

Revelations of the Divine: Unravelling Enigma in Milton's *Paradise Lost*

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Abstract

Through his most controversial yet prominent Epic titled "*Paradise Lost*" (1667), John Milton, the renowned English intellect and writer, addresses the ideology of free will and questions the existing hegemony of supreme power and dominance. It was written when people mindlessly followed the Church and the rules of the Monarch and, in utmost fear, paid heed to all the rules and norms that existed in society, ultimately leading to nothing more than a simple and unnoticed death. This research will also discuss the purpose of having a choice and how it all began initially. The character of the 'fallen angel' and how he is not seen as a pessimist but a transforming being moulded under the circumstances laid for him. This perspective will be analyzed thoroughly, and the way Milton takes a stand for Satan to give us readers a whole new angle of interpretation will also be dwelt upon and further examined in this paper. Moreover, his futuristic thinking and how his Epic still holds a firm ground in today's contemporary world will also be reviewed to highlight the necessity of such revolutionists in our history, which will be considered vital in this research.

Keywords: John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Free will, Absolute Power, Choice, Revolutionists, Fear of Authority.

1. Introduction

Paradise Lost (1667) by John Milton is a bold expression of free will, individuality, and the right to seek freedom by choice. He wrote contrary to the hegemony of kings and monarchs of that time who were given the absolute authority to govern the nation. Milton firmly questioned this unchecked power in his renowned Epic. Milton was a devoted disciple of Oliver Cromwell, leader of the 'Republics' movement. His philosophy went against society's existing ethics, enticing Milton and further influencing him to create such a dubious Epic of that time. One of the critics stated that Milton's goal in writing *Paradise Lost* was to write an epic that would capture the spirit and environment of his society and religion, much as Homer's epics spoke for Greek civilization (Bourne 4-5).

His sole purpose for composing the whole Epic in 'blank verse' was to deliver the symbolic thought to his readers that writing in rhyme schemes is similar to being in "bondage," the same way how people of England were tied and bonded under their monarch during their reign. Here, Milton tried challenging the notion of blind faith governed by fear.

Milton further criticizes the impaired functioning of the Church and the government. He wanted his readers to know that the strength of power, authority, or force, when credited to some unacceptable hands, can cause plenty of atrocities which, out of dread and absence of knowledge, the common mob proceeded to confront and endure due to their ignorant religiosity towards those who are in a higher position of power and are not at all reluctant to exercise their unfettered authority.

2. Character Analysis of Lucifer in *Paradise Lost*

In his notable work, the controversy began when Milton challenged and questioned the Church by bringing in biblical and scriptural concepts to directly contrast the pecking order of religion and the authority of government straightforwardly. Nonetheless, one has to look closely to point out that his idea of uninformed faith toward the Church was ultimately proved valid. With the advancement in Science, men gradually comprehended that reality and superficiality are challenging in parallel terms. This belief was fortified by Milton when he tried to praise and address the side of Lucifer, the fallen angel, who had to endure and govern Hell simply because God asserted and intended his way to be the only path to proceed further, regardless of whether absolute power is legitimate remains an unanswered question. According to Milton's perspective, Lucifer's anguish was solely based on pure old vengeance from God, the Almighty. His plans and

plottings were ascribed to tell the world how strong God is and how he has supreme control over and exercises his clout on whoever he wishes. Those who might hinder him, question his works or challenge his authority will endure the severest fallouts like Satan. With such a disclaimer, Milton asks his readers - is it just to have such outright power and control?

Lucifer's characteristic trait is skepticism because God wishes it to be that way. The uncontested truth regarding his existence makes the Almighty appear just and legitimate. However, it's crucial to understand that even this mere belief is created by God. Being the Archangel, having the title of being 'the angel of light,' is considered worthy to sit at the right hand of God. Having won all these rightful entitlements, Lucifer asked for his equity of powers since he was among those who were allowed to convey his perspective due to his remarkable capabilities, which even God noticed, and that's why he was offered proximity to his so-called father. Unfortunately, this quality of scrutinizing his position by questioning his methods had a different viewpoint compared to God. Consequently, he was deliberately given the most difficult errand and even the most challenging task, which included punishing evil after being condemned to Hell and sentenced to damnation, symbolizing the 'fall of mankind.'

Acquiring discipline through punishment is easy since one must constantly be unforgiving, discourteous, and determined and prepare to be harsh, rude, and adamant; otherwise, men won't realize the intensity of their mistakes committed, and it's the emotion of absolute fear that must be instilled in people to make them trail along the assigned path laid out for them without anyone to inquire their ways of professing faith.

