

EBERHARD-KARLS-UNIVERSITÄT TÜBINGEN
SEMINAR FÜR ENGLISCHE PHILOLOGIE

Metaphors of Conquest and Deliverance

Theory and Imagery of the Atonement
in the Works of John Milton

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SOLEMN DECLARATION

I declare that I have drawn up this thesis on my own and have not used any aids apart from the ones indicated.

Tübingen, February 13th, 2004

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What wise and valiant man would seek to free
These thus degenerate, by themselves enslaved,
Or could of inward slaves make outward free?

John Milton, *Paradise Regained* IV. 143–45

But I shall rise victorious, and subdue
My vanquisher, spoiled of his vaunted spoil;
Death his death's wound shall then receive, and stoop
Inglorious, of his mortal sting disarmed.

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, III. 250–53

Chapter 1

Introduction

“Milton’s thought, when purged of its theology, does not exist,” claims C.S. Lewis in his *Preface to Paradise Lost*.¹ Although written before the birth of New Historicism, Lewis’ wish to read “the work ‘in the same spirit that its author writ’ ”² reminds one of Stephen Greenblatt’s “desire to speak with the dead.”³ For the modern reader who wishes to understand the English Civil War and Restoration literature, a historical reconstruction of the theology of the Puritan writers is of pivotal importance. In this essay, I will take one of the central Christian doctrines and investigate how it is employed in the *œuvre* of seventeenth-century author John Milton (1608–1674).⁴ For this purpose, I chose the doctrine of justification based on Christ’s atoning death on the cross because it is the “central teaching of Christianity,”⁵ the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*.⁶ Thus, the teaching of the Atonement

¹C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost*. Being the Ballard Matthews Lectures. Delivered at University College, North Wales, 1941. (Oxford: OUP, 1942), p. 65.

²Lewis quotes Pope: “A perfect judge will read each work of wit / With the same spirit that its author writ,” *Ibid.*, p. 64.

³Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations. The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), p. 1, Greenblatt, here makes a pun on Roland Barthes’ essay “Death of the Author,” cp. Moritz Basler, editor, *New Historicism. Literaturgeschichte als Poetik der Kultur. Mit Beiträgen von Stephen Greenblatt, Louis Montrose u.a.* 2nd edition. (Tübingen/Basel: A. Francke, 2001), p. 17.

⁴Where relevant, I will also draw comparisons with the other great Puritan writer of the seventeenth century, John Bunyan (1628–1688).

⁵Alister E. McGrath, ‘Justice and Justification: Semantic and Juristic Aspects of the Christian Doctrine of Justification’. *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 35 (1982), p. 404.

⁶The term originated with Luther: “[...] stante enim hac doctrina stat ecclesia, ruente autem ruit ipsa quoque.” *Comm. in XV psalmos graduum*, EA opp. exeg. 20,176, Friedrich Loofs, ‘Der articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae’. *Theologische Studien und Kritiken. Eine Zeitschrift für das gesamte Gebiet der Theologie*, 3 (1917), p. 332.

does not only determine the eternal destiny of the Christian church⁷ but also offers an important key to understanding Milton's texts.

For an adequate discussion of the doctrine of justification, at least a concise overview of its history is essential. Milton did not copy the doctrine straight from St Paul without any further influences, but draws on various theological interpretations of the Atonement. The Pauline confession that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3) presents the central Christian doctrine that reconciliation has been achieved between God and man through Christ.⁸ However, the emphasis on a particular aspect of the *articulus iustificationis* varied from epoque to epoque and were expressed through diverse images. In my summary of relevant soteriological concepts in the history of Christian theology, I shall endeavour to highlight the literary significance of this doctrine and lay the foundation for the main analysis of the Atonement motif as used by John Milton.

Apart from studying the metaphors and the structuring which grow out of the employment of the Atonement motif, my main thesis is that the rôle of the Atonement is often neglected in recent Milton criticism. In particular, I offer a comparison of Milton's early minor religious poems with his late major poetry. If one agrees that the Atonement was an important aspect of the Christian faith for Milton,⁹ the juxtaposition of minor and major poetry elucidates what M. A. Radzinowics calls the "contextual" structure of the Miltonic *œuvre*.¹⁰ Milton's feeling of failure of writing adequately about the Atonement, which is demonstrated in his unfinished poem "The Passion," left the poet trying again and again to approach the theme from different points of view and by the means of different literary techniques. One could read his *œuvre* as an attempt to approach the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* in various, different degrees of success. His personal experience of suffering and his rediscovering of typology enhance Milton's writing about the Atonement. I will analyse how Milton, theologically a cosmopolitan who enriched his Puritan understanding with early Christian theology, could best express the *effect* and *action* of Christ's death in his literature. A structuring rôle of the Atonement motif for the works of Milton will become evident.

⁷Cp. *Ibid.*, pp. 323–420.

⁸A. McGrath, 'Justice and Justification', p. 404.

⁹The fact that Milton, as an Arian, doubted Christ's deity did not modify his understanding of the Atonement (cp. *DDC* I. xiv).

¹⁰Mary Ann Radzinowics, *Toward Samson Agonistes. The Growth of Milton's Mind*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1978), preface.

