

# Chapter Six :

## Rebellion and Obedience : the Voice of Myself

### I. Pride and humility

In Chapter Three, I have suggested that *Paradise Lost*, with its underlying themes drawn from the Bible and specifically similar to those of the Book of Isaiah, is an epic of God's salvation history, which begins with the Fall of man and ends with Christ's Redemption. There the poem is seen from an historical perspective; and Milton seems to show, from this historical viewpoint, how God directs history for the fulfillment of His eternal plan—the salvation of man through Christ. Milton's epic of salvation with its poetic objective to justify the ways of God culminates when Adam realizes God's miraculous way of turning the Fall of man to the occasion of His wonderful grace in Christ's saving activity. Essential to the theological framework of the poem, each of these two pivotal events can be explained, respectively, as a consequence of the willful act of disobedience on the one hand, and as a consequence of the humble act of obedience on the other. For Milton it is the creature's attitude toward God that is the most important element, for this attitude relegates him either to God's judgment or to salvation—two principal subjects discussed in the previous chapter as central both to *Paradise Lost* and the Book of Isaiah. Milton seems to believe, like most theologians, that behind these two opposite acts of will lie hubris and submissiveness, respectively, as their motivating forces. These two opposite forms of behavior are well contrasted in *Paradise Lost* with the proper outcome occurring in each of the major characters of the poem, as well as the cosmic consequences for the history of mankind. For Satan,

it is his complete destruction with no chance of recovery;<sup>1</sup> for Christ, it is the fulfillment of the deliverance of man;<sup>2</sup> and for Adam and Eve, it is a spiritual journey from fall to restoration as they experience the judgment of God and His promise of salvation. In this epic of salvation, God's problem with the rebellion of His creature is resolved by the obedience of Christ, the Son of God, who lays down His own example as the foundation of Christian morality. In this respect, the purpose of this chapter is to connect Milton and Isaiah with a principal focus on hubris and submissiveness as basic modes of the creature's attitude toward God. We can also find in Milton's Adam and Eve what Israel as the people of God experience in history when they sin and when they repent. In addition, in this chapter, I will discuss how hubris and submissiveness, two ethical extremes, are respectively embodied in Milton's two characters, Satan and Christ, within the horizon of my personal Bible.<sup>3</sup>

Just as C. S. Lewis pointed out, Satan is no doubt "the best drawn of Milton's characters" (100). Lewis does not mean that Milton makes Satan an admirable character as certain Romantics and modern Satanists have chosen to believe; rather he means that Milton is successful in his depiction of the embodiment of evil. Many critics have delved into the literary sources for Milton's Satan, from the patristic tradition to medieval and Renaissance drama to Italian influences,<sup>4</sup> not to mention Milton's primary source, the Bible. However, almost everything about Satan, including his origin, is uncertain and speculative, and even scriptural detail about him is very brief. For example, Calvin warns us not to indulge in empty

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<sup>1</sup> See Revelation 12: 12, "Therefore be full of delight, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great rage, knowing he has a short time."

<sup>2</sup> See John 3: 16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him may not perish, but have life eternal."

<sup>3</sup> As I point out in "Introduction," "self" and "I" combine to create a personal horizon of reading or interpreting the texts.

<sup>4</sup> In Neil Forsyth's *The Satanic Epic*, cited are literary sources from ancient myth and epics, Hesiod, Apocalypse, the Testament, the early church, the medieval heresies, old English *Genesis* to Chaucer, and Elizabethan drama. (24-69).

speculations concerning the nature and the fall of the angels (164). For theologians and Scripture offered little concrete or specific concerning Satan's early history. This explains why *The Christian Doctrine*, a guide to the theologian foundation of *Paradise Lost*, does not provide a counterpart for the scenes about Satan and his fall in the poem. Unlike *The Christian Doctrine*, which is dependent wholly on the Bible and aims at abstract and literal truth, *Paradise Lost* aims rather at imaginative truth, which Milton obtains either by invention or by reshaping his sources materials, just as I pointed out in "Introduction," that Milton's genius seems to fly between abstract Biblical truths and his own imaginative.

## II. Satan as a heroic figure in the Romantic tradition<sup>5</sup>

Among the above-mentioned literary sources, the Romantic tradition is considered to be the most controversial and provocative to the modern readers. Is Satan an admiring figure or an embodiment of evil? Indeed, Blake believed that Milton unconsciously exalts passion over reason in the epic. And he held that Satan, the embodiment of passion was Milton's true hero. His unorthodox statement of the theme of *Paradise Lost* is included in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*:

Those who restrain Desire do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the Restrainer or Reason usurps its place and governs the unwilling. And, being restrained, it by degrees becomes passive till it is only the shadow of Desire. The history

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The understanding of Satan, in the Romantic tradition, is actually derived from individualism. Individualism is essentially based on ego and self. That is, individualism puts self before anything else. It is pointed out that self is the essence of Satan itself. In the sixteenth chapter of Matthew, Jesus Christ rebuked Apostle Peter for "his mind are the things that are of man" (Matthew 16: 23). And then Jesus, who would surrender himself to obey the will of God to the such extent that he would be crucified on the cross, said, "If any one desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what does a man profit, if he should gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul" (Matthew 16: 24-26). Individualism, extremely upholding the pursuing of self, is Satan's theology. This is why in the Romantic tradition, Satan was considered a heroic figure. And this kind of viewpoint paved a way for the postmodern/de-constructive reading of *Paradise Lost*.

of this is written in *Paradise Lost* and the Governor, or Reason, is called Messiah (Blake 248-49).

Although most critics see the tragedy of the fall as the usurpation of passion over reason, Blake sees the tragedy of the entire epic as the final triumph of reason over passion.

Coleridge himself uses the terms “subject” and “object” rather than “moral” or “theme.” He analyzes the poem’s structure from the vantage point of strictly epic criteria. He says that the fall of man is the subject and that a justification of the ways of God to man is Milton’s object. The closest he comes to stating an actual theme is in this statement:

...inasmuch as it represents the origin of evil, and the combat of good and evil, it contains matter of deep interest to all mankind, as forming the the basis of all religion, and the true occasion of all philosophy whatever. (Coleridge 478)

In addition, interpreting the poem in light of Milton’s life and seeing his life as an uninterrupted fight against tyranny, Byron and Shelly regarded Satan as the hero of the poem. Like Blake they believed that Milton was of the devil’s party, and even though Satan could not triumph against a tyrannical monarchy, he still fought and thus, for all the more reason, was perceived as achieving nobility. Shelley even contended that Milton’s “bold neglect of a moral purpose is the most decisive proof of the supremacy of his genius” (Clark 290).

### III. Satan’s rebellion

The downfall of Milton’s Satan, in terms of my personal Bible,<sup>6</sup> which in a sense goes against the Romantic tradition, is the result of a pride so gross as to wish

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<sup>6</sup> The version of the Bible adopted by me is *The Holy Scriptures* translated by J.N.Darby in 1975. Here, “my personal Bible” signifies that the biblical verses are interpreted by life experiences and philological study.

to lift up to surpass God in his daring ambition to rule in Heaven. Actually, heroism here is a synonym for a self arrogance that wishes to steal the glory of God.

