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To Beget or to Breed: How Adam Broke the Design before Eve Ate the Apple, and How Jesus
Righted It

Abstract: By design, mankind was meant reproduce asexually. Then Adam screwed it up, which made the Fall necessary. Jesus, per usual, had to fix it. Thaddeus Parker's "Evil as Justification for Redemption" mentioned to bolster the argument. Fight me.

Sexual species give birth to small children, which then must age before maturing to become sexually reproductive adults so that the cycle may continue. However, aging inevitably leads to death--- everything that grows must die, while that which stagnates lives on (an object in motion...). Sex, then, risks bringing another inevitable death to the world, while childbirth confirms another inevitable death. Yet, in *Paradise Lost*, death was not a given until the Fall. At first glance, this might suggest Milton's God deliberately created a flawed second creation by founding it on sexual reproduction (which would lead to the need to age, which would bring with it death) and was banking on humanity falling for his design to work. However, the original creation of mankind incorporated an alternate way of propagation--- "begetting," which the Father set up as the ideal form of propagation during the original begetting of the Son. When Adam pushed for a sexual partner, against God's advice, Adam downgraded from begetting to breeding, which was an essentially problematic practice from its conception. In shorter terms, Adam's seemingly innocuous request strayed from God's original design and ended up damning

humanity, long before Eve ever ate the apple. Later when Jesus came, he not only was begotten into the world, but he helped his followers become begotten with him and fixed Adam's error.

With the appearance of the Son, the Father established a sexless propagation technique, the results of which negated the need for aging. The first notice given to this technique is referenced in the phrase "only begotten Son" (*Paradise Lost* 3: 80), with the keyword being "begotten." "Beget" suggests a form of procreation with an emphasis on the male figure (in this case, the Father). However, "procreation" is a shaky term to use here, given that God has this to say about his sex life: "[I] Who am alone/From all Eternity, for none I know/Second to mee of like, equal much less..." (*Paradise Lost* 8: 406-407). There is no queen or consort in heaven, and sex outside of marriage is almost out of the question in the Christian framework. This only leaves the possibility of some sort of asexual reproduction, the exact details of which are left undefined.

However, while unable to guess the exact nature of this asexual "begetting," Milton does describe the events that immediately followed the first instance, which gives clues as to the nature of *what* was begotten--- namely, that the begetting was not *child*birth, per se. The first thing the Father does with his Son is announce the Son's supremacy over all of heaven, giving the Son full right to rule and warning everyone against disobeying him (*Paradise Lost* 5: 595-615). This rules out the possibility of the Son being born a child. While it would be appropriate to announce a child as heir, giving a newborn full right to command everyone and everything from the get-go would lead to a rather disorganized kingdom, sinless or not. Moreover, in less than a week since his birth, the Son wins a war for the Father (*Paradise Lost* 6: 681-891), an action that most definitely could not be accomplished by a child. It stands to reason then that when the Father begat the Son, the Son came out as a full-grown adult. The begetting was an

adult-birth, rather than childbirth, if you will. An adult-birth would negate the need for aging, which in turn would negate the need for death.

This “begetting” sets the pattern for the rest of (holy) creation.

“God said... The Earth obeyed, and straight

Op’ning her fertile womb teem’d at a Birth...

...Creatures, perfect forms

Limb’d and full grown” (*Paradise Lost* 7: 450-456).

When something or someone is born, they are born as adults unburdened by aging and therefore unburdened by death. The ideal form of reproduction then is an asexual, adult-birth begetting, and it follows that God uses this tool for the rest of his creation, including mankind.

On the flip side of the coin, the early concept of “breeding” provides a negative contrast to the ideal begetting. When describing Hell as Satan flies through it, the narrator calls it

“A universe of death, which God by curse

Created evil, for evil only good

Where all life dies, death lives, and Nature breeds

Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things” (*Paradise Lost* 2: 621-624).