Chapter 2

Prolegomena

Firstly, the literary approach I draw upon for an analysis of Milton will be explained. Then, basic definitions for soteriology and the theory of metaphor will be given.

2.1 New Historicism

Milton's universe and ideology are removed from our modern world and conception of life nearly as far "as from the centre thrice to the utmost pole" (*PL* I. 74). A late twentieth century literary theory which takes this gap between the worlds into account is New Historicism. It brings the neglected historical background of a work of art into focus of literary criticism again. Art is not *l'art pour l'art* but is inseparably interwoven with its times. The philosopher Michel Foucault provides the theoretical background for this new abandonment of the Barthian *Werkimmanenz*. Especially significant is the French philosopher's notion of *discours*, which he defines in his methodological text *L'archéologie du savoir*. He criticises that terms¹ such as "influence," "book," or "œuvre" for being too vague.² In the name of a "happy positivism,"³ Foucault offers a solution to the terminological dilemma: the "discours." He likens this notion to archaeology, a science which contented

¹He calls them unities ("l'unité").

²"C'est que les marges d'un livre ne sont jamais nettes ni rigoureusement tranchées: par-delà le titre, les premières lignes et le point final, par-delà sa configuration interne et la forme qui l'autonomise, il est pris dans un système de renvois à autres livres, d'autres textes, d'autres phrases: nœud dans un réseau. Et ce jeu de renvois n'est pas homologue [...]" Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir*. (Gallimard, 1969), Bibliothèque des sciences humaines, p. 34.

³Cp. Hinrich Fink-Eitel, *Michel Foucault zur Einführung*. 3rd edition. (Hamburg: Junius, 1997), p. 61.

itself to collect the fragments it found in the different layers of history, but resisted the temptation to interpret them.

An die Stelle der Illusion evolutionärer Kontinuität setzt sie das Prinzip der Diskontinuität, an die Stelle der traditionellen Einheiten und Einteilungen die Verstreutheit diskursiver Ereignisse, die völlig unabhängig von den üblichen Abgrenzungen zwischen Alltagswissen, Wissenschaft und Philosophie zu analysieren seien.⁴

New Historicists take over Foucault's notion of "discours." In the essay in which Stephen Greenblatt first coins the phrase "New Historicism,"⁵ he challenges Dover Wilson's interpretation of Shakespeare's history play *Richard II.* as a "hymn on the order of the Tudors." Instead, on the basis of other contemporary documents such as Queen Elizabeth's utterance she was Richard II.,⁶ Greenblatt claims that the play is subversive. However, he perceives that "not only the poet but also the critic exists in history; that the texts of each are inscriptions of history."⁷ Besides the author, sixteenth century Shakespeare, the critic (twentieth century Dover Wilson in this case) also is involved in the discourse of absolute power. Holding his lecture in Weimar during the dictatorship of Hitler, Wilson was involved in the discourse of power and rebellion and thus prejudiced and influenced by the power structures of his times as well. By this approach, Greenblatt interprets other Renaissance texts, too. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is linked to the discourse of "colonialism" and Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrewd* is interpreted not as a love story but as a an act of creation of a certain type of ("womanly") femininity.

New Historicism is a child of postmodernism and poststructuralism respectively, albeit a rebellious one. New Historicist Alan Liu offers the insightful observation that New Historicism is "an allegory for history."⁸ The metaphor of the "metaphor" expresses the opinion that all historiographic

⁴Ibid., p. 60.

⁵Stephen Greenblatt, *The Forms of Power and the Power of Forms in the English Renaissance*. special edition of *Genre*. (Oklahoma, 1982), cp. Stephen Greenblatt, 'Die Formen der Macht und die Macht der Formen in der englischen Renaissance'. Einleitung. in: M. Basler, editor, *New Historicism*. (Tübingen: A. Francke, 2001), p. 31.

⁶The Queen's utterance of August 4th, 1601 after the unsuccessful upheaval in Essex, M. Basler, *New Historicism*, p. 29.

⁷Louis A. Montrose, 'Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture'. in: Harold Veenser, editor, *The New Historicism*. (New York / London: Routledge, 1989), p. 24.

⁸Alan Liu, 'The Power of Formalism: The New Historicism'. *ELH*, 56 (1989), p. 755.

attempts to discover a “texte général” in history (Foucault), are doomed to fail in the last respect and, thus, cannot claim full validity.⁹ This heritage of Poststructuralism is seen by New Historicist Louis Adrian Montrose as the chiasm of “the historicity of texts and the textuality of history.”¹⁰ This skepticism about historiography mirrors the postmodern “confession of modesty, if not despair” that there “is no grand narrative of human progress; only countless stories of where people and their cultures are now.”¹¹

The value of New Historicist interpretations is to challenge well-known but unbalanced understandings of literature, sometimes by the use of just an historical document which seems rather an anecdote.¹² The New Historicists unblushingly choose from the vast compendium of facts out of the “slime of history” what they think makes most sense. They acknowledge their preliminary character of their interpretation, which Greenblatt labels a “poetics of culture” thus drawing attention to its artificial and fictional quality.¹³ However, one should be aware of the dangerous tendency of New Historicism to build too much on anecdotes “outside their full historical context.”¹⁴ In order to prevent such justified criticism, I will embark on a rather long journey through church history in chapter 3. Thus, one sees Milton drawing from and modifying soteriological concepts of nearly seventeen centuries of Christian theology. If I, far from claiming to unearth a brand new interpretation of Milton’s religious writing, nevertheless can shed new light on a neglected aspect of his poetry, the goal of this essay has been fulfilled.

