

Chapter Three :

Paradise Lost in the Horizon of Old Testament Prophecy

I. Two prophetic poets

This chapter is designed to elucidate the Book of Isaiah, the greatest of the prophetic books in the Old Testament, as the assumed interpretive framework for *Paradise Lost* and to demonstrate the underlying thematic similarities between these two works. C.S. Lewis writes: “The first thing the reader needs to know about *Paradise Lost* is what Milton meant it to be” (1). The present study is an attempt to illuminate the spiritual meaning of the poem by placing it in a biblical and religious context, for it is commonly recognized that the Bible in Milton’s poetry is a source for his poetic subjects. Milton’s poetry is consistently rooted in the Bible, not by way of static allusions but in such a way as to involve interaction between the two texts. Certainly Milton’s poetry does not exist apart from the reader’s awareness of the active presence of the Bible in it.

The epic is a reflection of the whole Bible which, itself, is the paramount drama of salvation in human history, “built around a single organizing pattern whose key points are creation, fall, redemption, and apocalypse” (Sims 11). This key typological pattern is outlined in the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*: “from the Fall of the first man to the triumph of Christ, the greater man, from the loss of an earthly paradise to the restoration of spiritual happiness, from the external temples of old to the inward temple of the upright heart” (Hunter 8: 100).

Paradise Lost in a sense can be connected to the Book of Isaiah which is a full historical drama of redemption through the history of God's chosen people. One biblical commentator calls the Book of Isaiah "a miniature Bible in structure" and points out the structural similarities between Isaiah and the Bible as a whole.¹ Actually, Isaiah's foundational message is centered on the fall of the people of Israel and God's punishment and His call for repentance, followed by His comfort and the promise of salvation in the forthcoming Messiah. This design of rebellion-retribution-repentance- restoration is the pattern by which Milton shows in his poetic work the fulfillment of God's plan in history and seeks to "justify the ways of God to men." One critic calls Milton's vindication of the ways of God to men "the prophetic theme of the Old Testament": "The chosen people sin and suffer retribution," and "They are afflicted until, at the point of despair, in humiliation and repentance, they are offered redemption and salvation" (Fixler 221). This thematic analogy between *Paradise Lost* and Isaiah helps us to understand Milton not merely as a poet but as a prophet. In *Paradise Lost*, this prophetic voice is an important element for the establishment of Milton's role as poet-prophet.

Likewise, Isaiah is considered the greatest man of his time as prophet and poet dedicated entirely to the service of God and His people. As a poet-prophet, Milton seeks for his poetry a divine authority. Just like Isaiah, Milton is a man of vision with spiritual eyes to see the eternity beyond human history revealed before him. As one critic puts it, Milton has achieved "the art of eternity" and has soared "beyond the reach of change" (Kerrigan 12). Therefore *Paradise Lost* is offered as another version of the Testament, a combination of his poetic imagination, prophetic inspiration, and divine revelation.

¹ Henrietta C. Mears (*What the Bible Is All About*. CA: Regal Books, 1983) 207-21. Mears demonstrates striking similarities between the structure of the Book of Isaiah and that of the Bible: "This book has sixty-six chapters, just as the Bible has sixty-six books. There are two great divisions, just as there are in the Bible, with thirty-nine chapters in the first (like the Old Testament) and twenty-seven chapters in the second (like the New Testament).

II. A redemption story

Paradise Lost can also be called a story of God's salvation, in which Milton sees history as basically "the ongoing story of God's redemptive activity" (Erickson 73). From this point of view, Milton's role as a prophet is no different from that of Isaiah who also sees God's saving activity in a historical context and teaches those who are spiritually blind the ways of God, what He has designed, and what are His purposes. Accordingly, the main focus of my study in this section is how Milton connects the Fall of man to Christ's Redemption, the key events in the larger picture of salvation history, and how he lives up to his declared purpose in writing the epic from beginning to end—the purpose to "assert Eternal Providence, /And justify the ways of God to men" (I, 25-26).

In this section, I shall try to link the epic to the Book of Isaiah with a thematic approach that examines their common belief in God's handling of human affairs for the redemption of man. With regard to the Christian tradition, C.A. Patrides says that "Milton stands heir to the Hebrew prophets and the early Christian and medieval historians." For Milton, Patrides explains, "human events constituted a record of God's constant intervention in the affairs of the world" (Patrides 257). This sense of history can be drawn from Isaiah, who is said to have laid the foundations of the universal dominion and glorious reign of God in history. Following Isaiah's doctrine of salvation, Milton portrays in *Paradise Lost* a dramatic vision of God at work in history and, at the same time, God's purpose of accomplishing His work of redemption through "one greater Man" (I. 4), Christ the Savior. Thus Milton's concept of history can be compared with Isaiah's prophetic task of calling attention to an awareness of God's saving activity in history.

