*, such as Agamemnon's in the opening scene of Book 19.⁷¹

⁷¹ Erwin F. Cook, *The Odyssey in Athens: Myths of Cultural Origins* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), 36.

This approach treats Zeus' statement in the council of the gods as a break with the dominant theodicy of the *Iliad*. Cook considers the theodicy of the *Odyssey* to be thoroughly consistent. But I see his work as a cutting of the Gordian knot rather than a more proper unravelling.

Cook's explanation of the double theodicy in the *Odyssey* is too simple in one respect. He solves the problem of a conflicting theodicy by simply splitting up the gods into two camps that behave according to quite different motivations. He states it in this way:

From my work I concluded that the *Odyssey* is informed at all levels of composition by a series of contrasts that can be placed under the rubric of *metis* and *bie*, or 'cunning intelligence' and 'violent might.' In the human sphere this polarity is seen in the struggles of Odysseus with Polyphemos, the suitors, and even his own crew. Among the gods, Zeus and Athene are aligned with *metis* and Poseidon with *bie*, chiefly in the context of their opposed attitudes toward Odysseus. Thus, in the divine assembly of Book I Poseidon's hatred of Odysseus conforms to a patriarchal system of retributive violence that contrasts with Zeus's own view of human suffering and the role of the gods in it.⁷²

Fenik had stated that there was a double theodicy, a discrepancy between stated purpose and actual fulfillment. Cook says that there is no need to destroy the unity of the purpose proclaimed by Zeus, as long as you prosecute and defend each character in the poem correctly.

⁷² Cook, 5.

For instance, Odysseus' comrades are displayed, in Fenik's account, as those who are kept on the island of Thrinacia by a contrary wind sent by the gods, and then left to their own devices by Odysseus when he goes off and falls asleep.⁷³ These two points are indisputable.

Cook, on the other hand, insists that the *Odyssey* goes to great lengths to lay clear blame on the comrades of Odysseus.⁷⁴ Thus, they deserved their punishment, because they brought evils upon themselves. To the objection that Odysseus suffers too, but not because he sinned or broke a commandment of the gods, Cook posits not two theodicies, but two realms of action.

In the real world and culture of the Greeks, there is Zeus of Book I and Athena, who guard and protect a good man, Odysseus. But when Odysseus is in a land of fantasy, in the *Apologoi*, that is simply not the realm of Zeus and Athena. That is the realm of the gods of force and might. They have their way for a while. But reasoning, in the persons of the gods Athena and Zeus, eventually overcomes force and might.

The main virtue of Cook's approach is that it absolutely guards the words of Zeus that the gods do not

⁷³ Fenik, 208ff.

⁷⁴ Cook, 111-27.

bring evils on men, but that men, by their own foolishness, bring destruction on themselves. Zeus is here the voice of reason, teaching men to obey the reasonable voice of the gods. The irrational impulses, exemplified by Poseidon and Helios, are gods for those who do not reason sensibly. For those who know the ways of the gods, Cook's approach reinforces a way of gods toward men that is roughly fair and consistent. Those who suffer have only themselves to blame.

When this position is compared to Fenik's summary, one little word appears which Cook has not taken into account. Fenik admits that the wrath of Poseidon is an instance in which men can rightly blame the gods. He states:

We are forced to conclude that the ethical standards set forth by Zeus do not apply to the Poseidon-Odysseus story, or to put it another way, that the religious and moral outlook of the Odyssey is not uniform. The contradiction is not, to be sure, absolute. Zeus does not claim that *all* human suffering is self-inflicted- indeed, he clearly implies that it is not (33):

οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ
σφηῆσιν ἀτασθαλίησιν ὑπὲρ μόρον ἄλγε' ἔχουσιν.

The καὶ is important:

But they suffer because of their own crimes, too (in addition to the ills sent by us), and endure evils beyond their due portion (i.e. beyond what they would have to put up with in any case). Zeus gives, in other words, no guarantee that the gods will not arbitrarily inflict misery on mortals, so that when Poseidon hounds Odysseus over the sea for what is, in human eyes at least, a forgivable offense, he is not

doing anything that Zeus claims men should not expect.⁷⁵

Fenik sums up very well:

...it is my conviction that the punishment meted out to the crew is basically the same as that inflicted on Odysseus himself. The one deserves it more, the other less, but both incidents show an angry god avenging a personal affront committed under circumstances that strongly encouraged or even forced the deed, without the god concerning himself with anything but the act itself. I find these similarities infinitely stronger than any resemblances between the suitors' willful criminality, freely chosen and freely carried out, and the crew's unheroic breakdown under the pressures of hunger and desperation.⁷⁶ I conclude that neither the anger of Helios nor of Poseidon conforms to Zeus' excursus in the prologue, but that together they form a pair in their divine character, as they do in the external similarities of narration.⁷⁷

This is the theodicy of the *Iliad*. Here, in the *Odyssey*, Zeus does not eliminate immortals from human contact and meddling. He did not say that the gods do not cause men woes. Instead, Zeus deflects the blame by saying that men bring woes upon themselves also, on top of what the gods do. The freedom granted by this good, close reading, is that the reader is released from any obligation

⁷⁵ Fenik, 211.

⁷⁶ Notwithstanding the objections of those who claim that the crew was not forced to eat the cattle because they had food to eat, such as fish. See Charles Segal, *Singers, Heroes, and Gods in the Odyssey* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994), 216-17. Segal still admits that the punishment of the crew, the "gods' intervention [of sending a contrary wind] is the visible expression of the companions' loss of morale, discipline, and good judgment."

⁷⁷ Fenik, 215.

to prosecute anyone who speaks about the gods. Instead, the gods can act on a whim. They may bless or they may curse. But men can also bring trouble on themselves without the initiation of a god (or contrary to their help.)

That is exactly how so many in the *Odyssey* speak about the gods. Therefore, when one reads the opinions of gods or men, the important question is not the accuracy of the speaker. Athena and Hermes both give inaccurate information. But they both move the plot along. Men mistake which god is responsible for what woe inflicted on mortals. But that does not really matter.

Consider the variety of the conversation about the gods in the *Odyssey*. How do these opinions fit inside Zeus' words about the gods bringing woe and about one bringing woe upon oneself?

When Hermes tells Calypso that she must let Odysseus go, she blames the gods of Olympus:

σχέτλιοί ἐστε, θεοί, ζηλήμονες...
(V, 118)

[Merciless are you, gods, jealous...]

Calypso belongs to the class of immortals. But she lives on the earth, floating somewhere, and she is obsessed

with a mortal whom she cannot have. Yes, only the gods can free Odysseus. There is woe for Calypso but happiness for Odysseus. The poem's theology accepts the validity of Calypso's complaint. The gods can accept it too, without much anxiety. They have already been excused.

When Odysseus finally reaches Ithaca, a peasant, Philoetius, complains about the gods. He meets the disguised Odysseus and has an earful for Zeus and for anyone else listening:

Ζεῦ πάτερ, οὐ τις σεῖο θεῶν βλοῦντος ἄλλος·
οὐκ ἐλεαίρεις ἄνδρας, ἐπὴν δὴ γείνεαι αὐτός,
μισγόμεναι κακότητι καὶ ἄλγεσι λευγαλέοισιν.
ἴδιον, ὥς ἐνόησα, δεδάκρυνται δέ μοι ὅσσε
μνησαμένω Ὀδυσῆος, ἐπεὶ καὶ κεῖνον οἶω
τοιάδε λαίφε' ἔχοντα κατ' ἀνθρώπους ἀλάλησθαι,
εἴ που ἐτι ζῶει καὶ ὄρᾳ φάος ἡελίοιο.

(XX, 201-207)

[Father Zeus, there is no other god more deadly than you. You do not pity men, even though you yourself produced them, and permit them to consort with evil and grievous pain. I began to sweat as I saw you, and my eyes filled with tears as I remembered Odysseus, for I believe that he too, with rags such as these, wanders among men, if he still lives somewhere and sees the light of the sun.]

There is no one so low that he lacks an evaluation of the gods and their ways. The epic allows this man his opinion. Zeus has pity, when he wants to. If he withholds it, what can Philoetius do but complain?

Is this man wrong, that Zeus has no pity? Yes and No. He is correct in this regard: Zeus seems to have forgotten Odysseus for so long. But then again, the gods are not finally, irreparably harmed by the woes of men. Should this man expect nothing else? I do not believe he expects any other treatment by the gods. And I am not surprised that he is not struck dead for his complaint.

Telemachus was not struck dead when he stated, just after Athena flew away, that the blame for the woes Penelope has does not belong to Phemius, who sang about the disastrous return of the Greeks from Troy. Instead, Zeus is to blame (I, 346-349). Zeus stands in for Poseidon and Helios. But that is close enough for this epic.

Cook has tried to maintain a consistent theology in the *Odyssey* by justifying the actions of each character. If one mortal or god complains about one of the mightier gods, like Zeus, Zeus has an explanation ready.

The problem of this approach, in Cook's book, is summed up by Fenik twenty years earlier than Cook:

The real problem is that the theology of the *Odyssey* seems inconsistent, that older and newer levels of thought sit uncomfortably side by side, that two of the poem's most important episodes fail to correspond with its most important moral guidelines as exemplified by the suitors and as explained by Zeus.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Fenik, 216.

Where does Fenik direct us then, to grasp the use of these contradictions in these epics? He writes:

The epics represent a historical, cultural, linguistic and intellectual amalgam. They are a rich storehouse of contributions from many epochs and generations of poets. Their unity does not consist of a logically conceived philosophical or theological system, in which everything in this world is integrated into a neatly distributed whole. Unity consists rather in certain narrative structures and in dominant emphases imposed upon a complex substructure. The angers of Helios and Poseidon do indeed contradict Zeus' words in the prologue. But they are so similar to each other both in general and in so many particulars as to belong unmistakably to the whole larger class of doublets in the *Odyssey*. They contribute to the stylistic unity of the epic as much as they disturb its ethical uniformity. The story is always the same: strong stylistic tendencies and narrative emphases take precedence over a consistent world-outlook.⁷⁹

Fenik has found two contradictory theologies. One is a theodicy, by which the gods are exculpated because men do not follow the advice and warnings of the gods. The other theology is of a violent, and therefore primitive, type which puts forward no justification of the gods. That theology does not care for any justification.

Fenik finds a complicated set of relationships that exists in the *Odyssey* between mortals and immortals. He writes:

[There are] three different kinds of relationships between men and gods in connection with human guilt and suffering...(1) man brings his own doom upon himself, and the gods oversee the working out of

⁷⁹ Fenik, 219.

retributive justice; (2) the gods urge a man along criminal paths consistent with his inborn predilections; (3) the gods arbitrarily impose suffering, or lure men into misdeeds that are punished without respect for circumstances or deserts. There is an easy bridge between 1 and 2, but the gulf between 1 and 3 is very wide. It is interesting not only how widespread number 3 is in the *Odyssey*...but...inside the *apologoi* Zeus himself, despite his programme in the prologue, follows the same arbitrary principles as Helios and Poseidon.⁸⁰

This three-fold relationship between men and gods is not something to regret, to figure out, or to explain away. Instead, it is the fabric of the work. These are the ways gods deal with men, when you read the *Odyssey*. It turns out that this is just about how gods deal with men in the *Iliad*.

I would simply add that if we consider more carefully the relationship of mortals and immortals in terms of the gifts they give, this enriches our reading of the fabric of the works. Homer is not concerned about the justice of gods or men apart from the gifts they give and receive. Further evidence from the poem elucidates the importance of gifts.

Men say much about the gods and their gifts in the *Odyssey*. Though Odysseus travels through many cities and knows the minds of many peoples, the gods remain the same throughout. The theology of the *Odyssey* can be divided

⁸⁰ Fenik, 223.

into three main loci. There are the statements about the gods by men, which are now corroborated, now contradicted by the rest of the poem. There are the statements of the gods about themselves. Finally, there are the statements of the poet—perhaps we might say the "Muse."

The gods speak about themselves, from the beginning of Book I to the end of Book XXIV. Lowly Eumaeus speaks about the gods. The shades of the suitors speak about the gods. Penelope speaks about the gods.

Mortals expect things from the gods; they expect gifts. According to Huebeck "...that the gods are held to guarantee some moral relationships is an important idea in the *Odyssey*, reflected in an epithet unknown to the *Iliad*, θεουδής, 'god-fearing', i.e. just (vi 121, viii 576, etc.)."⁸¹ Mortals can try to build up that god-fearing relationship. All that the poem states over such an attempt is that it guarantees nothing.

Sometimes the gods respond to mortals the way that mortals, but Cook overemphasizes this response. Huebeck more correctly states this:

Zeus similarly sends an eagle, the bird he loves best, **τελειότατον πετεηνῶν**, in answer to prayer at *Il.* viii 247, xxiv 315; we are thus assured that Telemachus'

⁸¹ Huebeck, 1988, 134.

prayer will be fulfilled. This divine confirmation will seem the more impressive if we bear in mind how seldom Zeus intervenes directly in the events of the *Odyssey* (cf. xx 102ff., xxi 413, xxiv 539); the omen underlines the seriousness of this moment.⁸²

This divine confirmation is in agreement with the wishes of Cook's work, that Zeus would support a just cause everywhere. But where Cook expects too much, Telemachus knows better. He remains sceptical about the ways of gods to men and their gifts.

For the gods do not tell the entire story. There is a discrepancy between what we know and what Hermes tells Calypso in Book V. Hermes gives a "conventional" explanation to the goddess. Odysseus is one of those who sacked Troy, who before returning home sinned against Athena. She sent an evil wind and huge waves, which wrecked the fleet and destroyed his companions, but which carried him to her island.⁸³ This is another passage in which the work itself describes the whole topic of the gods, punishment and theodicy. Hermes has a mission to do. The short version, a rumored version, a popular version of the gods' actions towards men is all that is needed. Homer (or the Muse) is telling us not to push the details of the

⁸² Heubeck, 1988, 140.

⁸³ That Athena was indeed full of wrath toward Odysseus is the thesis of Jenny Clay's book *The Wrath of Athena*.

narrative too closely. Even the gods, who know better, are not so concerned with accuracy.

There have also been many questions raised about the presence, or better the absence, of Athena during Odysseus' wanderings. Athena "had deserted Odysseus before the encounter with the Cyclops and gives no reason for her resumption of relations at this particular moment. No very convincing reasons have been adduced for her behavior."⁸⁴ To one who reads the poem as Fenik does, with the "καὶ" of the first council in mind, this is not much of a problem.

The gods, in fact, do not always support Odysseus, which a consistent reading would require. The limitations of the gods are no better displayed than in the case of Zeus, who does not accept Odysseus' sacrifice of a ram to Zeus in Book IX, 550ff., after the terrifying episode with Polyphemus. Odysseus later knows what Zeus was doing:

ἀλλ' ὃ γε μερμήριξεν ὅπως ἀπολοίαιτο πᾶσαι
νῆες εὖσσελμοι καὶ ἐμοὶ ἐρίηρες ἐταῖροι.
(IX, 554-555)

[But he was planning how all my well-benched ships
might perish and my trusty comrades.]

Heubeck explains that Zeus was not angry with Odysseus. It was simply that "[h]e must let events take their course in

⁸⁴ Heubeck, 1988, 315.

accordance with Moira, which has ordained that Odysseus should return only after twenty years, and so he gives thought to destroying Odysseus' fleet and companions."⁸⁵

At this point the theodicy is doubled along with the gifts of the gods to men. In the same way that Zeus worked out matters in the *Iliad*, Zeus in the *Odyssey* must balance his concern for fate, Poseidon and Helios, over against the worthiness of Odysseus. Zeus has two areas of concern when making his own plans.

When speaking of the speech of Odysseus in XVIII 141ff, the speech to Amphinomus, Russo calls Odysseus' words "one of the first examples of early Greek speculative thought striving to articulate a morally justifiable theodicy."⁸⁶ This is a pivotal section for theodical thought in this work. For there is, earlier in XVIII, an idea that there is, for man, just a "turn of fate." Good things happen and then bad things happen, with little or no rhyme or reason. Here Odysseus insists that people "get what is coming to them." This is an echo of Zeus in Book I. But in proximity to his earlier ideas, we see a two-fold idea (from one mouth!) of the gods, men and

⁸⁵ Heubeck, 1989, 41.

⁸⁶ Russo, 1992, 57.

punishment. As Segal writes, "All of which is to say that the *Odyssey* is poetry, not moral philosophy."⁸⁷

Many explain this dual nature of theodicy, especially in the *Odyssey*, as a "process," a "work in progress," some sort of struggle between what men say about men and gods, what the gods say about men and gods, and the "hard facts of life;"⁸⁸ "...it was not Homer's endeavor to weave a seamless garment or to fashion a well-wrought urn."⁸⁹

It is also good to remember the setting of the *Odyssey*. Dietrich writes:

Homeric man, too, felt unfettered by any supreme guiding power of fate which indeed is absent in the epic: the concepts of *Heimarmene* [Fate] and *Ananke* [necessity] are yet to come, and they will then at times deprive man of his free will, and remove the need for righteous conduct by providing a sterile creed which absolves him from all responsibility...⁹⁰

On the other hand, the hero...cannot look to the gods for guidance; they may indeed exert their influence over his life at any moment, but they do so without following a consistent moral motivation. Homeric society, however, imposes upon a man a code of conduct which he may not transgress without penalty, and which embraces many aspects of his life. Yet the overall picture we find in Homer is that of men who are remarkably free agents, not violent or lawless, but independent and proud, unrestricted by superstitious fear of unapproachable gods or fate. It is only natural, then, that in such an atmosphere a concept of fate should show the beginnings of a connection with

⁸⁷ Segal, 226.

⁸⁸ See especially Segal, 195-227.

⁸⁹ Andrew Ford, *Homer: The Poetry of the Past* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 58.

⁹⁰ Dietrich, 337.

justice; and moreover that such religious thought should make an impact on the Greek mind which was to leave its mark on subsequent literature and also on philosophy.⁹¹

Dietrich's view agrees quite well with my thesis, that the gods give gifts and expect men to act accordingly. If men appreciate the gifts of the gods, they may be blessed by the gods; then again, they may not. Men should then live obedient to the gods. They may receive more gifts or they may end up in sorrow, complaining. But that is what it means to be mortal.

One very important discussion about the gods and their justice arises from the works of Adkins and Lloyd-Jones.⁹² Their contradictory views are one place where my thesis of gift giving offers a third way toward understanding the gods and divine justice, especially in the *Odyssey*.

Adkins, writing in 1960, contends that there was no fully developed notion in Homer that the gods were concerned with justice at all. In a section of his work entitled "Non-moral Gods",⁹³ he states

At all events, it is natural to look to the gods if the gods are themselves just; for otherwise there can be no help in Olympus either. This help is doubtful in Homer... The relations between such gods and mankind are clearly not founded on justice, as may be seen from the reprisals they take against men in the poems.

⁹¹ Dietrich, 337.

⁹² See note 6 above.

⁹³ Adkins, 62ff.

Oeneus sacrificed hecatombs to all the other gods and goddesses, but not to Artemis: he either forgot, says Homer, or he did not think of it. There was nothing deliberate in this slight; yet Artemis sent a wild boar to ravage the land: an act which harmed not merely Oeneus but the people as a whole. Again, the plague which ravaged the Greek army in *Iliad* I was first believed to be a punishment for a forgotten hecatomb.⁹⁴

Adkins quotes Odysseus to buttress his arguments that the poems are not concerned about justice. Adkins writes

Therefore let no man be utterly lawless; let him rather quietly possess such gifts as the gods give him.

Odysseus has been treated as no Homeric beggar should be treated, but he does not reply 'The gods will punish you for this.' Instead, he merely says 'Life has its ups and downs. You should be cautious. One day you may be in my position, if the gods choose to deprive you of your arete [excellence, position], and you will then need just treatment from others.'⁹⁵

This quotation is supposed to support the argument that the Homeric gods are not concerned about justice and that the mortal characters know this. What Adkins is trying to prove is that there was a development of the notion of justice among the gods between the time of Homer and the time of the fifth century Greek Enlightenment.

Hugh Lloyd-Jones objects to this view. However, he agrees with Adkins concerning the separation between gods and men. He summarizes the differences very well:

⁹⁴ Adkins, 62.

⁹⁵ Adkins, 64-5.

The Greek notion of the divine, it can never be said too often, differed utterly from the Jewish or Christian notion. Between men and gods there is no comparison in point of beauty, happiness and power. The gods live for ever, and meet with little but good fortune; men either meet with nothing but ill fortune or at best are given a mixed lot; after death, their existence in Hades will hardly be an existence. Zeus may be father of gods and men in the sense that he is their ruler; but men in general are not the children of Zeus...In the *Iliad*, as in all early Greek poetry, the gods look on men with disdain mingled with slight pity. "I should not be sensible," says Apollo to Poseidon when he meets him in the battle of the gods, "if I fought with you on account of wretched mortals, who like leaves now flourish, as they eat the fruit of the field, and now fade away lifeless." "Nothing," says Zeus himself, "is more wretched than a man, of all things that breathe and move upon the earth."⁹⁶

There is a gulf between mortals and immortals that cannot be overcome. However, Lloyd-Jones objects to Adkins' conclusions. Adkins has based his argument, to a great extent, on the lack in Homer of the words for justice that later Greeks employed.⁹⁷ As Lloyd-Jones points out well, a lack of terms does not mean a total lack of an idea among a people. He properly cites the beginning of the *Odyssey* as support to his counter-thesis that there is indeed a notion of justice present in the works of Homer. This notion is important to both men and gods.

I agree with the position of Lloyd-Jones, who denies that Adkins' positivistic approach proves the lack of a

⁹⁶ Lloyd-Jones, 3.

⁹⁷ Lloyd-Jones gives a sober assessment of the use of the lexical method, pp. 165ff.

notion of justice among the Greeks. But I submit that this notion of justice, over which these two professors argue, can be proved in a positivistic manner. This notion is addressed by words that are indeed present in both Homeric poems. When we look to the *Odyssey*, however, we see that the presentation of the justice of the gods is different from its presentation in *Iliad*.

In the *Iliad* there was much attention given to the gifts of men to gods and that of gods to gods. In the *Odyssey* these gifts are present; but there is more importance given to the gifts of gods and men to mortal men.

Adkins is primarily concerned about an historical judgment. He concludes that the Greek notion of divine justice present in the splendid fifth century in Athens developed from the time of Homer. Lloyd-Jones agrees that there was a development. He disagrees, though, that the notion was entirely absent from Homer.

I agree on that point. The characters in Homer were not unsophisticated savages. Merely an appropriate survey of the gifts they give teaches us that obligations based on gifts given were central to the nature of these epics. Where I would modify Lloyd-Jones' conclusion is in one area: his reaction to Adkins' positivism. Lloyd-Jones

rightly says that lack of a word group, such as justice, does not mean a lack of a notion of justice. I would simply like to add that when there is a prominent word group, such as gift, which is related to any notion under consideration, a lexical study is the first place to begin a critique of the work regarding that notion.

Not only the gifts of the gods to men, but also the gifts of men to men are central to the *Odyssey*. When Odysseus in Book Six reaches Hypereia, where the Phaeacians live, the king Alcinous and his queen welcome Odysseus and ask him to tell the tale of his travels. This is the structure in which we hear of the fantastic experiences of Odysseus and his crew: Polyphemus the Cyclops, Circe, the Sirens, et alii.

The Phaeacians are so pleased with Odysseus and his stories that they give him gifts. A great deal is made of these gifts. Then the contents of Alcinous' house are listed in Book VI. They are a people specially blessed by the gods. They excel in crafts. Their gardens have tall, full trees, vineyards and fountains, which supply water for all the people of the town.

τοῖ' ἄρ' ἐν ' Ἀλκινόοιο θεῶν ἔσαν ἀγλαὰ δῶρα.

(VI, 132)

[Such were the glorious gifts of the gods in the house of Alcinous.]

The poet sounds as if he belongs to the Phaeacians. Whatever gifts these people possess are naturally described as having come from the gods. In fact, the Phaeacians are a special sort of people, very dear to the gods. The poem surely wants us to recognize that the gods hold dear those who give them thanks. There is something in this notion that is almost Miltonic, like the theology of *Paradise Lost*. In Milton, sacrifices are ridiculed in favor of recognition of and thanksgiving toward God. I will cover this more fully in Chapter Four.

Yet the Phaeacians are a special case. As they prepare to send Odysseus off, Alcinous tells all the leaders of the people to bring gifts for their new friend (VIII, 387ff.). Not only this, but Alcinous hopes that Odysseus' homecoming may be successful. To whom does the king ascribe the homecoming? To the gods.

σοὶ δὲ θεοὶ ἀλοχόν τ' ἰδέειν καὶ πατρίδ' ἰκέσθαι
δοῖεν, ἐπεὶ δὴ δηθὰ φίλων ἀπο πῆματα πάσχεις.

(VIII, 410-411)

[May the gods grant you to see your wife and to come to your country, since it is a long time indeed that you have been suffering far from your dear ones.]

Alcinous knows that you apply to the gods for a homecoming. They can bring it about. Again, there is nothing more natural for this king than to speak of the

gods and what they can do. The distance between gods and men is somehow lessened in their land.

The poet, though, knows other gifts. When Odysseus needs help, the elements are given to him. The winds are a gift from Aeolus.⁹⁸ Odysseus reports to the Phaeacians:

δῶκε δέ μ' ἐκδείρας ἀσκὸν βοὸς ἐννεώροιο,
ἐνθα δὲ βυκτάων ἀνέμων κατέδησε κέλευθα·
(X, 19-20)

[He gave me a bag made of nine year skinned ox hide and inside of it he bound the paths of the blowing winds.]

Odysseus' crew misuse the winds and are blown back to Aeolus. Then we see the "demand balance" notion of gifts return. Aeolus is stunned that Odysseus has come back. When Odysseus tells him what happened and asks for more help, Aeolus refuses. He can see clearly that the gods are angry with Odysseus. That is why they have had such misfortune. So he will give them no more help.

Yet even this admission of Odysseus does not keep the Phaeacians from helping Odysseus. After some of his tales

τοῖσιν δ' Ἀρήτη λευκώλενος ἤρχετο μύθων.
"Φαίηκες, πῶς ὑμῖν ἀνὴρ ὅδε φαίνεται εἶναι

⁹⁸ The presentation of Aeolus in the *Odyssey* is quite different from that in the *Aeneid*. The Greek epic presents the ruler of the winds as a civilized man who keeps the winds in a bag. He gives the bag to Odysseus but his men open the bag and loose the winds. In the *Aeneid*, Aeolus lives in a cave with the winds howling all around him. He breaks a hole in the cave to let out the winds. The elements are much more under control of divine beings in Homer (and Milton!) than in Vergil.

