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## THE DIALOGUE IN HEAVEN: A RECONSIDERATION OF *PARADISE LOST*, III.1-417

BY IRENE SAMUEL

WHEN Douglas Bush and C. S. Lewis—not to name readers as disparate in time and temperament as Pope, Blake, and Shaw—find the God of *Paradise Lost* unattractive, it may be ill-advised to attempt the justification of Milton's ways with Heaven. Even the excellent refutation of the Satanist position in John S. Diekhoff's book on *Paradise Lost* ignores rather than answers, perhaps quite properly, those who have objected to Milton's God as not so much a tyrant as a wooden bore.<sup>1</sup> My paper is addressed to such readers and to any others who are willing to start from the assumption that Milton may have known what he was about in the first half of Book III as surely as in Books I and II. I put it thus because objections have generally turned on the first episode in Heaven and have rather consistently echoed Pope's quip that "God the Father turns a school-divine." I wish to argue that we have mistakenly read the scene as a mere presentation of doctrinal assertions conveniently divided between the Father and the Son, and that to take it thus is to forget both how highly Milton prized poetic economy<sup>2</sup> and how central he made this episode to the action of his whole poem. For may not the trouble be that we have incautiously misconstrued as dogma what Milton intended as drama? In short, the failure may be not in the scene but in our reading of it.

Milton, we know, thought mere presentation of testimony of "very little power for proof" even in logical argument: "testimony affirms or denies that a thing is so and brings about that I believe; it does not prove, it does not teach, it does not cause me to know or understand why things are so, unless it also brings forward reasons."<sup>3</sup> How unlikely then

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century* (London, 1946), p. 381, and *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (London, 1942), p. 126; and see *Milton's Paradise Lost* (New York, 1948), Chs. v and vi.

<sup>2</sup> The popular word now is "strategy," though one may still prefer the metaphor of the productive household to the metaphor of the destructive battlefield. Milton, at any rate, used the term "economy," explaining it in the Preface to *Samson Agonistes* as "such . . . disposition of the fable as may stand best with verisimilitude and decorum." For what he meant by "decorum," "verisimilitude," and "economy" the reader should consult Ida Langdon, *Milton's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, Cornell Stud. in Eng., No. 8 (New Haven, 1924).

<sup>3</sup> *Logic*, I, 32, trans. A. H. Gilbert, *The Works of John Milton*, Columbia ed., XI, 283. My references to Milton's prose are to the volume and page numbers of this edition. For *Paradise Lost* I have used the edition by Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, 1935), but have normalized some spellings for the quotations incorporated into my own prose.

that he would have rested the poetic argument of *Paradise Lost*, turning as it must on this very scene in Heaven, on the mere testimony of theological statement or on his own mere assertion that these statements are made by personages named God and the Son. Surely we do more wisely to assume that Milton intended the statements in the scene to demonstrate that the persons involved are recognizably God, the creator of the universe, and the Son, his “word, wisdom, and effectual might.”

The meaning of the council in Heaven starts before either person speaks, since it depends in large part on the continuity of the poetic fabric: the obvious contrasts with Hell indicate how we are to regard Heaven.<sup>4</sup> Thus, for example, the invocation of light in the opening lines of Book III at once helps to establish Milton’s God as the cosmic principle, the source of ordered nature, partly because we have seen Hell’s darkness filled with unnatural perversions and monstrosities. We are impelled by the lines to mark such contrasts, though we ought also to note the near-absurdity of the word “contrast”; it suits Satan’s pretensions well enough, but hardly suggests that what he opposes is the entire universe. We have to bear in mind from the first that we could predict nothing of Milton’s God and Heaven by simply inverting his Satan and Hell, though we are expected to learn much by observing their differences.

What we learn, to begin with, is that, unfortunately for Satan, the God of *Paradise Lost* is not merely another being on whose pattern he can model his rebel state, but Total Being, *the Primal Energy, the Voice of Reason, the Moral Law* that makes possible a moral cosmos as surely as the laws of physics make possible a physical cosmos. He is *the Creator* who by intention brings into being others who act of themselves, and consequently *the Intelligence* that comprehends the universe. Significantly enough, his first act in the poem is to bend “down his [omniscient] eye, / His own works and their works at once to view.” To try to read the dialogue that follows without allowing the first speaker his full

