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Similarities Between the Holy Spirit and Satan's Method of Influence

Abstract: This essay contains the comparison of the Holy Spirit and Satan's similar ways to influence beings as well as how different their separate purposes are. This essay will investigate Milton's spirit versus Satan as the anti-spirit and the similar ways in which they impact humankind, while showcasing the different viewpoints that they each represent. I pull from Paradise Lost, The Bible, and references to a previous research paper, and form my opinion based upon these texts.

In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is the equal to the Father and Son and lives within God's people and influences them from within. The Holy Spirit is known for guiding, teaching, and leading in a positive and encouraging way that is opposed by Satan in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Milton's Satan and the Holy Spirit are at war in *Paradise Lost* and fight primarily in Eve's decision to rebel against God's wishes and eat from the tree of knowledge. Both Satan and the Holy Spirit are highly influencing examples in the poem and are typically similar in that way. They also both share the ability to form connections and good/bad relationships with different entities and usually succeed in influencing and connecting with others. Satan tends to form relationships with his devils, the Holy Spirit, and humans (Adam and Eve), and very similarly the Holy Spirit creates connections between itself, Satan, humans (Adam and Eve), and God. Milton's Satan appears to be an anti-spirit to the Holy Spirit in *Paradise Lost* and both represent two morally different ideas: a true fulfilling life versus a living hell. Satan goes on to use

mankind's free-will to his advantage in forming his negatively impacting and corruptive relationship with Eve by appealing to her curiosity and willingness to disobey God.

In Milton's epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, he consistently accentuates the similarity between the Holy Spirit and the anti-spirit, Satan. The Holy Spirit is not seen as often in *Paradise Lost*, yet can be seen as the opposer to Satan in quotes where Heaven and Hell are compared and set up the basis of the Holy Spirit versus Satan argument: "Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;/ And in the lowest deep a lower deep/ Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide/ To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n" (*Paradise Lost* 4: 75-78). Why does Milton use this wording to accentuate the opposition that is seen between the Holy Spirit and Satan? Satan is known to be brutish and dwells in Hell, which is his "Heaven" and eternal resting place. Milton uses words like "suffer" and "devour" to show how different Hell and Heaven are, which emphasizes how different the entities are that the Holy Spirit and Satan signify. Heaven is supposed to be a pure and suffering-free resting place; however, the contrasting image of Satan's Hell being his Heaven serves to better represent the different purposes that the Holy Spirit and Satan have. Satan's descension into Hell contrasts the Holy Spirit's continuous cycle on Earth and in each individual's "hell" that is their sinful life and back into Heaven to select the next individual that needs the Holy Spirit's guidance. In contrast to Milton's description of Hell, Heaven is described as "Paradise" and as "their place of rest," which is accompanied by a description of Eden and is understood to be a place of Peace and goodness where Satan was indeed expelled from (*Paradise Lost* 12: 605-649). In the beginning of the poem, Milton specifically references the fall of man and how Satan "Stirr'd up with Envy and Revenge, deciev'd/ The Mother of Mankind; what time his Pride/ Had cast him out from Heav'n" (*Paradise Lost* 1: 35-37). Milton uses some of the most common examples of sin in "Envy," "Revenge," and "Pride," which are all feelings and

emotions that Satan evokes in man as well as in himself in much the same manner as the Holy Spirit does with love, forgiveness, and peace, which are awarded to Adam and Eve at the end of the poem. While Satan transmits these negative feelings onto the humans he tries to corrupt, the Holy Spirit is presented as a comforter and confidant. Both characters appeal to others through emotion and by being a representation for their individual positions, yet still stand for two totally different purposes and plans.

As the Holy Spirit works for goodness, Satan works through Evil and targets Eve in a dream, which she explains to Adam and he responds with: “This uncouth dream, of evil sprung I fear;/ Yet evil whence? In thee can harbor none, / Created pure. But know, that in the soul/ Are many lesser Faculties, that serve/ Reason as chief” (*Paradise Lost* 5: 95-106). Satan targets individuals as they are in their most vulnerable state and for Eve it is her naivety to her dream state’s interpretation of events within her dream. Eve starts to fall for Satan’s persuasiveness as he appeals to the curious human nature and two-year old excitement. Much like a child, Eve does not understand what Satan is talking about, so he appeals to her “pure” nature and his “evil [is] sprung” in his first attempt at corrupting her. Satan and Eve’s relationship is a prime example of just how alike the Holy Spirit and Satan’s relations to people are. They both target individual’s needs to act upon feelings and desires and form connections in a personal and highly influencing way. Eve’s originally pure nature is interrupted and overshadowed by Satan’s “malice” and “fierce” approach to forming his connection to Eve:

Her graceful Innocence, her every Air/ Of gesture or least action overaw’d/ His malice,
and with rapine sweet bereav’d/ His fierceness of the fierce intent it brought:/ That space
the Evil one abstracted stood/ From his own evil, and for the time remain’d/ Stupidly

good, of enmity disarm'd,/ Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge;/ But the hot hell that
always in him burns. (*Paradise Lost* 9: 459-467)

Milton shows how different Eve and Satan are and how their interactions are thoroughly contradicting. Eve is created by God and possesses equal parts good and bad. Eve later obtains the choice of free-will while Satan is cursed after his fall from Heaven with “the hot hell that always in him burns.” Eve and Satan’s relationship is unstable in this way because of Eve’s ability to stray from Satan’s influence with her freedom to choose her fate. This is similarly seen with the Holy Spirit as well in that man can choose what they want to stand for and what they believe in.