⁹ “New Historicism “erects an intricately-wrought veil of allegory that figures not any holy of holies behind the veil (History) so much as the shadow cast by the interpreter in his complex posture of adoration/skepticism.” Ibid., pp. 721–71.

¹⁰ L. A. Montrose, ‘Professing the Renaissance’, p. 20.

¹¹ Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*. (London/Sydney/Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton, 1994), p. 105 quoted in John Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today*. 3rd edition. (London: Harper Collins, 1999), p. 52; cp. Richard Rorty’s epistemology, p. 18.

¹² See above: Queen Elizabeth’s comparing herself to Richard II.

¹³ M. Basler, *New Historicism*, pp. 12; 33.

¹⁴ Critic and historian Garry Wills, quoted in Mitchell Stephens, *The Professor of Disenchantment (Stephen Greenblatt and the New Historicism)*. (URL: <http://www.nyu.edu/classes/stephens/Greenblatt%20page.htm>) – visited on 17.12.2003, p. 5.

2.2 Soteriology

Milton set out to “justify the ways of God to men” (*PL* I, 26) through the means of poetry.¹⁵ This essay goes the opposite way: It endeavours to contribute to a more profound understanding of literature by examining its theological substructure.¹⁶ For this purpose, some basic soteriological terms need to be defined in advance.¹⁷ The term “soteriology” is derived from two Greek words: *σωτηρία* (“Salvation/deliverance”) and *λόγος* (“word/thought”). It very generally treats the study of man’s salvation.¹⁸ Although the totality of Christian theology is salvific in character because at its centre lies the “saving encounter of God with sinful man,” “soteriology” specifically refers to the redeeming work of Jesus Christ.¹⁹ Thus, whereas soteriology is relevant for *Paradise Lost* only in so far as it explains why salvation was necessary,²⁰ *Paradise Regained* claims to focus on soteriology *per se*:

[...] now sing
Recovered Paradise to all mankind,
By on man’s firm obedience fully tried
Through all temptation [...].²¹

The obedience of the “one man,” i. e. the second Adam and redeemer of mankind, Jesus Christ, is an obedience culminating in his vicarious death, “even the death of the cross.”²² This is not to say that Milton writes about the Crucifixion itself, but he foreshadows it in his account of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness in *Paradise Regained*.

¹⁵Cp. Dennis Richard Danielson, *Milton’s Good God. A Study in Literary Theodicy*. (Cambridge: CUP, 1982), p. 10.

¹⁶Cp. Paul Ricœur, *La métaphore vive*. (Paris: le Seuil, 1975), pp. 165f.

¹⁷According to standard practice in theological literature, Latin theologians are quoted in their original tongue; longer passages from Greek sources are translated into English with the original version given in the footnote. If not indicated otherwise, Biblical quotes are taken from the *King James Bible, KJV*.

¹⁸E. L. Peterman, ‘Soteriology’. in: William J. McDonald, editor, *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. Volume 13, 1st edition. (Detroit / New York: Thomson Gale / Catholic U of America P, 1967), p. 444.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 444f.

²⁰“Of man’s first disobedience, and the fruit / [...] till one greater man / restore us,” *PL* I, 1.4f. Of course, my distinction between *PL* and *PR* is an oversimplification, mainly based on the corresponding prologues. I will show the complex treatment of the Atonement in both poems in chapter 6 and 7.

²¹*PR* I., 3–5; cp. Rom. 5:19: “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

²²Christological hymn describing Christ’s obedience, Phil. 2:8.

At the centre of Christian soteriology, thus, stands the short formula that $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{\epsilon}\theta\alpha\nu\epsilon\nu \upsilon\pi\acute{\epsilon}\rho \eta\mu\acute{\omega}\nu$, “Christ died for us.”²³ Christ’s death was universal in that he – in contrast to the Greek or Roman hero – died for “all human guilt”²⁴ instead of only for his country or his best friend. More important even, it is depicted as a divine intervention:

In other words, men no longer need to assuage the wrath of God through their actions. God, as subject of the saving event, reconciled to himself his unfaithful creatures, who had become his enemies.²⁵

Thirdly, the *eschatological* character of Jesus’ death was a new element of the dying hero. It saved man from “imminent judgment,”²⁶ standing “ready to smite once, and smite no more.”²⁷ In this manner, Jesus’ Atonement is seen as making a “onement” of man and God again.²⁸

If the Atonement is the means by which man is saved, *justification* is one of many concepts describing the result effected by the saving act of Christ. Through the rise in Pauline scholarship during the twelfth century and the importance of the doctrine of justification for Martin Luther during the Reformation, the *concept* of justification was turned into the *doctrine* of justification. The latter has a broader meaning and could be summarized by the phrase “*the means by which man’s relationship to God is established.*”²⁹ It includes the conditions under which man enters into a “onement” with God again and the nature of that transition itself. The source of man’s justification is described in the theological discipline of the “theology of grace”

²³Along with the resurrection formula $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma \epsilon\gamma\epsilon\acute{\iota}\rho\epsilon\nu \tau\acute{o}\nu \text{I}\eta\sigma\omicron\upsilon\nu \acute{\epsilon}\kappa \nu\epsilon\kappa\rho\acute{\omega}\nu$, i. e. “God raised Jesus from the dead”, this formula “is the most frequent and most important confessional statement in the Pauline epistles [...]” Cp. 1 Cor. 15:3f. Martin Hengel, *The Atonement. The Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament*. transl. John Bowden. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), p. 37.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 4; 31.

