The problem of Satan in Milton's Paradise lost

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THE PROBLEM OF SATAN IN MILTON'S
PARADISE LOST

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JEANNE SAUNDERS
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INTRODUCTION

"Know then, that...Lucifer from Heav'n
(So call him, brighter once amidst the Host
Of Angels than that Starr the Stars among)
Fell with his flaming Legions through the Deep
Into his place..."

(Paradise Lost VII. 131-135)

By 1641 John Milton had prepared a rather detailed outline for a tragic drama, Adam Unparadised. The design was to take form and grow, not as a religious drama, but as a magnificent epic poem which would "assert Eternal Providence,/And justify the ways of God to men" (I.25-26). In the original design for the drama the character and person of Satan did not constitute a basis for sustained interest. However, when Paradise Lost was finished in 1665, this was no longer the case; Satan, as an historical figure treated by the poetic and religious imagination of Milton, emerged as one of the major characters in the poem. The first edition of Paradise Lost was published in 1667, and from that time until this the nature and function of this major character, Satan, have been matters for speculation and conjecture.

1 John Milton, Paradise Lost, in The Works of John Milton, Columbia Edition (New York, 1931-38), II, 216. [All quotations from Milton's works have been taken from this edition--hereafter cited as Works.]

2 David Nason, in The Life of John Milton: Narrated in Connection With the Political, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of his Time (New York, 1946), II, 120-121, calculated that the outline and other jottings were begun in 1639-40 and continued through 1640 or 1641. The Columbia Edition of Works, XVIII, 511, cites the dates established by Nason.
Some criticism maintains that Satan, by Milton's specific design, is the hero of the poem. Other has held that Satan is the hero of the poem in spite of Milton's design. As a rebel mad enough to declare war on the Omnipotent, Satan has been labeled a fool. He has been referred to as an "agonist" and as a charming "untamed rebel," and he has been said to represent the exalted and indomitable nature of the human will and spirit. On the other side are those who have found Satan not the hero but the villain of the poem, the personification of evil, and the classic example of creative talent wasted and abused. The diverse nature of the criticism concerning the character of Satan would suggest, perhaps, that he is to be considered finally as an enigma. This conclusion, however, diminishes the significance of Satan's role in the poem. As an active combatant in the moral conflict, he is more than a riddle. His character, drawn with bold strokes, is one of strength—strength made up of the potential within him. Satan has the capacity to be heroic, but the use he chooses to make of his capacity is not heroic. By his own choice he is a villain. Milton fully realized the significance of Satan's role in Paradise Lost, and "a great creator with an important idea never

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furnishes a weak villain for an ethical combat." In formulating a thesis concerning the nature of the character of Satan, it is necessary to examine representative criticism of the Satanists--those who for one reason or another designate Satan the hero of the poem--and the anti-Satanists--those who argue that Satan is not the hero of *Paradise Lost*. Also to be considered is the presentation of Satan in relation to Milton's concept of evil as it fits into the theological scheme of *Paradise Lost*. Finally, it is important to examine the character and function of Satan as he moves about in the poem.

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I

THE SATANISTS

As the earliest among Milton's critical contemporaries to treat *Paradise Lost* as a subject, John Dryden referred to the poem in 1677 as "one of the greatest, most noble, and most Sublime Poems, which either this Age or Nation has produc'd."6 Twenty years later Dryden confessed to the critic Dennis that at the time he had made his first evaluation of the poem, he "knew not half the extent of Milton's excellence."7 Dryden's perception as a critic as evidenced by his early appraisal of *Paradise Lost* has been noted by many on more than one occasion. George Saintsbury commented in 1899:

> it is sufficient to say that, with his unfailing recognition of good work, Dryden undoubtedly appreciated Milton to the full long before Addison, as it is vulgarly held, taught the British public to admire him.8

However favorable were Dryden's views concerning the poem as a whole

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6John Dryden, Preface to *The State of Innocence, and the Fall of Man*, in *The Works of John Dryden: Illustrated With Notes, Historical, Critical, and Explanatory, and a Life of the Author, by Sir Walter Scott*, ed. George Saintsbury (Edinburgh, 1839), V, 126. [All quotations from Dryden's works have been taken from this edition--hereafter cited as *The Works of John Dryden*.]


undertaking, he did take issue, creatively and critically, with certain aspects of the work. In 1677 he published an adaption of part of *Paradise Lost*, an opera entitled *The State of Innocence, and Fall of Man*. Dryden felt that his use of rhymed couplets was superior to Milton's use of blank verse. This, to some, would not seem a tribute from one who had praised the original work so highly, yet Dryden did obtain permission from Milton before he published the adaption, and Sir Walter Scott excused the adaption by saying:

Dryden's views on translation apply here; and there is no doubt that, as in the case of Shakespeare and Chaucer, it seemed to him a worthy service to Milton to give him a chance of popularity with those who could not "taste" him as he was....[Scott concluded that] all Dryden's own observations about Milton, whether in prose or verse, are noble and worthy; his few unfavorable remarks are not illjustified, especially from his own point of view; and he is perfectly capable of having uttered the alleged verdict on *Paradise Lost*. "This man cuts us all out, and the ancients too."\(^9\)

With the publication of his *Aeneid* in 1697, Dryden presented the criticism which designates him as the first of the Milton Satanists. The *Aeneid* was introduced by a dedication to the Honorable John, Lord Marquis of Normanby, Earl of Mulgrave. In the dedication Dryden presented a critical discussion of heroic poetry—its meaning, its design, and its function. In the statements which treated the epic

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hero Dryden offered:

The shining quality of an epic hero, his magnanimity, his constancy, his patience, his piety, or whatever characteristic virtue his poet gives him, raises first our admiration. We are naturally prone to imitate what we admire; and frequent acts produce a habit. If the hero's chief quality be vicious...yet the moral is instructive...we abhor these actions while we read them; and what we abhor we never imitate. The poet only shows them like rocks or quicksand, to be shunned.

Dryden concluded that the list of epic poets was a short one. He referred to a group of little poets who would claim the distinction, but he disavowed their right to such a claim, arguing that "Spenser has a better plea for his 'Fairy Queen,' had his action been finished, or had been one; and Milton, if the Devil had not been his hero, instead of Adam." Because Satan figured prominently in the action of the poem, he was in Dryden's opinion, the hero of the poem. That he was vicious did not keep him from being instructive. Satan exhibited great will power, and this characteristic was significant to Dryden. In one of his own plays, a romantic drama entitled The Conquest of Granada (1670,1671), Dryden had created a hero, Almanzor, who--like Satan before him--had a vast power of will. Early in Part I of the play, Almanzor comments:

But know that I alone am king of me!  
I am as free as Nature first made man.

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10 Dryden, Dedication of Aeneid, XIV, 136-137.
11 Ibid., p.144.
Ere the base laws of servitude began,
When wild in woods the noble savage ran.

(I.1.)

In Part II, the hero continues to maintain the same spirit:

Spite of myself I'll stay, fight, love, despair;
And I can do all this because I dare.

(II.iii.)

Satan, in *Paradise Lost*, had realized that he was not good; he had realized that the forces of good were superior, and that his struggle was a hopeless one. At the same time, though, he had resolved steadfastly "never to submit or yield" (*Paradise Lost* I.108). Because Satan is so resolved, Dryden saw him as heroic.

Much of the criticism offered by the Milton Satanists is concerned with Milton's involvement, intentional or unintentional, with Satan the hero. Walter Raleigh's *Milton*, published in 1900, put forward the two extreme attitudes concerning the directions of the readers' loyalties: Readers identify wholly with Satan's party or "may be so much on the side of the angels that they cannot give the devil his due." Raleigh commented that Satan's very situation as the fearless antagonist of Omnipotence makes him either a fool or a hero [and that Milton] is

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far indeed from permitting us to think him a fool. 15

In regard to the belief that Satan is the hero of *Paradise Lost* the question concerning the true aim of the poem must be considered. Did Milton maintain his intention to "assert Eternal Providence" (*Paradise Lost* 1.25), or was there a conscious or unconscious reversal of his primary motive? William Blake believed that Milton's presentation of the two opposing forces in the ethical combat clearly indicated that the poet's sympathies were with the devil. However, Blake was concerned with what to him were errors in Milton's presentation of Satan. In "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" (1790-1793) Blake included a series of prose passages concerning this idea.

Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling. And being restrain'd, it by degrees becomes passive, till it is only the shadow of desire. The history of this is written in *Paradise Lost*, & the Governor or Reason is call'd Messiah. And the original Archangel, or possessor of the command of the heavenly host, is call'd the Devil or Satan, and his children are call'd Sin & Death. But in the Book of Job, Milton's Messiah is call'd Satan. For this history has been adopted by both parties. It indeed appear'd to Reason as if Desire was cast out; but the Devil's account is, that the Messiah fell, & formed a heaven of what he stole from the Abyss. This is shown in the Gospel, where he prays to the

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Father to send the comforter, or Desire, that Reason may have Ideas to build on; the Jehovah of the Bible being no other than he who dwells in flaming fire. Know that after Christ's death, he became Jehovah. But in Milton, the Father is Destiny, the Son a Ratio of the five senses, & the Holy-ghost Vacuum! Note: The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it.16

Blake, whose opinion of organized religion was not high, offered "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" as a commentary on his concept of morality. He saw the divine presence in man in the human imagination. He contended that "every thing that lives is Holy."17 His belief was that all that hindered the coming into being of man's whole humanity should be destroyed. Blake's marriage was that of "reason and energy...of the conscious and unconscious halves of man's original wholeness."18 To Blake, Milton's presentation of Satan had not been true to this theory. The angels who remained loyal to God represented repressive forces, and yet theirs had been the victory.

Exploring Blake's concept of evil, Denis Saurat explained that Blake saw evil as the only difference between God and man --


17 Ibid., p. 160.

if there were no evil, man would not exist. God would be alone. Why cannot God be alone? Because God has a certain work, only mysteriously alluded to, which can only be accomplished by individual men. Therefore he has given them individual existence, and allowed evil to be born so as to create individual man.  

For this reason, Blake found the central ideas presented in the seventh and eighth books of Paradise Lost totally unacceptable. These two books concern Raphael’s relating to Adam the history of the creation of the world and the events leading up to it, and Adam’s relating to Raphael what he remembers since his own creation. Blake mistakenly held that Milton’s doctrine included the idea that the pleasures of sex had arisen from the fall of man, and that this doctrine was in error. The fall of man could not produce any pleasure. Blake’s concern for the erring poet was treated extensively in "Milton, A Poem in 2 Books" (1804-1808). Here he attempted a reform of Milton’s character by having the poet return to earth as the Awakener in order to correct the fallacies put forth in Paradise Lost. We see Milton in the first book as he rises in heaven surrounded by angels who weep as they look on his face. Milton speaks:

"...I go to Eternal death! The Nations still Follow after the detestable Gods of Priam, in pomp Of warlike selfhood contradicting and blaspheming.

19Denis Saurat, Blake and Modern Thought (New York, 1929), pp. 138-139.

When will the Resurrection come to deliver the sleeping body
From corruptibility? O when, Lord Jesus, wilt thou come?
Tarry no longer, for my soul lies at the gates of death.
I will arise and look forth for the morning of the grave:
I will go down to the sepulcher to see if morning breaks:
I will go down to self annihilation and eternal death,
Lest the Last Judgment come & find me unannihilate
And I be seized & given into the hands of my own Selfhood.
The Lamb of God is seen through mists & shadows, hovering
Over the sepulchers in clouds of Jehovah & Winds of Elohim,
A disk of blood distant, & heav'ns & earths roll dark between.
What do I here before the Judgment? without my Emanation?
With the daughters of memory & not with the daughters of
inspiration?
I in my Selfhood am that Satan: I am that Evil One!
He is my Spectre!"21

Later, in the second book, Milton confronts Satan. The poet vows:

"I come to discover before Heav'n & Hell the Selfe righteousness
In all its Hypocritic turpitude, opening to every eye
These wonders of Satan's holiness, shewing to the Earth
The Idol Virtues of the Natural Heart, & Satan's Seat
Explore in all its Selfish Natural Virtue, & put off
In Self annihilation all that is not of God alone,
To put off Self & all I have, ever & ever. Amen."22

To Blake, Satan's was the eternal will, and Milton had denied the
impulsive energy and life of human imagination by failing to admit
the superiority of Satan's will in Paradise Lost.

Blake's interest in Satan was primarily concerned with the
character as he fitted into the scheme of Blake's own religious theory.

Other late eighteenth and early nineteenth century English romanticists

Writings of William Blake: With All the Variant Readings, ed. Geoffrey

22Ibid., p. 530.
may be considered Milton Satanists by virtue of the enthusiasm which they displayed for the personal character of Satan. This group, including Robert Burns, William Hazlitt, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Lord Byron, embraced Milton's romantic conception of Satan. Indeed, the figure of Satan in *Paradise Lost* has many romantic aspects. He is a paradoxical figure, and his greatness, his courage, his sense of purpose, and his indomitable spirit are evident.

Near the close of the eighteenth century, as the love of independence was growing, and as unrest and rebellion were becoming popular attitudes throughout England, Burns, in a letter to Mr. James Smith (June 11, 1787), made evident his enthusiasm for the unconquerable will of the fallen angel. Burns exclaimed, "Give me a spirit like my favorite hero, Milton's Satan." A week later, Burns wrote to Mr. William Nichol,

I have bought a pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about with me, in order to study the sentiments -- the dauntless magnanimity, the intrepid, unyielding, independence, the desperate daring, and noble defiance of hardship, in that great personage, Satan.

The poet's attitude toward Satan was based on admiration for one who possessed "A mind not to be changed by place or time" (I, 253).