The central subject of *Paradise Lost* is similar to that of Isaiah: it addresses not only the loss of Paradise, a judgment of God brought on by Adam's sin, but also the restoration of man to the grace of God through Christ's Redemption. The themes of the Book of Isaiah are central to the thought of the whole Bible: God's

stern judgment and sublime salvation. The juxtaposition of these two principal themes which connect the Old Testament and the New Testament demonstrates a typological contrast between the law of Moses and the love of Christ. The former is “the law of sin and death” (Romans 8: 2) that brings man to judgment, while the latter is “grace through redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (3: 24).

Contrastively speaking, the long sweep of human history related by Michael in the last two books of the poem consists of God’s judgment on the one hand, and His salvation on the other. Concerning the function of the last two books of *Paradise Lost*, some critics have questioned the need of a summary of sacred history in terms of the structural or artistic merit of the whole epic (Muldrow 80-81), while others have defended it as a fine culmination or ending (Summers 186-224). However, the conclusion of *Paradise Lost*, with Adam’s historical preview incorporated in the vision and narration of Michael, is an essential part of the entire poem, corresponding thematically to the beginning of the epic. The question of how these concluding books fit into the larger structure of the whole can be answered by linking them to Milton’s poetic objective announced at the outset.

Some of the most important actions and events in biblical history are related by Michael for Adam’s understanding of divine Providence. Indeed, at the very beginning of *Paradise Lost*, Milton has summarized the foundational message of the entire poem as it corresponds to the dual themes of God’s judgment and redemption. He asks for the inspiration of the Holy Ghost for the guidance to write:

...Man’s First Disobedience, and the Fruit
of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat.

(I, 1-5)

The restoration of man to God's grace is to be the turning point, as well as the consummation, of this epic. After realizing the saving acts of God in history, Adam becomes a new creation, rejoicing in the work of God. This is the epitome of heavenly Providence.

For Milton, God has been working in history ever since Adam's first disobedience. Without the Fall, there would be neither history nor the drama of redemption. For history itself is a record of conflicts between good and evil within the limits of divine permission, as well as within the scope of God's ultimate plan of salvation. History is a product of what Adams calls "this transient World" (XII, 554) which has become temporal and corruptible, and which is in need of spiritual restoration to its original state. With the Fall, God begins to work out a salvation for man. And all the events in human history lead to the future when man's redemption is achieved by Christ's triumph over the Serpent, the embodiment of Satan.

For Isaiah, the "Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 1: 4) is the director of the drama of history and His divine acts are the key determinants in it. God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, Who clearly voices his accomplishments through the mouth of Isaiah: "It is I that have made the earth, and created man upon it; it is I, my hands, that have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded" (Isaiah 45: 12). Furthermore, God uses for the fulfillment of His will the empires of the world, "the rod of mine anger," and their staff as "mine indignation" (Isaiah 10: 5). For Isaiah, history is the human drama acted within a sacred framework and under the vigilant eye of God.

Milton's view of history must be understood in terms of what William Kerrigan calls "the interpenetration of time by eternity." Kerrigan explains in *The Prophetic Milton* that the Old Testament points forward in time to the New Testament and Christ (35). Similarly, Milton's prophetic message must be understood as having a deeper meaning that extends far beyond his time and its

worldly concerns, especially politics in seventeenth-century England. It should be pointed out that Milton's sense of transcendence of history teaches him to see and find a spiritual meaning in worldly affairs with a prophetic vision of eternity.

A similarity between Milton and Isaiah can be found in their pursuit of the timeless truth that God is our salvation. Isaiah foresees that truth in the future history of Israel, while Milton sees it in Adam's historical preview, which is also a historical review for Milton.

Concerning the relation between Isaiah's message and its historical background, it can be seen that the form of his teaching is conditioned by the political circumstances of the period in which he lived. The historical conflicts between nations lead to the prediction of the child, Immanuel, born of a virgin, which indicates the birth of Jesus Christ. A famous verse follows:

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. (Isaiah, 9: 6)

In fact, breaking the temporal chain of being, Isaiah transfers his historical scope to the spiritual domain of the individual man, elevating contemporary and national matters to the eternal and universal truth of God, which penetrates human history from its beginning to its end.

Since the aim of the Hebrew prophet is to save the nation from the wrath of God, this salvation can be interpreted in two ways: first, it can be seen as a proclamation of the historical judgment of God upon the sinful nations; second, it offers a promise of God's salvation for those individuals who repent and return to Him, as A. S. Herbert holds: "The only appropriate response of man is humility, repentance, and exclusive trust" (15).