²⁵Ibid., p. 31

²⁶Ibid., p. 32 Cp. Karl Kertelge, ‘Rechtfertigung. II. Neues Testament’. in: *TRE*. Volume 28, (1997), p. 288.

²⁷John Milton, “Lycidas” 131. If not indicated otherwise, I quote Milton’s shorter poetry from John Milton; John Carey, editor, *Complete Shorter Poems*. 2nd edition. (Harlow: Longman, 1997).

²⁸Translation of Erasmus’ *Comm. Crede*, 1533, 162; J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 20 vols. 2nd edition. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), X, 812 “Atonement” is derived from the phrase “at-one-ment;” “onement,” either describes a physical union or a union of mind and feeling (here it is the latter meaning which could be translated as “reconciliation”).

²⁹Alister E. McGrath, *Justitia Dei. A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*. 2nd edition. (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), pp. 2f.

(*χάρις*),³⁰ as St Paul writes:

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.³¹

The semantic shifts from Hebrew “*שְׂדֵאָה*” into Greek “*δικαιοσύνη*” into Latin “*iustitia*”³² signify the transformations, to which the first chapter is dedicated. It is, however, important not to lose sight of the immutability of the basic concept: *Qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de coelis!*, as the Creed expresses it.³³ I will trace the varying treatments of the doctrine of justification until Milton’s time (Puritan Covenant Theology). Of course, this restriction does not mean that the doctrine plays no relevant part in the theological disputes since the Enlightenment, which initiated the “modern” period in the development of the doctrine of justification.³⁴ Theologians did not stop to criticise and modify the understanding of *iustificatio* inherited from the Reformers. Immanuel Kant’s focus on the moral imperative, reminiscent of the theology of the *via moderna*,³⁵ or Karl Barth’s “dialectical” approach, in which the fact of revelation rather than the *articulus iustificationis* is the salient point,³⁶ necessarily important may spring to mind. The discussion was and is not limited to theologians alone, as the example of Immanuel Kant demonstrates. Thus, in recent years, the French anthropologist René Girard has filled the newspapers by his attempt to defend the Christian faith from an anthropological point of view.³⁷

³⁰Cp. Volker Gäckle, ‘Gnade systematisch-theologisch’. *ELTG*, 1 (1998), p. 781.

³¹Rom. 3:24; cp. Otto Hermann Pesch, *Einführung in die Lehre von Gnade und Rechtfertigung*. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981), p. 5.

³²A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, pp. 8, 15.

³³A. McGrath, ‘Justice and Justification’, p. 403.

³⁴A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 323.

³⁵“Man muss mit allen Kräften der heiligen Gesinnung eines Gott wohlgefälligen Lebenswandels nachstreben, um glauben zu können, daß die (uns schon durch die Vernunft versicherte) Liebe desselben zur Menschheit, sofern sie seinem Willen nach allem ihrem Vermögen nachstrebt, in Rücksicht auf die redliche Gesinnung den Mangel der That, auf welche Art es auch sei, ergänzen werde;” mark the emphasis on man *facere quod in se est*—“nach allem ihrem Vermögen,” Immanuel Kant, *Schriften*, 6.120.10–16, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 339

³⁶“Gerade des Menschen Rechtfertigung und gerade das Vertrauen auf die objektive Wahrheit der Rechtfertigungslehre verbietet uns das Postulat, daß ihr theologischer Vollzug in der wahren Kirche *semper, ubique et ab omnibus* als das *unum necessarium*, als die ganze Mitte oder als die einzige Spitze der christlichen Botschaft und Lehre angesehen und behandelt werden müsse.” Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, III/2, § 61, I; 584, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 363

³⁷Central to Girard’s thinking is the notion of violence which becomes evident in persecution. The peculiarity of Christ’s death as a scapegoat is that Christ is completely

2.3 Metaphor

Eberhard Jüngel has pointed out that religious language in general is metaphorical.³⁸ This chapter will sketch out the groundwork of the theory of metaphor. The classic literary example making use of the process of semantic μεταφῆρειν in the seventeenth century is John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory, which consists out of a host of different metaphors.³⁹ These metaphors are developed into one great metaphor of life as a way, a spiritual journey. The first-person narrator sees a man with "a great burden upon his back."⁴⁰ The burden, which here is the so-called *vehicle*,⁴¹ represents "sin," the so-called *tenor*,⁴² which depresses man, whose conscience has been awakened by the reading of God's word.