Hazlitt referred to Milton as a moral poet who described things as they should be rather than as they are. He found nothing

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insipid or uninspired about Milton's Satan, and he pointed out the
superiority of Satan's character as shown in his "figure, his speeches
in council, his soliloquies, his address to Eve, [and] his share in
the war in heaven, or in the fall of man." 25

In a lecture on Shakespeare and Milton, delivered in 1818,
Hazlitt offered an analysis of Satan which is evidence of his enthu-
siasm for Milton's rebel:

Satan is the most heroic subject that was ever chosen
for a poem; and the execution is as perfect as the design
is lofty. He was the first of the created beings, who,
for endeavoring to be equal with the highest, and to divide
the empire of heaven with the Almighty, was hurled down to
hell. His aim was no less than the throne of the universe;
his means, myriads of angelic armies bright, the third part
of the heavens, whom he lured after him with his countenance,
and who durst defy the Omnipotent in arms. His ambition
was the greatest, and his punishment was the greatest; but
not so his despair, for his fortitude was as great as his
sufferings. His strength of mind was matchless as his
strength of body; the vastness of his designs did not
surpass the firm, inflexible determination with which he
submitted to his irreversible doom, and final loss of all
good. His power of action and of suffering was equal. He
was the greatest power that was ever overthrown, with the
strongest will left to resist or to endure. He was baffled,
not confounded.... Yet Satan is not the principal of malignity,
or of the abstract love of evil—but of the abstract love of
power, of pride, of self-will personified, to which last
principle all other good and evil, and even his own, are
subordinate. From this principle he never once flinches....
The poet has not in all this given us a mere shadowy outline;
the strength is equal to the magnitude of the conception.
The Achilles of Homer is not more distinct; the Titans were
not more vast; Prometheus chained to his rock was not a more

terrific example of suffering and of crime. Wherever the figure of Satan is introduced...it is illustrated with the most striking and appropriate images: so that we see it always before us, gigantic, irregular, portentous, uneasy, and disturbed—but dazzling in its faded splendor, the clouded ruins of a God.26

Hazlitt pointed out that Milton as an antagonist had been too open to resort to the "bye-tricks of a hump and cloven foot"27 in order to demean Satan. Milton had given the devil his due. Hazlitt concluded that the criticism aimed at Milton for carrying his liberal attitude toward Satan too far and, thus, defeating his own purpose in the poem found a basis in the fact that Milton was himself a rebel and that Milton had chosen to make Satan, a rebel, the main character in his poem.

Shelley followed this general line of thought in his references to Milton's Satan. He recognized Satan as a moral being, and he complimented Milton for not having asserted that the virtue of God was greater in quality than the virtue of Satan. Shelley, too, drew a parallel between Milton's Satan and Milton himself. The conception and creation of Satan, to Shelley, was in accord with Milton's personal questionings concerning religion and morals, and with his love of rebellion. In the first part of "A Defense of Poetry," written in 1821, Shelley offered the following analysis:

Milton's poem contains within itself a philosophical refutation of that system of which, by a strange and natural

26Hazlitt, pp.63-65.
27Ibid., p.65.
antithesis, it has been a chief popular support. Nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in *Paradise Lost*. It is a mistake to suppose that he could ever have been intended for the popular personification of evil. Implacable hate, patient cunning, and a sleepless refinement of devices to inflict the extremest anguish on an enemy, these things are evil; and, although venial in a slave, are not to be forgiven in a tyrant; although redeemed by much that ennobles his defeat in one subdued, are marked by all that dishonours his conquest in the victor. Milton's Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments. Milton has so far violated the popular creed (if this shall be judged to be a violation) as to have alleged no superiority of moral virtue to his god over his devil. And this bold neglect of a direct moral purpose is the most decisive proof of the supremacy of Milton's genius.  

Earlier, in the preface to *Prometheus Unbound* (1818-1819), a lyrical drama, Shelley had discussed Milton's Satan in relation to his own *Prometheus*, saying that the two resembled each other but that *Prometheus* was of a more practical nature than Satan—

...in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he [Prometheus] is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which, in the Hero of *Paradise Lost*, interfere with the interest.  

Shelley added in the same preface that "the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican, and a bold enquirer into morals and

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29Ibid., p. 98.
religion."  

Hazlitt and Shelley both recognized the two sides of Satan, but they chose to emphasize and celebrate the free spirit and the unbending will of the character as it opposed the tyranny which, in their opinion, was represented in the presence of Milton's God. Lord Byron is mentioned briefly at this point as his views indeed fit the context of the romantic attitude of Hazlitt and Shelley. Byron presented no critical analysis of Satan, but he "brought to perfection the rebel type, remote and descendant of Milton's Satan," in "The Corsair" (1811) and in "Lara" (1814). In the drama of Cain (1821) Byron's Lucifer is a "champion of man's thirst for intellectual emancipation." Childe Harold, Byron's hero in Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (Cantos I and II, 1812; III, 1816; IV, 1818) is disappointed and disillusioned with the world. The characteristics of Byron's heroes indicate, generally, the poet's ideas concerning man's free will. To Byron the divine Creator endowed each individual with a certain nature; thus, man's free will, motivated by his particular nature, was not to be considered absolute. Satan rebelled because by nature he was a rebel, and his nature had been determined by the divine Creator, who,

30 Shelley, p.98.
31 Proa, p.61.
to Byron, assumed a certain responsibility for that nature. Milton makes it clear, however, particularly in the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*, that Satan alone is responsible for his evil doings. The fallen angel addresses the sun, declaring his hate for the beams 'That bring to my remembrance from what state/I fell' (IV. 38-39). He then questions what his state might have been had he been created "some inferiour Angel" (IV.59) in whom "no unbounded hope had rais'd/ Ambition" (IV. 60-61). He conjectures, however, that even then in a meaner state he might have been drawn to follow another mightier rebel. He recalls other angels as powerful as he who chose to remain loyal to God, and he questions himself, "Hadst thou the same free Will and Power to stand?" (IV. 66). And his own answer is, "Thou hadst" (IV. 67). He then curses himself for his own state, saying,

"Nay curs'd be thou; since against his thy will Chose freely what it now so justly rues." (IV. 71-72)

Because Satan's responsibility for his own actions constitutes a significant factor in relation to his character and function in the poem, Milton's views concerning the subject will be discussed more fully in the third chapter of this paper.

James G. Nelson in *The Sublime Puritan*, 1963, explained that Satan's appeal to the nineteenth century lay in his defiance of overwhelming odds. The reader identified sympathetically with Satan, the

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pursuer of action. He was in keeping with the spirit of the time.

As the eighteenth century had come to a close,

that strangely modern feeling of aspiration, that insatiable desire to know all things and do all things and scorn all restraint, was beginning to permeate the culture of the Western World. Men once restrained and limited by tradition suddenly, after the Enlightenment, felt free and unlimited. Many now divested of the knowledge of certain truth were impelled to search for it till they died or satisfied themselves that they had found it again through experience; and men and nations, elated by the feeling of infinite power which machines and science instilled in them, labored like titans under the illusion that their possibilities were limitless.34

Nelson proposed that Satan's character appealed to this attitude.

On one hand he was intellectually and physically sublime; on the other, he was human.

Another nineteenth century writer to be considered as a Milton Satanist is the eminent biographer of Milton, David Masson. His view that the fallen angel is the hero of Paradise Lost was based on the characteristic action of Satan in the poem, both as a functioning part of the epic tradition and as a functioning part of the drama of humanity.

In an article--written in 1844--concerning the three devils presented by Luther, Milton, and Goethe, he recognized the primary function of Milton's Satan as being that of producing evil. Masson asserted that the character was based on the Scriptural proposition and that, traditionally, Satan was a being accursed. He operated incessantly to produce evil in human affairs. The biographer's enthusiasm for Milton's creation is

evident in his statement that we have reason to know that [Milton] did actually believe in the Devil's existence; and it agrees with what we know of Milton's character to suppose that the Devil thus believed in would be pretty much the same magnificent being he has described in his poem.35

The basic nature of the subject of Milton's poem, concerning supernatural conditions of being, presented difficulties which had to be overcome in the writing of the story. Masson explained the problem as being that of "making the course of events correspond with the reputation of the objects."36 Milton had to place the supernatural conditions of being into a working structure, making events follow each other just as they would in a human narrative. The motives, the reasonings, the misconceptions of these beings, all that determined the succession of events, he had to make substantially human. The whole narrative, for instance, proceeds on the supposition of these supernatural beings having no higher degree of knowledge than human beings, with equal physical advantages, would have had under similar circumstances.... In the Paradise Lost, the working notion that the Devils have about God is exactly that which human beings have when they hope to succeed in a bad enterprise. Otherwise, the poem could not have been written.37

Having established the fundamental limitations placed by Milton on all the supernatural beings within the poem, Masson proceeded to study

35David Masson, "The Three Devils: Luther's, Milton's, and Goethe's," Fraser's Magazine, XXX (July to December, 1844), 649.

36Ibid., p. 650.

37Masson, pp. 651-652.
the character of Satan by observing his progress in the action of the poem. As an archangel Satan had been favored above all. His position had been an exalted one; but, the biographer argued, Satan by nature was not a contemplative being. He was a creature of action, and the action grew and eventually obsessed him, destroying his angelic characteristics. Just by giving in to what he was, he destroyed himself. In fact, Masson pointed out, his position as the highest of all the angels made him especially liable to fall. Then, the archangel became the rebel; he had pursued action to too great an extent, avoiding contemplation and worship, and had thus developed a rebellious nature. This in turn led to a closer association with others in heaven who were also more fond of action than contemplation, and to a position of leadership which was to assume such importance for him that he would finally assert that it was "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heav'n" (I. 283). Considered next in Masson's study of progressive action was Satan's reaction to the decree of the Almighty concerning His Son, Satan's war against Michael, and later, in hell, Satan's plan for his function in the future:

"...but of this be sure,
To do ought good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight,
As being the contrary to his high will
Whom we resist."

(I.158-162)

Masson saw the character of Satan as being a result of the decisions
of Satan. He decided to be a devil. His was the decision to corrupt man. He decided to be the one to leave hell and go to the new world. When he first arrived, he fell into doubts with himself, but at length he threw off these doubts. It was at this point, Masson went on, that

Satan begins to degenerate into a meaner being. In the very act of ruining man he committed himself to a life of ignominious activity,--he was to go on his belly and eat dust all his days. 38

In his biography of Milton, Masson refused to agree with the previous criticism which had explained much of the poem as being the result of Milton's self-involvement, consciously or unconsciously, in the poem. To Masson the poem had been treated objectively. The thematic decision was Miltonic--"an epic of the entire created universe, in its relations to prior and aboriginal eternity" 39--but the poem was of the objective order. Paradise Lost, in Masson's view, was to be considered a contribution to the permanent mythology of the human race [because] it connected, by a narrative of vast construction, the inconceivable universe anterior to time and to man with the beginnings and history of our particular planet. 40

In relation to this viewpoint the biographer explained his reasons for considering Satan the hero of Paradise Lost. He argued that the

38 Masson, pp. 652-655.


40 Ibid., p. 554.
only way that Milton could succeed in his vast narrative was by fastening the attention on one great supernatural being, supposed to belong to the angelic crowd that peopled the empyrean before our world was created, by following this being in his actions as a rebel in heaven and an outcast in hell, and by leaving him at last in apparently successful possession of the new universe for which he had struggled. If the "hero" of an epic is that principal personage who figures from first to last, and whose actions draw all the threads, or even if success in some sense, and command of our admiration and sympathy in some degree, are requisite for the name, then not wrongly have so many of the critics regarded Satan as "the hero" of Paradise Lost. There is, in all events, no other "hero" there, unless Humanity itself, which is the notable contrary object of our affections and hopes throughout, and which we may accept as personified distributively in Adam and Eve, can stand us in that character.41

In Masson's analysis Milton's Satan is designated a hero primarily because of his function within the epic framework.

Augustus Hopkins Strong, writing in 1897, was also concerned with Satan as he functioned within the structure of the epic, but the epic structure to Strong involved both Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. He referred to Milton as the only one of all the great English poets who was a "systematic theologian,"42 and the whole Christian theme with which Milton was concerned, Strong asserted, was put forth in the two poems. Milton did not believe that Paradise Lost was superior to Paradise Regained, and, the critic maintained, Milton "would not have the victory of Satan, the hero of the first epic,


obscure the victory of Christ, the hero of the second." In Paradise Lost Satan proposes to his legions that they seek out the new world which the Almighty has created --

"...here perhaps
Some advantagious act may be achiev'd
By sudden onset, either with Hell fire
To waste his whole Creation, or possess
All as our own, and drive as we were driven,
The punie habitants; or if not drive,
Seduce them to our Party..."

(II.362-368)

Later, when Satan sees Adam and Eve for the first time, he muses:

"Ah gentle pair, ye little think how nigh
Your change approaches, when all these delights
Will vanish and deliver ye to woe,
More woe, the more your taste is now of joy;
Happie, but far so happie ill secur'd
Long to continue..."

(IV.366-371)

Then the fallen angel, filled with envy as he watches Adam and Eve in the garden, decides on his plan of action:

"All is not theirs, it seems:
One fatal Tree there stands, of Knowledge call'd,
Forbidden them to taste: Knowledge forbidd'n?
Suspicious, reasonless. why should thir Lord
Envie them that? Can it be sin to know,
Can it be death? and do thay onely stand
By Ignorance, is that thir happie state,
The proof of thir obedience and thir faith?
O fair foundation laid whereon to build
Thir ruine! Hence I will excite their minds
With more desire to know, and to reject

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43 Strong, p.262.
Envious commands, invented with designe
To keep them low whom knowledge might exalt
Equal with Gods; aspiring to be such,
They taste and die."

(IV.513-527)

To Strong Satan was victorious in that he carried out his plan to bring about the fall of man. It must be recalled, however, that Satan, acting as a free agent, was dependent upon man, also acting as a free agent, for the success of his venture. Too, the victory of Satan, as is made clear in *Paradise Lost*, is not a final one. Strong showed no enthusiasm for the character of Satan, but because he was the instrument which instigated the loss of Paradise, Satan was considered by the critic as the functional hero of the epic.

Six writers publishing before 1945 complete the list of Milton Satanists to be considered in this study. The first, William Vaughn Moody, praised the eloquent speeches of the rebel angel, contrasting them to the pedantic dullness of the passages designated to the Omnipotent. Moody cited Satan's accounts of his comings and goings as being brilliant and elevated. He echoed the sentiments of Blake and Shelley by remarking that the chief figure in *Paradise Lost*, "and real hero, Lucifer, is an embodiment of that very spirit of revolt against arbitrary authority...." 44 Moody, writing in 1899, fitted the rebel more closely, however, into the historical framework

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of Milton's own lifetime by asserting that one could view Satan as an unsuccessful Cromwell, refusing to bow before the tyranny of irresponsible might, and Jehovah [as] a triumphant Stuart, robed in the white light of omnipotence. The theology and the politics of the poet are at variance, and this fact introduces into much of the poem an unconscious insincerity.45

According to Moody, the power and spirit of Satan the hero in *Paradise Lost* was the same power and spirit which had swept Charles I from the throne of England in 1649.

