

Kaeley DeLuca

Dr. Ainsworth

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Satan and *The Temptations*

Abstract: This paper analyzes the degree of influence Satan's temptations have on both Jesus and Eve. This paper compares Eve's disobedience in Paradise Lost to Jesus's obedience in Paradise Regained and further discusses whether Milton's God gave humans free will, or predetermined their original sin. It investigates the parallel between Eve's decisions and eventual fall to temptation, and Jesus's actions and his salvation of humanity. Conclusively, this paper asserts that Eve and Jesus represent the opposite ends of the spectrum of humanity.

Throughout *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, Milton chose to change or add controversial pieces to the puzzle of Genesis and Luke. He adds multiple perspectives, characters, and changes to the biblical recount of the fall from Eden and Satan's temptation of Christ, which arguably intensifies the level of disobedience Adam and Eve achieved. His version of scriptural texts accentuate his messages of free will and obedience/disobedience. *Paradise Lost* features the addition of Eve's dream, depicting her committing original sin, which eventually lead to the fall of humanity whereas *Paradise Regained* adds to the depth of the first disobedience, highlighting Jesus's ability to reject Satan's temptations, providing us with what could be interpreted as humanity's salvation.

Book five of *Paradise Lost* opens with Eve's awakening from a dream of "offense and trouble" (*Paradise Lost* 5: 34). After being visited by "One shap'd and wing'd like one of those from Heav'n," Eve finds herself in the company of what she believes to be an angel tempting her

with the fruit of knowledge (*Paradise Lost* 5: 55). The angel however – as Milton has informed us – is Satan himself. Satan refers directly to her as “Angelic *Eve*” promoting her to a God-like position, one which Eve had (until then) not received (*Paradise Lost* 5: 74). Satan also states, ever so matter-of-factly, that the fruit brings about God-like qualities which can only be beneficial. Why would there be harm in elevating your status and knowledge within the universe? “Forbidd’n here, it seems, as only fit / For Gods, yet able to make Gods of Men: / And why not Gods of Men, since good, the more / Communicated, more abundant grows, / The Author not impair’d, but honor’d more?” (*Paradise Lost* 5: 69-73). Satan argues that knowledge cannot hinder you but make you better, make you more aware, grant you more insight, which can only be good. This also displays Satan’s internal belief that his status is comparable to God’s: his power is equal, and his understanding of the universe is greater than God himself. This is extremely dangerous because it increases his appeal to Eve. Since Eve is already questioning her own status and God’s judgement, a knowledgeable and rebellious Satan who denounces God’s judgement and provides a window into angelic status, seems trustworthy and charismatic, likened to a leader she is ready to follow. This shift in following invariably moves her further from God.

Eve decides to partake in eating the fruit and she and Satan ascend “up to the Clouds” (*Paradise Lost* 5: 86). Yet she recounts to Adam that “suddenly / My Guide was gone, and I, methought, sunk down, / And fell asleep” (*Paradise Lost* 5: 90-92). She directly refers to Satan as her guide, and almost solemnly remembers him leaving her to fall down to Earth to sleep. Adam of course is saddened by this, he believes “That what in sleep thou didst abhor to dream, / Waking thou never wilt consent to do” (*Paradise Lost* 5: 120-121). Yet he either chooses to ignore her almost reminiscent account of her dream or dismisses it to make himself feel better.

Either way, he's clearly affected by her thoughts of disobedience, and asks Raphael about the concept of obedience itself. Raphael willingly informs Adam that while he and Eve have "thy will / By nature free" they can still fall to disobedience, and therefore fall "from Heav'n to deepest Hell" (*Paradise Lost* 5: 526-527, 542). This clarifies Milton's argument that mankind has free will to choose, but to choose God means to live life in the light of Heaven, outshining the personal hell that one can create for oneself when distanced from God.

Milton adds Eve's dream to create a level of uncertainty between Eve and her trust in God. In the dream, Eve follows Satan through paradise to the Tree of Knowledge. Not only is she choosing to follow his steps quite literally, but she also seems to be following his lead on a more spiritual note. She is openly and freely choosing to follow Satan, which distances herself from God. Because of this addition, Milton is giving evidence that her relationship with God is more distant than Adam's relationship with God, which therefore leads to the fall from Eden. What our job is as the reader is to interpret his message behind adding this to his *Genesis*. His *Paradise Lost*.

