

A PARADISE WITHIN:  
THE FORTUNATE FALL IN *PARADISE LOST*

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Just before Adam and Eve are expelled from Eden, Michael tells Adam that they will “not be loth/To leave this Paradise, but shall possess/A paradise within . . . happier far” (XII. 585–87).<sup>\*</sup> His words are, in essentials, a restatement of his earlier promise: “then the earth/Shall all be Paradise, far happier place/Than this of Eden, and far happier days” (463–65). But Michael’s promise seems to be in flat contradiction with the basic assumption of the poem, that the “loss of Eden” is the source of “all our woe.” As if to make the paradox quite explicit, God had said that man would have been

Happier, had it sufficed him to have known  
Good by itself, and evil not at all. (XI. 88–89)

Michael’s comparison, happier *than*, can refer only to “this Paradise” (XII. 586), which, in turn, must be taken to mean man’s unfallen bliss. (To say that the Paradise within will be happier merely than man’s fallen condition in the Garden would hardly be a revelation.) But surely God also refers to man’s unfallen state.

I. There have generally been two approaches to this problem. Both, it seems to me, finally amount to the same thing, but their initial assumptions are quite different. The first position is theological, the second humanistic; the one proposes to deny man’s freedom, the other God’s providence. But so essential is human freedom to Milton’s conception of providence that the first argument collapses into the second. And conversely, to deny God’s providence destroys the basis of man’s freedom. There is little to choose between these arguments.

The more orthodox of the two approaches proposes to account for the paradox by attributing the Fall to Providence. Arthur Lovejoy has carefully delineated the historical attitudes which are usually classed under the rubric *felix culpa*. Learning of that “Goodness immense” which “all this good of evil shall produce,/And evil turn to good” (X I I. 469, 470–71), Adam doubts

Whether I should repent me now of sin  
By me done and occasioned, or rejoice

<sup>\*</sup>Quotations of Milton’s poetry are from *The Complete Poetical Works of John Milton*, ed. Douglas Bush (Boston, 1965). References to Milton’s prose (by volume and page number) are from the Columbia edition of *The Works of John Milton*, ed. Frank A. Patterson et al. (New York, 1935).

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. (474-78)

As Professor Lovejoy explains,

From the doctrinal premises accepted by Milton and implicit in the poem, the two conclusions between which Adam is represented as hesitating were equally inevitable; yet they were mutually repugnant. The Fall could never be sufficiently condemned and lamented; and likewise, when all its consequences were considered, it could never be sufficiently rejoiced over. . . . If it had never occurred the Incarnation and Redemption could never have occurred. . . . Thus Adam's sin . . . [was] the *conditio sine qua non* . . . of immeasurably greater benefits for man than could conceivably have been otherwise obtained.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever its attractions for the religious, this view presents serious difficulties if it is offered as an explanation of Milton's poem. Milton is not concerned merely with making us *feel* that the Fall, in its consequences, is ultimately acceptable; he is not much given to that sort of "mystical sublimity"<sup>2</sup> which delights in logical contradiction. He has undertaken to **demonstrate** God's justice. Any suggestion that God caused the Fall will destroy his argument, just as the suggestion that the Fall was **necessary** for man's ultimate glory will reflect against the integrity as well as the wisdom of Deity.

In the first place, the orthodox arguments impeach man's free will. For Milton, the only thing that could possibly make the **culpa felix** is for it to be *our* guilt, the result of our own free choice. If God contrived the Fall, the idea of human responsibility is an unpleasant hoax. No man could possibly justify God's ways, for man would be incapable of any moral judgment whatever: "reason is but choosing,"<sup>3</sup> but man would have no choice.

Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere  
 Of true allegiance, constant faith or love,  
 Where only what they needs must do, appeared,  
 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 despoiled,  
 Made passive both, had served necessity,  
 Not me? (III. 103-1 1)

To be of value, to God or himself, man's love must be voluntary.

<sup>1</sup>"Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall," Essays in **the History of Ideas** (Baltimore, 1948), 277-79.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>3</sup>*Areopagitica* (IV, 3 19).