Likewise, Milton presents in *Paradise Lost* two important aspects of God's purpose: first, God's macrocosmic purpose in history, and second, His microcosmic purpose for each individual soul. These two elements, historical and spiritual, are essential components of the poem. In fact, *Paradise Lost* deals with God's handling of human affairs in history, and out of that context, delivers the spiritual message to the individual man. Therefore, history, in Milton's eyes, is a process of divine revelation, in which all events lead to the fulfillment of God's macrocosmic purpose for the Creation. In this process, God's microcosmic purpose in the individual man becomes simultaneously envisioned, just as Adam learns after Michael's history lesson that the most essential thing in life is to obey God, to Love Him with fear, to walk in His presence, and to observe His Providence (XII, 561-64). In short, Milton, like Isaiah, teaches that man's proper response to the truth of God is obedience to His will. Yet history itself begins with Adam's disobedience; thus, C.S. Lewis defines the Fall simply and solely as "Disobedience." (Sims 171) It should be noted that in Book XII, Michael explains to Adam that the "Law of God is fulfilled, not by the fight or duel between Christ and the Serpent, but by Christ's obedience and by love" (403).

The first 26 lines of Book I of *Paradise Lost* is the foundation on which Milton builds a biblical structure similar to that of the Book of Isaiah. It is thus an introduction to the entire poem, containing the principal themes of Milton's prophetic message, that is, the sin of Adam, its consequences, and the salvation to come through Christ. In addition, the poem connects the entire content of the poem to a conclusion that shows the fulfillment of God's purpose through Michael's relation of sacred history. In the same way, it is to be pointed out that the Book of Isaiah delivers the message of sin and forgiveness, of destruction and restoration, of judgment and salvation. Following the manner of Moses' prophecy, Isaiah declares the ways of God toward men, proclaiming God's righteousness in His dealing with human affairs, and shows His saving activity in the drama of human history. Isaiah begins his prophecy by charging the Israelites with ingratitude (1: 3). Then the

judgment of God follows, which they have brought upon themselves by their sins (1: 6-7). This is followed by God's earnest call to repentance and reformation with a choice between new life and utter destruction; life, if they wash and clean themselves, and "put away the evil of their doings" (1: 16); death, if they "refuse and rebel" (1: 20). Among them, God's promise of restoration to their primitive purity and prosperity finally prevails. This indeed is the pattern of God's salvation in Biblical history.

As with Isaiah, it is Milton's task to "justify the ways of God to men"; for Milton, God is the "chief of judges/ of all things made" (Book III, 154). For the completion of this poetic objective, Milton, too, juxtaposes in *Paradise Lost* man's fall and rise, sin and forgiveness, punishment and consolation. Actually, we find these contrasting ideas side by side throughout the entire poem. Especially salient, the biblical history related by Michael shows judgments necessitating destruction along with the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation. Just as Isaiah proclaims the new age of salvation for all nations and predicts Christ's triumph over the serpent, so Milton concludes Michael's long history lesson with his declaration of salvation and with the contrast between Christ's victory and the destruction of Satan.

With his poetic themes corresponding to the basic structure of Old Testament prophecy, Milton's record of the long biblical history at the end of *Paradise Lost* presents the recovery process of the Creation, in which God works out his salvation plan with a few elected people. In this way, God and man are finally reconciled through Christ. In this process, on the basis of man's free will, God directs all human affairs, including the Fall, toward the completion of His covenant of salvation through His chosen people. Furthermore, Milton's task is to demonstrate the progressive movement of history toward the final point at which God's salvation is fulfilled. And in this movement he fuses the destructive and tragic consequences of man's sinfulness with God's restorative handling of human affairs for the eternal

good. Therefore, Milton is hopeful due to his belief in the redemptive power of Christ in His second coming. And Michael's description of Christ's final victory over Satan leads Adam to his realization of the consummation of salvation history.

God's salvation, both in Milton and Isaiah, comes after the fiery judgment upon the sinfulness of man in history. In Isaiah Messianic predictions occur when the nation is faced with great danger. These prophecies indicate that the restoration is to be achieved through a fiery trial, which washes away the filth to make way for purity, beauty, and holiness. Like the prophet Isaiah, Milton affirms in Adam's praise the transforming power of God in history. Therefore, Milton presents *Paradise Lost* as part of the drama of salvation in human history. Salvation is found within the individual who understands God's Providence and promise—as Adam comes to understand it through Michael's history lesson. In other words, *Paradise Lost* can be seen as salvation history, in which Milton tries to show the ways of God to men from the beginning to the end of history. As mentioned before, there are certain basic thematic similarities between Milton and Isaiah with regard to their view of God's redemptive activity. In the sections that follow, various aspects of Milton's doctrine of salvation will be discussed.