<sup>4</sup> Ernest Schanzer has collected a number of such parallels in “Milton’s Hell Revisited,” *UTQ*, xxiv (1955), 136–145. My notion of these contrasts is that Milton used his augmented treatment of Hell to make possible an abbreviated treatment of Heaven. Thus, for example, because Hell is finally summed up as “a universe of death” where “all life dies, death lives,” and Death in fact is king (as he claims [II.698–699] and his crown proves [II.673]), we recognize more immediately that Heaven is the realm of vitality and indeed of nature, without any hammering at the point. And thus in turn the list of the beauties of nature from which blindness has cut the poet off (III.40–50) can suggest to us that Milton’s God is the God of Nature long before we meet the phrase “God and Nature bid the same” (VI.176). Or again, because we have noted the incestuous monstrosities, ugly contention, and even uglier agreement between Satan, his perfect image Sin, and their only begotten son Death, the whole dialogue in Heaven between the Father and *his* only begotten Son, who is his perfect image, takes on added meaning.

nature would indeed make nonsense of the scene.<sup>5</sup> But as soon as we take Milton's God as Being, infinitely beyond all created beings, the scene has dramatic point. The near tonelessness of his first speech at once proves itself the right tone. It has offended readers because they assume that the "I" who speaks is or should be a person like other persons. The flat statement of fact, past, present, and future, the calm analysis and judgment of deeds and principles—these naturally strike the ear that has heard Satan's ringing utterance as cold and impersonal. They should. For the omniscient voice of the omnipotent moral law speaks simply what is. Here is no orator using rhetoric to persuade, but the nature of things expounding itself in order to present fact and principle unadorned.<sup>6</sup>

Clearly Milton uses that toneless voice of the moral law to destroy immediately the straw figure of a gloating, tyrannical victor that Satan and his followers had conjured up in Books I and II. More important, he uses it to afford the Son opportunity for his impassioned reply. And this we must mark emphatically before turning to what either says: the Father in dialogue with the Son is not listening to an echo, but encouraging the distinctive tones of a quite different voice. To take the difference as showing the amiability of the Son at the expense of the cold, rigorous Father is to mistake Milton's point. The compassion, love, and grace we are asked to observe in the Son (ll. 140–142) are emphatically equated with the substantial expression of the invisible Godhead (ll. 138–140): the Son's compassionate tone is made possible by the passionless logic of the Father.<sup>7</sup>

We may now turn to what is said, noting briefly that it is said in the presence of the assembled angels, for all to hear, though the opening words are directed to the Son. God states that man will fall, expounds the doctrine of free will, observes a difference between the rebellion of

<sup>5</sup> Lewis shows that Milton keeps to "the great central tradition" of Christian doctrine throughout *P. L.* (pp. 81–91). But Lewis, it occurs to me, makes heavier theological demands on the reader than Milton ever suggests in the poem.

<sup>6</sup> Milton, of course, knew the ancient distinction between what is appropriate in persuasion and in exposition. Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. Lane Cooper, III, 1404a: "Strict justice, of course, would lead us, in speaking, to seek no more than that we should avoid paining the hearer without alluring him; the case should, in justice, be fought on the strength of the facts alone, so that all else besides demonstration of fact is superfluous. . . . No one uses them [the devices of style] in teaching mathematics." And see Plato, *Phaedrus*, especially 263.

<sup>7</sup> It will be evident that I fully agree with Maurice Kelley that "no indecision is present in *Paradise Lost*, III" (*This Great Argument*, Princeton, 1941, p. 34) and even that nothing Milton says in *P. L.* conflicts with his *Christian Doctrine*. But is there any evidence that Milton wanted his reader to adopt, or so much as recognize, the Arianism implicit in Bk. III? Any reduction of the drama of the council-scene to exposition of doctrine surely distorts Milton's intent.

Satan's crew and the disobedience of man, uses past, present, and future tenses interchangeably, announces his intention of mercy to man, and ends as though the final word had been spoken. The Son, unbidden, answers; and what he answers, though put most respectfully, sounds remarkably unlike mere assent:

O Father, gracious was that word which clos'd  
 Thy sovran sentence, that Man should find grace. . . .  
 For should Man finally be lost, should Man  
 Thy creature late so lov'd, thy youngest Son  
 Fall circumvented thus by fraud, though join'd  
 With his own folly? . . .  
 Or shall the Adversary thus obtain  
 His end, and frustrate thine, shall he fulfil  
 His malice, and thy goodness bring to naught . . .  
 . . . or wilt thou thyself  
 Abolish thy Creation, and unmake,  
 For him, what for thy glory thou hast made?  
 So should thy goodness and thy greatness both  
 Be question'd and blasphem'd without defence.