The argument from divine paternalism has the further embarrassing consequence of casting the gravest doubt on the quality of God's merciful intention. If man is not really responsible, how can he be punished?

There can be no doubt that for the purpose of vindicating the justice of God . . . it is much better to allow to man . . . some portion of free will in respect of good works. . . . For if God . . . inclines the will of man to moral good or evil, according to his own pleasures, and then rewards the good, and punishes the wicked, the course of equity seems to be disturbed; and it is entirely on this supposition that the outcry against divine justice is founded.<sup>4</sup>

If we argue, not merely that "the final state of the redeemed . . . would far surpass in felicity and in moral excellence the pristine happiness and innocence of the first pair in Eden," but that, were it not for the Fall, "man would presumably have remained" as he was, that the Fall was the "*conditio sine qua non* . . . of immeasurably greater benefits for man *than could conceivably have been otherwise obtained*,"<sup>5</sup> we disintegrate God's justice. Why did He bother to create us innocent in the first place and then punish us for carrying out His scheme, unless part of His scheme was to punish us-for something He caused us to do?

We must distinguish carefully. It is quite reasonable to say that the good resulting from the Fall far outweighs "all our woe," that the Incarnation completely overbalances the consequences of original sin. That is the way God works:

Who seeks  
To lessen thee, against his purpose serves  
To manifest the more thy might: his evil  
Thou usest, and from thence creat'st more good.

(VIII. 613-16)

But it is not reasonable to suppose that the benefit will be greater than it could otherwise have been. We need not deny that "much more good thereof shall spring" (XII. 476); God uses the evil generated by the free will of His creatures to accomplish greater good. The crucial question, however, is: 'Greater than what? Lines 585-87 of Book XII do not say "happier than you are now miserable" (which would be a rather odd way to look at the problem); rather they seem to insist that man's good is to be greater than formerly it had been. And therein lies the difficulty. To make man's future divinity originally contingent upon the commission of mortal sin seems grotesque beyond the limits

<sup>4</sup>*Christian Doctrine*, l.xii (XV, 213-15).

<sup>5</sup>Lovejoy, *loc. cit.*, 278-79 (my emphasis in second italicized phrase).

of irony. Out of such moral chaos no justification could possibly be wrought.

If we interpret Michael's words to mean that the evil of the Fall was necessary to produce the good which resulted from it, we are upon familiar and treacherous ground-right next to Satan. St. Ambrose's assertion that Adam fell "*in order that* he might be redeemed"<sup>6</sup> has all the appearance of a hideous practical joke. If all could originally have remained saved, why damn them in order to save only a few?-because "sin is more fruitful than innocence"<sup>7</sup> Even the supposititious greater happiness of those few fit survivors could never be held to justify such waste. And even the possibility that all might be saved would merely blunt the edge of the joke. To reduce the argument to further absurdity: If Satan's fall was necessary to man's salvation, then God damned him to that end, eternally. We should be compelled to agree with Shelley that

Milton's devil as a moral being is as much superior to his God as one who perseveres in some purpose, which he has conceived to be excellent, in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments?

If we consider the excellence of Satan's purpose, we may find a slight incongruity in Shelley's argument, but his point is nonetheless well taken.

Thus do we find ourselves at the position occupied by secular humanists. Convinced that God is a thoroughly bad actor, they concentrate upon the problem of human freedom and responsibility, for which, they argue, evil is necessary. They deny God's assertion that man would have been happier had he remained innocent. Mark Van Doren, for example, believes that Milton

had to justify God's punishing us for becoming what at our best we are. . . . To do this . . . he made every effort to remember, believe, and prove that our original state of obedience and ignorance was better than the virtues we achieved through losing grace. . . . As a humanist he loved knowledge, but he put forth all his powers to recommend that early state of whiteness and innocence. . . . [But] his powers were not equal to the task. . . . [Satan] out-argues God. . . . Nor can Milton escape the conclusion that in the long run our experience of the Fall has built within us, if we are virtuous, another Paradise, and "happier far."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup>*In Psalmum, XXXIX, 20 (Patrologia Latina, 14, 1065); cited by Lovejoy, 288.*

<sup>7</sup>*De Jacob, 6.2 1; ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>*A Defense of Poetry, in The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley, ed. Carlos Baker (New York, 195 1), 5 12.*