III. Milton's Satan: rebellion

The downfall of Milton's Satan is the result of a pride so gross as wish to lift himself up to equal God in his daring ambition to rule in Heaven. Though, once an archangel of glorious and pompous stature before the presence of God, Satan has now fallen into disgrace. James H. Hanford calls this transformation of Satan and the fallen angels "the outward symbol of the degradation of their souls" (214). It is true that more serious than the external deformity is the degradation of the soul, which is both the source of the destructive power of evil and the cause of the disintegration of the created order. For Milton's Satan, the downfall is actually the beginning of his devilish rule over the world as "the prince of the power of the air."

He has paved the way for “Man’s First Disobedience” (I, 1) in the Garden of Eden with his perverted will already oriented toward the destruction of man from the very beginning. That is, the sin of man originated first in the instigation of the devil. In this respect, pride first came out of Satan’s head and then caused the fall of man.

Thus, this section is designed to connect Milton and Isaiah with a principal focus on pride as a basic mode of the creature’s attitude towards God. Especially noteworthy, with his message primarily focusing on the corruption of man, the judgment of God, and the promise of redemption through the Messiah, the prophet presents three groups of characters in his own history of salvation: the kings of the Assyrian and the Babylonian empires; the people of Israel; and the forthcoming Messiah. Behind these groups God is always present as the author of salvation history. In this connection, Milton’s portrayal of Satan and his pride can be drawn from Isaiah’s historical account of the arrogance of the kings of powerful empires of his time. Therefore, in this section, I will discuss how pride is embodied in Milton’s Satan, and how the theme corresponds to the same subject in Isaiah’s prophetic message.

It has been pointed out that Satan’s identity as an adversary against God and man is unmistakable from the beginning of the Old Testament to the end of the New Testament. In fact, Satan is the first reality of God’s adversary, as well as the enemy of man, in the Fall of Adam and Eve, and the last entity to be defeated by Christ at the end of human history (Revelation 20: 10). Milton faithfully follows in *Paradise Lost* almost all biblical references to the character and role of Satan. Throughout the Bible, Satan is called by various names,² Milton characterizes his Satan after these names, thus creating a concrete embodiment of evil.

² Satan is called by a variety of names such as “Serpent” (Genesis 3: 4), “Accuser” (Revelation 12: 10), “Adversary” (1 Peter 5: 8), “Murderer” (John 8: 44), “Prince of demons” (Matthew 12: 24), “Prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2: 2), “Ruler of darkness” (Ephesians 6: 12), and “Apollyon,” a Greek name for the “destroyer” (Revelation 9: 11).

Satan, as the source of evil, desires to rule the world for its ultimate destruction. In fact, Satan is obsessed with a desire to rule. This is always true whether he is in Heaven or Hell or this world on earth. Before his fall, Satan was the so-called “governor of the angels” (Handford 228-231), enthroned in the regions of the North in Heaven and revolting against the kingship of the Son in order to take hold of all power. Then, as the ruler of Hell, he sits “High on a throne of Royal State” (II, 1) in the Infernal Council to find a means of destruction for man so he may reign over the world. Milton depicts this obsession of Satan not only from his identity, as ironically defined in the Bible, as “prince of this world,” but also from his character described as ambitious (Isaiah 14: 13-14), “powerful” (Ephesians 2: 2), and “proud” (Timothy 3: 6). Especially, his daring aspiration to rule over Heaven has been associated with Lucifer’s in the Book of Isaiah, where the prophet describes him as “the son of the morning” (Isaiah 14: 12), who revolted against Jehovah in his arrogant desire to place his seat above God’s throne. In this respect, the Book of Isaiah may be considered a source for Milton’s characterization of Satan as an embodiment of pride, obsessed with the desire to rule.

In his prophecy, addressed to “the king of Babylon” (14: 4), Isaiah depicts the fall of the oppressor from glory to his shameful destruction as a result of his haughty wish to vie with God. In the same way, Satan is the origin of evil, whose pride is first fomented in his rebellious aspiration to elevate himself above God, thus the name, Satan, literally means “the Adversary.” Luther assumes that pride is the cause of the fall of the angels, “because they despised the Word or the Son of God and wanted to place themselves above Him.” St. Augustine, too, traces the origin of sin to the pride of Satan in *The City of God*. He demonstrates that the difference between the good and the bad angels lies in their will and desire, in their propensity either to God’s eternity, truth and love, or to self-exaltation and self-love (Rosenblatt 17). Thus, the origin of sin, as well as the cause of the fall of the angelic world, is pride, namely, the craving for undue exaltation.