A parallel was also drawn between Satan and Cromwell by Alden Sampson, writing in 1913. He too referred to the dramatic expression of Satan's language, saying that it was suited to a great commander. In the second book of *Paradise Lost*, Satan, described as one "whom now transcendent glory rais'd/Above his fellows" (II.427-328), addresses his compatriots. His remarks concern the plan to seek out God's newly created world as a possible site for future evil activity. His plan is met with mute thoughtfulness, but

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none among the choice and prime
Of those Heav’n-warring Champions could be found
So hardie as to proffer or accept
Alone the dreadful voyage.
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(II.423-428)

Next, Satan speaks of hell as a "prison strong" (II.434), and he describes the barriers which must be passed if any would leave the infernal region. He then makes his decision to act:

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45 Moody, p.99.
"But I should ill become this Throne, O Peers,  
And this Imperial Sov'ranty, adorn'd  
With splendor, arm'd with power, if aught propos'd  
And judg'd of public moment, in the shape  
Of difficulty or danger could deterr  
Me from attempting. Wherefore do I assume  
These Royalties, and not refuse to Reign,  
Refusing to accept as great a share  
Of hazard as of honor, due alike  
To him who Reigns, and so much to him due  
Of hazard more, as he above the rest  
High honourd sits?"

(II.446-456)

Sampson referred to this speech as being "in downright Cromwellian fashion as the born leader of men." The critic further maintained that when Milton depicted the fallen angel,

he gave of the very choicest in his own soul, perhaps in more generous measure than he himself was quite aware of, and unconsciously, it may even be in spite of himself, he endowed the fallen Angel with his own unswerving ideals.

The critic pointed out Satan's loyalty, generosity, and nobility. He argued that Satan's attempt to overthrow the ruler of heaven was in itself an appeal to the reader's sympathy. Sampson asserted that before Satan's rebellion there had been no established proof that heaven's ruler was omnipotent. He cited a speech made by God in the fifth book of the poem as statement of this fact. In the speech, God addresses his Son in relation to Satan's activities:

"Son, thou in whom my glory I behold  
In full resplendence, Heir of all my might,  
Neerly it now concernes us to be sure


47 Ibid., p.125.
Of our Omnipotence, and with what Arms
We mean to hold what ancienly we claim
Of Deitie or Empire: such a foe
Is rising, who intends to erect his Throne
Equal to ours, throughout the spacious North;
Nor so content, hath in his thought to try
In battel, what our Power is, or our right.
Let us advise, and to this hazard draw
With speed what force is left, and all impoy
In our defence, lest unawares we lose
This our high place, our Sanctuarie, our Hill."

(V.719-732)

Sampson argued that these did not seem the words of an absolute, omnipotent ruler, and, he continued, "if God himself be constrained to admit contingency of defeat, who can blame Lucifer for sharing the opinion of his Chief?" The critic's argument loses much of its force, however, when the Son's reply to his Father is considered. His words make clear that God's speech was one of irony:

"Mightie Father, thou thy foes
Justly hast in derision, and secure
Laugh'at at their vain designes and tumults vain,
Matter to mee of Glory, whom their hate
Illustrates, when they see all Regal Power
Giv'n me to quell thir pride, and in event
Know whether I be dextrous to subdue
Thy Rebels, or be found the worst in Heav'n."

(V.735-742)

Also, in the fourth book of Paradise Lost Satan himself admits that God "deservd no such return/From mo, whom he created" (IV.42-43), and he also refers to his vain boast that he "could subdue/Th' Omnipotent" (IV.85-86). Sampson maintained that when Satan made these last statements he had, perhaps, lost some of his "fighting

48 Sampson, p.127.
edge."  

The critic's enthusiasm for the importance of Satan's function in the poem is further seen in his statements concerning the role which the fallen angel played in the fall of man. Sampson pointed out that Eve's fall was a natural result of man's instinctive search for truth and knowledge, and, he concluded, instead of blame for our mother we should have only gratitude and thanks, and to Satan must we yield the entire credit for her act.  

Sampson maintained that although Satan sinned and, because of his pride, fell, still his nature was celestial, and he was as much an instrument as God was in the establishing of Milton's theme.  

Martin A. Larson also considered Satan in terms of his function within the epic framework. In a study written in 1927 he referred to Satan as the "central figure and probably the hero" of Paradise Lost. Larson pointed out that Satan, by separating himself from good and by allowing his passion to rule him, rather than his reason, represented a negative, destructive force. By establishing himself as the opposition to good and to natural order, by being evil, Satan had become inseparably involved in the purpose of the epic. Larson  

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49 Sampson, p.120.  
50 Ibid., p.133.  
later stated, however, that "there is no hero in Paradise Lost. Milton was not interested in heroes, human or divine."\(^5\) For this reason, Larson's position as a Milton Satanist is not a definite one. He did point out, though, that in his struggles to overcome obstacles and in his interests Satan was similar to man. Satan was an example through which Milton presented an ethical philosophy. The reader is able to realize the "effects of sin in a moral agent"\(^5\) as Satan gradually degenerates throughout the poem. Larson also stated that because Satan was aware of his degradation and that because the fallen angel knew that he would have to pay for his actions, "he is the most tragic figure in literature."\(^5\)

The appraisal of Satan made in 1932 by Charles Williams involved an awareness of his importance as an artistic creation within the epic. Williams, by reason of the complexity of Satan's character, designated him as the chief figure in Paradise Lost. The critic stated that the intellectual subject of the poem concerned free will and that the choices which Satan and Adam made exemplified "the double exercise of free will."\(^5\) Satan, however, was more experienced and more complex

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\(^5\) Larson, p.207.

\(^5\) Ibid., p.224.

\(^5\) Larson, p.232.

than Adam, and Satan's exercise of free will was the initial cause of Adam's exercise of free will. For this reason, Williams named Satan's role in the poem the predominant one. Satan's decision to defy the Omnipotent was based on his desire to be true to himself, the critic maintained. Satan realized that he would "lose himself" if he submitted to something to which his whole being was antagonistic. The lesson to be learned from Satan's action is concerned with the realization that good, by being refused to be submitted to, will not be destroyed or done away with. Satan realized this as he made his final decision to hate the good and to set himself up in opposition to it:

"So farwel Hope, and with Hope farwel Fear,
Farewel Remorse! All Good to me is lost;
Evil, be thou my Good; by thee at least
Divided Empire with Heav'ns King I hold...."

(IV.108-111)

Williams stated that the moral choice with which Satan was confronted was responsible for his complexity as a character. The critic also echoed an idea suggested by many of the Milton Satanists: that Milton's presentation of Satan was, artistically, more interesting than his presentation of the heavenly host. He argued that Satan had maintained his greatness even after he had been overcome by the Son and transformed into a serpent:

56 Williams, p.122.
...but still greatest bee the midst,
Now Dragon grown, Larger than whom the Sun
Ingendar in the Pythian Vale on slime,
Huge Python, and his Power no less he seem'd
Above the rest still to retain.

(X.528-532)

The succeeding lines, which Williams did not cite, seem to diminish,
however, to a considerable extent, the prominence of Satan's great-
ness:

They all
Him follow'd issuing forth to th' open Field,
Where all yet left of that revolted Rout,
Heav'n-fall'n, in station stood or just array,
Sublime with expectation when to see
In Triumph issuing forth their glorious Chief;
They saw, but other sight instead, a crowd
Of ugly Serpents; horror on them fell,
And horrid sympathie; for what they saw,
They felt themselves now changing; down their arms,
Down fell both Spear and Shield, down they as fast,
And the dire hiss renew'd, and the dire form
Catcht by Contagion, like in punishment
As in their crime. Thus was th' applause they meant
Turnd to exploding hiss, triumph to shame
Cast on themselves from their own mouths.

(X.532-547)

Williams concluded that even though Milton may not have approved of
Satan, "he certainly had an artistic -- if no other -- tenderness for
the 'archangel ruined',"57 and in order for the poem to convey the
beauty and majesty which it intended the heavenly relationships to
assume, the reader must accept the characters of God and the Son as

57Williams, p.130.
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assume, the reader must accept the characters of God and the Son as

57Williams, p.130.
abstractions representing larger concepts and ideas. The reader's interest in Satan, he maintained, is for the present; the interest in the deities is a projected one.

Mario Praz, writing in 1933, took no decisive stand as a Milton Satanist, yet he did emphasize in his criticism the charm of the untamed rebel, and he praised the energy with which Milton had endowed his heroic creation. He recalled that Satan, in spite of the fall and his personal change "From him, who in the happy Realms of Light/Cloth'd with transcendent brightness didst out-shine/Myriads" (I.85-87), had planned revenge. Praz also pointed out the sadness within Satan as he viewed with "baleful eyes" (I.56) his state, and the critic emphasized the fact that even then Satan did not repent.58

Still concerned with what Satan represented in Paradise Lost but not dealing as much with seventeenth century politics as Moody, and more emphatic than Praz, yet still reserved, labeling Satan the hero, was G. Rostrevor Hamilton, publishing in 1944. Hamilton admitted that because of Milton's presentation of Satan the reader does start with a prejudice against the devil. We conceive him "as wholly evil, the negation of all good...and the infernal Serpent."59 However, he went on to cite the dual personality of Satan as a

58 Praz, p.55.
59 Hamilton, p.9.
character whom Milton allowed to be "exalted as well as mean, heroic as well as vicious." In spite of the constant references to Satan's malice and pride, we still, the critic maintained, see splendor and greatness, tenderness, courage and determining endurance in the person of the fallen angel. Within Satan's nature are heroic virtues, and these combined with the evil also within him give a certain tragic importance. Hamilton's reference to Satan as a hero, though reserved in its finality, is clear:

There was room in Milton's heaven for a wholly splendid rebel, a tragic figure torn between the real claims of an imperfect if perhaps Omnipotent King, and the absolute claim of an ideal by which he fell short. Such a figure, fighting in a hopeless cause, would be worthy of unstinted admiration, and we may be inclined to transfer it undiminished to Satan, who showed some of the heroic qualities. But Satan, though a hero, is a hero darkened and perverted; admiration cannot blind us to the selfishness of his pride.

Hamilton's analysis concerned the idea that in Satan we can see a personification of our own divided wills, and that behind the meanness of Satan we can catch a glimpse of something that is glorious and illuminating.

These later analyses of Satan are most generally based on the character as he appears in the first two books of the poem, whereas

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60 Hamilton, p.9.
61 Ibid., pp.9-10.
the earlier Milton Satanists were concerned with Satan as he fitted into their particular philosophies or moral schemes, or as he fitted into the epic structure of the poem. The romantic writers emphasized the romantic attributes of Satan and found in his expression of his free will a kindred spirit. The structural analysts saw him participating principally in every action and named him hero. It would seem, however, that there are other considerations to be involved in the total appraisal of the position of Satan in *Paradise Lost*. 
II
THE ANTI-SATANISTS

Equally as impressive as the criticism put forth by the Milton Satanists is the body of writing which maintains that Satan is not the hero of Paradise Lost—the criticism of the anti-Satanists. Again, the reasoning behind their analyses is varied and personal, but it is necessary to examine both viewpoints in order to arrive at a thesis which is both just and accurate.

Cited earlier in this study were Dryden's comments, printed in 1697, concerning Satan as the hero of Paradise Lost. Fifteen years later Joseph Addison published a series of articles in The Spectator which presented a critical examination of the poem from an entirely different viewpoint. One essay was aimed specifically at Dryden and set about refuting his theory.

On Saturday, January 12, 1712, Addison wrote an essay concerning the principal actors in Paradise Lost. He praised the characterizations maintaining that

Milton's poem is admirable in this respect, since it is impossible for any of its Readers, whatever Nation, Country or People he may belong to, not to be related to the Persons who are the principal Actors in it; but what is still infinitely more to its Advantage, the principal Actors in this Poem are not only our Progenitors, but our Representatives. We have an actual interest in every Thing they do, and no less than our utmost Happiness is concerned, and lies at Stake in all their Behaviour.
I shall subjoyn as a Corollary to the foregoing Remark, an admirable Observation out of Aristotle, which hath been very much misrepresented in the Quotations of some modern Criticks. 'If a Man of perfect and consummate Virtue falls into a Misfortune, it raises our Pity, but not our Terror, because we do not fear that it may be our own Case, who do not resemble the Suffering Person.' But as that great Philosopher adds, 'If we see a Man of Virtues mixt with Infirmities, fall into Misfortune, it does not raise our Pity but our Terror; because we are afraid that the like Misfortunes may happen to ourselves, who resemble the Character of the Suffering Person.'

Nearly a month later, on Saturday, February 9, 1712, Addison treated even more specifically the viewpoint put forth by the first Milton Satanist:

There is another Objection against Milton's Fable, which is indeed almost the same with the former, tho' placed in a different Light, namely, That the Hero in Paradise Lost is unsuccessful, and by no means a Match for his Enemies. This gave occasion to Mr. Dryden's Reflection, that the Devil was in reality Milton's Hero. I think I have obviated the Objection in my first Paper. The Paradise Lost is an Epic, or a Narrative Poem; he that looks for an Hero in it, searches for that which Milton never intended; but if he will needs fix the Name of an Hero upon any Person in it, 'tis certainly the Messiah who is the Hero, both in the Principal Action, and in the chief Episodes.

In formulating his criticism of Paradise Lost and, particularly, of the interpretation of Satan's role in the poem, Addison considered

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64 Addison, No. 297, Saturday, February 9, 1712, p. 386.
the entire poem and its whole function. He designated Adam and
Eve as the principal characters with whom the readers relate. It
was by observation and understanding of the actions of these
principal characters that the readers received moral instruction
or enlightenment. Addison's reference to the Messiah's being the
real hero of Paradise Lost was also based on his consideration of
the whole function or purpose of the Christian epic. It was the
Messiah's unselfish act which was of primary importance to the
theme of the poem, and it was through the Messiah that Adam achieved
his salvation.

Samuel Johnson, too, followed this approach. In Lives
of the Poets (1779-1781) he considered the entire action of the
poem in determining the literary classification of the work; and in
determining the hero of the work, he reflected upon a consideration
of the whole poem. He also refuted Dryden's analysis concerning Adam
as an unsuccessful hero:

The questions, whether the action of the poem be strictly
one, whether the poem can be properly termed heronic, and
who is the hero, are praised by such readers as draw their
principles of judgement rather from books than from reason.
Milton, though he intituled Paradise Lost only a poem, yet
calls it himself heronic song. Dryden, petulantly and
indecently, denies the heroism of Adam because he was over-
come; but there is no reason why the hero should not be
unfortunate, except established practice, since success
and virtue do not go necessarily together.
...However, if success be necessary, Adam's deceivers was
at least crushed; Adam was restored to his Maker's favour,
and therefore may securely resume his human rank.65

65Samuel Johnson, "Milton," Lives of the Poets (1779-1781), in
The Six Chief Lives from Johnson's "Lives of the Poets," ed. Matthew
Johnson's reference to Dryden was more pointed than Addison's, and in his argument he considered Adam the hero of the work whereas Addison had designated the Messiah as hero; but the general conclusion concerning the function of Satan was the same.

