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### The Unnecessary Fall

Is self-reliance maturity? Several of Milton's characters in *Paradise Lost* seem to be self-reliant, but is not their Father everywhere? Was he not there when his Son created the Earth, and is not all credit due to Him for victory in heaven? Good from evil may have come, but Good was already present. Adam and Eve didn't need to fall any more than Abdiel did, to be mature. The idea of a necessary fall has come from Satan, and is inherently bad and farther from the Truth than any other. Satan's maturity, like a drug addict's, is halted when he first tries for something more. He then ceases to receive maturity through the continual trials of his Father; which are the only source of maturity; and attempts to assert his own claim on more responsibility and power. He is a child who believes he is ready to live on his own, being of age, but having no feet planted anywhere but home. As for the purposes of this paper, maturity will basically be that which God praises and teaches, attained with or without a fall, for the fall is not needed, because maturity does not come from the fall, but from growing awareness and understanding of the Truth, through God the Father.

Our Author created many fruits in this story. When a fruit is ripe, it is also said to be mature; fruit "needs to be sustained and fed" (*Paradise Lost* V: 415); fruit needs the "Fountain of Light" (*Paradise Lost* III: 375), and when fruit is pulled or felled from a tree it has died. When Adam and Eve make their "solitary way" (*Paradise Lost* XII: 648) out of Eden, they are not mature, though Michael has foretold the coming of the Messiah; experience, not knowledge will

bring maturity. Experience in obedience with God's will, when all others have forsworn Him, as shown through Noah, "One man except, the only Son of light" (*Paradise Lost* XI: 808), Abdiel of Satan's original constituents, "among the faithless, faithful only hee" (*Paradise Lost* V: 897), or Jesus, "Is fortitude to highest victory/ And to the faithful Death the Gate of Life;/ Taught this by example" (*Paradise Lost* XII: 569-572). Surely the farthest fallen will be the most grateful to the grace of God [Jesus, "Both God and Man, Son both of God and Man,/ anointed universal King (*Paradise Lost* III: 315-318)], but they will not be the most mature. Maturity of the fruit can only come from God, the "Tree of Life" (*Paradise Lost* XI: 94), and though reason may be a sign of maturity, as Satan shows, it too can be perverted, "Yet by experience taught we know how good" the Truth is (*Paradise Lost* V: 826), for a false conclusion can be valid if its premises are also false. Eve should have sought not for the knowledge of evil which Satan so enticingly sold, but for the experience of *confronting* evil. In the end, this is what she will have, only fallen instead of remaining in Paradise. So, if maturity is to come from God, sin (a gaping hole whose tear begins when a creature leaves God until they return) must be replaced with the truth of God, and as Jesus must die and ascend to heaven, so shall our Parents, and all humanity, only reproducing to carry the seed that will rescue them from darkness.

Before the battle in heaven, Jesus was the only Angel to have been deemed God's son. He alone, out of the entire heavenly realm, of all God's creation, was able to ascend and see God. By merit, he is indeed given the reign of heaven, "alone/ My word, my wisdom and effectual might," (*Paradise Lost* III: 169-170) by God. Then, when the remaining angels in heaven come to be called sons by God, Jesus *alone* chooses to save humanity. He is not ordered, but from within he knows what his father's will is being closest to him in maturity, and when spoken his Father confirms. We don't know if this first son remembers his creation, but must assume he is

like all others as God is “alone/ From all Eternity, for none I know/ Second to mee or like, equal much less...To me inferior, infinite descents” (*Paradise Lost* VIII: 407-410). Because God created all, he is the Truth, and the Truth is where maturity lies. The Truth cannot be perverted and when understood, becomes a part of the soul. As Satan said, “the fixt Laws of Heav’n/ Did first create your Leader, next free choice,/ with what besides, in Counsel or in Fight,/ Hath been achieved of merit”( *Paradise Lost* II: 17-20). Adversely, the Truth comes from God, and although power can be stored and used for other purpose, only the Truth from God will stand up against the enemies he creates, and therefore there *must* be enemies. —Here I will find myself lodged between two arguments on the nature of evil in *Paradise Lost* from two former members of this class, Thaddeus Parker and Kori Hensell. The former asserts that evil is purposed a means for redemption, the latter that evil must be present in order for good to exist. While both arguments are claiming the fall to be necessary, and thus are peremptory to mine, they provide a useful framework for the nature of evil proposed here: that the *experience* of evil is a means for maturity of any being, whether fallen or not. Part of Mr. Parker’s argument is as follows from “Evil as Justification for Redemption”:

God clearly limits the angelic force’s level of strength to match that of Satan’s forces... God is presented as being the source of power for his angelic forces, both limiting their capabilities as well as sustaining them during battle. The nature of battle between the rebellious angels and God’s angelic forces further proves to emphasize the dependence that each force has on the power of God. The angelic forces are dependent upon the power of God to do battle while the rebellious angels are allowed to continue fighting because God postpones the release of the Son... Therefore, the battle in heaven is a way through which God is able to redeem his angelic forces from the threat of Satan’s rebellious angels. God allows Satan and his rebellious forces the ability to engage in battle, presenting a relevant threat to heaven, and then uses this battle as a chance to redeem heaven through the power he places in the Son. (Parker, 3)

Most poignantly, Parker considers Satan's forces to derive their power from themselves, further separating them from the remainder of Heaven. He is correct in emphasizing the dependence each force has on the power of God, but does not succeed in portraying God's omnipotence, his ability to limit any person's force; limiting *both* forces' might in this battle to save His beloved Earth. But God has the laws of justice to uphold, and the Truth always conquers, so "headlong themselves they threw/Down from the verge of Heav'n" (*Paradise Lost* VII: 864-5), and evil must go to evil's place. Kori Hensell's argument from "The Shifting Concept of Good and Evil in *Paradise Lost*" presents evil not as a chance for the redemption of Heaven, but as a requirement:

The difference in speech between Satan and Raphael serves as a point of interest for this good/evil debate. Raphael is an angel, who has never experienced evil, lest he should be kicked out of Heaven... The notion of damnation is a foreign concept to Raphael and so the only sort of conversation he can effectively have with Adam and Eve is one about something he is more accustomed to and knowledgeable of—God in Heaven and his goodness. This proves that without knowledge of evil, goodness cannot thrive on its own, and this is why Adam and Eve fell at all. (Hensell, 4-5)

Instead of making a distinction between experience and choice, Hensell chooses to believe an angel cannot know evil, and that this explains why evil is an inevitable choice for any of God's children. He goes on to claim Eve's failure as a mistake of distinction between good and evil. Along this line of reasoning, enemies must exist and all of God's children must become his enemies before they can "thrive." —Instead, I argue that good and evil are elements of God's creation, where evil can be distinguished from good, but does not define it. God is good, and evil is the absence of truth. If there must be enemies, not every creature must become one. Brian Greene might describe evil as space; in between, but separate from matter in all corners of the universe; and if the universe is infinite, then every possible combination will be played out, and

some will be enemies of God. “They who neglect and scorn, shall never taste; But hard be hard’n’d, blind be blinded more, That they may stumble on, and deeper fall.” (*Paradise Lost* III: 199-201) These enemies will bring God’s creation back to him, the misery of sin will bring his creation back towards him or at least force contemplation, as with Satan.

The fall was not necessary for Jesus or for Abdiel, and indeed even before the battle, all Angels in heaven are called Sons. Yet, for what are they exalted? “O Sons, like one of us Man is become/ To know both Good and Evil” (*Paradise Lost* XI: 84-5). Though the Angels did not have to disobey God to mature, “Such high advantages thir innocence/ Gave them over thir foes, not to have sinn’d,/ Not to have disobey’d.” (*Paradise Lost* VI: 401-3) They only had to follow God’s will that was in each of their individual hearts. Their self-discovery and maturation process has come through their tested faith in God and their obedience of Him. Like his brethren in heaven, Abdiel will continue to grow through his obedience of God and the experience thereof. They are able to rely on themselves, because God lives within them, He is not separated from them by sin or reason obscured. Furthermore, Abdiel only had to win an inward battle to gain God’s praise, infusing himself with reason true and from reason he “single has maintained/ Against revolted multitudes the Cause/ Of Truth.” (*Paradise Lost* VI: 30-32) He alone from half of heaven, from all of Satan’s tribe, was able to see clearly. His vision was not clouded by sin, and he was not tempted by his brothers’ scorn. His Father praises his valiance, and his experience in following his heart to the will of God will be with him eternally.