<sup>9</sup>*Great Poems of Western Literature (New York, 1962), 108.*

In other words, virtuous men (who are so because of the Fall) are happier with moral struggle than with innocence. And this is also Basil Willey's view of the matter. To God's assertion that man would have been happier without knowledge of evil he replies: "we do not believe it; and it is hard to conceive that Milton did." In fact, "the Fall was logically a necessary stage in the evolution of man."<sup>10</sup>

This kind of logic, of course, confounds Milton's stated purpose of justifying God. God turns out, in fact, much worse than a mere "dull dictator";<sup>11</sup> He is a duplicitous tyrant-as William Empson tries to demonstrate: Milton insists "with harsh and startling logic, that God was working for the Fall all along."<sup>12</sup>

In support of their arguments humanists frequently cite Milton against himself:

Good and evil we know in the field of this World grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is . . . involv'd and interwoven with the knowledge of evil. . . . And perhaps this is that doom which **Adam** fell into of knowing good and evil, that is to say of knowing good by evil. As therefore the state of man now is; what wisdom can there be to choose, what continence to forbear, without the knowledge of evil? . . . Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary. . . . The knowledge and survey of vice is in this world . . . necessary to the constituting of human virtue, and the scanning of error to the confirmation of truth.<sup>13</sup>

A world without evil, humanists argue, is amoral. Of itself the word *good* is meaningless, for good can exist only in connection with evil and can be known only by contrast with evil.

But Milton does not say so, and none of his assumptions about knowledge, morality, or human progress requires him to say so. His argument about good and evil applies to *this* world, not to Eden. We bring not innocence into the world, but Adam and Eve did. They are mistaken who suppose that man was amoral before he fell, that our virtues are the *result* of our original sin. Milton never argues that "innocence would have been better than morality," as Basil Willey does,<sup>14</sup> for he never supposes that the two are inconsistent. Morality depends, not on the experience of evil, but on the conscious avoidance of it. As Irene Samuel rightly observes, "we have no advantage in the necessity imposed upon us of learning good through evil, and Milton does not call it an advantage, but simply a *necessity*."<sup>15</sup> The knowledge of good and evil is the "*doom* which Adam fell into . . . of know-

<sup>10</sup>*The Seventeenth Century Background* (New York, 1934), 25 I, 250.

"*Great Poems of Western Literature*, 108.

<sup>12</sup>*Milton's God* (rev. ed.; London, 1965), 190.

<sup>13</sup>*Areopagitica* (IV, 310-11).

<sup>14</sup>*Seventeenth Century Background*, 244.

<sup>15</sup>*Plato and Milton* (Ithaca, 1947), 119.

ing good by evil." What we have "gained" is a "Knowledge of good bought dear by knowing ill" (IV. 222).

Applied to *Paradise Lost*, the humanistic argument involves two fundamental confusions, one ontological, the other epistemological. In the first place, good and evil are not two states of being. Evil has no independent existence; rather, it is a negation of good, a privation. It is true, in Milton's ontology, that things exist by virtue of their opposition: matter and form, soul and body, man and woman are necessarily interdependent. But the opposition between good and evil is of a different kind. Matter is not evil; it is the potentiality of form. But good is not the realization of evil, for evil is impossible, a contradiction of good and of itself. Good in no way depends on evil, for evil is merely a perversion. It is literally unreal. "Evil be thou my good" (IV. 110), as C. S. Lewis remarks, implies "nonsense be thou my sense."<sup>16</sup> Satan is a self-contradiction; he desires to embrace evil but must envision it as a good.

