MILTON'S "BETTER FORTITUDE:" A STUDY OF
THE NATURE OF HEROISM IN
PARADISE LOST

by

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Thesis Abstract

Because critics have continued to discuss *Paradise Lost* according to classical standards of heroism, the question of the poem's hero has been needlessly vitiated. Not until Milton's concept of heroism is clearly understood can any scholarly discussion of the epic's hero, or heroes, proceed. Our endeavour in this present study will be not to discover the poem's "hero" so much as to understand clearly that form of heroism, those qualities of character and action, which the poem espouses.

Milton found that the classical heroic ideal was sharply at odds with his understanding of Christian heroism. He rejected the destructive, self-glorifying, self-reliant hero, epitomized by Achilles, in favour of one who would embody the Christian ethic of love, humility, and faith. In attempting to define artistically "the better fortitude/Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom" in *Paradise Lost* Milton begins by painting in Books I to III an impressive picture of false heroism in Satan and by presenting the alternative of true heroism in the Son. By undermining the classical heroism of Satan while exalting at the same time the nobility of the Son, Milton orients the reader to the standards of heroism upon
which the epic is founded.

The first main movement within *Paradise Lost* dealing with the heroic nature of Adam and Eve consists largely of a process of education instituted by the Father through the Archangel Raphael intended to clarify for man the issues involved in maintaining his original heroic standing. The War in Heaven serves to emphasize for both unfallen man and the reader the heroism of obedience by displaying a showpiece of Christian fortitude, Abdiel, and by revealing the terrible results of disobedience which befall Satan and his followers.

The first movement concerning the heroism of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost* ends in the trial of their obedience, the heroic contest between man and Satan. The fall is significant for Milton as a negation of those qualities which are involved in his concept of heroism, and he implies that if noble acts of Christian heroes are more glorious than those of other heroes, acts of villainy by the former are more heinous than the sins of the latter. Doubt, revealed first in Adam by his questioning of divine providence in his talk with Raphael, prevents Adam from exercising the heroic faith which would have sought a solution to his dilemma in an appeal to the love and wisdom of God.

The second main movement within *Paradise Lost* dealing with the heroism of man is complementary to the first, consisting largely of a process of education instituted by the Father through the Archangel Michael by means of which Adam
and Eve's heroic stature is restored. Milton stresses here the importance of God's grace for the existence of true heroism. The patient submission of Adam and Eve to their expulsion from Eden is an act of Christian heroism which signifies their restoration as heroes.
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Introduction

Critics have long debated the question of who is the hero of *Paradise Lost*, hotly defending, or hotly disputing, the cases for Adam, Eve, the Son, and Satan. Difficulties arise with each character proposed. Some object that the Son is not a central enough figure within the epic structure, others that Satan is evil; such characteristics make it hard for the reader to regard them as wholly satisfactory heroes. While few would bring the same charges against Adam and Eve, many dismiss them as heroes, or retain them with some embarrassment, because their defeat and degradation go against classical epic precedents concerning heroic virtue.

This last view rests on a premise which often remains hidden: namely, that all heroes ought to conform to classical standards of heroism. When the limitations of this assumption are recognized, a wholly new outlook on Milton's later poetry becomes possible. Woodhouse has said that "one will never understand Milton's problem, or appreciate his artistry, unless one recognizes the degree of divergence between his theme and Homer's, his theme and even Virgil's, that is, the divergence between a Christian and a classical view of life."¹ This is particularly true with regard to the nature of heroism
in *Paradise Lost*. The question of the poem's hero receives a new significance if we realize that in his epic Milton is attempting to define a type of heroism importantly different from Homer's or Virgil's.

Unfortunately, confusion resulting from failure to note this divergence in standards of heroism has continued to plague criticism of *Paradise Lost* almost from the moment of its publication. Early readers saw that the poem was different from previous epics, but they failed to grasp the essential nature of this difference. Measuring the poem against classical precedents, many found the subject, "Man's disobedience, and the loss thereupon of Paradise wherein he was plac't," an "epic heresy."²

Addison, one of Milton's most sympathetic early critics, felt uncomfortable about certain aspects of the poem which did not conform to classical precedent. Popularizing *Paradise Lost* in the *Spectator* papers of 1712, he confessed in No. 297, "I must, however, own, that I think this kind of fable ["wherein the event is unhappy"], which is the most perfect in tragedy, is not so proper for an heroic poem."³ Dryden, writing in 1693, had been much less sympathetic in his "Essay on Satire:" "his [Milton's] subject is not that of an heroic poem, properly so called. His design is the losing of our happiness; his event is not prosperous, like that of all other epic works."⁴ Concerning the hero of the epic, Dryden wrote in 1697 in the "Dedication of the *Aeneid*" that Milton's claim to have composed a genuine epic would have been a bet-
ter one "if the Devil had not been his hero instead of Adam, if the giant had not foiled the knight and driven him out of his stronghold to wander through the world with his lady errant."  

Dennis's criticism is more confused on this issue than Addison or Dryden's. On the one hand, he realized that Milton had adopted a new attitude to the epic. Writing in 1704, he said in "The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry:"

That great Man had a desire to give the World something like an Epick Poem; but he resolv'd at the same time to break thro' the Rules of Aristotle.... he had discernment enough to see, that if he wrote a Poem which was within the compass of them, he should be subjected to the same Fate which has attended all who have wrote Epick Poems ever since the time of Homer; and that is to be a Copyist instead of an Original.... Milton was the first, who in the space of almost 4000 Years, resolved, for his Country's Honour and his own, to present the World with an Original Poem; that is to say, a Poem that should have his own Thoughts, his own Images, and his own Spirit.  

Despite this statement, Dennis's comment in the same work that "the Devil is properly his Hero, because he gets the better," shows that his criticism is still largely bound by classical norms of heroism and plot structure. As long as one looks at the question of heroic virtue in classical terms, one will probably agree with Dryden and Dennis that Satan is the hero of Paradise Lost. At the least, one will feel, with Addison, discomfort.

One early reader, at least, did note the vast difference between Milton's conception of heroism, and that traditionally held by writers of epic and romance. In 1734 Jonathan Richardson wrote in his "Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost:" "He [Adam] is not such a hero as
Achilles, Ulysses, Aeneas, Orlando, Godfrey, &c., all romantic worthies and incredible performers of fortunate, savage cruelties; he is one of a nobler kind, such as Milton chose to write of, and found he had a genius for the purpose. He is not such a conqueror as subdued armies or nations, or enemies in single combat, but his conquest was what justly gave heroic name to person and to poem. His hero was more than a conqueror through Him that loved us." As Richardson implies, Milton sees Christian heroism possible only within the context of a right relationship with God, the God of the Holy Scriptures, and, therefore, finds something wanting in the classical man of action, especially the Homeric hero, such as Achilles, whose self-glorification among men is the expressed purpose of his deeds; whose success depends on his strength, personal decisions, and self-reliant attitude; and for whom violence, destruction, and killing are natural and necessary elements of heroic activity. As we shall see, to Milton, the true hero should embody the Christian ethic of sanctification in a superlative degree. Thus, he should derive his strength, wisdom, courage, compassion, leadership ability, and magnanimous character from God; should seek to glorify God alone; and should show an antipathy to martial methods of achieving peace, turning to them only when called upon by God to do so. While able to undertake martial warfare successfully, patient endurance of trials and temptations would be his greatest heroic act, the culmination of a number of spiritual prerequisites: humility, faith, love.
These insights into Milton's notion of heroism are important for a critical reading of *Paradise Lost*. Not until we have clarified our definition of the standard of heroism upheld in the poem, can any scholarly discussion of Milton's hero, or heroes, proceed.
Chapter One:
"This Subject for Heroic Song"

It took Milton most of his life to develop fully the attitude toward heroism we find expressed in Paradise Lost. From his student days, Milton gave much thought to his intended magnum opus; eventually published in 1667 it was, indeed, of "long choosing, and beginning late" (IX, 26). He scorned unthinking poets who give little consideration to matters of prime significance, deriding in Reason of Church-Government (1642) "the corruption and bane ... of libidinous and ignorant Poetasters, who having scars ever heard of that which is the main consistence of a true poem, the choys of such persons as they ought to introduce, and what is morall and decent to each one, doe for the most part lap up vitious principles in sweet pils to be swallow'd down, and make the tast of vertuous documents harsh and sowe."  

The problem of the nature of his prospective hero, of the essence of true heroism, must have been highly important to Milton, for he returned to it again and again throughout the many years preceding the composition of Paradise Lost, and that his epic is fundamentally different from those of his predecessors is due largely to his fundamentally different an-
swer to this problem. Milton's earliest statement of epic intentions, in *At a Vacation Exercise* (1628), while mentioning no specific person or subject, suggests the desire to write a poem along the lines of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*. It is not unlikely, then, that at this point, Milton held the classical, especially the Homeric, view of heroism, and believed it suitable for a Christian poet aspiring to write an epic.

This view is also implicit in his plan in *Elegy VI* (1629) to sing of

wars and heaven under Jupiter in his prime, and pious heroes and chieftains half-divine, and ... [to sing] now of the sacred counsels of the gods on high, and now of the infernal realms where the fierce dog howls.

(55-58)

In *Manso* (1630) Milton's proposed subject becomes more specific, but the nature of heroism remains unchanged; he desires to

summon back our native kings into our songs, and Arthur, waging his wars beneath the earth, ... [to] proclaim the magnanimous heroes of the table which their mutual fidelity made invincible, and ... [to] shatter the Saxon phalanxes under the British Mars!

(80-84)

In *Epitaphium Damonis* (1639-1641) he implies that he has made a start on the Arthurian epic, but this is the last we hear of any intention on Milton's part toward the completion of the project.

The reason generally given to account for Milton's abandonment of his Arthurian epic is his growing doubt about the historicity of Arthur. This is unquestionably a major factor,
for in *Paradise Lost* Milton explicitly states his aversion to dissect

With long and tedious havoc fabl'd Knights
In Battles feign'd.

(IX, 29-31)

Similarly, in the *History of Britain* (1670), he states that he is not one "who can accept of legends for good story," and he tellingly comments that, with regard to Arthur, he doubts "whether ever any such reign'd in Britain."⁵

But a second factor of importance must not be ignored. In the early 1640's a dramatic change in Milton's thinking on the type of heroism suitable for epic treatment occurred. In *Reason of Church-Government*, Milton mentions as outstanding models of epic literature, not only the masterworks of Homer and Virgil, but the Book of Job, a portrait of the just man who maintains his righteousness and faith in God despite the worst of trials. Significantly, Milton asks, "what King or Knight before the conquest might be chosen in whom to lay the pattern of a Christian Heroe [?]" (p. 109). He is now aware that a truly Christian epic demands a specifically Christian hero. He goes on to note the suitability as subjects for his great poem not only of "the deeds and triumphs of just and pious Nations doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ," but, also, of the "victorious agonies of Martyrs and Saints" (p. 110). This is a new note, one far removed from Homeric and Arthurian brands of heroism.

When we consider the strong convictions Milton had long held regarding Christian heroism, it is not surprising that, in time, he should come to see this form of heroic vir-
tue as a viable alternative to that espoused by the classical epic poets. In an early poem, "The Passion" (1630), Milton had written:

on our dearest Lord did seize ere long,
Dangers, and snares, and wrongs, and worse than so,
Which he for us did freely undergo:
Most perfect Hero, tried in heaviest plight
Of labors huge and hard, too hard for human wight. (10-14)

Here Milton finds the Son of God the great exemplar of Christian heroism, and sees the heroic nature of Christ's life in the voluntary and redemptive aspects of His suffering. The same aspects are emphasized in much of Milton's later writings, as in this passage from the First Defence (1651) when he states that "Christ..., everyone knows, took on the likeness not only of a subject but even of a slave, for the very reason that we might be free not only inwardly, but also politically. ... By his birth, his servitude and his suffering under tyrants, he has bought for us all true liberty" (p. 405). The important element of obedience in Christ's heroism is demonstrated by His assumption of the role of a subject, for, as Milton notes in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates (1649), "obedience is the true essence of a subject" (p. 365).

Voluntary obedience which must ultimately involve redempptive suffering lies at the heart of Milton's view of Christian heroism. Such obedience involves not only the active fulfillment of commands, but also the inactive virtue of patience. In the first part of Sonnet XIX (1652), Milton expresses a fairly traditional view of Christian service:

"God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best."

He proceeds, however, to add that "'They also serve who only stand and wait.'" Equal importance is given here to persistent labour and inactive patience.

Patience necessarily requires faith, for the only basis of one's service, whether waiting, suffering, or actively working is confident assurance that one's service is not in vain. The faith which results in heroic patience underlies the confidence Milton expresses in Sonnet VII (1632) on the occasion of his twenty-third birthday having passed with little of eternal merit yet accomplished:

Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure ev'n
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heav'n.

This faith which produces patience remains present throughout much of Milton's poetry, as in his later Sonnet XXII (1655) on his blindness:

I argue not
Against heav'n's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer
Right onward.

In Comus (1634) Milton gives for the first time extended treatment to the aspect of patience in heroism. It is the Lady who primarily displays the qualities of heroic patience. Alone and lost at night in the blind mazes of a tangled wood, with the sound of rude and insolent wassailers near, and a thousand other terrible fantasies beginning to rise in her imagination, she says confidently:

These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion Conscience. —
O welcome pure-ey'd Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hov'ring Angel girt with golden wings,
And thou unblemish't form of Chastity.

(210-15)

Conscience, faith, hope, and chastity: these are her weapons, and they are as removed from the weaponry of the classical hero as the Lady's femininity is from the robust masculinity of an Achilles or an Aeneas. Her weakness is her strength, however, for it encourages her to rely to a greater degree upon God, the true source of all Christian victories. She believes

That he, the Supreme good, t'whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glist'ring Guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honor unassail'd.

(217-20)

Her trial becomes more dramatic, when, bound to the sorcerer's chair, she faces Comus's arguments designed to tempt her to indulge in sensual riot. Not inwardly defeated, wearing no mind-forged manacles, she performs the heroic act of resisting the tempter's wiles. Her confidence in divine deliverance is rewarded by the complete restoration effected by her brothers, the Attendant Spirit, and Sabrina.

Considering the strong influence Christian heroism long held on Milton, we may better appreciate why, in 1642, he ceased to regard the classical presuppositions concerning heroic virtue as the only ones appropriate for the epic. He had come to see those Christian virtues long extolled in non-epic literature, love, humility, obedience, patience, faith, sacrifice, suffering, martyrdom, as equally suitable characteristics
of heroism within the framework of the epic.

As Milton gave further consideration in the years that followed to a specifically Christian form of epic heroism, he came to see it as, not just equally suitable, but more suitable for epic treatment than the Homeric or Virgilian modes of heroism. Milton found that on many points the pattern of a Christian hero was at odds with the classical heroic ideal. Milton frankly admits, in Book IX of *Paradise Lost*, that he is

Not sedulous by Nature to indite
Wars, hitherto the only Argument
Heroic deem'd, chief maistry to dissect
With long and tedious havoc fabl'd Knights
In Battles feign'd;

... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...
or to describe Races and Games,
Or tilting Furniture, emblazon'd Shields,
Impresses quaint, Caparisons and Steeds;
Bases and tinsel Trappings, gorgeous Knights
At Joust and Tournament; then marshall'd Feast
Serv'd up in Hall with Sewers, and Seneschals.

(27-31, 33-38)

Milton's implicit criticism of preceding epics, expressed at the outset of Book IX, is owing not to any failure on their part in poetic technique, but to the employment of what otherwise may be excellent artistic craftsmanship to promote a faulty, and hence corrupting, view of heroism. His objection to classical heroism, any form of heroism in fact which places its main emphasis on human glorification through martial endeavour, is expressed by the Archangel Michael in Book XI:

prodigious Births of body or mind [,]
Such were these Giants, men of high renown;
For in those days Might only shall be admir'd,
And Valor and Heroic Virtue call'd;
To overcome in Battle, and subdue
Nations, and bring home spoils with infinite
Man-slaughter, shall be held the highest pitch
Of human Glory, and for Glory done
Of triumph, to be styl'd great Conquerors,
Patrons of Mankind, Gods, and Sons of Gods,
Destroyers rightlier call'd and Plagues of Men.
Thus Fame shall be achiev'd, renown on Earth,
And what most merits fame in silence hid.

(687-99)

Verse which extolls such qualities displays

The skill of Artifice or Office mean,
Not that which justly gives Heroic name
To Person or to Poem.

(IX, 39-41)

Milton feels obliged, in the interest of truth and morality,
to reject the classical norms of heroism as unsuitable for a
genuinely Christian epic, and to revise many of the traditional
epic conventions to make them compatible with his understanding of Christian heroism.

"Mee of these,"writes Milton, referring to the qualities of classical heroes,

Nor skill'd nor studious, higher Argument
Remains.

(IX, 41-43)

The argument Milton presents is higher, because, in the
Christian context, it depicts a form of heroism nobler, and
truer than classical modes. In the invocation to Book IX,
Milton criticizes preceding poets for leaving

the better fortitude
Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom
Unsung.

(31-33)

These neglected aspects of heroism are the ones Milton wishes to portray, for they are the great acts of heroic virtue
from a Christian standpoint. Because these elements, patience
and martyrdom, are involved in the consequences of the fall of man, Milton can find the "breach/Disloyal on the part of Man, revolt,/And disobedience" an 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,
Or Neptune's ire or Juno's, that so long
Perplex'd the Greek and Cytherea's Son.