Moreover, one needs to comprehend that Lucifer was given the occupation of rebuffing the people who are not following the sets of outright power and committing sin by being malevolent; one has to clearly understand that Lucifer was given the job of punishing those who are not following the orders of absolute power and committing sin by being evil but, in most cases, Lucifer is considered to be the evil one, which is an off-base suspicion that he too wants to clarify. Just because Satan is the king of Pandemonium in Hell, who turned out to be a hideous and monstrous creature after his wings were cut and were made to fall, cannot be understood as taking the persona of actual evil. The job allocated to him and the role God assigned to him made him turn into this. The human species wouldn't be terrified if such were not the case. He would become the reason they think twice before sinning by going against the words of God. It is a grievous fault that one

is reluctant to lift the weight of 'evil,' an unavoidable reality for 'good' to survive or exist. God needed Lucifer to be the demon, to take the face of evil and project pessimism on his believers. This diplomatic move was carried out to make the followers of God unite and make humans value God and goodness. The dictator was determined to make this sort of arrangement an everlasting one, as we all know that the Almighty foresees everything; hence, knowing that Lucifer is leading a civil war towards him, God didn't stop him initially because even he wanted everyone to understand how uncontrollable strength he has. It was evident that he, too, was proud of his name, fame, and even his petty egoistic games. Milton depicted his way of accumulating power as the sole superior. His methods always evoked the intense emotion of fear, which drives an individual to such an extent, involving manipulations to show his viewers who he truly is and maintain that stand to make his mere puppets believe him without thought. They are even forced to support him out of distress whenever he wishes, and another trait that he demands is when he is demeaning anyone, his trusted followers must mock the same individual and laugh, even if it means pretending, but never question the actions or even the desires of the Almighty. This was done with the sole intention that if men don't fear Lucifer's act of punishing, they will at least fear God because of his undefined power, which they have witnessed now.

God's ways were always simple: he needed a person who just follows, as our forefathers (Adam and Eve) had already brought the sin of disobedience into existence by defying their creator's words. Nevertheless, even in such a situation, God found the ideal candidate to take the fall- the devil himself. and his aim of indirectly letting everyone know that whoever disobeys him will be shunned and cast away was also part of God's ulterior plan to make people forget the visage of Lucifer by removing him from the face of the earth as 'the angel of light.' Further, God made it a fact that they will have an unbearable and tortuous existence in the pit of fire ahead with much misery and lament and won't ever be permitted to enter heaven being banished from the land of paradise if they involve in sin.

The concept of 'Utopia' reminds us that the garden of Eden mentioned in the chapter of Genesis in the Holy Bible was designed by God for humans to live in harmony with nature. And now, if we compare this with our modern world, the state was established to blackmail its citizens. They molded the rules according to their liking, profiting them solely for their well-being and success. They then made punishments and rewards in the form of amenities attributed to only those

with contacts in the State. Even this idea is similar to the concept of the Book of Judgment Christian domain, which decides our final destination after death depending on whether our names are written and accepted in that book.

Milton wanted to let his readers know that the emotion of "fear" tends to prevent man from taking the next step ahead. This component of dread helps the monarchs oversee and tactfully govern and deal with individuals by practicing their requests to acquire benefits and succeed in their approach to everyday life.

Referring to *Paradise Lost*, the character of Lucifer is deliberately made to fall by Milton, not to derive pleasure out of it but to make the readers well aware of the truth about God, which even Lucifer realized after being the 'fallen angel' damned for his ultimate fall to Hell. After discovering other demons banished to Hell to rot like Beelzebub. They all had the same thoughts and decided to join his rebellious army against God. Milton even said that Lucifer's endeavors leaned toward people appreciating the genuine side of God that was uncovered to them by his encounter.

Lucifer's actions were, to an extent justified, since he had just demanded the rights of equity that he deserved; however, when he was denied and rebuffed that too in the most humiliating way possible as he was made to stoop beneath the earth where fire boils, and fury thrives, like the existence of fire bubbles and fierceness that flourishes. Lucifer, after coming to terms with his situation of being Satan and before the creation of Pandemonium, says to his fellow demons- "*Better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven.*" (Milton 263).

Shakespeare's once-acclaimed life states- "*Life is a drama, God is the director, and we are all actors.*" (Shakespeare, Act II Scene VII Line 139) This statement fits in this situation: Satan used humans as pawns in his revenge against the Arch-enemy; similarly, the real battle often occurs between the 'haves' who continue to assert their dominance over the other to depict their superiority and exercise their rule. Ultimately, it is always the 'have-nots' who suffer the most, like in the case of Adam and Eve, who had lost entry to their paradise - 'the Garden of Eden' and were banished from their haven because of their sin of disobedience caused due to the devilish hands of Satan who used them as means to achieve his aim by attempting to figure out a way to scale up and impose his ultimate play of revenge to his Arch enemy.