In addition, Louis Berkhof³ explains in his *Systematic Theology* that in order to trace the origin of sin, “we must go back to the fall of man as described in Gen. 3, and fix the attention on something that happened in the angelic world” (220-21). When the Bible tells us that the devil is “a murderer from the beginning” (John 8: 44), and he “sinneth from the beginning” (1 John 3: 8), the original Greek for the word “beginning” means “from the beginning of the history of man.” It can be assumed, therefore, that the angels have already fallen when the history of mankind begins. And Berkhof assumes, like Luther, that the cause of that fall is “the sin of pride, of aspiring to be like God in power and authority.” In this respect, Berkhof connects the fall of the angels to the fall of man: “If the desire to be like God was their peculiar temptation, this would also explain why they tempted man on that particular point” (221). Thus his systematic theology traces the origin of sin to the pride⁴ of Satan.

In this regard, Satan is represented as the originator of sin, the archetype of pride, and the head of the evil angels, one who “sinneth from the beginning” by first revolting against God, and who is still “in control of this evil world” (Berkhof, 149). It is obvious that for Milton the special sin of Satan is a pride that leads him to exalt himself above God.

It should be pointed out that if Adam’s disobedience in the Garden of Eden is the first pivotal event in human history, the revolt of Satan in the angelic world undoubtedly precedes it. And the haughty attitude of Satan prevails in the opening books of *Paradise Lost*, though he experiences the degradation of his once glorious

³ To have an overview of Satan and his fall, it is worthwhile to take this brief look at the modern theological view of Louis Berkhof, a well-known Reformed theologian of this century, who presents scriptural data respecting the origin of sin in a summary fashion and from a biblical and orthodox theological viewpoint.

⁴ In *The Christian Doctrine*, a definition of the sin of pride is given as an undeserved self-exaltation, an inflated belief in oneself, which is revealed “when man is more puffed up than he ought to be, with no or with insufficient justification, or because of some trifling circumstance” (CPW VI, 736).

figure from the arrogant and rebellious leader of the fallen angels to the animal tempter of the woman in the Garden.⁵

In terms of divine logic, Satan's pride is meaningless. For Isaiah confesses, "we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand" (Isaiah 64: 8). This parable of the potter and clay, an ontological explanation of the relationship between God and His creatures, helps us see how meaningless Satan's pride is. Moreover, this parable is another way of telling the Genesis story of God's formation of man from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2: 7); it precludes all kinds of excuses for any creature's exaltation of himself over the Creator and renders any attempt to do so merely absurd and perverse.

In addition, Satan, the archetype of pride with a substance of deadly nonsense, also proves himself to be the father of lies (John 8: 44).⁶ The content of his speech to his fellows in the beginning of his insurrection in Book V is tainted with lies, blasphemies, and nonsense, all of which come from a will perverted by pride and envy. When the Messiah was pronounced Head of the angels in Heaven (V. 600), Satan "could not bear / Through pride that sight, and thought himself impaired" (664-65). With deep malice and disdain, he resolves to disobey the decree of God. But the first thing that comes out of his mouth is a lie to Beelzebub that in the "Dim Night" he will lead those myriads of his subjects to "The Quarters of the North to receive our King/ The great Messiah, and his new commands" (689-91). Under the guise of a reception for the anointed King, he rises in revolt against Him.

⁵ Kastor calls the transformation of Milton's Satan "a trimorph," or three basic patterns of his role, from the Archangel in Heaven as the great Adversary of God, to the Prince of Hell as the leader of the devil angels, and then, finally, to the Tempter in the Garden as a serpent (55-69).

⁶ See C. S. Lewis's *A Preface to Paradise Lost* for his explanation of Satan's lies (97-98).

Similarly, Isaiah picks up on the subject of pride. In his prophecy, Isaiah harshly attacks proud oppressors of powerful empires, who do not realize that their role as instruments of God to be used for the execution of His punishment upon the people of Israel and for the fulfillment of His plan for salvation history. As we read in Isaiah 37, God clearly demonstrates His wrath against Rabshakeh's haughtiness through the mouth of Isaiah. The result is the complete destruction of the Assyrian army by the angel of the Lord. These worldly kings and their armies resemble Satan and the legions of the fallen angels, who left their own proper sphere to vie with God. Thus, in the epic, we find the fate of Milton's Satan is similar to that of Lucifer in Isaiah; and we see Milton's Hell is comparable to Isaiah's. Like a falling star, Milton's Satan is hurled by the Almighty flaming from the sky. Moreover, the metamorphosis of Satan and the demons in Book X mirrors the same situation in Isaiah's Hell, where the fallen Lucifer, like a carcass in the grave, is welcomed by worms that spread all over his body. When Milton's Satan returns from his adventure to the new world, he finds himself transformed into a monstrous Serpent. This explains the inevitable degeneration of Satan from the lofty but arrogant archangel to an abominable and disfigured monster bent over his belly. Surely, Satan's self-exaltation was doomed to be followed by this humiliation.