εἶδος τε μέγεθος τε ἰδὲ φρένας ἔνδον εἵσας;
ξείνος δ' αὖτ' ἐμός ἐστιν, ἕκαστος δ' ἔμμορε τιμῆς·
τῷ μὴ ἐπειγόμενοι ἀποπέμπετε, μηδὲ τὰ δῶρα
οὕτω χρηρίζοντι κολούετε· πολλὰ γὰρ ὑμῖν
κτήματ' ἐν μεγάροισι θεῶν ἰότητι κέονται."

(XI, 336-341)

[Then among them white-armed Arete spoke first,
"Phaeacians, how does this man appear to you, his
looks, his bearing, the sound mind within him?
Moreover he is my guest, though that honor belongs to
all of you as well. Therefore, do not be hasty to
send him away, nor be stingy in your gifts to such a
man in need. For there are many treasures stored up
in your hall by the favor of the gods."]

Arete knows that gifts, treasures and possessions are
all given by favor of the gods. There is a great
difference between Arete, Alcinous, in fact all the
Phaeacians, and the rest of mortals. The Phaeacians
recognize so regularly the benefits of the gods that it is
easy to assume that this is why they are so blessed. It is
tempting to compare them to the verse, "To him who has,
more will be given. To him who does not have, even what he
has will be taken from him." (St. Luke 19:26)

But Odysseus greatly desires to leave. He tells
Alcinous:

ἤδη γὰρ τετέλεσται ἅ μοι φίλος ἤθελε θυμός,
πομπὴ καὶ φίλα δῶρα (XIII, 40-41)

[For now everything my heart desired has come to me:
a way home and friendship gifts.]

But Odysseus continues. Odysseus does not forget the gods.
He adds immediately,

ὄλβια ποιήσειαν

τά μοι θεοὶ Οὐρανίωνες
(XIII, 41-42)

[May the gods of heaven make them my blessed
possession.]

Either Odysseus has learned this manner of speaking or
he has known it all along. The gods are always present in
his mind or heart. So are their gifts to him.

Often a mortal feels the need to talk at length about
god. When Odysseus narrates his "story" of his travels, he
has a lot to say about god, especially Zeus, when he speaks
of his shipwreck. Zeus plans to destroy the Phoenician who
planned to sell Odysseus into slavery. Zeus sent a storm,
struck with a thunderbolt, put a mast under Odysseus' arms,
etc. Benardete remarks,

For a simple storm at sea the gods are surprisingly
active. It would be impossible to find a comparable
density of "Zeus" and "gods" anywhere else in the
Odyssey: "Zeus" and "gods" occur eighteen times each
in the course of Odysseus's narration. Odysseus makes
himself out to be a favorite of Zeus and assigns the
death of everyone else to divine punishment.⁹⁹

Odysseus has made up this story. We must note how
carefully he has crafted his words. He speaks as men
speak. They speak of the gods and the concern of the gods
for men. We have learned from Homer's works that the gods

⁹⁹ Benardete, 114.

may be quite concerned about men. Then again, they may not be paying very much attention. What matters for mortals, as the words of Odysseus show, is to keep the gods in their minds and on their lips.

Men should act as though the gods were always concerned with the actions of men. For example, there is the component of adultery, which is unacceptable to gods and men.¹⁰⁰ This applies to the case of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, of which Zeus spoke in Book I, which Demodocus sings about in Book VIII, and which is behind some of the wrath directed toward the suitors. Demodocus also sings about the adultery of Aphrodite and Ares. Hephaestus is very angry about the discovered affair. The gods, however, after the events of an exposed adulterous relationship may all have a good laugh and move on. Even adultery among their own is not serious enough to disrupt their deep care-free lives.

For the mortals, however, adultery will be one of the reasons for murder, betrayal, and a slaughter. There is a finality to the actions of mortals and their repercussions that cannot affect the gods in the same manner. This recognition teaches us to see that there are two ways of looking at the affairs of gods and men that are not in

¹⁰⁰ Lowenstam, 186-7.

complete harmony. The way that gods see events is decisively different from the way men see the events. This same recognition helps readers understand the two-fold view in Homer about gifts.

The gods are quite concerned about gifts. They agree with Odysseus about how important gifts are. When Poseidon sees that Odysseus will certainly gain Ithaca, he complains:

“Ζεῦ πάτερ, οὐκέτ’ ἐγὼ γε μετ’ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι
τιμῆις ἔσομαι, ὅτε με βροτοὶ οὐ τι τίουσιν,
Φαίηκες, τοί περ τοι ἐμῆς ἔξ εἰσι γενέθλης.
καὶ γὰρ νῦν Ὀδυσῆ’ ἐφάμην κακὰ πολλὰ παθόντα
οἴκαδ’ ἐλεύσεσθαι· νόστον δέ οἱ οὐ ποτ’ ἀπηύρων
πάγχυ, ἐπεὶ σὺ πρῶτον ὑπέσχεο καὶ κατένευσας.
οἱ δ’ εὐδοντ’ ἐν νηϊ θοῇ ἐπὶ πόντον ἄγοντες
κάτθεσαν εἰν Ἰθάκῃ, ἔδοσαν δέ οἱ ἄσπετα δῶρα,
χαλκὸν τε χρυσὸν τε ἄλις ἐσθῆτά θ’ ὑφαντήν,
πόλλ’, ὅς ἂν οὐδέ ποτε Τροίης ἐξήρατ’ Ὀδυσσεύς,
εἰ περ ἀπήμων ἦλθε, λαχὼν ἀπὸ ληϊδος αἶσαν.”

(XIII, 128-138)

["Father Zeus, I, even I, will no longer be held in honor among the immortal gods, since mortals do not honor me at all. Namely the Phaeacians, who, as you know well, are descended from me. For I just now declared that Odysseus should suffer many woes before he reached his home, though I did not rob his homecoming from him altogether after you had promised it and confirmed it with the nod of your head. Yet these men have carried him, asleep!, in a swift ship over the sea and set him down in Thace. And they have given him gifts beyond telling, piles of bronze and gold and clothes, more than Odysseus would have won for himself from Troy, even if he had returned unharmed with his share of the spoil."]

Two things bother Poseidon. That he will lose honor among men and gods is painful. But he also is quite upset by the gifts the Phaeacians have given to Odysseus. Gifts are proofs of blessing and friendship.

Zeus, in his answer, does not take away Odysseus' gifts. Instead, he confirms the honor in which the gods hold Poseidon; and he tells him to do whatever he pleases with the Phaeacians. Poseidon chooses to turn the ship of the Phaeacians into stone and to encircle the Phaeacians behind a mountain. The poem tells us in this way that there are no people, visible to us, who enjoy the full blessings of the gods. The Phaeacians appeared to break the rules we hear Achilles speak of in the *Iliad*, about only two options: a life of undending woe, or one of mixed good and evil. But by the middle of the *Odyssey*, the only exception to the rule disappears from mortal contact.

The old, familiar forms of gift-giving reappear in the *Odyssey*. Odysseus, after Athena appears to tell him he has reached Ithaca, prays to the Naiad nymphs of his land. He promises them gifts, if Athena will let him live and let his son grow up.¹⁰¹ Does Odysseus know that Athena is present? Yes he does. So he knows with whom he is bargaining.

¹⁰¹ *Odyssey*, XIII, 356-360.

When Odysseus appears and his son, Telemachus, does not recognize him, Telemachus thinks Odysseus is a god. So, naturally, he offers him gifts.¹⁰² The prayer asks the unknown god to spare the lives of Telemachus and Eumaeus the swineherd.

In addition to these old forms of the gift-giving pattern, the *Odyssey* presents another form of the concern for gifts. It is a closer look into the human evaluation of gifts.

In Book XVIII, Odysseus is very glad that Penelope is able to deceive all the suitors. By her speech, she moves them all to bring her gifts.¹⁰³ The poem delivers its own judgment on the gifts of the suitors. As gifts to the gods sometimes do not move the gods, so also gifts to mortals often get you nothing.

Then old Laertes, like old Priam, knows the value of gifts. Odysseus appears to him, unknown, telling his father a tale like a stranger. He pretends that he is a foreigner whom Odysseus visited one day. He says that he gave Odysseus many gifts. To this Laertes responds:

...δῶρα δ' ἐτώσια ταῦτα χαρίζο, μυρί' ὀπάζων
εἰ γάρ μιν ζῶν γ' ἐκίχεις Ἰθάκης ἐνὶ δῆμῳ,

¹⁰² *Odyssey*, XVI, 181-185.

¹⁰³ *Odyssey*, XVIII, 281-3.

τῷ κέν σ' εὖ δώροισιν ἀμειψάμενος ἀπέπεμψε
καὶ ξενίῃ ἀγαθῇ ἢ γὰρ θέμις, ὅς τις ὑπάρξῃ.
(XXIV, 283-286)

[All for nothing did you give those countless gifts.
For if you had found him living still in the land of
Ithaca, then he would have sent you on your way with
plenty of gifts and with good hospitality. For this
is what is due to the one who begins the gift-giving.]

These lines give us a clear understanding of the value
of gifts to these characters in these poems. There are no
free gifts. One man may give gifts; but he always has his
mind on some sort of return. Laertes states that it was of
no use for this stranger to have given gifts to Odysseus.
Why? Because Odysseus cannot repay him.

Odysseus is his father's son. He discloses his
identity and proves it. How will Odysseus convince his
father that it is he? He shows the scar which he received
at the boar hunt at the house of Autolycus. But Odysseus
includes an important addition. He says about that trip

...σὺ δέ με προΐεις καὶ πότνια μήτηρ
ἐς πατέρ' Ἀυτόλυκον μητρὸς φίλον, ὅφρ' ἂν ἐλοίμην
δῶρα, τὰ δεῦρο μολῶν μοι ὑπέσχετο καὶ κατένευσεν.
εἰ δ' ἄγε τοι καὶ δένδρε' εὐκτιμένην κατ' ἁλώην
εἶπω, ἃ μοί ποτ' ἔδωκας... (XXIV, 333-7)

[But you and my mother, the lady, sent me to
Autolycus, my mother's father, in order that I might
obtain the gifts that he promised and agreed to give
me when he came here. But come now, I will also tell
you about all the trees that you gave me
once...*Emphasis added.*]

How can Laertes recognize Odysseus without a doubt? He shows that he is his father's son. The father sent him to the father's father-in-law, in order to get gifts. The son remembers every tree the father gave him as a boy. Indeed the narrative continues with Odysseus naming and even numbering the fruit trees his father gave to him. He has not forgotten.

The role of gifts and gift-giving in the *Odyssey* is understandable. Gifts are deposits that make mortals dear to the gods. Gifts from the gods keep the gods dear to mortals. Gifts from one man to another bind them together in a relationship of further gift-giving. It is no shame for a man to make a visit for the purpose of receiving gifts. There is also no shame in making a show about the gifts that are given, nor about reminding others of the gifts that have been exchanged.

Gift giving is handled openly in the *Odyssey*. Those that give gifts are recognized and remembered. Those that receive gifts neglect the gifts at their own peril. This understanding of gifts and their place among gods and mortals helps us understand other notions in the epics, such as the justice of men and gods or a more complete appreciation of ancient Greek religion.

It is important not to put questions to the Homeric epics which, anachronistically, demand more from these works than they were ever prepared to give. However, the epics raise their own questions about the gods and the ways in which there is a relationship partly based on merit and partly based on an irrational element that no merit can fully replace. These questions and their formulation left their mark on Vergil and Milton who were to follow. For they also were deeply concerned about the ways of the gods with men.

CHAPTER THREE: THE AENEID

In the previous two chapters, we have seen that men and gods interact very closely in the world of epic—at least in the world about which Homer sang. In Vergil's *Aeneid*, this element of epic is changed very much. The gods in Vergil's poem are far more distant from men. Their actions are more inscrutable. The prayers that men make appear to have very little effect on the gods. The gods themselves are presented as sometimes inimical toward men. Men are used by the gods to further the goals of the gods. But there is much less affection between mortals and immortals than there was present in Homer.¹⁰⁴

The language of gift-giving demonstrates this clearly to us. The gods still give important gifts to mortals. One of the most important gifts in the work is that of

¹⁰⁴ The text used in this study for the *Aeneid* is from Vergil, *Opera*, Ed. by R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford University Press, 1969). Two sources that study the malignancy and darkness of the theology found in this epic are Viktor Pöschl, *The Art of Vergil: Image and Symbol in the Aeneid*, Trans. by Gerda Seligson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), and W. R. Johnson, *Darkness Visible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976). The humanism of Vergil and the concern of this poem for human affairs, rather than for theology, is in the incomparable volume by Brooks Otis, *Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963). For a fine study of the few prayers found in this epic, see Gilbert Highet, *The Speeches in Vergil's Aeneid* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), especially pages 117-121. The essential work for studying the debt Vergil owes to Homer (and Apollonius of Rhodes) is Georg Nicolaus Knauer, *Die Aeneis und Homer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964). Knauer was regularly consulted for this dissertation in order to discuss the tight relationship between Homer and Vergil.

Aeneas' armor, given by Venus to her son in Book VIII (lines 608ff.). This important gift is a good place to introduce the subject of gifts in the *Aeneid*, because it is such an extraordinary scene in this work.

Venus gains this armor by pleading with her husband, Vulcan (VIII, 370-88), by caressing him, by flirtation. In harmony with Homeric epic, we see the pattern appear again: Venus secures a gift by giving her own gifts, or favors. Obviously, Vergil is able to write in the manner of the *Iliad*: a character gains something by giving—here, by the affection of a wife to a husband.

Moreover, Vergil can write in a manner reminiscent of the *Odyssey*—in the same Book. For the poem states: that Venus secured the armor specifically because it was for her son (VIII, 370); and that, when she gave Aeneas the armor, she "sought the embrace of her son" (VIII, 615), the son whom she fled in Book I (lines 402-409). Venus has one, obvious favorite. Athena had Odysseus. Venus has Aeneas.

That episode, about the divine armor, is striking for its dissimilarity to the rest of the poem. For the gods, in the *Aeneid*, are not affectionate beings, kind to each other and to men. Mortals have great concern for other mortals: Aeneas for his comrades in Book I; Italians for their fighting men who die in battle in the second half of

the work. Lesser gods have affection for mortals, as we shall see below in the instance of Juturna. But the highest gods are utterly beyond the realm of human affection.

The gods are quite aware of the gifts of men. They may even be threatened with lost worship and sacrifice. But they do not inspire devotion based on love or affection. The scene in which Venus embraces Aeneas is the outstanding exception. In fact, at that point the poem does not actually describe their embrace. It mentions that Venus "sought" to hold her son. The poem goes on to tell of Aeneas' fascination with the armor. We are left wondering whether or not he even hugged his mother.

Vergil's gods are dark, mysterious gods. The gifts that are exchanged in their universe mark them as such.

There were no punctuation marks in the original editions of the *Aeneid*. But there were enclitics. In the eleventh line of Vergil's *Aeneid*, the poet asks a question, "Are there really such forms of wrath among the heavenly beings (tantaene animis caelestibus irae)?" We know this is a question, not from a question mark placed on an ancient manuscript. We are sure this is a question because the first word ends with -ne, making these words interrogatory.

But these words become our question as we read these twelve books. The words that describe Juno are startling. She grieves; her divinity is wounded; she is unforgetting, and thus unforgiving; wrath, savage wrath boils deep inside. Her beauty has been slighted—quite an injury! She is envious of Jupiter's favorite Ganymede. She has an internal wound which will not heal. All these notions are found within the first thirty-six lines.

Her wrath will subside. We need only read roughly ten thousand lines until we reach the grim agreement between brother and sister, king and queen, husband and wife in the heavens. Jupiter and Juno agree that Turnus will die and Aeneas will triumph, but that the name Troy will not denominate the resulting people. And while they make their peace, Jupiter smiles at Juno. The last act in heaven is smiling reconciliation. The last act on earth will be Aeneas thrusting his sword into wounded Turnus to finish his slaughter.

Are there such forms of wrath among heavenly beings? Indeed, are there such forms of wrath among earthly beings? Vergil writes twelve books to answer this question, among others. The answer is a strong affirmative. That is the task of this book, to explore men under such forms of wrath. In a book that moves from such darkness into bright

moments, and then back into the darkness, what place could gifts have in teaching us how mortals and immortals live?

Throughout the poem there are hints that wrath may not be the first and the last word of the ways of the gods with men. There are scenes in which there appears a sort of working relationship, an understanding between gods and men. Men pray, making their claims on the gods, and are answered accordingly. There are scenes that remind us of Chryses praying to Apollo in the first book of the *Iliad*.

For instance, in Book X—a remarkable book, in which the only plenary council of the gods meets in the *Aeneid*—the Arcadian Pallas prays, in the thick of battle, to the Tiber River. When Halaesus is charging him, Pallas makes a deal.

'da nunc, Thybri pater, ferro, quod missile libro,
fortunam atque viam duri per pectus Halaesi.
haec arma exuviasque viri tua quercus habebit.'
(X, 421-3)

[Grant now, father Tiber, to this steel, which I throw
as a missile good luck and a passage through the
breast of hard Halaesus. These arms and the man's
spoils your oak will have.]

In battle, before a strike, a warrior calls for the aid of a god—this time a river god. Vergil indeed takes Homer as a model for his work. After Pallas prays, Vergil continues that the Tiber, as if agreeing to this deal, heard those words, audiit illa deus (X.424). The loser,

the unhappy (infelix) man, was the victim of the gods at the request of another mortal.

One must always remember to compare Vergil to Homer. In this scene, we recognize Homer's influence in Vergil's prayer-scenes.

The imperative "give" initiates prayers. Anchises asks for a sign in the midst of burning Troy (II, 691) and receives two! Jupiter's mother asks her son for a request, that the ships made from the trees she gave the Trojans would never come to harm. She says to Juppiter, da, nate, petenti, / quot tua cara parens domito te poscit Olympto (IX, 83-4). She gave (89) trees to the Trojans. She has a claim on Jupiter, as his mother. So she says, "Grant this to me."

Aeneas prays to Apollo and speaks to the Sibyl before he goes into the underworld (VI, 65-70). And he will also build a shrine for the Sibyl and her oracular pronouncements. (These will be the famous Sibylline books later kept on the Capitoline Hill.)

There is, in many instances, a "demand balance of spiritual solvency." Pallas promises the Tiber god spoils from the fight if he helps. The god hears and gives his aid.

But Pallas' triumph is short-lived. For, in a passage clearly parallel to the *Iliad*, there comes the death of Pallas and the sorrow of Hercules. This episode parallels the death of Sarpedon in *Iliad* XVI while an anxious father (Zeus!) watches. After the former prayer the river Tiber hears Pallas' request, audiit illa deus. After the latter prayer the demi-god (Hercules) hears, Audiit Alcides (X, 464), but it does Pallas no good.

This is Vergil's description of Pallas' prayer and the impotent ear of Hercules:

'Per patris hospitium et mensas, quas advena adisti,
te precor, Alcide, coeptis ingentibus adsis.
Cernat semineci sibi me rapere arma cruenta
victoremque ferant morientia lumina Turni.'
Audiit Alcides iuvenem magnumque sub imo
corde premit gemitum lacrimasque effundit inanis.
Tum Genitor natum dictis adfatur amicis:
'Stat sua cuique dies, breve et inreparabile tempus
omnibus est vitae: sed famam extendere factis,
hoc virtutis opus. Troiae sub moenibus altis
tot nati cecidere deum; quin occidit una
Sarpedon, mea progenies. Etiam sua Turnum
fata vocant, metasque dati pervenit ad aevi.'
Sic ait atque oculos Rutulorum reicit arvis.
(X, 460-473)

["By your guest-friendship with my father when you came as a stranger to him, I pray you, Hercules, to support my great intent. Let Turnus, at point of death, see me wrest his blood-stained arms from him, and let his dying eyes endure the sight of his conqueror." Hercules heard the young man's prayer. Deep in his heart he repressed a heavy sigh; and his tears streamed helplessly. Then the Father spoke to his son in kindly words: "For each man his day stands fixed. For all mankind the days of life are few, and not to be restored. But to prolong fame by deeds,

that is valour's task. Under Troy's high ramparts fell all those many sons of gods; yes, and with them fell my own son, Sarpedon. Turnus also has his doom calling him; he too has reached the goal of his allotted years." So he spoke and then turned his eyes away from the farmlands of the Rutulians.]

In fact, Turnus will see his conqueror and know that his arms will be taken away on account of Pallas. This is the close of the epic, where Aeneas wavers momentarily over the wounded Turnus, but then sees Pallas' spoils on the man and so completes the slaughter. This prayer, in Book X is heard—but it is not answered as the suppliant desires.

The gods, even the lesser gods like the Tiber river and the now-divine Hercules are attentive to prayers. Sometimes they answer, so it appears, because the mortal deserves what he requests. Sometimes the gods, even if they are willing, cannot help.

There is also, in this work, an acknowledgement that the gods hear truly pious devotees, are able to help, but will not help. This pattern is foreshadowed (masterfully!) in Book I. When Aeneas reaches Carthage, he sees depicted on a mural in Juno's temple the Trojan War, in which he had played a prominent part. The "demand balance" structure is hinted at in one scene, in which Pallas Minerva turns her eyes away, toward the ground, as the women of Troy, truly devoted to her, pray for success for Troy. Minerva hears,

is able to help, but will not. Her hatred toward Troy is complete.

Book I of the *Aeneid* picks up the "demand balance" theme from Homer and fulfills it. Men should be devout and pray to the gods and give them gifts. It is up to the gods, however, to decide whether or not to answer a request and in what manner. The gods are in conflict. There are voices competing for their ears and they have their own private reasons for not taking into account the gifts of men.

When writing about the *Iliad* and the reason, perhaps, that Homer does not tell us a complete account of the Judgment of Paris, Fenik states:

At the beginning of Book Δ the tale of Paris' judgment is...suppressed in order to transform a divine fury that would be petty and ludicrous (*spretae iniuria formae*) into something that is measureless, incomprehensible, and for that reason utterly terrifying and laden with a sense of implacable destiny.¹⁰⁵

This is not a mockery of Vergil, as it might at first seem. For Fenik surely knows by heart that the Juno described in Book I of the *Aeneid* with those very words had an array of causae rolling around in her troubled spirit and mind:

manet alta mente repostum
iudicium Paridis spretaeque iniuria formae
et genus invisum et rapti Ganymedis honores:

¹⁰⁵ Fenik, 219-20.

his accensa super iactatos aequore toto
Troas, reliquias Danaum atque immitis Achilli...
(I, 26-30)

[There remained stored away deep in her mind the judgment of Paris and her scorned beauty and the hated race and the honors of Ganymede who was seized; enraged by these things (she takes revenge) upon the Trojans, tossed about, the remnant left by the Greeks and the hard Achilles...]

Homer and Vergil simply display what is terrible and incomprehensible in different ways. However, no matter how different their presentations of Juno may be, Juno is as consistently concerned about gifts and their reception as any Greek god or goddess.

Juno knows of demand balances. She knows that no one will go to her altars if Aeneas escapes—quite a packed statement. If Aeneas stays in Carthage, what will happen to Juno's temple? If he makes it to Italy, what then? Dido is building Juno's massive temple. There is no lack of devotion there. Dido and Carthage are naturally important to Juno.

Gods and men are bound in all epics to the demand balances. This is the same reason Juno has for her hatred of the Trojans. She fears for her own possession and her own honor. She sees the Trojans on the sea and her wrath churns:

Vix e conspectu Siculae telluris in altum
vela dabant laeti, et spumas salis aere ruebant,

cum Iuno, aeternum servans sub pectore volnus,
 haec secum: 'Mene incepto desistere victam,
 nec posse Italia Teucrorum avertere regem?
 Quippe vetor fatis. Pallasne exurere classem
 Argivom atque ipsos potuit submergere ponto,
 unius ob noxam et furias Aiacis Oilei?
 Ipsa, Iovis rapidum iaculata e nubibus ignem,
 disiecitque rates evertitque aequora ventis,
 illum expirantem transfixo pectore flammam
 turbine corripuit scopuloque infixit acuto.
 Ast ego, quae divom incedo regina, Iovisque
 et soror et coniunx, una cum gente tot annos
 bella gero! Et quisquam numen Iunonis adoret
 praeterea, aut simplex aris imponet honorem?'
 (I, 34-49)

[The Trojans had put out to sea from Sicily. They were just out of sight of land, their bronze oars churning the water to foam, happily hoisting sail, when Juno, always nursing the deep wound in her heart, spoke to herself: "I am vanquished? I must abandon the fight? I lack the strength even to keep Troy's prince from making it to Italy? Do the Fates truly forbid me? They did not stop Minerva from gutting the Greek fleet with fire because one man, Ajax, all alone, went crazy and sinned. She borrowed the devouring fire of Jupiter and threw it from the clouds. She smashed the ships and tore up the ocean with the winds. Ajax, pierced through with the lightning, was breathing his last and she caught him up in a tornado and impaled him on a rock. Yet I, Queen of the gods, sister and wife of Jove—I have been making war for all these years on one clan. Will anyone ever again pay reverence to the majesty of Juno? Will anyone lay his offering on her altar in prayer?]

Juno knows how the demand balance works. She has power and majesty and a great position. But it is not enough. She expects that she will lose something she possesses if she cannot finish what she started with the Trojans. If people do not fear her wrath they will not worship her. Besides, she says to herself, she deserves at

least as much as Minerva, of whom she is terribly jealous!
She has a better position, more powers to call up.

By now any student of epic knows exactly what Juno will do.¹⁰⁶ She will conform to the pattern of gift giving in epics. She will work with demand balances. She goes to Aeolus, now transformed from the civilized king in the *Odyssey*. She finds him in his cave. He has power over the winds. Why? Because Jupiter gave him this power:

Sed pater omnipotens speluncis abdidit atris,
hoc metuens, molemque et montis insuper altos
imposuit, regemque dedit, qui foedere certo
et premere et laxas sciret dare iussus habenas.
(I, 60-3)

[But fearing (that the winds would sweep all creation away) the Father Almighty banished the winds to a dark cavern and piled rocks over them and gave them a king, who, under a sure charter, would know how to hold them and to give them free rein when ordered.]