Satan's pride caused his fall and rebellion. In the beginning, Satan was the chief archangel in heaven, that is, the leader of all the angels. He was like a shining star and the son of the morning.

How art thou fallen from heaven, Lucifer, son of the morning!  
Thou art cut down to the ground, that didst prostrate the nations!  
And thou that didst say in the heart, I will ascend into the heaven,  
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit upon  
the mountain of assembly, in the recesses of the north; I will  
ascend above the heights of the cloud, I will be like the Most  
High: none the less art thou brought down to Sheol, to the  
recesses of the pit (Isaiah 14: 12-16).

The reason why Satan fell from heaven is that he attempted to be like the most high: he desired to ascend to the topmost pinnacle of the heaven, to exalt his throne above the stars of God, to sit upon the mountain of assembly, to ascend above the heights of the cloud. His arrogance, pride and hubris brought about his downfall.

Indeed, Satan's fall to the recesses of the pit makes a vivid contrast to the ascension of Christ whose humility raised Him up and glorified Him before God. Pride goes before downfall, while humility is the way to God's glory. This divine logic and godly principle can be seen in the following verses:

For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form, taking his place in the likeness of men, and having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even to death, and that the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every

knee should bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory (Philippians 2: 5-11).

Jesus Christ emptied himself without considering himself to be equal with God. Taking the form of a common mortal, he was incarnated into flesh to serve the world. Within temporality, the Word in the beginning was transformed into a man, who "shall grow up before Jehovah as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground: he hath no form for lordliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire of him. He is despised and left alone of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and like one from whom men hide their faces;--despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isaiah 53: 2-3). He obeyed God just as a lamb would its shepherd. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, but he did not open his mouth; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and was as a sheep dumb before its shearers, and he did not open his mouth. He was taken from oppression and from judgment. And he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of God's people was he stricken. He had subjected himself to suffering and become obedient even unto death. Humility, submission and obedience thus paved the way for his glorification. After his crucifixion, he was resurrected and ascended to heavenly glory, and upon him was bestowed a name which is above all other names of the universe. The ways of God were justified by the principle that pride and rebellion cause downfall, while humility and obedience lead to God's glory.

## IV. A theological understanding of Satan's history<sup>7</sup> and destined future: Satan as a thief, a murderer, a deceiver, and a liar

Satan is essentially a thief,<sup>8</sup> who has been stealing God's glory and human beings' blessings since the creation of the universe. The whole world lies under the hand of Satan,<sup>9</sup> for he destroyed the blessings available in the Garden of Eden, gaining all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.<sup>10</sup> Since the loss of paradise, he has been the master of those who give themselves up to the world and turn away from God.<sup>11</sup> Satan, the serpent itself, came into the world to steal, kill and destroy.

The original sin itself is Satan's. When talking about the Son's salvation in Romans, Apostle Paul used the singular form of "sin" to point to the root and necessity of the salvation of the cross. The disobedience of the first parents did pave the way for the entrance of sin into the world.<sup>12</sup> And sin builds up a strong

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<sup>7</sup> In *The Satanic Epic*, Neil Forsyth introduced Satan's history from the perspective of the Bible, myths, medieval heresy, Chaucer's works, Elizabethan dramas, and what not. His introduction is all-inclusive all right, but essentially it lacks a systematically in-depth insight. Therefore, I will provide an in-depth insight in terms of the Bible itself, which is actually the primary source of Milton's epic.

<sup>8</sup> See John 10: 10, "The thief comes not but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy." Here, the thief may refer to Satan.

<sup>9</sup> See 1 John 5: 19, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the wicked one." Here the wicked one refers to Satan.

<sup>10</sup> See Matthew 4: 8-9, "Again the devil takes him to a very high mountain, and shews him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory, and says to him, All these things will give to thee if, falling down, thou wilt do me homage." Indeed, since man's fall, Satan has been the spiritual ruler of all the kingdoms of the world, and he has enjoyed their glory.

<sup>11</sup> See Ephesians 2: 1-2, "and you, being dead in your offences and sins—in which ye once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience." Sinners, as the sons of disobedience, "had their conversation in the lusts of their flesh, doing what the flesh and the thoughts willed to do" (Ephesians 2: 3).

<sup>12</sup> See Romans 5: 15, "For if by the offence of one the many have died, much rather has the grace of God, and the free gift in grace, which is by the one man Jesus Christ." Here the offence of one refers to the rebellious act of the first parents. "The many" refer to all the descendants of the first parents. And judging from the destined death resulting from sin, it can be pointed out that the rebellion of the first parents ushered in the original sin, which has been passed down from generation to generation. The original sin is indeed the legacy of paradise lost. And it calls for the necessity of salvation. Therefore, on the one hand, according to Book One to Book Ten, the epic is a tragedy. However, on the other hand, the promised salvation in Book Eleven and Book Twelve, in a sense, makes the epic a tragicomedy.

self,<sup>13</sup> causing humans to deny the way of regaining paradise. The only way of gaining the salvation of the soul and entering the paradise within is indeed obedience. For salvation is always prepared for those who choose to obey and believe.<sup>14</sup> Sin,<sup>15</sup> Satan, and self combine to create a rebellious world, arousing God's wrath and destined to perish.<sup>16</sup>

Satan's glory and lies will pass away just as the beauty of flowers will disappear sooner or later. "Because as the grass's flower he will pass away. For the sun has risen with its burning heat, and has withered the grass, and its flower has fallen, and the comeliness of its look has perished" (James 1: 10-11). With the incarnation of the Word, the flesh of the son of God was crucified on the cross for the purpose of destroying Satan.<sup>17</sup> This is the fulfillment of God's words promised

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<sup>13</sup> See 2 Timothy 3: 1-2, "But this know, that in the last days difficult times shall be there; for men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money." As pointed out before, denying the self is the way to follow the will of God. In his well-known prayers at Gethsemane, Jesus Christ prayed in this way—"My father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26: 39). The son of God denied himself and completed the will of God, bringing salvation to all nations.

<sup>14</sup> See Galatians 3: 8-9, "and the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations on the principle of faith, announced beforehand the glad tidings to Abraham: In thee all the nations shall be blessed." God's justification and salvation are based on faith.

<sup>15</sup> In the very beginning of Romans focusing on the gospel and salvation of God, it's surprising that comes to mind is the singular form of "sin." For the necessity of salvation comes from "sin" brought about by man's rebellious act. The sin operating as a law is the originator of sins. The singular form of "sin" refers to the sinful nature existing in man's flesh, while the plural form of "sin", the fruits and outer expressions of the inner sinful nature. The "sins" can be listed as follows: "unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, malice, envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil dispositions, whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, proud, boaster, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, void of understanding, faithless, without natural affection, unmerciful" (Romans 1: 29-31). These sins are unseemly things. And it should be noted that in 2 Timothy 3: 1-5 Apostle Paul points out the sins rampant in the last days. "But this know, that in the last days difficult times shall be there; for men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, evil speakers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, profane, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, of unsubdued passions, savage, having no love for what is good, traitors, headlong, of vainpretensions, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; having a form of piety but denying the power of it" (2 Timothy 3: 1-5). In short, the singular form of "sin" refers to our sinful nature, while the plural form of "sin", the fruits and outer expressions of our sinful nature.

