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FREEDOM TO OBEY:
a glimpse into Milton's theological influences in *Paradise Lost*

PORTO ALEGRE
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a glimpse into Milton's theological influences in *Paradise Lost***

Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso, apresentado ao Departamento de Línguas Modernas da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul como requisito parcial e obrigatório para a obtenção do título de licenciado em Letras.

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PORTO ALEGRE

2015/1

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ABSTRACT

This monograph aims at analyzing the matters of evil, free will and predestination in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, under the light of Theology, more specifically Augustine's understanding of the matters, as well as the Reformers Luther's and Calvin's. The leading question throughout the study is to what extent Milton was tied to the theological streams of his time or else, developed a theology of his own. The political context is taken into account, given the impact it had on Milton's life and work, especially during the English Civil War and the following few years.

Key words: Milton, theology, revolution, freedom, free will, predestination, fall.

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1. INTRODUCTION

To *justify the ways of God to men...* That was the main reason John Milton presented when he composed the first lines of *Paradise Lost*. That was for sure an audacious task, and he performed it in a remarkable way, placing his name once and for all among the highest names in English literature.

John Milton was born on December 9th 1608, in London. He was a student at St. Paul's School and Christ's College in Cambridge, from where he graduated in 1632. Two of his most famous poems are from that period, *L'allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. Not too long after that, he wrote *Comus* (a masque first performed in 1634) in which he already brought the elements of what later permeated *Paradise Lost*: the conflict between good and evil and the freedom granted to anyone to choose between one or the other.

He wrote several poems in Latin, Italian and English whilst still at College, and though he was preparing to become a clergyman, his heart led him to interrupt his religious studies in order to apply himself towards a career as a poet. That did not stop him from being concerned about theological issues. In fact, he was a defendant of the Puritans' religious beliefs and political causes in times of revolution. Despite his literary ambitions being already great at the time, when the English Civil War broke, he once again changed the direction of his efforts by becoming a pamphleteer, as he could not stand being silent when Puritans were fighting for liberty. He embraced the political cause for nineteen years (1641-1660) during which his poetic dreams and aspirations were let aside.

Milton supported the execution of King Charles I, defended the right to divorce and wrote against censorship. He worked for Oliver Cromwell's government as the Secretary for Foreign Languages, which means that he was responsible for any translation of official documents, since the universal language of the time was still Latin. Later on, once the attempts of establishing a Republic in England were finally overcome and monarchy was restored, he was first arrested and then exiled in his own country, retiring to Chalfont St. Giles where he was virtually forgotten by his fellow citizens until he died in 1674.

In his solitude, Milton produced the blank verses of the twelve books of *Paradise Lost*. By this time he was already completely blind, a problem that had been gradually developing since he was on political duty. His inner eyes, however, served him well in a wondrous universe

of images that he would paint with words. He would construct his amazing work verse by verse especially during his rest, and then dictate its lines to secretaries, probably his own daughters, who wrote down the whole piece, which was first edited in 1667.

Milton lived in a time when the effects of the Protestant Reformation were boiling in Europe. He was a Puritan, which was a branch of Swiss reformer Calvin's theology. As well as a former political voice, Milton then took to himself the roll of representative of God's good ways. He felt the need to explain why evil had so much power in the world and why God permitted it. Added to that was his major literary aspiration: to write a great poem in epic form. That had been his ultimate dream since youth, even though by then he would consider Arthurian legends as the theme to his heroic poem. However, as an experienced and mature author, he finally chose what could be considered the most controversial issue of all times: good, evil and their power over the destiny of humankind.

In itself, that was not a choice for an unprecedented plot. The story of Adam and Eve, their creation and fall goes ages far behind. They are in the first three chapters of the book of Genesis which, by the time of Milton, was believed to have been written by Moses about 3100 years earlier. However, if one based only on the Bible the calculation of time, the event that is told in the first verses of the Bible would have happened at least 45 centuries earlier.

On its turn, the book of Genesis is not unparalleled either. It is possible to find similar stories in stone tables from ancient Sumerian and Acadian cultures.¹ The writer(s) of Genesis exploited those legends of gods, their caprices and vanities, to present the Jewish God, the loving and concerned creator of heaven, earth and humankind, who installs man and woman as the managers of a garden of blessings, which they eventually lose by not obeying the one single rule established since the very beginning: not to eat the fruit of a specific tree, the one that would produce the knowledge of good and evil. That adaptation of those stories by the author(s) of what later became the first chapters of the Bible transformed, to the ones who care about Jewish or Christian faith, a myth into God's Word, in times when myth was the language of "science", through which the unknown could be explained.

Now Milton takes the Genesis myth and translates it into something else. Although the poetry form of the epic was in the author's perspective far earlier, he finally established this theme as the one who would place him among the canonical English writers. During his early

¹ The ancient myths that seem to have had more influence on the writers of Genesis 1-3 are *Enuma Elish*, for the creation of man, and *Adapa*, for the loss of immortality by the means of food.

twenties, Milton had the ambition to write a great work that would glorify the greatness of England. However, perhaps due to all the political changes that England suffered during the previous years, the disillusion and the final reclusion to his own home made him reevaluate his plans. By selecting the biblical account of the fall of humankind, Milton dismissed the glory of England in favor of the glory of God, in an attempt of a theodicy, of making justice to the goodness of God towards a fallen human race.

The recurrent topic in the poem is freedom. Freedom, which in Milton's political militancy was the main banner, taken to the extreme of not only the dethronement, but also the beheading of a monarch who was held as a tyrant by his objectors. Freedom that Satan demands from God and that has him thrown to the steams and horrors of Hell. Freedom that God asserts to be prerogative of angels and human beings when it comes to the choice of standing or not by God's side.

One could think that Milton would insert into his epic a Calvinist/Puritan discourse which, roughly speaking, understood that God "plays" with human fate, for good or for evil. However, in a first reading, Milton gives the impression of having his own way of understanding the Bible and Theology. In some aspects his reasoning seems to be closer to Luther's than to Calvin's or the Puritans'. His theological thinking is not detached from his political life, as freedom permeates the whole of his discourse as a pamphleteer. Interestingly enough, the Calvinist view of freedom appears to be, in *Paradise Lost*, very similar to Satan's, especially in the first two books. In the rest of the poem, Milton seems to advocate that the concept of freedom according to God is something else; something like a deeper state in which creatures, either angels or human beings, find their completeness and their true liberty in a connection with their Creator.

This monograph aims at analyzing Milton's interpretations of the first three chapters of the Bible and of the theological discussions of his time, as shown in *Paradise Lost* with the purpose of demonstrating that he had his own way of understanding the Bible and the crucial issues of Theology, perhaps in a more humanistic way that his fellow Puritans did. The first chapter brings some information on Milton's life and the political context of early 17th century England, in order to set the ground for his thinking. Next, there is a summary of Puritan and Lutheran theological principles concerning the issues in debate, that is, the origin of evil, free will and predestination. Subsequently, the text brings a presentation of the poem followed by an analysis of some excerpts from it, in a discussion of those same theological principles as

exposed by Milton especially through Satan's, God's and Raphael's points of view. For that discussion, the Reformers' beliefs, as well as Milton's own battles as a political fighter for freedom are also taken into account.

I hope to be able to demonstrate Milton's peculiar understanding of some fundamental theological principles and how he took a stand on them through *Paradise Lost* in a time of unprecedented religious dissent.

2. MILTON'S TIMES

There was great tension in England in Milton's times. English society had been suffering religious, economic and political changes. The economical basis did not depend only on the vast land estates any more, but it was also starting to rely upon trade and commerce.

In the religious field, there were three different groups. On one side, there was the Anglican Church, established by the state under Henry VIII in 1534, when he, in need of the approval for his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, finally broke up with Rome and became the Head of the Church of England. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Church of England was the official church, but there was another significant religious group that was revolutionizing not only faith but also politics. They were the Puritans, or the "Roundheads" (probably so called because of the style of their haircut), a branch of the Calvinist reformation movement, who required from their followers a solid knowledge of the Bible and obedience to strict behavioral rules. The Calvinist movement started in Switzerland in the sixteenth century, and its influence came to Britain after spreading to France and the Netherlands (CHURCHILL, 1956, p. 4). Most of the Puritans were also traders, and at the time of Milton, they were oppressed by the huge amount of taxes that King Charles I repeatedly tried to raise.

The turmoil in England in the seventeenth century was also politically justified. The monarch, King Charles I, already not very popular for the reasons mentioned above, added some disgust to his subjects by choosing for a wife a Roman Catholic princess, Henrietta Maria of France, and that marriage shook the base of the Anglican Reformation in the country. Not only did the King defend the reestablishment of Catholicism but he also persecuted Puritans, in such a degree that many of them (20.000 only in 1632) were sent away to the Netherlands and America (WITTE, 2008, p. 1532).

Additionally, the king felt the need to engage war with Spain and France, and for that he had to require the support of the Parliament. Whenever the Parliament denied him the assistance he demanded, he would dissolve it and rule on his own. In 1640, it had been 11 years since the King had dissolved the Parliament for the last time. That happened in 1629, when the Parliament refused to vote in favor of the increasing of taxes to sponsor those wars with which people in general did not agree. Then Charles I found his own manners of obtaining

the capital he needed: as well as absurd raises in taxes in as many ways as his creativity allowed, he also obliged land owners and businessmen to lend him money. Inflation increased, commerce decreased, and to aggravate an already practically unbearable situation, there had been feeble harvests in the previous years.

Political leaders, aristocrats, Puritans and citizens in general abhorred the chain of poor decisions, negligence towards people's needs and rights added to extremely authoritarian leadership, and that unhappiness increased to the extent of the establishment of a civil war. The war was brewed from 1640 to 1642. During that period Parliament took a series of actions to diminish the power of the King. It finally started in 1642, when Charles I decided to dissolve Parliament once again and have some leaders imprisoned. The Civil War lasted until 1646. Charles I was arrested in 1647 and by the end of 1649 he had already been convicted and executed (WITTE, 2008, p. 1533 *et seq.*).

When revolution was taking form, John Milton was in Italy, studying and meeting great scholars and scientists of the period. His literary aspirations were already high then, and his dedication to his intents was absolute. He had the privilege of not having to earn a living, as many other artists, like Shakespeare, did. His father's financial situation allowed him to just study, write and become familiar with the scientific discussions and discoveries that were taking place all around Europe. As Burgess says, it was by his hard studies allowed by his financial situation that he was able to "equip himself with more learning than any previous great poet" (BURGESS, 1986, p. 113). Milton was reading, writing and progressively preparing for the most ambitious literary journey of his career: the composition of an epic on the models of Homer, Virgil and Dante. At that point his idea of a good topic on which to write his poem was the Arthurian legends, always popular, something that would praise the greatness of England. Later on, though, his choice was completely different.

