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### Two Forces, Both Alike in Divinity

*Abstract: This paper highlights Milton's characterization of Satan and how it relates to our understanding of Jesus. In this analysis, the motivations and personality of these two characters reveal a greater struggle: a battle between good and evil. Through Satan and Jesus, readers can understand what qualities Milton defines as "good" and "evil." Within this framework, Milton crafts a narrative of redemption entirely reliant on two opposing figures.*

Framed within the confines of Genesis, *Paradise Lost* captures the first in a plethora of spiritual battles to take place on Earth. As a result of Genesis, Earth ultimately becomes the battleground of two main forces: Satan and Jesus, the Son of God. Although readers see much more of Satan than the Son in *Paradise Lost*, they can get a good sense of both characters. This is accomplished in the way that Milton draws connections between these destined foes. By honing in focus on Satan, readers get a clear impression of his personality and motivations. Milton then positions the Son as everything that Satan is not. Within this framework, Milton's audience can begin to better understand the Son by drawing a comparison between Satan and Jesus. While both characters take an active role on Earth, each figure has a different intent for God's newest creations. Milton creates this divide to highlight the Son and Satan as opposing forces, hell-bent on the salvation or devastation of humanity. Milton uses each respective character's charisma or lack thereof as a way to highlight their influence over humanity and

underlying spiritual power. While Satan inspires his army of fallen angels with impassioned speeches, the Son does very little to incite confidence and relatability. The contrast in these two characters adds an extra dimension to their differences, leaving readers wondering which figure is “in the right.” Milton takes this question of morality to further complicate the role each character is set to fill, as well as their necessity in *Paradise Lost*. Although not at the forefront of *Paradise Lost*, Milton’s Jesus is characterized to a great extent by the actions and motivations of Satan. By examining Satan and the Son, readers can begin to understand a spiritual conflict brewing, a force of good, and a force of evil.

In Christian theology, both Jesus and Satan serve as conduits between Earth and their respective domains. Milton holds onto this concept and employs it throughout *Paradise Lost*. Michael, an angel of God describes how the Son will:

...judge both quick and dead;

To judge the unfaithful dead, but to reward

His faithful, and receive them into bliss, (*Paradise Lost* 12: 460-462).

Jesus presents himself as being the giver of salvation. However, it is only through the Son that humans can receive this form of mercy. Jesus is a lifeline, connecting the people of Earth to an eternity of salvation in Heaven. In contrast, Satan serves as the vessel of humanity’s destruction. By tempting Eve to eat from the tree of knowledge, Satan introduced Sin and, consequently, Death to the world. While Jesus is humanity’s hope for redemption, Satan serves as the gateway to damnation. Milton utilizes these differing roles to present the figureheads of Earth’s spiritual war. Satan and Jesus are like chess players, using their power and influence to turn the tide of a seemingly eternal war. Both figures see humanity as susceptible to sin, yet each of them responds differently to this knowledge. When peering at the tree of knowledge in Eden, Satan

exclaims “O fair foundation laid whereon to build / Their ruin! Hence I will entice their minds” (Milton 122). Satan sees humanity’s weakness and chooses to exploit it for his own gain. While Satan acts on mankind with selfish intent, the Son recognizes their flaws and offers mercy. After the fall of Adam and Eve, Milton writes that Jesus:

Then pitying how they stood  
 Before him, naked to the air, that now  
 Must suffer change, disdained not to begin

Thenceforth the form of servant to assume (*Paradise Lost* 10: 211-238).

These differing reactions to mankind’s flawed nature highlights the Son as a loving and merciful savior, a willing “servant” to humanity. Jesus acknowledges that we, as humans, are flawed. Yet, instead of condemning humanity for its many limitations, he recognizes these faults and offers us a shot at redemption. In this thread of mind, Milton shows that the Son sees the “bad” within fallen humans, but still champions on their capability for goodness. Milton includes moments like these to help readers see the Son as “the good guy” within Christianity’s spiritual war.

Milton also characterizes Satan and the Son through their capabilities as speakers. When Satan speaks in both Heaven and Hell, he draws his audience in, verbally willing them into service. He uses this same verbal prowess to convince Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Satan acts as an excellent speaker to show how manipulative he can be. Yet, this emphasis on persuasion reveals Satan’s hand. Manipulation is the only power he has against the Son. Within this depiction, readers can see that Milton views the influence of evil as a force of temptation. It is a method that gradually compels its targets into sin. Milton capitalizes on Satan’s persuasiveness to such an extent that he appears relatable to readers of *Paradise Lost*. As they follow Satan through Eden and Hell, he becomes a sympathetic figure. However, do not be fooled, for this is

Milton's intention. Satan is meant to be appealing because that is the same way he manipulates mankind. Milton writes Satan as if he is a Valentine's Day chocolate, appearing to be pleasant on the outside but, once you bite in, you discover the filling is disgusting. Satan's true nature reveals itself when Milton writes:

And in her [Eve's] ears the sound

Yet rung of his pervasive words, impregned

With reason, to her seeming, and with truth (*Paradise Lost* 9: 736-738).