<sup>16</sup> See Romans 1: 18, "For there is revealed wrath of God from heaven upon all impiety, and unrighteousness of men holding the truth in unrighteousness." God's wrath will lead to His judgment, and the price of sins is death.

<sup>17</sup> See Hebrew 2: 14-15, "Since therefore the children partake of blood and flesh, he also, in like manner, took part in the same, that through death he might annul him who has the might of death,



in Genesis 3: 15-16—“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall crush thy head, and thou shall crush his heel.” The crushing of “his heel” refers to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, while the crushing of “thy head”, the destruction of Satan, a liar, a murderer,<sup>18</sup> a deceiver,<sup>19</sup> and a thief rather than a hero.

Satan’s destined future is prophesied in Revelation, that is, the Apocalypse. Since paradise was lost, Satan has been the ruler of the whole world, and spiritually all kingdoms and their glory have belonged to him. He is the evil spirit operating in the sons of disobedience. In the coming ages, there will be prophesied warfare in heaven, when “the great dragon was cast out, the ancient serpent, he who is called Devil and Satan, he who deceives the whole habitable world, he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12: 7-9). Satan will be bound a thousand years, and cast into the abyss, and shut and sealed up. And then, “he should not any more deceive the nations until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be loosed for a little time” (Revelation 20: 3). “And when the thousand years have been completed, Satan shall be loosed from his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth” (Revelation 20: 7-8). At that time, there will be a great war. However, as pointed out before, *Paradise Lost* must be read as a tragicomedy, for “the devil who deceived them was cast into the lake of the fire and brimstone, where are both the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for the ages of ages” (Revelation 20: 10).

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that is, the devil.” Here, the form of blood and flesh refers to the incarnation of the Word, while the devil, Satan.

<sup>18</sup> See John 8: 44-45, “ye [sinners] are of the devil, as your father, and ye desire to do the lusts of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks falsehood, he speaks of what is his own: for he is a liar and its father.” Here, the devil refers to Satan.

<sup>19</sup> See Genesis 3: 13, “And Jehovah Elohim said to the woman, What is this thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” The tragedy of paradise lost resulted from the deception of the serpent, Satan itself.

## V. Rebellion and creation

As pointed out in the “Introduction,” Satan’s fall resulted in the judgment of God which thus would lead to the destruction of the heavens and the earth created in the beginning. There is a coordinate conjunction between Genesis 1: 1 and Genesis 1: 2, which signifies that God’s creation may indeed be the re-making of the fallen world. The suspended hiatus between these two verses could be an unfolding stage on which a spiritual war was to be waged between the anointed Christ and the fallen archangel. Thus, it will take time and effort for Milton to elaborate on the suspended time and space. That is, the powerful imagination of Milton has been flying between the extremely limited recorded biblical history and his poetic narration of the spiritual war. The spiritual war hidden between Genesis 1: 1 and Genesis 1: 2 strongly manifests Satan’s rebellion and the resulting judgment making the earth an empty waste. So it is Satan’s rebellion that destroyed the heavens and the earth created in the beginning.

The Spirit of God hovered over the face of the water, recovering the earth and creating all living creatures by His creative Word. The power of the creative Word conquered the subverting power of God. The creative history proceeded from the recovery of the earth through the successively more complex forms of plant life, and passed from these to the zoophytes, in turn to shells, fishes, higher animals, and so on in detail through the hierarchy of nature.

It’s pointed out that man is on top of the hierarchy of the great chain of being. The making of the universe aimed to create a paradise for the first parents, who were destined to be in charge of all creatures. The first man, Adam, was made in God’s image and after God’s likeness. And God<sup>20</sup> “let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over the whole earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth” (Genesis 1: 26-27).

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<sup>20</sup> Hebrew. Elohim, the plural of Eloah, means “the Supreme.” It is Deity in the absolute sense.

These two verses are echoed by King David's Psalms 8: 5-6, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and splendour. Thou hast him to rule over the works of thy hands; thou hast put everything under his feet." In terms of power relations, Adam was the head of all creatures since the Creator had put everything under his feet. In addition, the first marriage and sexuality were so blessed that "God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it" (Genesis 1: 28). Indeed, Adam was not only the head of the re-made cosmos but the master of Eve, bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh.

Based on this, Apostle Paul pointed out that "For man is not of woman, but woman of man. For also man was not created for the sake of the woman, but woman for the sake of man" (1 Corinthians 11: 8-9). Woman's head is the man. This is the core value of the first parents' marriage. However, Eve sinned after the temptation of the serpent, which marked the transformation of the rebellious Satan, since the serpent persuaded and motivated Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Ignoring the headship of Adam, Eve took the initiative to eat the forbidden fruit. This was totally against the divine order set by God, and Eve's rebellious act caused Adam to rebel against God's command, which led to the loss of the paradise. For without obedience based on man's free will, the paradise could not be retained. It's to be remembered that "the Christ is the head of every man, but the woman's head is the man, and Christ's head God" (1 Corinthians 11: 3). This divine power relation was repeatedly stressed in the Apostles' epistles. "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husband, as to the Lord, for a husband is the head of the wife, as also the Christ is head of the assembly" (Ephesians 5: 23). "Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands" (1 Peter 3: 1). Accordingly, Eve's disobedience resulted in man's rebellion, and man's rebellion brought about the curse of the ground. "And to Adam Jehovah said, Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee saying, Thou shalt not eat of; cursed be the ground on thy account; with toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; and thorns and thistles shall it yield thee" (Genesis 3: 17-18).

The loss of paradise resulted from man's rebellion, which thus made the creature subject to vanity. "For the creature has been made subject to vanity, not of its will, but by reason of him [man] who has subjected to the same, in hope that the creature itself also shall be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans together and travails in pain together until now" (Romans 8: 20-22). The breach of the divinely ordained power relation not only led to the expelling of the first parents out of paradise but put the creature itself in the bondage of corruption, making the whole creation groan together and travails in pain. Rebellion makes the whole creation a vanity of vanities. "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1: 2).

## VI. Rebellion and the original sin

Man's rebellion not only put the creature itself in the bondage of corruption but brought sin into the world. "For this cause, even as by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death; and thus death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5: 12). The original sin entered into the world due to the rebellion of the first parents. And sin's fruit is death.

Furthermore, the original sin, from Apostle Paul's perspective, is the root of lust. And lust is indeed among the works of the flesh. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strifes, jealousy, anger, contentions, disputes, schools of opinion, envyings, murders, drunkennesses, revels, and things like these" (Galatians 5: 19). Original sin as a law works in man's flesh, becoming an enormous power of evil, which operates against man's conscience. Apostle Paul's words might well shed a light on this phenomenon of man's struggle between good and evil. "For I do not practice the good that I will; but the evil that I do not will, that I do. But if what I do not will, this I practice, it is no longer I that do it, but the sin that dwells in me"

(Romans 7: 18-20). The original sin combined with lust works in man's flesh and drives man to do evil things, which are remarkably associated with lust. And actually, lust is the enemy of the Holy Spirit, so Apostle Paul proclaimed that "the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these things are opposed one to the other" (Galatians 5: 17).