The second argument is slightly more complicated. It is true that one cannot know what *good* means without knowing its opposite; to define a word is to limit it by what it is not. But Adam and Eve do *know* evil in this sense, for they have the example of Satan's pride and his expulsion from heaven. Their innocence resides, not in their ignorance, but in the purity of their will. All that is necessary for moral choice they have already: a knowledge of good and evil and the possibility of doing evil. What they lack is the experience of evil within themselves. Milton goes to considerable lengths (in Eve's dream especially) to demonstrate that "the virtue of Adam and Eve before the fall" was *not*, as Marjorie Nicolson supposes, "fugitive and cloistered."<sup>17</sup> Temptation was built into the system. In that sense evil is necessary to virtue, but only in that sense, as a possibility-or rather, the loss of possibility. What Adam and Eve gain from their fall is not the moral knowledge of good, which had been theirs all along, but the doom of knowing good only by separating it from the evil in themselves. The experience of evil, far from being liberating or enlightening, is a grievous limitation, a corruption of the will and a "loss . . . of that right reason which enabled man to discern the chief good, and in which consisted as it were the life of the understanding."<sup>18</sup> Humanistic critics fail to understand what Milton means by innocence and hence misconstrue the real consequences of its loss.

And, inadvertently, their elimination of Providence has certain unforeseen consequences for human freedom. According to Milton,

<sup>16</sup> *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (London, 1942), 99.

<sup>17</sup> *John Milton: A Reader's Guide to His Poetry* (New York, 1963), 320.

<sup>18</sup> "Christian Doctrine, I. xii (XV, 207).

freedom is the ability to choose **reasonably**. And the premise of man's rationality is God's truth. To say that man can know one must presuppose that something is knowable. And the knowable, for Milton, is God and the universe He has made. Without God's Providence the universe becomes completely arbitrary; if there is no order, there can be no truth, no rationality, and hence no freedom. Once again the paradox confronts us.

Milton's justification of God depends absolutely upon two interdependent assumptions: (1) man fell of his own free will, which (2) had been given him that he might choose. If **Paradise Lost** is to make sense, morally as well as theologically, all that the argument *de felicitate culpae* can be allowed to prove is that we may still gain infinitely more than we lost, that we may be again happier than we had been in Paradise. If we make the Fall a **necessary cause** either of man's morality or of his ultimate bliss, we not only deny man's essential freedom to have remained innocent, we impugn God's justice. If the Satanists deny God's justice in order to assert man's freedom, the orthodox, by denying human responsibility, also destroy justice, and all of the arguments offered against the humanists apply with equal force. Some other way must be found to interpret the crucial lines in **Paradise Lost**.

II. Let us return, after long choosing and beginning late, to the original statement of the problem: How are we to understand lines 585-87 of Book XII?

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

We must not overlook the meaning most obvious in the dramatic context: that Michael is simply contrasting Paradise as it now is, corrupted, with a paradise to be gained through internal regeneration. He is responding (albeit rather belatedly) to Eve's anguished outcry:

O unexpected stroke, worse than of Death!  
Must I thus leave thee, Paradise? (XI. 268-69)

This reading is, of course, unsatisfactory; it makes the promise far too unemphatic to bear the weight that its position requires. But this interpretation does suggest an analogous reading with much greater emphasis. Irene Samuel suggests that

Michael compares not the paradise within, which Adam has already lost, with that which he may yet find, but the external Eden with the inner; for the final consequence of the fall is this disjoining of inner and outer state.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup>*Plato and Milton*, 12 1.

This argument makes excellent sense. It meets all of the objections raised against the previous arguments and is quite consistent with Milton's beliefs about the supreme importance of the inner life. There is one serious objection to this analysis, however; it does not account for lines 463-65, which seem to admit of no distinction between inner and outer paradise:

then the earth  
Shall all be Paradise, far happier place  
Than this of Eden, and far happier days.

To be fully satisfactory, our explanation must take account of both the earthly paradise, arising out of its ashes like the Phoenix, and the paradise within. Furthermore, we must not fail to account for the contradiction of XI. 87-89:

knowledge of good lost, and evil got,  
Happier, had it sufficed him to have known  
Good by itself, and evil not at all.

What is needed, I think, is a further distinction, suggested by the objections raised against previous arguments. We must avoid any suggestion either (1) that good is *dependent* on evil or (2) that the Fall was the *necessary* cause of man's greater happiness in the future. (In other words, we must avoid concluding that man, *because* of his original sin, is going to be happier than he *could* otherwise have been.) What we are entitled to say-and I think we are now forced to this conclusion-is that, *in spite* of the Fall, man has it in his power to become happier than he *had been* in Paradise.