As suggested in many of the analyses of Satan's character, there is a problem which exists concerning the presentation of the fundamental nature of the character. There are two sides of Satan's nature: one, exalted and endowed with special potential; the other, corrupted and determined to use the potential for the perpetuation of evil. In many ways this problem seems to be the base upon which rests much of the conjecture concerning Satan's place in the work.

In 1818, in one of a series of lectures concerning the English poets, Samuel Taylor Coleridge speculated on the problem of Satan's dual nature. His ideas are included at this point because he considered so thoroughly the problem facing Milton in the presentation of Satan. Coleridge does not, however, establish himself firmly as an anti-Satanist; in fact, he alludes to Satan as an important character having much predominance in the work:

The character of Satan is pride and sensual indulgence, finding in self the sole motive of action. It is the character seen in little on the political stage. It exhibits all the restlessness, tamority, and cunning which have matched the mighty hunters from Nimrod to Napoleon. The common fascination of men is, that these great men, as they are called, must act from some great
motive. Milton has carefully marked in his Satan the intense selfishness, the alcohol of egotism, which would rather reign in hell than serve in heaven. To place the lust of self in opposition to denial of self or duty, and to show what exertions it would make, and what pains endure to accomplish its end, is Milton's particular object in the character of Satan. But around this character he has thrown a singularity of daring, a grandeur of sufferance, and a ruined splendor, which constitute the very height of poetic sublimity.66

In considering the seemingly insuperable difficulties presented by the plot in which Milton chose to exhibit his theme, Coleridge commented in the same lecture that

high poetry is the translation of reality into the ideal under the predicament of succession of time only. The poet is an historian, upon condition of moral power being the only force in the universe. The very grandeur of his subject ministered a difficulty to Milton. The statement of a being of high intellect, warring against the supreme Being, seems to contradict the idea of a supreme Being. Milton precludes our feeling this, as much as possible, by keeping the peculiar attributes of divinity less in sight, making them to a certain extent allegorical only.67

The reference to the determination and perseverance of Satan as he acted from a motive of greatness echoes the sentiment of many of the Satanists; yet the reference to the motive's being one of intense self-interest unhindered by and unconcerned with responsible consideration for others is more indicative of the views of the anti-Satanists. Also, Coleridge's speculation concerning the allegorical

66 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Lecture X" (Spring, 1818), Lectures on Shakespeare, etc. (London, 1853), p. 286.

67 Ibid., p. 285.
treatment of divinity may bear some relation to Moody's reference, cited earlier, concerning the pedantic dullness of the passages designated to the Omnifotent.

While the writings of the Milton Satanists span three centuries, most of the writers maintaining the anti-Satanists viewpoint are concentrated in the twentieth century. Marianna Woodhull, writing in 1907, asserted that the underlying purpose of Paradise Lost was to present the triumph of Christ, not the fall of Adam. Satan, treated as a free agent, was allowed by God to exist and perform as his nature directed. Miss Woodhull agreed with the opinion that Satan should be considered a unifying element in the poem; he joins the plot concerning the Omnifotent with the plot concerning Adam, or man. Satan, she stated, "is for this reason the dynamic center of the epic." She did not agree that this function made Satan the hero of Paradise Lost.

Not even in a classic epic did he who originated the action become necessarily the hero; but quite as often the resistance to the initial action marks the hero. The whole structure of Milton's epic is reared to show how, by resisting Satan's scheme, the Son of God triumphed as the hero of Paradise Lost.

She further analyzed the character of Satan, recognizing Milton's genius for having been able to create a spirit worthy once to be an angel of light, endowed

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89 Ibid., p. 254.
with great powers of mind and heart; Satan fell through a defect that was allied to his virtues, and degenerated into a fiend, possessed not of alien characteristics, but of qualities that result from a consistent downward development. The poet has created an enlarged psychology for Satan; he is never a man but superhuman always, all of his capabilities of mind and heart are on a larger scale than human. This achievement is a triumph of epic art.  

In referring to Satan's fall as being due to a "defect that was allied to his virtues," Miss Woodhull brings to mind the earlier statement of Masson that because Satan had given in to his potential and natural desire for action, he had destroyed himself. Miss Woodhull also commented that Satan, after the fall, sought "relief in activity." However, instead of arguing that this instinct was a tragic flaw in the character of the hero, Miss Woodhull maintained that from the moment of the announcement by God that His son was to be revered as highly as He by all in heaven, the jealous, prideful Satan chose to follow a course that moved down and down until finally he was suited only to crawl. Satan's doom was that he saw clearly the good and the evil and that he chose the evil. The critic observed that Satan had sinned from the beginning. As his potential degenerated, his original good impulses became thoughts which all ended in evil. Significantly, Satan's adoption of the snake for his disguise was a personal admission of his degradation——

70 Woodhull, p.263.
71 Ibid., p.265.
72 Woodhull, p.271.
a fugitive from good, crawling in his only course, and herein lies his defeat. This is a kind of defeat that appeals most in its force to the Anglo-Saxon love of open-minded, fair play. Surely no genuine Englishman is likely to misunderstand Milton's study of Satan here, nor to think him the hero of *Paradise Lost*.  

Satan's final degradation was emphasized when he returned to hell after his success in the temptation of Eve. Ironically, Miss Woodhull recalled, he then met a final humiliation. After boasting before the whole assembly in hell of his success against man,

> a while he stood, expecting  
> Their universal shout and high applause  
> To fill his ear, when contrary he hears  
> On all sides from innumerable tongues  
> A dismal universal hiss, the sound  
> Of public scorn.  

(X.504-509)

Satan, then, as one who corrupted beauty, opposed love, and challenged God, chose to follow evil, chose to degrade himself physically and spiritually, and chose to surround himself with other evil. When he sought recognition and praise from the evil forces with which he had surrounded himself, he received only scorn. His act had been ignoble and the retribution was fitting. Earlier in the preceding books of *Paradise Lost* Satan had entertained noble impulses and attitudes. He had pitied Adam and Eve when he first saw them, and he had envied the state which surrounded them:

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73Woodhull, p.271.
"O Earth, how like to Heav'n, if not preferr'd
More justly, Seat worthier of Gods, as built
With second thoughts, reforming what was old!
For what God after better worse would build?
Terrestrial Heav'n, danced round by other Heav'ns
That shine, yet bear their bright officious Lamps,
Light above Light, for thee alone, as seems,
In thee concentrating all their precious beams
Of sacred influence: As God in Heav'n
Is Center, yet extends to all, so thou
Centring receav'est from all those Orbs; in thee,
Not in themselves, all their known virtue appears
Productive in Herb, Plant, and nobler birth
Of Creatures animate with gradual life
Of Growth, Sense, Reason, all summ'd up in Man."

(IX.99-113)

But Satan had already chosen to rebel, and now "in none of these"
(IX.118) could he "find place or refuge" (IX.119). His only pleasure
now would come from trying to destroy what God had created:

"To mee shall be the glorie sole among
The infernal Powers, in one day to have marr'd
What he, Almighty styl'd, six Nights and Days
Contin'd making, and who knows how long
Before had bin contriving...."

(IX.135-139)

The devils in general, as well as Satan in particular, are
believably drawn by Milton. When they are first presented, after
Satan's fall from heaven with his evil host, they are busy in
speculation, recollection, and formulation, in spite of their situation.
Their busy-ness is believable. Blake, as cited earlier, had concluded
that Milton was at liberty when he wrote of the devil because the
poet was, in reality, on the devil's side. Elmer Edgar Stoll, writing
in 1930, took issue with this idea. He maintained that it was very
possible for the poet to have involved himself with the characters of the devils without his involvement's being considered an approval of what they did. Milton was more at home with the devils, he asserted,

not because they are wicked, but because they are limited, and are within the bounds of his and our comprehension, within those, that is to say, of art.  

Along this same line of thought, Stoll also reflected upon the problem of the plot within which Satan moves and acts. Satan as a character emerges natural and real, and many have concluded that because of this presentation Milton himself must have considered Satan the hero of the work. Stoll argued against this viewpoint, saying that the

chief trouble with Milton is, that having successfully created vast immaterial powers, omnipotent and omniscient or nearly so, he turns about and puts them—into a story. It is a contradiction in terms—a story implies limits in knowledge and power. The infinite playing a part, which is necessarily finite!  

Later, in 1944, Stoll treated more extensively the criticism based on the conception of Satan as the hero of *Paradise Lost*. In particular he decried the tradition of the romantics—Shelley, Hazlitt, and Byron. Their enthusiasm for Satan, he held, was based

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on the romantic attributes of the villain. Stoll granted that Satan had been drawn by a romantic poet who had "that Romantic bent for turning the ugly, painful, or fearful into the beautiful," and Milton's Satan, he went on, had been the first in a long line of romantic villains--

haughty and dauntless, rebellious and defiant, ambitious and self-centered, and as conscious of his own wickedness as of his "injur'd merit," he is yet loyal to his comrades, compassionate toward the feeble, and melancholy both in his intercourse with them and in himself.

Yet Milton's presentation of Satan had, the critic asserted, an imaginative quality which separated it from the later conceptions of the romantic writers. Milton's presentation had nothing of the "spirit of sadism, or masochism, or other perversions...and [took] no pleasure, either, in the painful or the horrible or the ugly for its own sake."

Stoll concluded:

Milton had an imagination, which as with the other great poets, passes far beyond the confines of his actual sympathy or approval. He was himself no primitivist or anarchist, no satanist or antinomian; and no Romantic either, in the thoroughgoing lawless modern sense. Like most great poets and other artists he delighted in noble imaginings, emotions, and sensations for their own sake more than his contemporaries; but his range was wider than

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77 Ibid., p.394.

78 Stoll (1944), p.405.
any of his predecessors partly because the province of sensibility for both poets and also other men had meantime widened. He was thus no sentimentalist or sensationalist, for he was big enough in his other faculties to keep his balance even. And by his imaginative sympathy with Satan Milton, though in the presentation he takes up more completely with the demon's point of view, his "injur'd merit" is no more compromised than a Shakespeare with his villains.79

The enthusiasm of the romantic poets for Milton's Satan was also attacked by C. S. Lewis in one of a series of lectures delivered in 1941. He speculated first on the general critical treatment of Satan as the hero of Paradise Lost:

...the proposition that Milton's Satan is a magnificent character may bear two senses. It may mean that Milton's presentation of him is a magnificent poetical achievement which engages the attention and excites the admiration of the reader. On the other hand, it may mean that the real being (if any) whom Milton is depicting, or any real being like Satan if there were one, or a real human being in so far as he resembles Milton's Satan, is or ought to be an object of admiration and sympathy, conscious or unconscious, on the part of the poet or his readers or both. The first, so far as I know, has never 'till modern times been denied; the second never affirmed before the times of Blake and Shelley--for when Dryden said that Satan was Milton's "hero" he meant something quite different. It is, in my opinion, wholly erroneous.80

Lewis's criticism involved still another consideration in the analysis of the character of Satan. Besides asserting that Satan was the villain of Paradise Lost, Lewis maintained that Satan was also, in the

overall appraisal of his acts, a fool. Satan's being a fool, he explained, did not, however, make the poem comic. Milton had subordinated the comedy by including within the poem the misery suffered by Satan and the misery inflicted upon others by Satan. Lewis referred to the idea that Satan suffered from a sense of injured merit as ludicrous. The injured merit, he declared, "compares to what domestic animals, children, film stars, politicians or minor poets feel." Because of the audacity of Satan's original challenge and the naivete of his subsequent reasonings, Lewis saw all of Satan's feelings as absurd. Even the Omnipotent, he pointed out, when He saw what Satan was about, laughed.

The analysis of Satan as a fool will not be developed here; significantly, though, Lewis's criticism does establish him as an anti-Satanist. He maintained that Milton's concept of Satan as a tyrant was made evident by the titles addressed to him. Throughout the poem he was referred to as Sultan, Chief, General, and the great Commander. This analysis refutes the opinion of Moody and many of the earlier romantic writers that Satan was the rebel who stood against the tyrant Jehovah. Lewis also pointed out the error in asserting that Satan

81 Lewis, p.93.
82 Ibid., p.77.
had made any progress in the poem. However great his misconception of the word, Lewis stated, Satan did begin by fighting for liberty. Then, degenerating from his initial idea, his goals became more personal—"Honour, Dominion, Glorie, and renowne" (VI.422).

Defeated in this, he sinks to that great design which makes the main subject of the poem—the design of ruining two creatures who had never done him any harm, no longer in the serious hope of victory, but only to annoy the Enemy whom he cannot directly attack... From hero to general, from general to politician, from politician to secret service agent, and thence to a thing that peers in at bedroom or bathroom windows, and thence to a toad, and finally to a snake—such is the progress of Satan.83

Clearly Lewis recognized no nobility in the designing of Satan, and no frustration of honorable attempt in his fall.

In the light of the total appraisal of the character and function of Satan in Paradise Lost, the fallen angel does not emerge as the hero of the poem. The character of Satan, however, is complex, and to deny this complexity is to deny the greatness of the work. Satan has vice and virtue within him. Because he has both components in his makeup, he is believable. Because he chooses to build on the evil within himself rather than on the good, he is a villain. In Book IV of Paradise Lost, Satan, in his famous address to the sun, first states his hatred for the sun's glorious beams which remind him

83Lewis, p.97.
of his once glorious state. He then goes on to comment on his warring in heaven—his open rebellion in the face of the Omnypotent:

"...He deserved no such return
From me, whom he created what I was
In that bright eminence, and with his good
Upbraided none; nor was his service hard.
What could be less than to afford him praise,
The easiest recompence, and pay him thanks,
How dear! Yet all his good prov'd ill in me,
And wrought but malice; lifted up so high
I adored submission, and thought one step higher
Would set me highest, and in a moment quit
The debt immense of endless gratitude,
So burdensome still paying, still to ow;
Forgetful what from him I still received,
And understood not that a grateful mind
By owing owes not, but still pays, at once
Indebted and discharged."

(IV.42-57)

Satan knows that his plan to corrupt Adam and Eve is wrong. He continues to argue with himself concerning the plan—in horror and despair and doubt. Then he finally decides to involve man in the revenge he plans against God:

"...therefore as far
From granting peace, as I from begging peace:
All hope excluded thus, behold in stead
Of us out-cast, exil'd, his new delight,
Mankind created, and for him this world.
So farewell Hope, and with Hope farewell Fear,
Farewell Repose: all Good to me is lost;
Evil be thou my Good; by thee at least
Divided Empire with Heav'n's King I hold
By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign;
As Man ere long, and this new World shall know."