The original sin dwelling in man's flesh becomes a law working against man's conscience, one which captures and forces man to do evil things when his mind chooses to satisfy the needs of lust. And the fruits of obeying the law of sin are death, especially death of the spirit, resulting in vanity and a heavy mental burden.<sup>21</sup> This is well explained by Romans 8: 5-6, "For they that are according to flesh mind the things of the flesh; and they that are according to Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit life and peace." It is man's free will that chooses to act, whether by flesh or by Spirit. If an individual chooses to act according to the lust conceived in the flesh, he or she will be captured by original sin and do evil. So, the choice of good or evil is based on man's choice, which is based on his free will. Just as the loss of paradise was due to man's choice based on free will, so the numerous descendants of the first parents can decide their fate according to their own free will.

The mind of the flesh signals enmity against God, for it rebels against the law of God.<sup>22</sup> The first parents made their own choice to rebel against God by obeying the language of evil. As a result, the earth was cursed and the first parents were

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<sup>21</sup> It is noted here that King Solomon's nihilism and "the sore travail," the two motifs resounding in Ecclesiastes, can find an affinity with Nietzsche's nihilism and "the heaviest burden." King Solomon, a preacher of the Word, said "vanity in vanity, all is vanity" right at the beginning of Ecclesiastes. This turns out to be the keynote of nihilism.

<sup>22</sup> See the ten commandments in Exodus 20: 3-17. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make thyself any graven image. Thou shalt not idly utter the name of Jehovah thy God. Remember the Sabbath day to hallow it. Honour thy father and thy mother. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not desire thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not desire thy neighbour's wife, nor his bondman, nor his handmaid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's.

expelled out of paradise. Rebellion resulted in the loss of paradise. And this principle can be considered true of the Israelites in Exodus. Their forty-year-long experiences in the wilderness just proved that rebellion leads to punishment, and that obedience of the law of God brings forth blessings. In the Old Testament, the law of God was written on stone tables, while in the ages of the New Testament, the law of God, which is virtually the Spirit of the living God, is inscribed on fleshy tables of the heart.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, an individual or a people can choose the mind of the Spirit to yield the fruits of life.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, an individual or a people can choose to rebel against God and act according to the mind of the flesh, which will eternally repeat the tragedy of the first parents. The provision and blessing of paradise would be lost.<sup>25</sup>

## VII. Rebellion and obedience: a binary opposition<sup>26</sup> for man's choice

As far as our interpretation of *Paradise Lost* is concerned, the quest for crucial binary pairs and their mutual references may therefore be essential and rewarding. And a brief survey of the notion of fusion of horizons will be stated as follows, serving as a complement to the linguistic binary opposition. “Be not diversely

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<sup>23</sup> See 2 Corinthians 3: 3, “Ye are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read of all men, being manifested to be Christ’s epistle ministered by us, written not with ink, but the Spirit of the living God; not on stone tables, but on fleshy tables of the heart.”

<sup>24</sup> See Galatians 5: 22, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control: against such things there is no law.”

<sup>25</sup> See Galatians 5: 19-21, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strifes, jealousies, angers, contentions, disputes, schools of opinion, envyings, murders, drunkennesses, revels, and things like these; as to which I tell you beforehand, even as I also have said before, that they who do such things shall not inherit God’s kingdom.”

<sup>26</sup> Contemporary critics known as structuralists have been arguing that binarism is fundamental and indispensable to human languages, cognition, and communication. Through binary ideas, man categorizes the seemingly chaotic world and imposes the notion of system on it. Therefore, binary oppositions help us to shape entire world views and mark differences in an otherwise unorganized world. Indeed, binarism underlies human acts and practices. Culture and languages more often than not work largely through binary oppositions. Be it philosophy or in religion, paired opposites serve as the very foundations of human thoughts. When it comes to literary studies, the discovery of thematic binary oppositions within literary texts is one of the most important reading and interpretative strategies.

yoked with unbelievers; for what participation is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship of light with darkness? And what consent of Christ with Beliar, or what part for a believer along with an unbeliever? And what agreement of God's temple with idols?" (2 Corinthians 6: 14-16). Apostle Paul holds that no participation or fusion is possible between righteousness and lawlessness, between light and darkness, or between Christ and Belair. This was actually an effective prescription for the sickening situation of the local church in Corinth, which was then in a chaotic state. In modern literary critics' terms, the orthodox Christian practice and doctrine were deconstructed in those days. In an attempt to settle all the thorny problems such as fornication and the threat of schism, Apostle Paul demanded a clear-cut distinction between light and darkness, between Christ and Satan. To prevent the fall of the church, Apostle Paul upheld the idea of no fusion between good and evil. In this way, when tracing back this concept to the fall of our human ancestors, we can also find a linguistically and theologically binary opposition in *Paradise Lost*.

It's easy for the reader to find binary oppositions that contribute to the complexity of this poem: God's heaven/Satan's hell, light/darkness, authority/freedom, domination/subordination, reason/passion, and obedience/transgression are all thematically important paired opposites. In view of the fact that binary oppositions pervade *Paradise Lost*, we might do well to assume that Milton, consciously or unconsciously, composed this epic on the basis of binarism; in fact, as John T. Shawcross claims, "The complexity of Milton's simulated creation of a world is seen in the poem's intricate structures; its philosophical technique is sustained by the literary device of opposites" (209).

## A. In Psalms 1: the way of the righteous versus the way of the wicked

The mind of the flesh, namely, the mind of rebellion against the law of God, forms the ways of the wicked. And “the way of the wicked shall perish” (Psalms 1: 6). In the third chapter of Genesis, the free choice of the first parents did determine the future fate of human beings. By their choice they rebelled against the commandment of Jehovah, the Creator of the great chain of being, led to the loss of paradise: they were expelled out of the Garden of Eden, and the earth became cursed. Due to the loss of God’s provision, the first parents were destined to “eat bread in the sweat of their faces” (Genesis 3: 19). Indeed, their choice of eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was based on their free will. The same principle can be applied to the “binary opposition” in Psalms 1, according to which the choice of obeying and loving the words of God yields the fruits of life, while “the wicked are not so; but are as the chaff which the wind driveth away” (Psalms 1: 4). “But his delight is in Jehovah’s law, and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he is as a tree planted by brooks of water, which giveth its fruit in its season, and whose leaf fadeth not; and all that he doeth prospereth” (Psalms 1: 2-3). In fact, “meditating in God’s law” is essentially the practice of the mind of the Spirit.