The restoration of Man is the act whereby man, being delivered 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 had fallen*.<sup>20</sup>

From this point of view, what is the most probable interpretation of God's statement in Book XI (11. 87-89)? We may interpret: "Man *would have been* happier *had* it sufficed him to know good only"; that is, he would have continued in his state of innocence, untroubled by the misery and suffering which he has brought upon himself. He was, and *was to have been*, happier than he *now is*. But we do not need to conclude that man *was*, and *was to have been*, happier than he *might have become* or than he *may yet become*. Lines 585-87 of Book XII prevent us from drawing any such conclusion. Michael's statement is conditional: "If you add deeds, faith, virtue, and charity, *then you will have* a paradise within, far happier than the paradise which you *had*." We need not suppose that man will be happier than he would

<sup>20</sup>*Christian Doctrine*, I. xiv (XV, 251); my italics.

have been had he not fallen, only happier than he was before he fell. On this interpretation, Michael's promise is consistent with God's observation: (1) You would have been happier than you now are, had you not fallen, but (2) you may yet become even happier than you were.

Man's internal paradise, we conclude, will make him happier than he was in Eden, in some way and for some reason (or reasons) yet to be determined, which must be at least implicit in the argument of the poem. But how is man's original perfection to be improved? In Eden there was perfect harmony between Adam and Eve, between the physical and spiritual, the passionate and reasonable parts of their nature. The Fall resulted in the "loss, or at least the obscuration to a great extent, of that right reason which enabled man to discern the chief good."<sup>21</sup>

Reason in man obscured, or not obeyed,  
Immediately inordinate desires  
And upstart passions catch the government  
From reason, and to servitude reduce  
Man till then free. (XI. 86-90)

The harmony between man's internal (reasonable) and external (passionate) nature is broken. His sin, corrupting him first within, ends in the corruption of his physical nature and finally of all nature: "Earth felt the wound" (IX. 782). The second creation will, of course, restore the lost harmony, but if man originally enjoyed a dual harmony of inner and outer paradise, why is a paradise purely internal said to be happier? If Eden is bliss, how can man be happier without it, even granting that the primary source of his happiness is always within himself? To have less, one would say, is not to be happier. Useful as Miss Samuel's distinction between external and internal paradise may be, her interpretation leaves us with a number of obstinate difficulties.

William Madsen has a very useful suggestion to offer in this connection.<sup>22</sup> He directs our attention to lines 281-317 of Book III, in which God tells Christ:

Thou therefore, whom thou only canst redeem,  
Their nature also to thy nature join;  
And be thy self man among men on earth,  
Made flesh, when time shall be, of virgin seed,  
By wondrous birth; be thou in Adam's room  
The head of all mankind, though Adam's son.  
As in him perish all men, so in thee  
As from a second root shall be restored  
As many as are restored; without thee none. (28149)

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, Lxii (XV, 207).

<sup>22</sup>"The Fortunate Fall in *Paradise Lost*," *MLN*, LXXIV:2(1959), 103-05.

[Men shall] live in thee transplanted, and from thee  
 Receive new life. So man, as is most just,  
 Shall satisfy for man, be judged and die,  
 And dying rise, and rising with him raise  
 His brethren, ransomed with his own dear life. (293-97)

[And] thy humiliation shall exalt  
 With thee thy manhood also to this throne;  
 Here shalt thou sit incarnate, here shalt reign  
 Both God and man, Son both of God and man,  
 Anointed universal King.. (303-17)

Because of the Fall, Madsen argues, the Son will be incarnate; man will thus be given the hope of union with God, a higher possibility than the association of angels which was the best that Adam could hope for in Eden.

Unfortunately, Madsen's interpretation is open to the same objections as other orthodox arguments. He argues that the Fall is a *necessary* cause of the Incarnation, which makes possible a higher condition than humanity *could otherwise* have obtained. He unquestionably offers a valuable perspective. Christ's Incarnation and the possibility which this gives to man of participation in divinity, the power to become both God and man (III. 316), clearly indicates the way in which man will become happier than he had been. What one objects to in Madsen's argument is the suggestion that the Fall made this possible, that otherwise man would have remained as he was. If the Fall extended the limitations of human nature and, ironically, enabled man to become like a god, then Milton's attempt to justify God becomes meaningless. There is simply no accounting for all our suffering.