(IX, 13-19)

Unlike other Renaissance poets who sought to combine classical and Christian heroism, Milton, realizing that the two are essentially incompatible, frankly rejects the classical conception, giving crucial importance to the frailty of man, and exploring the spiritual attributes needed before heroic action may take place. This does not mean that in Milton's view the Christian hero shares none of the qualities of the classical hero. The former, however, while similar to his classical counterpart in some aspects, is distinct in so many ways that the two types are mutually exclusive as ideal modes of virtuous action.

This will become clear if we consider three of the major areas in which Milton's heroism varies from traditional types: strength, wisdom, and leadership ability.

With regard to strength, the Christian hero, as Milton sees him, is quite different from the self-reliant hero with his vaunting speeches. The Christian hero has no cause to boast, for he realizes that his power is a gift of God and its continuance depends on His grace. The hero must confess that, while all things are possible when he goes forward in
God's strength, apart from Him he can do nothing. Since only those who abandon reliance upon their own strength and trust instead in God receive this gift, it is evident that faith is of extreme importance for heroic strength. Brute strength alone, then, is never sufficient for the Christian hero. He may be active as a warfaring champion, if God so wills, but, unlike the classical hero, his endeavours are always under the control of reason and faith.

Another kind of heroic strength is possible for the Christian champion, that needed for the seemingly passive heroic act of remaining patient in times of great suffering or temptation. Patience and heroic martyrdom, which, as we have seen, receive primary emphasis in Milton's view of heroism, were minor virtues, if virtues at all, in previous notions of epic heroism. The statement of the Apostle Paul, "when I am weak, then I am strong" (II Cor. 12:10), underlies this notion of strength in seeming weakness. Milton had discovered the truth of this apparent paradox in his own experience:

I do not think it miserable, as you do, to be numbered among the blind, the sick, the grieving, and the weak, since I may hope that this brings me closer to the mercy and protection of God, my father. Upon the witness of the Apostle, one may gain great strength through weakness. May I be one of the weakest of men so long as my weakness be the cause of the effective flowering of that immortal and better strength, and so long as my darkness remain the more brightly illumined by the light of divine countenance. Then I shall be both weak and strong, simultaneously blind and most perceptive. Thus my infirmity shall become my perfection and crowning glory, and thus my darkness will clothe me in radiance.


While the idea of strength in weakness seems paradox-
ical, the solution lies in the distinction between strength resulting from reliance upon one's own physical capacities, which is really a pseudo-strength, and the strength which results when, by divine grace, God infuses true strength into the man of faith.\footnote{11} The strength of patience, like the strength of pious activity, results from the individual's confidence in God to win the victory in any circumstance.

As opposed to the classical hero with his calculated stratagems and tactical "wiliness," the Christian hero, as Milton conceives him, chiefly exemplifies spiritual wisdom. Such wisdom demands right reason to enable the hero to control his passions at all times; divine revelation to establish truth; and humility, permitting one to see clearly the vast contrast between the limited wisdom of the creature and the infinite wisdom of the Creator.\footnote{12} The truly wise man, like the heroically strong man, is such through his faith in God. Recognizing his unaided reason's limitations, trusting instead in divine testimony and obeying its laws even when he does not understand them fully, he stands up for the truth despite intensely malicious opposition.\footnote{13}

Finally, we come to the leadership aspect of heroism. Milton follows classical precedent that epic heroes should be outstanding civil or military dignitaries.\footnote{14} While he further agrees that the leader must be a magnanimous man of high and deserved dignity, his conception of heroic leadership goes beyond this. The true leader, while aware of his excellence, is also aware that this too, like the virtues of heroic
strength and wisdom, is a gift of God. Thus, instead of the pride which motivated the classical champion's concern for personal honour, the Christian hero is marked by an obedience to God and love of Him which lead him, when necessary, to abandon his glory and accept humiliation.\textsuperscript{15} The ideal of heroic leadership, like that of strength and wisdom, requires faith, for the leader's moral excellence consists in his willingness to obey God and suffer for Him.\textsuperscript{16} Thus, for all his moral excellence, strength, and wisdom, the hero is not self-sufficient; rather he is seen as a subject, a servant, even simply as an instrument of God, used by Him to accomplish His mighty works.\textsuperscript{17}

The primary emphasis in Milton's view of heroism, then, as we have seen, falls upon that form of patience which may be defined as the steadfast loyalty to God displayed in times of extreme temptation or trial. Deeds of this type of patience are the greatest acts of obedience which faith, love, and humility can produce. Obedience is a quality which can only prove itself when tested by temptation, "For," as Milton says in \textit{Reason of Church-Government}, "if there were no opposition where were the triall of an unfained goodnesse and magnanimity?" (p. 105).

Implicit, of course, is the notion of human free will.\textsuperscript{18} A hero cannot be a mere puppet manipulated by God, "an Adam as he is in the motions" (p. 296). Before any act of heroism can be accomplished, a choice has to be made. One mode of action has to be adopted, and a multitude of other
possible actions rejected no matter how appealing they may be. The more difficult it is to make the right moral choice, the greater the hero's virtue is proved to be.

If patience is the basic spiritual motivation of Milton's heroes, resistance to temptation is the primary mode of heroic action. Paradoxically, this kind of heroic action demands non-action; abstention, in other words, from some evil activity. Milton sees the heroic victory as won or lost first within the soul; only subsequently, and consequently, in the external field of human activity. The struggle within the soul becomes the focal point for the artist trying to portray the dynamics of spiritual heroism.

Unfortunately, the Christian hero, as the Bible only too clearly shows, is not always invariably successful; even great heroes such as Moses, David, or Peter are fallible. The hero has to struggle throughout life and remain at all times completely ready for any action and any sacrifice. The supreme sacrifice, of course, is "the Heavenly Fortitude of Martyrdome" (Of Reformation Touching Church Discipline in England, p. 48): "The Christian concept of heroic martyrdom ... set[s] up the courage of willingness to undergo sacrifice against the concept of courage based upon pride, honor, or unreasoning stubbornness."

The supreme example of heroism is Christ, Milton's "Most perfect Hero," who struggled not for a temporal or worldly end, not for the destruction of Troy or the founding of Rome, but for an eternal goal, waging cosmic warfare on the
side of good against the powers of darkness in order to es-

tablish the New Jerusalem. While Christ is the ultimate
hero, triumphing over Satan, Sin, and Death on the cross, fal-
len man also becomes a victorious hero when, through faith, he
vicariously partakes of Christ's triumph. The cosmic as-
pect of Christ's struggle against Satan provides meaning for
the suffering which the hero must undergo, for only in the
perspective of the Christian view of the battle between good
and evil, Christ and Satan, can the concept of heroic martyr-
dom be understood.

Before turning to Paradise Lost and a detailed exam-
ination of its heroic aspects, we should note that, even af-
fer his masterwork, Milton felt so strongly about his notion
of heroism that he continued to give the exploration of it
first place in his later epic and drama. A brief look at
these works should lend weight to our argument, which has, by
necessity, been rather general to this point.