Passionate as he was about his country and people, Milton felt the need and moral duty to interrupt his poetic production in order to embark in the political revolution with the Puritans. His working tool was still the word, though now he used it as a weapon. He flew the flag of the Puritan party, and used the theology of the Reformation to legitimize his social and political ideals of liberty, in times when English people felt oppressed under the tyranny of their monarch. According to John Witte Jr., Milton's battle pro liberty was a three folded one: he was concerned about religious liberty, domestic or private liberty and also civil and political

liberty. His justification of those three aspects were based on the Truth (with a capital T) of God and Scripture and in the “inherent goodness and potential of every English man and woman” (WITTE, 2008, p. 1529).

The writings of the pamphleteers in general were in favor of freedom of faith, speech, guarantee of property, rules to a fair judgment in case of crime and rights to education and welfare. In 1649 *An Agreement of the Free People of England* was proposed, as a draft of a new constitution for England, to promote all that (WITTE, 2008, p. 1539-1540). It was a summary of the petitions of the pamphleteers, most of them Puritans.

“They pressed these claims not merely as positive rights created by the state, but as natural rights created by God and to be confirmed by a state constitution. Every person by his or her very nature, the pamphleteers insisted, has equal and natural rights to life, liberty and property. Every person is equally called by God to be a ‘prophet, priest and king’ with a natural right and duty to speak, preach and rule in the community (WITTE, 2008, p.1540).”

Once King Charles I had been arrested and later executed, Oliver Cromwell assumed the government of England, a new Republican state. Milton accepted to be Cromwell’s Secretary for Foreign Languages. Soon enough, though, the new governor started his own dictatorship, now with severe regulations and restrictions to people’s behavior, based on the harsh rules imposed by the Puritans. Through Cromwell, “the Old Testament became the book of the law, pleasure was regarded as sinful, moral crimes were savagely punished. It was a way of life perhaps foreign to the English character” (BURGESS, 1986, p. 104). Even though Milton insisted with his leader on his, Cromwell did not act as a guardian of liberty. On the contrary. His ways of thinking, believing and acting made of him a despot too. As Storm Jameson puts it, “:there is no better maker of wildernesses than your thorough-paced, make-straight-the-way, religious fanatic of whatever persuasion he may be, Puritan, Marxist, or Fascist. The idealist is a far more reckless destroyer than the opportunist” (JAMESON, 1939, p.17). So Oliver Cromwell installed his own kind of tyranny and, strangely, Milton stood by him until the end, when he died in 1658. People were feeling too much oppressed again. And two years later, monarchy was restored.

It was in 1660 that King Charles II was enthroned, and then Milton was silenced. After a few months in prison he was convicted to a lonely life in a reclusive place, where he was no more relevant, no more heard. Anglican values were back and reinforced, and the Puritans

were ignored. Then Milton had the time for his epic. Arthurian legends? Heroic kings or warriors? No. Enough for the glories of not so glorious Britain. Deluded Milton chose a theme that evoked freedom, liberty and the consequences of the misuse of such precious gift.

3. MILTON'S THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

John Milton lived in the 17th century, during which the Reformers' ideas had already been effervescing for about 100 years. He was born in times of theological, philosophical and scientific changes, and being a dedicated and ambitious scholar as he was, none of the great discussions of the time passed unnoticed by him.

Milton was the son to John Milton Sr., who was a scrivener and also a Church music composer. The family's financial situation was relatively good, and that allowed Milton Jr. to start his education under private tutors, followed by his attendance to St. Paul's School in London, and later to Christ's College in Cambridge. It was also in Cambridge that he achieved the degree of Master of Arts in 1632 (JOKINEN, 2006).

He learned classical languages with his tutors, and during his College years he prepared to be a member of the clergy. Milton was raised as a Puritan, but his grandfather had been a Roman Catholic. The decision of his father of becoming a protestant cost him his inheritance (THOMAS *et al.*, 2006, p. 472). John Milton Sr.'s father disinherited his son because of his change of religion, and the intensity of his beliefs probably influenced young Milton as well. He was also very vehement and sometimes even belligerent about his opinions, so much as having him suspended from Christ's College for some time.

Even though Milton abandoned his (or most probably his father's) plans of being a Christian minister, he did not renounce his Christian faith nor did he disregard any or what he had discovered and learned during the time he had applied himself more exclusively to the purposes of being a clergyman. In fact, his religious beliefs were crucial to his political involvement, especially by the time he embraced the party of Cromwell and the Roundheads to dethrone King Charles I. It is possible to assert that his theological ideas were part of who he was, of what he thought and defended and of what led him to the decisions he made and to the actions he undertook.

Paradise Lost is a fantastic mirror to Milton's beliefs about some of the most polemical issues in the discussion of Christian dogmas. Before looking into the poet's actual text, though, it is worth having a look on how his most influential religious predecessors viewed some of matters, especially the relation between God, angels and people, the political influence of Christianity, divine providence and free will.

3.1. ONE ONLY MAKES SENSE IN RELATION TO GOD

When we think of Reformation, Calvinism and Puritanism, we cannot ignore the influences that those movements suffered to become what they did: a revolution within the Church, which resulted in a number of different streams of religious thinking that impacted social and political life in Europe. One of the major predecessors of both Calvin and Luther's was Augustine (CAIRNS, 1995, p. 120), a north-African philosopher/theologian (probably 354-431), one of the so called *Fathers of the Church* in the Catholic tradition. Augustine was a professor of rhetoric and was very keen on religious issues, but none of the views of the most prominent theologians of the time on the subject of faith could really convince him. In his personal life, he had chosen to live with a concubine, with whom he had a son. Legend has it that one day he was meditating on spiritual matters when some strange force led him to open his Bible and read Romans 13.13-14, the text which exposed him to the self-consciousness that he had been living in sin and should turn to God in repentance. From that day on his life was transformed: he left his concubine and embraced the study of the Bible. Later, in his *Confessions*, probably the most popular writing of Augustine's, he stated, right in the first paragraph "[...]thou hast made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee" (AUGUSTINE, p.11). It is the *confession* of someone who, despite his huge erudition, found meaning in life solely by his personal relationship with God. (CAIRNS, 1995, p. 118-119)

This detail about Augustine's life is important because more than one millennium later, the Reformers would also find their purpose in life in a close personal bond with their Savior, and that means, by logical reasoning, that there is no sense in the creature's life when apart from the Creator. That thought might have led Milton to understand that any of God's creatures are "dead" or "lost" when away from Him, and from that basis try to *justify the ways of God to men* by demonstrating that away from God's there is no possibility to experience his goodness, and there is no life apart from the only source of it.

That is not the only aspect of Augustine's theology worth considering when we think of Milton and the Reformers. Augustine was, first of all, a Platonist philosopher, and after his conversion as a Christian believer the platonic source played an important part in the composition of the systematization of his theological reasoning, even though at the end of his life he regretted having invested so much effort studying "pagan philosophy" (CAIRNS, 1995,

p. 119). He was concerned about spiritual life and spiritual dimensions of society, teaching that Christians should fix their eyes on the *Civitate Dei*, the “City of God”. To him, the *spirit* was much more important than the *letter*, as for Plato the ideas were purer than empirical reality. That, however, did not keep him from being extremely meticulous in his studies of classical, historical, philosophical and theological matters. *De Doctrina Cristiana* is his grand hermeneutic work, in which he establishes that nothing in Scripture should be interpreted individually, isolated from the concordance of the whole message in it. That was the *principle of the analogy of faith* (CAIRNS, 1995, p. 119), or the assumption that scripture should interpret scripture, statement that was one of the banners of the Reformers, by which heresy should be prevented.

Although it was under his influence that the axial Reformer’s concepts of grace, free will and divine providence were established, it was also due to Augustine the reinforcement of a legend about the fall of Lucifer and his sympathizers against God, which was very popular among the Puritans, but is practically impossible to attribute its origin to the Bible.

3.2. THE LEGEND OF THE WAR IN HEAVEN AND THE REBEL ANGELS’ FALL

The whole story about Satan as fallen Lucifer and the war in Heaven comes from the first centuries of Christianity. Of course, there were several Jewish teachings concerning a personification of evil and all the so well known Greek myths about wars between deities of many kinds came to help the persecuted Christians to develop a doctrine in which God’s arch-enemy and his fellow fallen angels had once made war against God in Heaven. The biblical passage to support that is found in the book of Revelation, in which Michael and his angels fight against the dragon who is cast out from Heaven with his angels. There we have:

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Revelation 12.7-9²)

² All Bible quotations are taken from King James Bible online, authorized version, Cambridge edition.

However, this passage is supposedly a prophetic one, and not an account of what happened before the creation of the world and of humankind. Even so, the belief on the fall of Lucifer and his angels as a consequence of an empyreal war has its echoes still today.

Apart from that, it is due to a passage in the book of the prophet Ezekiel which has inspired readers to relate the prophecy against the King of Tyrus with the fall of Lucifer, allegedly the most beautiful of God's angels:

Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone *was* thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou *art* the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee *so*: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. (Ezekiel 28.12-17)

In the book of prophet Isaiah, the name Lucifer probably refers to one of the proud kings of Babylon, but the prophecy against him has also been understood as an account of what happened to the angel Lucifer, who by his fall became Satan, by the time he stood up against God overwhelmed with his ambitious ego:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. (Isaiah 14.12-15)

With some much tradition and different interpretations of the biblical text, it is not surprising that the Fathers of the Church (as Augustine himself) as well as the Reformers, held these concepts of the fall of God's most honored angel and a heavenly war rooted and unquestioned in their inherited theological framework. The historical-critical method took

form later, and so, Milton and his predecessors did not have, at the time, the tools that would prevent them from unquestionably accepting what was rooted in religious tradition.

It is worth mentioning Augustine's explanation for the reason some angels remained good and some became evil. In *Civitate Dei*, Augustine writes:

Thus the true cause of the blessedness of the good angels is found to be this, that they cleave to Him who supremely is. And if we ask the cause of the misery of the bad, it occurs to us, and not unreasonably, that they are miserable because they have forsaken Him who supremely is, and have turned to themselves who have no such essence. And this vice, what else is it called than pride? For 'pride is the beginning of sin.'³ They were unwilling, then, to preserve their strength for God; and as adherence to God was the condition of their enjoying an ampler being, they diminished it by preferring themselves to Him. This was the first defect, and the first impoverishment, and the first flaw of their nature, which was created, not indeed supremely existent, but finding its blessedness in the enjoyment of the Supreme Being; whilst by abandoning Him it should become, not indeed no nature at all, but a nature with a less ample existence, and therefore wretched. (AUGUSTINE, p.330)

Even though here Augustine talks about the angels, this quote reinforces what was discussed in the section above: for him, God's creatures only make sense in a relationship with him. So, for him, pride or, as Karl Barth would put it, *hybris* is the origin of evil in the first place.

Luther and Calvin believed the legend about the fallen angels, for it was unquestioned at the time, even though Luther recognized that the text from Revelation could not be interpreted as a primary war in Heaven. However, Luther used to demonize the powers of the established Church of the time, with its false teachings and indulgences. He, as well as Calvin, gave much importance to the enemy of God, as an effective player in people's decisions and actions. It is estimated, for example, that Luther mentions Satan more than he mentions Christ in the *Greater Catechism* (HEASTER, 2012, p. 77). For Calvin and Luther, Satan, God's most powerful enemy (yet not powerful enough) was to be fought; for Calvin, in order to preserve one's integrity; to Luther, just because God gave his children the grace of being forgiven and, therefore, to resist temptation, especially that inner personal appeal of not depending on anyone, not even on God, in order to achieve salvation. This will be discussed below, in the theological thinking of the reformers about free will.