For Aristotle, metaphor, "the mark of genius,"⁴³ is a condensed simile without explicit vocabulary that indicates a comparison such as the conjunction "as," and has also been called the "comparison view." The Greek philosopher differentiated between "living" and "dead" metaphors. Metaphors which have been incorporated into language are called "dead metaphors." The "leg of the chair," and the "foot of the mountain" are classic examples.⁴⁴

blameless. This refutes all myths of persecution as shameful: "L'étonnant c'est que les Evangiles en soulignent l'unanimité non pour s'incline devant elle, pour se soumettre à son verdict, comme feraient tous les textes mythologiques [...] mais pour dénoncer en elle une erreur complète, la non-vérité par excellence." (René Girard, *Le Bouc Emissaire*. (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1982), p. 166) From a theological point of view, the merit of Girard is that he in bringing in his viewpoint of *violence* and *persécution*, he does not reduce Christianity to the level of a mere irrational myth. A critique of Girard would have to take into account that his theology is a reduction to one (anthropological) aspect of the Atonement.

³⁸Eberhard Jüngel Paul Ricœur, *Metapher. Zur Hermeneutik religiöser Sprache. Mit einer Einführung von Pierre Gisel*. (München: Christian Kaiser, 1974), p. 122.

³⁹Allegory, has been defined by Quintillian as consisting of several elaborated metaphors Gerhard Kurz, *Metapher, Allegorie, Symbol*. Volume 1486, Kleine Vandenhoeck-Reihe. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1982), p. 35.

⁴⁰John Bunyan; Roger Sharrock, editor, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 11.

⁴¹The part of the "double unit" of metaphor which provides the imagery for the underlying idea, I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. (New York: OUP, 1965), pp. 96f. The German is *Bildspender*, G. Kurz, *Metapher*, pp. 21f.

⁴²"the underlying idea or principal subject which the vehicle or figure means," I. A. Richards, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 97 The German term is *Bildempfänger* G. Kurz, *Metapher*, pp. 21f.

⁴³Aristotle, *Poetics* XXII, 16–17, in Berta Haferkamp, *Bunyan als Künstler. Stilkritische Studien zu seinem Hauptwerk The Pilgrim's Progress*. Ph. D thesis, (Johannes Gutenberg-U Mainz, Tübingen, 1963), p. 193.

⁴⁴Gero von Wilpert, *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur*. 4th edition. (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1964), p. 423.

The twentieth century critics Max Black and I. A. Richards further analysed the nature of metaphor. Their resulting theory, the so-called “interaction view,” claims that metaphor functions as more than just decoration for an otherwise dry text.⁴⁵ They emphasise that the vehicle and tenor “interact”⁴⁶ and, thus, create a new meaning which cannot be explained by the corresponding literal senses of tenor and vehicle. Max Black describes this interaction by referring to the Hobbesian metaphor of man as wolf:

“The wolf-metaphor suppresses some details, emphasizes others – in short, *organizes* our view of man.”⁴⁷

In the Bunyan example, the use of “burden” as vehicle changes the connotations of its tenor.⁴⁸ Thus, sin is described as a state of being which not only decides man’s misery or happiness in this world but also his eternal destiny in “that which is to come”;⁴⁹ the burden will sink him “lower than the grave [...] into Tophet” (p. 12).⁵⁰ Through the elaboration of this specific metaphor, sin is ascribed great momentousness. Far from being merely morally “negative,” the vehicle has created a new meaning for its tenor.

This literary mechanism becomes especially evident by comparing it to the metaphor Bunyan’s theological opponents, the Ranters, employed. Abiezer Coppe (1619–1672) uses the metaphor of the riddle:

[...] sin and transgression is finished, it’s a mere riddle that they with all their human learning can never read.⁵¹

The metaphor of the riddle transforms a question of eternal life or death into “mere” playfulness. Coppe’s notion of *peccatum* leaves room for a certain inquisitiveness and the wish to decipher the “riddle;” but this is a detached, scientific curiosity and sin certainly will not affect one any more than “the

⁴⁵“un simple ornement du discours,” P. Ricoeur, *La métaphore vive*, p. 112.

⁴⁶I. A. Richards, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 100.

⁴⁷Max Black, *Models and Metaphors. Studies in Language and Philosophy*. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1962), p. 41.

⁴⁸To be precise, it only changes it in relation to Bunyan’s contemporaries. In relation to its biblical source it only explains and enriches the concept (cp. e.g. Ps. 38:4; Rom. 5:12). However, the canonical writers also use metaphors themselves.

⁴⁹Subtitle of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

⁵⁰“Tophet” is another word for “hell.”