Jupiter gave the power to Aeolus and gave the winds to Aeolus as a king. We see, though, that Juno's concern for her majesty evaporates when she pursues her ends. Vergil continues:

Ad quem tum Iuno supplex his vocibus usa est:
'Aeole, namque tibi divom pater atque hominum rex
et mulcere dedit fluctus et tollere vento...
(I, 64-6)

[To this one Juno now made her appeal as a suppliant. "Aeolus, to you the father of all gods and men has given authority to rouse and put down the waves with the wind."]

¹⁰⁶ Compare the discussion on page 52ff. above, about Hera's suborning of Hypnos in *Iliad* XIV.

It is a good thing to remind everyone why he has power. Having done this, she makes a deal with Aeolus. She offers and Aeolus accepts, pretending that he would grant her request only because of her majesty. We know this is not true. Juno says:

Sunt mihi bis septem praestanti corpore nymphae,
quarum quae forma pulcherrima Deiopea,
conubio iungam stabili propriamque dicabo,
omnis ut tecum meritis pro talibus annos
exigat, et pulchra faciat te prole parentem.'
(I, 71-75)

["I have fourteen sea nymphs of great beauty. Deiopea is loveliest of all of them. I will join her to you in a lawful marriage as a constant wife and because you deserve it she will live with you for all time and make you the father of a beautiful progeny."]

Aeolus, in his acceptance, shows deference. He may need it later.

Aeolus haec contra: 'Tuus, O regina, quid optes
explorare labor; mihi iussa capessere fas est.
Tu mihi, quodcumque hoc regni, tu sceptrum Iovemque
concilias, tu das epulis accumbere divom,
nimborumque facis tempestatumque potentem.'
(I, 76-80)

[Replying, Aeolus spoke this way: "O Queen, your only task is to decide what your wish is to be. My only duty is to obey you promptly. I owe you all my authority, for you won Jupiter's favor for me. You give me my place at the feasts of the gods. You have produced my power over clouds and storms."]

The two have made a deal. Thetis, in the *Iliad*, makes a withdrawal from her account with Zeus. She helped him once. So she believes that Zeus will help her because of her previous help to him. Here, Juno does not mention her

aid to Aeolus. But he cannot forget it. Vergil has worked through this epic the traditional understanding of the importance of gifts.¹⁰⁷

Not even Jupiter can escape the epic need of the gods for gifts. There is one episode, which Vergil treats at great length, that draws Jupiter into the "demand balance" scheme. Vergil wrote an epic much shorter than either of Homer's. His scenes, though, are often quite lengthy. I interpret this as a sign to us of their importance.¹⁰⁸

A unique character enters the epic in Book IV. A North African king, Iarbas, who proposed to Dido but was rejected, knows about the demand balance we have seen in the Greek epics. We must ask ourselves if we would ever pray to God in this manner. What sort of prayer is this?

Protinus ad regem cursus detorquet Iarban,
incenditque animum dictis atque aggerat iras.
Hic Hammone satus, rapta Garamantide Nympha,
templa Iovi centum latis immania regnis,
centum aras posuit, vigilemque sacraverat ignem,
excubias divom aeternas, pecudumque cruore

¹⁰⁷ Neptune will be very angry at Aeolus for his actions and will remind the winds:

Maturate fugam, regique haec dicite vestro:
non illi imperium pelagi saevumque tridentem,
sed mihi sorte datum. (I, 137-9)

["Go quickly and tell your king these words: not to you but to me has been given the rule of the sea and the severe trident." Juno and Aeolus momentarily forgot what had been given to whom.]

¹⁰⁸ As with all the quotations from Vergil, the abundance of lines quoted is necessary. There is much about Vergil that is modeled on rhetorical abilities of characters. This is, however, beyond the scope of this study.

pingue solum et variis florentia limina sertis.
 Isque amens animi et rumore accensus amaro
 dicitur ante aras media inter numina divom
 multa Iovem manibus supplex orasse supinis:
 'Iuppiter omnipotens, cui nunc Maurusia pictis
 gens epulata toris Lenaeum libat honorem,
 aspicias haec, an te, genitor, cum fulmina torques,
 nequiquam horremus, caecique in nubibus ignes
 terrificant animos et inania murmura miscent?
 Femina, quae nostris errans in finibus urbem
 exiguum pretio posuit, cui litus arandum
 cuique loci leges dedimus, conubia nostra
 reppulit, ac dominum Aenean in regna recepit.
 Et nunc ille Paris cum semiviro comitatu,
 Maeonia mentum mitra crinemque madentem
 subnexus, rapto potitur: nos munera templis
 quippe tuis ferimus, famamque fovemus inanem.'
 Talibus orantem dictis arasque tenentem
 audiit omnipotens, oculosque ad moenia torsit
 regia et oblitos famae melioris amantes.
 Tum sic Mercurium adloquitur ac talia mandat:
 'Vade age, nate, voca Zephyros et labere pennis,
 Dardaniumque ducem, Tyria Karthagine qui nunc
 exspectat, fatisque datas non respicit urbes,
 adloquere, et celeris defer mea dicta per auras.
 Non illum nobis genetrix pulcherrima talem
 promisit, Graiumque ideo bis vindicat armis;
 sed fore, qui gravidam imperiis belloque frementem
 Italiam regeret, genus alto a sanguine Teucris
 proderet, ac totum sub leges mitteret orbem.
 Si nulla accendit tantarum gloria rerum,
 nec super ipse sua molitur laude laborem,
 Ascanione pater Romanas invidet arces?
 Quid struit, aut qua spe inimica in gente moratur,
 nec prolem Ausoniam et Lavinia respicit arva?
 Naviget: haec summa est; hic nostri nuntius esto.'
 (IV, 196-237)

[Rumor next turned her quick steps toward King Iarbas
 and spoke to him. She set his thoughts on fire and
 fired his fury. Jupiter Ammon had ravished an African
 nymph and Iarbas was his son by her. To this Jupiter
 he had built a hundred vast temples and a hundred
 altars around his wide kingdom. He consecrated inside
 of them temple fires and relays of priests to keep
 vigil for the gods. The courts always reeked with
 blood of sacrifice and the gates were always decked
 with flowers of many colors. Iarbas, it is said, very

angry at what he now heard and crazy in his helplessness stood before an altar with the divine images around him, raised his hands in prayer and prayed long prayers to Jupiter. "O Jupiter Almighty, to whom now the North Africans pour libations when they banquet on couches richly wrought—do you see what is happening? Or is our dread of you in vain when you cast your twirling thunder-bolt? Are those fires that affrighted us in the clouds blind? Is there no meaning behind their grumbling and growling? For a woman, a refugee, who has built a small city in my land, only renting a strip to cultivate, has rejected my marriage proposal. And now she has accepted lord Aeneas into her kingdom. So now this second Paris, with his Phrygian bonnet from his chin to his hair, attended by men who are half-women, is to become the owner of what he has stolen. Meanwhile I am here bringing my offering to temples which I have understood to be yours, although that belief seems to be very mistaken."

Such were the words of his prayer. As he prayed he touched the altar. The Almighty One heard and turned his eyes on the city of the queen and on those lovers who had forgotten the nobler fame. He then spoke to Mercury and gave him this commission: "Go on, son of mine; go on your way! Call the west wind to help you. Glide on your wings! Speak to the Dardan prince now lingering in the Tyrian Carthage with no thought for the cities of his destiny. Go swiftly through the air and take my words to him. He was not rescued from the Greeks twice by his beautiful mother-goddess for this end. This is not the man she led us to think he would be. He was to guide an Italy to be a breeding place for leaders, noisy with war. He was to transmit a line of Teucer's blood and subject the world to the rule of law. Even if the glory of this great destiny cannot kindle his fire, will he withhold the might of Rome from Ascanius his son? What does he intend? What can he gain by lingering among these people, truly his foes? Does he have no care for his own descendants, the Italians to come, for the lands destined to bear Lavinia's name? He must sail. That is what I have to say. That is my message to him."]

I have quoted the entire message and divine reaction for good reason. Two matters of content are very important: the bold prayer and the frantic response of Jupiter. But I must first mention a matter of form. Vergil has used over forty lines for one prayer and one response. There are only 705 lines in the great Book IV in which to present Dido and Aeneas in their romance, their fighting, Aeneas' departure and Dido's suicide. Yet forty lines are reserved for the prayer of a man who will not be mentioned again after this Book.

We might say that Iarbas and Jupiter know their Homer. They know about gifts and reciprocity. They know that all gifts come with obligations. They both know about the "demand balance."

That is the source of Iarbas' boldness in prayer. He has deposited into Jupiter's account: a hundred temples with a hundred altars; relays of priest; flowers on the doors, always fresh. Iarbas threatens Jupiter. Jupiter takes the threat seriously.

He regains some composure though. For he turns the "demand balance" problem toward Aeneas. The gods have planned great things for the Trojan refugees, Jupiter says in effect, but look how poorly Aeneas is behaving. This is no surprise to readers of Homer. The gods find the root

of the problems on earth where gods always find it: with mortals.

The king of the gods cannot be moved by force of the gods. The gifts of men, though, are very powerful. Without men to honor the gods, what happens to the gods? This critique of a religion in which gods need sacrifices is worthy of Milton. Vergil wants us to wonder if this is how gods should act. He makes them act this way in his work. This is not surprising, since Vergil models his work so closely on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. So far, in this study, we have found a fairly consistent pattern of behavior for gods in epics. Gods and men are bound in epic works—at least in Homer and Vergil—to the pattern of demand balances.

Mortals also know about the gods and their gifts. Aeneas, very much like Odysseus, continually recognizes the gods. When they have been shipwrecked on the African coast, he cheers his companions with these words:

'O socii - neque enim ignari sumus ante malorum -
O passi graviora, dabit deus his quoque finem.
(I, 198-199)

["O comrades—we are not ignorant of previous trouble—O sufferers of greater woes, god will grant an end to these evils too...."]

The poet will show us that Aeneas is correct in his views. Aeneas is not only technically truthful, since

Jupiter will indeed bring an end to the wanderings of the Trojans. Aeneas is also rightly, properly, speaking in harmony with the theology of Homeric epic.

In line 199, he says that a god will give an "end" to these things as well. Then, with great artistry, Vergil changes scenes in the next twenty-five lines. It is a change of scene from earth to heaven. In this transition, the poet wants us to notice the repetition of Aeneas' words when he writes, at the point of transition, Et iam finis erat ["and that was that!" (I, 223)]. The next words tell us about Jupiter in heaven. These four Latin words are somewhat difficult to translate into smooth English.

The commentators like to "explain" these words. They are, says Austin, a

transition-formula...referring not so much to the particular scene of mourning as to the whole episode from 157 onwards: one chapter of the Trojans' affairs is over, a new development is to begin at 305; and at this turn of events important matters are being settled by the gods.¹⁰⁹

This is true. But Vergil uses the word finis to take us to Jupiter, the same word which Aeneas said would come. Jupiter will be the source of the end of their travels and suffering; another gift from the gods. According to the structure of the first book, there is great hope here that

¹⁰⁹ R. G. Austin, Editor of *P. Vergili Maronis: Aeneidos Liber Primus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 87.

mortals are somehow 'tuned in' to the ways of the gods with men. Aeneas has some sort of confidence that the woes they just suffered will have their finis.

This is all the more noteworthy because of what Aeneas does not do. When the storms come upon the fleet, the first thing Aeneas does is not to pray, to call upon the gods for help. Instead, he puts his palms up to the skies—the posture of prayer—and calls upon the memory of those who had died at Troy. What do the gods owe him? The fates have something to do with him. He is fato profugus, driven into exile by Fate. But how can Aeneas be sure that the gods are for him?

He is not sure. What he knows is that he will get to Italy, to found a new city. We will not learn this until Books II and III. Aeneas already knows this.

But more important for our understanding of theodicy in the *Aeneid* is what this means for a mortal with the gods. For this time, at least, Aeneas' understanding coincides with that of the gods and also with that of Virgil. It is Virgil's word that connects these passages—finem to finis. These words will subsequently be connected to the Latin word for "give," do, when Jupiter says "I have given [the Romans] empire without end, sine fine! (I, 279)."

Venus asks Jupiter about his giving. She assumes that he will give. She asks, Quem das finem, rex magne, laborum What end, great king, will you give to these labors? (I, 241). Jupiter responds:

His ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono;
imperium sine fine dedi. (I, 278-9)

[To these [Romans] I place no end of time or space; I give them imperium without bound.]

The two words do and pono are related closely here.

Jupiter gives and lays down laws and ways.

Unless we are prepared to speak of Vergil 'nodding off' at this point, we must conclude that he has not simply used the word "end" loosely. Vergil is setting us up for what is to come. When this epic begins, we are presented with a mortal hero who is "on the same page" as the gods. Aeneas can tell his worn-out companions that these woes will end. Then we hear the word "end," and Jupiter is moved by Venus to make an end of their woes.

Moreover, this is not diminished by noticing that Aeneas is speaking words which he, inside, doubts:

Talia voce refert curisque ingentibus aeger
spem uultu simulat, premit altum corde dolorem.
(I, 209-210)

[Such words he brings from his voice, but sick with great cares he feigns hope on his face, while he presses down deep pain in his heart.]

What finally matters, in the ways of the gods with men, is not the inner feeling of this man or that. The promise of the gods is what holds. This insight from Vergil strengthens the notion that Aeneas knows well the ways of the gods with men. Though he has pain inside, grieving pain, his face shows hope and his words refer to the gods and their promises.

As I stated earlier, we will learn in Books II and III how Aeneas came to such knowledge. His plans to settle in Thrace or Crete fail, while the words and portents of the gods urge him on, along with visions and ghosts.

Finally, though he must pass through one last "distraction," that of Dido, utilized by Juno, Aeneas will get back to the obedience of the gods. Then, when he is almost in Italy, and the frenzied ladies burn some of the ships out of disgust felt towards yet one more journey, an old comrade crystallizes the theology of this epic.

Some of the men and women are unwilling to make even one more sailing, though Italy is the next stop. One last time Aeneas turns matters over inside himself, wondering if he should go on himself.

At pater Aeneas, casu concussus acerbo,
nunc huc ingentes, nunc illuc pectore curas
mutabat versans, Siculisne resideret arvis,
oblitus fatorum, Italasne capesseret oras.

(V, 700-703)

[But father Aeneas, blasted again by bitter chance,
was turning over huge cares in his heart, now here,
now there: should he settle in Sicilian lands
forgetful of the fates, or head for the shores of
Italy?]

Aeneas is not so sure of the gods as Odysseus had been.

At this point Nautes addresses Aeneas. He tells him that their fortune will be completed. In fact, it must come to pass. But that does not mean that men should not take precautions. So those who cannot go any further stay behind while Aeneas goes on.

This is a familiar pattern for epic characters. The gods have given promises and help. Men have been blessed and cursed by the heavenly powers. They must go on; but they can go on by way of compromise.

The divinities themselves must go on with their business. It is not surprising that they go on in the manner of Homer's gods.

Harrison writes that the divine council which Jupiter calls at the start of Book X

is the only divine assembly in the *Aeneid*, a contrast with the five of the *Iliad* (the *Odyssey* has two); in the structure of Vergil's 'Iliadic' plot it recalls the council of *Iliad* 20 in occurring at the beginning of a book which marks the return to battle of the greatest hero.¹¹⁰

Harrison writes also that

¹¹⁰ S. J. Harrison, *Vergil: Aeneid 10* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 57.

Vergil's council belongs firmly to the divine machinery of epic: Jupiter's indignation at Juno's attempt to thwart his plans matches that of Zeus in the council of *Iliad* 4 (30-3), and his decision is couched in the words of Zeus from that same scene (104=*Il.* 4. 39).¹¹¹

For all of Juno's passion from Book I and her complaining to Jupiter in Book X, the resolution seems to come easily, at least for the gods. They will continue while the mortals come to terrible ends.

Juno and Venus have had their say. It is clear that they, and the other gods, will not stay out of the conflict. Thus, Jupiter ends this council with these words.

'accipite ergo animis atque haec mea figite dicta.
Quandoquidem Ausonios coniungi foedere Teucris
haud licitum, nec vestra capit discordia finem:
quae cuique est fortuna hodie, quam quisque secat
spem,
Tros Rutulusne fuat nullo discrimine habebo.
Seu fatis Italum castra obsidione tenentur
sive errore malo Troiae monitisque sinistris.
Nec Rutulos solvo: sua cuique exorsa laborem
fortunamque ferent. Rex Iuppiter omnibus idem.
Fata viam invenient.' Stygii per flumina fratris,
per pice torrentis atraque voragine ripas
adnuat et totum nutu tremefecit Olympum.
Hic finis fandi. Solio tum Iuppiter aureo
surgit, caelicolae medium quem ad limina ducunt.
(X, 105-117)

["Receive, therefore, these words and implant them in your hearts. Since the Ausonians have not been able to make a pact with the Trojans, and since your discord finds no end, whatever fortune belongs to each man today, and what hope each one has, I will make no distinction between Trojan or Rutulian. Whether it is

¹¹¹ Harrison (1991), 57.

by the fates of the Italians that the camp is held in siege, or by the sinister prophecy and the cursed wandering of Troy. Nor do I absolve the Rutulians. To each man shall his own free actions bring both his suffering and his good fortune. King Jupiter is the same to all. The fates will find their way." And Jupiter nodded, ratifying his oath by the rivers of his own Stygian Brother and by their banks of scorching pitch with the black gulf between; and with his nod he set all Olympus quaking. This was the end of the speaking. Jupiter arose then from his throne of gold, and the Heaven-Dwellers gathered about him and escorted him to the threshold.]

There are three important elements in this final speech of the council. First, Jupiter declares that each man will receive what he is due because of his own actions. The suffering of a man is due to the man by his own fault.

Second, Jupiter does not change, though the fortune of an individual man may change. Here, Jupiter retreats into the inscrutable. Jupiter is so troubled that he must call a council. He must hear the complaints of adversarial gods. And yet, somehow, he is still "above it all." King Jupiter is the same to all. Then, hand-in-hand, comes the next statement: the fates will find their way. Jupiter identifies himself with the fates. From man's viewpoint, life is short and uncertain, full of doubts. From where Jupiter sits, everything will work out just as he wants it to.

Third, even the gods learn obedience. They may still take part in the struggles. Juno certainly does. But when

Jupiter ends a conference, the conference is over. Heaven and earth and even the Styx recognize his authority. When Jupiter has had his say, there is nothing more to say. There is truly a finis fandi at this point.

Brooks Otis calls the other gods, Venus and Juno, "sub-fates."¹¹² They argue before King Jupiter. The King "seems to abdicate." But this is truly an illusion. For the fates will work out their business by means of the actions of the gods, sub-fates, and the mortals. They all remain under fate.

In this council, Jupiter seems to give way. He will allow the gods to interfere in the battle between the Rutulians and the Trojans. But what about his promises to Venus in Book I? What about Fate? We are accustomed, by now, to know that in an epic, the highest god will always get what he wants. This happens even when he seems to be giving way, letting others win. The highest god, in epic, is always a facilitator. He must get things done. We may call it compromising. The epic implies that it is the quality of the Almighty. All gifts are somehow connected to the highest god.

The compromise that Nautes proposed to Aeneas, which he accepted, teaches us part of Vergil's point in the ways

¹¹² Otis, 353.

of men with the gods in his epic. The gods are involved in the activities of men; but men must make choices and act. Gods may give gifts, prophecies and signs. But men must do the best they can. Consequently, some of the Trojans are left in Sicily. But this does not settle Aeneas' troubled thoughts.

DiCesare repeats the view of the human condition which readers of Homer have learned when he writes about Jupiter's promises to Venus and the subsequent actions of Aeneas and the other mortals. He writes:

The details of prophecy or patriotism in the poem must not be over-stressed. Jupiter prophesies to Venus, but Aeneas has the immediate reality of lost ships, scattered men, and a strange land; Anchises passes Roman heroes, famous and infamous, in review, but Aeneas has the immediate reality that Elysium is for him a momentary respite before the war in Italy; Venus and her spouse delight on a golden bed and in the brittle gold of Roman history, but Aeneas has the immediate reality of a war whose scope is getting out of hand. What nexus is there between Aeneas and these other things?¹¹³

This critic has already answered his own question earlier in his work when he wrote:

In a general way, it may be said that this conflict goes beyond armies and heroes. Juno's power is at stake, and so is the Saturnian heritage and the world order in which power controls justice and morality, the order of the chthonic gods brilliantly dramatized by Aeschylus in the *Oresteia*. Aeneas represents the threat that mankind will transcend these limited

¹¹³ Mario A. Di Cesare, *The Altar and the City: A Reading of Vergil's Aeneid* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 173.

cycles (which are expressions of the gods' power and of their triflings) and create a new world of justice and virtue.¹¹⁴

Is this going too far? I believe so. There are those who like to make a sharp distinction between the gods of order, typified by Jupiter, versus the gods of force and disorder, typified by raging Juno.¹¹⁵ Instead, Vergil shows us how men are trapped in the demand balance structure of the gods and cannot get out.

According to Slavitt, "...deep gloom is a part of the *Aeneid*. I suggest that the fundamental drama of the poem is the tension between private pessimism and public optimism."¹¹⁶ This is Aeneas in Book I, in his speech before his men. But there is something about Aeneas which prompts this public optimism. The revelations about and from the gods are what give Aeneas that optimism. And in these revelations we find the problem of theodicy in the *Aeneid*. For is this any place to find optimism?

Bailey reminds us that

The struggle on earth has its counterpart in heaven, for it is the outcome of the divine will. This is perhaps too definite a theology and it is not to be supposed that the poet was at all times conscious of the reconciliation of the many diverse elements he uses, derived from different sources; he is here as

¹¹⁴ Di Cesare, 126.

¹¹⁵ David R. Slavitt, *Virgil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 87ff.

¹¹⁶ Slavitt, 125.

always an eclectic. But he is feeling towards a monotheism in which Iuppiter is supreme and, like the Stoic world-god, expresses his will in the decrees of fate. It is perhaps in this conception that we meet Virgil's highest and deepest religious conviction.¹¹⁷

Bailey discusses the ways in which the word fate should be understood in the *Aeneid* as it relates to different realms: to individual men, to the world and to the gods.

Bailey interprets the gods as closely related to the fates, under Jupiter, as if they were, in their own ways, Fates. He writes again:

...Venus and Iuno...are not 'divine persons' in the sense of the Homeric gods; they have not in the poem any personal history or interest apart from the fate of the mortal heroes and heroines with whom they are concerned; they do not, like Homeric gods, intervene arbitrarily, as the whim seizes them, to interpose their will. Both have a perfectly consistent purpose, which they pursue unswervingly throughout, and indeed they exist only for the carrying out of that purpose. Their speeches in the councils of the gods are a rhetorical statement of the case for and against Aeneas and his men, and their actions are a translation of those arguments and pleadings into deeds.¹¹⁸

What is the conclusion to the ways of gods and men in the *Aeneid*? It is this: Vergil knows that men are in a relationship of gift giving, a demand balance structure with the gods. He learned this from Homer. However, man

¹¹⁷ Cyril Bailey, *Religion in Virgil* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), 233. Francis Cairns, *Virgil's Augustan Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 25ff.

¹¹⁸ Bailey, 223.

has a little manoeuvring room inside this structure. He must make the best of it that he can. For he is trapped. Vergil too was trapped into presenting this structure. He does it with great artistry, all the way to the end. At the end of the work, Jupiter and Juno finally are reconciled—at least it seems that they are reconciled.

This is another passage that must be quoted at great length. Vergil provides examples of rhetoric which were unknown to Homer. He has fewer, but longer, speeches in his work.

Jupiter speaks to his sister and wife:

'Quae iam finis erit, coniunx? Quid denique restat?
Indigetem Aenean scis ipsa et scire fateris
deberi caelo fatisque ad sidera tolli.
Quid struis, aut qua spe gelidis in nubibus haeres?
Mortalin decuit violari vulnere divom,
aut ensem (quid enim sine te Iuturna valeret?)
ereptum reddi Turno et vim crescere victis?
Desine iam tandem precibusque inflectere nostris,
[ni te tantus edit tacitam dolor et mihi curae
saepe tuo dulci tristes ex ore recursent,]
ventum ad supremum est. Terris agitare vel undis
Troianos potuisti, infandum adcendere bellum,
deformare domum et luctu miscere hymenaeos:
ulterius temptare veto.' Sic Iuppiter orsus;
sic dea submisso contra Saturnia voltu:
'Ista quidem quia nota mihi tua, magne, voluntas,
Iuppiter, et Turnum et terras invita reliqui;
nec tu me aerea solam nunc sede videres
digna indigna pati, sed flammis cincta sub ipsa
starem acie traheremque inimica in proelia Teucros.
Iuturnam misero, fateor, succurrere fratri
suasi et pro vita maiora audere probavi,
non ut tela tamen, non ut contenderet arcum:
adiuro Stygii caput implacabile fontis,
una superstitio superis quae reddita divis.
Et nunc cedo equidem pugnasque exosa relinquo.

Illud te, nulla fati quod lege tenetur,
 pro Latio obtestor, pro maiestate tuorum:
 cum iam conubis pacem felicibus, esto,
 component, cum iam leges et foedera iungent,
 ne vetus indigenas nomen mutare Latinos
 neu Troas fieri iubeas Teucrosque vocari
 aut vocem mutare viros aut vertere vestem.
 Sit Latium, sint Albani per saecula reges,
 sit Romana potens Italia virtute propago:
 occidit, occideritque sinas cum nomine Troia.'
 Olli subridens hominum rerumque repertor
 'Es germana Iovis Saturnique altera proles:
 irarum tantos volvis sub pectore fluctus.
 Verum age et inceptum frustra submitte furorem
 do quod vis, et me victusque volensque remitto.
 Sermonem Ausonii patrium moresque tenebunt,
 utque est nomen erit; commixti corpore tantum
 subsident Teucri. Morem ritusque sacrorum
 adiciam faciamque omnis uno ore Latinos.
 Hinc genus Ausonio mixtum quod sanguine surget,
 supra homines, supra ire deos pietate videbis,
 nec gens ulla tuos aequae celebrabit honores.'
 Adnuit his Iuno et mentem laetata retorsit.
 Interea excedit caelo nubemque relinquit.
 (XII, 793-842)

[Meanwhile the almighty king of Olympus spoke to Juno, while she was gazing at the fight from a glowing cloud. "What will now be the end, my queen? What is still left for you to do at this time? You know yourself—you admit it!—that it is right for Aeneas to be raised to heaven as a god of Italy and that Destiny has allotted him an exalted place among the stars. Therefore what is your purpose? What do you hope to gain by lingering among the cold clouds? Was it right for a deity to be enraged by a wound from a mortal? Was it right that Turnus should have his sword returned to him? Juturna could not have done it without your help. Now the conquered warrior has another chance. At last, now, desist. Let my request move you. Do not let this resentment devour you. Do not let opposition come from your sweet mouth. This is the time for a final decision. You had enough power to drive the Trojans over land and sea in torment, to kindle terrible war, to bring shame on a home and to infect a wedding with mourning. I forbid any more."