³ Here Augustine quotes Ecclesiastes 10.13.

3.3. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR A POLITICAL VIEW

As mentioned in the former chapter, Milton's political view was based on the idea that every Christian has the right to be a prophet, a priest and a king. This triple commission was first asserted by Luther in *Freedom of a Christian*, from 1520. As Witte summarizes, "it challenged not only the traditional authority of the clergy over laity, but eventually all traditional authority structures—rulers over subjects, husbands over wives, parents over children, master over servants, and more" (WITTE, 2008, p. 1541). Puritans in England used this premise in the 17th century, and so did Milton. He believed that everything regarded to citizenship, law, rights and liberty had its foundation, first of all, in the Bible, and thus, as Luther affirmations were mainly Bible-based, he felt free to hold them as a banner.

As well as Augustine and later the Reformers, Milton believed that every man and woman was created in God's own image (according to Genesis 1.26, which brings: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"), and due to that, there is a natural craving for God's presence in every human being. Not only that, but as a resemblance of God Himself, every person has the natural capacity to differ right from wrong, to understand what is good and what is evil and to make choices, especially when it comes to taking a position before their fellow human beings. Here Milton disagrees with both Calvin and Luther, even though he seems to be closer to the latter. Calvin would state that humans have no choice whatsoever, that God is the owner of people's destinies since the beginning of times, and that there is no participation of a person's will when it comes to the matter of salvation, for example. Luther understood that one does not have the free will to accept salvation, but once God has worked with His irresistible grace on a person's life, he or she is free to serve their fellow human beings, and by that they will be serving God as well, because the love of God is shown in the service to the neighbor. In this sense, it seems that Milton's understanding of grace and service is similar to Luther's (although his opinion appears to be that even in the matter of salvation a person is free to decide on their own judgment), as he stated: "Christian liberty means that Christ our liberator frees us from the slavery of sin and thus from the rule of the law and of men, as if we were emancipated slaves. He does this so that, being made sons instead of servants, and grown men instead of boys, we may serve God in charity through the guidance of the spirit of truth." (MILTON apud WITTE, 2008, p.1551)

In Milton's political writing, his understanding of theology played a fundamental part. He understood that if a person is freed to serve God and fellow human beings, law becomes less important, because charity and the common good are to be the starting point of people's actions, from the peasant to the king. Therefore he did not base his writings on law or on what could be considered politically correct, but mainly on his understanding of freedom or liberty, that came from God's grace and that made of every human being an instrument of this grace and love. By being so, people should invariably respect one another and set their actions in order to guarantee their fellow men and women's liberty in every aspect of their lives.

Many people consider Milton an antinomian (WITTE, 2008, p.1555), but that does not make sense if his understanding of the consequences of God's grace in a person's life is the service to their neighbor. That unfailingly implies in good deeds, and if a person is pushed by love and by God's good will explicit in Scripture (which every Christian should know how to read and interpret, by the Puritans' teaching) instead of law or fear, their actions are much more effective. So, a Christian has the right to do good and to act in imitation of Christ, and that is where the trinomial duty of "prophet, priest and king" comes from (WITTE, 2008, p.1557).

"Christians, who are followers and imitators of Christ and who live with the mind of Christ, have the right and duty to discharge these same three offices. Christians, too, as prophets, must educate the church and the whole world about heavenly truth, and the whole will and Word of God. They, too, as priests, must sacrifice for others, pray for them, and care for them as loving neighbors. They, too, as kings, must rule themselves by the same internal law and so share in the ruling and preservation of Christ's church." (WITTE, 2008, p.1557)

The decision to imitate Christ would give no place to not do right.

Milton was polemical and his ideas were far ahead of his time. It was under the idea of liberty of conscience that he defended divorce on the grounds of incompatibility. It was also based on that principle that he defended the beheading of King Charles I when time had come. If people are born free, they bound together to protect one another and to live in an organized society, and that means the need of the constitution of a serving kind of authority. Whoever takes to themselves the prerogative to neglect their fellow human beings' rights needs to be stopped. That understanding made it possible for Milton to support the rebels in their opposition to Charles I, even when they took to themselves the right (which, roughly speaking,

belongs to God alone) of ending his life. It was the need to guarantee English people's liberty that made it possible for his conscience to accept as correct the idea of taking the life of the person who was impeding that.

This liberty of conscience professed by Milton was not admitted by the Puritans. On the contrary, they believed that a Christian should obey the law in the Bible and the conveniences established by the Christian groups and churches. When later on Oliver Cromwell governed England as a dictator, he imposed on people the law, the conventions and several behavioral details that Milton did not agree with, but he strangely remained in his function as Cromwell's Secretary for Foreign Languages.

“[A]ll men naturally were born free, being in the image of and resemblance of God himself, and were by privilege above all the creatures, born to command and not to obey; and that they lived so. Till from the root of Adam's transgression, falling among themselves to do wrong and violence, and foreseeing that such courses must needs tend to the destruction of them all, they agreed by common league to bind each other from mutual injury, and jointly to defend themselves against any that gave disturbance or opposition to such agreement. Hence came cities, towns, and commonwealths. And because no faith in all was found sufficiently binding, they saw it needful to ordain some authority that might restrain by force and punishment what was violated against peace and common right. This authority and power of self-defense and preservation being originally and naturally in every one of them, and unitedly in them all, for ease, for order, and lest each man should be his own partial judge, they communicated and derived either to one, whom for the eminence of his wisdom and integrity they chose above the rest, or to more than one who they thought of equal deserving. . . . The power of kings and magistrates is nothing else, but what is only derivative, transferred and committed to them in trust from the people, to the common good of them all, in whom the power yet remains fundamentally, and cannot be taken from them, without a violation of their natural birthright. (...) As the king or magistrate holds his authority of the people, both originally and naturally for their good in the first place, and not his own, then may the people as often as they shall [think] it for the best, either to choose him or reject him, refrain or depose though no tyrant, merely by the liberty and right of free born men, to be governed as seems to them best.” (MILTON apud WITTE, 2008, p.1546s)

Milton's delusions due to the failure of the revolution and of the new government might have led him to ponder about the matter of authority and the need of some kind of hierarchy in society. *Paradise Lost* gives us some hints of that reevaluation of his dearest political convictions. The subject of freedom, however, seems to be the mainstream of the poem, which perhaps indicates that Milton might have concluded that the City of God should

still be the model for any secular society. In *Paradise Lost* there is a ruler, but his command is born in love executed in self-sacrifice.

3.4. PREDESTINATION AND FREE WILL

The matter of free will and divine providence were among the main topics discussed by the Reformers, with inevitable divergences between them. In their Augustinian belief that scripture should enlighten itself, they drew different lights to the same texts, and came to different conclusions.

Both Martin Luther and John Calvin believed in God's providence and in people's dependence of God's good will, but they diverged in their understanding of some important elements in those two themes.

Luther believed in predestination for salvation. One of the biblical texts that laid the foundation of Luther's understanding of predestination is that of Isaiah 26.9-10, that brings: "Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." On verse 13 the prophet carries on: "I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory." Luther understood that God looked upon his creation with good eyes and good will, and that His plans for humankind were always good plans, even though sin had spoiled God's original project for the world and all living things.

On the matter of free will, Luther's most relevant document was *De servo arbitrio*, which he wrote in order to refute the ideas of a contemporary humanist scholar, Erasmus of Rotterdam. Desiderius Erasmus had stated in *De libero arbitrio diatribe sive colatio* that God had provided people with the freedom of choosing right or wrong, good or evil, and also the liberty of accepting or not God's love and salvation. The Reformer, then, wrote a harsh and vehement argument addressed to Erasmus. Luther could not agree that the person could play any important role on their salvation, for it is the work of God alone in his merciful gesture of drawing His creature to the acceptance by faith of Christ's redeeming sacrifice (LUTHER, 1525). According to Luther, it would be too much of a crisis if a person had to try to determine how much of the final work of salvation depended on them and how much depended on God. To

Luther, this crisis is overcome when the person understands that they are under God's merciful and just will of saving His beloved creature.

Luther claims that no individual is able to, by themselves, make the choice of obeying God. People are born in sin and are naturally bound to err. Therefore, God makes the move towards sinners by what is the essence of the Gospel: it is *God's will* to redeem the otherwise doomed humankind, and it is His will that counts. That act of redemption is to be accepted by faith only. There is no good deed that can enable a person to achieve the state of righteousness that God's sanctity demands. Faith can, though, and that is provided by God's work in the human heart. Faith grants peace in human's heart and the assurance to God's creatures that all sins are forgiven, and that they are now actually free... to serve God and their neighbor (LUTHER, 1520).

Luther states that whoever takes upon themselves the burden of achieving salvation is in fact committing sin, for the illusion of having the capacity of coming to terms with God is a reflection of human's pride and desire to be autonomous and not to need God's intervention in their destiny. Not permitting God to be God is in itself the transgression of the first commandment. That is also the reason for Satan's fall in Milton's *Paradise Lost*: even not using the term, Milton implies that what triggered Satan's revolt was nothing less than his *hybris*, that exacerbated pride that does not admit full dependence on a higher being or entity, does not accept oneself not to be self-sufficient and does not allow God to be God, the source of life.

For Calvin, God's prescience and providence have already settled, since the beginning, who is going to be saved and who is not, and therefore, one can conclude that God, since the very start of the world itself, had already, not only predicted, but also established that the angels would rebel and the humankind would fall and be responsible for their own doomed destiny. So, there is no free will whatsoever for man or woman. Their attitude before God, grace and the sacrifice of Christ is already predetermined since the beginning of times. However, the sanctity that is demanded from believers somehow contradicts this belief, for a strict following of law or principles does not match a destiny determined beforehand. For Calvin, both good and evil come from God. "In regard to men, good as well as bad, he will acknowledge that their counsels, wishes, aims and faculties are so under his hand, that he has full power to turn them in whatever direction, and constrain them as often as he pleases"

(CALVIN, p. 185). On Chapter XIX of the first Book of Calvin's *Institutes*, he affirms that even Satan is a tool in God's hands, to execute his judgments.

Hence a distinction has been invented between *doing* and *permitting* because to many it seemed altogether inexplicable how Satan and all the wicked are so under the hand and authority of God, that he directs their malice to whatever end he pleases, and employs their iniquities to execute his Judgments. The modesty of those who are thus alarmed at the appearance of absurdity might perhaps be excused, did they not endeavor to vindicate the justice of God from every semblance of stigma by defending an untruth. It seems absurd that man should be blinded by the will and command of God, and yet be forthwith punished for his blindness. Hence, recourse is had to the evasion that this is done only by the permission, and not also by the will of God. He himself, however, openly declaring that he *does* this, repudiates the evasion. That men do nothing save at the secret instigation of God, and do not discuss and deliberate on any thing but what he has previously decreed with himself and brings to pass by his secret direction, is proved by numberless clear passages of Scripture. (CALVIN, p. 193)

Calvin would not approve of Milton's God's discourses on Providence, especially in book III of *Paradise Lost*, for the English author makes a clear distinction between foreknowledge and will. Milton's God in his omniscience knew that Satan and his angels would fall and knows that humankind will too, and does not avoid repeating that he acknowledges that those events will happen, but does not take responsibility for them. Responsibility is assigned to those who make the choice, who have the free will to do so. Milton's God says, from line 103 of Book III on, that freedom is the vehicle through which love and gratitude can be proven, and that it is angels' or people's choice to give direction to their destiny.