⁵¹Abiezer Coppe, ‘A Fiery Flying Roll’. in: M. H. Abrams (Gen. Ed.), *Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Volume 1, 6th edition. (New York / London: Norton, 1993), p. 1746.

laws of England concern Spain.”⁵² This is not just some petty stylistic distinction, but had far-reaching effects for the Ranters’ religious life. It led to what Bunyan was to call “divellish [sic]”⁵³ lifestyle of “hideous blasphemy and continuous whoredom.”⁵⁴

While this thesis profits from the insights of “metaphorical truth,”⁵⁵ it will not build upon Rortian postmodern epistemology in my interpretation.⁵⁶ I distinguish the insight that the understanding of a particular religious doctrine is enriched as well as modified by metaphor from the epistemological belief that there are no doctrinal truths “out there [...] independently of the human mind.” By the way, I draw the reader’s attention to the fact that having made this differentiation, the basic orthodox Christian understanding as also held by Milton is not led *ad absurdum*. According to my understanding, it is still intellectually possible to believe in a God who exists *de hors-text*⁵⁷ no matter whether men believe or disbelieve that he is there, just as Ptolemy’s *Almagest*⁵⁸ did not change the orbit of this “vulnerable earth” (IV 594) a hair’s breadth, who⁵⁹ “from west her silent course advance[s]” (VIII. 162f.).

⁵²The Antinomian Tobias Crisp in his *Christ Alone Exalted in Seventeene Sermons* (1643), pp. 156–9, quoted in Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down. Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*. (London; Harmondsworth: Temple Smith; Penguin, 1972; 1974), p. 150.

⁵³John Bunyan, *Some Gospel-truths Opened* (1656), John Bunyan; Roger Sharrock, editor, *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*. 13 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), I, 26.

⁵⁴C. Hill, *Upside Down*, p. 165.

⁵⁵P. Ricœur, E. Jüngel, *Metapher*, p. 45.

⁵⁶Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 1989 in Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*. (New York / Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 434 cp. Dieter Thomä, *Erzähle dich selbst. Lebensgeschichte als philosophisches Problem*. (München: Beck, 1998), pp. 121ff. I find Alvin Plantinga’s confutation of the Rortian view convincing. He argues that truth is not solely dependent on language in A. Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, pp. 434f..

⁵⁷The “notorious Derridean aphorism” of Deconstructivism: “il n’y a pas de hors-text;” quoted in L. A. Montrose, ‘Professing the Renaissance’, p. 32.

⁵⁸In his *Almagest*, Ptolemy argued for a geocentric cosmology, and men believed him. This is not to say, that Earth really was the centre of the universe. Cosmology exemplifies the idea that one must distinguish between truth in and outside of language.

⁵⁹[sic!] Milton’s Earth is a feminine personification.

Chapter 3

Relevant Soteriological Concepts in the History of Christian Theology

Milton is a learned and scholarly poet, who drew on many – even Catholic – sources. An overview of the history of the development of soteriological concepts will provide the background for a classification and interpretation of Milton's employment of soteriology in his *œuvre*.

3.1 The Foundation: Augustine of Hippo

3.1.1 The Liberation of the *Liberum Arbitrium Captivatum*

The foundation of the Christian doctrine of the Atonement is to be found in the Bible, especially in the Pauline epistles. But since the time of the apostles, Christian thinkers have interpreted the Bible in different ways while labouring to bring together the different aspects into a coherent philosophical system. Among all the contributors to these doctrinal systems, the north African bishop Augustine certainly constitutes the fountainhead¹ and influenced Christian thought way beyond 1500.² Thus, Milton takes up many Augustinian ideas about the Fall in *Paradise Lost*.³ Although Augustine de-

¹A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 24.

²Ibid., pp. 17 and 24 Since the classic work of Albrecht Ritschl, *Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung* (1870), A. McGrath's *Iustitia Dei* constitutes the first and definitive major study of the development of the doctrine of justification. Cp. *ibid.*, p. x.

³"Milton's version of the Fall story is substantially that of St Augustine, which is that of the Church as a whole," C. S. Lewis, *Paradise Lost*, pp. 66ff. For a discussion of Milton's

veloped his doctrine of grace “in a non-polemical context”,⁴ it was to play a central part in the so-called Pelagian controversy. Pelagius, a British lay theologian (sometimes depicted as monk), had come to Italy around 380. Abashed by the immorality he encountered at Rome, he began to battle against Manichaean determinism.⁵ He taught that, if man *ought* to follow God’s commandments, he was also *able* to do so.

This “exaggeration of fallen man’s abilities”⁶ brought the north African bishop into the arena. In his first anti-Pelagian text, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* (AD 411), he further expounded on his doctrine of grace. In his momentous autobiography, the *Confessiones*,⁷ Augustine also tackles this issue. His answer, which is repeated like a refrain throughout book X, indicates that man’s eternal condition hinges on God’s will alone. The believer here submits to God’s will, “Da quod iubes et iube quod vis.”⁸ Man cannot reach moral perfection on his own. It is God alone who enables him to go against the tide of evil. Even the desire to do good is totally attributed to God’s grace (“Amare Deum, Dei donum est”).⁹

The bishop argues his case by making two distinctions. *Heilsgeschichtlich*, the crucial dividing line is, of course, the Fall. There, man possessed *libertas*. Or, to speak with Milton, in the “delicious Paradise” of Eden (*PL* IV,132), God

[...] ordained thy will
By nature free, not over-ruled by fate
Inextricable, or strict necessity; (*PL* V, 526f.)

After “man’s disobedience and the fruit” (*PL*, I,1),¹⁰ however, man lost his *libertas*. Augustine takes up Julian of Eclanum’s image of the scales in order

orthodoxy see chapter 4.