Put any such figure as Satan feigned to rebel against in the place of the Godhead here, and what the Son says would surely win him the most crushing reply. Unlike the "yes man" Satan had made of Beelzebub by the time he dared to make his second speech in Hell, the Son *argues*: "That be from thee far, / That far be from thee, Father." In Milton's Heaven the independent being speaks his own mind, not what he thinks another would like to hear.<sup>8</sup>

And that independent voice turns out to be precisely what this other does like to hear. When the voice of the moral law resumes to congratulate its interlocutor, it briefly adopts a tone of praise:

O Son, in whom my Soul hath chief delight . . .  
 All hast thou spok'n as my thoughts are, all  
 As my Eternal purpose hath decreed:  
 Man shall not quite be lost. . . .

<sup>8</sup> Milton clearly knew the traditional treatment of the dispute in Heaven on this very theme of man's condemnation or salvation, so that he would feel no suggestion of impiety in attributing vigorous argument for opposing views to the participants in such a celestial *débat*. See Hope Travers, *The Four Daughters of God*, Bryn Mawr Coll. Monographs, No. 6 (Bryn Mawr, 1907), for the history of this popular mediaeval theme from the Hebrew *Midrash* to the Renaissance. Miss Travers observes that Milton "knew a number of the versions of the allegory" (p. 146) and that it "would have reached crowning expression in English drama" if he had carried out the plan of the Cambridge Manuscript (p. 143). I am indebted to Professor Merritt Y. Hughes for calling my attention to the relevance of Miss Travers' work to my thesis. Milton with his true epic touch reassigns the old arguments of mercy and justice, along with some decidedly new arguments, to the Son and God, transmutes the *débat* into a dialogue, uses what he had assimilated from Homeric scenes on high Olympus, and creates an episode central to *P. L.*

Now the eternal purpose, though the same as in the first speech, can reveal another aspect that the Son's answer has brought into prominence. The new statement of the moral law proceeds, again with the cold logic of "thus it is and thus must be," to redefine the future of man:

But yet all is not done . . .  
Die hee or Justice must; unless for him  
Some other able, and as willing, pay  
The rigid satisfaction, death for death.

Thus the question is raised,

Say, Heav'nly Powers, where shall we find such love,  
Which of ye shall be mortal to redeem  
Man's mortal crime, and just th' unjust to save,  
Dwells in all Heaven charity so dear?

These are the first words directly addressed to the angels, a synthesis that combines with the immutable moral law the Son's opposing love. But to the angelic ear it apparently sounds no less harsh than the original statement and no less final: "all the Heav'nly Quire stood mute." The question and the moment of silence inevitably remind us of the council in Hell when Beelzebub proposed the voyage to Earth and asked who dared go (II.402–426). But the resemblance underscores the difference.

In Hell the stage was in every way set. All the ceremonious preliminaries, the trumpet proclaiming a solemn council, the call summoning the worthiest of each band, the signal dividing nobility from commoners, all served to prepare those admitted to the inner chamber for the lofty tone in which Satan asked their advice. In marked contrast, the council in Heaven starts without fanfare, in every possible way in the open. It takes place outdoors and in the presence of "all the Sanctities of Heaven." Though no one's presence has been commanded, any one who wishes may hear. (Uriel, Gabriel, and Gabriel's troop are notably absent for reasons of dramatic necessity.) Without a word of preface, presumably on the spur of the occasion, God speaks, and as if with the utmost finality. He does not pretend to seek advice, but calls attention to Satan loose in the world, and announces what will follow.

In Hell, after Satan's explicit request, three of his followers offer two distinct plans. But just as the second is about to win unanimous approval (II.284–298), Beelzebub intervenes to propose as his own, and win acceptance for, what is in fact Satan's plan, stated piecemeal in Book I (II. 120–122, 162–165, 650–656). The proposal calls for the selection of a spy; and Beelzebub makes it, evidently as Satan planned, stressing the risk involved with the clear purpose of frightening off every one but Satan (II.378–385). When Satan then offers to go, he is the actor taking his cue in a scene he had written for himself. It is a magnificent moment

designed to show his magnificent courage. And if he almost spoils it for his deluded audience with his final words, “This enterprise / None shall partake with me,” he saves his pose by at once moving offstage.