(IV.103-112)
Here Satan makes apparent his villainy. A look at the total character of Satan reveals two sides to his nature. Both sides must be considered in the total appraisal of his character. Douglas Bush, writing in 1945, although his views are those of the anti-Satanists, pointed out that "Satan would certainly have been an ineffectual villain if he had not had magnetism enough to sway a host of followers (and us)." He also recalled that Aldous Huxley had had one of his characters say: "Indeed you can't be really bad unless you do have most of the virtues."

Many of the Milton Satanists held that Milton's presentation of God showed the Omnipotent, in outlook, as unpleasant and stilted; whereas the poet's presentation of Satan showed the fallen angel, in outlook, as vital and energetic. They concluded that the poet, thus, must have been more personally involved and concerned with the latter.

Bush's contentions differed:

No doubt artists have sometimes produced effects different from what they intended, have produced works with internal antinomies, but if any artists in the world have given the impression of knowing what they are about, it is Virgil and Milton. That these poets should in their major works reveal a fundamental religious and moral contradiction one may find it quite impossible to conceive.

He further stated that if Milton's personal rebellious nature had been

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66 Bush, p.65.
incorporated into any character in the poem, it could be seen in Abdiel, who rebelled against Satan. The unconquerable will of Satan so lauded by those who judged him a rebel hero, was not, in the opinion of Bush, "the religious and ethical will [but] the irreligious and naturalistic will to power." 87

The misinterpretation of Milton's purpose in Paradise Lost is due in many respects to the failure of the Milton Satanists to judge the poet in the light of his own environment's religious and moral structure. Bush made a comprehensive indictment of this practice by the modern critics:

The traditional Renaissance orthodoxy of order and degree in the soul, in society, and in the cosmos is central in Milton. The fact is simply that the modern world has moved quite away from the old assumptions and doctrines of religious, ethical, social, and cosmic order and right reason. It is perhaps a fair guess that among the general public three out of four persons instinctively sympathize with any character who suffers and rebels, and pay little heed to the moral values and responsibilities involved, because in such cases the sinner is always right and authority and rectitude are always wrong.... This instinctive response has of course grown the stronger as religion and morality have been increasingly sapped by romantic naturalism and sentimentality. So thoroughly are we debauched by these flabby "liberal" doctrines that when we encounter an artist who passionately affirms the laws of justice, reason, and righteousness, the laws that grow not old, we cannot understand his high convictions and purposes and either turn from them in disgust or explain them away. The moment such principles are associated with a poet, he becomes automatically a timid and conventional

87 Bush, p. 70.
reactionary or, in the case of Milton, too simple-minded to understand human experience. To celebrate Milton therefore as the great champion of a religious and ethical orthodoxy is to bring ignominy upon him.\textsuperscript{38}

Milton's concept of a universe which is ordered and which is composed of superior and inferior degrees in its total structure is apparent throughout the poem. The presentation of peace and order in the universe is consistent with the preservation of all the degrees. The importance of recognizing this basic concept is emphasized by the anti-Satanists. James Holly Hanford, writing in 1948, pointed out that "Satan and Eve attempt to break this order, with results disastrous to themselves and to others."\textsuperscript{39}

Hanford also discussed the problem of Satan's character. He concluded that, although Satan has a certain appeal to the reader, his basic nature is perverted. Recalling Satan, after the fall, as he raised his head from the burning lake, surveyed the scene around him, and turned to address Beelzebub, Hanford commented:

His address, couched in language of unrivaled grandeur, is expressive of the situation and of the human passions which dwell with superhuman intensity in his heart. At the root of his sense of the glory of the attempt, and of his determination to persist, is the fundamental perversion of intellect, for his language shows that he has lost his original comprehension of God and has attributed to him

\textsuperscript{38}Bush, p. 67.

\textsuperscript{39}Hanford, p. 239.
motive and a being like his own. He falls into the heresy of the Manicheans who held the angels to be coexistent with God, attributes his own creation to Fate, and proclaims his independent immortality. He thus manifests himself as the "father of lies," though at first our perception of his true nature is swallowed up in admiration of the heroic "virtue" which he brings with him as the mark and seal of his divine origin. 90

Concerning the attitude of the romantic writers of the eighteenth century, Hanford argued that the "new age of spiritual rebellion...adopted Milton as its ally against his will." 91 He did admit that there is a certain comparison that can be drawn between the character of Satan and the character of Cromwell, an argument cited earlier in this paper, but that the reasons and the goals of the two differed entirely—Satan had aimed to destroy, and Cromwell's ultimate purpose had been to effect peace.

In the analysis of the various aspects of Paradise Lost and particularly of the character of Satan, the criticism written in 1951 by E. M. W. Tillyard presented in its attitude an interesting contrast. Prior to this writing Tillyard had published, in 1930, a study of Milton in which he had concluded that the poet in some ways had indeed been in sympathy with Satan and that "unwittingly [Milton] was led away by the creature of his imagination." 92

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90 Hanford, p.195.
91 Ibid., p.344.
Tillyard now admitted, in 1951, that his own viewpoint had changed considerably. He defended, in some respects, his previous opinion, saying that Satan represented something which is a part of all men, and that, conceivably, in order to create Satan Milton would draw from his knowledge of the Satan that was within him. This could explain a partial alliance between Milton the creator and Satan the creation. However, the critic maintained at this time that he did not believe that Milton had allowed this alliance to go too far. In relation to the second part of his statement—that Milton had been "led away" by his imaginative creation—Tillyard now argued:

Ultimately Milton was a reasonable man who took life as it is. Nevertheless, he was sometimes possessed of an initial urge to force things to be other than they are. Wisdom in the end asserted itself, but it sometimes took Milton a little time to see where pride was leading him. In his early pamphleteering days he allowed his Utopian hopes more scope than a wise man should, though this did not ultimately prevent him from seeing that a change of church government need not imply a change of heart in the governed. Both Milton and his Satan suffered from the romantic complaint of the love of the impossible, and though in Milton that love may have been effectively checked and balanced it may have led him, in the heat of composition, to give to the same quality in Satan just a little more indulgence than he meant. It is foolish to expect utter perfection in a human artist. And if Milton's wisdom had asserted itself, when he created Satan, with a more rigid and speedy conscientiousness, he might have created a less exciting figure. I do not now think, granted Milton's ultimate wisdom, that the question whether he gave Satan a little more rope than he meant is very important.93

93Tillyard, p.59.
Tillyard went on to say that Satan, in essence, was evil—an allegorical figure which provided a parody of the creation that was divine. Milton had, the critic asserted, complimented the courage of Satan whom he had allowed to maintain a strength of purpose when all was against him and when all was without hope, but, Tillyard maintained, when we judge the total situation "our admiration for his courage is crossed by the horror and madness of it." 94

The major changes in Tillyard's appraisal of the character of Satan had been brought about, he explained, by a dramatic series of historical events which took place after his first writing. With the rise of Hitler to power and with the occurrence of World War II there had been, the critic observed, a general change of attitude among all men—

Opposition, intransigence, rebellion, assertion of personal rights at all costs—these are matters we have seen too much of, and we are correspondingly more friendly to what used to be considered the Deadly Virtues.95

He compared Satan, the rebel who opposed the natural order of the universe, to Hitler, the frightening and real dictator-type.

The character of Satan expressed itself according to the circumstances of the moment. He could be courageous, and he could

94 Tillyard, p. 64.
95 Ibid., p. 53.
be coarse and base and evil. The final analysis of the character of Satan by Tillyard did not overlook the tragic elements in the character of the villain. However, the critic’s views coincided with the general viewpoint of the anti-Satanists:

He is neither the hero with whom Milton in his heart morally sympathized, the kin of Shelley’s Prometheus, nor the fundamentally stupid and hence ridiculous rebel; but, as Milton himself calls him, a ruined archangel, a creature of highest endowments converted to ill.... And it is surely the quality of Milton’s Satan that...he inspires contrary feelings: the desire to approach and gaze because of his greatness, the desire to shrink and avoid because of his cruelty; the desire to approach and support because of his courage, the desire to flee because of the madness on which it is based....Satan is the classic embodiment of the eternal dictator-type.... [He goes down before the forces of good,] yet he will reappear and fight the same hopeless nefarious fight through all times.96

Satan was evil, and he perpetuated evil. Tillyard saw a final justice in the fact that in the treatment of Milton “Satan is absorbed into a symbolic darkness vaster than himself.”97

The anti-Satanist criticism published in 1955 by Robert Martin Adams upheld the tradition cited earlier that Satan was a tempter and a tyrant, not a rebel. The critic concerned his views with Satan’s actual physical action within the poem. Satan, he pointed out, perverts his followers, seizes the power and trappings of an oriental monarch, and proceeds with expedition to a series of unjust acts. He commits many acts of

96Tillyard, p.57.

97Ibid., p.66.
disobedience and trespass, but not of rebellion; except in Raphael's retrospect, he does not attack the Almighty or his warriors but for reasons of state concentrates on man the scapegoat, whom Satan recognizes to be guiltless.98

The habit concerning the analyzing of Satan's character based on a judgment of the fallen angel as he is presented in the first two books of Paradise Lost was decried by Adams. Satan's characteristics of virtue are more abundant in the first two books of the poem, but, Adams maintained, a whole judgment's being based on a partial presentation was not conclusive or just. He argued that Milton was seeking variety in his literary technique by emphasizing one aspect of Satan's character in the opening books of the poem and another aspect of Satan's character in the remaining books of the poem. He pointed out:

One could not judge the position of Achilles in the Iliad by his petulant appearance in the first books; why then should not Milton have given Satan one aspect in the first books so that his "true" appearance might have its proper impact in the later ones?... If we can trust his own allegory of sin, Milton would have much preferred to say that sin at first sight seems behovely but is actually disgusting. On these terms, the author's "editorializing" in the first books, which contrasts so oddly with Satan's splendid energy, is merely Milton's way of bridging the gap in the reader's mind between Satan's apparent attractiveness and his real corruption.99

99 Ibid., p. 55.
Satan was free in his actions and in his decisions. He, as a free agent, did what he had decided on his own to do. He did not sin against the Omnipotent merely by existing as evil incarnate. Adams maintained that "his sin is a series of wicked actions."\(^{100}\) Concerning Milton's attitude toward Satan, Adams concluded:

Milton was in fact partisan, like his God; and he expected his fit audience though few to be partisan too, in the same way, for good and against evil.\(^{101}\)

To Roland Mushat Frye, writing in 1960, Milton had used Satan as a symbol in \textit{Paradise Lost} -- a symbol which projected an idea. Satan represented a way of life which man is able to choose if he so desires. However, the critic observed, even as a symbol Satan has about him a genuineness and a reality which provide "a commentary on life, on human frustration and fulfillment."\(^{102}\) Satan represents power, raw and divorced from goodness and love, and the power results in chaos. Frye designated Satan's rebellion against God as the rebellion of a part against the whole--the part being in rebellion, too, against its natural self. In the very beginning as Satan is exciting his legions to rebel with him, he denies the fact of his

\(^{100}\)Adams, p.58.

\(^{101}\)Ibid., p.58.

creation, saying:

"That we were formd then saist thou? And the work
Of secondarie hands, by task transferd
From Father to his Son? Strange point and new!
Doctrin which we would know whence learnt: who saw
When this creation was? Rememberst thou
Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?
We know no time when we were not as now;
Know none before us, self-begot, self-rais'd
By our own quick'ning power, when fatal course
Had circl'd his full Orbe, the birth mature
Of this our native Heav'n, Ethereal Sons."

(V.853-863)

Satan's main interest was in self, and, Frye argued, he was a parody of God. His acts, all perverted, were aimed at wasting or possessing God's creation. He volunteered "for the role of counterfeit messiah dedicated to the betrayal of man," 103 and he was motivated by "revenge [and] immortal hate" (I.107). Satan, an opposite in every way to the Son, set love aside in order to reveal his power; whereas the Son, whose power was infinite, set that power aside in order to reveal his love. The opposition of these two characters provides a major theme of Paradise Lost. As Satan makes his decision to pursue an evil course, and to separate himself from love, he also separates himself from reason. His views, thus, become false, and he must resort to lies and hypocrisy in order to perpetuate his intentions.

In the sixth book of the poem God refers to the rebel angels as those

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"who reason for thir law refuse" (VI.40). Frye maintained that Satan, in his obsession for self, denied his own potential, his own nature. He reigns in hell, but he is miserable—"The lower still I fall, only Supream/in miserie" (IV.81-92). Satan becomes a slave to himself. He has power in hell, but, divorced from love, his power is sterile.

Frye's criticism did not explore, specifically, the question of whether or not Satan is the hero of *Paradise Lost*. The critic was more concerned with Satan's function in the poem, not as a hero or a villain, but as an idea. However, Frye did not question Milton's attitude toward Satan, the perpetrator of evil, nor did he see any majesty or magnificence about the character of the fallen angel.

John Peter, whose book, *A Critique of Paradise Lost*, was published in 1960, maintained a similar attitude. It was his contention, in addition, that many of the questions which have arisen concerning the characters and motives in *Paradise Lost* are a result of Milton's artistic failure or ineptitude in several areas of the poem. One of his ideas pertained to the general criticism, put forth by both Satanists and anti-Satanists, concerning Milton's failure to create God and the loyal angels as interesting as Satan and the fallen angels. Peter suggested that Milton, in order to maintain the whole Christian attitude which he wished to perpetuate, should have artistically safeguarded God from appearing pedantic and dull.
God's presence in the poem was a necessary one and the artistic challenge presented by this necessity was difficult, but, Peter maintained, most of the difficulty "could have been avoided if Milton had used the angels more effectively."\textsuperscript{104} Most of God's speeches could have been spoken as effectively by angels or by Milton himself.

In his particular references to Satan, Peter cited the paradoxical quality of the fallen angel—more depraved and yet larger than life. The paradoxes in Satan's character grew out of the facts of his circumstances, the critic maintained. He was in a period of transition, and as his conditions changed, he changed. His magnificence from the beginning had been qualified. The reader is awed by the fallen angels, but he is also aware of their defeat. Nothing discounts this. Some of the criticism concerning Satan has referred to a break in Satan's character, an abrupt difference between the Satan of the first few books of \textit{Paradise Lost} and the Satan of the remaining books. Other criticism has seen the degeneration of Satan's character as smooth and unbroken, his initial grandeur being progressively degraded. Peter in his criticism referred to a "bumpy

and uncertain curve" in Milton's treatment of Satan's character.