## B. In Galatians: the Spirit versus the flesh

In the third chapter of Genesis, impressive is the first man’s choice between the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thanks to the first parents’ rebellion against the words of God,<sup>27</sup> Who created the heavens and the earth

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<sup>27</sup> Heb. Elohim, the plural of Eloah, “the Supreme.” It is Deity in the absolute sense. Elohim, in the Biblical text, appears only in the name of Jehovah Elohim; moreover, when Elohim following immediately on Jehovah has a grammatical adjunct, its place will be taken by the English word “God”: see Gen. 9: 26 and 24: 7. Other Hebrew divine names translated as “God” will be indicated as follows: Eloah God; *El* (meaning “The Mighty,” see Gen. 14: 18), God. For the meaning of Jehovah, (Heb. *Yahveh*, or *Yehveh*), the ever-existing One, see Ex. 3: 14, 15; Isa. 40: 28. For *Jah*, the existing One objectively, see Ex. 15: 2; Ps. 68: 4. The name seems to express *absolute* rather than *continuous* existence. For *Adonal* ( a name of God, not merely a title), translated “Lord,” see Ezek. 2: 4.



in the beginning,<sup>28</sup> their failure to resist the temptation of the lust of eyes as well as the pride of the world led to the curse on the earth and the destined heavy burden of man's life. Influenced by the epic story of the choice between the two trees, Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Galatians in the New Testament, uses such metaphors as seeds, trees, and fruits to depict the binary opposition between lust/the flesh and the Spirit. He defines the flesh in this way: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strifes, jealousies, angers, contentions, dispute, schools of opinion, envyings, murders, drunkennesses, revels, and things like these" (Galatians 5: 19-20). On the other hand, concerning the fruits of following the Spirit, Which is the essence of the Word,<sup>29</sup> Apostle Paul said, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control: against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5: 22). Furthermore, he compared the choice of obeying the Spirit to "sowing to the Spirit," while he compared the choice of resisting the Spirit and obeying the flesh to "sowing to the flesh." Just as in the first parents' epic story, the pattern can apply to later generations in human history. Thus, Apostle Paul reaffirmed the universal pattern of determining an individual's or a people's destiny by using the metaphors of seeds and fruits: "Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatever a man shall sow, that also shall he reap. For he that sows to his own flesh, shall reap corruption from the flesh; but he that sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life" (Galatians 6: 7). The first parents'

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<sup>28</sup> According to Zechariah 12: 1, "The burden of the word of Jehovah concerning Israel. Thus saith Jehovah, who stretched out the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him," man's spirit of which conscience is its function is as important and valued as the heavens and the earth. Indeed, the creation of Adam and Eve was the climax of God's creative works. The first man was in charge of the whole universe, especially the Garden of Eden. It is assumed that if the first man acted according to his conscience, the original sin would have not entered the world, influencing human history, and paradise would have not been lost. Therefore, without man's spirit or conscience, man can not make a reasonable choice, which is in accordance with God's commandments.

<sup>29</sup> See John 6: 63, "It is the Spirit which quickens, the flesh profits nothing: the words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life." The words of God are spirit, and obeying the words of God will definitely lead to the fruits of life. Man's tragedy in the Garden of Eden resulted from rebellion against the words of God. So, in Galatians, Apostle Paul further explained the things of the flesh and the things of the Spirit.

rebellion was indeed an act of sowing to the flesh, so they reaped corruption. In other words, with the loss of paradise, they were destined to travail in a cursed world, which was alienated from the blessings and provision of the Creator.

### C. In Romans: obeying or rebelling against conscience

The loss of paradise resulted from Adam's rebellion, which caused original sin to enter into the world. And sin brought about death to human beings. In Apostle Paul's Romans, which delineates, like Isaiah of the Old Testament, God's full salvation, he reviewed Moses' record of man's fall in paradise, and then boldly proclaims "For as indeed by the disobedience of the one man the many have been constituted sinners" (Romans 5: 19). Sin due to Adam's rebellion has since entered into the world and thus all human beings have been constituted sinners. This is not a surprise, but divine logic— original sin has been passed down from generation to generation, making Adam's descendants living souls who "walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2: 2). All sinners are indeed the sons of disobedience in consideration of Adam's rebellion in the Garden of Eden. Disobedience led to death for God had told Adam, "but of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, Ye shall not eat of it, and ye shall not touch it, lest ye die" (Genesis 3: 3). Death has since become men's portion, as Hebrew 9: 27 says, "And forasmuch as it is the portion of men once to die, and after this judgment."

The original sin dwelling in man's flesh causes him to follow his lust and do evil things. Just as the first parents could decide whether to obey or to disobey God's law, so sinners can choose to obey the Spirit and obtain the fruits of life and peace. On the other hand, they can choose to obey the demands of the flesh and then die in spirit. Obedience and rebellion form two options for an individual of free will

to choose from. Disobedience leads to death, while obedience, to divine life and heavenly peace. For Adam and Eve, their destiny depended on the choice of obedience or rebellion. And for today's human beings, their choice of obeying the Spirit, namely their conscience, will lead them to paradise within, while their choice of rebelling against their conscience will keep them from the peace of their inner conscience, that is, the paradise within.<sup>30</sup>

#### D. In Matthew: two gates, two trees, and two houses

Since Milton's *Paradise Lost* aimed to justify the ways of God, in the seventh chapter of Matthew a perspective of binary opposition might well shed light on the reader's understanding of God's ways, as well. It's realized that obedience emerges as a principle of gaining life, good fruits and a solid foundation in faith. Here, Apostle Matthew pointed out that the gate and the way are narrow and straitened on the way to life, and that "they are few who find it" (Matthew 7: 13-14). Secondly, he proclaimed that only those who obeyed the will of God could produce good fruits, thereby entering into the kingdom of the heavens.<sup>31</sup> Finally, for those who followed the word of God, their foundation of faith was as solid as a house built upon a rock.<sup>32</sup> Judging from these passages, it can be seen that God's way is justified by obedience. The loss of paradise resulted from the disobedience of the first parents whose choice

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<sup>30</sup> See Hebrew 4: 15-16, "For we have not a high priest not able to sympathise with our infirmities, but tempted in all things in like manners, sin apart. Let us approach therefore with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace for seasonable help." Here, the throne of grace is, in a sense, in man's spirit, that is his conscience. If he obeys the demands of conscience, he will be rewarded, gaining mercy and grace. On the other hand, if he rebels against the inner throne in his conscience, he will be figuratively expelled from the paradise within. His life will thus lack peace and vitality.

<sup>31</sup> See Matthew 7: 17-21, "So every good tree produces good fruits, but the worthless tree produces bad fruits. A good tree cannot produce bad fruits, nor a worthless tree produce good fruits. Every tree not producing good fruits is cut down and cast into the fire. By their fruits then surely ye shall know them. Not every one who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he does the will of my Father Who is in the heavens."

<sup>32</sup> See Matthew 7: 24-25, "Whoever therefore hears these my words and does them, I will liken them to a prudent man, who built his house upon the rock; and the rain came down, and the streams came, and the winds blew and fell upon that house, and it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock."

of following the temptation of the serpent did essentially rebel against God's will, leading to the fall of the human race as well as the corruption of the cosmos. This epical tragedy is rooted in man's disobedience.<sup>33</sup>

## VIII. Rebellion and obedience in the old creation and the new creation

The old creation divulged in the first chapter of Genesis in the Old Testament was a creation of rebellion, while the new creation symbolically described in the first chapter of the Gospel according to John is essentially a creation of obedience.