In Paradise Regained (1671) we see heroic patience de-
lineated in the person of Christ. The Father's words to Gab-
riel about the Son in Book I clearly reveal the importance of
the temptation motif in this epic:

```
this man born and now upgrown,
To show him worthy of his birth divine
And high prediction, henceforth I expose
To Satan; let him tempt and now assay
His utmost subtlety, because he boasts
And vaunts of his great cunning to the throng
Of his Apostasy; he might have learnt
Less overweening, since he fail'd in Job,
Whose constant perseverance overcame
Whate'er his cruel malice could invent.
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(140-49)
These last words are significant, for Milton long admired Job and considered him a hero of the faith, a hero who proved his worth by patient endurance of suffering. But Christ will prove even more exemplary than Job:

He [Satan] now shall know I can produce a man
Of female Seed, far abler to resist
All his solicitations, and at length
All his vast force, and drive him back to Hell,
Winning by Conquest what the first man lost
By fallacy surpris'd.

(I, 150-55)

This may sound like the classical epic's emphasis on violent conquest, but then we note the prior spiritual battle:

But first I mean
To exercise him in the Wilderness;
There he shall first lay down the rudiments
Of his great warfare, ere I send him forth
To conquer Sin and Death the two grand foes,
By Humiliation and strong Sufferance.

(155-60)

Humility and the ability to endure suffering are to be the primary weapons of warfare, and, once again, as with the Lady in *Comus*, weakness is seen as a source of strength which is crucial to the ultimate victory:

His weakness shall o'ercome Satanic strength
And all the world, and mass of sinful flesh.

(161-62)

Like the Lady, He is tempted by the specious arguments of an arch-deceiver. Each of Satan's offers to Christ, food, proof of personal identity to Himself and others, the worship of the world, are things Christ desires greatly, and are available immediately and with comparatively little trouble. But each offer involves disobedience to God's sovereign will, and
the Son heroically refuses to disobey. The temptation, bas-
ically, is to take things out of God's hands, and to act au-
tonomously. The Son recognizes that all depends on God and
must be done according to His will.

Heroic patience and martyrdom are present also in
_Samson Agonistes_ (1671), though the following lines might
seem to indicate just the opposite:

> Oh how comely it is and reviving
> To the Spirits of just men long opprest!
> When God into the hands of thir deliverer
> Puts invincible might
> To quell the mighty of the Earth, th'oppressor,
> The brute and boist'rous force of violent men

> Hee all thir Ammunition
> And feats of War defeats
> With plain Heroic magnitude of mind
> And celestial vigor arm'd,
> Thir Armories and Magazines contemns,
> Renders them useless, while
> With winged expedition
> Swift as the lightning glance he executes
> His errand on the wicked, who surpris'd
> Lose thir defense, distracted and amaz'd.

(1268-86)

While this is somewhat similar to the classical he-
ro's engagement in violence and killing, we should note some
fundamental differences. This hero's strength and wisdom are
unquestionably derived from God, and, as the results of Da-
lila's shearing Samson's locks make clear, are gifts of divine
grace, not human merit, which remain only as long as the re-
cipient maintains a faithful obedience. Furthermore, the war-
rrior seeks to enhance God's glory, not his own.

This type of active Christian heroism, moreover, is
the exception, not the rule:
But patience is more oft the exercise
Of Saints, the trial of thir fortitude,
Making them each his own Deliverer,
And Victor over all
That tyranny or fortune can inflict.

(1287-91)

This is the distinctive brand of heroism which we have noted as characteristic of Milton's notion of epic virtue. Again we see the familiar pattern of resistance to temptation, and, as with Christ, this is a prior condition to any active physical conquest. Samson successfully resists the temptations presented to him in various disguises: to escape his punishment justly imposed by God by returning home with Manoa; to give in to his weakness for women by acceding to Dalila's wishes; and, most subtle of all, to despair of God's grace. Having achieved the victory within, he is established as a Christian hero, and is ready to do battle with the Philistines.

The pattern we see repeated then in these last poems, that of a hero resisting the temptation to fulfill his own very strong desires when he realizes that to do so would go against the higher will of God, is completely in accord with our earlier statements concerning Milton's idea of Christian heroism. With these conclusions in mind, let us turn now to a consideration of *Paradise Lost* itself.
Chapter Two:
Divine and Demonic Heroism

In *Paradise Lost* Milton attempts for the first time to give epic treatment to his idea of heroism. He sets about this by undermining those inherently secular expectations which we have noted as characteristic of the classical hero, and providing in their place the contrasting Christian ideals. Books I to III constitute an essential phase of his definition of true epic virtue.

At the outset of his epic, in the invocation, Milton gives the reader in capsule form the essence of villainy and the basis of heroism. The negative is presented first:

> Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste Brought Death into the World, and all our woe, With loss of Eden, 
> 
> Sing Heav'ny Muse.
>

The heavy rhythmic weights of "Disobedience" and "Forbidden" are significant; they emphasize that evil is the refusal to obey authority. "Mortal," "Death," "woe," and "loss" are also weighty rhythmically, for they suggest the results of such villainous acts.

Heroism is then succinctly demonstrated; we have lost
Eden

until one greater Man
 Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat.

(4-5)

"Restore" and "regain," emphasized by alliteration as well as rhythm, are words which sum up the fundamental act of heroism: the restoration of others to their rights, property, or capabilities. The result of such heroic activity is bliss.

Milton uses the contrasting figures of Satan and Christ to continue his delineation of heroism in Books I to III. He moves expertly from the opening invocation to the main body of his poem by a bridge in the form of a direct question which is of interest to us, for it concerns "our Grand Parents:"

Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view
Nor the deep Tract of Hell, say first what cause
Mov'd our Grand Parents in that happy State,
Favor'd of Heav'n so highly, to fall off
From thir Creator, and transgress his Will
For one restraint, Lords of the World besides?

(I, 27-32)

In asking the origin of man's first disobedience, Milton asks here for the Muse to tell him the "cause," a word which does not necessarily indicate the agency of another being. The next line, however, permits no such ambiguity, and we see that the human villainy is a result of the villainy of someone else: "Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt?" (I, 33).

This seducing being, responsible for not only our grand parents' misery, but "all our woe," is "Th'infernal Serpent" (I, 34). "Infernal" may refer to the place of doom of the serpent, Hell, or to this being's hellish attributes. As
Milton proceeds with the opening of his narrative, we see that both meanings apply:

he it was, whose guile
Stirr'd up with Envy and Revenge, deceiv'd
The Mother of Mankind; what time his Pride
Had cast him out from Heav'n, with all his Host
Of Rebel Angels, by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in Glory above his Peers,
He trusted to have equall'd the most High,
If he oppos'd; and with ambitious aim
Against the Throne and Monarchy of God
Rais'd impious War in Heav'n and Battle proud
With vain attempt.

(I, 34-44)

In the space of eleven lines, Milton is able to give us a splendidly concise description of the serpent's attributes: guile (34), envy (35), revenge (35), deceit (35), pride (36), rebelliousness (37-41), ambition (41), and impiety (43). Not only is he the source of human misery, he also trampled on the rights of his equals, for he had tried "To set himself in Glory above his Peers." The blatant injustice here is matched and surpassed in the following line: "He trusted to have equall'd the most High." The attempt by an inferior to equal that which is "the most High" is as morally unjust as it is logically absurd and physically impossible.

Lest we feel we may be dealing with one who has been temporarily prodigal but may soon repent, Milton destroys such a possibility a few lines further on by calling attention to the two basic characteristics of the serpent:

round he throws his baleful eyes
That witness'd huge affliction and dismay
Mixt with obdurate pride and steadfast hate.

(I, 56-58)

The obdurate and steadfast nature of the serpent's
villainy, which his eyes make evident ("witness'd"), rules out the possibility of his repentance. From this it should be apparent that the serpent merits the "Prison" (71) to which, for his "crime" (79), he has been condemned by "Eternal Justice" (70). Only at the end of this massive portrait of evil does Milton reveal the name of this character, but even as he does so he adds one more epithet: "th'Arch-Enemy" (81). By not specifying whose arch-enemy the serpent is, Milton has given the epithet a universal application. The serpent, whom we are now at last informed is "in Heav'n call'd Satan" (83), is not the enemy only of God and of those loyal to Him, but also of all mankind, and even of his own compeers. Everybody's enemy, he is ultimately his own worst enemy as well.

Milton has carefully built up the case against Satan without relying on any value judgment which the name "Satan" might evoke for his readers. Why all this trouble? Why not simply state at the outset that we are dealing here with Satan, and let the reader's background knowledge and emotional reactions supply the rest? Largely, because Milton is about to attempt something artistically breath-taking. He is about to clothe the villain of his poem in the garb traditionally worn by the classical hero. The purpose of this has been accurately described by Harding: "For criticizing the brand of heroism which the life and death of Christ had relegated to a position of the second order, what more telling device was available to Milton than to embody the old heroism in Satan and then to discredit it by exposing its deficiencies and inade-
quacies?"

But, in so doing, Milton runs the risk of enhancing Satan too much in the reader's eyes, and of drawing forth reactions of approval from his audience which it had been culturally conditioned to accord to heroes. Ambiguity and confusion are possibilities, but the worst reaction would be rejection by his Christian readership of his epic as immoral if it were thought to be whole-heartedly advocating Satan as a hero to be emulated. The long preamble to the introduction of Satan's name is intended to prevent this.

Milton takes care throughout the poem, but particularly in Books I and II, to reaffirm the effect of the preamble. Milton's portrayal of Satan's character constantly shifts abruptly from appearance to reality, often revealing as it does so one of Satan's prime characteristics: hypocrisy. After one of Satan's grand performances or speeches, Milton generally supplies a comment which bursts the grand illusion created by the fallen angel and uncovers the true nature of things, as in the following passage where a single word is sufficient for the poet's purpose:

Forthwith upright he rears from off the Pool
His mighty Stature; on each hand the flames
Driv'n backward slope thir pointing spires, and roll'd
In billows, leave i' th' midst a horrid Vale.
Then with expanded wings he steers his flight
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky Air
That felt unusual weight, till on dry Land
He lights, if it were Land that ever burn'd
With solid, as the Lake with liquid fire
And such appear'd in hue;

Such resting found the sole
Of unblest feet.

(I, 221-30, 237-38)
It is not necessary that the reader note the fateful similarity between Satan's doomed flight and that of Icarus, who with his father also flew "with expanded wings," both "glorying to have scap't .../As Gods" (239-40) from their prison. With one word, "unblest," Milton undercuts favourable reaction to the character who is performing such an apparently grand feat.

This undercutting is important, for by embodying classical heroic qualities in Satan who is exposed as fraudulent again and again, Milton at the same time undermines the traditional heroic values themselves. This should become clear if we consider Satan according to the three classical formulas of heroic virtue which we have noted are at variance with Milton's heroism: strength, wisdom, and leadership ability.

Satan's superlative strength is of the same kind of brute physical might which an Achilles or an Ajax gloried in. One of the physical aspects of heroism which counted for a good deal with the classical writers was personal appearance. In this respect, Satan's size is a match for the largest of classical figures; "extended long and large" we see him lie floating many a rood, in bulk as huge

As whom the Fables name of monstrous size, Titanian, or Earth-born, that warr'd on Jove, Briareos or Typhon, whom the Den

By ancient Tarsus held.  

(I, 196-200)

Satan's appearance is greater than that of previous epic heroes, for, when we see him first, his form has not lost "All her Original brightness" (I, 592) nor appears Less than Arch-Angel ruin'd, and th' excess
Of Glory obscur'd. \( (I, 593-94) \)

and he is the foremost of a host of

Godlike shapes and forms
Excelling human, Princely Dignities,
And Powers that erst in Heaven sat on Thrones.
\( (I, 358-60) \)

Milton explicitly compares the fallen angels to the ancient heroes, and finds the former to excel in those qualities traditionally associated with heroes:

never since created man,
Met such imbodied force, as nam'd with these
Could merit more than that small infantry
Warr'd on by Cranes: though all the Giant brood
Of Phlegra with th' Heroic Race were join'd
That fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side
Mist with auxiliar Gods;

Thus far these beyond
Compare of mortal prowess.
\( (I, 573-79, 587-88) \)

As his followers excel the Greek and Roman heroes, so Satan overshadows his followers, as Milton shows in the following passage:

\( he above the rest \)
In shape and gesture proudly eminent
Stood like a Tow'r.
\( (I, 589-91) \)

This passage strengthens Milton's identification of Satan with the classical hero, for it is borrowed largely from Virgil's description of Turnus in Book VII of the *Aeneid*, which follows, as does Milton's lines, a roll call:

Himself too among the foremost, splendid in beauty of body,
Turnus moves armed and towers a whole head over all.

Satan's strength is indicated not only by these comparisons, but also by actual physical endeavours. He is the
first to escape the Stygian pool, and when he calls his troops he calls

so loud, that all the hollow Deep
Of Hell resounded.

(I, 314-15)

The weapons and armor of the classical hero were most significant, for they symbolized his tremendous stature; none but Achilles could handle his spear, none but Odysseus his bow. Similarly, Satan's strength is attested by the huge armour, superior to that of any classical hero, which he bears:

the superior Fiend
Was moving toward the shore; his ponderous shield
Ethereal temper, massy, large and round,
Behind him cast; the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the Moon,

His Spear, to equal which the tallest Pine
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the Mast
Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand,
He walkt with.

(I, 283-87, 292-95)

Finally, Satan's epic journey from Hell through the realm of Chaos and Old Night to Earth requires prodigious strength. The journey is reminiscent of Jason's or Odysseus's, but is far more dangerous; this "Voyage" (II, 919) is across "no narrow frith" (919), but over "a dark/Illimitable Ocean without bound" (891-92) where "time and place are lost" (894), and requires the utmost from Satan's "Sail-broad Vans" (927). After "many a League" (929) he meets his Scylla and "drops/Ten thousand fadom deep" (933-34), but escapes only to face a Charybdis; "behoves him now both Oar and Sail" (942). Before he is able, "like a weather-beaten Vessel" (1043) with "Shrouds and Tackle torn" (1044) to reach "the Port" (1044),
he is

harder beset
And more endanger'd, than when Argo pass'd
Through Bosporus betwixt the justling Rocks:
Or when Ulysses on the Larboard shunn'd
Charybdis, and by th' other whirlpool steer'd.

(II, 1016-20)

We have already seen that, while physical strength
is essential to the classical hero, wisdom also played an im-
portant role. For the hero, "since wits are another sign that
he surpasses other men, there is nothing discreditable in
their use to secure some glorious end.... At the lowest lev-
el it might be argued that since the hero's chief aim is to
exert his own will and get what he wants there is no reason
why he should not use guile." 6 Satan, in the half-truths,
lies, and disguises he uses to manipulate Beelzebub, the out-
come of the Stygian Council, Sin and Death, Chaos and Ancient
Night, and Uriel, employs the same wiliness which character-
ized the Greek hero Odysseus. Satan himself is keenly anxious
that his claim to heroic wisdom not be doubted:

For mee be witness all the Host of Heav'n,
If counsels different, or danger shunn'd
By me, have lost our hopes.

(I, 635-37)

Satan, however, is far superior to Odysseus in guile, for he
is the "fraudulent Impostor foul" (III, 692) who

beguil'd
Uriel, though Regent of the Sun, and held
The sharpest-sighted Spirit of all in Heav'n.

(III, 689-91)

Having lost a war based primarily on might, Satan now is com-
mitted to a course of wiliness and deceit:

our better part remains
To work in close design, by fraud or guile
What force effected not.

(I, 645-47)

The council he calls to discuss the matter resembles the Homeric council in which heroes assemble to share wisdom and plot strategy. 7

With respect to the formula of the heroic leader, we have already noted that classical tradition held that the greatest heroes were men whose magnanimity was attested to by their being placed in outstanding civil or military positions. Satan is his followers' "great Sultan" (I, 348), and is anxious that the ceremony due to his position be observed. Having raised his troops' spirits, he

straight commands that at the warlike sound
Of Trumpets loud and Clarions be uprear'd
His mighty Standard.

(I, 531-33)

The magnificent temple, Pandemonium, is built as his "high Capitol" (I, 756), and "winged Heralds by command/Of Sovran power, with awful Ceremony/And Trumpets' sound" (752-54) deliver his proclamations.

The opulence of "State," as well as the dignity of ceremony, is sought by Satan:

High on a Throne of Royal State, which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
Show'rs on her Kings Barbaric Pearl and Gold,
Satan exalted sat.

(II, 1-5)

Such luxury reminds one of the classical banqueting and royal splendour which characterized Dido's reception of Aeneas and his Trojans at the conclusion of the first book of the Aeneid:
The queen receives them, on a golden couch
Below the royal tapestries, where spreads
Of crimson wait Aeneas and his Trojans.8

That Satan is a hero in the classical tradition can
be inferred from Milton's description of his followers. They
are armed with "Spears" (I, 547), "Helms" (547), and "serried
Shields" (548) and march "In perfect Phalanx" (550) to "Mar-
tial sounds" (540)
such as rais'd
To hight of noblest temper Heroes old
Arming to Battle.
(I, 551-53)

When a volunteer is needed to pursue alone the dread-
ful voyage to spy out God's newly created world, Satan, like
many a classical hero faced with a critical emergency,9 volun-
teers himself. Even the words he speaks in acceptance of the
challenge help reinforce the portrait of Satan as a classical
leader, for they allude to the Sybil's advice to the leader
Aeneas in Book VI of the Aeneid:

    it is easy, the descending
    Down to Avernus. But to climb again,
    To trace the footsteps back to the air above,
    There lies the task, the toil.
    (p. 148)

Satan says:

    long is the way
    And hard, that out of Hell leads up to light.
    (II, 432-33)

It should be evident by now that Milton has incorporat-
ed in the character of Satan a great many of the qualities of
the classical hero. Milton undermines Satan in each of the
heroic formulas we have looked at, and in doing so, casts
doubt upon the classical ideal of heroism as well.
The basic fault which Milton reveals in Satan, and which he implies about the old heroic creed, is pride. Satan appears not simply eminent above the rest, but "proudly eminent" (I, 590). Milton shows that beneath the Archangelic exterior reigns pride:

yet shone
Above them all th'Arch-Angel: but his face
Deep scars of Thunder had intrencht, and care
Sat on his faded cheek, but under Brows
Of dauntless courage, and considerate Pride
Waiting revenge.

(I, 599-604)

Satan is proud of his might; when he sees his troops,

his heart
Distends with pride, and hard'ning in his strength
Glories.

(I, 571-73)

This pride is present in his every speech, and in his "Vaunting aloud" (I, 126) he strikes the boasting tone customary in the addresses of the classical warrior. Diomedes' answer to Paris in Book XI of the Iliad is a typical example:

"Bowman, reviler, proud in thy bow of horn, thou gaper after girls, verily if thou madest trial in full harness, man to man, thy bow and showers of shafts would nothing avail thee, but now thou boastest vainly, for that thou hast grazed the sole of my foot. I care not, more than if a woman had struck me or a senseless boy, for feeble is the dart of a craven man and a worthless. In other wise from my hand, yea, if it do but touch, the sharp shaft flieth, and straightway layeth low its man, and torn are the cheeks of his wife, and fatherless his children, and he, reddening the earth with his blood, doth rot away, more birds than women round him."

The boastful pride evident here is also clearly demonstrated by Satan, as in the following speech to his troops:

O Myriads of immortal Spirits, O Powers
Matchless, but with th'Almighty, and that strife
Was not inglorious,
what power of mind
Foreseeing or presaging, from the Depth
Of knowledge past or present, could have fear'd
How such united force of Gods, how such
As stood like these, could ever know repulse?
For who can yet believe, though after loss,
That all these puissant Legions, whose exile
Hath emptied Heav'n, shall fail to re-ascend
Self-rais'd, and repossess thir native seat?
(I, 622-24, 626-34)

The word "Self-raised" is important, for it suggests the self-reliant attitude typical of classical heroes. Such self-reliance Milton implies, arises not from a true evaluation of the nature of things, but from arrogance.

The "wisdom" of Satan and the classical heroes is also corrupted by pride. Milton's brief description of Satan's first speech to his troops reveals the motivation behind the pseudo-logic of all Satan's speeches:

he his wonted pride
Soon recollecting, with high words, that bore
Semblance of worth, not substance, gently rais'd
Thir fainting courage, and dispell'd thir fears.
(I, 527-30; emphasis mine)

Satan's essential folly is displayed in his next speech, for, acknowledging God to be "Matchless" in open combat, he presumes that a new war prosecuted by guile may be effective, since he who overcomes by force "hath overcome but half his foe" (I, 649). He cannot see that he is not half, but wholly undone, that he would never have escaped the Stygian flood were it not for "the sufferance of supernal Power" (I, 241). Satan's "wisdom," then, like the unscrupulous guile which a classical hero such as Odysseus frequently resorted to, consists primarily of an ability to deceive others, and an inability to undeceive himself. Only when the human intellect is di-
rected toward an end truly worthy is wisdom possible in Milton's view; in this respect he found both Satan and the classical heroes inadequate.

The same is true of Satan as leader; the greatness of his leadership qualities is vitiated by his use of them to promote a corrupt regime. It is clear from his love of order, ceremony, opulence, and glory that he is committed to a hierarchical social structure, but the thing of prime importance to him is that he should be at the top of such a structure:

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

He does not want his followers to cease to believe that, in his words,

Mee ... just right and the fixt Laws of Heav'n
Did first create your Leader,

(II, 18-19)
yet at the same time he will not recognize the truth of his own statement that

he
Who now is Sovran can dispose and bid
What shall be right.

(I, 245-47)

Satan acknowledges the sovereignty of God, and hence His right to be Lord of Lords, yet he will not serve. Satan's unwillingness to accept any position of authority less than the highest perverts his value as a leader and, instead of his rule benefitting his followers, his actions result in their condemnation:

condemn'd
For ever now to have thir lot in pain,
Millions of Spirits for his fault amer't
Of Heav'n, and from Eternal Splendors flung
For his revolt.

(I, 607-11)

Pride, of course, is behind Satan's desire to be leader, and his heroic activities as leader are undertaken simply to remain unrivalled in that position. Milton is at pains to make it clear what are the motivating impulses behind Satan's offer to undertake the epic journey alone. Before Satan speaks to make his offer, we are told:

at last
Satan, whom now transcendent glory rais'd
Above his fellows, with Monarchal pride
Conscious of highest worth, unmov'd thus spake.

(II, 426-29)

This same pride, highly conscious of glory and renown, Milton reveals in Satan at the conclusion of his offer:

Thus saying rose
The Monarch, and prevented all reply,
Prudent, lest from his resolution rais'd
Others among the chief might offer now
(Certain to be refus'd) what erst they fear'd;
And so refus'd might in opinion stand
His Rivals, winning cheap the high repute
Which he through hazard huge must earn.

(II, 466-73)

A desire for self-glorification, not any altruistic notion, is clearly shown to be the motivation here. In this desire he resembles many classical heroes, especially Achilles. Milton is opposed to this desire, for, as with Satan and Achilles, it eventually leads to rebellion against authority.

who can think Submission? War then, War
Open or understood, must be resolv'd,

(I, 661-62)

cries Satan. Because pride is so central a characteristic of Satan, and is the causal factor in his rebellion, Milton says,
as he introduces the fallen Archangel chained on the burning lake, that it was

his Pride
Had cast him out from Heav'n.

(I, 36-37)

Rejecting Satan, Milton at the same time makes it clear to the reader that he is also rejecting the classical type of heroism. The ground is thus prepared for him to provide an alternative type of heroism. Those who complain that Milton upsets the balance of his poem by presenting such an appealing character as Satan first, creating an impression which the reader cannot entirely escape from afterwards, miss the point; in presenting a form of heroism at variance with that traditionally approved, he wisely decides to expose the shortcomings of the old hero before introducing the new. Qualities of Milton's alternate form of heroism appear in the Son.

The Son's introduction in Book III is far different from Satan's, being, in comparison, quite brief. Milton does not have to fear that his reader will misinterpret him here. The entire introduction takes a little more than eight lines:

Now had th'Almighty Father from above,
From the pure Empyr'yan where he sits
High Thron'd above all highth, bent down his eye,
His own works and their works at once to view:
About him all the Sanctities of Heaven
Stood thick as Stars, and from his sight receiv'd
Beatitude past utterance; on his right
The radiant image of his Glory sat,
His only Son.

(III, 56-64)

The Father is described first: "Almighty" and "High Thron'd above all highth" reveal the exalted nature of His person;
"pure" describes that which He creates, and hence that which He is, and "Sanctities" implies the same; the word "Father" conveys His concern for "His own works and their works;" and the "Beatitude past utterance" which He bestows on the inhabitants of Heaven suggests the loving regard He has for His creation. This description puts content into Milton's introduction of the Son as "The radiant image of his Glory," the words "radiant" and "Glory" having an especially strong emotional appeal for the reader.

Even if we set aside the attitudes prevalent among seventeenth-century readers and later developments within the epic itself, it is evident from the way Milton introduces Satan and the Son that the poet has provided the reader with characters who are morally polar opposites. Upon the former negative pole he hangs the old heroic ethic, upon the latter positive pole he founds his new heroism.

The Son of God, Milton's great exemplar of Christian heroism, provides the contrast to Satan's pseudo-heroism. In terms of strength, we find Him matchless in the only type of heroic strength Satan knows, physical combat. In an apostrophe to the Son, Milton writes that the Father

by thee threw down
Th' aspiring Dominations: thou that day
Thy father's dreadful Thunder didst not spare,
Nor stop thy flaming Chariot wheels, that shook
Heav'n's everlasting Frame, while o'er the necks
Thou drov'st of warring Angels disarray'd.

(III, 391-96)

The Son's "fierce vengeance" (III, 399) here, however, is not the sheer brute strength of classical heroes and of Satan, be-
cause reason and piety at all times control His endeavours. The combination of reason and piety, never present in Satan, is often lacking in classical heroes' acts; even Aeneas, the most reasonable and pious of ancient warriors, at times shows unbelief and irrational passion.

In direct contrast to Satan and classical epic heroes is another kind of heroic strength which the Son manifests. This is the strength of patience, which, as we have seen, receives prime emphasis in Milton's notion of heroism. When the Father asks for one to redeem fallen man, the Son volunteers to go on an epic journey quite unlike Satan's:

Behold mee then, mee for him, life for life
I offer, on mee let thine anger fall;
Account mee man; I for his sake will leave
Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee
Freely put off, and for him lastly die
Well pleas'd, on me let Death wreck all his rage.

(III, 236-41)

This is a heroism of which Satan knows nothing; unlike Satan's offer in the parallel passage in Book II, motivated by pride and vainglory, the Son offers to suffer and die for fallen man out of love. In order to accomplish this He must "Freely put off" those qualities of strength He used to defeat the rebel angels in the War in Heaven, and, becoming a man, conquer again by strength which lies in seeming weakness. The strength of patience demanded by the Son's future roll will depend upon His faith that God will achieve the victory through Him. The Son reveals this faith only a few lines after His offer:

Though now to Death I yield, and am his due
All that of me can die, yet that debt paid,
Thou will not leave me in the loathsome grave
His prey, nor suffer my unspotted Soul
For ever with corruption there to dwell;
But I shall rise Victorious, and subdue
My vanquisher, spoil'd of his vaunted spoil.

(Ill, 245-51)

In terms of wisdom and leadership ability, the Son again stands in complete contrast to Satan. In Satan we found lies and self-deception; in the Son we find the epitome of right reason, the embodiment of Truth. The Father and Son are in such complete harmony that the Father calls the Son "my wisdom" (III, 170) and says "All hast thou spok'n as my thoughts are" (III, 171).

We found Satan's leadership ability perverted by his extreme self-concern. The Son's leadership shows its authenticity in His great concern for those whom He leads. His love leads Him to suffer for others, and not others for Him as with Satan. As the Father says,

\[
\text{in thee}
\]
\[
\text{Love hath abounded more than Glory abounds.}
\]

(Ill, 311-12)

Thus Milton has clearly delineated in the first three books of his epic the attitudes he wishes his reader to take toward Satan and the Son, toward classical and his own notion of heroism.

In rejecting Satan Milton rejects the heroic ideal in more than one form. In the first place, he rejects the authentic hero who lives for his glory and is moved by personal pride.... Milton may still keep his old love for the poems which told of Achilles or Roland, but he denies the ideals which they embody.... But he is not content to criticise only this type. In Satan he even criticises the more civilised types of heroism which Virgil and others had created. ... For what Milton rejects is the whole notion that heroism lies in deeds which bring earthly glory or are concerned with human power. In their different ways Virgil, Camoes, and Tasso, even Boiardo and Ariosto, had made this
assumption, but Milton thinks that heroism lies in suffering for the good and that the only true glory belongs to this.\textsuperscript{13}