His complexity, the critic argued, begins to break down after the first three books. At the end of the fourth book, before Satan has instigated the temptation of Eve, Gabriel confronts the fallen angel, saying:

"Satan, I know thy strength, and thou knowest mine,
Neither our own but giv'n; what folly, then
To boast what Arms can do, since thine no more
Than Heav'n permits, nor mine, though double d now
To trample thee as mine: for proof look up,
And read thy Lot in yon celestial Sign
Where thou art weigh'd, and shown how light, how weak,
If thou resist."

(IV.1006-1013)

Satan, then, looks up and recognizes

His mounted scale aloft: nor more; but fled
Murmuring, and with him fled the shades of night.

(IV.1014-1015)

At this point, Peter pointed out, most of the interest which Satan had held for the reader is gone. Satan's progress in Paradise Lost, continued Peter, involved a process of progressive simplification--

a wonderfully iridescent surface, shot with conflicting lights, is subject to a gradual arrest, in the process coming more and more to resemble a mosaic crudely patterned with dark and light. Dramatic intensity, once located within the figure of Satan, has shifted elsewhere, and Milton's artistry has shifted with it.106

105 Peter, p.52.
106 Ibid., p.62.
As Satan's character simplified, the critic further explained, he relied more and more on self-deception. Just before the temptation of Eve, Satan explains to himself why he is involving man in his revenge, and clearly he is deceiving himself:

"Hee to be aveng'd,  
And to repair his numbers thus impair'd,  
Whether such vertue spent of old now faild  
More Angels to Create, if they at least  
Are his Created, or to spite us more,  
Determin'd to advance into our room  
A Creature form'd of Earth, and him endow,  
Exalted from so base original,  
With Heav'nly spoils, our spoils: What he decreed  
He effected; Man he made, and for him built  
Magnificent this World, and Earth his seat,  
Him Lord pronounc'd, and, O indignitie!  
Subjected to his service Angel wings,  
And flaming Ministers to watch and tend  
Thir earthly Charge."

(IX.143-157)

He later comments in the same speech that even though revenge which begins sweet becomes bitter, he cares not,

"Since higher I fall short, on him who next  
Provokes my envie, this new Favorite  
Of Heav'n, this Man of Clay, Son of despite,  
Whom us the more to spite his Maker rais'd  
From dust: spite then with spite is best repaid."

(IX.174-178)

Peter cited this speech as exemplifying that Satan's mental processes had become "crude and fanatical." The critic, further, did not find Satan to be the champion of liberty and individuality. Rather he found Abdiel, the just angel who defied the multitude and remained

107 Peter, p.62.
loyal to God, as being the one most in accord with Milton's own love of personal liberty.

The idea that Satan and hell were parodies of God and heaven was also expressed by B. Rajan, writing in 1982. The idea at the heart of the epic, he explained, concerned hell's being a "perverted creation" and Satan's being a perverted creature.

Rajan further maintained:

If Milton dwells upon [Satan's heroic qualities] it is because he knows that you will put them in their context, that you will see Satan's virtues as perverted by their end and darkening therefore to their inevitable eclipse, corroded and eaten out by the nemesis beyond them. The moral condemnation is never explicitly, or even poetically, denied.

Satan's dual nature presents a true comprehension of the nature of evil. Rajan cited Satan's deception of Uriel as the transition between the good and bad features of the fallen angel. Satan confronts Uriel, "one of the sev'n/Who in God's presence, nearest to his throne,/Stand ready at command" (III.648-650), at the orb of the sun. Satan assumes the shape of a lesser angel as he seeks directions to God's new creation, and he proves himself "the false dissembler" (III.631):

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109 Ibid., p.95.
"Unspeakable desire to see, and know
All these his wondrous works, but chiefly Man,
His chief delight and favour, him for whom
All these his works so wondrous he ordain'd,
Hath brought me from the Quire of Cherubim
Alone thus wandering. Brightest Seraph, tell
In which of all these shining Orbes hath Man
His fixed seat, or fixed seat hath none,
But all these shining Orbes his choice to dwell;
That I may find him, and with secret gaze
Or open admiration him behold
On whom the great Creator hath bestow'd
Worlds, and on whom hath all these gracious pow'r,
That both in him and all things, as is meet.
The Universal Maker we may praise;
Who justly hath driven out his Rebell foes
To deepest Hell, and to repair that loss
Created this new happie Race of Man
To serve him better: wise are all his ways."

(III.662-680)

In Rajan's opinion, Satan's degeneration throughout the poem was gradual and smooth. He saw no abrupt change in Satan's character. As the fallen angel underwent his progressive deterioration, he lost his lustrous titles. Rajan pointed out that the reference to "th' Arch-Enemy" (I.91) and "th' Arch-Fiend" (I.56) in the first book became, later, "Fiend" (II.643), and then, "th' Arch-Felon" (IV.179), and for the first time, "the Devil" (IV.502). In the fourth book of Paradise Lost, as Satan first sees Adam and Eve, he is pictured as being envious of them. As he looks at them "with jealous leer malign"

(IV.503), he complains:

"Sight hateful, sight tormenting! thus these two
Imparadis't in one another's arms
The happier Eden, shall enjoy thir fill
Of bliss on bliss, while I to Hell am thrust,
Whore neither joy nor love, but fierce desire,
Among our other torments not the least,
Still unfulfill'd with pain of longing pines."
(IV.505-511)

Satan's jealousy of married love, Rajan explained, was in keeping with the popular view in Milton's time. The Protestants had long decried the practice of exalting the single life above the married life. The critic further maintained that the pity which Satan later showed for Adam and Eve was actually self-pity. His protestations exemplified his "inner emptiness".110 Whereas his speeches in the first three books of the poem show Satan to be a positive, strongly-assured and strongly-resolved character, his speeches in the fourth book lack direction. He has degenerated, and his character has become indecisive and forced. His words lack energy. Rajan also referred to "the symbolic verdict of the scales,"111 cited earlier by Peter, saying that the Satan who originally appeared in the poem would not have accepted the verdict. By the fourth book, he argued, the heroic Satan was giving in to the perverted Satan. In the sixth book, Satan explains to Abdiel the reason for his revolt:

"At first I thought that Libertie and Heav'n
To heav'nly Soules had bin all one; but now
I see that most through sloth had rather serve,
Ministryng Spirits, train'd up in Feast and Song."
(VI.164-167)

110Rajan, p.100.
111Ibid., p.101.
Abdiel replies, pointing out to Satan that he has confused service and servitude. He sees Satan's obsession with self and tells him that he is really not free, "but to thy self enthralld" (VI.181). Satan's degeneration continued, Rajan argued, as he came to believe in his own deception. The critic cited Satan's address to the earth in the ninth book as being a contrast to his earlier address to the sun. The sun had reminded him of what he had been; the earth inspired him to believe in a glory he thought he would receive. With his own words he convinces himself that earth is greater than heaven. Rajan pointed out, however, that because Satan's character depends on the occasion—that he is what he does—he still retains traces of his original grandeur. The critic cited Satan's attractiveness in the temptation scene. Satan, disguised as a serpent, moves toward Eve; he

Address'd his way, not with indented wave,
Prone on the ground, as since, but on his rear,
Circular base of rising foulds, that tour'd
Fould above fould a surging Maze, his Head
Created aloft, and Carbuncle his Eyes;
With burnisht neck of verdant Gold, erect
Amidst his circling Spires, that on the grass
Floted redundant: pleasing was his shape,
And lovely, never since of Serpent kind
Lovelier....

(IX.496-505)

Also, when Satan returns to chaos, he is "in likness of an Angel bright" (X.327). He conducts himself like a hero, and he brags of
having seduced man from God" with an Apple" (X.487) and of having purchased the world "with a bruise" (X.500). The complexity of Satan's character, argued Rajan, makes him more than an abstract symbol. The critic referred to him instead as a "poetic representation." Satan was exactly what Milton intended him to be, he maintained, and the treatment and presentation of Satan in Paradise Lost proves to be a sermon on the weaknesses of evil and on the power and strength of evil. The misinterpretation of Satan's role has resulted, Rajan concluded, from Milton's execution of the characterization of God. God is abstract, and because his victory is a moral victory and not a poetic one, it seems hollow. "Milton may justify God's ways, but he does not celebrate them."113

The final anti-Satanist criticism to be considered in this study is that published in 1964 by Louis L. Martz. His criticism concerned the structure of Paradise Lost, and he considered Satan as he fitted into this structure. He referred to the appeal which Satan and the fallen angels held in the opening books of the poem as a temporary one, and he contended that the War in Heaven, which was in the heroic mode, had about it an air of futility. In the middle books of Paradise Lost, Milton seemed to be keeping a check on his

112 Rajan, p.105.

113 Ibid., p.107.
poetic abilities. Martz pointed out that the writing became awkward and heavy as Milton attempted to make the old heroic ideals seem ridiculous. Satan was the center of interest in the first three books, and then the interest shifted to Adam and Eve. The critic argued that Milton did not have to begin degrading Satan at this point, because the poem's structure removed him as the center of interest. From the beginning, Satan represented the subtle, pervasive evil that leaks and seeps through all the vivid imagery of the first two books, culminating in the vicious allegory of Satan, Sin, and Death, the trinity of Evil. The emergence of Satan into allegory, both in Book 2 and again in Book 10, is the key to his function throughout the poem: he has never possessed reality; what reality he has comes from the world of men. So now the symbol of Satan, having served its purpose, can be discarded by Milton with contempt. Adam lies before us "in a troubl'd Sea of passion tost" (X, 718).

In Martz's opinion Satan was a symbol. Milton's main concern in the poem was man, and Satan's only importance lay in his allegorical function as he related to man.

The criticism of both the Satanists and the anti-Satanists should be considered in formulating a total appraisal of the character and function of Satan in Paradise Lost. To disagree with the views of the Milton Satanists concerning the analysis of the fallen angel

is not to discredit their every word concerning the poem. It has
been necessary, however, to examine the framework upon which their
criticisms of Satan were based. Is it fair to judge a character on
the basis of a partial presentation of him? Is it true that because
a character plays a central role in an epic creation—often instigating
and manipulating the action, often unifying the various aspects with-
in the framework—he is the hero of the work? Is it valid to remove
a character from the total environment of the work of which he is so
vitally a part and judge him in the light of personal theory—praising
the qualities and virtues which conform with that personal basis?
Should Milton be judged in the light of his own views or in the light
of the views of his reader-critics? Did Milton in truth, become swept
away from his original intent by the grandeur of his creative charac-
terization? Did he become so involved with enthusiasm for Satan that
he effected a fusion of his own personality and Satan's, becoming one
with the devil? In a final analysis of the whole poem the questions
which concern the character and function of Satan must be answered
negatively. Satan must be considered on the basis of his total presen-
tation in the poem. He has a significant role within the epic structure.
It is because Satan seeks revenge on God that the fall of man is
brought about. As the title of the poem suggests, it is the primary
idea—the loss of Paradise—which is treated. But it is man who
loses Paradise, and in the underlying struggle between the forces of good and evil it is God and the Messiah who are the victors.

Within the epic structure it is not the final outcome of Satan which is of chief concern; it is, rather, the final outcome of man.
III

SATAN AND THE CHRISTIAN SCHEME

The conflicts within *Paradise Lost*—between good and evil, between love and hate, between the whole and the part, between the tempted and the tempter, between the rebel and himself—are all functioning parts of a Christian scheme. Thus, it is important to consider Milton's presentation of Satan in regard to this Christian scheme. The dogma, the aims, and the argument of the epic are included within its narrative frame, but a more direct statement of the poet's Christian attitude is evident in a prose treatise written by Milton and published in 1825, one hundred and fifty-one years after the poet's death. The treatise, a systematic theology, was entitled *De Doctrina Christiana*. Maurice Kelley, in 1941, made an extensive study of the treatise and of the scholarship and criticism which had treated the work. He established that the first draft of the *De Doctrina Christiana* was made c. 1658-1660— at the same time or just before *Paradise Lost* was being dictated.  

His study further concluded that there is a close association between the treatise and *Paradise Lost*, and that the *De Doctrina Christiana* is a gloss upon *Paradise Lost*, useful in the interpretation of the theological detail

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of the epic. In 1962, D. Rajan commented that Kelley's "conclusive survey"\textsuperscript{116} had led to the present assumption by most scholars "that the treatise and the epic are doctrinally identical,"\textsuperscript{117} and in the Cambridge Edition of Milton's complete poetical works, 1965, Douglas Bush referred to the \textit{De Doctrina Christiana} as a "very useful theological gloss of \textit{Paradise Lost}."\textsuperscript{118} In pointing out the essential differences between the epic and the treatise, Kelley observed:

Both works, it is true, are products of the Renaissance, and both, in seeking to justify the ways of God, have the same general end; yet in the two contrasting methods by which these works attain that end lies the difference between Spenser and Aquinas, between poetry and theology. Dependent on the Bible, which the seventeenth century generally accepted as literally and historically true, and fraught with division, definition, and distinction, the \textit{De Doctrina} combines 'history' and 'philosophy': it teaches by example and precept, and aims at abstract and literal truth. In \textit{Paradise Lost}, however, Milton seeks to figure forth precept in a concrete, speaking picture, to present ethical teaching in a form that is both attractive and stimulating; in short, to teach by the feigned image of poetry; and this concept of the feigned image, as the name implies, liberates the poet from the narrow and straightening confines of dogmatic truth. Thus, as a Protestant theologian, Milton is bound to induction or deduction from Scriptural proof texts; but as a Renaissance poet, he may aim rather at imaginative

\textsuperscript{116}Rajan, p.22.