So Jupiter spoke. With submissive face the daughter of Saturn replied, "Yes, supreme Jupiter. Because I know your desire I have forsaken Turnus against my own will and have left Earth. Otherwise you would not see me here, enduring all these outrages. Instead, on fire, I would be standing at the battle dragging the Trojans to fight. I persuaded Juturna to help her helpless brother; I admit it. And I approved her saving his life. But I never intended that she draw her bow and let arrows fly. I swear by the Styx, the only sanction the gods hold in awe. Now I withdraw and leave the battle; for I hate it. But one request, not covered by Fate, I ask of you for Latium's sake and the splendor of your people. Let it be. Let them have peace and seal it with a hopeful marriage. Let them bind themselves with a treaty. But do not command that the Latins, in their own land, be called Teucrians. Do not command that they speak a different language or wear different clothes. Let there still be a Latium and Alban kings through the years. Let the Roman people draw its power from Italian virility. Troy has fallen. Let her stay fallen with her name."

Smiling at her the Creator of the world and men answered: "You are truly Jupiter's sister, Saturn's child. Such strength in your anger do you roll in your heart. But now, let this violence go, to which you never should have given in. What you want, I give. You win; and I want it to be so. I waive my own desires. The ancient Italian people will retain the speech of the ancestors and their way of life. Their name shall stay the same. The Trojans will blend into the Italians. I will impose customs and sacrifices. I will make all the Latins of one language. From the union you will see a race of mixed Italians, exceeding in religious obeisance all other men, and even the gods. Nor shall any nation worship you as they will."

To this Juno nodded. Happy now, she changed her will. At that moment she left the cloud and the sky.]

Here we find the word "end" again. The gods will conclude the events on earth. How is it done? Jupiter gives way, gives in. He gives to Juno what she wants. But does Jupiter get what he wants? Yes. Again, as at the end

of the *Iliad*, there is a "happy ending" for the gods. They all give to each other. Plenty of gifts are exchanged. However, Vergil has more to write. The mortals will end in sadness. Aeneas will kill Turnus and the epic will end. The gods are happy and the mortals begin their mourning. You cannot be more Homeric. Even Milton will follow this pattern.

Writing about the end of the work, in which Juno is reconciled to the eventual triumph of Aeneas and the death of Turnus, Brooks Otis finds a neat consistency at least in the workings of men with the gods. He writes that "Acceptance or rejection of fate is free but it is precisely through this freedom that fate works."¹¹⁹

Then what of the gods and their persons? Otis continues: The divine machinery of the Iliadic *Aeneid* is a most impressive attempt to depict in symbolic terms the inextricable union of free will and predestination. We see the individual and social and demonic aspects of violence brought face to face with *pietas* and humanity, and we see that Fate is finally on the moral side because the moral forces have in fact already put themselves on the side of Fate.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Otis, 319.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

This summary is tidy, but there is just one loose end to tie up. What then of Turnus? Why does he end up in destruction? Pallas died because it was his fated day. All men have their appointed day. But for Otis, what causes Turnus to face Aeneas with "no chance" of success? Fate: "but he need never have brought himself to this pass."¹²¹ Does this sound too much like the winning side writing the history books? Vergil's gods would agree with Otis. The gods give their gifts and eventually get their way.

But the gods do not always give. This shows us part of the frustration of the human condition. Back in Book One, Aeneas' mother, Venus, meets him in the woods in disguise. After a discussion she runs away and reveals herself to her son. Aeneas complains:

Cur dextrae iungere dextram
non datur, ac veras audire et reddere voces?'
(I, 408-409)

[Why is it not given for us to join our right hands and to hear our voices going back and forth?]

His own goddess mother does not give the simplest thing: truth. Aeneas calls it cruel.

Aeneas will have his turn to be cruel. Dido asks one last favor of her departing lover. She asks him to delay a

¹²¹ Ibid.

while; just until her crazed grief subsides. Then she says, eerily, to her sister,

Extremam hanc oro veniam – miserere sororis –
quam mihi cum dederit, cumulatam morte remittam.'
(IV, 435-436)

[I ask only this one last plea. Pity your sister. And, when he gives it to me, I will repay the debt, with interest, by death.]

Dido is familiar with debts and payments. She knows how to make a plea and a promise of repayment, no matter how strange. But Aeneas is not moved. Why? Because, the narrative says (IV, 437ff.), destiny and heaven had other plans for him. Here we see again that clash between what heaven gives and promises versus what mortals give and promise. As usual, the heavenly powers win.

At the end of the poem we see the gulf that exists between those with power and those without. It is in a scene that is strange because it deals with a goddess, once human but now divine and her doomed, mortal brother. Turnus' divine sister, Juturna, when she sees the Dira approaching, knows that her brother will die. Part of her complaint is this:

Haec pro virginitate reponit?
Quo vitam dedit aeternam? Cur mortis ademptast
condicio? Possem tantos finire dolores
nunc certe et misero fratri comes ire per umbras!
Immortalis ego? Aut quicquam mihi dulce meorum
te sine, frater, erit? O quae satis ima dehiscet
terra mihi Manisque deam demittet ad imos?'
(XII, 878-884)

[Is this the return that I receive for my virginity (lost to Jupiter)? To what end did he give me eternal life? Why did he cancel the law of death for me? Otherwise I now certainly would put an end to such griefs and pass into the shades with my brother. So, I'm immortal? Will I enjoy anything without you, brother? O, that the earth would swallow me up and let me go down to the gods of death, though a goddess.]

This speech has all the words we have emphasized in epic: end, give, repay. She has received a great gift: eternal life. She received this gift, though, in return for her favors given to Jupiter. But what does it gain her? She cannot even save her brother.

This is a poignant commentary on the mortal position given by an immortal goddess. For she may be immortal; but she does not have all power. She has been mortal and knows what the death of her brother will bring. However, unlike the other mortals we have met, Juturna is not seen to move past her grieving to live again. Though her life is assured for eternity, the last we hear of her is a passing into mourning.

How far removed are the highest gods. When Jupiter and Juno reconcile at the end, this is what he says to her:

Verum age et inceptum frustra submitte furorem
do quod vis, et me victusque volensque remitto.
(XII, 832-833)

[I give what you want. And I submit myself, conquered and willing.]

Juno gets what she has always wanted, that the name and customs of the Trojans would be eliminated from the earth. After all the trouble of the epic, Jupiter gives way to her and does not truly care. How far removed is this exchange from Juturna, or Dido or even Aeneas.

There is simply a distinction of power in the scheme of balances and payments due in the *Aeneid*. This is one of the messages of Vergil. Mortals can be aware of the gift-giving pattern of gods and men; but this does not comfort or sustain them. Gods may simply ignore gifts and pleas. For example, Juno rejects Aeneas' sacrifice to her in Book VIII, 81ff. Or the gods may prefer one plea or gift over another.

The emphasis, in Homer and Vergil, lands on man. Learn the ways in which gifts work with gods and men and then make your way! That is one of the messages of the Latin masterpiece. The pattern was present already in Vergil's predecessors. The pattern will reappear in the work of the man who tries to surpass his predecessors and what they have given to him.

What about the gods, especially the highest god? Vergil's Jupiter is different from Homer's Zeus. Zeus, in Homer, has favorites. Vergil's Jupiter is the same to everyone, he claims. He is impartial. In both poets it is

states that the Fates will find their way. The relation of Jupiter and Fate is quite similar to the understanding of Homer's Zeus. His impartiality is not.

The gifts, though, work the same way. Jupiter is as concerned with gifts as the Zeus of Homer. The long prayer of Iarbas and Jupiter's frantic response suggest that this supreme divinity is perhaps more concerned about his rightful gifts.

What do men have to do with gift giving in Vergil? Much the same as in Homer. Mortals have been given gifts, promises, miracles. They should obey the gods, appreciate the gifts and sacrifice to the gods. Lack of devotion to the gods can spell disaster. Devotion to the gods, though, is no guarantee of divine favor. Continued gifts are contingent upon the will of the immortals.

Vergil's poem continues the traditions of Homer's epic genre—no more so than in its preoccupation with gifts. However, Vergil's presentation of gods, men and their gifts opens up a terrifying spectacle when one considers heavenly beings. The gods are indeed concerned with the gifts and the recognition that men give to them. However, there is little (if any) affection for mortals. Mortals are pawns for the gods to move.

The gods strike bargains with each other: Juno with Aeolus; Jupiter with Juno; Venus with Vulcan. There remains a concern with accounts and balances. But the true motivations that drive any of the gods are utterly unrelated to the life and death of men. This part of Vergil's message is clear: men should be religious and not offend the gods; but men should never expect the gods to care about men.

John Milton's God cares about men. He rewards them and punishes them. His rewards and punishments revolve, to a great extent, around gifts. This is not surprising, since Milton is writing an epic. What is remarkable, though, is the way in which Milton is able to weave together epic vocabulary and epic conventions with the story of a God Who is so far above the Olympians in power, but so much more concerned about men. Vergil's gods quite different from Homer's. They are much less concerned with mortals. You can tell this by examining gift-giving in Homer and Vergil. When you compare Homer and Vergil to Milton, however, you read about a God Who is also quite different. But He is concerned about men. *Paradise Lost* is concerned about men.

CHAPTER FOUR: *PARADISE LOST*

Though seventeen centuries will elapse between Vergil and Milton, the classical terminology of gift-giving appears in *Paradise Lost*. This is true, not just because Milton is so familiar with Homer and Vergil, along with so many other classical authors. Milton's gift-giving structure appears to be quite similar to the structure found in Homer and Vergil, whether he writes about God, the good angels and perfect Adam or Eve, or if he writes about the fallen angels and men. This is not surprising, since he is writing an epic.¹²²

However, Milton surprises us. For he presents to us a gift-giving structure similar to the one present in the classical epics, only without the irrational element found in Homer and Vergil. Milton clearly states that his God gives gifts and expects a proper response from angels and from men. Milton tells us how unfallen men and angels give gifts to each other and to God, as mortals and lesser divinities do in the classical works. The heroes in Homer and Vergil, who were most loved by the gods, were always

¹²² For the edition of *Paradise Lost* used in this study, see Note 1. For another recent attempt by a classicist to study this poem in light of the classical epics, see William M. Porter, *Reading the Classics and Paradise Lost* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1993). Two good sources to begin discussing the theodicy of this poem are William Empson, *Milton's God* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), and Dennis Danielson, *Milton's Good God: A Study in Literary Theodicy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

conscious of the duty to give back to the god who gave first. Men and angels are conscious of this duty in Milton's work also.

However, Milton breaks with his predecessors when he removes the irrational element from his gift-giving structure. For prelapsarian men and angels, God will always give gifts as long as they give God obedience and love. Milton's epic sounds more thoroughly Homeric and Vergilian in regard to gift-giving when he puts gift terminology into the mouths of fallen men and angels.

Paradise Lost is a work that flows from Homer and Vergil and speaks back to their works. Before we examine the use of gifts in this work it is beneficial to recognize a shift in this work regarding character types. In Homer and in Vergil there are two types of characters: mortals and immortals. This is not the case in *Paradise Lost*. Although there is a large number of named persons in this epic, there are three character types rather than two: good divine characters, evil "divine" characters and humans. The first characters the reader encounters are Satan and his followers. There are different fallen angels with differing opinions and interests; but in this work all the powers of evil take their direction from Satan. Even

Sin and Death are minor players compared to him. He is their parent, their source.

God and His Son and the good angels all belong to a second character type. Again, God is almighty and infinite while the good angels are limited in power and extent. But the good angels and the Son follow God Almighty without wavering. What He desires, the others fulfill.

Adam and Eve belong to the third character type. They are a favored creation of God and an obsession of Satan's hatred. They occupy a kind of middle ground. It can be argued that, in this poem, they are the characters who change the most notably. Within the time frame of *Paradise Lost* God and the angels are and remain, of course, good. Satan and his crew are evil and remain so, even in the earliest recollection of them by Raphael who recounts to Adam.

But Adam and Eve begin the story as good, even "perfet" (V, 524). But their fall was a true and great fall into sin and evil. Adam was like the good angels but became like the bad. Unlike the good angels, however, he was ungrateful and sinned. Unlike the evil angels he repented and found grace.

Adam and Eve learn what God and the Son and the good angels always knew, that to obey God is the best action

there is. Satan knows this too, but that knowledge serves to make him more angry.

These three character types are the topic of this chapter. Each of these three understands the obligation in terms familiar to us from Homer and Vergil. They use banking terms, terms from the market-place. All three character types speak in terms of a "demand balance of spiritual solvency." God and Satan remain consistent in their views. Adam and Eve change their view—twice.

This chapter will review what each character type says about spiritual solvency between the God and His creatures in terms of gifts given and received. This review will prepare us for the following chapter, in which I will compare the approaches of Homer, Vergil and Milton to this aspect of theodicy.

Paradise Lost begins with the poet's invocation of the Heavenly Muse:

Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
Sing Heav'nly Muse. (I, 1-6)

Man and his disobedience are mentioned first, then the greater Man, from God. The argument of the epic is, in fact, in these lines. Man disobeys God, bringing death and woe into the world. Another Man, greater, then restores

what is lost. One can readily see the poet's understanding of Man's accounts with God. God gave Man many things—not merely that one tree. Man overdrew his account and received the penalty. But God filled up the account again by another.

The whole point of the epic, however, is to recount this tale, not just to summarize it. The language, meter and style must combine to display the intent of the poet and his subject. Thus, Milton, telling us that a great argument will follow, continues:

What in me is dark
Illumin, what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great Argument
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justifie the wayes of God to men.
(I, 22-26)

That last line is perhaps the most famous, which has produced a debate over whether or not *Paradise Lost* is a true theodicy.¹²³ If we leave behind the questions of the definition of the term "theodicy" and of the way in which that definition applies to the present work, we may still focus on what it means to "justify the ways of God to men." For Milton, this justification has begun. Man disobeyed God. God does not create evil. He allows it, but others have earned the blame and the fault.

¹²³ Danielson, *Milton's Good God*, says yes. Terrence Tilley says no. Terrence W. Tilley, *The Evils of Theodicy* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991).

As Homer and Vergil began, so does Milton. There is a heavenly being involved in the woes that man suffers. Zeus' plans are fulfilled—but Apollo was a cause of the argument at the beginning of the *Iliad*. Jupiter will have his Rome—but Juno will make it difficult. She causes men much woe. Milton's God is totally justified, says the poet. Man is at fault. But there is much blame to assign to another being—one who once was "heavenly."

Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view,
Nor the deep Tract of Hell, say first what cause
Moved our Grand Parents, in that happy State,
Favour'd of Heav'n so highly, to fall off
From thir Creator, and transgress his Will
For one restraint, Lords of the World besides?
Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt?
(I, 27-33)

Anyone who is familiar with Milton's prose writings can rightly question his consistency. It is a surprise to find the blame placed on someone else. Does Milton mean to point to a cause of sin that is unrelated to personal responsibility? Or does Milton write as Homer does, saying that heavenly beings bring trouble on men, but men also have their own part in bringing trouble on themselves? That would not be surprising.

Man is mentioned first in the epic, then God, then Satan. But as the work proceeds, the order is quite different. Satan is the first main character, then God, then man. That is the order in which the characters will

be examined. First we will hear what a dissident thinks of God and of the extent to which His ways are just. Satan speaks at length about God and His gifts. His character is developed greatly by means of gifts. Then we will see what God thinks of His gifts and their use and abuse by different receivers. God, being so consistent, says much the same thing throughout.

Finally we will hear about Adam and Eve and their gifts. First in innocence, then in sinful impenitence, and then in sorrow and humility before God, their Savior, they constantly have gifts in view. Paradise has a promised return, at least for Man. But first, it is lost.

What is the cause? Who first seduced them?

Th' infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile,
Stird up with Envy and Revenge, deceiv'd
The Mother of Mankind. (I, 34-6)

The blame is clearly laid on the Serpent. Later on we will learn that punishment then falls on Satan and the evil angels (Book X), but that the serpent in which Satan worked was also punished. So the epic opens on the lake of fire, where Satan and his army lie after being driven from heaven by the Son. Milton adds that God's justice is already working:

Such place Eternal Justice has prepar'd
For those rebellious. (I, 70-71)

Again, this is very clear. Rebels receive punishment. God, dispensing Eternal Justice, prepares a place of pain for those who do wrong, who rebel against God and His ways of giving.

The poem is biased. Satan is in the wrong and God is in the right, because He is eternal. That is why He is just, because of His nature. But this is the point at which we first see Satan's theodicy. Or, since he only seeks to justify himself, we should call his words a "demonodicy." Satan is diabolical. He perverts everyone and everything. To his closest comrade, Beelzebub, he justifies their loss in battle against God

so much the stronger prov'd
He with his Thunder; and till then who knew
The force of those dire Arms? yet not for those,
Nor what the Potent Victor in his rage
Can else inflict, do I repent or change,
Though chang'd in outward lustre; that fixt mind,
And high disdain, from sense of injur'd merit,
That with the mightiest rais'd me to contend.
(I, 92-99)

God was just stronger on that day, Satan is saying. He rejects any thought that he is less than he imagined-although he also admits it (changed in outward lustre). Why does he reject such thoughts? From "the sense of injured merit."

This is the summary of the beginning of the rebellion in heaven. God the Father raised up the Son to be ruler in

heaven. The angels sang a song of rejoicing, figuring that God had added even more value to their accounts.¹²⁴ As Abdiel will say in the midst of the rebellion, the Son performed God's creation:

and all the Spirits of Heav'n
By him created in thir bright degrees,
Crown'd them with Glory, and to thir Glory nam'd
Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Vertues, Powers,
Essential Powers, nor by his Reign obscur'd,
But more illustrious made, since he the Head
One of our number thus reduc't becomes,
His Laws our laws, all honour to him done
Returns our own. (V, 837-45)

For Abdiel, the servant of God, the Son's exaltation was just that much more exaltation of himself and all angels. "Who has much, to him much more will be given. But to him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away" (Saint Luke 19:26). The former is Abdiel. The latter would be, of course, Satan.

Although, when the poem opens, Satan has lost already and is in hell with his hosts, he cannot stop boasting of his achievements, what he has gained, or earned: I, he says,

to the fierce contention brought along
Innumerable force of Spirits arm'd,
That durst dislike his reign, and me preferring,
His utmost power with adverse power oppos'd
In dubious Battel on the Plains of Heav'n,
And shook his throne. What though the field be lost?
All is not lost; the unconquerable Will,

¹²⁴ See Satan's admission of the same in his soliloquoy (IV, 32ff).

And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield:
And what is else not to be overcome?
That Glory never shall his wrath or might
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace
With suppliant knee, and deifie his power
Who from the terror of this Arm so late
Doubted his Empire, that were low indeed,
That were an ignominy and shame beneath
This downfall; since by Fate the strength of Gods
And this Empyrean substance cannot fail,
Since through experience of this great event,
In Arms not worse, in foresight much advanc't,
We may with more successful hope resolve
To wage by force or guile eternal Warr,
Irreconcilable to our grand Foe,
Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy
Sole reigning holds the Tyranny of Heav'n.
(I, 100-124)

"What a proud spirit!" one might exclaim. "So
consistent and confident in purpose!" There are those who
admire such a creature, those who find such a creature more
interesting than the other characters in this epic, God,
angel or human.¹²⁵

But the Spirit sees through Satan (I, 27-28), even if
some modern commentators cannot. And by extension, blind
Milton sees through him too.

So spake th' apostate Angel, though in pain,
Vaunting aloud, but wrackt with deep despair.
(I, 125-6)

¹²⁵ William Blake, Percy Bysshe Shelley and other commentators
have read Satan as the hero in *Paradise Lost*. A survey of the
question concerning Satan's position appears in Calvin Huckabay,
"The Satanist Controversy of the Nineteenth Century," in *Studies
in English Renaissance Literature*, Ed. by Waldo F. McNeir (Baton
Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962), 197-210.

This is the type of character who throws a lavish party even though the creditors are at the door. He has emptied his accounts but cannot admit it. He must still live, as he sees it, so he keeps moving. Thus does Satan, who rises from the lake with his lieutenant Beelzebub.

The poet is careful to tell us that God is allowing all of this. He could have left them all bound on the lake of fire forever. But God has His own ways. Satan was allowed to get up,

nor ever thence
Had ris'n or heav'd his head, but that the will
And high permission of all-ruling Heav'n
Left him at large to his own dark designs,
That with reiterated crimes he might
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
Evil to others, and enrag'd might see
How all his malice serv'd but to bring forth
Infinite goodness, grace, and mercy, shewn
On Man by him seduc't, but on himself
Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour'd.
(I, 210-220)

This is a well-known aspect of Milton's theology: that all evil eventually turns out for good for God and for His chosen ones. Thus, although Satan's actions are evil, and we from our viewpoint may be inclined to think that we would have stopped Satan where he was, if we had the power, the poet clearly says that Heaven chooses not to stop Satan.

The modern objection, of course, is answered by Milton. "If only we had the power, we would have stopped

Satan." This is a sentence naturally found in the mouth of Satan, "If only I had the power." But it is a sentiment shared by Milton's detractors.

God will say, in Book III, that man had and has the power to stop Satan where he is. That is just the problem. Adam and Eve will be reminded of this in four of the twelve books. Still, they will give Satan everything he wants. Within the first quarter of the first book, Milton is begging us to object to God's "allowing evil." Who are we to blame God, Milton is asking. All the while we do not notice that God allows us to sin also. The poet describes the readers, when he describes Satan and his right hand man:

Him followed his next Mate,
Both glorying to have scap't the Stygian flood
As Gods, and by thir own recover'd strength,
Not by the suffrance of supernal Power.
(I, 238-41)

Oh, what they have earned! What they have recovered! Reason is now left behind, as well as all due obedience to God. For Satan is glad to be in Hell. He addresses the place:

Hail, horrors, hail
Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell
Receive thy new Possessor: One who brings
A mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.
What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be, all but less than he

Whom Thunder hath made greater? Here at least
We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
Here we may reigh secure; and in my choyce,
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n.
(I, 250-263)

In prison he is free. In Hell, he is in Heaven. This is the end of those who have earned their heavenly realm. They must be proud of what they have earned. What else could they do, besides repent? They have spurned the gifts of God. That is the original evil action.

Milton then gives his summary of religious history. He relates his work to the classical epics, making an obvious attempt to surpass their works and their characters not only quantitatively but qualitatively.

Say, Muse, thir names then known, who first, who
last,
Rous'd from thir slumber on that fiery Couch,
At thir great Emperors call, as next in worth
Came singly where he stood on the bare strand,
While the promiscuous crowd stood yet aloof?
(I, 376-80)

Within this list come the Olympians, a fact that we shall discuss at greater length in Chapter V. It is enough to note here that the pagan gods, for Milton, are just lesser types of Satan. If we understand the ways of Satan with God and man, we will better understand the ways of the pagan gods with God and man.

Not only has Satan damned himself, but also others.
When the hosts of devils come off the lake, Satan is
described this way:

cruel his eye, but cast
Signs of remorse and passion to behold
The fellows of his crime, the followers rather
(Far other once beheld in bliss) condemn'd
For ever now to have thir lot in pain,
Millions of Spirits for his fault amerc't
Of Heav'n, and from Eternal Splendors flung
For his revolt, yet faithful how they stood,
Thir Glory witherd. (I, 604-12)

"His eyes...his crime...his fault...his revolt." The blame
is all Satan's. But the punishment is shared by so many,
in their faithfulness! (Milton is engaging in irony.)
Homer and Vergil know of the blame of heavenly beings
(devils according to Milton) which nevertheless redounds on
mortals.

But Satan must keep up appearances. In his first
address, before they build Pandaemonium, he puts the blame
on the more powerful God. There are endless examples of
this sort in Greek and Latin epic. Juno blames Juppiter
and the fates for not allowing her to have her way.¹²⁶ Hera
and Athena blame Zeus for having his favorites.¹²⁷ Satan
blames the One stronger than he, defending himself by
saying:

¹²⁶ *Aeneid*, I, 37-49.

¹²⁷ *Iliad*, XVI, 439ff.

But he who reigns
Monarch in Heav'n, till then as one secure
Sat on his Throne, upheld by old repute,
Consent or custom, and his Regal State
Put forth at full, but still his strength conceal'd,
Which tempted our attempt, and wrought our fall.
Henceforth his might we know, and know our own
So as not either to provoke, or dread
New warr provok't; our better part remains
To work in close design, by fraud or guile,
What force effected not: that he no less
At length from us may find, who overcomes
By force, hath overcome but half his foe.
Space may produce new Worlds; whereof so rife
There went a fame in Heav'n that he ere long
Intended to create, and therein plant
A generation whom his choice regard
Should favour equal to the Sons of Heav'n:
Thither, if but to pry, shall be perhaps
Our first eruption, thither, or elsewhere:
For this Infernal Pit shall never hold
Celestial Spirits in Bondage, nor th' Abyss
Long under darkness cover. But these thoughts
Full Counsel must mature: Peace is despair'd;
For who can think Submission? Warr, then, warr
Open or understood must be resolv'd.

(I, 637-62)

This is Satan's conclusion: It is the fault of the Almighty. Because Satan did not know how powerful God was, he was tempted to rebel. But now he has experience and if free, in his own mind, to pursue his own goals.

This is a clear parallel to any number of minor gods in classical literature who fancy themselves free and powerful, forgetting that they are, in reality, subject to fate, to a supreme will. God will mock Satan in Book III, 120ff., for this delusion, for Satan being so similar to the lesser gods in classical epic, as it were. God is

Fate, so He says. Satan, in his own version, lays the blame on someone else. (What a treat to hear him saying, in his own way, "The devil made me do it.")

He is true to his word. He will build a mock heaven in that place and play God.

High on a Throne of Royal State, which far
Outshon the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
Shows on her Kings Barbaric Pearl and Gold,
Satan exalted sat, by merit rais'd
To that bad eminence. (II, 1-6)

The poet agrees with Satan in one regard: he does have merit. He has merited a place, a "bad eminence." Satan has already said that no one would want the realm they now possess. Things cannot get any worse. Thus, he has earned his throne, the inverse of what he truly wanted.