Not free, what proof could they have givn sincere
Of true allegiance, constant Faith or Love,
Where onely 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 despoild,
Made passive both, had servd necessitie,
Not mee. They therefore as to right belongd,
So were created, nor can justly accuse
Thir maker, or thir making, or thir Fate,
As if predestination over-rul'd
Thir will, dispos'd by absolute Decree
Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed
Thir own revolt, not I: if I foreknew,
Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,

Which had no less prov'd certain unforeknown. (*Paradise Lost*, Book III, p. 103-119⁴)

Milton's Adam and Eve seem closer to Luther's than to Calvin's understanding of human will. They are evidently enabled with free will before the fall and during it. Eve has a choice, and makes the wrong one. Adam's dilemma is between his love for Eve and his loyalty to God. He does not trust God enough to provide him with the consolation he would need in case of losing his wife. He chooses human love over being freely connected to the source of life. After that, all they feel is shame, fear and uncertainty. Nothing they do can lead them to being any more comfortable inside their own skins. Their only console comes from the news, the proto-gospel brought to them by the Son and by Michael that there was indeed hope for them and their progeny, and they should accept the hardships of their life as sinners, but must keep their faithful and believing eyes in the future, because God in His infinite grace had not abandoned them.

⁴ All quotes from *Paradise Lost* are taken from the transcripts in *The John Milton Reading Room*, available in: <[https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/pl/**book_1**/text.shtml](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/pl/book_1/text.shtml)>. The only detail that varies in the links is the number of the Book, marked in bold in the example. From now on, the quotes from the poem will be presented as follows: *PL*, number of the book, numeration of the lines). Ex.: (*PL* 3.103-119).

4. THE POEM

Paradise Lost, the primary English epic, was first edited in 1667 in ten books. The second edition came in 1674, and, already rearranged into twelve books, perhaps after the model of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

Milton had the ambition of writing an epic since the very beginning of his career, when he was still completely dedicating himself to reading and writing, with his father's financial support. He did not have by then, a topic or a theme, he only had the genre. Wars had always been a good motif for epics, and he did not rule out the possibility. Arthurian legends were popular, so he considered writing about them. Milton had the aspiration of placing England among the great nations glorified by their most prominent writers (ZUKERMAN).

However, he finally made his choice on something completely different. He dismissed the earthly heroic warriors to discourse on the ethereal conflict between the rebellious Satan and the heavenly forces, that eventually led to the fall of humankind. After so many years involved in the Roundheads' battles, he might not have felt free to be a Cavalier poet. As Burgess states, "in the seventeenth century, even literature takes sides" (BURGESS, 1986, p.104). Milton had all the reasons to be disappointed at any human hero. He himself had fought against monarchy, and in spite of its restoration, he was not an admirer of it. Yet, his political ideals showed to be illusions as well. There was no great English or British story to tell. He had to go further, but the story had to make sense to his fellow citizens as well as to himself. And the issue he chose affected not only the English or even the British. It affected humankind.⁵

Although Milton's *Paradise Lost* has most of the elements that the classical epics present, such as interaction between deities and human beings, invocations, muses, conflicts, etc, it is remarkably unlike the others when it comes to the definition of who the hero of the poem is (ZUKERMAN). There is much controversy on this matter. Many people, including William Blake, understood the hero of *Paradise Lost* as Satan. Blake states in *The marriage of heaven and hell* that "the reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels and God,

⁵ Milton had had the intention of writing about the fall of Adam and Eve much earlier, but apparently, he had chosen a different genre for that, probably the tragedy. Drafts with titles as *Paradise Lost* or *Adam Unparadised* were found among his papers, but none of them seems to have been fully developed.

and at liberty when of Devils and Hell, is because he was a true poet, and of the Devil's party without knowing it." (BLAKE) However, many modern critics have rejected this idea.

Who is the hero, then? Is it the *Son*, a less interesting character in the poem (literarily speaking), for being perfect and self sufficient? Or is it Adam, who is a total antihero, for his primary act was sin?

Furthermore, were those questions in Milton's mind as he wrote the poem? Or did he just give an epic body to the myth of creation? As mentioned in the introduction, by the time Genesis was written the language people would understand was that of the myth. Milton might have felt as well that a people who had undergone so many changes in their nation's political background, who had faced all kinds of unfulfilled promises and a long row of disappointments, who were, perhaps, desperately in need of a hero, could find some consolation in the story of the beginning and end of all human suffering: God's love, people's freedom, sin, redemption and hope.

Milton chooses to write in blank verses. He defends his option in a short paragraph in the beginning of the book, by saying that a good piece of poetry such as those of Homer and Virgil's would not need the "barbarous" tool of rhyme. A good poem could show itself in its music, "which consists onely in apt Numbers, fit quantity of Syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one Verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings, a fault avoyded by the learned Ancients both in Poetry and all good Oratory." (*PL*, The verse)

In Book I, right in the first six lines of the poem, Milton proposes the theme of the epic by invoking his heavenly muse, as perhaps the briefest abstract possible of the history of fall and redemption:

Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of *Eden*, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
Sing, Heav'nly Muse... (*PL* 1.1-6)

The muse he appeals to is presented as being the same one that inspired "the shepherd"⁶. But that is not the only entity he leans on to accomplish his audacious enterprise. He also calls upon the

⁶ *PL* 1.8. That could have been Moses, when he presumably wrote the Pentateuch. Here Milton shows his tendency to mix mythological and biblical characteristics to his literary work.

Spirit that “made pregnant” and “brooded” creation over chaos, the Holy Spirit of God, that he might be enlightened enough to

...assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the wayes of God to men. (*PL* 1.25s)

And then Milton starts the presentation of the tempter by whose irresistible influence the parents of humankind have brought disgrace upon themselves and their descendants. Satan, one of God’s archangels, the highest of them in hierarchy, rebelled against God, followed by a whole legion of lower angels

by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in Glory above his Peers,
He trusted to have equal'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 Battel proud
With vain attempt. (*PL* 1.38-44)

Milton states, then, right at the beginning what the main issue concerning fall, judgment, punishment and destruction was: what Karl Barth called *hybris*⁷, that inner ambition of a being to be equal to God.⁸

The rebellion led to Satan and his angels’ expulsion from Heaven. After nine days of lethargy in a lake of fire, Satan calls his fellow fallen angels and urges them to discuss and figure a way to reconquer their way back to Heaven. They establish the city of *Pandemonium* right from the depths of darkness and sit in counsel to decide on their immediate course of action.

In Book II the debate takes place. Many ideas arise. One of the demons suggests that they go to war, another suggests that they just adapt to their new reality, and they go on deliberating until Satan proposes that they try to destroy God’s new passion, humankind. He boldly volunteers to perform the intrepid act of revenge, which renders him praises and applause from the other rebels.

⁷ The term comes from the Greek Philosophy, meaning the excessive self-confidence that one might have, and its consequential disdain for others. Barth adapted the term to Theology, defining *hybris* as one’s pride and self-sufficiency disregarding God and his grace.

⁸ Satan uses that as a moral weapon against Eve, when he tells her that she might become wise as God, and God’s forbiddance was nothing more than keeping all the power, the light and the wisdom to Himself, in order to maintain man and woman and any other creature subject to Him. (*PL* 9.703-709)

In his way out of Hell, Satan finds his daughter Sin and his incestuously born son Death as the guardians of Hell, and they allow him to leave the horrid place, for they chose to be loyal to their father, and not to God, who they do not feel obliged to obey. Satan starts his journey to the newly created world, guided by Chaos, transposes all obstacles until his missing eyes finally stare Heaven, his former home, and then spots Earth hanging among other orbs. He turns to its direction, overcome by his feelings of rage and vengeance.

Book III is extremely dense and revealing of what Milton understood and believed in terms of Christianity. Here God appears sitting in His throne, observing Satan's approach to the newly born world that He created, and calls His Son to watch it too. He tells the Son the enemy's plans and, in His foreknowledge, affirms that man and woman will fall, even though they have been created with the capacity of resisting evil and the free will to obey. The Son, knowing of God's extreme love for His creation and of His supreme justice that cannot bear sin and disobedience, chooses to reconcile the two features of his holy Father by volunteering to take upon himself the judgment and the punishment for humankind's sin. God happily accepts the offer:

"O thou in Heav'n and Earth the only peace
 Found out for mankind under wrath, O thou
 My sole complacence! well thou know'st how dear,
 To me are all my works, nor Man the least
 Though last created, that for him I spare
 Thee from my bosom and right hand, to save,
 By loosing thee a while, the whole Race lost.
 Thou therefore whom thou only canst redeem,
 Thir Nature also to thy Nature joyn;
 And be thy self Man among men on Earth,
 Made flesh, when time shall be, of Virgin seed,
 By wondrous birth: Be thou in *Adams* room
 The Head of all mankind, though *Adams* Son.
 As in him perish all men, so in thee
 As from a second root shall be restor'd,
 As many as are restor'd, without thee none." (PL 3.274-289)

It is so established that, in the future, the Son will become man, die, resuscitate and by doing so, redeem creation. God exalts his Son's benevolence and good will and gives him all the power and glory in Heaven.

Satan, who believes to be on his way to the total success of his enterprise, spots a staircase that heads towards Heaven and disguises himself as an angel of lower hierarchy. He

shows interest on admiring God's most recent work of creation, and Uriel, the guard of the new world, allows him passage.