\textsuperscript{117}Ibid., p.22.

truth, and is free to enliven his subject, to give it interest and attraction, either by invention or by reshaping his source materials in any manner that his sense of literary values may direct.\(^{119}\)

The views expressed by Milton in the *De Doctrina Christiana* were based on what he found in the Holy Scripture. In the dedication to the treatise, he referred to other treatises of theology which had been written since the beginning of the sixteenth century—treatises which had sought to restore the original purity of religion by setting down, methodically and soundly, the principles of Christian doctrine. His own treatise was written as an expression of his individual faith. He wrote that as

\[\text{it is only to the individual faith of each that the Deity has opened the way of eternal salvation, and as he requires that he who would be saved should have a personal belief of his own, I resolved not to repose on the faith or judgement of others in matters relating to God; but on the one hand, having taken the grounds of my faith from divine revelation alone, and on the other, having neglected nothing which depended on my own industry, I thought fit to scrutinize and ascertain for myself the several points of my religious belief, by the most careful perusal and meditation of the Holy Scriptures themselves.}\(^{120}\)

Later in the dedication he again emphasized: "I adhere to the Holy Scriptures alone."\(^{121}\)

\[\begin{align*}
^{119}\text{Kelley, p.98.} \\
^{120}\text{Milton, Dedication of De Doctrina Christiana, in Works, IV.2.} \\
^{121}\text{Ibid., p.8.}
\end{align*}\]
It is important for the purpose of this study to consider the ideas in the *De Doctrina Christiana* which provide an insight into Milton's attitude toward Satan in *Paradise Lost*, and Milton's presentation of Satan as it fitted into the poem's Christian theme and purpose. As pointed out earlier, Byron, in designating Satan the hero of the epic, argued that Satan's actions were a result of his nature—a nature with which God had endowed him. Thus, Byron claimed, because Satan was not the creator of his own nature, he was not totally responsible for his own actions. Milton's attitude toward Satan's responsibility for his own actions is possibly the determinant in understanding Satan as Milton intended him to be, and this attitude is made clear in the *De Doctrina Christiana*. In the first book of the treatise Milton wrote of the knowledge of God. He referred to the beauty of the order of the world, and the evidence in the world of a "determinate and beneficial Power." According to Milton, a specific end for the whole of creation was ordained by the beneficial Power, and the idea that evil should ever be a supreme power, prevailing over good, to Milton "is as unmeet as it is incredible." In a chapter devoted to explanation of divine

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122 Milton, *De Doctrina Christiana*, Book I, Chapter ii, in *Works*, XIV, 27. [Hereafter, in citing references from Milton's *De Doctrina Christiana*, capital Roman numerals will designate books of the treatise, and lower case Roman numerals will designate chapters of the treatise. Volume and page numbers refer to Columbia Edition.]

decrees, Milton discussed the gift of free will with which God had endowed men and angels. Both were allowed their own choice, uncontrolled, and both were allowed to stand or fall. The Omnipo
tent did not necessitate the ensuing evil consequences; they were left contingent:

hence, the covenant was of this kind: If thou stand, thou shalt abide in Paradise; if thou fall, thou shalt be cast out; if thou eat not the forbidden fruit, thou shalt live; if thou eat, thou shalt die.124

The angels, Milton pointed out, had been endowed with the same uncontrolled choice, and as man made his choice, which led to his fall, so the devil had done before him. There was no evil nature. Originally, God created the world out of matter. The matter was of God, and thus it was inherently good. Milton explained that even though there were many passages in Holy Scripture in which God distinctly declares that it is himself who impels the sinner to sin, who hardens his heart, who blinds his understanding, and leads him in error,125 still the Omnipotent, because of His infinite holiness, could be considered in no way as the originator of sin. He further maintained:

There is indeed a proverb which says, that he who is able to forbid an action, and forbids it not, virtually commands it. This maxim is indeed binding on man, as a moral

precept; but it is otherwise with regard to God. When, in conformity with the language of mankind, he is spoken of as instigating, where he only does not prohibit evil, it does not follow that he therefore bids it, inasmuch as there is no obligation by which he is bound to forbid it.\textsuperscript{126}

The angels were not all good because of God's grace; rather they were good or evil and were "upheld by their own strength no less than man himself was before his fall."\textsuperscript{127} Milton referred to the prince of devils as "the author of all wickedness and the opponent of all good,"\textsuperscript{128} pointing out that the name Satan, by which he is frequently called, means adversary or enemy. The angels, he continued, revolted of their own accord, and they were, like man, liable to fall. The evil angels fell because they "abode not in the truth" (John viii.44), and their apostasy occurred before the fall of man. Later, Adam's sin was instigated by the devil, but it also originated in man's liability to fall. Man chose to believe in the assurances of Satan, and he chose to disbelieve in divine truth.

Milton made two significant references to Satan in the second book of the treatise. In one, he spoke of man's envy as being "exemplified in the envy with which Satan regards the salvation

\textsuperscript{126} Milton, I, viii, Vol.XV, p.77.

\textsuperscript{127} Milton, I, ix, Vol.XV, p.99.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., p.111.
of the human race,"\textsuperscript{129} and in the other, he referred to falsehood, also exemplified in Satan, as "the devil, speaking in the serpent, was the first liar (Gen.iii.4)."\textsuperscript{130}

As the history of Satan's early existence is not especially treated in Scripture, there is no concrete basis offered for all of Milton's presentation of the fallen angel in \textit{Paradise Lost}; however, his attitude toward Satan is clearly expressed in the \textit{De Doctrina Christiana}, and that attitude prevails in the epic. Satan was evil by choice, and the beauty of the order of the world, to which Milton referred in the dedication of the treatise, is contrasted in the epic to the chaos in Satan's kingdom of the damned. Also, there was no final victory for Satan. He claimed that he would instigate and perpetuate evil, but the evil he achieves is not final. God turns the evil for his own purpose of good, and overcomes evil with good. In the third book of \textit{Paradise Lost}, God refers to his heavenly host, both those who fell and those who stood, saying:

"Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell. Not free, what proof could they have given sincere Of true allegiance, constant Faith or Love, Where only what they needs must do, appeared, Not what they would?"

(III.102-106)


\textsuperscript{130}Milton,II,xiii,Vol.XVII,p.301.
Later, when the angels learned of the creation of the world and of the sacrifice the Son was to make to save man, Raphael relates to Adam that

"Great triumph and rejoicing was in Heav'n
When such was heard declar'd the Almighty's will;
Glorie they sung to the most High, good will
To future men, and in their dwellings peace;
Glorie to him whose just avenging ire
Had driven out th' ungodly from his sight
And th' habitations of the just; to him
Glorie and praise, whose wisdom had ordain'd
Good out of evil to create...."

(VII.180-188)

Finally, in the twelfth book of the poem, when the Angel Michael concludes the revelation of future things to Adam,

...our Sire
Replete with joy and wonder thus repli'd.
"O goodness infinite, goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good"

(XII.467-471)

The epic maintains that God endowed Satan with a free will and

Left him at large to his own dark designs,
That with reiterated crimes he might
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
Evil to others, and enrag'd might see
How all his malice served but to bring forth
Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shewn
On Man by him seduc't, but on himself
Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour'd.

(I.213-220)

The ideas recorded in the De Doctrina Christiana which present Milton's attitude toward Satan, and Milton's subsequent treatment of Satan in Paradise Lost are in accord with the earlier
theological views set down by Saint Augustine. Although the religious tradition of Augustine, a Roman Catholic, differs from that of Milton, a Protestant, still there are many similarities in their basic ideas. Augustine, like Milton, in formulating his theology, had based his study on Holy Scripture, and with regard to the theological views of Augustine, Milton’s treatment of Satan does not present any unusual or revolutionary tendencies. The devil’s acts are in accord with his character, and his punishment is in accord with his actions. Driven by pride and self-love, which he wills to be his dominating characteristic, Satan becomes perverted—merely a shadow or vague suggestion of his former self. He falls from what had been an exalted state to that which is significantly the meanest state.

Much of the philosophical speculation of Saint Augustine is concerned with the problem of evil. His position was Christian, and his consideration and treatment of the speculation was in terms of his position—“the first and most important of the major strands in his thought [being] his conviction that all things must be and are God-centered.”131 In Book VII, Chapter III, of the Confessions, written in the closing years of the fourth century, Augustine recalled

his own early questioning as to the origin of evil:

"Who made me? Was it not my God, who is not only good, but goodness itself? Whence came I then to will and to do evil, and to be unwilling to do good, that there might be cause for my just punishment? Who was it that put this in me, and implanted in me the root of bitterness, seeing I was altogether made by my most sweet God? If the devil were the author, whence is that devil? And if he also, by his own perverse will, of a good angel became a devil, whence also was the evil will in him whereby he became a devil, seeing that the angel was made altogether good by that most good Creator?" 132

Byron's belief that the devil, having been endowed by God with a certain nature, was, thus, not responsible for the actions which that nature undertook, is quite similar to this line of Augustine's questioning. In succeeding chapters of the Confessions, Augustine recorded his continued search for the answers to his questions—for truth. By God's assistance he reached his goal and was led to understand that God who is good created only that which is good, and that evil, then,

is not any substance; for were it a substance, it would be good. For either it would be an incorruptible substance, and so a chief good, or a corruptible substance, which unless it were good it could not be corrupted. I perceived, therefore, and it was made clear to me that Thou didst

132 Saint Augustine, Confessions, Book VII, Chapter iii, in Basic Writings of Saint Augustine, ed. Whitney J. Cates (New York, 1948), I, 93-94. [All quotations from the writings of Augustine have been taken from this edition—hereafter cited as Writings. Capital Roman numerals will be used to designate books in the treatises, and lower case Roman numerals will be used to designate chapters in the treatises. Volume and page numbers refer to Writings.]
make all things good, nor is there any substance at all that was not made by Thee; and because all that Thou hast made are not equal, therefore all things are; because individually they are good, and altogether very good, because our God made all things very good.\textsuperscript{133}

Evil, he realized, was not a substance "but a perversion of the will, bent aside from [God]."\textsuperscript{134}

In Book XI of \textit{The City of God} (413-420 A.D.), Augustine wrote more specifically of the devil. He explained the Apostle John's words, "The devil sinneth from the beginning," as meaning that the devil, from the time of his creation, refused righteousness. Augustine continued, however, that those are in error who suppose that the devil has derived from some adverse evil principle a nature proper to himself....they do not notice that the Lord did not say, "The devil was naturally a stranger to the truth," but "The devil abode not in the truth," by which He meant us to understand that he had fallen from the truth, in which, if he had abode, he would have become a partaker of it, and have remained in blessedness along with the holy angels.\textsuperscript{135}

He further explained that

as the words stand, "He abode not in the truth, because the truth is not in him," it seems as if the truth's not being in him were the cause of his not abiding in it; whereas his not abiding in the truth is rather the cause of its not being in him.\textsuperscript{136}


\textsuperscript{134}Ibid., p. 102.


The devil, Augustine maintained, was not created with a nature that was sinful; "for if sin be natural, it is not sin at all." He drew proof for his statements from the prophets of the Old Testament—

either what Isaiah says when he represents the devil under the person of the King of Babylon, "How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" or what Ezekiel says, "Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering," where it is meant that he was some time without sin; for a little after it is still more explicitly said, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways?" And if these passages cannot be well be otherwise interpreted, we must understand by this one also, "He abode not in the truth," that he was once in the truth, but did not remain in it. And from this passage, "The devil sinneth from the beginning," it is not to be supposed that he sinned from the beginning of his created existence, but from the beginning of his sin, when by his pride he had once commenced to sin. There is a passage, too, in the Book of Job, of which the devil is the subject: "This is the beginning of the creation of God, which He made to be a sport to His angels," which agrees with the psalm where it is said, "There is that dragon which Thou hast made to be a sport therein." But these passages are not to lead us to suppose that the devil was originally created to be the sport of the angels, but that he was doomed to this punishment after his sin. His beginning, then, is the handiwork of God; for there is no nature, even among the least, and lowest, and last of the beasts, which was not the work of Him from whom has proceeded all measure, all form, all order, without which nothing can be planned or conceived. How much more, then, is this angelic nature, which surpasses in dignity all else that He has made, the handiwork of the Most High.


138 Ibid., pp. 157-158.
Augustine continued his explanation by pointing out that wickedness, which is contrary to nature, has its origin not in God but in the Will. Even then, he maintained, the Creator is able to use evil natures for purposes of His own good—

Accordingly, He caused the devil (good by God's creation, wicked by his own will) to be cast down from his high position, and to become the mockery of His angels—

that is, He caused his temptations to benefit those whom he wishes to injure by them. And because God, when He created him, was certainly not ignorant of his future malignity, and foresaw the good which He Himself would bring out of his evil, therefore says the psalm, "This leviathan whom Thou hast made to be a sport therein," that we may see that, even while God in His goodness created him good, He yet had already foreseen and arranged how He would make use of him when he became wicked.\[139]

The punishment of the devil was further discussed in Book XIX of The City of God. The devil, Augustine here explained, could not live in the truth and in the peace of order; neither could he escape "the judgement of the Truth... and the power of the Ordainer."\[140] The Creator punished the evil which the devil has committed, and

God did not take back all He had imparted to [the devil's] nature, but something He took and something He left, that there might remain enough to be sensible of the loss of what was taken. And this very sensibility to pain is evidence of the good which has been taken away and the good which has been left. For were nothing good left, there could be no pain on account of the good which had been lost.\[141]

\[141\] Ibid., p. 489.
Again, the devil is designated evil by virtue of his own choice. Both Augustine and Milton pointed out the uncontrolled will which allowed Satan the choice, evil or good. There were angels who chose to remain loyal—who chose the good. Satan, however, chose to rebel, and in the attitude of Milton in the De Doctrina Christiana and in the attitude of the early Augustinian tradition, the action of the rebel angel was not considered an heroic one. This attitude is maintained by the poet throughout Paradise Lost.
IV
PARADISE LOST AND SATAN

Milton presents a clear statement of the theme and purpose of *Paradise Lost* in the first twenty-six lines of the first book. From the beginning, when the poet invokes the Heavenly Muse, the statement is distinct:

> Of Mns First Disobedience, and the Fruit
> Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
> Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
> With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
> Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
> Sing, Heav'nly Muse....

(I.1-6)

The poem is generally referred to as a literary epic, although Milton referred to it as an "Heroic Song" (IX.25). By the poet's own designation in the first book the work was to be unique—it was, according to Milton's own statement, to lie outside of the epic tradition, to soar above tradition:

> ... I thence
> Invoke thy aid to my adventrous Song,
> That with no middle flight intends to soar
> Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues
> Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime.

(I.12-16)

Contrary to tradition, the poem is theological rather than secular in its attempt to "assert Eternal Providence, /And justify the ways of God to man" (I.25-26). Milton had originally planned, as stated
earlier, to incorporate his theme into a tragic drama, but the elaboration which his plot and theme entailed was more suited to the larger frame of the epic. Marianna Woodhull made a detailed study of Milton's use of the epic in *The Epic of Paradise Lost* (1907). She pointed out that the extensive material and the marvel and wonder of the supernatural detail would have found the method of tragedy too confining. Besides, she added,

Milton's belief compelled him to make prominent the domination of Christ over Satan. For this reason man's fall issues necessarily, not in a tragedy, but in a Christian epic in which Christ is the hero who triumphs over Satan; and man becomes a victorious hero only when, through faith and hope, he partakes of the Messiah's triumph. 142

The epic does not emphasize the hero's suffering. A tragedy does. The epic emphasizes instead the victory of a cause. 143 This is true of *Paradise Lost*. Adam's suffering is not the primary concern; his victory through Christ is the theme which is emphasized.