In *Paradise Lost* there is a progressive change in who is more influential, Satan or the Holy Spirit. Although they both go about impacting mankind in similar ways, they both hold different moral decisions in the poem. Adam and Eve are given the Garden of Eden and have no understanding of good or evil, making scholars wonder if the Holy Spirit was present within them yet. The Holy Spirit would have been present when God created Eden, but given that Milton did not fully believe in the Trinity, is this held to be true? Therefore, did Satan have the first untethered and unbiased influence upon mankind? The beginning holds details about how mankind falls as a consequence of the war between Satan and the Holy Spirit’s influence upon Eve: “So glister’d the dire Snake, and into fraud/ Led *Eve*, our credulous Mother, to the Tree/ Of prohibition, root of all our woe” (*Paradise Lost* 9: 641-645). Satan’s influence did impact mankind on how they live their lives. Although they started with God, and then were tempted by Satan, they ended up being blessed by God. Adam and Eve move back and forth between good and bad decisions just like God intends according to their free-will. For example, the Holy Spirit and God’s love and forgiveness are seen when Milton writes: “only add/ Deeds to thy knowledge

answerable, add Faith,/ Add Virtue, Patience, Temperance, add Love,/ By name to come call'd
 Charity, the soul/ Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath/ To leave this Paradise, but shalt
 possess/ A paradise within thee, happier far" (*Paradise Lost* 12: 581-587). At the end of the
 poem, much like in the Bible, Adam and Eve receive the blessing of a possible redemption
 through the Son. This displays yet another difference between the Holy Spirit and Satan. The
 Holy Spirit is understood to be the way in which mankind can earn redemption, whereas with
 Satan there is nothing but damnation. Adam and Eve go through man's first journey between
 good and evil, leaving the rest of mankind to decide between the Holy Spirit and Satan using the
 free-will they have and the knowledge of how Satan and Eve's relationship impacted that free-
 will.

Satan and the Holy Spirit are not only similar in their delivery of their individual
 purposes, but also make a big impact upon the free-will of humankind with each of their
 influential roles. Eve is especially integral in the understanding of how Satan tempts, and the
 Holy Spirit appeals to each person and their ability to choose good or evil with their free-will. As
 Lauren Alexander explains free-will and humans, she relays that

God describes this relationship with the lines "As if Predestination overrul'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."

(*Paradise Lost* 3: 114-118). This line expresses the fact that God would not interfere with
 the actions of his creation, though He has foreknowledge of their actions, even if the
 actions are not good. (Alexander 1-2)

Even though God may prefer that his creation pick good over evil, he is not willing to
 compromise the integrity of his creation to decide for humanity. So why did God create free-will

and how do Satan and the Holy Spirit approach the subject differently? While Satan has no problem corrupting and misleading humanity, the Holy Spirit tries to lead and guide by encouragement and promoting free-will versus taking it away. When Satan tempts it is almost as though the choice traps the individual in his evil, whereas with the Holy Spirit there always seems to be that reinforced and freeing decision. In *Paradise Lost* there is a moment of that lost and trapped feeling, when Eve eats the fruit, that seems to take away Adam and Eve's free-will, yet Adam and Eve are finally truly freed when they are forgiven and given a new life (*Paradise Lost* 12). Alexander sets up an interesting point of how different Satan and the Holy Spirit treat the free-will of man and how they each interfere in the decisions that are made daily in different ways. Satan can have a more direct and intrusive approach while the Holy Spirit typically interferes with a more subtle and refrained dynamic.

Overall, Satan serves as an anti-spirit to the Holy Spirit in that they both reach out and affect people's emotions and point of view on things. They both stand for different things, good and evil, and connect to different aspects of one's conscience by attaching to one of the two sides of humanity. Mankind has a good and bad side and both entities exploit these two aspects of humankind to reach their goals. The influence of both tie into the free-will of mankind and man's ability to make choices based upon what they are most influenced by. The free-will of an individual is always there, but it can be corrupted and interrupted depending on the driving force behind the choices that are made with their free-will. The influential methods and different representations between the two can be seen in Satan's influence over Eve and the connection they make with her. The Holy Spirit may not be written about much in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, but it can be inferred through the actions and words of Satan, based off what is known from the Bible, that the Holy Spirit is opposite in purpose but similar in delivery.

Works Cited

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