⁴Augustine’s letters to Simplicianus, in which he first expounded on the dilemma between free and captivated will, were written at the end of 396 or at the beginning of 397; A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 24.

⁵Ibid., p. 26.

⁶Ibid..

⁷AD 397–98.

⁸Saint Augustine; Martin Skutell, editor, *Confessionum*. Volume 27, Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina. Sancti Augustini Opera, ed. Lucas Verheijen. (Turnholti: Brepols, 1981), X. xxix. 40; xxxi. 45; xxxvii. 60.

⁹A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 29.

¹⁰The enjambment suggests two possible meanings and can be understood as the actual “fruit” hanging on the tree as well as figuratively as “results;” John Milton; Alastair Fowler, editor, *Paradise Lost*. 2nd edition. (Harlow: Longman, 1998), p. 57.

to draw a fine distinction between *libertas* and free will. The scales represent man's ability to make a decision whether to choose a morally good or a morally bad action. According to Augustine, the problem is that the scales are not in balance any more. Weights have been placed on the side of evil. This image signifies the meaning of Augustine's term *liberum arbitrium captivatum*. The "free will is not lost, nor is it non-existent: it is merely incapacitated, and may be healed by grace."¹¹ Thus, when God is described as the great deliverer in the *Confessiones*, this also means that he has freed man's captivated will. The great deliverer, confesses Augustine, has "broken my chains" which had bound my will.¹²

3.1.2 Theology of Grace

For the sake of clarification, Augustine introduces a second soteriological distinction relating to his *Gnadenlehre*. God's grace deals with man in two ways. In justification, grace works in an *operative* way; and in the subsequent process of justification, the method of grace is *cooperative*:

God *operates* to initiate man's justification, in that he is given a will capable of desiring good, and subsequently *cooperates* with that good will to perform good works, to bring that justification to perfection. God operates upon the bad desires of the *liberum arbitrium captivatum* to allow it to will good, and subsequently cooperates with the *liberum arbitrium liberatum* to actualise that good will in a good action.¹³

After justification, the "reality and necessity" of merit is affirmed in terms of an *inherent*¹⁴ rather than an *imputed* righteousness, to employ the vocabulary of the sixteenth century.¹⁵ Against the foil of Pelagius' high regard for man's will, the difference becomes obvious: In Pelagian theology, there is no place for the Augustinian notion of *operative* grace, but the choice between God and sin lies in man's own power:

simul notandum quod homo membra [sua]¹⁶ cui uelit parti exhibeat per arbitrii libertatem.¹⁷

¹¹A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, pp. 26f.

¹²VIII,1,1 quotes Ps. 115:16f. Saint Augustine; Henry Chadwick, editor, *Confessions*. (1991).

¹³A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 27.

¹⁴In the sense of "imparted" (by God).

¹⁵Ibid., p. 28,31 (Cp. 3.4.1 and 3.4.4).

¹⁶I.e. the parts of the "mortal body" of Rom. 6:12.

¹⁷My emphases; Pelagius; J. Armitage Robinson, editor, *Pelagius's Expositions of Thir-*

For Augustine, it is essential to use a clear-cut terminology in the Pelagian controversy and, therefore, he underpins the distinction between *operative* and *cooperative* grace by introducing the terms *gratia praeueniens* and *gratia subsequens*:

*Misericordia eius praeueniet me, et: Misericordia eius subsequetur me:
nolentem praeuenit, ut uelit, uolentem subsequitur, ne frustra uelit.*¹⁸

Prevenient grace is the *movens* responsible for preparing sinful man for the encounter with God. This grace comes “unprevented, unimplored, unsought.”¹⁹ It draws man to God, who longs to speak to him, but cannot do so because of human deafness.²⁰ Subsequent grace, on the other hand, cares for the disciple, whose ears have been opened. It takes him by the hand and leads him on.

3.1.3 The Divine Perspective: Predestination and Foreknowledge

Augustine’s theology of grace also tackles one of the issues most hotly disputed in soteriology. Besides theologians honestly struggling to understand predestination, there stood those whose disputes degenerated into mere battles of words. Milton mocks this scholastic attitude in *Paradise Lost* when he portrays the fallen angels discussing the topic in question:

Others apart sat on a hill retired,
In thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high
Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.
(*PL II, 557–561*)

teen Epistles of St Paul: Text. Volume 2, (London: CUP, 1926), Rom. 6:13, cp. Pelagius; Theodore de Bruyn, editor, *Pelagius’s Commentary on St Paul’s Epistle to the Romans.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), Oxford Early Christian Studies, ed. H. Chadwick and R. Williams, 6:13.

¹⁸Augustine quotes Ps. 58:11 and Ps. 22:6, Saint Augustine; M. P. J. van den Hout, editor, *Enchiridion.* Volume XLVI, Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina. (Turnholti: Brepols, 1969), pp. 9 and 32 and 67; cp. O. H. Pesch, *Gnade und Rechtfertigung*, p. 21.

¹⁹*PL*, III, 231; *unprevented* means “unanticipated, therefore unasked;” John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, p. 181.

²⁰“[...] vocasti et clamasti et rupisti surditatem meam.” St Augustine, *Confessionum*, pp. X, 27.