C. M. Bowra in *From Virgil to Milton* (1948) defined an epic poem as being

by common consent a narrative of some length [which] deals with events which have a certain grandeur and

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142 Woodhull, p.16.

importance and come from a life of action, especially of violent action such as war. It gives a special pleasure because its events and persons enhance our belief in the worth of human achievement and in the dignity and nobility of man.\textsuperscript{144}

He asserted that in spite of the fact that Adam's fall would not seem to fit into the general definition, \textit{Paradise Lost} would still be considered heroic because of the greatness of the issues with which it was concerned. Adam, Bowra maintained, is the central figure. He unifies the poem, and it is his conflict of loyalty between God and Eve which brings on his tragedy.\textsuperscript{145} As Adam is judged, finally, hero by his decisions and acts, so Satan, by his decisions and acts, is judged villain. Bowra traced Satan's gradual decline in appearance and character throughout the poem, pointing out various critical analyses of Satan's character which he considered erroneous. He cited one of Satan's speeches, referred to often by the Milton Satanists as an example of the firm resolution and determination of Satan:

\begin{quote}
"The mind is its own place, and in it self
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n."
\end{quote}

(I.254-255)

Bowra argued that this sounded good but that it was not true. "The difference between Heaven and Hell is absolute\textsuperscript{146} as Satan himself


\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Ibid.}, p.204.

\textsuperscript{146} Bowra, p.221.
later admits:

"...which way shall I flie
Infinite wrauth and infinite despair?
Which way I flie is Hell; my self am Hell.
And in the lowest deep a lower deep
Still threatening to devour me opens wide,
To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n." (IV.73-78)

The critic recalled many of the heroic traits with which Milton had endowed Satan—his leadership, his daring, his royalty, his resourcefulness, and his eloquence. Even though Milton's subject did not fit wholly into the main epic tradition, still the poet could not avoid totally the old type of hero. Bowra suggested that perhaps Milton intended to contrast the traditional old hero with his new one. Excessive pride was evil to Milton, and the traditional concept of the epic hero was based on pride. The critic argued that Milton "deliberately fashioned Satan on heroic models, because he rejected the old heroic standards and wished to show that they were wicked."147

There were major difficulties which would have arisen in any attempt to present Satan's character. The problem for Milton was in existence from the moment the idea of the poem was conceived. In one sense, Satan existed historically. He was no imaginative figment of Milton's fertile brain, to be shaped and molded by the artist as

147 Bowra, p.229.
he saw fit. Milton was dealing with a known figure whose shape, form, and dimension had been determined long before he ever lifted his head from the burning lake in the first book of *Paradise Lost*. The problem for Milton was, remaining true to himself as an artist, to fit Satan into his poem in such a way that his true nature would be preserved and yet he would be able to function within the framework of the drama being presented in the epic.

The problem was not peculiar to Satan, as has been discussed earlier. Every character, true to the determined system of order and degree in the universe, was of vast proportion—from the Omnipotent to the two human inhabitants of Paradise. Even as Adam and Eve were presented in the last three books—concerning their function after the fall—they must be considered larger than life. And yet it was necessary to fit them into a working frame which would present their actions in a manner which could be comprehended by men. Their comings and goings were translated into human terms. For a true appraisal of any of the characters the two planes of conception must be considered. (The consideration might nullify some of the earlier speculation concerning the dull, pedantic quality of the character of the Omnipotent.)

The drama in *Paradise Lost* is a drama of humanity—with Adam and Eve representing man, and with the Messiah representing the
link between man and God. Satan as the tempter, the tyrant, the evil incarnate, manipulates and schemes to upset the natural order and the natural connection between the various natural degrees. Satan, early in the epic, resorts to the use of fraud, guile, and hypocrisy. He abandons his reason and allows himself to be ruled instead by his passion. Any means which will achieve his end become just in his own mind. Satan's use of deceit is evident in his initial encounter with Sin and Death, the woman-serpent and the "execrable Shape" (II.631). Realizing that he needs their cooperation if he is to leave the infernal region, he resorts to hypocrisy and addresses them as "dear Daughter" (II.817) and "my fair Son" (II.818). Later, in the fourth book, after making his address to the sun, showing himself to be envious of the earth, arguing with himself as to whether he should proceed with his plan or not, and finally confirming himself in evil, Satan has his true identity revealed by his passion:

Thus while he spake, each passion dimm'd his face
Thrice chang'd with pale, ire, envy, and despair,
Which marr'd his borrow'd visage, and betray'd
Him counterfeit, if any eye beheld.
For heav'nly mindes from such distempers foule
Are ever clear. Whereof hee soon aware,
Each perturbation smooth'd with outward calme,
Artificer of fraud; and was the first
That practis'd falsehood under saintly show,
Deep malice to conceal, coush't with revenge....

(IV.114-123)

He continues to degenerate physically and spiritually, and his
deceptions, although directed at others, begin to involve himself. Ithuriel and Zephon do not recognize Satan as they discover him in Paradise. Disguised as a toad, Satan is tempting Eve in a dream. As he sees the "two strong and subtle Spirits" (IV.736), he changes to his original shape and asks them in scorn why they do not know him—"ye know me once" (IV.328). Zephon, with contempt, reminds Satan that because goodness and glory have departed from him, he now resembles his "sin and place of doom obscure and foul" (IV.840). Gabriel then joins Satan and the two spirits and demands of Satan why he has left the infernal region and why he has decided to involve man in his revenge. Satan's answer, filled with contradictions, subterfuge, and hypocrisy, illustrates his intellectual cowardice:

"Gabriel, thou hast in Heav'n th' esteem of wise, And such I hold thee; but this question askt Puts me in doubt. Lives there who loves his pain? Who would not, finding way, break loose from HELL, Though thither doomed? Thou wouldst thy self, no doubt, And boldly venture to whatever place Farthest from pain, where thou mightst hope to change Torment with ease, and soonest recompence Dole with delight, which in this place I sought; To thee no reason, who knowst only good, But evil hast not tri'd: and wilt object His will who bound us? Let him surer barr His Iron Gates, if he intends our stay In that dark durance. (IV.886-890)

Satan, in his attempt to deceive Gabriel, is in reality deceiving himself. In the ninth book, in his address to the earth, Satan shows
a clearer awareness of the significance of his actions. Having decided to assume the guise of a serpent in order to carry out his purpose of revenge, he comments:

"O foul descent! that I who erst contended
With Gods to sit the highest, am now constrained
Into a Beast, and mixt with bestial slime,
This essence to incarnate and infrute
That to the height of Deitie aspir'd;
But what will not Ambition and Revenge
Descent to? who aspire to must draw as low
As high he seard, obnoxious first or last
To basest things? Revenge, at first though sweet,
Ditter ere long back on itself recoils."

(IX.167-172)

Yet he decides to pursue his revenge, for spite, and he chooses to pervert Eve rather than Adam, "Whose higher intellectual more I shun" (IX.483). After the accomplishment of his mission, he returns to hell, where he addresses his legions. He admits the omnipotence of God as he says, "me also he has judged" (X.494), but he deceives himself and his followers as he concludes,

"Ye have th' account
Of my performance: What remains, ye Gods,
But up and enter now into full bliss."

(X.501-503)

At this point, his legions offer "A distant universal kiss" (X.508), and Satan wonders at their reaction--

but not long
Had pleasure, wondering at himself now more;
His Visage drawn he felt to sharp and sore,
His Arms clung to his ribs, his Legs entwining
Each other, till supplanted down he fell
A monstrous Serpent on his Belly prone,
Reluctant, but in vain....

(X.509-515)

Of the twelve books in *Paradise Lost*, Satan figures
prominently in six. His active movement in the poem concerns: in
Book I, his recovery in hell, his awakening of his legions, and his
initial leadership of his followers; in Book II, his manipulation
of the debate of his full council, his original suggestion of the
new world's being a site for their future activity, and his volun-
teering to be the one to go; in Book III, his designing to deceive
Uriel and obtain directions to earth; in Book IV, his resolving to
involve man in his revenge against God; in Book IX, his tempting of
Eve; and in Book X, his boastful returning to his legions in hell.
Satan's actual revolt in heaven and his war with Michael and the
heavenly host is referred to in Books V and VI, and briefly in Book
VII, in a long narrative by Raphael, who is explaining all past
history to Adam. Milton's first mention of Satan in the poem is a
reference to "Th' infernal Serpent" (I.34). He describes Satan as

...he it was whose guile
Stirred up with Envy and Revenge, deceiv'd
The Mother of Mankind, what time his Pride
Had cast him out from Heav'n, with all his Host
Of Rebel Angels, by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in Glory above his Peers,
He trusted to have equal'd the most High,
If he oppos'd; and with ambitious aim
Against the Throne and Monarchy of God
Rais'd impious war in Heav'n and battel proud
With vain attempt.

(I.34-44)

Later, in Book II, Milton included a scene which provides one of
the strongest indictments against Satan's personal character. The
scene reveals Satan's past incestuous relationship with his daughter.
The scene begins with "the Adversary of God and Man" (II.629) as he
is journeying toward the earth; finally, he reaches the gates of
hell:

Before the Gates there sat
On either side a formidable shape;
The one seem'd Woman to the waste, and fair,
But ended foul in many a scaly fould
Voluminous and vast, a serpent arm'd
With mortal sting.

(II.646-652)

The second shape--

If shape it might be call'd that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joynt, or limb,
Or substance might be call'd that shadow seem'd,
For each seem'd either; black it stood as Night,
Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell,
And shook a dreadful Part; what seem'd his head
The likeness of a Kingly Crown had on.

(II.667-673)

As Satan raises his hand to strike "the Goblin full of wrouth"

(II.668), the "Snake Sorceress" (II.724) rushes between them crying,

"O father, what intends thy hand...
Against thy only Son?"

(II.727-728)
When Satan denies knowing either of them, the sorceress questions:

"Hast thou forgot me then, and do I seem
Now in thine eye so foul, once deem'd so fair
In Heav'n, when at th' Assembly, and in sight
Of all the Seraphim with thee combin'd
In bold conspiracy against Heav'n's King,
All on a sudden miserable pain
Surpris'd thee; dim thine eyes, and dizzie swimm
In darkness while thy head flames thick and fast
Threw forth, till on the left side op'ning wide,
Likest to thee in shape and count'rance bright,
Then shining heav'nly fair, a Goddess arm'd
Out of thy head I sprung; amazement seiz'd
All th' Host of Heav'n; back they recoild affraid
At first, and call'd me Sin, and for a Sign
Portentous held me; but familiar grown,
I pleas'd, and with attractive graces won
The most averse, thee chiefly, who full oft
Thy self in me thy perfect image viewing
Becam'et enamour'd, and such joy thou took'st
With me in secret, that my womb conceiv'd
A growing burden...."

(II.747-787)

The sorceress then explains that after the war in heaven she too
had fallen; also, she had been given the key to the gates of hell,
where she was to stay:

"... Pensive here I sat
Alone, but long I sat not, till my womb
Pregnant by thee, and now excessive grown
Prodigious motion felt and rueful throes.
At last this odious offspring whom thou seest
Thine own begotten, breaking violent way
Tore through my entrails, that with fear and pain
Distorted, all my nether shape thus grew
Transform'd: but he my inbred enemie
Forth issu'd, brandishing his fatal Dart
Made to destroy: I fled, and cry'd out Death."

(II.777-787)
Satan, then, in an incestuous act with Sin, his daughter, had conceived Death. Surely, the scene was not included by a poet who wished to emphasize or stress the heroic qualities of his subject. Also, references to Satan as tyrant, as cited earlier, are consistent throughout the poem. Satan is last mentioned in Books XI and XII as the Angel Michael relates succeeding history to Adam, leading up to the coming of Christ into the world, and including the eventual, final and everlasting victory of the Messiah over Satan. God sends Michael and a band of warriors to escort Adam and Eve from the garden, "least the Fiend...some new trouble raise" (XI.101,103); Michael arrives wearing his sword which is "Satans dire dread" (XI.248).

He explains to Adam the meaning of Christ's coming:

"...not therefore joynes the Son
Manhood to God-head, with more strength to foil
Thy enemie; nor so is overcome
Satan, whose fall from Heav'n, a deadlier bruise,
Disabl'd not to give thee thy deaths wound:
Which he who comes thy Savior shall recure,
Not by destroying Satan, but his works
In thee and in thy Seed."

(XII.388-395)

Only by Adam's love and obedience to God can his doom be annulled:

"this act
Shall bruise the head of Satan, crush his strength
Defeating Sin and Death, his two maine arms,
And fix Farr deeper in his head thir stings...."

(XII.429-432)

Michael, continuing his narration, reveals that after Christ's death and resurrection,
"...he shall ascend
With victory, triumphing through the aire
Over his foes and thine; there shall surprise
The Serpent, Prince of aire, and drag in Chaine
Through all his Realme, and there confounded leave."
(XII.451-455)

The last reference to Satan in *Paradise Lost* is included in Michael's narration as he refers to the final day of judgment when "Satan with his perverted World" (XII.547) will be dissolved.

Perhaps, because man with his human failings finds it easier to recognize the reality in evil than he does to recognize the reality in good, many have been quick to identify with Satan and, thus, to praise the heroic virtues which they recognize in his character. The virtues are present—the appreciation of beauty, the doubting and worry which precede the final decision concerning the involving of man in the revenge, and the strong will and fearless courage—however misdirected. It seems dramatically ironic, then, when Satan refutes his divine origin in proclaiming his opposition to God's will and in determining that there will be eternal warring between good and evil, as it is the divine origin which had endowed Satan with the heroic virtues in the first place. These virtues combined with and, finally, overwhelmed by the evil in him make Satan a whole figure. For this reason, to consider him simply an allegorical figure seems to diminish his total effectiveness in the poem. As a mere symbol, Satan would seem to possess too superficial a character. There would be a one-sidedness suggested to
his nature—a one-sidedness which does not exist. Satan is part of an allegory, but he is, also, a whole and real figure—a worthy adversary. He knows what good is, and he knows what evil is. He chooses for reasons determined by his own pride and unnaturally tyrannical will to follow the evil. He degrades himself, he involves innocence in his degradation, he abuses his creative talents and his heroic endowments, and, significantly, he realizes throughout exactly what he is doing. He is a calculating opponent to God, and man; he is a determined adversary; but he is not the hero of *Paradise Lost.*
Bibliography


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