### A. Rebellion in the old creation

Concerning the creation recorded in Genesis, we can see two rebellions—Satan's rebellion and man's rebellion. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1: 1). Unfortunately, as mentioned in the Introduction of this dissertation, the heavens and the earth were destroyed so that "the earth was waste and empty, and darkness was on the face of the deep" (Genesis 1: 2). The destruction resulted from Satan's rebellion and the resulting judgment. The rebellion of Satan was out of his pride, which had strongly compelled him to seek to raise himself as high as God's throne. However, God's judgment brought him down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, in the first chapter of Genesis, God spent six days recovering the waste of the earth, and His Spirit

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<sup>33</sup> In the seventh chapter of Matthew, we can also see the results of rebelling against the way of God. For those who did things against God, their way led to destruction, they produced bad fruits, and their foundation of faith was as fragile as the house built on sand. In short, rebellion leads to destruction, shame, and foolishness. This shows that the logic of "binary opposition" does exist in these cited passages.

<sup>34</sup> See Isaiah 14: 12-15, "How art thou fallen from heaven, Lucifer, son the morning! Thou art cut down to the ground, that didst prostrate the nations! And thou that didst say in thy heart, I will ascend into the heavens, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit upon the mount of assembly, in the recesses of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High: none the less art thou brought down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit." Satan wanted to exalt his throne above the heights of clouds, and to be like the Most High. As a creature of God, Satan was obliged to obey God all right, but his pride got him to rebel against God, leading to his fall.

hovered over the face of the waters, creating the cosmos by His creative words. In the Jewish tradition, God's creation, in the eyes of the Jewish race, was centered upon the creation of man. This world view can be fully explained by Psalms 8, which was written by King David.<sup>35</sup> Man, whom God "was mindful of," was "a little lower than the angels, and hast being crowned with glory and splendor" (Psalms 8: 4-5). In addition, God "hast made him to rule over the works of God's hands; and God hast put everything under man's feet" (Psalms 8: 6). Thus, man was put on the top of the hierarchy of the great chain of beings. However, as with the rebellion of Satan, the first man rebelled against God, leading to "the curse of the ground."<sup>36</sup> Therefore, it can be seen that in the beginning Satan's rebellion had led to the destruction of the earth, and that the first man's rebellion resulted in the corruption of God's creation recorded in the first chapter of Genesis.

## B. Obedience in the new creation

Creation in Genesis is indeed a rebellious one—following Satan's rebellion is Eve's rebellion; and then, Adam's rebellion; and then, the rebellion of the earth; finally, the first parents were destined to be expelled out of paradise, that is, paradise was lost.

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<sup>35</sup> See Romans 1: 1-3, "Paul, bondman of Jesus Christ, [a] called apostle, separated to God's glad tidings, (which he had before promised by the prophets in the holy writings,) concerning his Son (come of David's seed according to the flesh." Consulting with the genealogy of Jesus Christ, we can see that King David was the fore-father of Jesus Christ.

<sup>36</sup> See Genesis 3: 17, "And to Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee saying, Thou shalt not eat of: cursed be the ground on thy account." The earth was cursed and corrupted by the sin of rebellion. As a result, "the creature has been made subject to vanity, not of its will, but by reason of him who has subjected, in hope that the creature itself also shall be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8: 20-21). Man's rebellion was the most miserable tragedy in history. His rebellion put the creature in the bondage of corruption. The salvation of the sin-tainted cosmos shall come when God gives His only-begotten Son, just as John 3: 16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal." God's son's salvation will save the world.

Here, a supplementary insight will be provided, for Milton's view of creation was so limited that he did not see through the whole picture of creation, although he tried very hard to talk comprehensively about the coming salvation in Book Eleven and Book Twelve. Actually, the fruit of the coming salvation is essentially a new creation. And the new creation is a creation of obedience. As mentioned in the "Introduction," the first three chapters of Genesis are the primary source for Milton and for critics to consult in order to get a whole picture of man's creation, his fall, and thus paradise lost. And in these chapters, the motifs that would catch the eye of a theologically well-equipped reader are as follows: creation of the heaven and the earth, the creation of the first parents and their marriage and sexuality, Satan's temptation and the entrance of original sin into the human race, and the promise of coming salvation. Based upon my understanding that the Bible was the primary source of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, these above-mentioned motifs were used as points of departure for me to discern a fusion of horizons in reading the epic concerning man's creation, man's rebellion, man's sin, and man's salvation. Indeed, the first three chapters of Genesis, which are the original sketch depicting the whole picture of paradise lost, are like a window for us to see through to the whole picture of paradise lost and to understand the significance of the epic, which, in the sense of rebellion, can be called a Satanic epic, and which, in the sense of obedience, can definitely be called an epic of sin and salvation. Due to rebellion, the curse of sin is a divinely logical result rather than a surprise. On the other hand, due to obedience, the coming of salvation is a divinely destined hope rather than a vain, Pollyannaish eschatology. And, again, it should be remarkably noticed that the ultimate consummation of the promised salvation<sup>37</sup> is a new creation, which, in essence, is a creation of obedience.

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<sup>37</sup> According to Isaiah 9: 6, "For unto us a child is born unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace." The promise of the coming of the Messiah can be clearly seen in this classic verse concerning the prophecy of the coming salvation in the ages of the New Testament. In addition, it is to be pointed out that, according to the third chapter of Galatians,

The Gospel according to John is a philosophically significant book concerning the incarnation of the Word. The creative Word in the first chapter of Genesis was incarnated into flesh, full of grace and truth (John 1: 14). The creative Word was the maker of the old creation, while at the same time the Word incarnated is the initiator of the new creation. Just as 2 Corinthians 5: 17 says, “So if any one be in Christ, there is a new creation;” the rebellious old creation is reconciled with God, through the momentous impact of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. “And all things are of God who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthian 5: 18). The first parents were tempted by Satan, and surprisingly tainted by sin, transforming the history of mankind into a history of rebellion against God.<sup>38</sup> The original sin causes rebellion. But the sins of rebellion have been resolved by the crucifixion of the incarnated Word.<sup>39</sup> Actually, the incarnation of the Word brought an end to the old creation, and started the new age of the new creation. The new creation consists of two components—churches and the new heaven and earth of the Apocalypse.<sup>40</sup> Based on Christ’s obedience, the old creation was renewed and human beings were saved. He yielded to God’s will, “having found himself in figure a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross” (Philippines 2: 8).

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the promised Holy Spirit indeed refers to Jesus Christ, who is, in flesh, a descendant of Abraham, the father of the race of faith.

<sup>38</sup> See Ephesians 2: 1-2, “And you, being dead in your offenses and sins—in which ye once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.” For Adam’s original sin, his descendants of later generations have become the sons of disobedience, that is, the sons of rebellion.

<sup>39</sup> See 1 Peter 2: 24, “who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, in order that, being dead to sins, we may live to righteousness.” Jesus Christ, the incarnated Word, bore the sins of the human race before being crucified on the cross. The cross is a milestone for the coming of the new creation.