In Satan's address to the hellish council, he shows his clear notions of demand balance, though careful to include others into his scheme, in order to augment his account that much more. He asserts that

just right, and the fixt Laws of Heav'n,
Did first create your Leader, next, free choice
With what besides, in Counsel or in Fight,
Hath bin achiev'd of merit. (II, 18-21)

The willing hordes are enthralled. Their leader is leader because of what is right and just; he simply had to be the one in charge. There was this force, "up there,

somewhere," which said it must be so. But then, wise subjects as they are, the devils chose Satan as a leader.

He has been given and has earned the right to be their leader. For

where there is then no good
For which to strive, no strife can grow up there
From Faction; for none sure will claim in Hell
Precedence, none, whose portion is so small
Of present pain, that with ambitious mind
Will covet more. With this advantage then
To union, and firm Faith, and firm accord,
More than can be in Heav'n, we now return
To claim our just inheritance of old..
(II, 30-38)

Here is true folly on the part of the king of hell. All that Satan can achieve by these words is to secure his place at the head of that one place which no other being would ever want to see, much less inhabit. But that is how Satan's ways with God are. God gave him a high place; Satan wanted to attain a higher place. The only blessings he could earn would come by way of obedience. What he earns by making himself "god" is nothing but curses.

The other devils show us other sorts of deviltry. They are, though, basically shadows of Satan in his evil. But Milton shows how far-reaching this evil accounting is.

In their council in Book II, Moloch speaks for open warfare, and concludes with a tallying account of their possible losses. If they are completely wiped out, they will not be around to regret it. However,

if our substance be indeed Divine,
And cannot cease to be, we are at worst
On this side nothing. (II, 99-101)

The devils are accountants or investors. They can add up what they have and what they can risk, and then project their losses. Moloch sees that there is not much to lose. How could things get worse?

Belial does not see the numbers adding up that way. Instead, his accounts are filled best by staying put, earning interest, the "bird in the hand" rather than the "two in the bush."

To be no more; sad cure; for who would loose,
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through Eternity,
To perish rather, swallowd up and lost
In the wide womb of uncreated night,
Devoid of sense and motion? and who knows,
Let this be good, whether our angry Foe
Can give it, or will ever? how he can
Is doubtful; that he never will is sure.
(II, 146-54)

There is something worse: to be annihilated. For Belial, "to be" is the only option. There is no question about "not to be." For Belial is always on the prowl, knowing that there is always something more to take, when someone else is not looking. The government in heaven has not given them a very good house—but it is a place to live. In his estimation, it is something, better than nothing.

...Besides what hope the never-ending flight
Of future days may bring, what chance, what change
Worth waiting, since our present lot appears

For happy though but ill, for ill not worst,
If we procure not to ourselves more woe.

Thus Belial, with words cloath'd in reasons garb
Counsel'd ignoble ease, and peaceful sloath,
Not peace. (II, 221-28)

A consideration of competing "demand balances" or competing computations on the part of different characters opens up Milton's strange comment with regard to Belial. Why go to the extent of commenting on Belial's sloth, on top of his rebellious sin? Belial's option is hard work and determination, looking for a "brighter tomorrow." In fact, Belial does look for a brighter "tomorrow" through chance and change.

Milton is not taking sides in the debate in hell. He is simply showing the sinful motives behind each evil angel. Moloch is fired by the urge to inflict death and destruction. Belial is moved by ease. The two have differing investment strategies: the "risk-taker" and the "conservative." There are two more approaches. One is Satan's, that will matter most. The other is Mammon's, who wants, with Belial, to maintain what capital remains but to enhance it with industry:

This Desart soil
Wants not her hidden lustre, Gemms and Gold;
Nor want we skill or Art, from whence to raise
Magnificence; and what can Heav'n show more?

..All things invite
To peaceful Counsels, and the settl'd State
Of order, how in safety best we may

Compose our present evils, with regard
Of what we are and where, dismissing quite
All thoughts of warr. (II, 270-73, 278-83)

Mammon is a bit more industrious than Belial. Yet they both want to "cut their losses" and forget any ideas about heaven, concentrating on use the "gift" of Hell.

What Moloch, Belial and Mammon do not realize—and what we should already have realized—is that the only accounting which matters in Hell is Satan's accounting. When he finally speaks, through another, each of these three will imagine that they are getting what they want. There will be no open war, so that Belial and Mammon are happy. But there will be hidden attacks, which satisfies some of Moloch's wishes.

But what is actually happening is that Satan is having everything his way. That is what he wanted all along. And this point is important for readers in regard to one of the lessons we should learn from this epic. The followers are the most to be pitied. At least Satan has his way. The followers are deceived and led astray. So are Adam and Eve. It is fitting that a follower speaks in place of Satan.

Beelzebub speaks for Satan, just what Satan had hinted at privately and in his first speech to the council. Hell is Satan's Hell, as he had stated. The plan to rebel was

his. The poet says it was his fault. He is not now going to listen to another strategist.

But there is no need to attack Heaven; Satan knows that is futile. And he will not be content with "Hell-at-ease" or "Hell-at-work." Satan's concern is only Satan's account over against the Almighty. He will put all of Hell to work to enhance *his* accounts, none other. His words, even in the mouth of another, are always most persuasive:

What if we find
Some easier enterprize? There is a place...
(II, 344-5)

There is a place, to which Satan will go, after some struggle through chaos. Satan will visit the family, see Eden, be softened for a moment by the sight of Eve, even flirt with contrition, though repentance is not an option. There is a place where Satan will work for Satan's ends, though the rest are left in Hell. Satan does not need them; they do nothing for his balance sheet, except to applaud him on his return. Until then, they are set to tasks in which he has no interest.

But I should ill become this Throne, O Peers,
And this Imperial Sov'ranty, adorn'd
With splendor, arm'd with power, if aught propos'd
And judg'd of public moment, in the shape
Of difficulty or danger could deterr
Mee from attempting. Wherefore do I assume
These Royalties, and not refuse to Reign,
Refusing to accept as great a share
Of hazard as of honour, due alike
To him who Reigns, and so much to him due

Of hazard more, as he above the rest
High honoured sits? (II, 445-56)

Satan "assumed royalties" and will "reign," after he is prodded. Since he has due honor, the hazard is his due as well. That all he wants to do is to escape from Hell for a while, the angel Gabriel knows well later when he captures Satan in Eden. We readers should learn to read these things as well as Gabriel does when he asks Satan:

But wherefore thou alone? wherefore with thee
Came not all Hell broke loose? is pain to them
Less pain, less to be fled, or thou then they
Less hardie to endure? courageous Chief,
The first in flight from pain, hads't thou alleg'd
To thy deserted host this cause of flight,
Thou surely hadst not come sole fugitive.
(IV, 917-23)

Satan does not like to have someone auditing his actions. Satan tries to persuade this unfallen angel as he persuaded so many, as he will persuade Eve:

From hard assaies and ill successes past
A faithful Leader, not to hazard all
Through wayes of danger by himself untri'd:
I therefore, I alone first undertook
To wing the desolate Abyss, and spie
This new created World, whereof in Hell
Fame is not silent, here in hope to find
Better abode. (IV, 932-39)

As if to say, "I have myself and my friends to worry about." (In that order.)

Gabriel is not impressed. He interrupts and says:

To whom the warriour Angel soon repli'd.
To say and strait unsay, pretending first

Wise to flie pain, professing next the Spie,
Argues no Leader, but a lyar trac't,
Satan, and couldst thou faithful add? O name,
O sacred name of faithfulness profan'd!
Faithful to whom? to thy rebellious crew?
Army of Fiends, fit body to fit head.
(IV, 944-51)

That is enough to understand Satan. He had begun to calculate what God owed to him and had demanded more than was his due. Then he could not keep from speaking about what was his due, to the infernal angels and to the blessed ones.

When he returns to Hell, in Book X, he returns in hellish triumph. He has corrupted the favored creation of the Almighty, Sin and Death are on their way to Earth, and he announces his hard work to the devils, waiting for the applause which he—and they!—consider due him:

Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Vertues, Powers;
For in possession such, not only of right,
I call ye and declare ye now, returned
Successful beyond hope, to lead ye forth
Triumphant out of this infernal Pit
Abominable, accurst, the house of woe,
And Dungeon of our Tyrant: Now possess,
As Lords, a spacious World, t' our native Heav'n
Little inferiour, by my adventure hard
With peril great atchiev'd. (X, 460-69)

His work brought to them possessions. Satan is very profitable to them.

Ye have th' account
Of my performance: What remains, ye Gods,
But up, and enter now into full bliss. (X, 501-3)

What Satan receives instead is the hiss of snakes, their annual punishment for what they have done. Yes, Satan has worked for them all, and earned for them all, even more punishment than they had first received.

As noted earlier, the other evil characters are, at a deep level, put into motion by Satan. His accounting is their accounting. But they deserve a short mention.

Satan's incestuous daughter, Sin, uses the language of the market place also when she arrives on earth after Adam and Eve's fall:

Mean while in Paradise the hellish pair
Too soon arriv'd; Sin, there in power before,
Once actual, now in body, and to dwell
Habitual habitant; behind her Death,
Close following pace for pace, not mounted yet
On his pale Horse: to whom Sin thus began.
Second of Satan sprung, all conquering Death,
What thinkst thou of our Empire now, though earnd
With travail difficult. (X, 585-93)

They have earned their way to the Earth. Now, it is payday for them.

When Death answers his mother and speeds off to the buffet, the poem then returns to Heaven, in which God speaks about all these events, which He had predicted and seen unfold. These words show us how God, in *Paradise Lost*, evaluates from whom and to whom balances are due. These comments, just prior to the ultimate scene of the work, in which Adam sees all history and then leaves Eden

with Eve, sum up the ways of Milton's God and how He justifies Himself:

From his transcendent Seat the Saints among,
To those bright Orders uttered thus his voice.
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 me. (X, 613-21)

This is an important statement from God that men are to blame for the opportunity given to the "furies."

Although I disagree completely with John P. McCaskey's evaluation of Milton and his theology, he presents an accurate picture of the Almighty in *Paradise Lost*. He writes:

God is anxious throughout *Paradise Lost* to insist that he did not cause Adam and Eve to disobey. In Book III, foretelling the fall, God says, "I have made him just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (98) and "Authors to themselves in all / Both what they judge and what they choose; for so / I form'd them free, and free they must remain" (122). And in Book X, after the fall, he says he did not interfere in the slightest with Adam's free will: "no Decree of mine / Concurring to necessitate his Fall, / Or touch with lightest moment of impulse / His free will, to her own inclining left/ In even scale" (45). Yet God self-consciously allows Satan to tempt Eve. On many occasions he has the chance to stop Satan but does not. When Satan leaves hell, Sin and Death follow his tracks, "such was the will of Heav'n" (II, 1025). Indeed we find that the will of Heaven rules among all hell's creatures. None of them do anything without God's permission. Several times, God recalls his angels so that they do not stop Satan from completing his mission. In Book IV, when Gabriel's entire squadron is rallied against Satan alone, God's scale commands Gabriel to let Satan go. In Book I, Milton

tells us plainly that Satan does not even lift his head without God's permission, and that it is with "the will / And high permission of all-ruling Heaven" (210) that Satan will be allowed to pursue his evil plans. For God to judge Adam and Eve, even if he does not compel them to fall, he must be sure they get tempted.¹²⁸

I disagree with the conclusion expressed in the last sentence. There is no necessity that God judge Adam and Eve. He will, because He says He will if they disobey. The fault is their own. That He allows them to sin is due to Him. He made them free. That is a central point of the work.

But the words above are a fine summary of God's view of the "demand balance of spiritual solvency" regarding men and God. He gave Man everything needed to live, to be blessed and to keep from evil. That man misused the freedom is man's fault. Even the classical poets knew this much.

Mr. McCaskey has other problems with those who feel affinity with Milton and his theology:

Another critical clash is between, ostensibly, theists such as C. S. Lewis and Dennis Danielson, and atheists such as William Empson (and me). As such, this clash is unresolvable. The foundation of theism is faith, not reason. It explicitly holds that the most important things cannot be known by reason. They must be accepted without rational evidence. But if reason is to be excluded from resolving the most important conflicts, then any issues that rest on those

¹²⁸ John P. McCaskey. *The Deontological Ethics of Paradise Lost* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 14.

conflicts are also unresolvable. William Empson is self-consciously making every effort to be rational when he holds that Milton's God is evil. Danielson, on the other hand, explicitly relies on faith when he contends that God is good. In his theodicy, he dwells on how Milton adheres to the orthodox explanation of how a good God could have created evil. But this is not to say God is good, only that the problem of evil does not preclude God from being good. It says God could be good, not that God is good. When Danielson has to say that God is good, he writes, "The goodness of God has to be asserted...out of a recognition that one's actual worship of God, if it is to have any integrity, is predicated on a conviction that the object of one's worship is wholly worthy of it" (*The Fall*, p. 126, italics added). In other words, God is known to be good because worshippers of integrity have a conviction that he is. But whim, conviction, faith, emotion, no matter how strongly felt, are not tools of cognition. If they are accepted as such, then there can be no resolution when they conflict with reason.¹²⁹

This is a critic who is very unhappy with a "traditional" reading of *Paradise Lost*. But *Paradise Lost* loses a great many of its historical foundations if it is read as some sort of "Anti-Epic" or subversion of traditional Christianity. For Milton writes in the manner of Homer and Vergil. Though he surpasses them in many ways, he still writes about gifts.

There is a tradition in Milton scholarship that has tried to treat *Paradise Lost* in a subversive manner. William Empson¹³⁰ is a solid, modern supporter of those who find Milton's God unbearable and Satan noble. I quote

¹²⁹ McCaskey, 15.

¹³⁰ Above, note 122.

Empson a number of times, not because I agree with him. He has many interesting points to make, when he stays with the text. I quote Empson as an example of someone who has taken note of the presence of gifts, payments and obligations in *Paradise Lost*, but who has not pursued the function of gods, men and their gifts in epic.

Empson says correctly that Satan

fell, he says, because he felt God to be a usurer—the gift God made in creating him had appeared to him, perhaps wrongly, as only an initial lump sum, whereas a more generous nature would have accepted endless repayment.¹³¹

and

Always an extremist, Satan now admits all the claims of God, even his claim to goodness, because a generous mind would feel no burden in paying a usurer incessantly.¹³²

Satan knows how the "demand balance" works. The monotheistic God of this poem is profoundly different from the pagan Zeus and Jupiter. But He is the same in these ways: He gives gifts; He expects recognition; He continues to give gifts; He has favorites.

The Son has Regal Power "Giv'n me" (V, 740). The Son is a favorite Who Himself recognizes the giving nature of the Father.

¹³¹ Empson, 63-4.

¹³² Empson, 65.

Later on in the epic, as Empson writes, Milton "makes the Son remark, while rejoicing over the repentance of Adam and Eve, that God's 'implanted Grace' in man is already producing fruit (XI. 25)."¹³³ Even sinful man receives gifts—gifts that are to be used.

Empson is surely wrong when he concludes that Milton meant to make his God feel evil in his good poetry.¹³⁴ But he is right to maintain that Milton was serious about his attempt to justify the ways of God to men.¹³⁵ What Empson noticed but did not interpret faithfully is Milton's entanglement in the entire notion of demand balances, the gift giving structure of epics. Empson places the entire fault of Milton's system on Christianity itself. He writes:

The idea of payment is indeed deeply imbedded in the system [of Christianity], as we too are paying all the time for Adam; what Satan reaches as rock-bottom, after abandoning his suspicion that God is a usurper, is that he could not in any case submit to a God who is a usurer.¹³⁶

Empson's final judgment is too simple. He has not considered that Milton's God must be compared and contrasted to the gods of classical epic. The gods of Homer and Vergil were usurers. They gave gifts that always

¹³³ Empson, 168.

¹³⁴ See, for example, Danielson, 202ff.

¹³⁵ Empson, 204ff.

¹³⁶ Empson, 208.

had 'strings attached.' If Empson is right about Satan's attitude here—and I believe he is right—my only response is that Satan has forgotten that he is in an epic. Readers should not be surprised to find fallen creatures assigning blame for accounts on which they themselves have defaulted.

There is constant giving going on in this epic. Even Sin is "given to." At the family reunion of Satan, Sin and Death at Hell's gate, she says, "this powerful key/Into my hands was given" (II, 774-5).

No one is surprised that Sin will not faithfully keep the one charge she has been given. In fact, to whom could God have better entrusted the key, since He wanted to allow Satan out?

But Sin is no gracious giver of gifts. She gives the key in the manner of the pagan gods, *do ut des*:

The key of this infernal Pit by due
And by command of Heav'ns all-powerful King,
I keep, by him forbidden to unlock
These Adamantine Gates; against all force
Death ready stands to interpose his dart,
Fearless to be o'ermatcht by living might.
But what ow I to his commands above
Who hates me, and hath hither thrust me down
Into this gloom of Tartarus profound,
To sit in hateful Office here confin'd,
Inhabitant of Heav'n and heav'nlie-born,
Here in perpetual agonie and pain,
With terrors and with clamors compassst round
Of mine own brood, that on my bowels feed:
Thou art my Father, thou my Author, thou
My being gav'st me; whom should I obey
But thee, whom follow? thou wilt bring me soon
To that new world of light and bliss, among

The Gods who live at ease, where I shall Reign
At thy right hand voluptuous, as beseems
Thy daughter and thy darling, without end.
Thus saying, from her side the fatal Key,
Sad instrument of all our woe, she took.
(II, 850-72)

In other words: "Dear Satan, you gave me my being.
How can I keep one gift from you? Besides, you will give
me so much more."

God too wants gifts. In His justification that He
gives to His Son in heaven, before Adam falls, God explains
that He has given gifts to men and expects obedience in
return. For this purpose, for man to be able work in the
context of a spiritually solvent state, God made Adam and
Eve free in their will. They could obey or disobey. It
was up to them. Adam and Eve are free. Otherwise,

Not free, what proof could they have givn sincere
Of true allegiance, constant Faith or Love,
Where onely what they needs must do appeard,
Not what they would? what praise could they receive?
What pleasure I from such obedience paid,
When Will and Reason (Reason also is choice)
Useless and vain, of freedom both despoild,
Made passive both, had serv'd necessitie,
Not mee. They therefore, as to right belong'd,
So were created, nor can justly accuse
Thir Maker, or thir making, or thir Fate,
As if predestination over-rul'd
Thir will, dispos'd by absolute Decree
Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed
Thir own revolt, not I; if I foreknew,
Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
Which had no less prov'd certain unforeknown.
So without least impulse or shadow of Fate,
Or aught by me immutably foreseen,
They trespass, Authors to themselves in all
Both what they judge and what they choose; for so

I formd 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.
(III, 103-28)

God wants Adam and Eve to "give" proof of their sincerity. Then they may "receive" praise. Otherwise, if they are not free, God will be "paid" an obedience He does not want.

The Father wants something big in Book III. He wants someone to take what man will have due him for his sin. Milton has God ask, "Dwells in all Heaven charitie so dear?" (III, 216)

The Son offers Himself and offering says,

Account mee man; I for his sake will leave
Thy bosom, and this glorie next to thee
Freely put off, and for him lastly die
Well pleas'd; on me let Death wreak all his rage;
Under his gloomie power I shall not long
Lie vanquisht; thou hast givn me to possess
Life in myself for ever, by thee I live,
Though now to Death I yeild, and am his due
All that of me can die, yet, that debt paid,
Thou wilt not leave me in the loathsom grave.
(III, 238-47)

Notice the terms that are used: "Account," "Thou hast given me to possess," "his due," "debt paid." Who forgets the demand balance? Not the Father nor the Son in Milton.

The Father's answer is full of giving and paying:

So Heav'nly love shall outdo Hellish hate,
Giving to death, and dying to redeem,
So dearly to redeem what Hellish hate

So easily destroy'd, and still destroyes
In those who, when they may, accept not grace.
Nor shalt thou by descending to assume
Mans nature, lessen or degrade thine own.
Because thou hast, though Thron'd in highest bliss
Equal to God, and equally enjoying
God-like fruition, quitted all to save
A World from utter loss, and hast been found
By merit more than Birthright Son of God,
Found worthiest to be so by being Good,
Farr more then Great or High; because in thee
Love hath abounded more than Glory abounds,
Therefore thy Humiliation shall exalt
With thee thy Manhood also to this Throne;
Here shalt thou sit incarnate, here shalt Reign
Both God and Man, Son both of God and Man,
Anointed universal King; all Power
I give thee; reign for ever, and assume
Thy Merits. (III, 300-21)

Not only does God give to the Son "all power." The Son also has earned it according to His "merits." Gifts and merits are not in tension among perfect beings. Tension appears only inside sinful beings. Milton's work speaks with great power about the predicament of sinful beings, his inner tension.

The first speech of God in *Paradise Lost* states the consistency of Milton's God, as opposed to the pagan gods. His is a consistency that even Satan will acknowledge. In the classical epics, the gods' ways are inscrutable. They have been described as "chaotic." They have favorites. Sometimes we are told the reason that the gods favor one being over another. More often, though, there is silence.

In addition, even though the gods have favorites, even their favorites are often not "favored."

As opposed to the "chaotic" gods of the pagans, Milton shows us a God Who is always consistent. He always states the reasons for what He is doing. When He speaks in Book III, His speech has a manner that Stanley Fish has called "calm tonelessness."¹³⁷ He tells the Son that man will sin, but will find grace.

It might seem, at first, that Almighty God plays favorites arbitrarily, much as the pagan gods are described. Man will find grace and get another chance. But the fallen angels are given no such gift. God appears to be inscrutable also. But this is not the case. Instead, Milton's God gives His reasoning when He says,

The first sort by thir own suggestion fell,
Self-tempted, self-deprav'd: Man falls deceiv'd
By the other first: Man therefore shall find grace,
The other none. (III, 129-132)

Satan will agree that God had given gifts, clearly made known that He wanted obedience in return, and promised more gifts. It is only when Satan (and Adam!) show "bad form" that they start to blame God instead of themselves.

If a reader is not enamored with Satan, but rather finds him ridiculous (Lewis) or despicable, there remains

¹³⁷ Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967), 75.

one scene in which such a reader can feel pity. On Niphates' top, at the beginning of Book IV, Satan feels contrition. He will not submit, but he does admit something startling. Satan admits that God had given him gifts. Then he admits that he did not pay God back properly. Then he exclaims:

Ah, wherefore! he deserved no such return
From me, whom he created what I was
In that bright eminence, and with his good
Upbraided none; nor was his service hard.
What could be less than to afford him praise,
The easiest recompence, and pay him thanks,
How due! (IV, 42-8)

Satan clears God of the charge of Empson!

yet all his good prov'd ill in me,
And wrought but malice; lifted up so high
I sdeined subjection, and thought one step higher
Would set me highest, and in a moment quit
The debt immense of endless gratitude,
So burdensome still paying, still to ow;
Forgetful what from him I still receiv'd,
And understood not that a grateful mind
By owing owes not, but still pays, at once
Indebted and discharg'd. (IV, 48-57)

God is good and gives gifts. That is Satan's admission. He goes even further in justifying the gifts of God to angels when he says:

but other Powers as great
Fell not, but stand unshak'n, from within
Or from without, to all temptations arm'd.
Hadst thou the same free Will and Power to stand?
Thou hadst: whom hast thou then or what t' accuse,
But Heav'ns free love dealt equally to all?
(IV, 63-8)

Satan has not even forgotten the meaning of the word "love." This is the point at which a frail human can have sympathy for this magnificent being. But then comes the change that certainly must be meant to make Satan irredeemably despicable when he says:

Be then his Love accurst, since love or hate,
To me alike, it deals eternal woe.
Nay, curs'd be thou; since against his thy will
Chose freely what it now so justly rues.

...Is there no place
Left for Repentance, none for Pardon left?
None left but by submission; and that word
Disdain forbids me. (IV, 69-72, 79-82)

Satan knows that God gives gifts and expects something in return. Satan also admits that what is expected from him is no burden at all. God is a good giver of good gifts. And yet Satan rejects the gifts. Instead, he imagines that he can make his own good things, gifts, and treats as gifts things that are not.

Milton knows about gifts. As the author, or the bard, he often makes mention of gifts in authorial comments. As the plot continues in Book IV, the Tree on which Satan sits is described as a "life-giving Plant" (IV, 199), which Satan only uses "for prospect" (200).

Then comes the eerie offer of Satan to the unsuspecting pair. Satan could only use terms of debt and

payment when he was on Niphates' top. Here, though, we learn that he knows the word "give."

League with you I seek,
And mutual amitie, so streight, so close,
That I with you must dwell, or you with me
Henceforth; my dwelling haply may not please
Like this fair Paradise, your sense, yet such
Accept your Makers work; he gave it me,
Which I as freely give; Hell shall unfold,
To entertain you two, her widest Gates,
And send forth all her Kings; there will be room,
Not like these narrow limits, to receive
Your numerous offspring; if no better place,
Thank him who puts me loth to this revenge
On you who wrong me not for him who wrong'd.
(IV, 374-86)

Satan, now having defaulted on the structure of gifts and response, must plunder the accounts of others. He has tried to abandon his obligations in regard to God's demand balance with him. Now, however, he wants to join with others.

Adam knows about the "demand balance." He knows about the gifts of God. He calls Eve

My fairest, my espous'd, my latest found,
Heav'ns last best gift, my ever new delight!
(V, 14-15)

What a happy recognition of God's good gifts. With great care, Milton emphasizes the source of the gift called Eve. She is "My fairest" and "my delight;" but when it comes to Eve being a gift, she is "Heaven's last best gift." Sinless Adam naturally points to God when he speaks of gifts.

Hail, universal Lord, be bounteous still
To give us onely good. (V, 205-6)

Adam, moreover, knows more about God and His gifts. God's gifts clearly come with "strings attached." There is nothing sinful or evil about this structure. The structures is so prevalent in this work, it should be noticed more frequently, while its roots in classical epic should be appreciated. While conversing with Eve, he articulates what God requires of them:

needs must the Power
That made us, and for us this ample World,
Be infinitely good, and of his good
As liberal and free as infinite;
That rais'd us from the dust, and plac't us here
In all this happiness, who at his hand
Have nothing merited, nor can perform
Aught whereof hee hath need, hee who requires
From us no other service then to keep
This one, this easie charge, of all the Trees
In Paradise that bear delicious fruit
So various, not to taste that onely Tree
Of knowledge, planted by the Tree of Life,
So near grows Death to Life, what eer Death is,

mortals (and angels) keep their gifts by their own exertions, by what they give to God. This is indeed another, unstated gift: the opportunity to give love, obedience and service to God. God made them this way.