If Book III is essential for the discussion of Milton's understanding of God's foreknowledge and man and woman's free will, Book IV is determinant for the reader's realization that even Satan has an opportunity to repent. In Book IV, Satan holds inside himself an ultimate battle against his once pure heart. He had not been completely doomed until then, when he recognizes that God is the source of everything, that his creator deserves all the gratitude from his creatures, and that he himself would eternally owe to God, whom he judged fair and worthy of all praises, his very own existence, whether he lived in Heaven or in Hell. By resisting God, Satan, at least in the context of the poem, is actually going against himself, as Lewis states: "a creature revolting against a creator is revolting against the source of his own power" (LEWIS,1969, p. 96). Satan is aware of that when he vents his anguish to the Sun:

"O Sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams
That bring to my remembrance from what state
I fell, how glorious once above thy Spheare;
Till Pride and worse Ambition threw me down
Warring in Heav'n against Heav'ns matchless King:
Ah wherefore! he deservd no such return
From me, whom he created what I was
In that bright eminence, and with his good
Upbraided none; nor was his service hard.
What could be less then to afford him praise,
The easiest recompence, and pay him thanks,
How due! yet all his good prov'd ill in me,
And wrought but malice; lifted up so high
I sdeind subjection, and thought one step higher
Would set me highest, and in a moment quit
The debt immense of endless gratitude,
So burthensome, still paying, still to ow;
Forgetful what from him I still receivd,
And understood not that a grateful mind
By owing owes not, but still pays, at once
Indebted and dischargd"... (PL 4.37-57)

From that inner argument results the victory of pride over gratitude, and from that comes Satan's decision to not turn to God, to not return home, to his origin, to happiness. He admits that he was happy in Heaven, doing what he was meant to do, standing where he was meant to stand, praising the One by Whom he had been created. However, he cannot bear the thought that by subjecting to God he will be deprived of what he understands to be

freedom, even though it actually means misery. He realizes that Hell is within himself and he chooses to be ruler in Hell and have evil as his good. In his reasoning, he ponders:

...curs'd be thou; since against his thy will
 Chose freely what it now so justly rues.
 Me miserable! which way shall I flie
 Infinite wrauth, and infinite despaire?
 Which way I flie is Hell; my self am Hell;
 [...]
 O then at last relent: is there no place
 Left for Repentance, none for Pardon left?
 None left but by submission; and that word
Disdain forbids me, and my dread of shame
 Among the Spirits beneath, whom I seduc'd
 With other promises and other vaunts
 Then to submit, boasting I could subdue
 Th' Omnipotent. Ay me, they little know
 How dearly I abide that boast so vaine,
 Under what torments inwardly I groane:
 While they adore me on the Throne of Hell
 [...]
 This knows my punisher; therefore as farr
 From granting hee, as I from begging peace:
 All hope excluded thus, behold in stead
 Of us out-cast, exil'd, his new delight,
 Mankind created, and for him this World.
 So farewell Hope, and with Hope farewell Fear,
 Farewel Remorse: all Good to me is lost;
 Evil be thou my Good; by thee at least
 Divided Empire with Heav'ns King I hold
 By thee, and more then half perhaps will reigne;
 As Man ere long, and this new World shall know. (PL 4.71-75; 79-89; 103-113)

Satan, therefore, refuses the possibility of repentance, forgiveness and reestablishment of a relationship with his Creator. He makes a second free choice of rejecting God's love and lordship. And he knows that there is no way back this time.

This Book is extremely important, especially when it comes to making a hero out of Satan. The ruler of Hell knows that that freedom he fights for does not exist, but he cannot admit that to himself, even less to his fellow fallen angels, who believed him to be the greatest among themselves, over whom he intended to be the eternal chief. In Book IV Satan acknowledges that there is no freedom away from the One who created him with the ability of freely obeying and being grateful. He knows that his existence does not make sense if he is distant from God. Even so, he makes his choice. Paradoxically, this makes the "anti-hero" a

hero in the sense that he does not mind giving up his supposed happiness because of what he holds as a principle: his understanding of what freedom is.

After Satan confirms himself in evil, he penetrates Paradise and observes Adam and Eve, not without some awe. He admires their innocent happiness, the love they share, their devotion to God, and listens to their conversations. By eavesdropping he detects that his starting point at bringing destruction to God's beloved creation should be the tree of Knowledge, by which fruit anyone was condemned to die.

Meanwhile, Uriel had realized that the angel that had presented to him in Book III could not be one of God's, for he watches the inner conflict and perceives that Satan's body movements and grimaces are not peaceful, cannot be reflection of good. He hurries to warn Gabriel that the Garden has been invaded and Satan is stopped by angelic forces when whispering at Eve's ear in her dreams. He and Gabriel have an argument and Satan flees.

God sends Raphael to Paradise in Book V. He is sent as a messenger to alert Adam and Eve about the presence of the tempter. Raphael is received with honor, he eats⁹ with the first couple and talks to Adam for a long time. Having been warned, the couple would never have an excuse for disobedience, and that was an important measure to be taken, as blaming anyone but oneself for misfortune is one of the characteristics of human beings. Raphael answers all of Adam's questions about who this enemy is, describing the rebellion and the power of persuasion that the chief of the fallen angels has. Through that power he had convinced all his legions to follow him in revolt, except for Abdiel, who resisted and chose (for all angels had the ability of making choices) to be loyal to God, his ultimate commander, and not to Satan, his immediate leader.

Raphael continues the story in Book VI, in which he vividly details to Adam the battles that Gabriel and Michael, God's angels, fought against Satan and his legions. At the end of Raphael's description of the three days of war and confusion, Adam becomes familiar with the existence of the Son of God, whose power overcomes all other forces, and by whose authority Satan and his angels were once and for all banished from Heaven and engulfed by the Deep. The first man is by those reports well warned that Satan, once expelled from Heaven by the

⁹ Do angels eat people's food? It is worth paying some attention to the explanations Raphael gives to Adam when the latter shows to be rather curious about angelical habits, possibilities and relations. Milton allows himself to actually talk about the sex of the angels, among other subjects. However weird, his descriptions are most interesting, if not amusing to our 21st-century eyes.

Son of God, envies Adam and Eve and is surely plotting his revenge on the seduction of God's youngest beloved creatures. Raphael makes it clear that the primary couple must be ready to resist temptation.

“Thus measuring things in Heav'n by things on Earth
 At thy request, and that thou maist beware
 By what is past, to thee I have reveal'd
 What might have else to human Race bin hid;
 The discord which befel, and Warr in Heav'n
 Among th' Angelic Powers, and the deep fall
 Of those too high aspiring, who rebelld
 With *Satan*, hee who envies now thy state,
 Who now is plotting how he may seduce
 Thee also from obedience, that with him
 Bereavd of happiness thou maist partake
 His punishment, Eternal miserie;
 Which would be all his solace and revenge,
 As a despite don against the most High,
 Thee once to gaine Companion of his woe.
 But list'n not to his Temptations, warne
 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.” (PL 6.893-912)

Adam enjoys the angel's visit very much, and wants to benefit the most from it by investigating about his own origins. In Book VII, Raphael answers the first man's questions about the creation of the world, giving Adam a pictured account of the six days in which, by the Son of God, the universe was formed¹⁰. The descriptions are superbly detailed and so is the glory that the Son is given for his grand deeds, as the end of the Book brings the angels' praises to God's Son, worthy of all honors.

¹⁰ The vivid description of how God created the world and everything in it makes the reading of Book VII one of the most delightful of the whole poem. But it is not only that which makes this particular account so special. However unfortunate it is that there is no room in this monograph for such a discussion, it is worth paying attention to Milton's understanding of Creation, which seems different from the dogma accepted by both Catholic and Protestant theologians at the time: the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*, or creation out of nothing. Milton agrees with the dogma of creation by the word of God, but he seems to understand God Himself as the primary matter out of which everything else derives (in fact that is explicit in Raphael's discourse in Book 5.469-479). That concept is developed later, in 19th-century German theologian Schleiermacher's work. Schleiermacher would say that all created things are like a drop that spilled out from the ocean of the infinite, and that ocean would be God. For him creation emanates out from God. Some years after that, Einstein would have an almost spiritual experience when he figured that all matter is composed by energy, and that this energy is similar to the wave of sound. Well, according to Milton's account, there was music on creation, and creation itself was performed by the word of God... The Quantum Theory is a development of that and those amazing descriptions of Milton's in Book VII of *Paradise Lost* suggest that he is very much ahead of his time.

However, if Raphael happily agrees to give Adam the details about the world origin, he does not do so when Adam speculates about other planets and the way other orbs move and function. The angel tells him that he should mind more important issues, the more practical ones, the ones that concern him and his wife and their life in Paradise:

“To ask or search I blame thee not, for Heav'n
Is as the Book of God before thee set,
Wherein to read his wondrous Works, and learne
His Seasons, Hours, or Dayes, or Months, or Yeares:
This to attain, whether Heav'n move or Earth,
Imports not, if thou reck'n right, the rest
From Man or Angel the great Architect
Did wisely to conceal, and not divulge
His secrets to be scann'd by them who ought
Rather admire...” (PL 8.66-75)¹¹

As Adam does not want the angel's visit to end, he starts relating his memories of the beginning of his life in the Garden, first on his own, and later with his wife, towards whom he confesses to have immense love, but who he will never be enslaved by (even though later on is precisely this love towards her that keeps him from being loyal to his Creator). Raphael recommends that Adam should always devote his tender affection to the one God had given him as a partner, but he must remember that physical passion does not make him different from the “brutes”; it is by reason that man is closer to God. And it is to God in the first place that man or woman should devote their hearts.

“In loving thou dost well, in passion not,
Wherein true Love consists not; love refines
The thoughts, and heart enlarges, hath his seat
In Reason, and is judicious, is the scale
By which to heav'nly Love thou maist ascend,
Not sunk in carnal pleasure, for which cause
Among the Beasts no Mate for thee was found. [...]
Be strong, live happie, and love, but first of all
Him whom to love is to obey, and keep

¹¹ It is interesting that Milton puts such words in Raphael's mouth, for the discussions about the universe were seething at the time. It is known that in his journey to Italy, still at very early age, Milton had met Galileo, who was responsible for many of the most important astronomic discoveries of the time, and was condemned by the Catholic Church to reclusion in his own home. For some reason, older scholar Milton dismisses such issues as less important and determinant to one's life, although he incorporates some of his personal knowledge about natural sciences in the account of creation and even, as mentioned, tends to suggest a concept of creation that is further ahead in the scientific discussions. It would be fascinating to try to find out why Milton's Raphael approached the matter this way. It might be that pre-fall Adam should not speculate about so many things, as the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was the forbidden one. But could it be a subtle criticism towards merciless Inquisition, which deprived people from their freedom or life when they asked too many questions that could shake the institutionalized truths regarding nature and science? Intriguing.

His great command; take heed lest Passion sway
 Thy Judgment to do aught, which else free Will
 Would not admit; thine and of all thy Sons
 The weal or woe in thee is plac't; beware." (*PL* 8.588-594; 633-638)

After some more words of disclosure on the same matter, Raphael leaves the Garden and Adam then returns to his wife, who would rather hear all that the angel had to say by her beloved husband's mouth.

The final admonitions of the angel are extremely relevant at this point, for it is in Book IX that the actual fall takes place, and Adam's failure shows to be not of a deceived one, but of someone who makes an erroneous choice, who devotes loyalty to the wrong being.

It is in Book IX that Adam and Eve condemn themselves to the loss of Paradise. Satan enters the Garden again and, taking the form of mist, embodies a sleeping serpent. Adam and Eve have their first argument, not in the sense that they fight, but that they disagree about something and both stand up for their point of view. Eve understands that their work would be much more productive if they shared it and worked separately. Adam considers that the amount of production is not the only aim of their working together, but all the sharing of words, smiles and affectionate looks are important as well, as part of their well being. Besides, he fears that, by herself, she would be much more exposed to the influence of their enemy, about whom they had been so energetically warned by angel Raphael.

Eve feels rather offended in her dignity, as Adam insinuates that she is more vulnerable than he is, that she would not be able to prove her valor if temptation showed itself. Adam finally agrees to her suggestion, and they spend the morning apart.