In stark contrast, the Son is not depicted as a natural speaker. When introduced to the Angels, it is God, the Father that does all the talking. After God commands the angels to adore the Son, they clamor to worship him (*Paradise Lost* 3: 342-349). Although this may seem to be an ascribed status from an outsider's perspective, Milton is showing readers that the Son does not need to "earn" his place. Being the Son of God in itself is a position worthy of respect and power. Therefore, the Son does not speak because he should not have to convince the angels of his worth. By being the Son of God, Jesus is already an overwhelmingly powerful force of righteousness. Jesus's silence also speaks to his humble nature. He does not appear to bask in or further encourage the admiration of the angels. This moment also speaks for Jesus's transparency as a character. Instead of rallying the angels to his side with flowery words and false promises, Jesus lets his actions do the talking. He has the power to conquer Death just by being who he is. Instead of garnering support or praise for sacrificing himself, the Son simply volunteers (*Paradise Lost* 3: 266-270). This is in direct contrast to Satan's character, a figure that allowed his ambition to corrupt him beyond recognition. If Satan was asked to step up, he would have made a huge show of volunteering in front of the angels. Yet, the Son does not sing of his own glory and merit. Milton utilizes this moment to further emphasize the Son's humble nature. This

behavior compliments the Son's merciful nature, creating a better image of what Milton defines as "goodness." These qualities clash with Satan's exploitative, ambitious qualities. However, when asked to sacrifice himself for humanity, the Son does hesitate before answering. Some could interpret this moment as the Son expressing doubt. Yet, this instance better lends itself to setting Jesus apart from the other angels. Milton writes in this pause to show that the angels had a chance to volunteer, but it is a sacrifice only God's Son has the power to fulfill. Although admired by angels, the Son's lack of charisma makes the character less relatable to readers. Unlike Satan, the Son does not reveal his inner monologue to the audience. Reader's are not given this inside view, because it is not something that we, as humans, would understand. Milton writes Jesus from an exterior perspective because he is intending to capture the Son of God as accurately as he can. It would be difficult for Milton to capture the thoughts of an omnipotent being. Because, as a human, Milton would be unable to encapsulate a character without a single flaw or moral shortcoming. Therefore, it is logical for the Son to appear unrelatable to readers of *Paradise Lost*. This highlights the Son as a deity, all-powerful and incomprehensible to man. Because of this incomprehensibility, Milton does his best to emphasize the Son's exterior actions and what they indicate for his character's interior goodness. The various levels of relatability and charisma speak volumes for the way that Milton has formed the opposing characteristics of Satan and Jesus within *Paradise Lost*.

Throughout *Paradise Lost*, the Son and Satan are depicted by Milton as direct opposites of one another. Although this is a strong indicator of their good and bad natures, it also highlights the necessary role they each play for humanity. The Son and Satan in Milton's epic are perfectly cast in their respective roles. Readers see the Son, a symbol of light, mercy, and humbleness act as a savior to redeem humanity while Satan, a symbol of darkness, manipulation,

and ambition tries to corrupt them. Although they each are in opposition towards one another, the Son and Satan need each other to fulfill their purposes. Milton taps into this idea when he includes the Son's declaration in Book Three of *Paradise Lost*. There is no Biblical record of Jesus in the Genesis story, yet Milton inserts him into *Paradise Lost*. In that moment, the Son commits to serving as the savior of humanity; a tool to drive out evil from Earth. Yet, humanity has not fallen at this point. Satan is still Lucifer, if by name only. So why is the Son declared to be a spiritual savior before anyone requires saving? When tracing the purpose of both Satan and Jesus, readers can observe how each character drives the other's story. Many may wonder why Milton chooses to characterize both Satan and Jesus as reliant on each other. As Troy Farsoun points out in "Candle in the Dark," Milton's work implies "the necessity of evil in order to glorify the good so that future generations of man will be capable of making the right choice" (Farsoun 6). Within this frame of thought, Milton's Satan serves to test humanity. Because, without Satan, could humans ascertain the difference between good and evil? Would humans truly "earn" their place in heaven if never tempted? Milton explores this idea when Raphael speaks to Adam about his love for Eve. In Book Eight, Raphael warns Adam to "

...Take heed lest passion sway

Thy judgment to do aught which, else, free will

Would not admit...

(*Paradise Lost* 8: 635-637).

This warning stands out because it implies that Adam may be too eager about having sex with Eve. Although Raphael does not directly cite lust, it is clear he worries that their physical relationship may be treading on something to a similar affect. In intervening this way, Raphael is showing readers sinful actions may be possible without the "trespasser's" awareness. Milton uses this moment to argue that our recognition and rejection of sin play a large role in our own

redemption. Because, “For the world to function, for goodness to flourish, there must be darkness before there can be light” (Farsoun 6). Without Satan, humanity would not have fallen. As a result, the Son would not have been needed, because there would be no one to save. Before the fall, the Son does not serve as a conduit between Earth and Heaven. Instead, angel convened with Adam. Therefore, if Satan had not fallen, Jesus would have no role to fill. While Milton casts each character in opposition to one another on a fundamental and personal level, it is also important to note how these contrasts exist to carry out their intended purposes. The Son and Satan being antitheses of one another is not only good storytelling to Milton, it is a spiritual necessity.

Although the Son is not the center of focus within *Paradise Lost*, he is of monumental importance to Milton’s narrative. In fact, it is the Son’s name that “Shall be the copious matter of my [Milton’s] song” (*Paradise Lost* 3: 412-413). Because of the importance of Jesus within Milton’s narrative, a reader cannot expect to grasp the full purpose of *Paradise Lost* without first understanding Milton’s Jesus. By setting up Satan and the Son as polarizing figures, Milton provides readers with an avenue to better understand Jesus’s character. Milton’s approach to characterization coincides with the idea that one cannot truly understand what is good without also knowing what is evil. While both of these immortal figures “rule” Earth, each character uses this power in a different way. This cements Jesus as both a merciful deity and a key to human salvation. Additionally, Milton writes the speaking style of both Satan and the Son in order to reflect their opposing natures. While Satan reveals himself to be manipulative and relatable, the Son presents as transparent and humble. Through drawing a comparison between Satan and the Son, the personality and motivation of Milton’s Jesus begins to reveal itself. These motivations,

though in opposition, create a much-needed avenue for each character to fulfill their respective roles in *Paradise Lost*.

Works Cited

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