<sup>40</sup> See Revelation 21: 1-2, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea existed no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” “A bride” here refers to the redemptive assembly, and “her husband”, the lamb of God, that is, Jesus Christ.

## IX. Rebellion and obedience: in marriage and sexuality

The creation of the first parents is the most important event in the six days of God's creation. Under the sovereignty of the Spirit, man is created "in the Triune God's image and after the Triune God's likeness" (Genesis 1: 26). In Hebrew, image refers to intrinsic nature, while likeness, the outer appearance. It follows that man resembles God both in his outer appearance and intrinsic nature. Moreover, the first woman Eve was made from one of Adam's ribs.<sup>41</sup> This episode of creation legitimates the formation of a patriarchal society in Christian civilization. For from the perspective of creation, woman comes out of man. Since woman is second to man, obedience is supposed to be her portion and obligation. Woman's rebellion is the root of human tragedy. As aforesaid, man's fall resulted from disobedience—the first couple's rebellion against God and Eve's rebellion against Adam.

The relationship of Adam and Eve is closely connected with the fore-structure: disobedience was the cause of man's fall. Most certainly all theologians and readers of the Bible interpret Genesis' story of the creation of Earth's first human couple, Adam and Eve, as one of comedy-turned-tragedy: their blissful lives were shattered when Satan tempted Eve with the promise of knowledge by eating the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, the one tree in the garden that God designated as untouchable. However, Genesis does not fill in the missing background information as to the reasons why man and woman came to be the first rational, mortal creations of God's divinity. Moreover, most believers in the Bible do not know the specific similarities and differences regarding these two humans' characteristics, and how

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<sup>41</sup> See Genesis 2: 21-22, "And Jehovah Elohim caused a deep sleep to fall upon Man; and he slept. And he took one of his ribs and closed up flesh in its stead. And Jehovah Elohim built the rib that he had taken from Man into a woman; and brought her to Man." The first man was made from dust, while the first woman was a refined artistic work made from a rib rather than dust.



their relationship impacted each other as well as all other living creatures in the garden.

Humans were created in the image and likeness of God. This testimony of a human's innate likeness and godlike image can be traced back to these lines in Book IV of *Paradise Lost*: "Two of far nobler shape erect and tall/Godlike erect, with native honor clad/ In naked Majesty seem'd Lords of all/and worthy seem'd, for in their looks divine/ The image of their glorious Maker shone" (Book IV, lines 287-91). The modeling of the first parents can be seen as a model of God's love and divinity: proving their perfections by making them flawless in flesh and spirituality, providing the necessities for their well-being, and having them mirror the roles that God already mapped out on a physical, mortal level in Eden. However, even though God created them in His likeness, He created them to be physically, spiritually, and psychologically different.

The contrasting relationship between Adam and Eve might well be discussed within the horizon of the biblical tradition. As mentioned before, man's fall resulted from "disobedience"—the first couple's disobedience to God and Eve's disobedience to Adam. And Eve's disobedience was in essence against the patriarchal tradition of the Old Testament and the Apostles' teaching in the New Testament. The patriarchal tradition was pre-ordained and practiced in Hebrew society, which is proven by the fact that the leading class of the Jewish society, whether kings or prophets or priests,<sup>42</sup> were almost all male. Ancient Jewish women played a subordinate role. Meanwhile, in the age of the New Testament, the teachings of Apostle Paul and Apostle Peter well explain the male dominance and female subordination of the patriarchal tradition. According to Apostle Paul, the head of every man is Christ; and the head of woman is the man (2 Corinthians 11: 3).

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<sup>42</sup> As mentioned in the Introduction, the kingship male tradition is manifested in 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, and 2 Chronicles. In addition, the priestly male tradition can be seen in Leviticus. Likewise, male dominance can be found in the tradition of the prophets.

This is the divinely pre-ordained power relation which should be practiced in human marriage. Moreover, Apostle Paul pointed out that the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man, and that nor was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man (2 Corinthians 11: 8-9). In consideration of these verses, Eve's rebellion in marriage was against the divinely ordained power relation, leading to the loss of paradise.

The teaching of a wife's submission to her husband was also reaffirmed in Apostle's Peter's epistle. Essentially, he pointed out that obedience is woman's virtue, and that as a virtue obedience can be considered a value of aesthetics. According to 1 Peter 3: 1-3, "Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, that, even if any are disobedient to the word, they may be gained without the word by the conversation of the wives, having witnessed your pure conversation carried out in fear." Here, the conversation of the wives refers to their manner of life. Actually, obedience is a way of life, becoming symbolically a substantial adornment of the woman. A woman's beauty does not depend on "tressing of hair, and wearing gold, or putting on apparel, but on the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price" (1 Peter 3: 3-4). A meek and quiet spirit is obedience in essence. The value of beauty is measured by the way of life rather than the outward ornament.<sup>43</sup>

It should be pointed out that the submissive relation between husband and wife is not unilateral but bilateral. In Ephesians, Apostle Paul's epistle, which clarifies the decently ethical relation in church life and family life, a bilateral submissive relation is indicated in Ephesians 5: 21-22—"submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands,

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<sup>43</sup> In ancient times, the fairness of the daughters of men caused the sons of God, that is, the angels "to take themselves wives of all that they chose" (Genesis 6: 2). The angels had intercourse with the fair daughters of men. "They had born children to them; these were the heroes, who of old were men of renown. And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of Man was great on the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually" (Genesis 6: 4-5).

as to the Lord.” Wives are obliged to submit themselves to their husband, but the presupposition is that husband and wife should submit to one another in fear of Christ. The act of submission is based on love, care, and communication.<sup>44</sup>

This kind of communicative relation can be called “a love of chambers” (The Song of Songs 1: 4). In the Old Testament, the most typical book describing the intimate love between man and woman is The Song of Songs, in which the virgins were so attracted by the king that they ran after him and he brought his beloved into his chambers. This signifies that love is an intimate communication like the love within the chamber. Since husband and wife are one flesh, their intimate relation is like the one of the inner chamber, and their submissive relation is due to the inner communication. So, the submission based on mutual communication is natural, sweet,<sup>45</sup> and harmonious instead of being unilateral, absolute, savage, and disrespectful.

In addition, in The Song of Songs, it can be seen that love, marriage and sexuality are intertwined. In the beginning of the first chapter, love emerges as the focal point of the narration in which it is compared to ointment and wine. With the enjoyment of the love of chambers, the lady and the gentleman are transformed into “the beloved” and “the loved one.” And each of the two has been engaged in praising the beauty and virtue of the other. From their compliments, the reader can enjoy the pleasure of appreciating the physical beauty of “the beloved.” “Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely; as a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples behind thy veil. Thy neck is like the tower of David, built for an

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<sup>44</sup> See 5: 28-31, “So ought men also to love their own wives as their own bodies: he that loves his own wife loves himself. For no one has ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as also the Christ the assembly: for we are members of his body; we are of his flesh, and of his bones. Because of this a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh.” The communicative relation between husband and wife is inclusive of love, nourishing, cherishing, and union. Under this presupposition, a decently submissive relation between husband and wife may be established.