There it is: the first mention of sexual reproduction, found in hell and listed right next to words like “death,” “evil,” “perverse,” and “monstrous.” The enjambment of lines 623 and 624 allows the interpretation that the adjectives listed (perverse, monstrous, prodigious) not only describe what nature breeds but also each element of the tricolon in the line before it, in other

words, describing the breeding itself. Rather unsurprising, then, that the first act of sexual reproduction literally results in the birth of Death (*Paradise Lost* 2: 765-787), the most perverse, monstrous, and prodigious creature in all of *Paradise Lost*. It concludes then that sexual reproduction is, at the very least, subideal.

The immediate counter to this seemingly simple binary of positive asexual begetting and negative sexual breeding would be the profuse praise that Adam and Eve receive for having pre-Fall sex. However, note that Eve never gave birth in the garden. There was never any sexual reproduction, just the risk of it. Eve is suspiciously unable to conceive until after the Fall, given that half her God-given role is “to [Adam you/Eve] shalt bear/Multitudes” (*Paradise Lost* 4: 473-474). This then begs the question: by designing mankind to reproduce sexually, and therefore outside the ideal, did God deliberately create a flawed system that was destined to fall?

No, because God did not originally craft mankind to reproduce sexually. Adam is called “First Father” (*Paradise Lost* 8: 298) before Eve’s creation, indicating that his role as a human reproducer was cemented before the advent of Eve. Moreover, Adam’s request for a partner is rather oddly worded if sexual production is his default. When Adam argues his case before God, he says,

“Man by number is to manifest

His single imperfection, and beget

Like of his like, his Image multiplied

in unity defective, which requires

Collateral love, and dearest amity” (*Paradise Lost* 8: 422- 427).

Adam does not bring up that reproduction is an impossibility without a female partner, which seems like it would be the primary talking point given his God-ordained role as a father. Instead, he argues against begetting “like of his like.” Adam’s plea assumes Adam’s ability to beget without a female. Adam is not saying that he cannot reproduce alone; Adam is saying that the current reproduction process will produce unsatisfactory results if he reproduces alone. Bold thing to tell the creator of the universe, but Adam persists.

God warns Adam, originally advising him against changing things up, “Thou to thyself proposest, the choice/ of thy Associates, Adam, and wilt taste/ No pleasure, though in pleasure, solitary” (*Paradise Lost* 8: 401-402). God cautions Adam that his request will lead Adam to “taste no pleasure,” and that he would be happier alone. Not only does this spell trouble in the broadest sense, but the verb “taste” directly alludes to the Fall. God further encourages Adam to stay within the original design, mentioning that he himself is happy while single.

“What think’st of thou them of mee, and this my States

Seem I to thee sufficiently possest

of happiness, or not? Who am alone

From all Eternity, for none I know

Second to mee of like, equal much less...

...those to me inferior, infinite descents

Beneath what other Creatures are to thee?” (*Paradise Lost* 8: 403-411).

While the ‘I’m-fine-so-why-aren’t-you’ card might fall short in another context, key to remember is that Adam was made in God’s “image” (*Paradise Lost* 4: 566), in other words, God

designed Adam to be like Himself. What pleased God, in theory, should have pleased Adam. Also, at this point, both God and Adam beget in the same asexual, most likely adult-birthing, manner. To change the design of Mankind--- to transform Adam and make Eve for sexual reproduction--- would make Adam less of an image of God.

To complicate but not refute the matter at hand, after Adam continues to beseech God, God not only relents but praises Adam for the request (*Paradise Lost* 8: 436-450). The stark turnaround may paint God's initial negative reaction as a test on first look. However, such behavior neatly fits into the pattern described by Thaddeus Parker in "Evil as Justification for Redemption" where he describes God "allowing evil to become relevant, thereby allowing evil to inflict a varying degree of harm, and God using this harm for the purpose of supplying redemption" (Parker). While naming the creation of woman as 'evil' may feel barbaric, the underlying premise is spot on: God allows his design to be bent in order that the Son might gain merit by righting it.