IV. Christ's obedience

As I have discussed, the downfall of Milton's Satan is the result of his pride to lift himself up to equal God with his daring ambition to rule in Heaven. Therefore, once an archangel with glorious and pompous stature before the presence of God, Satan is now fallen into disgrace. However, compared with Satan's pride, Christ's humility is in accordance with the divine logic, which goes beyond man's reasoning and thinking. Indeed, humility is the essential energy in the redemptive work of Christ; it underlies every stage of humiliation in His life on earth. According to the second chapter of Philippians, there are five stages of the humiliation of Christ: (1) incarnation; (2) suffering; (3) death; (4) burial; and (5) descent into Hades. The

character of Christ in *Paradise Lost* can be defined as humble, faithful, and obedient—indispensable virtues for a perfect model of a servant. Moreover, being the servant of God does not mean doing the work of God in a victorious and glorious way; rather, it means that He must suffer unto His death after the will of the Father in an extremely humiliating way.

This image of a suffering servant can be drawn from the Book of Isaiah, where the prophet shows that God will achieve His goal through the suffering and death of the Messiah. Isaiah finds the essential attribute of true heroism in the humility of God's servant, who is described as "willing and obedient" to follow the divine will (1: 19). Especially, Isaiah 53 is the core of all Messianic prophecies throughout the Old Testament: it clearly portrays the true identity of the Savior to come for the restoration of man. In this respect, it is important to see first how Isaiah presents Him as an exemplary of humility in his prophetic book. The prophet envisions the Messiah in the form of man, humble and suffering without any mark of heavenly glory. He exclaims at the beginning of the chapter that no one has believed in the report about Him, because He looked before God like "a tender plant," and because he has "no form nor comeliness" and "no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53: 2). Isaiah describes Him as a submissive and innocent sufferer and as a lamb of God to be slain for the sins of the world. The seed of salvation⁷ goes through humility and suffering to attain the insurmountable glory and ecstatic joy after His crucifixion. It is the divine logic that exaltation comes from humility.

V. Milton's Adam and Eve

In the previous section, Milton's Satan was depicted as an embodiment of pride. Satan's pride can be related to Isaiah's historical account of the arrogant rulers of the great empires of his time. Now I will discuss the third element in

⁷ See Galatians 3: 16, "But to Abraham were the promises addressed, and to his seed: he does not say, And to seeds; as of many; but as of one. And to thy seed; which is Christ."

Milton's epic, *Adam and Eve*, emphasizing their spiritual transformation, which is centered on repentance. Adam and Eve, in a sense, resemble the people of Israel in that they experience the judgment of God when they sin, receiving the promise of salvation when they repent. Adam and Eve take part in Satan's rebellion against God by being faithless, ungrateful, disobedient, greedy, and proud. However, fortunately enough, they do not continue long in their rebelliousness; after experiencing spiritual turmoil and emotional bitterness in their miserable, fallen state, Adam and Eve humble themselves before God, meekly asking for God's forgiveness for their sin and accepting the consequence of the Fall as a gracious and mild judgment by God. Even if Satan felt remorse for his acts against the Creator, however, the "disdain" in his heart (IV, 82) would deny him the possibility of repentance.⁸ He hardens his heart even more after the fall, swearing to remain an adversary of God. Adam and Eve, on the other hand, though they have sinned first at the instigation of the devil, soon abandon the Satanic way that would bring them to eternal damnation, and turn toward God through repentance. Therefore, Satan's fall is bottomless, while Adam and Eve's is not.

In the Book of Isaiah the prophet's preaching stresses the repentance of the individual as an integral part of salvation. Isaiah preaches the conversion and repentance of individuals, although he understands that God is working in the historical, national, and political context of his day (Schmitt 88). For Milton, too, repentance is a personal matter in the individual's proper relationship with God. Repentance requires the volition of each individual. For "God will call upon each man to repent and receive grace" (*Milton Encyclopedia* 7: 113). Milton shows in the epic how man can be restored to his original relationship with God. This restoration is made possible first by the Son's humble obedience to the will of the

⁸ Satan's soliloquy in Book IV, where he resolves to do evil, is discussed in George Muldrow's "The Beginning of Adam's Repentance" in the *Philological Quarterly* (XLVI, 1967), 194-206. Muldrow compares Satan's speech with the soliloquy of Adam in Book X (720-844), which he ends in self-accusation and repentance. Comparatively speaking, Satan's fall is bottomless, while Adam and Eve's fall is not.

Father—Christ’s death on the cross for the redemption of man. Secondly, it can take place only when man does his part by choosing to repent his sins and turn from evil to good.