According to Milton, God's mere creation of humans was because God predicted that, over time, he might feel threatened by the other angels with some sort of power attributed to them. (Book 13). And the Almighty was assumed to be concerned about the day when he might see all the angels united against his dictatorship, ready to fight for themselves. This constant terror generates a tinge of worry in God haunting him, to develop the belief that if such a scenario ever occurs, that would be the day God needs to sacrifice his battle for power and authority. As a precaution to secure his everlasting position, God created humans in his likeness (Genesis 1:27), as it is mentioned in the New Testament of the Bible in the book of Genesis, as they are pawns for God to play around with, and as usual, to take a morally acceptable stand, he claimed that he loves humans the most and gave our forefathers everything to live in peace and happiness. God's plan was solid as these humans would be completely unaware of their existence, uninformed about their reality, and grateful to the maker who molded them into this and shaped their reality.

Moreover, it is perceived that God needed an audience to heed his commands. He required a crowd of people to regard his words and acknowledge his presence over whom he could attribute his reign and rule without any disruption, cross-questioned or unheard, as already, by creating them, he had achieved his goal of taking the supreme role over them. Therefore, we could also say that not only Satan but even God has used humans as mere beings who have accepted him as the 'supreme power of all.' Furthermore, considering our Almighty the 'know it all, he knew that his favorite creations would disobey him, yet he didn't stop them before allowing them to welcome sin into our world. When we have such a perspective, our doubts that were once subsided boil up again, making us all think that God might have an ulterior motive against us humans. Ultimately, even we are designed for someone else.

Conclusion

We understood that Milton was in a radical way ahead of his time as the Church was dominant during his time of existence. Even the monarchs depended on religion to control their kingdom, and, somewhere, they were using spirituality and blind faith to govern and rule over the citizens, indirectly influencing the mob to make choices that were in their favor. Nevertheless, Milton was not someone to step down. He directly attacked the Church by depicting biblical references in his Epic work and questioning the extent of control the Church has claimed. His ideology was simple, as he wanted his readers to know that even the Holy Scriptures were written

by apostles who were humans. The interpretation by other Holy men of the Church who try to preach what they feel is the just, proper, and moral way to act in society. In the same way, even humans, part of this dynamic society, can have their interpretation and decipher any text in our practice that seems suitable for their liking and well-being. Hence, writing on such a disputable subject was Milton's approach of delivering an ulterior dimension of similar scriptural beliefs, which once was considered as the Gospel can now have a scope of reinterpretation by any of us providing a different angle against to work within the existing framework of the Church. The writer wanted his readers to see both sides before coming to an informed decision and to make them aware that the idea of 'free will' always exists, and once you make a choice, only one would understand the value of that choice. Milton didn't declare a substantial consummation for his Epic since he believed the readers and critics should pick what they considered suitable and just.

Milton didn't profess a solid ending for his Epic because he wanted the readers to choose what they perceive as right and just. Throughout our lives, humans have been told what to do and how to do it rightly based on the pre-existing norms we continue to follow mindlessly. Therefore, Milton is encouraging his readers to have similar traits of bravery, risk-taker, self-sufficient and determined beings like Milton and Lucifer to question those in power and finally open the eyes of the commonfolk to make sound decisions and also know the fact that they always have a 'choice' and 'free-will,' rather than mindlessly putting their faith on something which their ancestors shared to continue to keep the traditions and customs to live on simple, but again, there is no learning or meaning attached to it as you are just irrationally following for the mere sake of angst that our ancestors implanted in us in such a manner making us believe that the old way passed orally to us might be the right way to act without causing any harm to society and disrupt the will of God.

In conclusion, revolutionaries and rebels like John Milton and Lucifer are essential in our community to bring change that benefits our post-modern culture. History has taught us thoroughly, with solid examples of revolutions like the French Revolution, Enlightenment Age, Age of Reason and Realism, Democracy, and so on. Witnessing all these, unthinkingly obeying the predetermined traditional practices and norms without realizing their ultimate aim differs from how society functions efficiently. One needs to question the relevance of such rules and regulations based on their period of existence. It's a relevant fact that we need such revolutionists to come forth and mark their purpose in life and leave their footprints in this literary world to help others

understand and make an informed decision after adhering to both the pros and the cons side of the issue we are dealing with.

To sum up, Milton and many other like-minded revolutionaries have attempted their utmost to educate the public and bring necessary changes in society through their works of artistic creations. Such iconic examples inspire us to speak up for what we believe is right and express ourselves without fear. Others notice when one stands apart and are sometimes criticized for that. Only time will tell whether Milton, who decided to take a strong stance and was stern not to budge even when all the tables turned against him, was not someone to give in easily. Milton continued to fight for what he believed in, and today, all admire him. His Epic *Paradise Lost* is regarded as one of the significant works of art and a proper English literature classic. This particular work of art is still frequently used in Law, Politics, and Sociology, leaving its imprint on fields outside of literature.

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