In the figure of the Son Milton depicts a heroism consisting of wisdom founded on the recognition of God's authority, leadership based on love, and strength manifested in patient suffering and heroic martyrdom; all attributes ultimately resting on faith in God's providence. As Milton soon makes clear it is important that man emulate the divine heroism of the Son, rather than the demonic pseudo-heroism of Satan.
Chapter Three:
Instruction in Fortitude

We have seen that Milton, in the first three books of *Paradise Lost*, clearly indicates to his reader that he is rejecting classical heroism, and proceeds to show, in its essential form, the type of heroism he is advocating as a viable alternative. Having thus reappraised the nature of heroism, the reader is now prepared to judge the epic's heroic contest between man and Satan in a new way. With regard to the heroic nature of Adam and Eve there are two main movements within *Paradise Lost*: a process of education instituted by the Father through the Archangel Raphael intended to clarify for man the issues involved in maintaining his initial heroic standing, and a second movement, similar to the first, instituted by God through the Archangel Michael, which assists Adam and Eve to become heroes on the highest level possible for postlapsarian man. This chapter will deal with the former movement.

As with the introductions of Satan and the Son, the introduction of Adam and Eve is a miniature portrait, intended to suggest in brief their main characteristics. We have noted earlier the importance of physical appearance as a heroic quality; Adam and Eve not only are
Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,  
Godlike erect,  

(IV, 288-89)

when compared to the other living creatures in the Garden,  
but are  

the loveliest pair  
That ever since in love's imbraces met,  
Adam the goodliest man of men since born  
His Sons, the fairest of her Daughters Eve.  

(IV, 321-24)

They are more gloriously attractive than any Achilles, because they have not been tainted by sin as their descendants, including the classical heroes, will be. In "thir looks Divine" shines fully "the image of thir glorious Maker" (IV, 291-92).

Milton suggests the robust physique of the classical hero in his first description of Adam:

His fair large Front and Eye sublime declar'd  
Absolute rule; and Hyacinthine Locks  
Round from his parted forelock manly hung  
Clust'ring, but not beneath his shoulders broad.  

(IV, 300-03; emphasis mine)

Harding (p. 70) points out that this portrait is similar to one in the first book of the Aeneid:

Aeneas stood discovered in sheen of brilliant light, like a god in face and shoulders; for his mother's self had shed on her son the grace of clustered locks, the radiant light of youth, and the lustre of joyous eyes; as when ivory takes beauty under the artist's hand, or when silver or Parian stone is inlaid in gold.

It is also reminiscent of Homer's description of Odysseus in Book VI of the Odyssey:

Athene ... from his head caused deep curling locks to flow, like the hyacinth flower. And as when some skilful man overlays gold upon silver -- one that Hephaestus and Pallas Athene have taught all manner of craft, and full
of grace is his handiwork — even so did Athene shed grace about his head and shoulders.²

Milton's contemporary reader would undoubtedly have recognized at least the association of Adam with Aeneas in these passages;³ it seems probable then that Milton is presenting the knowledgeable reader with a challenge to weigh the heroism of Adam against the acknowledged excellence of an Aeneas or an Odysseus.⁴

Further evidence of Adam's heroic strength is provided later in the poem by Satan, who shuns a direct confrontation with Adam because of his "strength" (IX, 484), as well as his intellect (483). He goes on to describe Adam as

of courage haughty, and of limb
Heretic built, though of terrestrial mould,
Foe not formidable, exempt from wound.
(IX, 484-86)

That the terrific figure of Satan which we have met in Books I and II should seek to avoid face to face conflict with Adam is in itself an eloquent testimony to the latter's superlative strength.

Adam surpasses the classical hero not only in terms of physical appearance and strength, but also in wisdom. Created in the image of God, he embodies "Truth" and "Wisdom" (IV, 293). Adam then is superlative in both the qualities of heroism so highly valued by the classical writers: "For contemplation hee and valor form'd" (IV, 297; emphasis mine).

As a magnanimous leader, Adam excells also. He possesses true dignity, for he is "with native Honor clad" (IV, 289) and is marked by
Sanctitude severe and pure,  
Severe, but in true filial freedom plac't;  
Whence true authority in men.  

(IV, 293-95)

Given by God dominion over all the earth, he is leader without equal, he has "Absolute rule" (IV, 301). Clearly, then, Milton is indicating that, in those areas of heroism which the classical writers tended to emphasize, Adam is superior to even the greatest heroes of Homer and Virgil.

Indeed, Eve as well not only surpasses all heroines descended from her but, despite her femininity, exceeds the noblest classical heroes in some aspects of heroic virtue. Like Adam, she possesses "Truth, Wisdom, Sanctitude severe and pure" (IV, 293) in their original fullness, a fullness which no sin-defiled descendant of hers, no matter how exemplary compared to his contemporaries, can hope to claim. Milton makes it clear at the same time that Adam and Eve are "both/Not equal, as thir sex not equal seem'd" (IV 295-96). We learn later that Adam has the "higher intellectual" (IX, 483), and that Eve therefore is

in the prime end  
Of Nature ... th' inferior, in the mind  
And inward Faculties, which most excel.  

(VIII, 540-42)

Also, despite her "outward show/Elaborate" (VIII, 538-39), her appearance is overshadowed by Adam's; we find

In outward also her resembling less  
His Image who made both, and less expressing  
The character of that Dominion giv'n  
O'er other Creatures.  

(VIII, 543-46)

Lastly, if both seem "Lords of all" (IV, 290), Adam is the
supreme leader, as Milton makes explicit in his first description of Eve:

Shee as a veil down to the slender waist
Her unadorned golden tresses wore
Dishevell'd, but in wanton ringlets wav'd
As the Vine curls her tendrils, which implied
Subjection, but requir'd with gentle sway,
And by her yielded.  

(IV, 304-09; emphasis mine)

Her heroism consists in obeying her husband in a manner identical to Adam's heroism of obedience to God: "Hee for God only, shee for God in him" (IV, 299).

While the heroism of prelapsarian Adam and Eve is similar, but superior to that of postlapsarian classical heroes in some respects, it is also different in ways that should not surprise us when we recall Milton's convictions about Christian heroism. The faith which is so essential to Milton's heroism reveals itself in the first words we hear Adam speak, as he tells Eve,

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.  

(IV, 412-17)

Humility is also present, as he recognizes their dependence on God and confesses that they

at his hand
Have nothing merited, nor can perform
Aught whereof hee hath need.  

(IV, 417-19)

The importance of obedience for Adam and Eve is also brought out in this speech; "let us not think hard/One easy prohibition" (IV, 432-33), says Adam,
The only sign of our obedience left
Among so many signs of power and rule
Conferr'd upon us.

(IV, 428-30)

Finally, Adam expresses the love of God which is one of the prime motivations in a Christian hero: "let us ever praise him, and extol/His bounty" (IV, 436-37).

Adam and Eve, of course, are not at this point fully-fledged heroes in the Miltonic sense, for they have yet to undergo the trial of temptation and suffering, they have yet to demonstrate the better fortitude of patience and martyrdom. They are, at best, potential heroes, possessed of all the attributes of the proven hero, but these qualities have not been tested under fire. The test will come, however, and, again indicating the hero’s dependence upon God, out of "pity" (V, 220) God sends Raphael to Adam, telling him to bring on such discourse

As may advise him of his happy state,
Happiness in his power left free to will,
Left to his own free Will, his Will though free,
Yet mutable; whence warn him to beware
He swerve not too secure.

(V, 234-38)

The word "pity" is important, for it shows that love is the chief motivation behind the commissioning of Raphael. "The descent of Raphael typifies that celestial condescension which is opposed to demonic aspiration. It is a minor instance of the solicitous compassion for man whose major instance is Christ's sacrificial redemption."5

A recent critic, after looking at the convention of the angelic messenger descending to speak with the hero in
classical and Renaissance epics, notes that "Milton's celestial messenger represents a unique departure from the convention. For he is dispatched neither to prod nor to encourage nor to punish but to explain, almost indeed to lecture. The success or failure of his mission will lead to visible, objective consequences, but these are actually secondary; they serve only to manifest the crucial consequences which are interior. Milton welcomed the triviality in the act of eating an apple because that triviality demonstrates the primacy of interior action."6

Raphael comes, then, as an educator to help man, in the words of Milton's Tractate On Education (1644), "perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices both private and publike of peace and war" (p. 232). At the same time that Raphael reinforces Adam's convictions of heroic behaviour, Milton reinforces in the reader's mind the concept of Christian heroism which he had revealed in Books I to III.

The Archangel first schools Adam in the responsibility to obey necessitated by the hierarchic structure of the cosmos:

O Adam, one Almighty is; from whom
All things proceed, and up to him return,
If not deprav'd from good, created all
Such to perfection, one first matter all,
Indu'd with various forms, various degrees
Of substance, and in things that live, of life;
But more refin'd, more spiritous, and pure,
As nearer to him plac't or nearer tending
Each in thir several active Spheres assign'd.
   (V, 469-77)

The dependence of the hero, as of all things, upon God is clearly indicated here, as is his need, as a free creature to
act in accordance with the "degree" assigned to him, lest he be "deprav'd from good." What is emphasized here is "the necessity of 'wholeness' to the maintenance, indeed the very existence, of the good." Man, created in the image of God, by God, and for God, is made in such a way that he can only be happiest when he assumes his rightful position, and fulfills the characteristics of his role, within the hierarchic framework. Raphael is not exaggerating when he advises Adam later to enjoy

Your fill what happiness this happy state
Can comprehend, incapable of more. (V, 503-05)

In their present condition, maintained by their obedience, Adam and Eve could not be happier. But a future state, more exalted than that they now enjoy, is envisioned by Raphael, and again the precondition of such bliss is the heroism of obedience:

Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit,
Improv'd by tract of time, and wing'd ascend
Ethereal, as wee, or may at choice
Here or in Heav'nly Paradises dwell;
If ye be found obedient. (V, 497-501)

Adam cannot comprehend the possibility of disobedience suggested by the Archangel's words, and this gives Raphael the opportunity to explain a second aspect of heroism: the free will of the hero. Calling his pupil to "Attend" (V, 520), the master proceeds:

God made thee perfet, 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.
(V, 524-28)

Free will is not only a necessary prerequisite of heroism, it is a fundamental part of selfhood itself, since, for any created being, if selfhood is to be real and meaningful, the individual must have at least as much freedom as will allow him to choose rationally to accept or reject those claims of love, obedience, worship, and service which his creator justly makes. To be heroic, then, Adam cannot be "a meer artificiall Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions" (p. 296), in the words of Milton's Areopagitica (1644); he must be, as he is, a truly free individual, "Sufficient" to stand, "though free to fall" (III, 99). That he is subject to temptations suggests no imperfection or inclination to sin in him, for, as Adam tells Eve,

Evil into the mind of God or Man
May come and go, so unapprov'd, and leave
No spot or blame behind.
(V, 117-19)

Thus, Adam possesses an individual selfhood capable of heroic actions, but also capable of villainous transgressions.

The existence of free will is undeniable in view of the fall of Satan, and Raphael alludes to it as a case in point, whereupon Adam encourages the instructor to relate the War in Heaven. Raphael, accommodating his "intuitive" intellect to Adam's "discursive" by "lik'ning spiritual to corporeal forms,/As may express them best" (V, 573-74), uses the narration of the War as a means of graphically demonstrating
the meaning of obedience and disobedience, of heroism and villainy. The narration also serves as another opportunity for Milton to expose the weaknesses of classical heroism, especially those elements associated with warfare. Bowra notes that Milton's "objection to Homer and Virgil is that they treat of war, and Milton rejects war as not a truly heroic subject. He introduces it on a noble scale into Paradise Lost, but his war is of a very special kind, unlike human war and far more important in its issues and its results." Another critic has described Milton's narration of the War in Heaven not only as "a full length critique of war," but also as "the revelation of true heroic virtue in a rampantly false heroic background."

Through Raphael's relation, Adam learns the identity of his enemy and the characteristics of his nature. The first time Satan's name is mentioned to Adam, as when it was introduced to the reader in Book I, his pride is brought out:

Satan, so call him now,

great in Power,
In favor and preëminence, yet fraught
With envy against the Son of God, that day
Honor'd by his great Father, and proclaim'd
Messiah King anointed, could not bear
Through pride that sight, and thought himself impair'd.

(V, 658, 660-65)

Adam sees, in Raphael's description of the exaltation of the Son, the hypocrisy that results from Satan's pride; after the Omnipotent has finished His great proclamation,

All seem'd well pleas'd, all seem'd, but were not all.

(V, 616-17)

The inevitable fruit of pride, disobedience, is soon made
clear to Adam; Satan, he hears, resolved
to dislodge, and leave
Unworshipt, unobey'd the Throne supreme,
Contemptuous.

(V, 669-71)

Raphael's account permits Adam to see the disobedient creature's attempt to justify his rebellion, and the basic absurdity of such rationalization. Satan pits himself and his followers against what he portrays as the tyrannous nature of God's hierarchy, yet at the same time he is himself an advocate of hierarchy, for he justifies his own position as leader by insisting that

Orders and Degrees
Jar not with liberty, but well consist.

(V, 792-93)

His only argument against the present structure, thus, clearly reduces itself to the arrogant and selfish grudge that he is not the one at the top of the scale. "Knee-tribute" is, in his view, "prostration vile,/Too much to one" (V, 782-83); he asks his cohorts if they will submit their necks and "choose to bend/The supple knee" (V, 787-88)

to th' abuse
Of those Imperial Titles which assert
Our being ordain'd to govern, not to serve.

(V, 800-02)

The rebellion of Satan occasioned by the exaltation of the Son is not only an object lesson for Adam in pride and disobedience, but is also useful to Milton in reinforcing the bias against classical heroism which Milton tried to establish in the early books of the epic. When the Chadwicks come to consider the nature of the causes which lead to feuds and wars
in heroic poetry they write: "In view of the importance attached to personal honour and glory, ... it is not surprising to find that personal wrongs, especially insults and outrages to dignity, are among the most prolific sources of strife. Such is the case not only with the quarrel between Achilles and Agammemnon, which forms the subject of the Iliad, but also with the siege of Troy itself." In connection with this, Frye's comment is significant: "it is to Satan and his followers that Milton assigns the conventional and Classical type of heroism. Satan, like Achilles, retires sulkily in heaven when a decision appears to be favoring another ..., and emerges in a torrent of wrath to wreak vengeance." Satan maintains the Homeric standard of honour in opposition to the Christian standard of justice; he tells Michael that

The strife which thou call'st evil ... we style
The strife of Glory.

(VI, 289-90)

In Abdiel Adam sees the alternative to Satanic pride and disobedience; in him the reader sees Milton's alternative to the classical hero. Abdiel's rebuttal to Satan reveals to Adam the speciousness of those arguments. If "everything he says in the poem is of the highest importance," his remarks in reply to Satan's justification of his rebellion are especially so. His apologia in defense of God's hierarchy can be applied to all rebellion against God, and through it the injustice of disobedience and the virtue of heroism are shown to Adam again.

Abdiel destroys Satan's case with two crushing argu-
ments, both exposing the folly of Satan's pride. First he attacks Satan's inflated estimation of his wisdom:

Shalt thou give Law to God, shalt thou dispute
With him the points of liberty, who made
Thee what thou art?

(V, 822-24)

Abdiel here bases his case on the omniscience of God. How can Satan, who cannot fathom at best anything more than a small part of God's thoughts, consider himself in a position to criticize? God's wisdom may seem foolishness to Satan, but it is wisdom for all that. Next Abdiel attacks Satan's inflated estimation of his worth:

to grant it thee unjust,
That equal over equals Monarch Reign:
Thyself though great and glorious dost thou count,
Or all Angelic Nature join'd in one,
Equal to him begotten Son, by whom
As by his Word the mighty Father made
All things, ev'n thee.

(V, 831-37)

We have earlier noted the necessity of humility and faith in divine testimony for the Christian hero. Abdiel's arguments reinforce Adam's innate appreciation of the need of such virtues.

Abdiel is important for Adam, and the reader, not only because of his arguments, but because he is a showpiece of Christian heroism. "The speech which he makes to Satan at the time of the war in heaven indicates that he is establishing the pattern of genuine heroism that is later to be exhibited in the life of Christ, the 'better part of fortitude' which consists primarily in obedience and endurance and in the kind of courage that is willing to suffer under ridicule and con-
tempt and a chorus of opposition." Abdiel's arguments are not the product of mere cold logic, but arise "in a flame of zeal severe" (V, 807) from one

than whom none with more zeal ador'd
The Deity, and divine commands obey'd.
(V, 805-08)

His deep love manifests itself in loyalty which is willing to pay any price; only he among Satan's legions is found "faithful" (V, 897):

unmov'd,
Unshak'n, unseduc'd, unterrifi'd
His Loyalty he kept, his Love, his Zeal;
Nor number, nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind
Though single.
(V, 898-903)

The emphasis on Abdiel's facing temptation alone is surely not accidental on Raphael's part; Adam and Eve will soon have to undergo testing with, on the human level, only each other for support. "Brave though he is in battle, he has the highest kind of courage in that he defends what he knows to be right.... By defending the truth Abdiel has almost been ready to endure that 'heroic martyrdom' which Milton thought a proper subject for epic." The Father makes this explicit when He commends Abdiel for having borne "for the testimony of Truth" (VI, 33)

Universal reproach, far worse to bear
Than violence.
(VI, 33-34)

The motivation behind his action is also recognized:

this was all thy care
To stand approv'd in sight of God, though Worlds
Judg'd thee perverse.
(VI, 35-37)
Abdiel's response to Satan, then, acts as a model of heroic behaviour for Adam, presenting unmistakably the heroism which stems from one's recognition of one's limited perception of truth, the futility of battling against evil in one's own strength, and the need to wait upon God, and His timing, for the fulfillment of His purposes. Abdiel exemplifies for the reader the highest type of heroism, for, as the Father says, he has "fought/The better fight" (VI, 29-30) of patiently suffering for the cause of truth; having done so, the active physical combat that remains to be done is "the easier conquest" (VI, 37).

These statements by the Father should warn the alert reader that the ensuing warfare described by Raphael is an occasion for the display of a form of heroic action which is, at best, secondary and inferior to that already displayed by Abdiel. There is, however, in the "Military prowess" (VI, 45) which God commands the faithful angels to perform an element which unites it with the heroism of patience; both types of heroic fortitude require obedience. "Abdiel does in Book VI exactly what he did in V; he obeys God." Active physical combat, we have noted earlier, is not inconsistent with Milton's view of heroism, so long as it is sanctioned by God and waged under His guidance. "The paradox most often mentioned with respect to Milton's concept of heroic virtue is that God accomplishes 'great things, by things deem'd weak,' or that highest victory is won by patient suffering; central though this idea is in Milton, it is impossible to ignore another,
which the modern mind is less comfortable with — Abdiel's assertion that 'he who in debate of truth hath won/Should win in Arms.'

Nevertheless, it becomes evident in the narration of the War itself that Milton is again undermining the traditional heroic expectations; showing the inferiority of the heroic activity the faithful angels are engaged in, and the falsity of those who, like Satan and the Homeric heroes, account deeds of warfare the chief glory of heroic endeavour. "The first day's battle is Milton's main exercise in the depiction of warfare in the epic manner. The scene is filled with the accoutrements of war — shields, spears, armor, even chariots and 'firey, foaming steeds.' Great masses of armed legions occupy the background, with the foreground filled by a series of individual skirmishes presented in rapidly shifting close-ups." Satan vaunts in the classical style:

Ill for thee, but in wisht hour
Of my revenge, first sought for thou return'st
From flight, seditious Angel, to receive
Thy merited reward, the first assay
Of this right hand provoked.

(VI, 150-54)

The faithful angels appear to vaunt in the same manner:

Proud, art thou met?

... . . . . . . . . .
fool, not to think how vain
Against th' Omnipotent to rise in Arms.

(VI, 131, 135-36)

The difference is that whereas what the faithful angels speak is truth, what Satan says is mere empty boasting, and, thus, Satan, so closely associated with the classical hero, again is
used to undermine the old heroic ideal.

The clash of angelic champions deliberately suggests the contests of classical heroes:

-likest Gods they seem'd,
Stood they or mov'd, in stature, motion, arms
Fit to decide the Empire of great Heav'n.
Now wav'd thir fiery Swords, and in the Air
Made horrid Circles; two broad Suns thir Shields
Blaz'd opposite, while expectation stood
In horror; from each hand with speed retir'd
Where erst was thickest fight, th' Angelic throng,
And left large field, unsafe within the wind
Of such commotion,

Together both with next to Almighty Arm,
Uplifted imminent one stroke they aim'd
That might determine, and not need repeat,
As not of power, at once; nor odds appear'd
In might or swift prevention; but the sword
Of Michael from the Armory of God
Was giv'n him temper'd so, that neither keen
Nor solid might resist that edge.

(VI, 301-10, 316-23)

The "godlike" appearance of the combatants; their weaponry, especially that received by divine favour; the withdrawal of other warriors from the range of their activity; and the desire for a skirmish, a stroke even, that will end the entire War, are all elements to be found in Homer's Iliad. A passage similarly Homeric in its surface details is the following, but here the horror Milton felt about war becomes evident:

-the battle swerv'd,
With many an inroad gor'd; deformed rout
Enter'd; and foul disorder; all the ground
With shiver'd armor strown, and on a heap
Chariot and Charioter lay overturn'd
And fiery foaming Steeds.

(VI, 386-91)

The "glory" of military heroism only begins to deteriorate in this passage; it reaches its ultimate absurdity on the second
day of battle:

So hills amid the Air encounter'd Hills
Hurl'd to and fro with jaculation dire,
That under ground they fought in dismal shade:
Infernal noise; War seem'd a civil Game
To this uproar; horrid confusion heapt
Upon confusion rose.

(VI, 664-69)

The repudiation of classical heroism receives reinforcement in this passage from its suggestion of the classical story of the War of the Titans, in which a similar contest of mountain-throwing occurred. Raphael's comment on the rebel angels is in harmony with Milton's attitude toward the classical heroes:

the other sort

In might though wondrous and in Acts of War,
Nor of Renown less eager,
.......
Nameless in dark oblivion let them dwell.
For strength from Truth divided and from Just,
Illaudable, naught merits but dispraise
And ignominy, yet to glory aspires
Vain-glorious, and through infamy seeks fame.

(VI, 376-78, 380-84)

The faithful angels, on the other hand, "Seek not the praise of men" (VI, 376). Further, though on occasion put at a disadvantage by the rebels, the loyal angels remain "Invulnerable" (VI, 400), and this, again, is due to their heroic obedience:

Such high advantages thir innocence
Gave them above thir foes, not to have sinn'd,
Not to have disobey'd.

(VI, 401-03)

Faithful and obedient, the loyal angels are yet unable to expel the hosts of Satan, for the War is a kind of living parable, illustrating the fact that the victory of good is impossible apart from the power of God. The Son of God comes
forth with "Victory" (VI, 762) at His right hand to encounter the rebels alone, and, significantly, His first act is one of re-creation, rather than destruction:

Before him Power Divine his way prepar'd;
At his command the uprooted Hills retir'd
Each to his place, they heard his voice and went
Obsequious, Heav'n his wonted face renew'd,
And with fresh Flow'rets Hill and Valley smil'd.
(VI, 780-84)

In Milton's view of Christian heroism, active physical deeds of war are undertaken, not to unleash a violence-prone nature, but to re-establish order from chaos. The Son's entering the War indicates the need for God's assistance in the battle which must take place in every Christian hero's soul. It is thus highly important as a lesson to Adam concerning his need of God's assistance in all his activities and trials. "The warfare in Heaven gives cosmic dimension to the spiritual war in which Adam and every man must participate. It is an enactment on a colossal scale of the analogous battle which Adam must fight against Satan (or against the aspects of himself which Satan represents) within his own soul."

Thus, in the description of the War in Heaven, Raphael makes clear to Adam the essential features of heroism. Physical power, knowledge and intelligence, bravery, loyalty, self-sacrifice -- all are insufficient by themselves. Even faith and obedience, unlike some magical rite, have no power at all in, and of, themselves alone. All is dependent on the unmerited favour of God who alone achieves the victory for those who acknowledge their weakness and rely on Him. The words of the Apostle Paul convey the Christian hero's fundamental attitude:
"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God" (II Cor. 3:5). Raphael has tried to encourage Adam to trust in God, not in himself, when his trial by Satan occurs.

Yet Adam doubts.

His doubt is first expressed after his divine historian has granted Adam's request to hear of the creation of the world. Raphael, believing that the relation will, as he says to Adam,

serve
To glorify the Maker, and infer
Thee also happier,

(VII, 115-17)
tells of the wonders of God's creation, only to find in his pupil "something yet of doubt remains" (VIII, 13). Adam appears to show conscientious anxiety about a wasteful economy in nature by questioning the celestial motions, but basically it is God's wisdom he is doubting:

reasoning I oft admire,
How Nature wise and frugal could commit
Such disproportions.

(VIII, 25-27)

Raphael counters these queries by suggesting more doubts than ever could have occurred to Adam, for he "has been too quick to doubt the intelligence and providence of God; he has not experienced enough doubts about his own ability to observe and judge God's aims and methods."25 He then advises Adam:

Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid,
Leave them to God above, him serve and fear;

...
Implicit in this advice is another advocacy for the faith in God which the hero must have, faith which is far more important than any abstract knowledge. Since a man cannot know everything about God's ways to man, faith must be the hero's sole resource in times of trial and doubt.

Adam's second doubt comes out as he entertains his guest with a narration of his own. Raphael, knowing that correction of self-expression is a valuable teaching technique, listens patiently until Adam describes his love for Eve in a manner which casts doubt upon God's providence:

here passion first I felt,  
Commotion strange, in all enjoyments else  
Superior and unmov'd, here only weak  
Against the charm of Beauty's powerful glance.  
Or Nature fail'd in mee, and left some part  
Not proof enough such Object to sustain,  
Or from my side subducting, took perhaps  
More than enough; at least on her bestow'd  
Too much of Ornament, in outward show  
Elaborate, of inward less exact.  

Whereas he had earlier found the macrocosm out of joint, now Adam finds the microcosm disproportioned. Adam's statement, "Nature failed in mee," is not so much an expression of doubt as an accusation, as Raphael recognizes; "Accuse not Nature" (VIII, 561), he replies. While Adam may say "Nature," it is clear that he means God, and therefore Raphael, as before, points out that one must trust God's wisdom:

Nature ... hath done her part;  
Do thou but thine, and be not diffident  
Of Wisdom, she deserts thee not, if thou
Dismiss not her, when most thou need'st her nigh.
(VIII, 561-64)

Raphael warns Adam lest the transport he feels turn love into "subjection" (VIII, 570), and reminds him that he was created to rule:

weigh with her thyself;
Then value: Oft-times nothing profits more
Than self-esteem, grounded on just and right
Well manag'd; of that skill the more thou know'st,
The more she will acknowledge thee her Head.
(VIII, 570-74)

Raphael concludes his instruction of Adam by stressing one last time the theme which has run throughout: the need to obey. As he departs he encourages Adam to love,

but first of all
Him whom to love is to obey, and keep
His great command.
(VIII, 633-35)

The first movement concerning the heroism of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost* ends in the trial of their obedience, the heroic contest between man and Satan. Milton places so much importance on this spiritual combat that we shall consider it in some depth in the following chapter.
Chapter Four:  
The Catastrophic Epic Contest

We have said that the first main movement concerning Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost* culminates in their fall, and so momentous and complex is this climactic deed that it would be well before moving on to consider the second phase to attempt to analyze the fall in the light of Milton's concept of heroism. In the invocation to Book IX, as in those to Books I and VII, Milton invites comparison of his poem with the classical epics.¹ Here, however, the stress is not so much upon the superiority of poetic undertaking or Muse, but of heroic mode, of that better fortitude of patience and heroic martyrdom which we have seen to be of central importance in Milton's thinking concerning the epic hero. We have seen that the patient endurance of trial or temptation is a crucial part of Milton's heroism and he found few heroes in classical epic that even approach his high standards. "None of Homer's protagonists is tested in a significantly moral way, and Virgil's Aeneas is made to undergo trials of a moral sort only in the opening books; by the sixth book he has become an instrument of Fate, impelled to the task put upon him."² Such, at any rate, is the view of one recent critic, and it is highly prob-
able that Milton would have agreed with him. From what we have said earlier it should be evident that "Adam's temptation is a higher argument, and 'more Heroic' than the wrath of Achilles[,] because it focuses on the inner test."\(^3\) While it is true that Adam and Eve fail this crucial moral testing, it is not the last battle. Through God's grace, man will face many similar trials afterwards, and be able to achieve victory.

The epic hero was often the untested son\(^4\) of a noble father. "Adam, the son of God" (Luke 3:38), is in such a position at the commencement of Book IX. Eve too is untried. The couple's first dialogue in Book IX prepares the way for the heroic contest with Satan.

Eve's immediate concern is how two people can keep up the maintenance of so vast a garden. She defines the problem succinctly:

```
what we by day
Lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind,
One night or two with wanton growth derides
Tending to wild.
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(IX, 209-12)

Something about her speech, accurate and practical though it is, strikes us as unusual; her initiative in raising the problem is foreign to the Eve presented to us up to this point. Her simple address, "Adam," is peculiar, gone are the elaborate epithets; she is a woman of business now, she is talking to an equal. She asks for Adam's opinion in the blunt manner of a board manager, "Thou therefore now advise" (212), but without waiting for a reply she proceeds to lay out what she
feels is the proper plan: "Let us divide our labors" (214). This, she admits, is not a conclusion based upon deep consideration of the problem, but her "first thoughts" on the subject; nevertheless, she has taken it upon herself both to raise the issue and to propose a solution. She has begun to take the lead in their domestic affairs, whereas the essence of her heroism consists in her obedience to Adam.

Adam makes it clear that he thinks it best she should stay with him; "doubt possesses me, lest harm/Befall thee sever'd from me" (251-52), he says. He does not assert that harm will befall her alone; he is concerned that it might befall her. It is the possibility, not the certainty, of harm which Adam raises, and the possibility of human fallibility had been clearly indicated by Raphael. Adam's caution, then, in suggesting that two are better than one in dealing with their "malicious Foe" (253) who works "By sly assault" (256), is just.

Eve, however, acts as though insulted:

that thou shouldst my firmness therefore doubt
To God or thee, because we have a foe
May tempt it, I expected not to hear.

(IX, 279-81)

This is unjust, for she raised no protest when she heard Raphael tell Adam,

Satan, ... who envies now thy state,
... is plotting how he may seduce
Thee also from obedience,
... But list'n not to his Temptations, warn
Thy weaker; let it profit thee to have heard
By terrible Example the reward
Of disobedience; firm they might have stood,
Yet fell; remember, and fear to transgress.
(VI, 900-02, 908-12)
Warning his weaker is exactly what Adam is doing.

In the course of his attempt to dissuade Eve from departing, Adam discusses the nature of temptation in a passage which is highly important in our understanding of this aspect of Milton's heroism. The hero is

Secure from outward force; within himself
The danger lies, yet lies within his power:
Against his will he can receive no harm.
(IX, 348-50)

Adam has learned from Raphael that the chief battleground lies within man's soul, and that, so long as there is perfect harmony within, God has given him the power to achieve complete victory over discordant elements from without. Continuing his summary of Raphael's lessons, Adam says,

God left free the Will, for what obeys
Reason, is free, and Reason he made right,
But bid her well beware, and still erect,
Lest by some fair appearing good surpris'd
She dictate false, and misinform the Will
To do what God expressly hath forbid.
(IX, 351-56)

The importance of right reason to Milton is clearly indicated by this passage. Prerequisite to heroic obedience and love are knowledge and understanding and thus the display of heroic virtue depends upon the maintenance of a reason which is "right."

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

Reason for Milton "is man's only way of distinguishing between virtue and vice within, of avoiding the self-deception which leads him to confuse his desires with his best interests."^7

The hero's spiritual trial, then, involves a struggle to keep reason -- which in the hierarchy of the soul governs the will which in turn curbs the passions -- functioning as it should, to keep it "still erect;" a struggle against deception by a false but "fair appearing" good that would seek to "misinform the Will" and allow the passions to bring both reason and will into perpetual bondage to the lowest nature of man's soul. This idea is so vital to Milton that no sooner has he stated it once than he repeats a good deal of it:

Firm we subsist, yet possible to swerve,
Since Reason not impossibly may meet
Some specious object by the Foe suborn'd,
And fall into deception unaware,
Not keeping strictest watch, as she was warn'd.
(IX, 359-63)

Eve, to whom these warnings about the possibility of deception are addressed, nevertheless persists, and, with Adam's reluctant permission, leaves to do her gardening alone. She has rejected Adam's advice, and thus has failed in the type of heroism allotted to her: obedience to her husband. Her action contradicts her earlier acknowledgement:

My Author and Disposer, what thou bidd'st
Unargu'd I obey; so God ordains,
God is thy Law, thou mine: to know no more
Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise.
(IV, 635-38)
Since to obey Adam is the role God has ordained for her, in rejecting Adam's advice Eve is also rejecting the role God has given her. That Milton does not approve of this independence on Eve's part is evident: "O much deceiv'd, much failing, hapless Eve" (IX, 404), he addresses her, and calls her action an "event perverse" (405). The presumption of her "presum'd return" (405) lies in her self-assured confidence that, enemy or no enemy, she will return unscathed.

Whether Adam acted rightly in acceding to Eve's wishes to separate may be a debatable matter, but, to this writer, Raphael's injunction to Adam, coming so close to the termination of his instruction, is highly significant. Eve is

fair no doubt, and worthy well
Thy cherishing, thy honoring, and thy love,
Not thy subjection: weigh with her thyself;
Then value: Oft-times nothing profits more
Than self-esteem, grounded on just and right
Well manag'd; of that skill the more thou know' st,
The more she will acknowledge thee her Head.
(VIII, 568-74)

That Eve fails to acknowledge perfectly Adam's headship by ignoring his advice is partly due to Adam's weakness just at that point where, as Tillyard points out, Adam could have carried the day, and this weakness is a result of his having failed to accept completely Raphael's advice to re-evaluate his relationship with Eve. She is still too important to Adam. It seems more important for him to avoid a domestic squabble than faithfully to perform his duty of ruling Eve for her own best interests. He thus reneges his heroic responsibilities.