Mortals know about the demand balance before they sin—good angels too. When Satan is apprehended and is about to fight with Gabriel at Eden's gate, Gabriel sees the sign of God in the sky and says to Satan:

Satan, I know thy strength, and thou knowst mine;
Neither our own, but giv'n: what follie then
To boast what Arms can doe, since thine no more
Than Heav'n permits, nor mine. (IV, 1004-7)

This is just one example of the critique of Homer and Vergil this work contains. Milton critiques Homer and Vergil when he presents epic warfare and its futility in Books V and VI of *Paradise Lost*. He also critiques the pagans in terms of gifts. This is a development from Homer and Vergil. But I see it as an expansion of what already existed in the pagans.

This expansion, this development appears clearly in two passage from the lips of Adam. The first passage comes when Adam is still sinless. The second is after he has fallen. When he has fallen, Adam sounds like a mortal from a classical epic, who counts the cost of what he must give

to another. When he is sinless, Adam gives simply as a natural response.

In Eden Adam has all that he needs. God has given to Adam and Eve in such a satisfactory way. Thus, when Raphael is approaching the Garden, Adam speaks to Eve about preparations for lunch by using the terms "give" and "afford." Here, being sinless, Adam means nothing more than "affording" is simply "giving." He urges Eve:

But goe with speed,
And, what thy stores contain, bring forth, and pour
Abundance, fit to honour and receive
Our Heav'nly stranger; well we may afford
Our givers thir own gifts, and large bestow.
(V, 313-17)

In this instance, Adam simply uses the word "afford" as a parallel to "bestow" in the next line. This passage supports my thesis, that in all four epics under consideration, there exists of pattern of gift-giving that is quite similar. When Adam sees Raphael approaching, Adam speaks a recognition that he and Eve have received good gifts from heavenly beings. Thus, "well" may they give and bestow gifts to those who have given gifts.

Milton's Adam contrasts with heroes of classical epics in two ways. First of all, Adam lives under a thoroughly rational God, who gives rewards and punishments in a consistent manner. Second, while sinless, Adam does not

Speak about "giving" to anyone for the sake of appeasement. This changes, though, when Adam has fallen.

The difference between Adam's God and the pagan gods is important to Milton's poem. The pagan gods may or may not reward a man for his gifts, blaming Fate, or competing wills in the heavenly realms, god versus god. Adam's God, while Adam is sinless, is completely rational. He gives good gifts as long as His creatures respond with obedience, loving Him. Also, He clearly warns His creatures that punishment will follow disobedience.

Adam's God acts in a consistent, rational manner while Adam is sinless. He acts in the same way when Adam falls. What changes, though, is Adam. In fact, the change *begins* as Adam starts to pervert his own will after Eve has eaten the fruit.

When Eve declares that she has eaten the fruit, Adam knows that death will follow her act. He immediately states his resolve to die with Eve:

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

(IX, 907-16)

The word "afford" may again mean simply "give" in this passage. The thesis of this work is then supported once again. When Adam acts, he counts the cost. There is nothing sinful about that activity. That is the way God made him.

However, since we know the way in which Adam will throw the gifts back in God's face after the Fall (X, 137-143), we may begin to question Adam's choice of words while he is dallying with sin. Later, in his fallen state, Adam points to God, the Giver of Eve and to Eve, God's gift, as if he can somehow deflect his own blame. Where is the devotion to Eve that he boasts of in the present speech? By his words in Book X, Adam offers up Eve as an object for God to blame. The word "afford" in the present speech points us in that direction already. Adam is calculating the necessary ingredients to get a new Eve: one part God creating, one part my rib, etc.

Adam leaves off his calculations and sins with Eve, resolved to die with her. Yet even in their Fall, Adam and Eve have shown us that they are truly made in the image of God. They are quite aware, always, of their position in a gift-giving creation.

Milton has shown himself to be in great agreement with Homer and Vergil in terms of gift giving between gods and

men. God gives gifts; it is up to man to use them correctly. Adam considers what he can afford to do and to give. That is how he is. He is made in God's image.

Raphael tells us how much rests with Adam when he says,

Attend: That thou art happie, owe to God;
That thou continu'st such, owe to thy self,
That is, to thy obedience; therein stand.
This was that caution given thee; be advis'd.
God made thee perfect, not immutable;
And good he made thee, but to persevere
He left it in thy power, ordain'd thy will
By nature free, not over-rul'd by Fate
Inextricable, or strict necessity:
Our voluntarie 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 no, who will but what they must
By Destinie, and can no other choose?
Myself, and all th' Angelic Host that stand
In sight of God enthroned, our happie 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:
And some are fall'n. (V, 519-541)

Adam can "owe to" himself his happy condition. Adam has an account—many, in fact. God gives to him and rewards him at the same time. Adam's destiny—and the destiny of all humans—rests in Adam's obedience.

God also wants angelic obedience. This is the dividing line between the rebel angels and the good. Abdiel is the sole dissenter in the revolt. He rebuffs Satan, pointing out that when Satan refuses to obey the Law

of God, to confess the Son as the true King of heaven, he misses the fact that God is giving even more to his creatures by demanding this obedience. His argument is logical:

unjust, thou saist,
Flatly unjust, to bind with Laws the free,
And equal over equals to let Reigne,
One over all with unsucceeded power.
Shalt thou give Law to God, shalt thou dispute
With him the points of libertie, who made
Thee what thou art, and formd the Pow'rs of Heav'n
Such as he pleased, and circumscrib'd thir being?
Yet, by experience taught, we know how good,
And of our good and of our dignitie
How provident he is, how farr from thought
To make us less, bent rather to exalt
Our happie state under one Head more neer
United. But to grant it thee unjust,
That equal over equals Monarch Reigne:
Thy self though great and glorious dost thou count,
Or all Angelic Nature joind in one,
Equal to his begotten Son? (V, 818-35)

God has been good by his gifts, says Abdiel. If He gives to us, even new laws, we should have learned that this is for our good. (One imagines Adam, on hearing about the Tree Prohibition, wiping his brow and thanking God: "You are a good God! So, that's the death tree? Thanks for the law.") Abdiel says here what Satan will say after the war on Niphates' top. We have already heard about it. All that God wanted was to give more gifts.

But Satan is fallen already. When no one seconds Abdiel, Satan snorts,

strange point and new!

Doctrin which we would know whence learnt: who saw
When this creation was? rememberest 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.
(V, 855-60)

This is the only option. If God has not given life and
being, then we got it ourselves.¹³⁸

As the rejection of God's gifts brings the end of
gifts, obedience to God brings even more. The good angels
show up to battle in heaven

Invulnerable, impenitrably arm'd;
Such high advantages thir innocence
Gave them above thir foes, not to have sinn'd,
Not to have disobey'd; in fight they stood
Unwearied, unobnoxious to be pain'd
By wound, though from thir place by violence moved.
(VI, 400-5)

The right use of God's gifts—by obedience—brings more
gifts.

The Son of God knows how the gifts of God work too.
In fact, the plan all along is that whatever the Father
gives to Him, He will give back to the Father:

This I my Glorie account,
My exaltation, and my whole delight,
That thou in me well pleas'd, declarst thy will
Fulfill'd, which to fulfil is all my bliss.
Scepter and Power, thy giving, I assume,
And gladlier shall resign, when in the end
Thou shalt be All in All, and I in thee
For ever... (VI, 726-33)

¹³⁸ Satan fits very comfortably into modern society.

The Son sees no end to the giving of the Father to Him and to all. The Son is therefore obedient, giving the Father what He wants.

This is what God wants of humans also. Raphael says to Adam:

Sollicit not thy thoughts with matters hid;
Leave them to God above, him serve and fear;
Of other Creatures, as him pleases best,
Wherever plac't, let him dispose: joy thou
In what he gives to thee, this Paradise
And thy fair Eve. (VIII, 167-72)

God has given such gifts as promote service and fear. Adam himself is full of the gifts of God. Raphael says so:

To whom thus Raphael answer'd heav'nly meek.
Nor are thy lips ungraceful, Sire of men,
Nor tongue ineloquent; for God on thee
Abundantly his gifts hath also pour'd
Inward and outward both, his image fair.
(VIII, 217-21)

Adam speaks with graceful, gift-giving lips to Raphael, because He is full of the gifts of God. He speaks the same way to God about His gifts, when Eve is created:

thou hast fulfill'd
Thy words, Creator bounteous and benigne,
Giver of all things fair, but fairest this
Of all thy gifts, nor enviest. I now see
Bone of my Bone, Flesh of my Flesh, my Self.
(VIII, 491-95)

Adam knows where the gifts come from. He recognizes all good gifts.

Everything goes wrong when non-gifts are treated as gifts of God. You can tell simply by the vocabulary. The Serpent speaks the truth at first when he says to Eve:

Fairest resemblance of thy Maker fair,
Thee all things living gaze on, all things thine
By gift, and thy Celestial Beautie adore
With ravishment beheld, there best beheld
Where universally admired. (IX, 538-42)

But then he speaks of the 'not-given' Tree of Knowledge:

O Sacred, Wise, and Wisdom-giving Plant,
Mother of Science, now I feel thy Power.
(IX, 679-80)

This plant gives gifts. He who will not address God addresses the wood. Then he boasts of the gifts:

Queen of this Universe, do not believe
Those rigid threats of Death: ye shall not Die:
How should ye? by the Fruit? it gives you Life
To Knowledge; by the Threatener? look on mee.
(IX, 684-7)

The Fall happens because of a muddling of gifts with things that are no gifts. Adam adds to the muddling. It is *after* the Fall that Adam starts blaming God. Then the echoes of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid* reach us most clearly!

Since Adam now listens to his gift from God, Eve, rather than God, the Giver, the poet remarks,

In recompence (for such compliance bad
Such recompence best merits) from the bough
She gave him of that fair enticing Fruit
With liberal hand: he scrupl'd not to eat
Against his better knowledge, not deceav'd,

But fondly overcome with Femal charm.
Earth trembl'd from her entrails.

(IX, 994-1000)

She gave to him; he received a recompense, a merit
from what was not given by God. The language of gift and
payment runs throughout the Fall itself. After the Fall,
Adam tries to excuse himself before God. What twisting of
the gifts of God when he says

This Woman, whom thou mad'st to be my help,
And gav'st me as thy perfet gift, so good,
So fit, so acceptable, so Divine,
That from her hand I could suspect no ill,
And what she did, whatever in it self,
Her doing seem'd to justifie the deed;
She gave me of the Tree, and I did eat.

(X, 137-43)

The fault lies with the Giver and the gifts, according
to Adam, not with the receiver. This is the definition of
the Fall of Man. Its outline will reappear throughout
history, as Michael shows it to Adam. First Michael tells
Adam what might have been:

To whom thus Michael with regard benigne.
Adam, thou know'st Heav'n his, and all the Earth,
Not this Rock onely; his Omnipresence fills
Land, Sea, and Air, and every kind that lives,
Fomented by his virtual power and warmd:
All th' Earth he gave thee to possess and rule.

(XI, 334-39)

He had such great gifts from such a Giver. But he gave
himself not to the Giver but to the gifts. His sons will
do the same. They will be

Inventers rare;

Unmindful of thir Maker, though his Spirit
Taught them, but they his gifts acknowledg'd none.
(XI, 610-12)

Adam tried to put the blame on the gift (Eve) and the Giver
(God). God did not accept the excuse and neither will
Michael. When Adam sees the continuous falling of man, he
bemoans that such great people

should turn aside to tread
Paths indirect, or in the mid way faint!
But still I see the tenour of Mans woe
Holds on the same, from Woman to begin.
(XI, 630-33)

Michael has had enough. He gives Adam his own, sinless
audit:

From Mans effeminate slackness it begins,
Said th' Angel, who should better hold his place
By wisdom, and superiour gifts receiv'd.
(XI, 634-36)

The problem, Michael says correctly, is the abuse of
gifts by the receiver of gifts. Adam will notice it in his
own offspring, Nimrod:

O execrable son! so to aspire
Above his Brethren; to himself assuming
Authoritie usurped, from God not giv'n.
(XII, 64-66)

Paradise Lost asserts the structure of gift giving,
with all its problems and abuses, that Homer and Vergil
have already used. The time frame is convoluted here.
These words, written after Homer's and Vergil's, pretend to

foreshadow the illusion of the "demand balance" that will haunt men throughout time.

The end of the poem is not without hope, however; it is not without gifts. The renewal of man will begin by way of gifts again, gifts acknowledged. First will come Abraham,

poor, but trusting all his wealth
With God, who call'd him, in a land unknown.
Canaan he now attains, I see his Tents
Pitched about Sechem, and the neighbouring Plain
Of Moreh; there by promise he receives
Gift to his Progenie of all that Land.

(XII, 133-38)

The renewal will end by way of gifts and merits, because of the Son of God, Who will defeat Satan. He tells Adam,

Dream not of thir fight,
As of a Duel, or the local wounds
Of head or heel: not therefore joyns the Son
Manhood to God-head, with more strength to foil
Thy enemies; nor so is overcome
Satan, whose fall from Heav'n, a deadlier bruise,
Disabl'd, not to give thee thy death's wound:
Which he, who comes thy Saviour, shall recure,
Not by destroying Satan, but his works
In thee and in thy Seed: nor can this be,
But by fulfilling that which thou didst want,
Obedience to the Law of God, impos'd
On penaltie of death, and suffering death,
The penaltie to thy transgression due,
And due to theirs which out of thine will grow:
So onely can high Justice rest appaid.
The law of God exact he shall fulfil
Both by obedience and by love, though love
Alone fulfil the Law; thy punishment
He shall endure by coming in the Flesh.

(XII, 386-405)

Then, for men, there will come more gifts. The pattern of gift-giving will be renewed,

For the Spirit,
Powrd first on his Apostles, whom he sends
T' evangelize the Nations, then on all
Baptiz'd, shall them with wonderous gifts endue
To speak all Tongues, and do all Miracles,
As did thir Lord before them. Thus they win
Great numbers of each Nation to receive
With joy the tidings brought from Heav'n.
(XII, 497-504)

The problem is that man's disobedience will be the same as always. God gives gifts but men take what does not belong to them. Thus, even though the Spirit gives good gifts, in the Scriptures, men will misuse God's gifts. The truth of God is

Left onely in those written Records pure,
Though not but by the Spirit understood.
Then shall they seek to avail themselves of names,
Places, and titles, and with these to join
Secular power; though feigning still to act
By spiritual, to themselves appropriating
The Spirit of God, promis'd alike and giv'n
To all Beleevers. (XII, 513-20)

Milton has hope that the gifts of God will reach all sorts of people. His depiction of the human situation does not speak against the illusory "demand balance of spiritual solvency" we have seen in the other epics.

In *Paradise Lost*, God sees all accounts as full when He gives creation, life and the supremacy of His Son. The accounts are all defunct when what is given is treated as

something that belongs to the recipient to use as he or she pleases.

When it comes to Satan and his angel followers, the results are disastrous, with no hope of rehabilitation. When it comes to God's dealings with Adam and Eve, there is a great fall and disaster. But new accounts are opened, with more gifts.

It is only when we reach the end of the work that we know that Adam has learned the good and evil of banking with God. Then he will learn that obedience toward God is what is due from him, after he has learned that his accounts have been credited with the worth of the Son.

In his comments in criticism of modern people who do not like the idea of Satan and Hell and the demonic as something truly real, existent, John Sisk provides solid parallels between the demons and the thoughts of modern man. Men and women in our society show themselves to be truly sons of Adam, impenitent, unconverted, when they act like Satan rather than our contrite first parents. He writes about modern man. Satan's outrage is much like modern man's moral outrages.

To discover this is to suspect that their moral outrage is at bottom a sentimental indulgence in which

doing good had been confused with feeling good in adversarial circumstances.¹³⁹

Such people are somehow akin to the followers of Satan, who saw him as a "Liberator Devil."

When he appears to Eve in *Paradise Lost*, Milton's Satan is the consummate flatterer who beguiles "our credulous Mother" into believing that she is one "who shouldst be seen/ A Goddess among Gods, ador'd and serv'd/ By Angels numberless, thy daily Train." Note that shouldst: the Liberator Devil, like Twain's Satan, is always a severe moralist, indignant with whatever victimizing forces deny us the personal fulfillment to which we are entitled. He is both New Age facilitator and anarchist. He knows that, deep down, humans, especially the young, don't want to be civilized. They only want to be happy, and their cruel fate is that in the process of trying only to be happy against the grain of established culture they manage, more or less, to get civilized. To the Liberator Devil it is an appalling state of affairs. Who would better understand Harold Bloom's fear that "we are on the verge of being governed by a nationally established religion"?

Sisk's true concern, and that of Milton, is with man, not with Satan. He writes:

There is no point in wasting sympathy on this Devil. He does not want to be saved. He wants to scramble those "signals of transcendence" (Peter Berger's fine term) which if unscrambled speak to a yearning for a kind of salvation that to him is damnation. When in his disguise as an intransigent truth-teller he identifies this yearning as nothing more than a failure of nerve, he is not only being quite honest but is saying what he must if he is to keep up his own nerve in the touchiest of situations. As a professional [excrement] detector, his only course is to expose as fraudulent the enchantments that have always kept the damned human race in thrall to his grand Adversary, but he must do this while striving to

¹³⁹ John Sisk, "The Necessary Devil," *First Things* 37 (November 1993), 26.

re-enchanted it in his own darkly romantic terms. So he is caught between a rock and a hard place: he cannot succeed without fostering in humans that boundless appetite for enchantment that has always made them susceptible to the unscrambled signals of transcendence. If this Devil wants to be saved from anything it is from the exigencies of the ego-diminishing role he must play in a metaphysical drama he longs to revise.¹⁴⁰

Man begins *Paradise Lost* with two demand balances of spiritual solvency. God has an account with man, from God, which God can demand to be rendered to Him at any time. Man also has an account with God, who has given, and will give, whatever is lacking. The only way to lose both balances is to waste what comes from God and replace it with the notions of Satan or self.

After Adam sins, he acts much the way that mortal characters act in the classical epics. They blame others, exaggerate what is due them, and even blame the heavenly powers. They reflect Satan, their deceiver, in their sense of injury.

Yet Milton adds one more element that is not in classical epic. In *Paradise Lost*, God is still able to be counted on—for forgiveness. Therefore, when Adam and Eve repent, there begins a new balance, a new account, which helps them leave Eden with a calm and a serenity which are unknown in Hell. The classical epics did not address such

¹⁴⁰ Sisk, 27.

an issue of theology. It is also beyond the scope of this study. However, we may at least state that this is no change of procedure, that Milton shows us that his God has not changed, though man has. God still gives good gifts.

CHAPTER FIVE: COMPARISON

Paradise Lost clearly associates itself with the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid*. The allusions to all three works, the claim by the bard Milton that he will surpass the earlier works (no matter what irony we read there), and the form of the work invite every reader to read the Christian epic together with the classical ones. Someone unfamiliar with the ancient epics may be able to read Milton with some amount of profit. But any profit thus gained would surely resemble the aesthetic pleasure an infant enjoys when it gets hold of a crystal vase. The item at hand sparkles brilliantly, but the child has no idea of the effort or cost involved in producing it. The bard Milton wants more from and for his readers. For the bard himself entices his readers, in fact he dares them, to read his work and compare it to the recognized authorities of Western literature.

This study has asked how *Paradise Lost* compares to the ancient epics in regard to the theodical element of each work and the use of gifts. To make such a comparison, we must avoid making the easy assumption that Homer or Vergil did not share a common concern with Milton to justify God's ways to men. At what level are we prepared to state that Milton and the ancients may not properly be compared? The

English poem boasts its superiority over the classical-language poems and then states, as a major purpose of the work, a form of theodicy. The bard Milton has asked us to read all the epics and to remain conscious of their attempts to explain or make sense of the ways of the gods with men. In this way, Milton has almost asked that this study be written.

There are many ways, of course, to approach the theodicy of *Paradise Lost*. One avenue is to learn how theodicy was approached in Milton's day. The best modern study of Milton's theology and theodicy in view of seventeenth-century thought is Dennis Danielson's *Milton's Good God*. This admirable volume illuminates the ways in which Milton responds to theodical debates contemporary with him. Danielson provides us with a distinction between the poem by Milton and a treatise such as Leibnitz's *Theodicy*, by calling *Paradise Lost* a "literary theodicy." The treatise does not deal so much with particular cases of human suffering in view of a good God, but rather focuses on the metaphysical questions raised about God's power and goodness. A "literary theodicy" shows God in action, working with man in his fallen condition.

Danielson's distinction strengthens the argument that Milton can be read most profitably in company with Homer

and Vergil. For the gods show deep concern for men in the classical works, no matter how often the poets have their gods say that they are above the concerns of mortals. Even a god's or goddess's obsessive hatred of a mortal demonstrates the ways of the gods with men.

William Porter's book on Milton's poem and the classical epics is an attempt by a classicist to speak to critics of Milton who have assumed too much about ancient epic or, worse, are not very familiar with them. Porter takes pains to elevate the use of "allusion" over occurrences of "echoes" or "borrowings" from the ancients by Milton. Porter insists that the terms used will affect the results of any comparison. "Allusion," for Porter, happens when an artist makes a reference to an earlier work in a witty manner. This wit consists in an intentionally bold use of another writer's material, which makes the reader fill in gaps for himself and question the appropriateness of referring to the earlier works at each particular moment.

The scarcely veiled impatience Porter has with "unfit" readers of Milton is constant throughout his book. For Porter believes that when we find a so-called allusion to Homer or Vergil in every other line or word we miss the importance of the major allusions in the work. Porter

shows convincingly one major mistake made by critics of all sorts. This example shows how a reading of *Paradise Lost* can mis-fire immediately if one does not pay attention.

When Milton boasts that he will soar "Above th' Aonian Mount" while he pursues "Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rime" (I, 15-16), readers assume that Milton is challenging Homer primarily. Porter shows that this is not true.¹⁴¹

Milton is first of all proposing that readers read Hesiod, who is most closely associated with Mount Helicon. Porter argues that many assume that Milton compares the Christian God with the pagan gods of Homer, without first recognizing that Milton's allusion asks for a comparison primarily with Hesiod. What such a comparison gives fit readers is a crucial recognition. Porter argues, convincingly, that Milton wants us to learn what elements of the Christian God are already present in Hesiod, even before anyone attempts to compare the Zeus of Homer or the Jupiter of Vergil to Jesus and the Father. What background has one missed if only Homer and Milton are compared?

Porter first investigates how Hesiod is an anti-traditionalist in view of his claims to inspiration by the Muses. Although the Muses inspire his work, Hesiod first admits that the Muses know how to say false things that

¹⁴¹ Porter, 44ff.

seem real and real things that seem false (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 26-28). Hesiod intends to tell all about the gods and their generation, their wars and their powers. He does not claim to be telling lies. But he knows the dangers of being drafted into the service of the Muse. (Robert McMahon would agree completely.)¹⁴²

Porter's conclusion on the matter of the inspiration of the poet helps us to dismiss one error of reading:

So Hesiod turns *Paradise Lost*'s critique back upon itself: Milton would reject the ancient poet that he most resembles. There are perhaps some for whom the authentication of Milton's inspiration requires only weighing the Christianity of *Paradise Lost* against the paganism of the *Theogony*. But this drives the reader to a kind of literalism that I suspect many of us would not find congenial; piety here is hard to distinguish from chauvinism.¹⁴³

Milton cannot be wholly serious in his boast to excel Hesiod and the other ancient bards. For he has described his vocation as too similar to Hesiod's. He has also made his poem too similar to the works of the pagans.

Porter's conclusions are worth considering. For much of what he states about Milton and Hesiod has already been stated in the current work about Milton, Homer and Vergil.

¹⁴² Robert McMahon, *The Two Poets of Paradise Lost* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998). McMahon's thesis is that the bard Milton fails in the first half of *Paradise Lost* because he attempts to put Christian themes in epic clothing, and then proceeds to the humbler task of true Christianity. The process of the bard's growth agrees well with Hesiod's recognition of the pitfalls of speaking for the Muses.

¹⁴³ Porter, 52.

After he has discussed the contrast and similarity that *Paradise Lost* has hinted at between Milton's vocation and Hesiod's, Porter states that the most important comparison to be made between the work of the two poets concerns the war in heaven. In the *Theogony* the war is waged to decide who will reign in heaven and who will be cast down. In *Paradise Lost* there is no question about who has won the battle. Thus, one could readily (but mistakenly) match up and compare all the characters by means of simple questions: How does Milton's God surpass Zeus in power? How do the Titans resemble the evil angels?

Yet Milton does not allow the matter to be decided by his recognition of an absolutely more powerful God than Zeus. Instead, Milton's war in heaven lasts three days, after the Father (albeit mockingly) speaks of making His throne secure (V, 719ff.). There are allusions to the fall of the Titans, which lasts for nine days in Hesiod's work, but which is doubled in Milton's to nine of falling (VI, 871) and nine of rolling on the fiery lake (I, 50). Milton could tempt readers to come to a hasty inference, e.g., that by doubling Hesiod's nine days his work is at least twice that of the Greek. But that would lead us to conclude that Milton's only goal is to make his God and the angels that much more similar to the Greek Zeus and his

henchmen. That is not Milton's goal. His God rewards the obedient and punishes the disobedient, as the classical gods do. Milton's God, however, is consistent in regard to rewards and punishments. That is the proper way to read of the nine days' doubling.

There are other similarities between the wars in these poems. But Porter advances his thesis with this preliminary conclusion:

These borrowings or weak allusions set up the broad analogy between Hesiod's war in heaven and Milton's war. The few strong allusions, however, the striking points of Milton's poetic revision of Hesiod, are aimed to explode the analogy by controverting the reader's facile inference that, just because the rebel angels resemble the Titans (as the defeated and fallen), Messiah must resemble Zeus. But Milton's stratagem...is equally facile. He pulls the reader up short simply by attributing to Satan rather than the Messiah the proper virtue of Zeus, which may be regarded as the combination of knowledge with power.¹⁴⁴

There is much "play" in Milton's transformation of Hesiod. One cannot simply read *Paradise Lost* as if one were decoding a character-cryptogram, simply filling in substitute characters, e.g., "Zeus is like Messiah, Titans are like evil angels, Father is like Fate, etc." That is the very exercise Milton tempts us to initiate but hopes we will quickly abandon.

¹⁴⁴ Porter, 63.