Before the fall, Adam was aware of his spirit. God tells him he is “Expressing well the spirit within thee free,” (*Paradise Lost* VIII: 440) and when Eve is created he first knows the trial Nature will have on him, and he blames his own nature and wisdom. Already he says, “that I am happier than I know” (*Paradise Lost* VIII: 282) He senses the possibility of evil, but knows

nothing of its nature. Passion can be debilitating, “And all temptation to transgress repel” (*Paradise Lost* VIII: 643), Raphael tells him. Adam has the power to choose freely, as do all of God’s children, but must not let any of his judgments be without the guidance of his Father. No enemy influences Adam here, and there has been no transgression, yet Adam knows where his conscience leads him and can feel the battle within. He has everything he needs to mature, and his new companion will prove an even greater challenge, for passion may “sway/ thy judgment to do aught, which else free Will/ would not admit” (*Paradise Lost* VIII, 634). (Is this not the same as those who tried to sway Abdiel’s judgment?) The absence of God will must always be accepted by His creation, by submitting to anything other than His will. Evil will fester and manifest into “Diseases dire, of which a monstrous crew/ Before thee shall appear; that thou may’st know/ What misery th’inabstinence of Eve/ Shall bring on men...Since they/ God’s Image did not reverence in themselves.” (*Paradise Lost* XI: 475-477 and 524-525) Notice that Michael speaks here in the perfect tense of Adam and Eve’s children. They did not listen to God’s “Umpire *Conscience*, whom if they will hear,/ Light after light well us’d they shall attain,/ and to the end persisting, safe arrive.” (*Paradise Lost* III, 195-8) So all men are endowed with a spirit and conscience of God, and can live their lives in love and become mature in their old age through the experiences of life. But some will be taught by God’s spirit and still choose to “tread paths indirect” (*Paradise Lost* XI: 447). Instead of travelling the path that is laid in their hearts towards oneness with their creator, men like Adam, of Adam’s same nature hold “on the same, from Woman to begin.” (*Paradise Lost* XI, 633) Good and bad will be mixed, and are mixed. Some will even have come to understand God’s laws and use them for carnal gain and power. Others, like Satan, will reject God’s authority all together, yet “One man except, the only Son of light/ In a dark Age, against example good,/ Against allurements, custom, and a World/ Offended;

fearless of reproach and scorn, Or violence, hee of thir wicked ways/ Shall them admonish, and before them set/ The paths of righteousness, how much more safe,/ And full of peace” (*Paradise Lost* XI 808-15).

Noah is part Jesus and part Abdiel, at least in story. He, as they were, is not the fallen in this instance, but fallen only for justice, not of his own choice. He alone followed the Truth in his heart, as did Moses leading the one people out of all Earth to safety. He gains the experience of evil, by following his heart and knowing God’s will, not followed by those without an ark.

Satan, continuing his battle with God, believes and tries to tell others that the fall is necessary for maturity. Instead, why not listen to the most mature Son of God, who has gained his merit not through fall, but through obedience? The consequences of the fall may be necessary in order to preserve heavenly justice, but “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 some 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!” (*Paradise Lost* V:538-543) Their love comes from within and is endowed by their creator. He alone has grace. Falling has no power. The fruit that falls from the tree does not propel itself to the ground, but is pulled there. A man’s spirit may be moved either way, towards Good or Evil, but unless he receives nutrient from the branch, “otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” (Romans 11:22) Without this, there is no free will, and there is no maturity.