Satan finds Eve, then, alone, and alone Eve undergoes the heroic contest. "In meeting her enemy face to face, Eve
usurp's Adam's role, just as Adam, in following his wife's leadership, forsakes his own matrimonial office for hers." Satan, disguised as a serpent, a "fair appearing good," tempts her to pervert the true heroic norm even further by enticing her to desire to become a goddess. The subversion of her reason is his first desire. He begins the trial of her fortitude by appealing to her pride through flattery:

Wonder not, sovran Mistress, if perhaps
Thou canst, who are sole Wonder, much less arm
Thy looks, the Heav'n of mildness, with disdain,
Displeas'd that I approach thee thus, and gaze
Insatiate, I thus single, nor have fear'd
Thy awful brow, more awful thus retir'd.
Fairest resemblance of thy Maker fair,
Thee all things living gaze on, all things thine
By gift, and thy Celestial Beauty adore
With ravishment beheld, there best beheld
Where universally admir'd.

(IX, 532-42)

He concludes his first speech by telling Eve she should be seen

A Goddess among Gods, ador'd and serv'd
By Angels numberless, thy daily Train.

(IX, 547-48)

Satan continues to praise Eve, calling her "Empress of this fair World, resplendent Eve" (568), and "Sovran of Creatures, universal Dame" (612); when Eve mildly protests this "over-praising" (615), Satan ignores her objection and proceeds with his flattery, calling Eve "Queen of this Universe" (684) and "Goddess humane" (732). He also continues to suggest that she ought to be a goddess, second to none:

in the day
Ye Eat thereof, your Eyes that seem so clear,
Yet are but dim, shall perfectly be then
Op'n'd and clear'd, and ye shall be as Gods,
Knowing both Good and Evil....
That ye should be as Gods, since I as Man,
Internal Man, is but proportion meet,
I of brute human, yee of human Gods.
So ye shall die perhaps, by putting off
Human, to put on Gods, death to be wish't.

(IX, 705-14)

Satan first attempts to get Eve to direct her gaze
inwardly in self-admiration, and then proceeds to convince
her that her rights have been withheld:

look on mee,
Mee who have touch'd and tasted, yet both live,
And life more perfet have attain'd than Fate
Meant mee, by vent'ring higher than my Lot.
Shall that be shut to Man, which to the Beast
Is open?

Why then was this forbid? Why but to awe,
Why but to keep ye low and ignorant,
His worshippers.

(IX, 687-92, 703-05)

Satan is trying to disrupt the hierarchical structure in the
microcosm of Eve's soul, using flattery and false logic to de-
ceive her reason, in order to disjoint the hierarchical frame-
work of the macrocosm, encouraging her to rebel against God
and the creational role He has assigned her. The conception
of hierarchy here was a commonplace Renaissance notion, but
vitally important to Milton's thinking.

According to this conception degrees of value are objec-
tively present in the universe. Everything except God
has some natural superior; everything except unformed mat-
ter has some natural inferior. The goodness, happiness,
and dignity of every being consists in obeying its natural
superior and ruling its natural inferiors. When it fails
in either part of this twofold task we have disease or
monstrosity in the scheme of things until the peccant be-
ing is either destroyed or corrected. One or other it
will certainly be; for by stepping out of its place in
the system ... it has made the very nature of things its
enemy. It cannot succeed.

That Eve should step out of her place in the system and be de-
stroyed is precisely Satan's purpose; before commencing the temptation he soliloquized:

    under show of Love well feign'd,
    ... to her ruin now I tend.  

(IX, 492-93)

Satan succeeds in persuading Eve to eat the fruit, and he does so through a twofold strategy of flattery and false reasoning. Flattery encourages her to want the good things which the serpent has told her the fruit offers:

    Fixt on the Fruit she gaz'd, which to behold
    Might tempt alone, and in her ears the sound
    Yet rung of his persuasive words, impregn'd
    With Reason, to her seeming, and with Truth. 

(IX, 735-38)

False reasoning has produced in her such confusion that she cannot, for the moment, see clearly why she should not take the offered benefits. In Satan's last temptation speech he fires a dozen questions at Eve, and she shows her confusion in her final speech before eating the fruit by asking seven more.

    What fear I then, rather what know to fear
    Under this ignorance of Good and Evil,
    Of God or Death, of Law or Penalty? 

(IX, 773-75)

Her reason is so weakened that it cannot defend her against the importunity of her desires to eat the fruit. Ironically, however, her reason, now completely entangled, actually invites her to eat in order to end the agony of confusion it is suffering:

    Here grows the Cure of all, this Fruit Divine,
    Fair to the Eye, inviting to the Taste,
    Of virtue to make wise: what hinders then
    To reach, and feed at once both Body and Mind? 

(IX, 776-79)
And so Eve eats; the heroic contest is over; the enemy of mankind has won. Milton again shows the superiority of his heroic argument over that of the classical pagan poets by emphasizing that if noble acts of Christian heroes are more glorious than those of other heroes, acts of villainy by Christian heroes are more heinous than the sins of other heroes. In describing Eve's crime, he writes:

her rash hand in evil hour
Forth reaching to the Fruit, she pluck'd, she eat:
Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat
Sighing through all her Works gave signs of woe,
That all was lost.

(IX, 780-84)

This is reminiscent of the sin of Dido in Book IV of the *Aeneid*:

The heaven
Darkens, and thunder rolls, and rain and hail
Come down in torrents.

...... mountain nymphs wail high their incantations,
First day of death, first cause of evil. Dido
Is unconcerned with fame, with reputation,
With how it seems to others.

(p. 92)

Eve's sin, however, does not produce a mere local effect upon nature, but an universal one; all of nature's works reflect the pathos of her act. Further, whereas Dido's sin leads to the Punic Wars, Eve's is a necessary cause of all wars between nations, all crimes within society, and all rebellions against God of which postlapsarian man is guilty. If the goodliness of Dido pales before that of the unfallen Eve, so too does her crime.

In its criminal dimensions Eve's act outweighs any wickedness done by classical heroes; in its tragic dimensions,
In Book XXII of the *Iliad* it is the wife, Andromache, not knowing that he has been defeated by his great enemy, Achilles, who prepares for the return of her husband, Hector, from battle:

But Hector's wife knew not as yet, for no true messenger had come to tell her how her husband abode without the gates, but in an inner chamber of the lofty house she was weaving a double purple web, and broidering therein manifold flowers. Then she called to her goodly-haired handmaids through the house to set a great tripod on the fire, that Hector might have a warm washing when he came home out of the battle -- fond heart, and was unaware how, far from all washings, bright-eyed Athene had slain him by the hand of Achilles.

(p. 401-02)

If the fall of noble Hector is tragic, Milton implies that the fall of Eve is far more tragic, for, as we have noted earlier, prelapsarian Eve is of a higher nature than any of her descendants, no matter how noble.

The fall of Eve is different from the defeats or sins of classical heroes in another respect, and in this case the difference is a radical one. A defeated warrior, if he lived
to fight again, or a character who sinned, such as Dido, remained, by and large, unchanged in the general make up of their personalities after their defeat or sin. Eve, however, undergoes a subtle, but essential, transformation of character. The Eve who returns to Adam is not the Eve who departed from him. She now takes on the role of the seductive and deceptive temptress who, like Calypso in the *Odyssey* or Dido in the *Aeneid*, traditionally tests the epic hero and seeks to lure him from his quest. Eve herself has become that "fair appearing good" (IX, 354) which, being in reality a "specious object by the Foe suborn'd" (IX, 361), Adam warned might deceive the reason. Ironically, Adam fails to heed his own advice.

Adam enters into spiritual combat with the forces of evil at the point where he is weakest: the tension between his love for Eve and his love for God. Although the heroic battle is over almost immediately, we have been assured that Adam was created "Sufficient to have stood" (III, 99), and it is clear that when Adam capitulates, he is aware of the tremendous issues involved and of the certain outcome:

> some cursed fraud
> Of Enemy hath beguil'd thee, yet unknown,
> And mee with thee hath ruin'd, for with thee
> Certain my resolution is to Die.

*(IX, 904-07)*

He is not confused, as Eve was, as to the propriety of eating the fruit; to him it is clearly wrong. He asks Eve,

> how hast thou yielded to transgress
> The strict forbiddance, how to violate
> The sacred Fruit forbidd'n!

*(IX, 902-04)*

Having decided to reject his heroic duty to obey God, he justi-
fies his decision by a perversion of true heroism: he will be heroically faithful to Eve.

I with thee have fixt my Lot,
Certain to undergo like doom; if Death
Consort with thee; Death is to mee as Life;
So forcible within my heart I feel
The Bond of Nature draw me to my own,
My own in thee, for what thou art is mine;
Our State cannot be sever'd, we are one,
One Flesh; to lose thee were to lose myself.

(IX, 952-59)

To lose Eve is unthinkable to Adam; "How can I live without thee?" (IX, 906), he asks. Without her "sweet Converse and Love so dearly join'd" (IX, 909) Eden is reduced to nothing more than "wild Woods forlorn" (IX, 910). The ardent loyalty he shows to Eve might on another occasion have been truly heroic:

Should God create another Eve, and I
Another Rib afford, yet loss of thee
Would never from my heart.

(IX, 911-13)

In choosing to die with Eve, Adam "has made what appears, on the surface, to be a heroic renunciation.... This looks like heroic constancy -- a firmness of devotion in adverse fortune, a love that 'looks on tempests and is never shaken.' But, in reality, it is the opposite. Adam has chosen the lesser love before the greater."12

Eve, however, interprets Adam's actions as the proof of his heroism in her trial of his love. Seeing things from her fallen perspective she can only regard as heroic that which best promotes her own selfish interests:

O glorious trial of exceeding Love,
Illustrious evidence, example high!
Ingaging me to emulate, but short
Of thy perfection, how shall I attain,
Adam, from whose dear-side I boast me sprung.

(IX, 961-65)

She shows no concern for her Creator in encouraging her husband to displease Him (IX, 991-93), nor any genuine love for her husband in thus placing him in jeopardy, for, as Milton says concerning her fall in *De Doctrina Christiana* (1658-60), she is guilty of being "negligent of her husband's welfare."¹³

She is only concerned that "This happy trial" (IX, 975) gives proof of Adam's love, which otherwise "So eminently never had been known" (IX, 976) to her.

That Milton did not think Adam's sin a noble act is clear: it is "compliance bad" (IX, 994).

he scrupl'd not to eat
Against his better knowledge, not deceiv'd,
But fondly overcome with Female charm.

(IX, 997-99)

In *De Doctrina Christiana* Milton attributes one causal aspect of the fall to Adam's being "uxorious" (I, xi, 383), and in *Eikonoklastes* (1649) he clearly reveals his attitude to uxoriousness. Charles I, he says,

ascribes ... all vertue to his Wife, in straines that come almost to Sonnetting. How fit to govern men, under-valuing and aspersing the great Counsel of his Kingdom, in comparison of one Woman. Examples are not far to seek, how great mischeif and dishonour hath befall'n to Nations under the Government of effeminate and Uxorious Magistrates. Who being themselves govern'd and overswaid at home under a Feminine usurpation, cannot be but far short of spirit and autority without dores, to govern a whole nation.

(pp. 395-96)

In the light of this condemnation of uxoriousness in Charles I, it is hardly likely that Milton could find Adam's uxoriousness heroic. Adam, in fact, is truly a traitor, for his first
love and allegiance should be to God. He has preferred things less excellent to the One who is perfect, and thus has failed in his duty as a Christian hero. In choosing Eve before God, Adam has made her into an idol.  

In the completion of the fall of man, the sin of Adam, we see the fruit of the doubts we earlier noted in his discussion with Raphael. It is only if we take these doubts into consideration that we can account for the suddenness of his capitulation. Eve takes a good deal of persuading before she eats the fruit; Adam, despite his "higher intellectual" (IX, 483), virtually none at all.

In De Doctrina Christiana Milton identifies other causal aspects of the fall and condemns Adam "for not trusting God; he was faithless" (I, xi, 383). That the doubts which Milton went at length to reveal in Adam in Book VIII are in some way connected with this unbelief at the time of the fall is evident in that, when confronted by fallen Eve, Adam sees only two possibilities before him: to choose God and lose Eve, or choose Eve and forfeit his relationship with God.

We do not mean to suggest that we expect Adam to envision such a strategy as the Son of God, or Adam himself, dying to redeem Eve; we can only make such suggestions with the benefit of hindsight. But that he should doubt the possibility of God effecting some form of rescue, he who has been in such close communion with the God for whom all things are possible, shows an appalling lack of faith in his Creator. And faith, as we have noted several times, is a prerequisite for
heroic obedience. While we do not mean to oversimplify the causes of the fall, only one element of which Milton diagnosed in *De Doctrina Christiana* as unbelief, nevertheless, from the angle at which we are approaching it, namely, in the light of Milton's concept of heroism, Adam's failure to live up to his heroic potential must be seen as owing as much to a refusal to exercise that faith which is the spiritual basis of heroism as to his uxoriousness. For, in the words of Augustine, "man had been so designed that if he had trusted in God's help as a good human being he would have overcome the evil angels, whereas if in pride and self-pleasing he deserted God, his creator and helper, he would be overcome."\(^{15}\)