The snake approaches Eve, stares at her with awe, and once it gets the woman's attention, it gains her appreciation by flattery. Eve is charmed by the animal, and after some time, she asks the serpent how it was possible that a "brute" could speak as a human being. Satan, then, tells Eve that it was a fruit from a tree in the Garden that had made it possible, and Eve is eager to know which of the trees of the garden would bear such a fruit. The serpent volunteers to take the woman to the tree, and once they get to the place, Eve recognizes the forbidden pome and tells the animal that the journey there was useless as they, Adam and Eve, were denied, from all trees in the garden, the fruit of that one, for it would bring death upon them.

The reptile, then, starts reasoning with Eve, showing her that the forbidden fruit just made it good, as it could not speak, and now it is able to communicate as a human being. It describes to the woman how the fruit has opened its sight and mind, and that such effects could not be of any harm. Perhaps God would be proud of Eve if she demonstrated that she had acknowledged with the help from no one that, by eating the fruit, she would become wise. Or maybe (there is the point on which Satan gets Eve to doubt God's goodness and fairness) God does not want to share wisdom and all the advantages that it could bring with other beings. Perhaps he is a vain and selfish deity.

Eve is convinced. She takes the fruit and eats it. She feels powerful, and praises the tree which would allow her, day by day, to become something close to a goddess. She feels superior to Adam, she feels that God cannot prevent her from developing herself any longer. She even considers not sharing the news with Adam, and by that be dominant, subdue him, rule over him. But then she is taken by the fear that perhaps God would fulfill his promise of condemning her to death and is overcome with jealousy. Adam could be given a new wife, and she would be dead. Unable to bear such thought, Eve decides to persuade her husband into trying the fruit as well and heads back towards him, now without making a curtsy to the tree.

Meanwhile, Adam is waiting for her full of expectation, as they had never been apart before. He prepares a garland to adorn her beautiful hair and sets his way to meet her, for he feels some discomfort for not being able to be by her side and protect her from any risks. When they come together, Eve tries to sound natural, but the text says that her face brings her excuse (*PL* 9.853). Eve tells Adam everything that happened, and he is horrified. He tells her so, and understands that once the tragedy had taken place, nothing could ever be as before. They are doomed, creation is doomed too. Adam consciously chooses to follow Eve in her sin, not because he is fooled or charmed by her, but because he cannot bear the idea of going on living if she is dead. Even if God gives him a new mate, the void from the rib out of which the Creator had formed her would forever hurt and never be forgotten. Destruction has not come over her yet, and he considers the possibility that the death they had been told of might not be so final, so devastating. Adam reaches the conclusion that whatever Eve is condemned to suffer he is freely making the option to endure as well.

He takes a fruit from the branch that she has brought with her and eats it. Again, Earth trembles and nature groans (*PL* 9.1000-1001). Lust is what immediately follows, and they join

their bodies in, up till then, unknown level of carnal passion, and are delighted by the new sensations they have just experienced. However, once they wake up from a bad sleep, they are filled with shame, guilt, confusion and horror. They finally understand that with innocence, peace and freedom are also gone. What they thought to be freedom showed to be slavery. They are doomed to a state in which they do not feel whole any more.

Inevitably, what comes next is an angry argument between the two, each blaming the other for their present state. He blames her for striding apart, she attributes to him all the guilt, for he should have used his authority to stop her from going away in the first place. None of them admits to be made responsible and that goes on endlessly.

“Thus they in mutual accusation spent
The fruitless hours, but neither self-condemning,
And of thir vain contest appeer'd no end.” (PL 9.1187-1189)

In Book X the angels that have been guarding Paradise go back to Heaven and are not blamed by God for any of what has happened, for they had no power to prevent Satan from tempting Eve, Eve from being deceived and Adam from choosing Eve over his Creator. God sends his Son to judge the couple as well as the serpent, and by sensing His proximity, Adam and Eve hide. They are already aware of their nudity, and have covered themselves with leaves. The Son calls for Adam, who up till then had been keen on the heavenly visitor.

“Where art thou Adam, wont with joy to meet
My coming seen far off? I miss thee here...” (PL 10.103-104)

Adam and Eve appear. Their sin, their guilt, their discomfort is visible.

“He came, and with him *Eve*, more loth, though first
To offend, discount'nanc't both, and discompos'd;
Love was not in thir looks, either to God
Or to each other, but apparent guilt,
And shame, and perturbation, and despaire,
Anger, and obstinacie, and hate, and guile.” (PL 10.109-114)

The Son confronts them and then pronounces the sentence. The woman will undergo much pain and trouble to procreate. Man will have to sweat to earn his and his progeny's livelihood. The soil is cursed. It will grow thorns and thistles and subject man to exhausting

work. The serpent is condemned to grovel upon its belly, and in the future will be bruised on the head by the “seed” of woman.¹²

The Son of God, after having pronounced the sentence to each one of the individuals involved in the horrid event of the Fall, mercifully covers the nakedness of the ashamed couple with animal skins and returns to Heaven.

By this time Satan has already fled from the Garden. His offspring, Death and Sin, want to join him in Earth, but meet him halfway, when they are trying to form a bridge over Chaos. Back in Pandemonium, Satan tells his victories to the other demons, but instead of the applause he eagerly expected, he only hears hisses. A sea of serpents is in front of him.

In the place where once was Paradise, Adam mourns his condition, and Eve persists in consoling him. After much conversation, she seems to make him feel a little calmer. She proposes that they do not have children, in order to not perpetuate the doom to which they have been condemned. Adam, however, remembers the words of the Son and is filled with the hope that come from the promises of the redemption that He had made.

The Son advocates in favor of Adam and Eve in Book XI, by stating that they regret their disobedience. God, even though accepting their repentance, affirms that they have to be expelled. For that, He sends angel Michael who, before properly getting them out of the Garden, takes Adam to a hill and shows him the future. The story goes up to the flood in Book XI, and goes on from Patriarch Abraham up to the birth of Jesus, his death, resurrection, the history of Christianity and finally the second coming of Christ.

Adam is consoled. He understands that he has lost Paradise, but also recognizes God’s mercy towards himself and his wife. Hand in hand, Adam and Eve leave Eden, and look forward to the future, in which all of Gods promises will be fulfilled.

¹² That is the *proto-evangelion* or “first gospel” in which the redemption of humankind is already predicted in the third chapter of the Bible (Genesis 3.15: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”). Milton takes it almost *ipsis litteris*.

5. ANALYSIS OF *PARADISE LOST* UNDER THE LIGHT OF MILTON'S THEOLOGY

5.1. *PARADISE LOST* AND THE FREEDOM OF ENGLISH CITIZENS

Paradise Lost might be, in some aspects, a political analogy. Jerrod Brown explores something that, in a first reading, catches the eye of any reader who is familiar with Christian doctrines; the fact that Milton treats the Son not exactly as part of the Holy Trinity, but as the excellence of God's creation. "Instead of being an equal to God, Jesus is more of a deputy to the Ruler of Creation." (BROWN, p. 12) Surely the author of *Paradise Lost* was aware of the doctrine of Trinity, as a good Puritan who had studied to become a clergyman, and who insisted that the Scripture should be used to interpret itself. However, according to Brown, Milton might have made this option to present the discrepancy between the Kingdom of Heaven and the kingdoms of Earth, demonstrating how far human societies are from the perfection that the heavenly society may be. God, as the supreme King is so *wholly Other*, as Karl Barth would say, so just and good, so great, perfect and wise, that nothing can be compared to Him. The Son, therefore, is someone who conquers His place in God's plan by merit. He is the chosen One, but He deserves it. He uses his free will to volunteer to redeem humankind. And it is the Son, not God, that deals with humanity (BROWN, p. 12). It is the Son who makes himself human. It is the Son who sacrifices. It is the Son that brings heavenly grace into a fallen world.¹³

In Brown's opinion, Milton's understanding might have been that if God in his benevolent sanctity steps back and lets the Son interact with Creation, the free will that created beings have (and that includes the Son himself, angels and humans) may bring failure but also the capacity for reasoning as well as the ability to improve, to learn and, in the course of History, to develop (BROWN, p. 14s).

Charles I was not, for sure, a King on God's model. Nor was Cromwell, for he also became a tyrant, neglecting the right that people had to freedom. To Brown, the whole

¹³ The presentation of the Son as the highest after God in the heavenly rank, which is the catalyzer of Satan's rebellion, is described in Book V of *Paradise Lost*. The idea that it is the Son who interacts with people is present especially in Book III, in which he chooses to sacrifice in order to redeem humankind, and in Book X, when he come to declare God's sentence to the fallen creatures. The Son also is the One sent to intervene when Gabriel and his angels do not manage to defeat Satan in the heavenly combat, in Book VI.

construction of the character Son in *Paradise Lost* (which Milton started to write after Cromwell's death and a little before Restoration) seems to show that, in a system that requires some kind of hierarchy and authority, there could be a ruler who made the right decisions and who would be willing to sacrifice on behalf of their subordinates (BROWN, p.15s).

Satan, in the poem, is the counterpart of the Son. Brown points that the leader of the fallen angels also seems to have built his position in Heaven, before the fall, by merit. In Hell, he is the most powerful one, because he overcomes all his subjects in strength and wit. Moreover, Satan is the one who volunteers to be in the front line in the battle between the fallen angels and God's angels, and it is him who embraces the endeavor of intruding God's creation to jeopardize it. Although that could seem praiseworthy, in his meritocratic system, Satan is the only one who deserves any credit for his deeds, he is the only one to succeed, he designs the mission and performs it. For him, it is "better to reign in Hell than serve in Heav'n" (*PL* 1.263), and that suggests that even though his greatest complaint is against God's tyranny, he, as the ruler in hell takes onto himself the right of being a tyrant as well.

Essentially, what Satan has established in Hell is a tyranny. Satan comes directly from the same group of angels that lost in their attempts to overthrow God and will not give up some of his own power to another to rule in his place. He does not see the possibility of one of his fellow creatures of Hell being as powerful as himself. Consequently, his meritocracy is set so that no one may rise above himself. The meritocracy that appears to be modeled after God's turns out to be a false, frozen one. (BROWN, p. 16)

Charles I was a tyrant, and when Cromwell, as a hero, reached power, he might have been at first "the chosen one", but his actions took him to a state of tyranny as well.

Perhaps due to Milton's political disappointments, *Paradise Lost* deals with hierarchy in a different way that he imagined as ideal by the time of his political militancy. Perhaps human society was not capable of living in total freedom, under no kind of authority whatsoever. Perhaps authority was necessary. But the kinds of authority Milton presents in the poem, the Son's and Satan's, are opposite to one another, and have radical consequences to every being that could be under them. There is no freedom under Satan's tyranny. However, there is hope and forgiveness under the leadership of the self-sacrificing Son, as it is developed below.

5.2. FREEDOM ACCORDING TO SATAN

The first two books of *Paradise Lost* are dedicated to Satan. In them, Milton gives voice to the once highest of all God's angels who is now an outcast and has to live in burning hell with his fellow rebels. Satan invests his rhetoric on blaming God for his current condition of horrid doom and questions the fairness of his creator on the idea that the punishments he is submitted to are due to God's tyrannical power.