Milton makes it clear in the concluding books of the poem that Adam’s decision to prostrate himself before God to confess his sin and ask for pardon turns the fallen situation into an occasion for a new experience of the grace of God. In this respect, repentance is an essential requirement for the fulfillment of the covenant of grace. Moreover, as defined in *A Study on Milton’s Christian Doctrine*, repentance is “the gift of God by virtue of which the regenerated man turns to God with all humility, and is eager in his heart to follow what is right” (467). In addition, Milton brings in a mention of grace only after he has shown the repentance of Adam and Eve. Milton’s prophetic role is found here in his emphasis on repentance for the regeneration of the soul, for all the Hebrew prophets have been preachers of repentance and conversion. The prophets of the Old Testament not only reproach the people for their sins, but also insist on their returning to God. For the biblical idea of genuine repentance involves man’s turning from sin to righteousness, which means a personal commitment to forsake sin and to enter into the grace of God.

Repentance is a dominant theme in the preaching of the prophet Isaiah. As John Schmitt points out, “Isaiah’s situation was indeed depressing: in the midst of a sinful people who had to be punished, Isaiah was commanded to announce that a catastrophe was coming” (73). Even though Isaiah constantly heralds the impending judgment of God upon the people of Israel, the purpose of his warning is to make them return to the Lord from their evil ways, so that the covenant relationship, broken by their persistent violation of the Law (24: 6), may be restored to its original state. Likewise, *Paradise Lost*, is not a tragic story that ends with the loss of Paradise and man’s separation from God; it is a story of the reconciliation between God and man, which ends with a new beginning: the regenerate man who goes forward into the world of woe and sorrow with faith and trust in God.

Accordingly, Adam and Eve's repentance plays an important role in their spiritual transformation from the sinful state to the state of regeneration.

In an attempt to better understand Adam and Eve's repentance as a turning point in their spiritual journey, I would like first to discuss original sin, which was based upon God's prohibition concerning the Tree of Knowledge, "thou shalt not eat of it" (Genesis 2: 17), or as Milton's God puts it, "Remember what I warn thee, shun to taste, /And shun the bitter consequence" (VIII, 327-29). This awareness eventually brings them to reason in their fallen and chaotic situation, leading them to examine themselves and repent from their sin. For Milton repentance is possible only when Adam and Eve correctly understand the nature of the sin they have committed. Our first parents committed the sin common to all men, that is, abandoning their obedience to God's commands.

God's prohibition in the Garden and the Mosaic law in the wilderness have one thing in common: obedience. From this point of view, God's command not to eat the Fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is the first covenant between God and man, and the prototype of the Law which is written later on the stone table, and given to the Israelites at Sinai through Moses. It should be noted that, from the very beginning, the Edenic covenant is founded on the principle that God's blessing is conditional upon man's will to follow the Word of God. Milton's God establishes his principle in *Paradise Lost* when He teaches Adam how he can preserve his original happiness. The first thing for Adam to remember is that he must obey the commandment of God concerning the Tree of Knowledge.

The Tree of Knowledge stands in the center of the Garden to remind Adam and Eve of the Word of God and the need to obey it for their eternal bliss in Paradise. In addition, like the Law in the Old Testament, it is an instrument that God uses to help them grow and progress in faith. Unfortunately, however, in the course of their pursuit of forbidden knowledge, the Tree, a symbol of the covenant of obedience,

turns into an instrument of sin. This perversion of the divine will in *Paradise Lost* is paralleled in the Book of Isaiah, where the people of Israel misunderstand the spirit and meaning of the Mosaic law. In the Book of Isaiah, the distortion of God's truth as expressed in the Law takes the form of corrupt religious practices. He points out the worthlessness of the people's external observance of religious ritual. Through the mouth of Isaiah, God tells the Israelites to bring no more vain incense. This indicates that worship and ceremonies unaccompanied by repentance and faith are an abomination to God. It is obedience that God requires when He gives His people the Law and places it at the center of their life.

Fatefully, disobedience results in Man's so-called "original sin." Furthermore, Isaiah reminds the Israelites of the need to recognize their sin as the first step toward repentance. Isaiah declares God's stern judgment upon the people, for their iniquity has provoked Him to anger. The resulting punishment is what Milton calls "the instrumental cause of repentance" (CD 469). For more important than the judgment of God is Isaiah's admonishment that this divine anger can be averted by repentance, which, as just mentioned, starts with the recognition of sin. Isaiah demonstrates God's plan for salvation through repentance. God's reproaches and accusations work as imperatives for repentance, growing stronger until they culminate in the great offer of salvation: "Zion will be redeemed with judgment" (1: 27). As Freeman points out, "Divine pardon, according to Isaiah, is conditioned on sincere repentance which manifests itself in the forsaking of sins and in righteous conduct" (192). For Isaiah, man's sincere repentance is the turning point in his miserable fallen state; it changes divine anger into the promise of salvation.