As Eve experienced a radical transformation of character after her defeat in spiritual warfare, so does Adam after his. "He becomes a man of the world, a punster, an aspirant to fine raillery."\(^{16}\) He tells Eve that, from his new perspective, he can see now that she is "exact of taste" (IX, 1017), punningly extolling the sensory faculty and the cultured sophistication she evidenced by eating the fruit and disregarding God's law. He continues in a tone of jocular blasphemy:

```
Much pleasure we have lost, while we abstain'd
From this delightful Fruit, nor known till now
True relish, tasting; if such pleasure be
In things to us forbidden, it might be wish'd,
For this one Tree had been forbidden ten.
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(IX, 1022-26)

Adam also becomes a hedonist, or as one critic puts it, he suffers "the transmutation of the spirit to flesh (the opposite process to that which Raphael had described in V, 496-99)."\(^{17}\) Having broken the hierarchic order of the cosmos
by disobeying his superior, Adam has lost control of the basic workings of his physical being, as is most clearly seen in the unbridled sexual passion which overpowers him.\textsuperscript{18} The fruit inflames "Carnal desire" (IX, 1013) and Adam looks on Eve with "lascivious Eyes" (IX, 1014); she, too, is feeling the effects of an impotent will; "in Lust they burn" (1015), writes Milton.

The degrading act of lust which follows symbolizes the ultimate cause of the fall, a disregard of the rightful obligation to venerate and love another person, whether God or man, stemming from a selfish concern with one's own gratification.\textsuperscript{19} Again in the words of Augustine, "man has become like the Devil ... by living by the rule of self."\textsuperscript{20} What had previously been ceremonious is reduced to the triviality of "play" (1027). Adam boasts to Eve of his "ardor to enjoy [her]" (1032); she has become an object, a thing, the "bounty of this virtuous Tree" (1033), and, like the fruit of the tree, exists now only to satisfy his self-indulgence. The destruction of perfect piety has necessitated destruction of perfect love on the human level as well.\textsuperscript{21}

The loss of their perfect love is evident to Adam and Eve when they awaken "As from unrest" (IX, 1052) and find themselves "naked left/to guilty shame" (1057-58). Milton alludes at this point to the effect of defeat upon another spiritual hero, one to whom Milton was to return later in his poetic career:

So rose the Danite strong
Herculean Samson from the Harlot-lap
Of Philistean Dalilah, and wak'd
Shorn of his strength, They destitute and bare
Of all thir virtue.

(IX, 1059-63)

Swept by shame, sorrow, "high Passions, Anger, Hate, Mistrust,
Suspicion, Discord" (IX, 1123-24), they resort to bitter "mutual accusation" (IX, 1187), but are "neither self-condemning" (IX, 1188).

Milton makes it quite explicit that what Raphael had warned the couple about, and what Adam later warned Eve to avoid, has come to pass: their souls have become dominated by their passions, and they can do nothing about it.

Understanding rul'd not, and the Will
Heard not her lore, both in subjection now
To sensual Appetite, who from beneath
Usurping over sovran Reason claim'd
Superior sway.

(IX, 1127-31)

In this state of slavery to fleshly desires heroic activity is impossible. The re-establishment of heroic virtue in man is the concern of the final books of Paradise Lost.
Chapter Five:
The Regeneration of Heroic Virtue

We come now to the second movement concerning the heroism of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*, a movement complementary to the first, in which Adam and Eve's heroic stature is restored through spiritual regeneration. At the same time, in the last quarter of his epic, Milton makes clear the full meaning of trial and suffering as necessary elements in the better fortitude.¹

The heroism of suffering is alluded to early in Book X. The Son, speaking to the Father, reminds Him of the covenant of grace:

> I go to judge
> On Earth these thy transgressors, but thou know'st,
> Whoever judg'd, the worst on mee must light.  
> (X, 71-73)

The Son has undertaken to pay the penalty for fallen man, we are reminded, and even in the judgment scene in the garden He shows His merciful condescension, for He disdains not

> Thenceforth the form of servant to assume,
> As when he wash'd his servants' feet, so now
> As Father of his Family he clad
> Thir nakedness.  
> (X, 213-17)

The eventual triumph of the heroism which Christ perfectly
manifests is also clearly alluded to in this scene. The Son
curses the serpent with the words: "Her Seed shall bruise thy
head, thou bruise his heel" (X, 181).

Milton explains that this oracle was verified

When Jesus son of Mary second Eve,
          rising from his Grave
Spoil'd Principalities and Powers, triumpht
In open show, and with ascension bright
Captivity led captive through the Air,
The Realm itself of Satan long usurpt,
Whom he shall tread at last under our feet.
(X, 183, 185-90)

It is incumbent upon Adam and Eve to relearn the principles
of Christ's heroism before they can share Christ's victory.
At this point, however, "the Son's merciful bearing in pro-
nouncing judgment, and his active charity in giving them
clothes, make no impression on their conscious minds. To all
appearances Hell has triumphed completely in them."^2

The judgment over, Adam in solitude shows a general
awareness of the results of his sin. "Three consequences fol-
low from this usurpation. The first is death.... The second
consequence is the propagation of this depravity in space, the
overflowing of sin upon the creatures.... The third ... con-
sequence of this rebellion is the transmission of evil in
time, the death of posterity in the loins of Adam."^3 Adam is
tortured by his awareness of all three of these disastrous
consequences of his sin.

Adam's most agonizing reproaches concern his poster-
ity. The epic hero was obliged to consider the welfare of his
descendants, especially his eldest son;^4 Aeneas' concern for
Julus is a good example. Adam in this regard has miserably failed, and, as we noted in the last chapter, the consequences of the original sin are far more serious than those of any postlapsarian transgression. Adam recognizes that his sin involves all of mankind:

both Death and I
Am found Eternal, and incorporate both,
Nor I on my part single, in mee all
Posterity stands curst: Fair Patrimony
That I must leave ye, Sons; O were I able
To waste it all myself, and leave ye none!

(X, 815-20)

Moved by guilt, Adam begins to examine his past conduct and motives in a way markedly unlike Satan's deliberate self-deception at the beginning of Book IV, for "Adam's soliloquy ... exhibits not only an intense awareness of his own misery, but an equally intense recognition of his own responsibility for it:"  

[God] after all Disputes
Forc't I absolve: all my evasions vain
And reasonings, though through Mazes, lead me still
But to my own conviction: first and last
On mee, mee only, as the source and spring
Of all corruption, all the blame lights due.

(X, 828-33)

"If we compare his soliloquy with Satan's at the beginning of Book IV, when 'conscience wakes despair,' Adam's submission may to some appear less heroic than Satan's defiance of his doom; but for Milton it is not less but more heroic, 'the better fortitude of patience.'"  

If Adam's
I submit, his doom is fair,
That dust I am, and shall to dust return.

(X, 769-70)
is, despite the general tone of despair which pervades his speech, a step toward the achievement of heroic stature, the scene between fallen man and fallen woman which takes place after Adam's soliloquy is of even greater significance. Eve comes to console Adam with "Soft words" (X, 865), but is cruelly repelled: "Out of my sight, thou Serpent" (X, 867). Eve persists, however, and, ironically, the very person Satan used to bring about Adam's downfall becomes a means of restoring Adam to his heroic role.

Eve's action parallels, and is only surpassed in the epic by, the loving self-surrender of the Son's unexampled love.² She pleads,

Adam, witness Heav'n
What love sincere, and reverence in my heart
I bear thee,

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
[I] to the place of judgment will return,
There with my cries importune Heaven, that all
The sentence from thy head remov'd may light
On me.

(X, 914-16, 932-35)

She moves Adam's pity, and thus teaches him the necessity of forgiveness on the part of man, and from this moment he, who had been considering only God's power and justice, begins to believe again in the existence of mercy on the part of God.⁹ "Eve's love makes their reconciliation to God possible by removing the hardness and bitterness from Adam's heart."¹⁰

After Adam and Eve are reconciled "complete humility before God has not yet been reached."¹¹ Immediately after her heroic action, Eve falls into the erroneous rationalism to which the postlapsarian mind is ever prone. She has concocted
a scheme which, she believes, will avoid the worst consequences of the fall on their posterity:

in thy power
It lies, yet ere Conception to prevent
The Race unblest, to being yet unbegot.

(X, 986-88)

If Adam thinks abstention from sexual intercourse too hard and difficult, she has a further proposal:

let us make short,
Let us seek Death, or he not found, supply
With our own hands his Office on ourselves.

(X, 1000-02)

Adam sees that she is wrong, not in her wish to alleviate the miseries of the fall on others, but in her manner of thinking which has omitted any searching out of the divine will, and has excluded any possibility of a supernatural solution to their dilemma. Adam, his faith in the God with whom all things are possible re-awakened, counsels her:

No more be mention'd then of violence
Against ourselves, and wilful barrenness,
That cuts us off from hope, and savors only
Rancor and pride, impatience and despite,
Reluctance against God and his just yoke
Laid on our Necks.

(X, 1041-46)

Adam at this point then reassumes his heroic role of leader. Having pointed out the error in her rationalistic argument, he invites her to turn with him to God, who alone can cure their distress:

what may ... be remedy or cure
To evils which our own misdeeds have wrought,
Hee will instruct us praying, and of Grace
Beseeching him, so as we need not fear
To pass commodiously this life, sustain'd
By him with many comforts, till we end
Adam's faith, the essential weapon of the heroic champion, has made a remarkable recovery, but two points should be kept in mind with regard to it. It is easy to view the couple's penitential prayer to God, sent from hearts full of "sorrow unfeign'd, and humiliation meek" (X, 1104), as the final step in the process of their recovery. However, it is not so.

That their prayers have had a beneficial effect in their restoration is evident:

Adam and first Matron Eve
Had ended now their Orisons, and found
Strength added from above, new hope to spring
Out of despair.

(XI, 136-39)

At the same time, however, we note their lack of comprehension of God's purposes. Adam, in an outburst of unfounded optimism, tells Eve that God's promise that her seed shall bruise their foe

now
Assures [him] that the bitterness of death
Is past, and [they] shall live.

(XI, 156-58)

Eve shares this confidence born of ignorance:

while here we dwell,
What can be toilsome in these pleasant Walks?
Here let us live, though in fall'n state, content.

(XI, 178-80)

Adam and Eve, then, "do not yet understand God's ways to Man nor Christ's offer of salvation. Until they understand these things and until they know the answers to the questions raised in Christ's judgments and in Adam's speeches at the end of Book X, their earthly redemption will be partial."

[11]
We must note as well another important factor here: Adam and Eve are incapable of attaining heroic virtue through their own unaided efforts. At the outset of Book XI we read:

Thus they in lowliest plight repentant stood
Praying, for from the Mercy-seat above
Prevenient Grace descending had remov'd
The stony from thir hearts, and made new flesh
Regenerate grow instead, that sighs now breath'd
Unutterable, which the Spirit of prayer
Inspir'd.

(XI, 1-7)

Milton stresses here his fundamental axiom that the existence of his brand of heroism depends upon God, and thus His prevenient grace is needed to soften the "stony" hearts of Adam and Eve before they can begin to repent and regain heroic stature. Milton emphasizes this idea further by restating it in the Son's words:

See Father, what first fruits on Earth are sprung
From thy implanted Grace in Man, these Sighs
And Prayers.

(XI, 22-24)

And, concerning fallen man, the Father Himself says,

He sorrows now, repents, and prays contrite,
My motions in him; longer than they move,
His heart I know, how variable and vain
Self-left.

(XI, 90-93)

It is not surprising that Milton underscores the importance of God's grace in the re-formation of Adam and Eve's heroism. As we noted earlier, dependence upon God is the hallmark of Milton's heroism; it is this more than anything else which distinguishes his concept of heroic virtue from that of the classical epic writers. To Milton, the hero first passively experiences the operation of divine grace upon his soul, and
only then is able to choose to co-operate with the continued outpouring of such grace. This does not negate human heroism by reducing man to the condition of a puppet, completely passive while God pulls the strings, for Milton sees man's heroism lying in his free decision -- a decision that must be continually repeated in the most trying of circumstances -- to actively and diligently co-operate with the Spirit of grace which has begun the good work in his soul.

As these statements involve an understanding of important ideas in Milton's theology, it would be worth while looking for a moment at Milton's discussion of repentance and regeneration in De Doctrina Christiana. Of the former Milton says briefly, "REPENDANCE ... is THE GIFT OF GOD" (I, xix, 466), and of the latter, "REGENERATION means that ... THE INNER MAN IS REGENERATED BY GOD ...: that is, by God the Father, for generation is an act performed only by fathers" (I, xvii, 460). Speaking more generally of man's restoration, Milton defines it as "the act by which man, freed from sin and death by God the Father through Jesus Christ, is raised to a far more excellent state of grace and glory than that from which he fell" (I, xiv, 415), and he notes shortly afterwards that "the Father is frequently called our Savior, as it is by his eternal counsel and grace alone that we are saved" (I, xiv, 416). These statements clearly show the importance for fallen man of grace on the part of God, who, "OUT OF GRATUITOUS KINDNESS, INVITES BELIEVERS TO SALVATION" (I, xvii, 453). God's grace initiates the process of salvation.
Milton also makes clear, however, his belief that,
after the initial movement of grace upon the heart, God enables
man to co-operate in the outworking of his salvation. In dis-
cussing God's decision whom to predestinate, Milton writes
that

God's grace is acknowledged supreme ... because he grant-
ed that we should once again be able to use our wills,
that is, to act freely, when we had recovered liberty of
the will through renewing of the Spirit. In this way he
opened Lydia's heart, Acts xvi.14. The condition upon
which God's decision depends, then, entails the action of
a will which he himself has freed.

(I, iv, 189)

Man, whose will has been freed by God from its bondage to sin,
is able to act heroically once more. Milton says this again
in discussing man's vocation, his invitation by God to salva-
tion:

The change in man which follows his vocation is that
whereby the mind and will of the natural man are partially
renewed and are divinely moved towards knowledge of God,
and undergo a change for the better, at any rate for the
time being.... this change ... is sometimes called a
hearing or a listening, though it is usually understood
that the ability to hear or listen is itself a gift from
God.... God gives us the power to act freely, which we
have not been able to do since the fall unless called and
restored.

(I, xvii, 457)

Kelley, in his introduction to the Yale edition of De Doctrina,
concurs with what we have been saying about these statements.
"To make belief possible in fallen man," he summarizes, "God
graciously restores to each individual sufficient freedom of
will for him to answer the call of salvation; and on those who
respond, he bestows increasing powers.... to attain salvation
the restored free will of man cooperates with the initial and
continuing grace of God."¹³

The best summary of Milton's beliefs on the relation between God's grace and the freewill necessary for the possibility of heroism occurs in Paradise Lost itself: in Book III the Father says,

Man shall not quite be lost, but sav'd who will, Yet not of will in him, but grace in me Freely voutsaf't; once more I will renew His lapsed powers, though forfeit and enthrall'd By sin to foul exorbitant desires; Upheld by me, yet once more he shall stand On even ground against his mortal foe, By me upheld, that he may know how frail His fall'n condition is, and to me owe All his deliverance, and to none but me. (III, 173-82)

It is grace, "Freely voutsaf't," which will "renew" man's "lapsed powers." The initial operation of God enabling man to respond to divine grace, and the onus upon men, at least upon those not specially chosen as "Elect above the rest" (III, 184), to respond to and continue to co-operate with this grace, is stated by the Father: men

shall hear me call, and oft be warn'd Thir sinful state, and to appease betimes Th'incensed Deity while offer'd grace Invites; for I will clear thir senses dark, What may suffice, and soft'n stony hearts To pray, repent, and bring obedience due. To Prayer, repentance, and obedience due, Though but endeavor'd with sincere intent, Mine ear shall not be slow, mine eye not shut. And I will place within them as a guide My Umpire Conscience, whom if they will hear, Light after light well us'd they shall attain, And to the end persisting, safe arrive. This my long sufferance and my day of grace They who neglect and scorn, shall never taste. (III, 185-99)

In this passage, "The absolute primacy of grace is established absolutely, yet once that is done Milton ensures the proper
balance through strategically placed words. Grace may con­strain but does not necessarily command. It is 'offerd,' it 'invites,' it can even be 'neglected.' If neglected, it de­prives man of mercy; but if 'endevord' with sincere intent, it enables 'persisting' man safely to reach the end.¹⁴

It would seem then that in Paradise Lost heroism of any sort is impossible for Adam and Eve apart from the preve­nient grace which regenerates their ability to obey and love God, but that fallen man and fallen woman are obliged to co­operate with this movement of grace, once it has been initi­ated by God. In the fulfillment of this obligation lies their claim to Milton's brand of heroism. Seen in retrospect then, Adam's confession and Eve's reconciliation with Adam are the visible outcome of their submission to and co-operation with an inward spiritual grace acting within them. In this sub­mission and co-operation resides the spiritual essence of their heroism.

Early in Book XI Michael is sent by God to further the process of regeneration in man. This movement complements Adam and Eve's earlier tutorial under Raphael. As Michael ex­plains to Adam:

```
know I am sent
To show thee what shall come in future days
To thee and to thy Offspring; good with bad
Expect to hear, supernal Grace contending
With sinfulness of Men; thereby to learn
True patience, and to temper joy with fear
And pious sorrow.
```

(XI, 356-62; emphasis mine)

Michael's statement that one of the prime goals of his in­struction will be to teach "True patience" adds weight to our
contention that in the last two books Adam and Eve continue to
grow in the better fortitude of patience and heroic martyrdom.
If Raphael's instruction accords with one of Milton's defini­
tions of education, Michael's is in keeping with the following
statement that the goal of education is "to repair the ruins
of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out
of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him,
as we may the neerest by possessing our souls of true vertue,
which being united to the heavenly grace of faith makes up
the highest perfection" (p. 230).

Milton couches this instruction within the traditional
convention of the epic vision. In Book XVIII of the Iliad, He­
phaistos, fashioning Achilles' shield, engraves upon it sev­
eral visions, and Milton clearly models some scenes in Michael's
speech upon these. Closer to Milton's use of this convention
is Virgil's, however, for Anchises' talk with Aeneas in Book
VI of the Aeneid and Vulcan's elaborate carvings on the shield
of Aeneas in Book VIII serve a prophetic purpose, and Michael,
when he is not didactic and hortatory, is similarly prophetic.
The purpose of the prophetic visions in the Aeneid is to in­
spire Aeneas "to fulfill his mission by showing him the sub­
sequent history and glories of Rome." The vision of Michael
is at once far worse, and far better, than any in the Aeneid,
for it vividly portrays both the horrors of the "sinfulness of
Men" (XI, 360), and the glories of "supernal Grace" (XI, 359).

Adam's instructor in righteousness seeks first to
teach him the enormity of his crime. As we have said, the ten-
dency to believe that all is well now must give way to a clearer understanding of those very general notions of the results of his sin on himself, nature, and his posterity which tormented Adam in Book X. He must learn about death, disease, seduction, and complete moral depravity, and about God's reaction to them.

Adam learns about the first of these, death, in the vision in which he sees his son Abel killed by another son, Cain, and about disease in the subsequent vision of the Lazarethouse; about moral depravity in the seduction of the sons of Seth by the daughters of Cain, and about God's hatred of sin in the picture of the world at Noah's time. This brings to a conclusion Book XI with the destruction of all mankind except Noah and his family through flood, the result of God's righteous anger against the evils prevalent among men.

The theme of the evil consequences of the Fall continues in Book XII: Adam's sin has made possible Babel, the persecution of the Jews under Pharoah, idolatry, and the Babylonian captivity. This theme reaches its culmination in the crucifixion of Christ and the persecution of His followers. Michael's summary is indeed bleak:

    so shall the World go on,
    To good malignant, to bad men benign,
    Under her own weight groaning, till the day
    Appear of respiration to the just,
    And vengeance to the wicked.

    (XII, 537-41)

Adam learns from this panoramic sweep of mankind's future "that the multifarious forms of evil which are to harass the human race and actually menace its existence are all reduc-
ible to the same kind of moral and intellectual defection as that which proved so fateful in the Garden of Eden." Michael brings this home to Adam:

\[
\text{first behold}
\]
\[
\text{Th'effects which thy original crime hath wrought}
\]
\[
\text{In some to spring from thee, who never touch'd}
\]
\[
\text{Th'excepted Tree, nor with the Snake conspir'd,}
\]
\[
\text{Nor sinn'd thy sin, yet from that sin derive}
\]
\[
\text{Corruption to bring forth more violent deeds.}
\]

(XI, 423-28; emphasis mine)

Later, he reinforces this:

\[
\text{know withal,}
\]
\[
\text{Since thy original lapse, true Liberty}
\]
\[
\text{Is lost.}
\]

(XII, 82-84; emphasis mine)

Again, he tells Adam concerning the children of Israel:

\[
\text{Doubt not but that sin}
\]
\[
\text{Will reign among them, as of thee begot.}
\]

(XII, 285-86; emphasis mine)

Thus, Adam learns not simply the consequences of sin, but the consequences of his sin.

While the folly of disobedience is shown to Adam, the glory of heroism is also exemplified. Michael's second major purpose, then, is to reveal to Adam the greatest instances of godly heroes in man's future, in order that his own re-instatement as a hero may be effected by the power of their examples. The single righteous individual, the "one just Man" (XI, 818) in a wicked world, is the most extreme case of Christian heroism. Adam has seen this type of hero earlier, in Raphael's description of Abdiel. Now, Michael cites case after case. Of Enoch, Adam asks,

\[
\text{who was that Just Man, whom had not Heav'n}
\]
\[
\text{Rescu'd, had in his Righteousness been lost?}
\]

(XI, 681-82)
Michael replies,

    thou beheld'st
    The only righteous in a World perverse,
    And therefore hated, therefore so beset
    With Foes for daring single to be just,
    And utter odious Truth, that God would come
    To judge them with his Saints: Him the most High
    Did ... receive, to walk with God.

(XI, 700-05, 707)

From this account Adam learns the glory of heroism, and the
great regard God has for the faithful champion, rewarding his
stance with providential care. "In a dark Age, against exam-
ple good" (XI, 809), Noah, also, stands as "The one just Man
alive" (XI, 818), as, in his time, does Abraham, the "one
faithful man" (XII, 113). Each of these great heroes is abun-
dantly rewarded: Noah, with his family, is spared in the del-
ge and "God voutsafes to raise another World/From him" (XI,
877); Abraham is blessed, and God "from him will raise/A mighty
Nation" (XII, 123-24) from whom the promised redeemer will
come.

These heroes are Christian heroes, for they fight a
spiritual battle; they are weak in their solitariness, but are
made strong by faith to remain obedient. Ultimately, of
course, the one just man theme reaches its climax in the great
exemplar of obedience: Jesus Christ. Adam, hearing of His ad-
vent, "expects an earthly kingdom and an immediate and final
victory over Satan.... He must still learn the nature of the
Messiah's warfare. The true warfare is inward, and man himself
is the battleground."18 Michael, repudiating the false con-
cept of heroism which is implicit in Adam's expectations, says,
Dream not of thir fight,
As of a Duel, or the local wounds
Of head or heel: not therefore joins the Son
Manhood to Godhead, with more strength to foil
Thy enemy.

(XII, 386-90)

There is surely a humourous intent in these last words, for
the picture of the Son of God becoming a man in order to add
to the strength of His deity is patently absurd. In Jesus,
the supreme hero of Christendom, Milton's view of heroism
finds its fulfillment. Christ's heroic strength is not that
of physical might, but of obedience; concerning man's deserved
punishment, Michael says to Adam,

hee, 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.

(XII, 393-97)

Christ's obedience arises not out of personal interest, but
out of love:

The Law of God exact he shall fulfil
Both by obedience and by love.

(XII, 402-03)

Apparently weak, He shall come

in the Flesh
To a reproachful life and cursed death,

he shall live hated, be blasphem'd,
Seiz'd on by force, judg'd, and to death condemn'd
A shameful and accurst, nail'd to the Cross
By his own Nation,

so he dies.

(XII, 405-06, 411-14, 419)

But this is not weakness; it is actually true heroic strength.
Love constrains him to suffer for His beloved; Michael tells
Adam, "thy punishment/He shall endure" (XII, 404-05). His love for fallen man can be compared to the love of Achilles and Aeneas for their friends who have fallen in war. The deaths of Patroklos and Pallas "give Achilles and Aeneas special cause for revenge, in effect, impelling the hero's return and resolution of the conflict." In the Christian context, however, Christ overshadows the classical heroes, for His revenge, in His punishment of Satan, is more terrible, His sacrifice, in laying down His life, is more costly, and His benevolence, in restoring Adam and Eve to spiritual life, is more efficacious, than any of Achilles' or Aeneas' actions. Here we have the noblest expression of that better fortitude of patience and heroic martyrdom which Milton saw as the highest form of heroism. Through His suffering and death Jesus Christ achieves a victory which no other man, no matter how heroic, could hope to win:

```
this God-like act
Annuls thy doom, the death thou shouldst have di'd,
In sin for ever lost from life; this act
Shall bruise the head of Satan, crush his strength
Defeating Sin and Death, his two main arms,
And fix far deeper in his head thir stings
Than temporal death shall bruise the Victor's heel.
(XII, 427-33)
```

His reward is in keeping with His deeds, far surpassing that of Enoch, Noah, or Abraham, for though He dies, He soon revives and ascends to

```
enter into glory, and resume
His seat at God's right hand, exalted high
Above all names in Heav'n.
(XII, 456-58)
```

The heroism of Christ sets the pattern for His follow-
ers, for they must be "in mind prepar'd, if so befall,/For death, like that which the redeemer di'd" (XII, 444-45). Their dependence upon God for victory is clearly indicated by Christ's sending the Holy Spirit to dwell in each of them. This Comforter will

   guide them in all truth, and also arm
   With spiritual Armor, able to resist
   Satan's assaults, and quench his fiery darts,
   What Man can do against them, not afraid,
   Though to the death, against such cruelties
   With inward consolations recompens't,
   And oft supported so as shall amaze
   Thir proudest persecutors.

   (XII, 490-97)

The necessity of the Holy Spirit's assistance under-}

scores again the point that Michael's survey of history makes very clear: man cannot achieve true heroic standing by himself. The need to rely on God through faith instead of on one's own abilities is stressed throughout Michael's speech. Trusting in his own merits, the would-be champion "can, at best, achieve only a temporary and earthly reward. Tainted as they are by sin, his noblest exploits must ultimately incur eternal death and shame instead of everlasting life and glory. On the other hand, by trusting in the imputed righteousness of Christ, he can attain the imperishable honours of Heaven." 20

Michael's teaching ministry has ended, and Adam now summarizes the lessons he has learned. He acknowledges first the folly of aspiring to knowledge beyond his capacity to understand or to appreciate. He has learned that which is crucial to all true heroes, the importance of obeying God and lov-
ing Him:

Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,
And love with fear the only God.
(XII, 561-62)

That dependence upon God which is a hallmark of Christian heroism has now become a part of Adam's outlook: he has learned to walk
As in [God's] presence, ever to observe
His providence, and on him sole depend.
(XII, 562-64)

He can thus trust Him, because of what he has learned from his teacher concerning the nature of God, He who is

Merciful over all his works, with good
Still overcoming evil, and by small
Accomplishing great things, by things deem'd weak
Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise
By simply meek.
(XII, 565-69)

In his final words in the epic we see that Adam has also learned the better fortitude of patience and heroic martyrdom:

suffering for Truth's sake
Is fortitude to highest victory,
And to the faithful Death the Gate of Life.
(XII, 569-71)

Having become prepared in heart and mind, Adam can only be exhorted now to put into practice that which he has learned, to move from being simply a potential hero to being one in fact. Even in Michael's exhortation, however, we note that heroic deeds are only one aspect of Christian heroism; the spiritual prerequisites for those deeds receive the greater emphasis, and of these preconditions love receives the greatest emphasis of all:

only add
Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add Faith, 
Add Virtue, Patience, Temperance, add Love, 
By name to come call'd Charity, the soul 
Of all the rest. 

(XII, 581-85)

The exercise of these spiritual attributes of Christian hero-
ism will merit the hero a reward far better than any attained 
by classical epic heroes:

then wilt thou not be loath 
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess 
A paradise within thee, happier far. 

(XII, 585-87)

Eden exceeds all the earthly kingdoms which pagan heroes 
strive for, but Adam and Eve, through their heroic struggles 
in the spiritual realm, will achieve spiritual satisfactions 
surpassing even the bliss of Eden.

This promised spiritual reward might seem proof of an 
attitude on Milton's part that the fall of man was ultimately 
a fortunate event, a felix culpa. Further support for this 
view might seem to be found in Adam's response to Michael's 
prophecy that Christ's faithful will be rewarded by being re-
ceived into 

Paradise, far happier place 
Than this of Eden, and far happier days. 

(XII, 464-65)

To this, Adam, "Replete with joy and wonder" (XII, 468), ex-
claims,

O goodness infinite, goodness immense! 
That all this good of evil shall produce, 
And evil turn to good; more wonderful 
Than that which by creation first brought forth 
Light out of darkness! full of doubt I stand, 
Whether I should repent me now of sin 
By mee done and occasion'd, or rejoice 
Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring,
To God more glory, more good will to Men
From God, and over wrath grace shall abound.
(XII, 469-78)

It is tempting to adopt this view of the fall for our present purposes, because a case could be made that the fall was fortunate in that human heroism as we now know it, with the momentousness of its struggles and the greatness of its rewards, would have been impossible had Adam and Eve not sinned. However, it would seem to this writer that Milton did not share this view. For one thing the argument used to support the notion of the felix culpa demeans the momentousness of the heroic exploits in which unfallen man might have engaged. God, in His original proclamation of His intention to create man, said,

[I] will create
Another World, out of one man a Race
Of men innumerable, there to dwell,
Not here, till by degrees of merit rais'd
They open to themselves at length the way
Up hither, under long obedience tri'd,
And Earth be chang'd to Heav'n, and Heav'n to Earth,
One Kingdom, Joy and Union without end.
(VII, 154-61)

The demonstration of heroic virtue "under long obedience tri'd" is clearly God's intention for unfallen man, and there is no reason to suppose that such heroism should be inferior to that of postlapsarian heroes. Further, the reward envisioned here is surely as great as that offered to Adam and to Christ's faithful disciples. We should also note that Adam's speech referred to above only expresses "doubt" whether or not he should repent. "Adam's speech does not express a reasoned theological view of the consequences of sin; read dramatically,
it expresses his emotional reaction to news of the final triumph of good, after he has several times been on the verge of despair. The tale of misery that has preceded the final triumph and the tale of postbiblical human history ... both contradict any argument that the fall was 'fortunate.'”

Finally, we cannot accept the view of the felix culpa, because the text itself flatly denies that idea: God the Father says of fallen man,

\begin{quote}
let him boast
His knowledge of Good lost, and Evil got,
Happier, had it suffic'd him to have known
Good by itself, and Evil not at all.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

(XI, 86-89)

The second main movement of Paradise Lost concerned with human heroism culminates in an act of heroism on the part of Adam and Eve which may at first seem "small" (XII, 566), but is in reality the means of "Accomplishing great things" (XII, 567). Michael concludes his instruction with a reminder of his commission and with a show of military strength:

\begin{quote}
Let us descend now ... from this top
Of Speculation; for the hour precise
Exacts our parting hence; and see the Guards,
By mee encampt on yonder Hill, expect
Thir motion, at whose Front a flaming Sword,
In signal of remove, waves fiercely round;
We may no longer stay.
\end{quote}

(XII, 588-94)

It would seem that Michael was prepared for the worst if Adam and Eve decided to resist their expulsion from Eden. The "dreadful Faces" and "fiery Arms" (XII, 644) of the cherubim, and "thir fixt Station, all in bright array" (XII, 627) are reminiscent of the demeanour, armament, and organization of.
those angels in Book IV whose duty is to protect Adam and Eve from the malevolent and powerful figure of Satan, and of those in Book VI commanded to drive out of Heaven the unscrupulous and destructive rebels. If Satan found Adam a "Foe not in-formidable" (IX, 486), it is conceivable that Michael might also have found him so had Adam decided to resist the Arch-angel.

Adam chooses to obey. Michael had told him to "go, waken Eve" (XII, 594); Adam not only goes, he runs to do the angel's bidding (XII, 607-08). Eve also exercises the heroism of obedience; "now lead on;/In mee is no delay" (XII, 614-15), she tells Adam. Together they submit to the will of God:

In either hand the hast'ning Angel caught
Our ling'ring Parents, and to th'Eastern Gate
Led them direct, and down the Cliff as fast
To the subjected Plain; then disappear'd.
They looking back, all th'Eastern side beheld
Of Paradise, so late thir happy seat,

Some natural tears they dropp'd, but wip'd them soon;
The World was all before thm, where to choose
Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide.
(XII, 637-42, 645-47)

Not only heroic obedience is revealed here; in trusting solely in God's guidance to lead them through the unknown world into which they are entering Adam and Eve show a heroic faith of the highest order. But apart from obedience and faith, the couple also demonstrate, in leaving Paradise for a world full of physical dangers and spiritual snares, the heroic virtue of patient endurance of suffering. Their brave acceptance of the suffering they must undergo is implicit in the last lines
of the poem:

They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,
Through Eden took thir solitary way.

(XII, 648-49)

The word "solitary" harks back to the "one just man" theme which runs throughout Books XI and XII: entering the world of the "subjected" plain, beneath Eden morally as well as physically, Adam will be the one just man, and Eve the one just woman in a world perverse. Warfaring, as well as wayfaring, Adam and Eve are truly heroic as they leave Paradise.

Our investigation of Paradise Lost has confirmed what we said at the beginning of our study concerning Milton's concept of heroism. It is clear that he rejects the destructive, self-glorifying, self-reliant type of heroism which he associated with classical epics for one that manifests the Christian virtues. Faith, humility, and love are the primary spiritual attributes of the hero's character, and these produce a desire to obey, a desire so strong that great trials, suffering, even martyrdom itself, are borne patiently. In our time, when violence, pride, and unrestrained individualism seem on the increase as traits of heroes in literature and cinema, studies of Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes, and more intensive examinations of Paradise Lost than the scope of the present work allows, offer opportunities to explore an alternative form of heroism which is truly noble.
Notes

Introduction


4 Thorpe, ed., p. 337.


7 Thorpe, ed., p. 345.

8 Thorpe, ed., p. 57.

Chapter One: "This Subject for Heroic Song"


Hanford and Taaffe, eds., p. 149.

Hanford and Taaffe, eds., p. 149.

Steadman, p. vi.


The following discussion contrasting Christian and classical modes of heroism is deeply indebted to Steadman's *Milton and the Renaissance Hero* which is the major scholarly work in this area of Milton studies, and to a lesser extent to Kurth's *Milton and Christian Humanism*.

Steadman, p. 29.

Steadman, p. 32.

Steadman, p. 37.

Steadman, p. 73-76.

Steadman, pp. 66, 77.

Steadman, p. 78.

Steadman, pp. 146-47.

Steadman, p. 83.

Steadman, p. 107.

Kurth, p. 8.


Kurth, p. 30.

C. M. Bowra, *From Virgil to Milton* (1945; rpt. Lon-
Chapter Two: Divine and Demonic Heroism

1Steadman, p. xix.


4Harding, p. 45. The following lines cited in Harding, p. 45.


7Seaman, p. 85.


10Seaman, pp. 70-71.


12Harding, p. 46.
Chapter Three: Instruction in Fortitude

1 Harding, p. 70.


3 Harding, p. 70.

4 Harding, p. 71.


6 Greene, p. 405.


8 Bowra, From Virgil to Milton, p. 197.

9 Revard, p. 122.

10 Chadwick, p. 90.


12 Seaman, p. 70.


15 Bowra, From Virgil to Milton, p. 231.


17 Stanley Eugene Fish, "Standing Only: Christian Hero-
Chapter Four: The Catastrophic Epic Contest

1 Hughes, ed., Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, p. 378, n. 15.
2 Kurth, p. 57.
3 Seaman, p. 55.
4 Seaman, p. 36.
5 Seaman, p. 131.
7 Seaman, p. 131.
8 In "The Crisis of Paradise Lost," Studies in Milton,
E. M. W. Tillyard, 1951, rpt. in Milton: Paradise Lost: A Collection of Critical Essays, Twentieth Century Views Series (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Spectrum Books, 1966), p. 164, Tillyard writes, "Adam has been eloquent; we know that Eve must have been impressed. Indeed when she makes her next (and last) speech, she is 'submiss.' Adam really has the situation in hand.... And then comes the tragedy. Adam, who could now be firm with impunity, whom Eve expects to be firm, suddenly weakens.... The whole situation is pervaded with tragic irony. Adam weakens just when he could so easily have been strong. Eve, having requested to garden alone, gains her request just as she has repented of it."

9Steadman, p. 126.


11Seaman, p. 102.

12Steadman, p. 127.


14We do not mean to deny the great emotional power with which Milton invests the account of Adam's fall moving the reader to sympathize with Adam, any more than we should deny that poetic power which created in Books I and II such an impressive figure in Satan. The reader's sympathy is aroused in both cases owing to the integrity of Milton's artistry. Understanding the attractiveness of evil under certain conditions, he created in Satan a figure superficially attractive, but evil; understanding the strong emotional feelings which accompany the temptation to do evil in certain circumstances, he renders Adam's fall in such a way that the reader sympathizes with Adam in his predicament while recognizing that his solution to the problem is disastrously wrong.


16Lewis, p. 127.

Chapter Five: The Regeneration of Heroic Virtue

1Kurth, p. 122.
4Seaman, p. 38.
10Wright, p. 187.
12Ogden, p. 323.
13Complete Prose Works, Vol. VI, p. 84.
14Patrides, p. 213.
15See especially Homer's scene describing the first of two fair cities, pp. 342-343, and Paradise Lost, XI, 580-596; 638-673.
16 Seaman, p. 127.

17 E. L. Marilla, *The Central Problem of "Paradise Lost:"
Lost:* The Fall of Man, Univ. of Upsala Essays and Studies on
english Language and Literature, No. 15 (Upsala: Univ. of

18 Summers, p. 215.

19 Seaman, p. 65.


21 Lawrence A. Sasek, "The Drama of *Paradise Lost*, Books
XI and XII," *Studies in English Renaissance Literature*, ed.,
W. F. McNeir, 1962, rpt. in Arthur E. Barker, ed., *Milton:
Modern Essays in Criticism* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965),
p. 353.

22 As I see it, this does not contradict Michael's
later statement (XII, 581-587) that Adam will, if he adds good
deeds to his re-awakened faith, "not be loath/To leave this
Paradise," but will possess a spiritual paradise within "happi-
er far." The Father's statement means that, considering all
the factors involved, it would have been better for Adam not
to have sinned; Michael is saying that it would be better now,
in his postlapsarian state, for Adam to leave Eden and seek a
spiritual paradise within, than to remain in what was once an
external material paradise, but as has been clearly evident
since the fall, is such no longer.
List of Works Consulted

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II. Secondary Material

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Harris, William O. "Despair and 'Patience as the Truest Fortitude' in Samson Agonistes." ELH, 30 (March 1963), 107-20.


Maclure, Millar and F. W. Watt, eds. Essays in English Liter-


Marilla, E. L. The Central Problem of "Paradise Lost:" The Fall of Man. Univ. of Upsala Essays and Studies in English Language and Literature, No. 15. Upsala: Univ. of Upsala, 1953.


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MAP II - THE SPATIAL LAYOUT OF THE VILLAGE OF OLAPPALAYAM
IN 1965

SOURCE: PEASANT SOCIETY IN KOMKU - R.E. BECK. (PAGE 146)