The reason for Satan's expulsion from Heaven is right in the beginning of the poem, when Milton, immediately after invoking his Muse, presents the subject of the following verses by asking her who made the primary parents of humankind apostate from God. He then, introduces Satan and his sin: the wish to be equal to the Almighty.

Th' infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile
Stird 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 equal'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 Battel proud
With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power
Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' Ethereal Skie
With hideous ruine and combustion down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In Adamantine Chains and penal Fire,
Who durst defie th' Omnipotent to Arms. (*PL*, 1.34-49)

According to Benjamin Myers, the first theology or the knowledge about God in *Paradise Lost* comes from Satan (not from God or His angels), as in the Bible the serpent is the first to speak about God.¹⁴ It is Satan's opinion about God that the reader receives first, and so, there is no wonder that so many people read *Paradise Lost* through the eyes of the rebel and sympathize with him right away (MYERS, 2004, p. 96). "Within the structure of the poem's theodicy, the most important function of Books 1 and 2 is to offer an uncompromising portrayal of the kind of God whom one might feel the need to justify" (MYERS, 2004, p. 97).

¹⁴ Myers mentions Karl Barth, who stated that the serpent was the first theologian, because it was the first to speak about God and interpret His words (MYERS, 2006, p. 98).

Satan is the author of the accusation, of the representation of God as an autocrat. It is his point of view that appears in the first two books. Milton's Satan's eloquence is so convincing that one is easily led to commiserate and feel his pains. He has his own way of speaking about God, and even though the popular notoriety of this character would not, at first, allow the reader to trust him, his discourse is very seductive, making some of Milton's readers such as William Blake, who was also one of the poet's greatest admirers, assert that Milton was of Satan's party without knowing it.

Any non-canonical representation of God and anything about him is called, in Theology, a heresy. If Satan, in his discourse, portrays an untruth image of God, he can be called heretic. Even though his being a heretic could be questioned in one's reading of *Paradise Lost*, many theologians have attributed to Satan all possible heresies. Myers sets an overview on many religious scholars previous to Milton and shows that most of them ascribed to Satan, God's enemy, the inspiration for any heretic teaching, and that includes Augustine and Luther (MYERS, 2004, p. 99). Therefore, that makes of the rebel angel not only the first theologian, but also the first heretic. As Myers states: "as the first theologian, Satan is also the first heretic – the first to use bad theology as an instrument of blasphemy" (MYERS, 2004, p. 100). However, one cannot forget that, as interesting as this parallel may be, Milton's work is not theological but literary, and within the poem it is hardly possible to label any speech by any character as either heresy or dogma. It is worth pointing out, though, that Satan, in the first two books, gives a portrait of God that is his own only.

Myers also points out the similarities between Satan's discourse about God and the Calvinist's understanding of the Almighty's powers. He develops a discussions in which he tries to show that "this 'Satanic theology' takes the form of a parodic exaggeration of Calvinism, in which God appears as an ethically arbitrary tyrant whose absolute power undermines both his own goodness and the freedom of his creatures" (MYERS, 2004, p. 102). The words Satan uses to speak about God just in Book I are very similar to those that could be attributed to any human despot: "Omnipotent" (1.49), "Monarch" (1.638), "the Conquerour" (1.323), "Potent Victor" (1.95), the one who oppressively inflicts pains and suffering to his subjects (MYERS, 2004, p. 103-104).

Myers seems to have a point here. Calvin might not have wanted to call God a torturer. However, his understanding of the impossibility of creatures' free will and the supremacy of God's arbitrary predestination approximates Satan of the Puritans' father. If Milton had or not

in mind this particular parallel is something that one cannot state. Nevertheless, it seems to exist. God as an arbitrary ruler who determines the fate of His creatures is Satan's (and, roughly speaking, also Calvin's), not Milton's.

One cannot mention the rage with which Satan refers to God as a tyrant without taking into account his virtual short lapse of repentance in Book IV, as mentioned in chapter 4 of this monograph. Although Satan is convicted that it is better to rule in Hell than to be subject to God in Heaven, deep inside he knows and admits that there is no way of being really free apart from the One who created him and to Whom he would be always indebted. More than that, he admits that God is worthy of everything that he demands from his creatures, and that all praise should be given as a result of love and gratitude. And these seem to be the attitudes that Satan lacks and decides not to open himself to being invaded by them in a humble encounter with God. It is possible to suggest, then, that Satan's acknowledges that the freedom he once fought for is a fake one. And so is God's presumed tyranny. In fact, by Satan's vehement assertion that he would rather rule in Hell than obeying in Heaven, he demonstrates that his fight for freedom is in detriment of others' liberty. The result of his so desired freedom could be despotic leadership over his fellow angels. The Bible does say that Satan is the father of lies: "Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8.44). Milton's Satan might be giving us the hint that Apostle John is not mistaken about him.

5.3. FREEDOM ACCORDING TO GOD AND HIS SON

Third book of *Paradise Lost* gives voice to God. In Books I and II He is accused. Now Milton starts the "justification of the ways of God to man".

Before any discussion, it is important to mention that in *Paradise Lost* freedom is primarily God's prerogative. The fact that He is a free entity is not questioned. All of His actions are fruit of His own will. He creates the angels out of His own will. He then creates the world and humankind in His liberty of performing wondrous deeds by means of His Almighty power. However, there is a tendency in Milton's poem to reassert again and again that even though

God's will establishes His actions, He does not determine or provoke the actions of his creatures. That appears in Raphael's discourse in Book V, and here in Book III it is God that emphasizes the freedom that He himself granted to all created beings, angels or humans, to make their own choices, either to be obedient and grateful or to rebel and turn away from their Creator. Lines 103-119 of Book III have already been quoted in chapter 3.4. In that part of the Book God and the Son are watching Satan approach the recently formed planet Earth. God has already started to reveal to His Son the intents of the enemy, and in his foreknowledge, mentioned to the Son that Adam and Eve will fall too. He explains that although He knows what is going to happen, He is not to be held responsible, for His creatures were gifted with free will, and would make ill use of it. In the mentioned lines, God affirms that there is no use in praise and obedience out of love. If creatures are not given the freedom to make their own choices, their love would never show itself into attitude, and so there would be no meaningful active relationship between them and their Creator, but passive obedience.

I form'd them free, and free they must remain,
Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change
Thir nature, and revoke the high Decree
Unchangeable, Eternal, which ordain'd
Thir freedom, they themselves ordain'd thir fall. (*PL* 3.124-128)

God is aware of the misuse of freedom, both by the fallen angels and later by humans, and he allows the disobedient acts of will to take place, He has not and will not prevent them, because he wants loving and grateful, not coerced obedience. Nevertheless, it is not possible for God to foreknow every possible tragedy and not do something about it. What he does in Book III is mainly discuss with the Son the solution for the problem of people's corruption of their free will. And that he does before any fall has actually happened.

God states, in the lines that follow:

The first sort by thir own suggestion fell,
Self-tempted, self-deprav'd: Man falls deceiv'd
By the other first: Man therefore shall find grace,
The other none: in Mercy and Justice both,
Through Heav'n and Earth, so shall my glorie excel,
But Mercy first and last shall brightest shine. (*PL* 3.129-134)

Apparently God makes a difference between the angels' fall and man and woman's. The angels have fallen out of sheer rebellion. In Book IV Satan has a chance to repent, but does not. Adam and Eve, however, will be tempted and deceived, and therefore they "shall find

grace". God's foreknowledge of the fall and previous intention to pardon man and woman is believed by the Calvinists and Puritans as basis for the doctrine of Predestination. Although both aspects appear in *Paradise Lost*, Milton contradicts this dogma. He seems to be closer to the belief of universal election, which consists in the availability of God's grace to all people.

Still in Book III, after the Son's praise to God's mercy, in which he declares to be sure that God has a plan to rescue humankind from their state of damnation, the Father reiterates His intent:

Man shall not quite be lost, but sav'd who will,
Yet not of will in him, but grace in me... (PL 3.173-174)

God's will is essential here. It is by His will that man and woman will be offered salvation. He has in Himself the desire and the determination to save his creature, but does not count on the fallen human beings for it, but only on his freely offered grace to those He has elected. However, election here appears to be for all human beings, even though there is the possibility of some reject and despise God's clemency.

Some I have chosen of peculiar grace
Elect above the rest; so is my will:
The rest shall hear me call, and oft be warn'd
Thir sinful state, and to appease betimes
Th' incens'd Deitie while offerd grace
Invites; for I will cleer thir senses dark,
What may suffice, and soft'n stonie hearts
To pray, repent, and bring obedience due.
[...]
This my long sufferance and my day of grace
They who neglect and scorn, shall never taste;
But hard be hard'nd, blind be blinded more,
That they may stumble on, and deeper fall;
And none but such from mercy I exclude. (PL 3.183-190; 198-202)

Much has been discussed about the first two lines of this excerpt. It might give the first impression that here Milton stands for the Calvinist/Puritan doctrine of predestination and its branches of election and reprobation. However, in the third line Milton's God mentions a "rest" who seem to be the rest of people, all people. Those first elected might be people who God has chosen for great achievements, like prophets, apostles, martyrs and so on, who would be gifted with "peculiar grace". The "rest", then, could be ordinary people, the whole crowd of human beings that are not deprived from God's loving invitation to accept His benevolence.

There will be, nonetheless the ones rejected, but that will be due only to their own hardness and negligence when it comes to embracing God's offer of salvation.

Here Milton alludes to Luther's understanding of predestination. The German reformer believed that people are predestined for salvation, that God's mercy extends itself to the whole of humankind. He does not agree that God has previously determined who will be damned. Neither does he believe that it is in human will the power to overcome sin and turn back to God.¹⁵ Man and woman depend on God's benevolence only.

Benevolence is not enough, however. God is also just. He continues his discourse by saying that people's hideous crime needs punishment, and that means death. He challenges all heavenly beings by asking who could be the vehicle of that mercy He wants to reach out to humankind. That is when the Son, who had already been active on creation, is now also active on redemption. And that is also the point where the Son, who so far has executed all of the Father's requests, freely offers himself as sacrifice on behalf of human creatures.

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 glorie next to thee
Freely put off, and for him lastly dye
Well pleas'd, on me let Death wreck all his rage... (*PL* 3.236-241)

If up till now there could be any doubt about God's free will to grant people's freedom from sin, from death, from damnation, the Son, who derived from the Father, ends it. In his freedom the Son chooses to empty himself from the glories of Heaven and to suffer people's punishment so that human freedom can be restored.