Milton asks us to think for ourselves. That's the whole point. God has already predetermined Adam and Eve's fall from the garden, but Milton is trying to express when we are far from God, it is upsetting. Thus, Raphael's message of disobedience and the invariable fall from heaven into hell. This also questions hell as a construct. Satan had "The Hell within him, for within him Hell / He brings" (*Paradise Lost* 4: 20-21). Milton made it clear that Satan's hell is personal, because it is the hell he created for himself by disobeying and choosing to leave God. This is Milton's way of not only warning that the further from God one falls, the more miserable they are, but the worse off they are because of the hell they have created for

themselves. This extends to his belief that the Church of England was in and of itself far from God because of the corrupted and sinful clergy members.

While Satan argues that we can't possibly grow and learn things if we can't think for ourselves, he misses the point that God was trying to make all along. Yes, God knew that Adam and Eve were going to fall, but they had to so that humanity could be saved. "Man falls deceiv'd / By th' other first: Man therefore shall find grace, / The other none" (*Paradise Lost* 3: 130-132). Adam and Eve fell because of deception, not simply because they decided on their own to disobey God. God knew that they would inevitably eat the fruit, but in doing so, they would realize their mistake and search for Him on their own account, not because they felt obligated to.

That is his proof that we have free will. Milton argues that God wants us to choose him because *we* want to. Quite honestly, that applies to humanity as well. We want to feel wanted not because we are the only option, but because we were consciously chosen. Milton includes this dream because it serves as the perfect example of free will. Eve has a dream about the temptation of the forbidden fruit. Raphael comes to Earth to directly warn Adam and Eve that Satan himself will come to Earth and attempt to tempt them with the fruit, so be careful as to not fall to temptation. Yet Eve invariably falls to temptation, even after being warned, because of her *desire* to choose for herself. This highlights the almost childlike behaviors of humanity, which require reprimand, but are also granted forgiveness.

Milton includes this dream as it serves as evidence that Eve already had knowledge of right and wrong, a simple extension of Good and Evil, which is the knowledge granted to humanity when the forbidden fruit is consumed. This means Eve already has a concept of Good and Evil, furthering the argument that she and Adam have free will. Adam and Eve refer to God as the "Parent of good" and Adam regards Eve's "uncouth dream, of evil sprung," with such

disdain that undeniably proves Adam and Eve are aware of Evil and Good before tasting the fruit (*Paradise Lost* 5: 153, 98). Yet she still chose to eat the fruit even though she knew it was wrong. This contradictory interpretation leads to the conclusion that maybe the fruit itself didn't reveal a knowledge of Good or Evil. Satan's eventual temptation of Eve, "who enclos'd / Knowledge of Good and Evil in this Tree, / That who so eats thereof, forthwith attains / Wisdom without their leave? and wherein lies / Th' offense, that Man should thus attain to know?" refers directly to the tree as the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (*Paradise Lost* 9: 722-726). The fruit from the tree was supposed to bring death to Adam and Eve upon eating it "God hath said, Ye shall not eat / Thereof, nor shall ye touch it, lest ye die," yet when Eve ate the fruit she did not die (*Paradise Lost* 9: 662-663). Milton's argument is that the fruit itself may not have been inherently bad. Humanity was doomed to die because of it, but immortality in a bodily sense was already impossible – spirit/energy/soul was the immortal base of humanity and the connection to God. It was the act of eating the fruit that exposed what it was like to go against God and do something wrong. This act of defiance and question of authority is what tainted the rest of their experience in the garden and why they had to leave.

Paradise Regained takes another approach towards the obedience/disobedience of humanity. Jesus came back to the Earth, but in human form to save mankind. After being baptized, he ventured out into the wilderness for forty days and forty nights without food, resisting human desire and went only to be tempted by none other than Satan himself. While Jesus rejects the first of Satan's temptations, Milton adds yet another dream. In "the hour of night" Jesus "slept, / And dream'd... / of meats and drinks" (*Paradise Regained* 2: 260, 263-265). While dreaming, he sees Elijah and Angels who had "his Supper on the coals prepar'd," (*Paradise Regained* 2: 273). He eats, drinks and regains his strength, but "found all was but a

dream,” where Milton continues to emphasize that “fasting he went to sleep, and fasting wak’d” (*Paradise Regained* 2: 283-284). Milton’s use of dreams continue to allude to future events, which was illustrated soon after when Satan tempts Jesus with food.