Writing about the comparison between Hesiod's powerful Zeus and Milton's All-Powerful God, Porter summarizes:

Now Milton would have us think that he is scandalized by Hesiod. But his concern is Hesiod's own, precisely: to allay the suspicion that only superior force keeps God on his throne. And yet he manages to turn the tables on Hesiod here. He has prompted his "fit reader" to link Satan with Zeus; but he also anticipates and provides for the general reader's natural temptation to compare the Greek god to the Christian.¹⁴⁵

Porter argues persuasively that Milton does not simply put all of the Greek and Roman gods into Hell with Satan and the evil angels. Instead, the qualities of the pagan gods can appear in the evil angels and the good ones, as well as in Satan and in God.

A striking example is the part played by the victorious gods of Hesiod and Milton. In the *Theogony*, Zeus does not play much part at all in the battle. In fact, all he does is to produce fantastic fireworks. Likewise, the Father does not Himself fight, and Milton writes of the Son, "Yet half his strength he put not forth" (VI, 853). Thus Porter:

Milton invites one to meditate on the contrast between the Greek god, exerting himself to the limit against no one in particular and succeeding in the end only with the aid of the monstrous hundred-handers, and the Christian Messiah, who faces the entire rebel army and defeats them almost without trying. In this simple,

¹⁴⁵ Porter, 66.

but strong, allusion is to be found the denouement of Milton's putative critique of Hesiod and thus of Greek myth generally...¹⁴⁶

Of what does this "putative critique" consist? One may imagine, if one is not fit to read Milton, that Hesiod's gods with all their attributes are now in Christianity's Hell. But this critique is only putative.

When we are fit to read Milton by recognizing his respect for the work and words of the ancient poets, we are freed from a facile inference that the difference between Milton's justification of God's ways and the pagan gods' justification is absolute simply because Milton sings of a better God and better gods. Milton himself does not allow this. We have seen already how the God of *Paradise Lost* acts so often like Zeus or Jupiter of the pagans. Those who approve of this similarity, such as Porter, claim that this is part of Milton's plan for writing. Those who disapprove of the similarity need to explain how a man as familiar with Christianity and paganism as John Milton could have made such a hodge-podge of a Christian God!

Porter teaches us to read Milton prepared to find similarities between classical verse about the gods and Christian verse about God. Before he investigates Hesiod's vocation, he writes, "We shall leave Homer to fend for

¹⁴⁶ Porter, 67.

himself."¹⁴⁷ This study has attempted to fend for Homer and Vergil because Porter's thesis is so convincing.

If Porter's manner of reading the classics and *Paradise Lost* is superior, then we must take seriously what we have read in all four epics about how the gods deal with men. We may not quickly dismiss any poet or interpretation, assuming that we have a more worthy theology. Instead, we must search to see if one poet only *appears* to dismiss other explanations, while explaining the ways of gods to men in much the same way.

I contend that Milton has done just this. His boast that he will surpass the entire heaven of the ancient poets tempts us to judge quickly that, as his God surpasses ancient gods, so his theodicy leaves ancient theodicy far behind. This is unsatisfying.

It is more proper to speak about the way in which Milton takes the gift-giving terminology and structure that is presented in classical epic and shows us how his God gives gifts more rationally, more consistently, than the gods of classical epic. The major difference between Milton and the classical authors is not so much found in the quality or the quantity of the gifts, but in the ways that Milton's God consistently punishes and rewards His

¹⁴⁷ Porter, 49.

creatures. Great emphasis is placed upon the recipients of the gifts and their responses. But the characters in Milton's poem are never left wondering about the ways of God, as characters are always wondering in Homer and Vergil.

We have read all the major epics and found their conclusions to be startlingly similar. The Greek epics show that the gods are not impartial. Certain divinities, especially goddesses, will never halt their hatred toward Troy. But there are favorites on each side, as well as doomed characters. Aeneas is saved¹⁴⁸ (one could say for Vergil!). Helen will survive; but Patroclus, Hector and Achilles *must* die, and in that order.

What should man do in such a universe? Honor and worship the gods. Dutiful reverence to the gods may never be safely neglected. It may not always get you what you want, but if you do not obey the gods you are dooming yourself.

The *Aeneid* presents much of the same: Juno's implacable hatred of the Trojans;¹⁴⁹ Aeneas' piety and favored position in the estimation of Jupiter and Fate;¹⁵⁰ the accounts of the bad ends of the Greek heroes who

¹⁴⁸ *Iliad*, V, 312ff; XX, 325.

¹⁴⁹ *Aeneid*, I, 25ff.

¹⁵⁰ *Aeneid*, XII, 794-795.

offended the divinities who once supported them.¹⁵¹ The message is too similar to Homer's message for us to miss it: If you dishonor or do not listen to the gods, the gods may turn their favor away for good.

Milton clearly knew all of this and still presented his God in the same manner. Adam's conclusion in Book XII, in his now sinful state, is familiar to us from the pagans. The best thing for mortals is to obey God and to depend on his providence. We learn this after we learn that God Almighty has favorites! The Son is a favorite. Man is a favorite. Even though he will disobey and fall into impiety, God will still provide for him.

But the devils disobey and seem to have no hope. Why? Because they disobeyed. They have misused the gifts of God. There is no safe amount of disobedience, no innocuous sin. The message for devils in *Paradise Lost* is the same as for mortals in the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*. If you end up in punishment which is threatened never to end, it is your own fault. Obey God!

Of course, the pagans know nothing of a Messiah Who takes on mortal flesh and provides the salvation and brings God's mercy to sinners. But that only serves to make the similarities of the theodicies that much more striking. So

¹⁵¹ *Aeneid*, I, 39-45.

much is left in the hands of mortals. The issues are utterly important. Homer and Vergil may not cover the entire world and universe from creation to denouement in their works. But they do cover life and death, the same matters which concern us.

It is a curious fact that some modern commentators deny that *Paradise Lost* is a theodicy, or that its predecessors were theodicies. Milton considered the ancient epics to be theodicies.

Sadly typical of the range of modern criticism are the contrary efforts of varying writers. Some include John Milton with all other writers who have tried and failed to justify God's ways to men, but a splendid failure! Others insist that Milton wrote something other than a true theodicy, and thus we may not expect very much from the poem of the Fall concerning the reconciliation of God's omnipotence and mercy. Tilley, an adamant foe of all theodicies, writes, in a note (!), "*Paradise Lost* is not a theodicy."¹⁵²

Despite more than three centuries of criticism to the contrary, this enemy of philosophical theodicy tries to protect Milton. Perhaps he is simply trying to establish that a poem about justifying the ways of the gods is

¹⁵² Tilley, 252, note 2.

totally foreign to a treatise concerned most of all with logic. But again, such a position must answer a question we have already asked: Was Milton so ignorant of such distinctions? Did John Milton intend to state a misleading goal at the end of his proem?

A more engaging problem is the presentation of the gods whom the poems attempt to justify. The character of God and the gods presented in the poems will determine the success of the justification. Immoral or unlovable divinities, divorced from everyday life, do not inspire true fear or worship. They also produce no defenders to justify their ways. Milton is certain that he is at the tail of a long line of those who speak for God. When critics attack any of these presentations of divinities, they are also attacking their implicit theodicies.

Dissatisfaction with the presentation of the gods appeared early. Xenophanes has already been mentioned. His criticism of Homer and Hesiod is worth repeating:

πάντα θεοῖς ἀνέθηκαν Ὅμηρός θ' Ἡσίοδος τε
ἃσα παρ' ἀνθρώποισιν ὀνείδεα καὶ ψόγος ἐστίν,
κλέπτειν μοιχεύειν τε καὶ ἀλλήλους ἀπατεύειν.¹⁵³

[Homer and Hesiod attribute to the gods all reproachful things, whatever is found among men—and it is a lie! stealing and adultery and deceiving one another.]

¹⁵³ See note 21 above.

Xenophanes is very unhappy that Homer has not maintained a sharp distinction between the behavior of men and the actions of gods. This distinction in kind between mortals and immortals strikes at the foundation of any need divinities may have for justification. The "two jars" of which Achilles speaks teach us this. So does the warning of Apollo to Diomedes that gods and mortals are totally different.¹⁵⁴

Here questions are raised for us concerning the moral basis of the gods' dealings with men in all of the epics. The Greek and Roman supreme god is called the father of gods and of men. But the moral basis of Zeus/Jupiter's ways toward men is contained in the discovery that the gods live forever and are too powerful, eventually, for those of us who die and go into the ground.

Milton's God is also "wholly other." He is shown to be eventually too powerful, in the battle begun by the devils. Milton's God is also the Father of men and "gods," i.e. angels. How different is He from Zeus/Jupiter? There are supernatural beings who are forever out of His favor, just as the Titans are out of Zeus' favor. There are mortals who meet bad ends and those who receive special favor, as happens in the universe run by Jupiter.

¹⁵⁴ *Iliad* V, 440-442.

One cannot escape the conclusion that at a fundamental level all these supreme gods have the same standing in regard to man. They are all too powerful, more powerful than other beings who are greatly superior to mortals, Titans and angels and demons.

Milton challenges prejudiced readers, especially those prejudiced in favor of Milton's God and His ways toward men. This is what William Porter concludes about Milton's critique of classical heroism, as exemplified by Achilles:

Milton acknowledges and takes to task only a single strain of classical heroism whose character he finds exemplified in the *Iliad* preeminently. But he does this by misrepresenting the plots and themes of the classical epics so egregiously that he can hardly have intended to fool anyone: a reader who does not object to the lines just quoted [9.27-33] is not paying attention.¹⁵⁵

What Porter contends about Milton's depiction of heroism is a good conclusion for our investigation of Milton's 'surpassing' theology/theodicy. When Milton seems to push aside stories exemplified by Juno's ire or Achilles' wrath, he is, in fact, daring us to read those works more closely than ever. He is not telling us that the conclusions of the pagans are useless.

¹⁵⁵ Porter, 89.

Porter writes about the ways of the gods with men in Vergil, sensitive to Milton's way of reading. He speaks specifically to issues of theodicy when he writes:

Suffice it to say that even though Vergil recognizes the presence of evil in the world and ascribes to it a divine origin, he also recognizes an imperative for man to pursue order through political activity and to cultivate piety toward the gods. This paradox is stated most strongly at Aeneid 12.838-40, only a few lines after Jupiter has admitted the "fluctus irarum" within Juno...This new race...will surpass even the gods [emphasis original] in piety, and it will do this at least partly by worshiping Juno, the cause of all their sorrow, more than she has ever been worshiped!¹⁵⁶

This supports my view completely. Evil has a supernatural origin. This means simply an origin beyond the ordinary powers of men like Aeneas. But what is Aeneas' duty, his program for life? Pursue order, obey the gods. Not all our questions are answered, in Vergil or in Milton. But man's duty remains the same: Obey God!

This remains, however, a similarity in only one respect. The high divities of these four epics all demand the same thing: obedience. Beyond this similarity, though, there are great differences between the Christian God and the Olympians.

Milton's God is more consistent in His treatment of men and angels. In Homer, the gods act from motives that are impossible to define with certainty (see note 22

¹⁵⁶ Porter, 126.

above). In Vergil, the gods are so removed from mortal concerns that there is even less hope of understanding why the gods act the way they do. Homer's gods and Vergil's gods never state a fixed rule that governs all of their behavior.

Milton's God states it clearly. He gives gifts and expects obedience and love. Those who transgress will be punished with death. Those who obey will enjoy more gifts. Milton's God does not harm one creature when He blesses another. When He raises the Son and demands obedience, we learn from the poem that this is meant to bless all of God's creatures. Two men pray to the Olympians during a battle; the gods most often help one by harming another. Why does this happen? There is no consistent answer. Milton presents a consistent God, who surpasses the Olympians in the very structure the pagans wrote about: gift-giving and payment.

There has been such fierce criticism of the portrayal of God in *Paradise Lost* that C.S. Lewis thought it was necessary to justify the ways of Milton with God.¹⁵⁷ It is quite common to find such phrases as "One of the most obvious defects in the God of *Paradise Lost*...."¹⁵⁸ Lewis

¹⁵⁷ C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (Oxford University Press, 1961), 82-93.

¹⁵⁸ John Peter, *A Critique of Paradise Lost* (Columbia University Press, 1960), 15.

must state the obvious, that despite whatever else Milton wrote about theology, *Paradise Lost* is "overwhelmingly Christian."¹⁵⁹

Even critics who wish to defend Milton at every turn often agree that the presentation of God in *Paradise Lost* is at least a partial failure.¹⁶⁰ Gardner writes of "the revulsion that many readers feel at the presentation of God as Monarch of Heaven rather than as the Father of angels as well as of men, whose 'nature and whose Name is Love'."¹⁶¹ A critic who is pleading for a sympathetic reading of Milton agrees partially with those who see something wrong with Milton's God.

The problem is that the "revulsion" felt toward the God of *Paradise Lost* is the result of reading in an unfit manner. There is no recognition that Milton is consciously making his God sound Homeric and Vergilian, while still striving to surpass Homer and Vergil.

Francis Blessington is correct only to a point when he writes:

¹⁵⁹ Lewis, 92.

¹⁶⁰ Helen Gardner offers a defense in *A Reading of Paradise Lost* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967) 56: "The only banal object in Van Eyck's Adoration of the Lamb is the Lamb. It might have been the work of any sign-painter. This does not hinder our enjoyment of the whole composition and the variety and beauty of all that surrounds the central conventional symbol."

¹⁶¹ Gardner, 56.

What the classical tradition invoked by Milton shows is that the relationship between man and god has changed as well as continued from the earlier epics. The Greeks and the Romans feared but did not love their gods. Man and god seldom confer in the classical epics, and the father of the gods and man never, but Adam actually argues with God for a mate.¹⁶²

Yes, we can all agree that Milton writes about a different set of divinities. But this simple fact leads Blessington to a conclusion that an unfit reader could make to the detriment of an accurate reading, that "The justice and mercy of God are the principal defenses of the ways of God to man."¹⁶³

An implication in that statement is that this defense has not been tried before. God may receive a good defense (and we must once consider here if God truly needs a defense), but what are the implications for man? What should man do? To answer this question, Blessington teaches an unfit reader how to become fit:

In his prose, Milton claims that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were proof for the free will of man that existed 'besides fate' (*Prose*, II, 294). Further, Milton found in the *Aeneid* (I, 39-41) an example of divine justice (*Prose*, VI, 387), where the sins of one sinner require expiation by a whole race. In his reading of the classical epics, Milton emphasizes that these epics are all partially theodicies: latent in the epic tradition is a defense of God's ways to man. The *Iliad* shows us a philosophically vague but poetically vivid picture of the relationship between

¹⁶² Francis Blessington, *Paradise Lost and the Classical Epic* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 46.

¹⁶³ Blessington, 47.

god and man, between fate and free will, and between god and fate. A similar series of relationships informs the *Aeneid*, but it is to the *Odyssey* that we must turn in order to see the key passage that influenced Milton's conception of his God.¹⁶⁴

That is a fit reading of the ways of gods with men in all these works. They are not completely foreign to each other. In fact, Milton's "conception of his God" comes, in part, from classical sources! Northrop Frye states in a series of lectures that the speech by Zeus in the first book of the *Odyssey* was the basis for the speeches of the Father in *Paradise Lost* III.¹⁶⁵ This is another example of reading the classics by way of Milton. Such a reading does not dismiss the classical work. It reads it again.

Blessington is surely wrong in stating this:

In the classical epic, man is so much the measure of all things that when Odysseus was offered immortality, he refused it...the classical epic centered itself, as Greek culture did, on man. Milton reverses this tradition and has put God back in the center of the epic world.¹⁶⁶

This is wrong, as suggested by the first line, "Of Mans Disobedience...." Here we see a close reading slip a bit, because there remains a desire to pronounce a champion in some sort of contest.

¹⁶⁴ Blessington, 47.

¹⁶⁵ Northrop Frye, *The Return of Eden* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 99.

¹⁶⁶ Blessington 49.

Blessington reads better in this conclusion:

If Milton had wanted to oppose Christian and pagan values, he could easily have done so: his God did not have to wield the thunderbolt. Once He does, however, He becomes Zeus through theocrasia¹⁶⁷ and helps to fuse the two worlds.¹⁶⁸

This is a fine example of taking Milton seriously when he boasts of his superiority. Such a reading demands that Milton support his boast and then finds that Milton's boast leads us to greater admiration for pagan gods and views.

Blessington acknowledges the differences between the gods which the epics demonstrate: "If Milton's God rivals Zeus in omniscience, He excels him in power. Zeus bows to fate in the *Iliad* when Hera reminds him that if he interferes with it he will set a bad precedent."¹⁶⁹ She goes on to state that a limitation of the gods' power is not so much an issue in the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*, for in these works, the gods seem to come close to the heights claimed by Milton's God, "What I will is Fate" (VII, 173).

This is a claim that needs to be considered. The Zeus of the *Iliad* may be quite unlike Almighty God in *Paradise*

¹⁶⁷ This word is applicable to Milton's use of gifts, so similar to Homer's and Vergil's use of gifts. It means that all of the associations of Zeus and thunderbolt identify any wielder of a thunderbolt with Zeus. Thus, the associations of Zeus (or Jupiter) and his gifts identifies the Christian God with Zeus if he uses gifts in the same manner.

¹⁶⁸ Blessington, 19.

¹⁶⁹ Blessington, 41. See *Iliad* XVI, 444-449; cf. XXII, 178-81.

Lost, but the Zeus of the *Odyssey* and the Jupiter of the *Aeneid* are quite like Him.

But when Milton writes in *Paradise Lost* about the actions of Almighty God, there are allusions to the *Iliad*. There is a golden chain hanging from the floor of Milton's heaven. Zeus could haul all the gods up to Olympus by this golden chain (*Iliad* VIII, 19-27). In *Iliad* VIII, 69-72 and XXII, 208-213, Zeus uses scales to determine the outcome before battle ensues. God's scales are shown in the stars¹⁷⁰ at *Paradise Lost* IV, 1006-11, so that Gabriel can tell Satan that if they fight Satan will surely lose.

Francis Blessington expresses a conclusion with which I agree in my summation of Milton's critique of Homer and Vergil:

Homer and Virgil were not wrong—Homer saw the faults of Achilles as well as anyone—but they did not see far enough into the theological workings of the world. Revealed truth shows that heaven is not at variance with the classical art: angels, the Son, and the Father may have classical analogues within the confines of faith and reason.¹⁷¹

William Porter would concur; Milton too, as I contend.

Thus, when we review the classical theodical statements of the classical works, we can read them with

¹⁷⁰ An allusion to the constellation Libra.

¹⁷¹ Blessington, 49.

new appreciation. The speech of Zeus at the opening of the *Odyssey* has been misread.

First of all, Zeus does not complain in the *Odyssey* that mortals blame the gods for miseries they bring upon themselves. Instead, he says specifically, "...οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ / σφῆσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὑπὲρ μέτρον ἄλγε' ἔχουσιν, / ὥς καὶ νῦν Αἴγισθος..." (I, 33-35) [but they also, themselves, by their own folly, have woes beyond what is their lot, as even now Aegisthus...]. Zeus does not deny that the gods send evils. He simply adds that βροτοί, mortals *also...by their own folly*,¹⁷² bring woes upon themselves.

How Miltonic. God also complains of the fact that mortals will blame Him, while they should be more concerned with their own folly.¹⁷³ Raphael warns Adam and Eve not to commit folly.¹⁷⁴ Sinful Adam finally learns that his troubles are his own fault, despite the fact that he cannot fully understand all of God's workings in the history of man's suffering and dying.¹⁷⁵ Men and women after Adam and Eve do not eat the forbidden fruit in the Garden. They do not commit that first sin. Many have asked, "Why, then,

¹⁷² Cf. *Odyssey*, I, 7.

¹⁷³ *Odyssey*, I, 32-43.

¹⁷⁴ *Paradise Lost*, VIII, 633-643.

¹⁷⁵ *Paradise Lost*, XII, 561-573.

are the rest of us blamed? We did not receive the chance at that sort of obedience." Milton's poem does not answer the questions about why each individual result of the Fall happens. But Milton's poem does tell the reader to concern himself with the obedience that lies before him.

As I have already stated above, at the end of the *Iliad*, Achilles does not say that Zeus "indifferently" mixes from the two jars. Rather, he states that some men, like Priam and Peleus, have received from Zeus a mixture. Others, far worse off, have received only from the jar of evil.

The God in *Paradise Lost* deals with angels and men in different ways. The devils receive only punishment. Adam and his descendants receive good and evil. Milton surely knew that we could see this similarity.

However, there is a great dissonance between the classical and Christian epics. Adam should obey God and hope for the future. There is no such sure hope for mortals in the Homeric epics. The gods may or may not reward obedience.

Vergil's presentation of the gods working with men gives us what we have called a "double theodicy." At the end of the *Aeneid*, the question from the proem of the poem

is answered. Can there be such wrath in heavenly spirits?
The answer is a resounding "Yes!"

There is where the theodicy is doubled. As it worked out in the *Iliad*, Zeus in the *Odyssey* must balance his concern for fate, Poseidon and Helios, with their demands on him, over against the worthiness of Odysseus. This is where the terrible quality of the gods in the *Aeneid* strikes most clearly. Juno has complained for the last time to Jupiter, who then responds:

Olli subridens hominum rerumque repertor
'Es germana Iovis Saturnique altera proles:
irarum tantos volvis sub pectore fluctus.
Verum age et inceptum frustra summitte furorem
do quod vis, et me victusque volensque remitto.
(XII, 829-834)

[Smiling at her the Creator of the world and men answered: "You are truly Jupiter's sister, Saturn's child. Such strength in your anger do you roll in your heart. But now, let this violence go, to which you never should have given in. What you want, I give. You win; and I want it to be so. I waive my own desires.]

Jupiter is as willing as Juno to cause grief to those who disobey. That Vergil ends his work in such darkness indeed shows a great difference between his work and Milton's. The Christian epic has examined a more positive, hopeful set of questions: Si Deus est, unde malum? Si non est, unde bonum?

This work proposes a defense of the theodical aspects of Homer's Greek epic, or, more precisely, an exaltation of the source and spring from which so many have borrowed. For although later epics widen their scope beyond Homer's works, they never lose sight of Homer. Although the form of epic has shrunk in size and the scope has widened, Homer yet retains his simple dignity. Although Milton proposes to surpass the earlier epics, he does so with Homer in mind; according to his own words, invoking the aid of the "Heav'nly Muse" for his

adventurous Song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursue
Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rime.
(I, 13-16)

Milton may indeed "soar/Above" the Mount of the Muses, whence came Homer's and Vergil's inspiration, with a theme more grand and more inclusive. But in this manner, he also soars above the characters, plot and action of his predecessors, especially Homer. That is, while much is the same in these epics, the main action of both *Paradise Lost* and the *Iliad* taking just a few days (a few more for the *Odyssey* and many years for the *Aeneid*), Homer has no idea of Milton's plan to "justifie the wayes of God to men" (I, 26). He has no desire to describe the creation of all men, nor to map the future development and lot of all mankind.

A hero such as Adam will be concerned with such things.
But that is simply too much for a hero destined to kill and
be killed, all for that particular glory that he hopes will
not disappear: the glory of the warrior.

Milton rejects this glory, this definition of what is
heroic. In the prologue to Book IX, he tells of his plan
to relate the fall of Adam and Eve, which he calls

Sad task, yet argument
Not less but more Heroic than the wrath
Of stern Achilles on his Foe pursu'd
Thrice Fugitive about Troy Wall; or rage
Of Turnus for Lavinia disespous'd,
Of Neptune's ire, or Juno's, that so long
Perplex'd the Greek, and Cytherea's Son.
(IX, 13-19)

This is Milton's only mention of Achilles (by name)
in his poetry. It seems, at first, that Homer is rejected
outright. A true hero, according to Milton, is the Christ,
called "Most perfect Heroe, try'd in heaviest plight"
(*Passion*, 13). Milton calls his own *Paradise Lost* an
"Heroic Song" (IX, 25), and he calls the unseen patience of
Christ in His temptation "Above Heroic" (*Paradise Regained*,
I, 15). And what Adam learns at the end of the poem is of
greater worth than all the heroic deeds of warriors:

Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,
And love with fear the onely God, to walk
As in his presence, ever to observe
His providence, and on him sole depend,
Mercifull over all his works, with good
Still overcoming evil, and by small

Accomplishing great things, by things deem'd weak
Subverting worldly strong, and wordly wise
By simply meek; that suffering for Truth's sake
Is fortitude to highest victorie,
And to the faithful, Death the Gate of Life;
Taught this by his example, whom I now
Acknowledge my Redeemer ever blest.

To whom thus also th' Angel last repli'd:
This having learnt, thou hast attain'd the sum
Of wisdom. (XII, 561-76)

How far is this view of what is best from Greek honor and glory. Adam has learned, is dependent, knows now about suffering through life unto a death which is more life. Of course, Milton is dealing with a theology foreign to Homer or Vergil; that accounts for much of the difference at this point. But Milton's superiority is not simply one of having material on hand which Homer and Vergil lacked. Milton also works with an epic variation which is hinted at by Vergil, and first developed fully in Ovid, as we shall see in the next section.

Vergil gives us a hero who stands at a decisive point in the development of great matters: these include the continuation of Troy's race, the beginning of the Roman people, the sower of seeds of enmity between Italy and Africa. Thus, the place of Aeneas seems so much loftier than the place of Achilles or Odysseus. For Aeneas sees and hears¹⁷⁶ in the underworld about centuries of his descendants, their troubles and their triumphs. Odysseus

¹⁷⁶ *Aeneid* VI, 752-886.

hears¹⁷⁷ missing pieces from the past, and about a limited future, how to get home and later expiate Poseidon's wrath. Achilles knows that he will kill Hector and that he will then die.¹⁷⁸ In comparison, Homer has a narrow view of past and future in his epic.

If Homer's view is narrower in comparison to Vergil's view, how much more narrow is his view than Milton's? For Adam knows of his death, and the future of his descendants, not for centuries, but for millenia, even for all time. And the past is laid bare to the point of creation, while Homer's heroes know of parents and grandparents, exchanging this information even in battle with a foe.¹⁷⁹ But creation and first things? Achilles could not care less; and Odysseus is too busy looking for Penelope and Home.

A word of defense for Homer is in order here. If Homer has a narrower view of past and future, he has quite a clearer view of the present. For the minds of Achilles and Odysseus are not, cannot be concerned with ancestors or progeny, to any degree comparable with themselves and their present state. But the picture of Achilles playing his lyre in his camp, singing about the renowned deeds of men

¹⁷⁷ *Odyssey* XI, 84-225. These are the lines in which Odysseus has conversations with Anticleia and Tiresias in the underworld.