Likewise, Milton dramatizes this key progression by linking Adam and Eve's fallen and chaotic state to the recognition of sin, followed by contrition and confession, and eventually to the regeneration of the soul. Indeed, Milton vividly describes the effects of the Fall—the radical and violent changes which Adam and Eve experience within themselves when they begin to be aware of good and evil.

For example, when they feel ashamed of their nakedness, they use their best efforts to hide it. Adam's suggestion to make a covering with the leaves of the fig tree is an example of man's vain attempt to solve on his own the problem of sin. Furthermore, Adam's soliloquy in Book X begins with an expression of his awareness of his fallen condition, the worst of which is his alienation from God. He then reflects on death and the divine curse upon all his posterity. At that moment, Adam's predicament is in danger of becoming worse because of his excessive despair, which turns into an outburst of extreme frustration, resulting from his confused feelings about the situation, including his distress at the consequences of the Fall, his regret for the things that have passed away, his fear of things to come, and his anger at having no alternative but to submit to his irresistible fate. As mentioned earlier, Adam's conviction of sin can be considered a natural result of his possession of the knowledge of good and evil (IX, 1073).

For Isaiah, this recognition of sin must lead to contrition. His harsh rebuke is intended to make the people recognize their sinfulness. The prophet is convinced that God has anointed and sent him "to preach good tidings unto the meek" and to "bind up the brokenhearted" (61: 2). Throughout, the Book of Isaiah emphasizes the need to be contrite at heart, for God cares for the person "that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my words" (66: 2). God dwells with him "that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (57: 15). This need for the contrition of the sinner before the God of salvation is one of the central messages of the entire Bible, since God does not look on the countenance of man, but on his innermost heart (1 Samuel 16: 8). The Psalmist proclaims that "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (34: 18). In short, it is a fundamental principle of Christian faith that man must be heartily displeased with himself and feel sincerely wretched for the sin he has committed.

Here, it should be pointed out that the most important moment for the fallen Adam and Eve in salvation history is when they “in lowliest plight repentant stood / Praying” (XI, 1-3) and begging pardon for their sin. When they are at their lowliest, God raises them up to make them “new flesh / Regenerate” (4-6). It is at this moment that Christ the great Intercessor “came in sight / Before the Father’s throne” to intercede for them (19-21). The Son calls their sighs and prayers the “Fruits of more pleasing savor from their seed / Sown with contrition” (22-29) in their hearts than those fruits produced before the Fall.

Adam and Eve’s true repentance is the turning point in their fallen state; it stands between their fall and rise, sin and forgiveness. Finally, after sincere repentance, Adam and Eve come to a true knowledge of God through the story of Christ’s new life on the cross as told by Michael in the concluding book of the epic. Milton the prophet focuses on man’s repentance as the heart of the solution to the problem of sin. He emphasizes the more spiritual and more internalized religion that we find in the sacrifice of a broken heart. This regeneration of the soul is the foundation of a new life for Adam and Eve, our first parents.

VI. A favored downfall

At the conclusion of the epic, Michael, sent from God to reveal future events to the repentant Adam, closes his narrative with a promise that Adam “shalt possess/ A paradise within thee, happier far” (XII, 586-87). Subsequently the fallen pair is expelled from Paradise “though sorrowing, yet in peace,” as God has commissioned Michael to have them leave in such a conflicting mood (XI, 117). This promise of a happier paradise is given to Adam and Eve in compensation for their harsh punishment, as well as in reward for their repentance.

Actually, Milton’s historical narration of salvation ends with Adam and Eve’s realization of the true meaning of happiness after they have lost their pristine bliss

in Paradise. Now they have experienced, have been disciplined, and have been regenerated through repentance. And Milton justifies the ways of God to men in this great history of salvation by replacing the lost paradise without with a new paradise within, “happier far.”

The final justification of God’s ways is the manifestation of his grace in the redemption of man. The word “redeem” is part of the Biblical metaphor in which Christ’s death is seen as the price to be paid as ransom to free man from the bondage of Satan, sin and death into which Adam sold himself by his disobedience. By his death Christ was believed to have fulfilled the law and to have paid the required price for all mankind. In this act of atonement, Christ restored to man eternal life, freed him from the unmitigated consequences of Adam’s sin, and made him more aware of God’s infinite love and grace.

This favored fall shows the wisdom of God, by whose grace man’s desires are directed to worthy ends. In one sense, again man is the end for whose sake historical events happen, for God’s purpose is man’s well-being; in another sense man exists merely as a means to the accomplishment of God’s ends, for God has created him only in order to work out His purpose in terms of human life.