5.4. FREEDOM ACCORDING TO RAPHAEL

In Book V God sends Raphael do admonish Adam (and by extension, Eve) to stand firm against the possible attacks from Satan. The timing is rather appropriate, since in that very morning Eve had cried because of a bad dream, caused by the rebel angel's whispers in her ear. Even though Adam had guessed that such a disturbance could only come from evil,

¹⁵ It is in the possibility of free acceptance and rejection, though, that Milton seems to diverge from Luther, and that will be discussed in topic 5.5.

neither he nor she had the slightest idea about who or what evil was, or where “it” came from (PL 5.98-99). Raphael has the mission to explain to Adam the dangers he and his wife are facing and to provide them with enough understanding of their responsibility in avoiding evil and being faithful to God. According to God’s messenger, if Adam, Eve and their progeny remained faithful, they would eventually become ethereal, like angels. At this point, Adam is shocked, not with the possibility of maybe changing natures, but with the idea that it is possible to disobey:

[...]But say,
 What meant that caution joind, *if ye be found*
Obedient? can we want obedience then
 To him, or possibly his love desert
 Who formd us from the dust, and plac'd us here
 Full to the utmost measure of what bliss
 Human desires can seek or apprehend? (PL 5.512-518)

Raphael then presents to Adam the gift of freedom, which he had not acknowledged so far. It is a gift, but it can jeopardize paradisiacal happiness. There were beings who fell, and that risk is the onus of such blessing.

To whom the Angel. Son of Heav'n and Earth,
 Attend: That thou art happie, owe to God;
 That thou continu'st such, owe to thy self,
 That is, to thy obedience; therein stand.
 This was that caution giv'n thee; be advis'd.
 God made thee perfet, not immutable;
 And good he made thee, but to persevere
 He left it in thy power, ordaind thy will
 By nature free, not over-rul'd by Fate
 Inextricable, or strict necessity;
 Our voluntarie service he requires,
 Not our necessitated, such with him
 Finds no acceptance, nor can find, for how
 Can hearts, not free, be tri'd whether they serve
 Willing or no, who will but what they must
 By Destinie, and can no other choose?
 Myself and all th' Angelic Host that stand
 In sight of God enthron'd, our happie state
 Hold, as you yours, while our obedience holds;
 On other surety none; freely we serve
 Because we freely love, as in our will
 To love or not; in this we stand or fall:
 And Som are fall'n, to disobedience fall'n,
 And so from Heav'n to deepest Hell; O fall
 From what high state of bliss into what woe! (PL 5.519-543)

This discourse of Raphael's is a kind of summary of what God himself stated in Book III: creatures are free, they are not obliged to obey, but free to lovingly respond to God's love and greatness. The happiness man and woman have been granted is owed to their Creator only. The maintenance of such state, however, depends on themselves. They are free to obey or not, but by choosing wrong, their freedom will no longer be.

Free to obey. It seems rather contradictory. However, if one considers Milton's theological framework, they might find some sense in this speech. Augustine's confession that people were made by God and that human heart only finds its rest in their Creator has an echo in these lines. It might also be recalled in Book IV, when Satan struggles against his nostalgic memories of blissful life in Heaven. According to Augustine's confession cited above, however pride, rebellion, unconformity with the state of being subject may assault God's creatures, there is no sense of completeness, of fully being oneself, apart from the One to Whom all life is owed. Not even Satan could deny that even though he was separated from God for eternity, he would always owe his existence to his Creator.

Another character who shares this understanding is Angel Abdiel. He seems to believe that God, in his place as Creator, demands obedience from his creatures, but not in a despotic way, if one takes into account that those who believe that life comes from God, by renouncing God they are in fact refusing life.

According to Raphael, Angel Abdiel understands that when he is incited to join Satan and the other rebels in war. He pleads that Satan puts himself in his place, the place of creature, not of Creator. He questions on what grounds Satan finds himself able to dispute shoulder by shoulder the authority with God, when God declares his Son to be the highest in hierarchy apart from the Himself. Satan cannot admit to be second to anyone whatsoever, and decides to fight God for it. Abdiel confronts him:

Shalt thou give Law to God, shalt thou dispute
With him the points of libertie, who made
Thee what thou art, and formd the Pow'rs of Heav'n
Such as he pleasd, and circumscrib'd thir being?
Yet by experience taught we know how good,
And of our good, and of our dignitie
How provident he is, how farr from thought
To make us less, bent rather to exalt
Our happie state under one Head more neer
United. [...](PL 5.822-831)

In other words, who is the creature to mistrust the decisions of the Creator, Whom they know as being essentially good? It is known that Satan does not recognize the goodness of God. But on what grounds? Probably on the grounds of selfish pride. Abdiel continues in his attempt to break Satan's ego by telling him that not only is the Son the Chosen One, but he is also the One through Him all things were created, including the angels, thus, including Satan.

As by his Word the mighty Father made
All things, ev'n thee, and all the Spirits of Heav'n
By him created in thir bright degrees,
Crownd them with Glory, and to thir Glory nam'd
Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Vertues, Powers,
Essential Powers, nor by his Reign obscur'd,
But more illustrious made, since he the Head
One of our number thus reduc't becomes,
His Laws our Laws, all honour to him done
Returns our own. (*PL* 5.836-845)

And then again a chance of repentance is offered: Abdiel urges rebel Satan to seek God's pardon.

Cease then this impious rage,
And tempt not these; but hast'n to appease
Th' incensed Father, and th' incensed Son,
While Pardon may be found in time besought. (*PL* 5.845-848)

To Raphael, there is freedom to obey, freedom to accept one's state based on the love and justice that is found in the Creator. Whoever doubts that has growing within themselves the seed of rebellion, and that means distance from the Creator, which leads to meaninglessness and thus, unhappiness.

5.5. FREEDOM AFTER FALL

Satan doubted God's goodness. And the same doubt that Satan cultivated within himself, he planted on Eve's heart, in Eden, when he led her to believe that God did not want anyone to be as great as He is. Doubt took also hold of Adam, when he did not believe that God could take care of him if he lost Eve, and that he would never be able to feel whole again. Doubt brought disobedience, and disobedience produced fall and punishment.

As mentioned earlier, in Book III Milton alludes to the impossibility of a fallen creature approach God or fight their "foul exorbitant desires" (*PL* 3.177). Yet, they are invited to accept

God's grace, and that is turned into reality in the Son's free will that drew him to exchange his life for fallen creatures' in redeeming sacrifice.

Milton seems to believe that the main aspect of freedom that could be granted to people after fall is that of choosing between accepting or not the forgiving grace that comes from the Son's free act of love, as it appears in God and the Son's dialogue mentioned in the topic of freedom according to God.

Here Milton apparently diverges from both Calvin and Luther. Calvin believed in predestination to either election or reprobation. Luther believed in predestination for salvation, but not in free will concerning the matter. As mentioned above, in *The servo arbitrio* Luther asserts that fallen men and women are bound to their status of fallen creatures, and only God by his Spirit is able to rescue a person from that state. For him, no human will is capable of such deed. Milton's approach to the matter of free will after fall seems closer to Arminius', a Dutch theologian that lived in the second half of the sixteenth century. He was a sectarian from Calvinism, and that believed that "sufficient grace is bestowed on everyone in this fallen world so that all can choose to accept the offer of salvation or not" (Danielson, 1982, p. 165).

However, Milton alludes to Luther ideas on the importance he gives to obedience. Once a person responds to God, according to Luther they are free to obey. In the *Treatise on Good Works* Luther states that there is nothing in humans' realm that can be done to gain salvation, but once a person has accepted God's forgiveness through the Son by faith, they are free to serve God and their fellow human beings. Luther felt the need to write that treatise in times in which the official Church was profiting from people's fear of Hell by the selling of indulgences. Luther calls the believers back to Scripture, in which they might find out that God's mercy is available for anyone who accepts it by faith, and once the person has no need to worry about salvation, they are free to serve, free to obey, free to enjoy the fulfillment that comes from a true relationship between creature and Creator, the One in Whom one's heart may find its rest.

The final two Books of *Paradise Lost* suggest that there is another kind of freedom: the freedom to hope, to bravely face the consequences of erroneous choices whilst keeping an eye on the promises of a complete regeneration. Adam and Eve leave the Garden hand in hand with a whole future ahead of them, a future that, as shown by Angel Michael, would be

spotted by the signs of fall all the way through the glorious day in which the relation between earth and Heaven would be fully restored.

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Let us start again. Milton's intention with *Paradise Lost* was to justify the ways of God to men. In more than 11.000 blank verses, Milton might have been successful in his intent, depends on the eyes of the reader. After all, a justification of God by any means is a matter of faith. Milton does develop the theme in a logical way, and taking into account that between Heaven and Earth there is much more than human reason can explain, Milton's attempt was at least fascinating.

However, Milton seems to have taken benefit from the opportunity to justify many other things that perhaps would not have been so eloquently demonstrated on a round table or a friendly conversation with the theologians that most influenced him.

Despite of the fact that he was a Puritan who embraced the Roundheads' party in a crucial moment of English history, and even though he exhaustively studied the Bible, the Fathers' and the Reformers' theological writings, Milton gives the impression throughout the poem that he felt to be allowed to expose his own ideas, his agreements and disagreements with his theological predecessors and also to take the risk to seem something of a heretic in order to make people think... all in the name of good literature.

It seems plausible to conclude that Milton was a Puritan in his political activity, but not in his religious beliefs. He disagrees with Calvin in the central dogmatic issues of free will and predestination. Not only does he disagree, but he insistently reiterates through many different voices that to him, the goodness of God would not allow Him to play with people's fate nor with their faith, that the benevolence of God goes far beyond any attitude of rebellion, and that there is hope for those who cling to His love.

In many ways, Milton seems to show a tendency to sympathize with Lutheran doctrines, especially when it comes to the subject of predestination. People, according to Luther and Milton, are predestined to be saved. However, the two of them disagree on to what extent free will plays a roll in the consolidation of salvation. Milton seems closer to Jakobus Arminius' thoughts, who believed the Creator had left a little of the unfallen free will left in each person, so that they could actually make their choice without anyone's interference, not even the Spirit of God's. Luther and Milton might be in the same track, though, when it comes to the understanding of real freedom. In the poem "freedom" is one

of the most recurrent words. It seems to be the major theme of the piece, once it is in the core of the need that Milton feels to justify God. God's accuser, Satan, sees Him as a tyrant. It seems fair that Milton tirelessly highlights God's freedom and the freedom that God grants.

The concept of freedom that Milton develops throughout *Paradise Lost* starts in a selfish search for freedom, Satan's desired liberty to be second to none, to be equal to God and to rule despotically over others. Then there is the freedom of happiness that creatures had in their state of innocence or, in the case of the angels, before they rebelled: the freedom that comes from a state of humble subjection to God, the Creator, and that can be misused and consequently lost. But there is also the freedom to empty and sacrifice oneself on behalf of others, and that is explored by Milton in the character Son, whose attitudes also seem to depict what a true ruler should be in order to grant freedom to their subject citizens.

Finally, what is left for humans is the freedom to obey. Milton apparently echoes Luther on this, but he enhances Luther's doctrine with the reinforcement of Augustine's idea that there is no meaning in a creature's life away from their Creator. Milton alludes to that several times, and in the end, it is under the protection of their God that Adam and Eve leave the Garden. Hand in hand, they walk away, not free from their loss of innocence, but free for a new start in a life made of hardships, but with their eyes focused on the promise that freedom would be concrete in the day of the final redemption, when they would definitively be united to their Creator, the One who 11.000 verses earlier, seemed to need justification.

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