What of the monarch Satan thought to emulate?<sup>9</sup> God makes no pretense of willingness to collect opinions on an open question. Yet he immediately sanctions and adopts the view presented by the Son, incorporating it into his new statement and modifying his first so that a task emerges. Without urgency or emphasis, he names the task. And it needs only to be named, for it involves not risk or danger but what to angelic ears must sound like annihilation. The grand opportunity—“Which of ye will be mortal to redeem / Man’s mortal crime?”—presumably means utter abolition of being. But this is a prospect that even in Hell only the brutal Moloch could regard with equanimity; this is the very penalty that the Son could not bear to think the Father intended for fallen man.

Little wonder that “none appeared / . . . that durst upon his own head draw / The deadly forfeiture.” Yet these are no cowardly puppets dependent on constant approval and reassurance from God. Every angel we later meet acts on his own responsibility without running to the God-head for advice: thus Uriel counsels what seems a young angel (III.681–735), then copes with what has proved an escaped devil (IV.124–130 and 555 ff.); the lesser Ithuriel and Zephor meet Satan’s taunts (IV.820–856); Gabriel confronts him (IV.877 ff.); Abdiel stands against him and all his forces (V.804 ff.); and the loyal angels wage their war against the rebels, all on their own momentum. That is indeed the most striking characteristic of Milton’s angels, the independence with which they demonstrate the lie of Satan’s talk about their harp-playing servility (IV.942–945; VI.166–170).

But what is now involved is presumably a certainty. The speaker is omniscient; none of his hearers is. Milton thought the point worth making at some length in his *Christian Doctrine*. “The good angels do not look into all the secret things of God,” he asserted (I, ix; Columbia ed., xv, 107) after arguing that “Even the Son . . . knows not all things absolutely” (I, v; XIV, 317), since “the attributes of divinity belong to the Father alone” (XIV, 227), and the first of the divine attributes listed is omniscience.<sup>10</sup> Here too omniscience is God’s alone. His hearers are

<sup>9</sup> Need we cite evidence of Satan’s attempts at “Godlike imitated state?” Perhaps the most interesting are the echoes in v.772, and throughout Bks. I and II of God’s words in v.600–601; the most obvious, the palace on the mount in v.756–766, and the throne in II.1–5, to be compared with God’s in III.58; the most significant the sudden self-revelation in x.444–450, with its almost ludicrous effort to duplicate the effect of God described in III.375–382.

<sup>10</sup> Note that when Michael is to give Adam knowledge of the future Milton makes clear twice over that Michael’s prophecy has to be allowed him by Omniscience: “reveal / To

confident of his goodness, but they cannot fully know what is in his mind. That is what gives the Son's offer its great dramatic value. The Son cannot know any more than others at the council that the task named does not mean annihilation. The moment of silence includes his silence to underscore the clear enormity of the solution. When after that moment's hesitation he offers to die for man, he does not know that the death he undertakes will not be final; he *trusts* that the omnipotence whose goodness he does know will not permit injustice.

Again he answers what he has heard: "Father, thy word is past, man shall find grace; / And shall not grace find means?" But his answer is far more than the offer of his life for man's. Again he responds to the unalterable law out of his own nature, now out of his boundless trust:

I shall not long  
Lie vanquish't; thou hast giv'n me to possess  
Life in myself for ever, by thee I live,  
Though now to Death I yield, and am his due  
All that of me can die, yet that debt paid,  
Thou wilt not leave me in the loathsome grave  
His prey . . .  
But I shall rise Victorious.

What the Son speaks is no assurance privately communicated nor any prescience bestowed uniquely on him. To read his speech so would destroy its meaning, the point of the scene in Heaven, and much of the system of values on which the whole poem rests. All that the Son says of his eventual triumph over death comes from nothing but a perfect confidence in the nature of the Godhead. He does not foreknow any part of his resurrection, the harrowing of Hell, or the reunion of Heaven and Earth at Doomsday. His lines can only mean that, knowing the omnipotence and perfect benevolence of the Father, he can not believe that his sacrifice of himself will have a different kind of issue. And in fact he does not name the details of his victory as God, again approving and adopting all that he has said, will presently name them.

For the moment his words hang unconfirmed as he "attends the will / Of his great Father." He has not pronounced that will. And the angels too attend, "what this might mean, and whither tend / Wond'ring." If they still wonder so should the reader; the outcome of the dialogue is as yet uncertain, the last word not yet spoken.