The question then becomes: how does the Son 'right' the reproduction process? How do Christians return to begetting, when they are biologically wired to breed? Or did Jesus introduce a third way--- something entirely new?

Looking at the circumstances of Jesus's birth, as well as the effects of his death and resurrection, provide a useful entry point to this enigma. For instance, Jesus was begot, not breed. "A Virgin his Mother" (*Paradise Lost* 12: 462) gave birth to him. The details on exactly how this begetting worked in practice are vague at best, but the term 'virgin' precludes any sort of sexual propagation from the process. If Jesus were begot, not bred, then he would be the first human since Adam to be begot, and thus be an almost second Adam. This opens up the possibility that Jesus is the do-over of Adam, meaning Jesus is everything Adam failed to be.

Worth inserting here is that Jesus had no marriage, and therefore no sexual partners throughout his life. One explanation for this, in light of him being begotten, is that like the pre-Eve Adam Jesus contained both the feminine and masculine. Unlike Adam, Jesus never asked for a partner of equal status, and never had one of those capacities removed from him and reformed into a whole other human being. This would also explain why Satan believes Jesus would not fall prey to lust (*Paradise Regained* 2: 175- 234), because if Jesus were the complete sum of both genders, then Satan would be effectively trying to tempt Jesus with something Jesus already possessed.

A caveat worth acknowledging is that despite being begotten, Jesus was born a baby and aged throughout his life. He died, too. Yet, “Death over him [had] no power” (*Paradise Lost* 12: 420). Jesus’s death was a temporary affair, he ended up resurrecting and then ascending into heaven as a mid-aged adult. Not a senior adult or a young adult, but rather in that window of the human life cycle when one is both capable of solid reasoning and solid bodily function. In other words, Jesus stopped aging at a rather ideal time, giving a clue as to what era of adulthood one is potentially begotten into.

None of this, however, solves the begetting problem for a post-Jesus believer. Surely God would not force his followers to sin in order that they may obey his original command that they “be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth” (*Paradise Lost* 7: 531). Indeed, He does not. Milton’s readers and Milton would have undoubtedly been familiar with the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, recorded in John chapter 3.

““³ Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.^[a]”

⁴“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

⁵Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.”” (John 3:3-5, NIV).

Jesus is, of course, referring to baptism. If this is to be taken literally, then baptism becomes a spiritual begetting wherein one is reborn without any breeding necessary. Moreover, when Jesus leaves, his followers (starting with the twelve Apostles but expanding from there) are commanded to “to evangelize all the Nations, then on all/ Baptiz’d, shall them with wonderous gifts endue” (*Paradise Lost* 12: 498-500). In other words: go forth and spiritually beget, which feels awfully familiar to “multiply and fill the Earth.”

Again, a quick counter to this would be that marriage is encouraged in the church (at least if one is not a priest). The immediate solution to this is that baptism is a spiritual begetting, not a physical one; just like “theirs whom he redeems, a death like sleep/A gentle wafting to immortal Life” occurs (*Paradise Lost* 12: 434-435). Jesus saves his followers from death in a physical and spiritual sense, but it begins with the spiritual. Jesus completely alters the life cycle of a believer, offering freedom from breeding and death, and yet both things still exist temporarily in the temporal. Problem solved, or as solved as it is going to get.

Therefore, it was when Adam protested and God relented that sexual reproduction, along with all its problems (namely death), entered into the design and damned humanity. God did not create a flawed system but rather allowed it to become flawed at Adam’s request, because doing so would help the Son earn glory by righting the system. The Son, Jesus who was begotten himself, righted the system by defeating death and offering followers a chance to spiritually be

begotten, to spiritually beget others, and to rise again. Long story short: Jesus is cooler than he may seem at first glance, which is saying a lot for someone who owns as whack a chariot as he does.

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