We need to examine more closely, not only the possibilities opened to man after his Fall, but the limitations of his original innocence and the possibilities open to him before he fell. The problem that most of us have, I think, in imagining a state of perfect innocence, is not that we feel innocence to be somehow undesirable or that we prefer guilt. What disturbs us in the usual accounts of the Golden Age is that life under such conditions is static, essentially purposeless, and without possibility of improvement. One observes in most humanistic criticism of the poem, in Hanford's or Tillyard's as in Van Doren's, Willey's, and Empson's, a strong feeling that Eden is limited, that there is no room to choose.

But that is not Milton's idea of innocence. Anthropology and psychology have taught us to understand the primitive mind as pre-logical and mythic, but Adam and Eve are not primitive in that sense. Nor are they childlike; they are quite rational and, to a large extent, self-conscious. Even Adam's *naïvete* is intellectual. As I have tried to

show, Milton insists that Adam and Eve are purposeful, moral beings, fully capable of free choice. Equally before as after the Fall, men are

authors to themselves in all,  
Both what they judge and what they choose; for so  
I formed them free, and free they must remain,  
Till they enthrall themselves. (III. 122-25)

They are "self-knowing" (VII. 5 10), fully conscious of themselves and of the possibilities open to them.

What is more important still, Milton insists that Adam and Eve are capable of growth. It is this possibility that gives meaning to choice. In his discussion of orthodox interpretations of the Fall, Professor Lovejoy notes an alternative to the usual view: "that the primeval state was not that in which man was intended to remain, but merely a phase of immaturity to be **transcended**."<sup>23</sup> Evolution, in other words, did not begin with the Fall; its course was interrupted, though not permanently. And this view, which Lovejoy does not explore, seems to be precisely the one held by Milton. An essential characteristic of Western Man is his grand aspiration, his desire for a perfection beyond anything he can conceive, a perfection not so much infinite as constantly striving for infinity. And this desire, properly qualified, Milton considers legitimate. Though perfect man, Adam has it within his power to achieve perfection in a higher degree, to extend his limitations, to become, indeed, a god.

Some critics find Milton's idea of human perfectibility hard to understand. J. B. Broadbent, for example, cannot accept the idea that there is a higher love possible to man than perfect human love; for him, Milton "spoils the love of Adam and Eve, and flees the very limitations of physical existence which make the act of love **important**."<sup>24</sup> But Broadbent ignores Milton's most fundamental assumptions about the nature of human love: that it is valuable, not because it is limited, but because it is the means to transcend limitation, that it is an expression of divine love and a means by which man may himself ascend to that love, even greater than that which he now enjoys. Human perfection is really two-fold: as he is a natural creature, the end of creation, man is perfect in himself (in God), but he desires also a supernatural perfection, the desire for which is as infinite as its object<sup>25</sup> Nor does this further perfection deny man's human nature; rather, it subsumes human nature and fulfills it. Man's supernatural perfection is the realization of his humanity.

<sup>23</sup>"The Fortunate Fall," 278, n. 2.

<sup>24</sup>*Some Graver Subject: An Essay on Paradise Lost* (New York, 1960), 216.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, I.

In a rather odd way, William Empson's commentary on the Fall is very shrewd: Adam and Eve are punished for doing what they ought, for trying to become as gods. But Empson fails to make a necessary distinction and so blinds himself to the justice of their punishment. Their disobedience consists, not in their aspiration, but in the way they try to fulfill themselves, by denying God: rather than know God in themselves, they make a false god outside themselves. Instead of realizing God in themselves and fulfilling themselves in Him, they empty themselves. If he understands himself **aright**, however, and so understands God, man does have the power, indeed the obligation, to become a greater man. His most immediate and pressing concern has always been to serve God:

to obey. . .  
 And love with fear the only God, to walk  
 As in his presence, ever to observe  
 His providence, and on him sole depend. (XII. 561-64)

Obedience enables man to imitate God, not only to be like Him but to become *more* like Him.