The final speech of God, reconciling the immutable moral law and the Son's trusting offer, the proposed vicarious atonement and the Son's hope of victory, does indeed transcend both. For one thing, we immedi-

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Adam what shall come in future days, / As I shall thee enlighten" (xi.113-115); and "So both ascend / In the visions of God," where "of God" must mean "provided by God" (xi.376-377).

ately note that the Father's voice, so cold and logically formal in stating fact and principle, can adopt a tone more warm and loving even than the Son's when a deed is to be praised, a reassurance given. The warmth in God's tone began, we noted, in the first five lines of his second speech where he applauded the Son's answer (ll. 168–172), but was at once lost in the severe abstractions that followed. Now in the third and last of God's speeches the warmth is unmistakably dominant, a warmth toward the Son that embraces the humanity he will share. For the Son there is rapturous delight and praise, and by no cosmic pathetic fallacy, but because Milton evidently thinks rapturous praise in the nature of the moral law when it sanctions what is praiseworthy. Even more important, each of the Son's hopeful phrases is caught up into a detailed affirmation: as he trusted it would be thus it shall be, and each time with something affirmed beyond what he had hoped.

He had said "Account me man" as the equivalent of "on me let thine anger fall." Now God promises that it shall be so—and more: "Their nature also to thy nature join / And be thyself man among men on earth, / . . . Be thou in Adam's room / The head of all mankind." He had said, "I for his sake will leave / Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee / Freely put off." Now God promises: "Nor shalt thou by descending to assume / Man's nature, lessen or degrade thine own. . . . / Thy humiliation shall exalt / With thee thy manhood also to this throne." He had said, "By thee raised I [shall] ruin all my foes . . . and return, / Father, to see thy face." Now God promises: "Here shalt thou sit incarnate, here shalt reign / Both God and Man . . . / Anointed universal king; all power / I give thee, reign for ever." He had hoped, "Wrath shall be no more / Thenceforth, but in thy presence joy entire." Now God assures him: "The world shall burn, and from her ashes spring / New Heaven and Earth, wherein the just shall dwell / And . . . / See golden days . . . / With Joy and Love triumphing and fair Truth."<sup>11</sup>

But the climactic element in God's final utterance is that it shifts the emphasis of the discussion from the subject initially proposed, the redemption of man, which now becomes secondary, to a new theme, the exaltation of the Son. That this is finally the major theme we know both from the expansion given it in God's final speech with its emphatic ending,

<sup>11</sup> The phrase "joy and love," emphatically repeated in the first reference to Eden (III.67–68), recurs here to make us doubly sure that the atonement will re-establish true Paradise; for the phrase is virtually the leitmotiv of Eden. See IV.519, VI.94, VIII.621; and cf. the anticipations in *Comus*, ll. 1010–11, and *Lycidas*, l. 177. The excellent collection of Milton's repeated phrases by Edward S. Le Comte, *Yet Once More* (New York, 1953), to my mind, offers no adequate explanation of Milton's intended repetitions.

But all ye Gods,  
Adore him, who to compass all this dies,  
Adore the Son, and *honour him as me*;

and from the hymn of praise with which the angels at once, rightly grasping all they have heard, meet the command.

The dialogue, for all its brevity, for all its use of the familiar and expected, has moved from its presumably fixed beginning to an unforeseen end. Where the corresponding scene in Hell made a stately progress to a foregone conclusion, proceeding with all possible solemnity from Satan's plan to Satan's plan, though it had to run a course more tortuous even than Belial's speech, the quick, terse, unplanned scene in Heaven arrives by tremendous leaps at a resolution unimaginable except to Omniscience at the outset. The "high decree unchangeable" has been radically altered, not of course in its unalterable essence, but in its application to man's destiny. The cold logic of the moral law has confirmed the Son's compassion, incorporated that compassion into the administration of the decree, and exalted it into the virtue most to be honored in the universe. What has made possible the changed application of the law has been raised by the law itself to an importance equal to its own. The role of the Son in the dialogue has elicited a resolution worlds removed from the initial prediction. And beyond working out a plan for man's redemption, the dialogue of the council in Heaven has shown in dramatic process the Son's growth to what the Father himself calls virtual equality.