¹⁷⁸ *Iliad* XIX, 95-96.

¹⁷⁹ For example, *Iliad* VI, 119-236.

(IX, 189) is one of the most profound examples in Western literature of a man who does not want to have the glorious deeds of men forgotten, who does not want to be forgotten himself. Doubtless, with a smile, Homer sang about this warrior not delivering oratory nor writing, but singing.

Milton sings too, and cannot keep himself from mentioning Achilles and Aeneas, Homer and Vergil. Milton may reject their glory, ridicule such heroes, even surpass such warriors. But he does all that with Homer in mind, Homer in view, Homer looming above us all. It has been stated that Milton's *Paradise Lost* "transformed (some would say killed) the Western epic tradition by destroying its heroic ethos and the forms that expressed that ethos."¹⁸⁰ Yes, he has killed Western epic; but only if someone does not take up the task of surpassing Homer, Vergil and Milton too. That someone equal to the task has not arisen is not the fault of Milton.

The focus of this study has been on gifts in epic. But Milton attempted to surpass classical epic in many ways, not just one. One of the fundamental questions

¹⁸⁰ Leland Ryken, "Paradise Lost and Its Biblical Epic Models," in *Milton and the Scriptural Tradition: The Bible into Poetry* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1984), 44. Ryken does not seem to agree fully with the charge against Milton of destroying epic in the West. Indeed, Ryken teaches us that "Milton's poem require us to read an 'intertext' (45). This is one of the bases for this paper's conclusion that reading Milton entails reading Homer, Vergil, et alii.

concerning *Paradise Lost* and its epic predecessors is the question of the hero of the epic. Who is the hero? In attempting to find a character to fulfill the role of "hero" in *Paradise Lost*, one encounters difficulties in the poem itself. The Heroic ideals are questioned extensively, the ancient models are insufficient for this biblical epic, Satan is finally so abhorrent and Adam's claim to fame is that he fell into sin. Where is the hero?

One could solve this problem simply, by assenting to J.E.Seaman and others, who assert that the hero of the epic is Christ. For Christ defeats His enemies in a chariot of wrath, "the young hero of unknown or unproved origin who must fulfil the prophecies about his great promise" (Seaman, p.99).

However, the sum of the evidence in *Paradise Lost* points to another conclusion about the ancient epic role model. Milton has not only soared above the Aonian Mount and Olympus with his plot and material. He has also burst the old wineskins of the epic hero with the new wine of Scripture. The hero is dispersed through the epic, if one searches for the heroes of old. Certainly Christ has martial virtues, as do the guardian angels at the gate of Paradise. But Satan has the pride mixed with doubts, the wounded pride which must be avenged by the suffering of

others. Satan is an Achilles figure. He is also the persuader, like Odysseus, who can persuade in the *Iliad* and lead in the *Odyssey* a band of followers doomed to death.

Then again, Adam is both the "ideal hero" before the Fall, and the hero in conflict after the Fall. One imagines that if he needed to fight with weapons in the Garden he would somehow make do. Then, when troubled and mortal like Aeneas,¹⁸¹ he views the future with sadness, happiness and, finally, composure.

The list can continue. Abdiel is steadfast, pious; Eve offers, in her penitence, to die for their sins; Michael is marshaller of troops and leads the exiles from their lost home to unknown parts, like Aeneas leading out of burning Troy his family, carrying them on his back.¹⁸²

The hero in Milton is dispersed throughout, diffused into many characters. All the heroes, though, can be recognized by their proper appreciation of the gifts of God. That is Milton's genius with regard to the hero. He is not just in one place, as an Achilles. For Achilles, in Milton's scheme, took too much upon himself, the striving for glory, the vengeance which is properly the Lord's. That Achilles could not know or would refuse to grasp

¹⁸¹ E.g., *Aeneid* I, 208-209; V, 700-703.

¹⁸² *Aeneid* II, 707-743.

Milton's theology is not at issue. Milton, by stating that he surpasses his forerunners, tells us that he would agree to Achilles' limitations.

That is precisely why the heroic role splinters from third person singular to third person plural. For steadfastness like Aeneas is the part of Adam and Eve, angels and archangels. The rewards for steadfastness, the vengeance upon wrongs committed, belong to God Almighty. The One who is the true warrior is the Son, who rescues the troops of God.

Milton's heroic characters provide a critique of past heroes. The ancients, according to Milton's work, jumbled too much together. They had no sight far enough to see their beginnings or their final ends. But since the revelation of Scripture has brought so much to light, the old things must pass away and the new must appear.

Much the same is true about the different views of divinities. In Milton, God cannot change; the Son changes into his epithets, as Achilles and Odysseus do, although Milton clearly approves of the Son more than the others. But Adam is completely transformed, Satan too. And these transformations go in opposite directions.

Satan is a continuous critique by Milton of the epic ideal (which is not, as we have seen, necessarily the

correct ideal), the critique of Achilles. The man of wrath is Satan; he lives by wounded pride; though his comrades suffer, yet he will stew, pout, fume. And when Satan actually changes forms before our eyes, he becomes less and less.

To fool Uriel, he becomes a "stripling Cherub" (III, 636). Then, in the garden, he turns from "Cormorant" (IV, 196) all the way down to a toad (IV, 800). Then, as the deceiver, he is a snake, who will lose his legs. As a final punishment, Satan and his comrades are forcibly transformed into snakes, punished in the form they sinned, in Book X, 504ff. Satan changed his appearance into a snake, and thus was forced to become a snake.

Adam, on the other hand, falls into sin and becomes a spiteful man, hating his wife, whom he considered the crowning jewel of creation, and hating his life, for which he used to thank God. But Adam moves on toward repentance which leads to a new life. These are transformations of the highest art, learned from the Scriptures and from Ovid.

The theme of journey is also common to all the epics we have discussed. The wanderings of Aeneas and Odysseus are the most apparent forms of the journey theme. However, there are journeys in the other works too, personal journeys, the progress of the individual.

Ovid's characters are always on the move. Medea is here and then she is on the fly (*Metamorphoses*, Book VII). Countless women are chased by the gods, some of them fleeing over the sea to escape, others, like Io, wandering around the Mediterranean Sea. Ovid has taken over the theme of journey from others, and applied it to many characters in his work. Even the gods make their journeys; as even the gods are transformed by love, by loss, by mourning.

The *Iliad* has journeys too: the journey that returns the girl Chryseis to her father; the journey of Briseis from Achilles to Agamemnon and then back again. Herald must be sent *within* the Greek camp, from Agamemnon to Achilles. Distances must be overcome, even within the common walls of defense.

In addition, there are all the journeys from the city to the shore, night-time raids and journeys, trips back into the city, to let us see Helen (or at least let us see the reaction of those who actually see her), for Hector to part on a journey from Andromache, for Priam to bring back the body of his dead son.

Though the Greeks have not made much movement for ten years, it seems, everyone has a trip to make, a goal to reach, a destiny to find, an embassy on which to go. The

voyage of a thousand ships was a great journey. But no one has stopped moving, even after they landed in Troy.

The journeys in *Paradise Lost* are, as in Ovid, grander in scope, covering more ground, more important and decisive, at least in the eyes of the blind poet. There is the journey of Satan from hell to the sun, then to the earth and the Garden. The crossing of chaos by Satan owes much to the sea troubles of Odysseus.

Then, in triumph (?!), Satan travels to Hell, again, as his proper abode. The road from Hell to earth is made easier by Sin and Death paving the way. So the journey, so hard for the tempter and his horde, is now made commonplace until the last day.

In order to begin in Hell, *Paradise Lost* tells us of an unwilling journey from Heaven to the burning lake. This fall was preceded by the rebel hordes in Heaven withdrawing from the throne of God "to the north." After this trip, faithful Abdiel must pass through the rebels, as hard a spiritual struggle as any sea-faring disaster in Greek or Roman epic.

Then, as in the entire scheme of Milton's theology, Satan shows where the end of his journey leads, as opposed to the movement and journey of the faithful angels. Life in Paradise was not static, but a life of work, tending the

garden, looking forward to children, greeting and entertaining guests. Raphael hints of a heavenward journey which awaits Adam and Eve, in God's good time. But for now, their life is one of activity and purpose. There is always movement toward God, to find out more of what He has given and continues to give.

Satan, on the other hand, moves away from God, away from all that is real. He will locate Heaven in his own mind. Heaven is not a place made for him any longer; Heaven is a place for him to make. That he makes the least desirable place of all his "Heaven" is something that Satan must ignore before the troops, although he puts a good face on it.

In the end, after all his travels, Satan ends up where he has led himself: in the dust, in the form of a snake, licking the floor of Hell in punishment. What did Satan receive? Not what he wanted. He received a payment for despising the gifts of God and making gifts out of what was no gift. Milton teaches by his epic that everyone reaches the end of his journey, one way or the other. And there are really only two ways: toward God and away from God. Toward God means more of God, more of God's giving; away from God means either the annihilation of the self, because one has denied one's own reality; or the worst of all for

the devils, the subjection of evil actions to God's plans. The will of God is done (Homeric sentiment)¹⁸³ despite sin and death, by forgiveness (not Homeric at all).

Adam, on the other hand, has journeys to make too. And just as Satan's transformations showed the futility of his ways, in comparison to Adam's transformations from holiness to sin to repentance, so too their journeys head in opposite directions. Satan must leave Heaven and as a rebellious toddler, he plays "sour grapes": "I'll make a heaven out of this Hell." Adam laments his sorry state, finally confesses his willful sin, and seeks forgiveness in repentance and prayer.

Belial and Mammon will tidy up Hell a bit and see how it goes. Adam and Eve leave Paradise, but confidently, looking forward to the journey, knowing the end of the trip, the fulfillment of the years and God's plans. Satan has nowhere else to look than to himself. So his reality will be whatever he can create or imagine, which is only Sin and Death. Adam and Eve return to the one who made them and forgave them. Left to their own devices, they might kill themselves. But fear and God's promises lead them to God's course, repentance, rather than Satan's course, self-destruction.

¹⁸³ E.g., *Iliad* I, 5.

In a way, the journey theme is much more subtly introduced in Ovid, Milton and Homer's *Iliad*, but it is much richer by that very subtlety. The Argo must voyage over the fearsome sea, the first to do so; Odysseus and Aeneas must pass through the treacherous waves to reach their homes. The lesson is overt, patent, obvious: there is a journey to be made, "life is a journey," but with divine help and a bit of heroism, the journey comes to an end. Though the journey is a more overt theme in these works, does it lead us as deeply into the character of the heroes? At least we cannot assume that the "journey epics" open up characters more clearly to us than epics which do not center around such a journey.

One way in which Milton has "soared above" the other poets has been in journey and epic transformation of heroes, as these brief examples have shown. For Milton brings his characters farthest, in whatever direction, either to unending punishment, or to a hope-filled future. This does not mean that the other poets are inferior. In fact, Milton could not have produced his work, as it is, without them.

I have mentioned Milton's transformation, the manner in which he surpasses classical epic in terms of presentation of hero and journey, simply to cite two other

ways Milton borrowed and expanded on his predecessors. Gift-giving is one more way in which Milton challenged Homer and Vergil—a way that, until now, has not been given enough attention.

A quotation from Roland Frye gives us a good summary of Milton's epic, which is applicable to Homer and Vergil also. He writes that:

It is through this classic pattern that Milton justifies the ways of God to men, and fulfills the purpose to which he dedicated his epic. *Paradise Lost*, as an assertion of eternal providence, of God's reversal of evil, is far less concerned with the commission of sin than with the triumph of grace.¹⁸⁴

My paraphrase of this statement covers the four works I have surveyed. Homer, Vergil and Milton justify the ways of the gods to men. These poems are assertions of divine providence, of the gods who give gifts despite their misuse. These works are not only finally concerned about the faults of men. They are also concerned with the continual gift giving of immortal gods.

That Milton presents us a different God is indisputable. That this God exhibits many of the gift giving ways of the pagan gods is also indisputable.

This awareness enhances the experience of *Paradise Lost* for readers. For if one has trouble identifying with

¹⁸⁴ Roland Mushat Frye, *God, Man, and Satan* (Princeton University Press, 1960), 70.

sinless Adam and Eve in the Christian epic, one need only open Homer or Vergil to find characters with whom to identify. They too work in a structure of gift giving with the divine element of life. They too fall into the truth and the illusion of the "demand balance of spiritual solvency." They all try to go on living in their particular systems of gift-giving.

CONCLUSION

The apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, asks his readers about man's relationship to God when he writes "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"¹⁸⁵ Homer and Vergil answer that question at great length. Homer sang forty-eight books that could not have been sung if the gods did not pay back each other and mortals too. Vergil wrote twelve books in a slightly different manner. The gods are farther away for Vergil, darker, more full of wrath. Yet Vergil's gods are also much preoccupied, as Homer's gods were, with the appreciation mortals show toward their divinity.

I contend that Milton describes the God of Christianity in much the same terms. This is no surprise, since he is writing an epic. Epics show us gods and men giving to each other and paying each other back or they are not epics. And Milton's God is preoccupied with the appreciation that Adam and Eve and even the angels show toward His Divinity.

Milton knew Saint Paul's question (above) quite well. He specifically rejects the notion that sacrifices, burnt offerings and rituals appease God. The "obedience paid" (III, 107) that pleases the Christian God is obedience to

¹⁸⁵ Romans 11:35.

God in regard to his gifts, based upon the "free will" that God had also given to men. The Christian God is clearly more concerned about the attitude of man's heart, the devotion of his spirit, than about the number and size of temples or material sacrifices.

Yet Milton does not abandon the epic structure that governs gods, men and their gifts. His vocabulary shows this. Obedience is "paid." Unfallen Adam voices a sentiment that reflects the God Who made him, when he says to Eve "Well we may afford / Our givers their own gifts" (V, 316-17). Where did Adam learn the meaning of the word "afford?" He learned it from God. There is nothing wrong with Adam's thinking or his vocabulary. This is the system into which God had placed him.

Adam's words immediately following this quotation state that he and Eve have learned not "to spare" when it comes to giving. I do not think that Milton has "nodded off" here, or has become "preachy," putting words into Adam's mouth to reprove his own greedy contemporaries. I conclude from these words that Adam was made by the God of *Paradise Lost*, even in his unfallen state, with a full knowledge of his need to keep his balance with God solvent. Milton's God keeps accounts much like the pagan gods.

No matter how many differences one may point out between the Christian and pagan deities, the texts of the Christian and classical epics claim kinship, by their shared concerns and common vocabulary. Gods keep track of their gifts, the use of their gifts and their repayment. This is not a criticism of the God of the Christian Milton. There is also much in the Old and New Testaments about gift-giving, accounting, using talents that God has given.

This work is an observation about what happens when the God of Christianity is presented in a comparison to the gods of ancient Greece and Rome. At a basic level, "our" God must be shown in terms remarkably similar to those that describe "their" gods.

This study has shown that Milton, in his poem, describes good and evil powers in other terms that Homer and Vergil could not have known: The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; the Incarnation; Satan; eternal life; Hell. Those are no small differences, qualitatively, between the classical and Christian writers.

But why does *Paradise Lost* present God as a banker, or accountant, carefully watching whether or not His creatures remain solvent? This question has been studied by those who considered closely the mercantile situation of Milton and the seventeenth century. This question can be

fruitfully discussed in terms of Milton's concern with the talents God has given and their proper use.

I propose that the question about Milton's God and the "demand balance of spiritual solvency" can also be studied with profit by way of Milton's vocabulary. Milton presents to us terms and structures that are used throughout the classical epics. Since Milton claims to surpass the classical epics while he justifies the ways of God to men, it is most fitting to address whether or not he surpasses the classical authors with the very words and structures that they had used so effectively.

I conclude that Milton has indeed surpassed the classical poets through his presentation of gift-giving between God and men. The greatest difference between Milton, on one hand, and Homer and Vergil, on the other, is that Milton takes great care to insist that his God is not arbitrary in the matter of gifts. Milton's critique of these, his predecessors in epic, seems to be this: that the classical authors had presented gods and gifts in so many and various ways, that they themselves needed to question, in their own works, the consistency of the gods, as far as gifts are concerned. Milton insists that His God is completely different. He proves his point by using the terminology of gifts and by displaying God's rewards and

punishments in a consistent manner, depending upon man's use or misuse of those gifts.

Another very profitable way to study Milton further is to consider his presentation of God, men and gifts, which we have now seen in the context of the classical epics, against biblical references to gifts, such as Saint Paul's in Romans 11. It is enlightening to study what Saint Paul says about gifts from God that are never a reward, never a "repayment" from God for the gifts of men, and then study what influence this notion had on Milton's work.

Is there an answer to Saint Paul's question regarding giving gifts to God, repaying Him? Saint Paul responds to his own question. But he does not respond with an answer. He intones a doxology. "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen."¹⁸⁶ "To him be... ." This is, in Greek, just one word: *αὐτῷ*, His.

Paul is not writing an epic. He does not present God and men and their gifts in terms of demand balances. He is also not concerned with justifying the ways of God to men. When he runs up against questions that men have about God,

¹⁸⁶ Romans 11:35-36.

the presence of good and evil in the world, the reasons why God does what he does, Paul puts a hand over our mouths and our questions. The gulf between God and man is even wider than the pagans had assumed. Man's gifts cannot reach God.

Yet Paul can continue to speak; but only by talking about what is "to God, from God, with God." In Paul's way of writing, God gifts are truly free gifts, with no strings attached, with no obligations assumed. For His gifts never stop being His. That is why he concludes, "His, to Him be glory for ever."

John Milton knew this letter of Paul. Milton's God is Paul's God, Who is, by nature, a "giver of good gifts." The God of *Paradise Lost*, however, is not shown to us only in biblical terms. He is shown to us in terms also fitting to a classical epic. Those terms are a proper place to investigate Milton's claim that he has surpassed the pagans and their works.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adkins, Arthur W. H. *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960.
- Ahl, Frederick, and Hanna M. Roisman. *The Odyssey Re-Formed*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- Armstrong, A.H. *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*. New York: Crossroad, 1986.
- Austin, R. G. Editor of *P. Vergili Maronis: Aeneidos Liber Primus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Bailey, Cyril. *Religion in Virgil*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969.
- Barton, Carol. "'They Also Perform the Duties of a Servant Who Only Remain Erect on Their Feet in a Specified Place in Readiness to Receive Orders': The Dynamics of Stasis in Sonnet XIX ('When I Consider How My Light is Spent.')," *Milton Quarterly* 32 (Dec 1998), 109-122.
- Bassett, Samuel Eliot. *The Poetry of Homer*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1938.
- Benardete, Seth. *The Bow and the Lyre: A Platonic Reading of the Odyssey*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997.
- Beye, Charles Rowan. *Ancient Epic Poetry: Homer, Apollonius, Virgil*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993.
- Blessington, Francis. *Paradise Lost and the Classical Epic*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979.
- Bloom, Harold. Editor, *John Milton's Paradise Lost*. New York: Chelsea House, 1987.
- . *Virgil's Aeneid*. New York: Chelsea House, 1987.
- Bowra, C.M. *Heroic Poetry*. London: Macmillan, 1961.
- Burkert, Walter. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1985.

- Cairns, Francis. *Virgil's Augustan Epic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Calhoun, George. "Polity and Society: (i) The Homeric Picture," in *A Companion to Homer*. Ed. By Alan J.B. Wace and Frank H. Stubbings. New York: Macmillan, 1974 [Second Edition].
- Clay, Jenny Strauss. *The Wrath of Athena: Gods and Men in the Odyssey*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Cook, Erwin F. *The Odyssey in Athens: Myths of Cultural Origins*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- Crotty, Kevin. *The Poetics of Supplication: Homer's Iliad and Odyssey*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Daiches, David. *God and the Poets*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.
- Danielson, Dennis Richard. *Milton's Good God: A Study in Literary Theodicy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- Di Cesare, Mario A. *The Altar and the City: A Reading of Vergil's Aeneid*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1974.
- Diels, H., *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed. revised with additions and index by W. Kranz. Berlin: Weidmann, 1951-1952.
- Dietrich, B.C. *Death, Fate and the Gods: The development of a religious idea in Greek popular belief and in Homer*. London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1967.
- Dimock, George E. *The Unity of the Odyssey*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989.
- Empson, William. *Milton's God*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1961.

- Erbse, Hartmut. Editor of *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Iliadem (Scholia Vetera)*. Volume I. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969.
- Faulkner, William. *Absalom, Absalom!* New York: Random House, 1936 [Reprinted by Vintage Books, 1990].
- Feeney, D.C. "Epic Hero and Epic Fable," *Comparative Literature* 38 (1986), 137-158.
- . *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Fenik, Bernard. *Studies in the Odyssey*. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1974.
- Ford, Andrew. *Homer: The Poetry of the Past*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Forsyth, Neil. "Homer in Milton: The Attendance Motif and the Graces," *Comparative Literature* 33(1981), 137-155.
- Frye, Northrop. *The Return of Eden*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965.
- Frye, Roland Mushat. *God, Man, and Satan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960.
- Gardner, Helen. *A Reading of Paradise Lost*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.
- Gransden, K.W. *Virgil's Iliad: An essay on epic narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Griffin, Jasper. *Homer on Life and Death*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.
- Hainsworth, J.B. *The Idea of Epic*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Hardie, Philip R. *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.
- Harrison, S.J. Ed. *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

- . *Vergil: Aeneid 10*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Heubeck, Alfred, and Arie Hoekstra, eds. *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*. Vol. 2, bks. 9-16. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Heubeck, Alfred, Stephanie West, and J.B. Hainsworth, eds. *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*. Vol. 1, bks. 1-8. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
- Hick, John. *Evil and the God of Love*. London: Macmillan, 1977.
- Hight, Gilbert. *The Speeches in Vergil's Aeneid*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.
- Homer. *Iliadis Libri*. Ed. by David Monro and Thomas Allen. 2 Vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1902.
- . *Odysseae Libri*. Ed. by Thomas Allen. 2 Vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1908.
- Houston, Jean. *The Hero and the Goddess: The Odyssey as Mystery and Initiation*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1992.
- Hunter, G.K. *Paradise Lost*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1980.
- Huckabay, Calvin. "The Satanist Controversy of the Nineteenth Century," in *Studies in English Renaissance Literature*. Ed. by Waldo F. McNeir. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962, 197-210.
- Johnson, W.R. *Darkness Visible*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.
- Kirk, G.S. General Editor of *The Iliad: A Commentary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984-1989.
- Knauer, Georg Nicolaus. *Die Aeneis und Homer*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964.

- Kranidas, Thomas. *New Essays on Paradise Lost*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.
- Lewis, C.S. *A Preface to Paradise Lost*. Oxford University Press, 1961.
- Lieb, Michael. "Talents," in *A Milton Encyclopedia*. Ed. by William B. Hunter et alii. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1978-83. Volume 8 (1980), 48-51.
- Lloyd-Jones, Hugh. *The Justice of Zeus*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.
- Lowenstam, Steven. *The Scepter and the Spear: Studies on Forms of Repetition in the Homeric Poems*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993.
- Lyne, R.O.A.M. *Further Voices in Vergil's Aeneid*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.
- Macleod, C.W. *Homer Iliad Book XXIV*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- McCaskey, John P. *The Deontological Ethics of Paradise Lost*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.
- McMahon, Robert. *The Two Poets of Paradise Lost*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998.
- Milton, John. *The Complete Poetry of John Milton*. Ed. by John T. Shawcross. New York: Doubleday, 1963.
- . "The Reason of Church Government," in *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, Volume I. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953, 801-823.
- Morris, Ian, and Barry Powell, eds. *A New Companion to Homer*. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- Otis, Brooks. *Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.
- Parry, Adam. *The Making of Homeric Verse*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Patrides, C.A., Ed. *Approaches to Paradise Lost*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968.

- Pavlok, Barbara. *Eros, Imitation, and the Epic Tradition*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Peter, John. *A Critique of Paradise Lost*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.
- Plutarch. *Essays on the Life and Poetry of Homer*. Ed. by J.J. Keaney and Robert Lamberton. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996.
- Porter, William M. *Reading the Classics and Paradise Lost*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1993.
- Pöschl, Viktor. *The Art of Vergil: Image and Symbol in the Aeneid*. Translated by Gerda Seligson. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962.
- Powys, John Cowper. "Preface to *Homer and the Aether*," in *Homer: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. by George Steiner and Robert Fagles. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962.
- Rand, Ayn. "Causality Versus Duty," in *Philosophy: Who Needs It*. New York: New American Library, 1982.
- Russell, Jeffrey Burton. *The Prince of Darkness*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Ryken, Leland. "Paradise Lost and Its Biblical Epic Models," in *Milton and the Scriptural Tradition: The Bible into Poetry*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1984.
- Seaman, J.E. "The Chivalric Cast of Milton's Epic Hero," *English Studies* XLIX, April (1968), 97-107.
- Segal, Charles P. *Singers, Heroes, and Gods in the Odyssey*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Slavitt, David R. *Virgil*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.
- Steiner, George. "Introduction: Homer and the Scholars," in *Homer: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. by

George Steiner and Robert Fagles. Englewood Cliffs,
N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962.

Taplin, Oliver. *Homeric Soundings: The Shaping of the
Iliad*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

Tilley, Terrence W. *The Evils of Theodicy*. Washington,
D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991.

Trypannis, C.A. *The Homeric Epics*. Warminster, England:
Aris & Phillips, 1977.

Vergil. *Opera*. Ed. by R.A.B. Mynors. Oxford University
Press, 1969.

VITA

The Reverend Paul Norman Anderson was born in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. He received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Biblical languages from Concordia College, Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1987. In 1991 he received the degrees of Master of Divinity from Concordia Seminary and Master of Arts in classical languages from Washington University, both in St. Louis, Missouri. He has been the pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, since July 14, 1991. He has taught at Louisiana State University since 1995 as an Instructor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures.

Paul married Laura Ann Whitaker in November of 1988. They have four children: Jessica, Kristen, Rachel and Allan.

His interests are Biblical languages and exegesis, Greek and Latin epic and tragedy. He has presented papers at theological symposia and has led numerous exegetical studies with colleagues in the Holy Ministry.

DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Paul Anderson

Major Field: Comparative Literature

Title of Dissertation: Gods, Men and Their Gifts: A Comparison
of the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Aeneid and
Paradise Lost

Approved:

Robert J. Edgenorth

Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Emily Batroski

Anna K. Raabe

Carolyn M. Jones

Robert McMahon

Marquita B. Branch

Date of Examination:

October 11, 1999