Raphael's great speech on the **organics** of Creation is absolutely crucial to our understanding of the Fortunate Fall. His words are from first to last an expression of human potential. Man is destined to return to his divine origins:

Time may come when men  
 With angels may participate, and find  
 No inconvenient diet, nor too light fare;  
 And from these corporal nutriments perhaps  
 Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit,  
 Improved by tract of time, and winged ascend  
 Ethereal. (V. 493-99)

Madsen argues that Raphael's argument is merely "the highest reach of the pagan intellect" and that man's resurrection in Christ will raise him to "a higher condition than the hypothetical one envisaged by Raphael."<sup>26</sup> But Madsen's distinction is rather difficult to support. Apart from the theological objections already raised, his designation of Raphael's vision as "hypothetical" contradicts what God himself has said: men shall dwell in earth,

till by degrees of merit raised  
 They open to themselves at length the way  
 Up hither, under long obedience tried,  
 And earth be changed to heav'n, and heav'n to earth,  
 One kingdom, joy and union without end. (VII. 156-61)

<sup>26</sup>*From Shadowy Types to Truth: Studies in Milton's Symbolism* (New Haven, 1968), 87, 120.

Surely this promise is not different from Michael's: "then the earth/ Shall all be Paradise" (XII. 463-64). Man has always had divinity within him, breeding wings.

III. The distinction we are trying to make between Paradise lost and regained has surely to be found in the word *within*. We are not meant simply to contrast the paradise to come with that which has been lost, but to identify it with that which man had originally been destined to attain. And the process by which paradise is to be internalized is clearly suggested by Raphael. All things as they return to their source, become

more refined, more spiritous, and pure,  
As nearer to him placed or nearer tending,

Till body up to spirit work, in bounds  
Proportioned to each kind. So from the root  
Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves  
More airy, last the bright consummate flow'r  
Spirits odorous breathes: flow'rs and their fruit,  
Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublimed,  
To vital spirits aspire, to animal,  
To intellectual; give both life and sense. (V. 75-85)

Of all creation man is "the master work, the end/Of all yet done" (VII. 505-06). All things achieve their perfection in man; "creatures animate with gradual life/ Of growth, sense, reason," are "all summed up in man" (IX. 112-13), in the body of "one greater Man" (I. 4), from within Creation.

Milton's primary metaphors for this process are digestion and consequent growth. Man is to realize a paradise in himself by subsuming the world without. The primary metaphor, organic growth, is identical with that in the passage cited by Madsen:

As from a second root shall be restored  
As many as are restored

And live in thee transplanted, and from thee  
Receive new life

God-like *fruition*. (III. 288-89, 293-94, 307)

Metaphors of organic growth, of fructification and transformation, permeate the language of *Paradise Lost*. It is to emphasize and clarify this process that Raphael dilates on the digestion of angels:

food alike those pure  
Intelligential substances require  
As doth your rational; and both contain

Within them every lower faculty  
 Of sense, whereby they hear, see, smell, touch, taste,  
 Tasting concoct, digest, assimilate,  
 And corporeal to incorporeal turn. (V. 407-13)

Man is to transubstantiate matter (438). Organic growth is Milton's primary metaphor (if metaphor be the proper term) for the way man is to rise out of darkness to light, for the way creation is to be consummated in man, digested, assimilated, and transformed into his substance.

Milton does not, of course, conceive of this process literally; the assimilation is not physical. Digestion is a metaphor for the way man, by knowing himself, and all of Creation within himself, comes to realize divinity within him. And when it is of the self, and of God in the self, "knowledge is as food" (VII. 126) because it nourishes man, enables him to sustain life and to grow. The appetite for knowledge must be temperate, "In measure what the mind may well contain" (128) because excessive knowledge is indigestible; it swells as pride, puffs up, rather than fulfills. Therefore Raphael warns Adam to enjoy his *fill*, "what happiness this happy state/Can comprehend, incapable of more" (V. 503-05). He cautions Adam against directing his desire for knowledge outward rather than in upon his own nature. Similarly, the thought, "be lowly wise:/Think only what concerns thee and thy being" (VIII. 173-74), is not an injunction against aspiration but a warning not to "Solicit . . . thoughts with matters hid" (VIII. 167).