And again we mark the contrasts of Hell. Before the council there Satan had been supreme, and through the council he affirmed his supremacy, establishing his power and prestige beyond the need of such arguments as he had opened the session with. Before the scene in Heaven the Son had already had a notable career: as first born and "only begotten"—the one creature produced directly by the creator; then as the instrument of the creation of the angels—the point Satan disputed with Abdiel (v.835–837 and 853–863); then as appointed head of all the angels, his second "begetting"<sup>12</sup>—the occasion of Satan's offended pride. Next he had the power of God transferred to him for the purpose of ending the war in Heaven (vi.710 ff.) and yet again for the creation of the new universe (vii.163–166 and 192–196). The first two of these steps are alluded to, the rest we hear of later in Raphael's account to Adam. The whole career is neatly summed up in the angels' song of praise (iii.372 ff.) with which the scene here ends.

<sup>12</sup> For the dual meaning of "beget" in the Son's career see *Christian Doctrine*, I, v (Columbia ed., xiv, 181–191), and the expositions of John S. Diekhoff and Maurice Kelley.

We witness directly only the final elevation of the Son, and for the meaning of *Paradise Lost* it is of moment that we should directly witness it, since it is the great contrast to the process by which Satan—and Eve and Adam after him—fell. In his opening pronouncement God had said:

Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.  
Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere  
Of true allegiance, constant Faith or Love,  
Where only what they needs must do, appear'd,  
Not what they would? what praise could they receive?  
What pleasure I from such obedience paid,  
When Will and Reason (Reason also is choice)  
Useless and vain, of freedom both despoil'd,  
Made passive both, had serv'd necessity,  
Not mee.

There the doctrine as major premise of a syllogism condemning the fallen sounded harsh. Here we see its obverse. Freely the Son makes his choice of word and deed; and if the choice has been foreknown, foreknowledge had no influence on his virtue. What praise is given to the right choice freely made, what pleasure taken in it by the moral law, we again see in Book VI in the reception of Abdiel. But we must know the happy meaning of the law of free will at the very time that we first hear it expounded in its unhappy significance for man.

Without the freedom which permits rebel angel and man to err the full wisdom and compassion of the Son would be impossible. This is not to argue for a “fortunate fall” any more than for explicit Arian doctrine as essential to the meaning of *Paradise Lost*. Doubtless Milton’s Arianism made it possible for him to handle the council in Heaven as a dramatic dialogue between distinct speakers more easily, with less conflict between what he saw as dramatically desirable and what he felt as doctrinally correct,<sup>13</sup> than a Trinitarian might. Doubtless too his conviction of man’s ultimate redemption permitted him to think that man’s *culpa* proves ultimately *felix* despite the cost of that dearly bought felicity. But the doctrinal heart of the scene is neither Arianism nor the *felix culpa*, but free will, central to Milton’s thought everywhere, not in *Areopagitica* alone, nor only where it makes for tragedy in *Paradise Lost*. Here in the first scene in Heaven the same principle makes for all that we consider desirable in a universe.

Moreover what happens in the dialogue in Book III is analogous to what might have happened in Book IX. If Eve had her moment when

<sup>13</sup> I am indebted for my phrasing here to Professor Hoxie N. Fairchild, whose critical comments on my argument have, I trust, helped me to avoid theological pitfalls.

she might, like Abdiel, have caught the liar in his lie, Adam had his when he might, like the Son, have risked himself to redeem Eve. He himself recounts to Raphael in Book VIII what independent assertion of his mind and will to his maker had won for him. What his making a like assertion in like confidence might have won for fallen Eve we cannot know since he does not make it. But it is worth observing that tragedies stem from alternatives ignored as well as choices made. A trust comparable to—on however lower a level than—the Son's and a self-abnegation willing to risk whatever was to be risked demanded only Adam's faith that the benevolence he had always known would remain benevolent, and the whole application of the moral law might have changed as the Son's choice changes it. What Adam, perfect and therefore "able," could have done for Eve remains unfortunately outside the action. But Eve was not irredeemably lost, as Adam at once concluded in his immediate assumption of a hostile universe. So much is clear from what follows for fallen Eve and Adam both. It is specifically clarified in advance by the dialogue of the Son with the Father. The trust that confronts and by confronting changes "Die hee or justice must" into "Thy humiliation shall exalt / With thee thy manhood also to this throne" is a possibility at some level for every being in the universe Milton established in *Paradise Lost*. His success in establishing it is no less remarkable in the swift dialogue in Heaven than in the poem that hinges on that brief scene.

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