<sup>45</sup> See The Song of Songs 1: 2-3, “For thy love is better than wine. Thine ointments savour sweetly.” Here, it is indicated that love based on intimate communication is as sweet as nectar.

armoury: A thousand buckles hang thereon, all shields of mighty men. Thy two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, which feed among the lilies”<sup>46</sup> (The Song of Songs 4: 3-5). Thus, we can see the sequential order of love, marriage, and sexuality.

Following the discussion on marriage is my view of sexuality from within my own biblical horizon. Tracing back to the first chapter of Genesis, we see that God said to the first parents, “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1: 28). Innocent as it once was, sexuality was the natural desire to multiply and populate the earth. However, with sin and lust entering into the world, the natural desire has become distorted and reversed. This is conspicuously manifested in homosexuality, which is extremely contrary to nature. Gays and lesbians are “inflamed in their lust towards one another,” and “working shame” (Romans 1: 26-27). Sexual perversion can be said to be a rebellion against God’s commandment. Therefore, sexually debauched sinners are destined to “receive in themselves the recompense of their error” (Romans 1: 27).

The rebellion against natural, sanctified sex includes lust in heart, adultery and fornication.<sup>47</sup> According to the Gospel of Matthew 5: 28, “everyone who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Indeed, “then lust, having conceived, gives birth to sin; but sin fully completed brings forth death” (James 1: 15). In addition, in the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews, the author admonished the assembly in this way—“Let marriage be held every way

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<sup>46</sup> Some critics hold that this book is erotic and sexual. Indeed, other critics say that the presupposition of interpreting the Bible is Christ and his cross. If we agree with this comment, in the shadow of the cross, sexual flesh is nowhere to be found especially in a Biblical text.

<sup>47</sup> In the Old Testament, God often likens Himself to the husband of His chosen people. So, when His chosen people forsook Him, He more often than not proclaimed that they committed fornication. Take the story of Hosea, for example. “The beginning of the word of Jehovah through Hosea. And Jehovah said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms, and children of whoredoms; for the land is entirely given up to whoredom, away from Jehovah” (Hosea 1: 2).

in honor, and the bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers will God judge” (Hebrew 13: 4).

## X. Rebellion and obedience: in salvation

Salvation itself is based on man’s faith rather than on his own righteousness. According to Galatians 3: 11, “that by law no one is justified with God is evident, because the just shall live on the principle of faith.” Man can not be saved by his good deeds, and the only way for everyman to gain salvation is through faith. “For ye are saved by grace, through faith; and this not of yourselves; it is God’s gift: not on the principle of works, that no one might boast” (Ephesians 2: 8-9). A sinner is saved by grace through faith. And faith is basically an attitude of obedience. In other words, it is an attitude of being willing to deny oneself. For “Jesus said to his disciples, if any one desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever shall desire to save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 16: 24-25).<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, suffering is more often than not a necessary instrument to enable man to deny himself and learn the lesson of obedience. Christ Himself is an excellent example to explain this golden rule. For “he learned obedience from the things which he suffered; and having been perfected, became to all of them that obey him, author of eternal salvation” (Hebrew 5: 8-9). In his famous prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, he prayed in this way—“My father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26: 39). And his

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<sup>48</sup> Following these two verses is this line—“For what does a man profit, if he should gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?” In literature, a strong self drove Dr. Faustus to sell himself to Satan, the king of the world of vainglory. As a result, he lost the chance of saving his own soul. Likewise, an extreme individualism which puts self before everything is an obstacle for an individual to enter the gate of faith. Indeed no man can boast that he himself and his works gained him salvation, which is based on the principle of faith. In history, Martin Luther has strongly insisted on this principle in resisting the moral downfall of the church and thus ushering in the reformation of Christianity.

prayer of self-denial in which he fortified himself to obey God was uttered in the midst of his “being sorrowful and deeply depressed” (Matthew 26: 38).

Jesus Christ was “ found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross” (Philippians 2: 8). The death of the cross is based on the principle of obedience. God’s will has been realized through man’s obedience. The first-born of God set a model of obedience for his brothers<sup>49</sup> to follow.

Self-righteousness as a main obstacle to choosing to obey is the nature of inexperienced and childish sinners. Previously, Job was “righteous in his own eyes” (Job 32: 1). However, after experiencing harsh trials and sufferings, he abhorred himself, repenting in dust and ashes, and his horizon was so widely broadened that his eyes saw God Himself.<sup>50</sup> Life experiences of suffering makes an individual mature enough to forsake self-righteousness and thus “crucify” childish<sup>51</sup> acts of rebellion, then choosing to obey the will of the creator.

## XI. A perspective of Romans: a linear way of thinking concerning obedience from faith

Here, at the end of this chapter, the reason why the individual parts of the hermeneutical circle, such as creation, marriage, sexuality, and salvation, were put together for discussion is to be explained. The prophetic Book of Isaiah is a

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<sup>49</sup> According to Hebrews 5: 5, “Thou art my Son, I have today begotten thee.” Here “thou” refers to Jesus Christ, the first born of God. And all the saints reborn in their spirit are said to his brothers.

<sup>50</sup> See Job 42: 5-6, “I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; whereof I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

<sup>51</sup> See 1 Corinthians 13: 11-12, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I felt as a child, I reasoned as a child; when I became a man, I had done with what belonged to the child. For we see now through a dim window obscurely, but then face to face; now I know partially, but then I shall know according as I also have been known.” Inexperienced men know things only partially. Only when they grow up in mind and throw away childish things, will they know the world thoroughly.

foreshadowing of the promised salvation for all nations, while Romans concerns obedience from faith, and a concrete explanation for the realization of salvation. In the first chapter of Romans, a linear kind of thinking is presented—creation, sexuality, and sins. “For from the world’s creation the invisible things of him are perceived, being apprehended by the mind through the things that are made, both his eternal power and divinity” (Romans 1: 20). God’s eternal power and divinity can be well proved by the world’s creation, which “render people inexcusable” (Romans 1: 20). People’s denying of the existence of the Creator leads to the worship of idols, and then to the indecency of sex. “For this reason God gave them up to vile lusts; for both their females changed the natural use into that contrary to nature; and in like manner the males also, leaving the natural use of the female, were inflamed in their lust towards one another; males with males working shames, and receiving in themselves the recompense of their error which was fit” (Romans 1: 26-27). Inflamed lust does change the natural use of sex, resulting in homosexuality whose practitioners, according to the Bible, are destined to “receive in themselves the recompense of their error.” Following the sins of illicit sex is the practice of unseemly things, such as “unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, malice, envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil dispositions, whispers, backbiters, hatred of God, insolence, boasting, invention of evil things, disobedience to parents, being void of understanding, being faithless, being without natural affection, and being unmerciful” (Romans 1: 29-31). The practice of sin calls for the necessity of salvation, which is in origin substantially connected with original sin, which is indeed the legacy of the first parents whose wrong choice caused the entrance of sin into the world as well as the loss of paradise.