This is precisely the same advice which Michael gives fallen man, after telling him of the unimaginable happiness which may be his. After he has received the moral and spiritual knowledge of human history necessary for his salvation, Adam says:

Greatly instructed I shall hence depart,  
 Greatly in peace of thought, and have my fill  
 Of knowledge, what this vessel can contain;  
 Beyond which was my folly to aspire. (XII. 557-60)

Michael replies:

This having learnt, thou hast attained the sum  
 Of wisdom; hope no higher, though all the stars  
 Thou knew'st by name, and all the ethereal powers,  
 All secrets of the deep, all Nature's works,  
 Or works of God in heav'n, air, earth, or sea,  
 And all the riches of this world enjoy'dst,  
 And all the rule, one empire. (XII. 575-81)

It is a poignant message for Milton's age, and for ours. The poet cautions us against knowledge misdirected outward rather than in-

ward to the truth which makes men free. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"<sup>27</sup> And "though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge . . . and have not charity, I am nothing."<sup>28</sup> To knowledge and virtue we must "add love,/By name to come called charity, the soul/Of all the rest" (XII. 583-85). Man shall enjoy one kingdom with God, an eternal paradise of joy and love, but only within himself.

Out of this self-knowledge grows the fullness of our response to Adam's joyous celebration of the second creation:

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 me done and occasioned, or rejoice  
Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring.

(XII. 469-76)

Adam's apparent confusion is like ours, but our immediate response should not limit our understanding of the poem. It is appropriate for us both to rejoice and mourn, for that is to be human. But greater goodness comes about not because of but in spite of our transgression.

This interpretation of the Fall, I think, resolves the paradox without dissolving it altogether, for it remains tragically paradoxical that Adam's suffering should be the means to his knowledge of such infinite goodness. And in this way the distinction between the earthly, phoenix paradise and the paradise within is explained. The two are identified as possibilities; the difference is in the degree of realization. Ultimately there will be no inside and outside; the greater harmony to come, when the new heaven and the new earth arise from the purgatorial flames, will be all within. All that is now external to us, all that is beyond our immediate control, will be brought within us, within the full measure of our perfect freedom in Christ. Paradise will be within us, potentially, until in the fullness of time,

We all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. . . . For we are members one of another . . . of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. . . . This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.<sup>29</sup>

Adam had originally one Scripture, the "unwritten law" of nature

<sup>27</sup>Matthew 16:26.

<sup>28</sup>I Corinthians 13:2.

<sup>29</sup>Ephesians 4: 13,25; 5:30,32.

implanted in him; fallen man has two: "Under the gospel we possess, as it were, a two-fold Scripture; one external, which is the written word, and the other internal, which is the Holy Spirit, written in the hearts of believers."<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, however, the two will be reunited. Man's regeneration begins naturally from the outside, but is consummated within, supernaturally.

The mode by which man is renewed, is either natural or supernatural. By the natural mode, I mean that which influences the natural affections *alone*.<sup>31</sup>

The intent of supernatural renovation is not only to restore man more completely than before to the use of his natural faculties as regards his power to form right judgment, and to exercise free will; but to create afresh . . . the inward man, and infuse from above new and supernatural faculties into the minds of the renovated. This is called regeneration, and the regenerate are said to be planted in Christ.

Regeneration is that change operated by the Word and the Spirit, whereby the old man being destroyed, the inward man is regenerated by God after his own image, in all the faculties of his mind, insomuch that he becomes as it were a new creature, and the whole man is sanctified both in body and soul, for the service of God, and the performance of good works.<sup>32</sup>

In the glory of his resurrection, transplanted in the body of Christ, man shall be both God and man, and God shall be "all in all" (III. 341), He in us and we in Him.

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<sup>30</sup>*Christian Doctrine*, lxxvi,xxx (XVI, 101, 273).

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, I, xvii (XV, 345). Arthur Sewell, *A Study in Milton's Christian Doctrine* (London, 1939), 19, observes that, for the words *naturalis* and *supernaturalis*, Milton had originally written *externa* and *interna*.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, I, xviii (XV, 367).