Jesus wakes from his food-filled dream to find that he is still hungry. He begins to question how long he shall go without food or drink, but quickly reminds himself that it is God who is keeping him full. Satan jumps at the opportunity and tempts Jesus with not only scraps or pieces of food, but an entire feast. Satan even reassures Jesus that there is no “Fruits forbidden” and that he should “sit down and eat” (*Paradise Regained* 2: 369, 377). Jesus reminds Satan that he doesn’t want any food or drink offered by the devil himself, and, if he wanted to eat, he could at any moment because he is none other than the *Son of God*. Milton also seems to be alluding to the fullness that one feels when God is in their heart and soul. By choosing and following God, you will never go hungry, because he keeps you full.

In addition to his depiction of the fullness one receives from faith in God, Milton seems to be constructing a parallel between Eve and Jesus. Eve invariably falls to deception and eats the forbidden fruit of knowledge, while Jesus is apt to reject all of Satan's advances. Eve dreams about Satan, being led to the fruit, partaking in the knowledge and higher power that it provides, and eventually decides to eat the fruit while awake. On the other hand, Jesus dreams about Angels and prophets providing him with sustenance, eating a supper provided to him, but declines Satan’s offer of food. He is later rewarded by God with a “Heavenly Feast” (*Paradise Regained* 4: 637). This is another example of man's free will. Eve made the conscious decision to eat the fruit, whereas Jesus made the conscious decision to *not* eat anything or partake in anything that Satan offered. Milton is using Eve and Jesus to depict both ends of the spectrum; inevitable effects that free will has on the fate of humanity.

This also speaks to obedience and disobedience, and how it contributes to humanity's position within the universe. Jesus is an obedient servant of God and keeps his faith within him. As Tazi Buchholz depicts in "Fighting for Dependence," Jesus is "active in his faith in the Father" (Buchholz 9). She argues that even when Jesus is tested and has to "rely totally upon his faith" he proves himself worthy and resists Satan's bribery and temptations (Buchholz 6). Buchholz believes that because Jesus had an undeniable trust in God and in himself, he was able to attain the divine status of the Son of God and successfully save humanity. This contributes to the belief that Milton was portraying the Son as the salvation, and Eve as the damnation. Considering Eve was disobedient and put her faith and trust in Satan instead of God, she removed herself from God therefore causing the fall of humankind.

Eve's dream offers insight to the reader as to why it was so tempting to eat the fruit, and why she invariably fell to temptation (the second time). Being visited by Satan twice seems to weaken her defense and thus commit her to original sin. That being said, Jesus was visited multiple times while starving, alone in the wilderness, and *still* refuted Satan's bribes and attempts to coerce him into compliance. Jesus's will seems stronger than Eve's, but still manages to support the argument of free will. God gave Eve the will to choose and she chose Satan. She listened to his lies and deceit and chose to follow him in rebellion against God and his will. God gave Jesus the will to choose, but he chose to not only rebuke and baffle Satan, but to sacrifice himself for the sake of mankind, undoing the crimes of Eve.

Milton also sends a tone of warning, that dreams can become a reality. Eve was tempted by Satan in her dream to eat the fruit, which she inevitably did. However, Jesus dreamed of a feast, which was soon thereafter proposed by Satan, which of course he denied, but in his denial of Satan, he inevitably received a feast from Angels. There are many comparisons between Eve

and Jesus, but their shared experience of dreams seem too compelling to ignore. Why did Milton find it important to add these dreams? Was he purposely comparing Eve and Jesus as the two opposites of humanity, or was it coincidence? What does that say about the purity of humanity to begin with? Does that imply that because Jesus was the Son of God, even in his human form, he was better equipped to resist Satan? While these are completely open to interpretation, Milton hands us his interpretation of Eve and Jesus and how their faith (or lack thereof) impacted humanity.