The devils' theological seminar in hell, a witty satire in the spirit of Desiderius Erasmus,²¹ may be totally beside the point existentially. After all, there is not much sense in discussing theology in hell! However, the devils score in theological terminology when they differentiate between "providence, foreknowledge" and "fixed fate." "Fixed fate" entails "foreknowledge," though not vice versa. The term "foreknowledge" describes that God *knows* in advance what will happen because he is not subject to time. This does not necessarily imply that he influences the human will in any way. God simply possesses a "simultaneous awareness" of past, present and future.²² "Providence" and "fixed fate" (the biblical term is "predestination"),²³ on the other hand, describe some form of determinism. This means that God not only knows what will happen in the future but also – at least to some degree – *determines* the (eternal) future of each individual and the (temporal) future of the whole world ("providence").²⁴ This also means that the human will is – at least to some degree – influenced by God's will.

At this point, the theological gap between Pelagius and Augustine becomes evident. In his *De gratia Christi*, the north African bishop quotes the two key verses Romans 9:15f.:

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.²⁵ So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.²⁶

²¹Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology. An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*. (Malden: Blackwell, 1998), p. 104; cp. A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 126.

²²A. Dyson, J. Lovelock, "Event Perverse: The Epic of Exile," (1973), in J. Lovelock A. E. Dyson, *Milton. Paradise Lost. A Casebook*. (London/Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1973), p. 222 C. S. Lewis takes up Milton's image of a great "[m]ystical dance" (*PL*, V 620) in order to elucidate the notion of foreknowledge: "In fact, of course, God saw the crucifixion in the act of creating the first nebula. The world is a dance in which good, descending from God, is disturbed by evil arising from the creatures, and the resulting conflict is resolved by God's own assumption of the suffering nature which evil produces." C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*. (New York: Macmillan, 1944), p. 72.

²³See Rom. 8:28–30.

²⁴The term "providence" defines the manner of determinism in that it attributes the planning of history not to a blind, impersonal force but to a "wise, loving and powerful God who is everywhere at work in the world" John H. Wright, 'Providence'. in: Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane, editors, *New Dictionary of Theology*. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), p. 816.

²⁵Cp. Exod. 33:19.

²⁶If not indicated otherwise, the Bible quotes are from the *The Holy Bible. The Authorized or King James Version of 1611*. 3 vols.. (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1963).

These two verses are the parting of the ways. The statement that man has no right to a merciful God leads Augustine to underline the close link between predestination and the believer's spiritual union with Christ:²⁷

[...] eique adhaerendo iugiter unus secundum apostolum cum eo fiat spiritus, Deus quem uult religiosum facit: et hoc totum homo, nisi religiosus, non facit. Quapropter, nisi a Deo fiat ut hoc faciat, quis hoc facit?²⁸

For the former Manichaean *auditor*, who heard the voice of God in a Milan garden, “nisi a Deo fiat ut hoc faciat, quis hoc facit?” is a rhetorical question. Of course, it is God himself who initiates and continues the spiritual relationship with man. For Pelagius, this is not so. He takes great pains to circumnavigate the doctrine of predestination. In his comment on Rom. 9:15, he substitutes foreknowledge (“*praesciui*”) for predestination:

Hoc recto sensu ita intellegitur: Illius miserebor quem ita *praesciui* posse misericordiam promereri, ut iam tunc illius sim misertus.²⁹

The stark contrast of Pelagius' notion to Augustine's also becomes evident in Augustine's late work, *De dono perseverantiae* (428/9), which is preoccupied with the other side of the coin of predestination: the believer's perseverance. *Perseverantia* describes that

One here will constant be,
Come wind, come weather.³⁰

²⁷Cp. to Calvin's *unio mystica*, 3.4.3.1.

²⁸Saint Augustine; J. Plagnieux and F.-J. Thonnard (ed. and transl.), *La Crise Pélagienne II: De Gratia Christi et de peccato originali libri II, De natura et origine animae libri IV*. Volume 22, œuvres de Saint Augustin. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1975), pp. XLVI, 51 It must be added that Augustine does not hold the doctrine of Calvinism (cp. 3.4.3.2) of *double* predestination to eternal bliss as well as to eternal damnation. People who are damned fall under a *passive* predestination at the most. This is the view of A. Kunzelmann and A. Zumkeller against R. Lorenz (Saint Augustine; Adalbero Kunzelmann and Adolar Zumkeller, editors, *Schriften gegen die Pelagianer (Lateinisch-Deutsch)*. *Sankt Augustin: Lehrer der Gnade*. Volume 2, (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1964), p. 480; Rudolf Lorenz, 'Gnade und Erkenntnis bei Augustinus'. *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 75 (1964), p. 75). The latter blames Augustine for having the notion of double predestination.

²⁹Pelagius, *Ad Romanos Pelagius, Thirteen Epistles of St Paul*, pp. Rom. 9:15, cp. Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 9:15 My emphasis. Note also Pelagius' focus on the Tertullian concept of *mereri* (“*posse misericordiam promereri*”).

³⁰John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, ll. 3f., 263; John Bunyan's pilgrim Christian, who seems to be the allegorised epitome of the *donum perseverantiae*, is not secure until he

Even this virtue to perseverance (*perseverantia*),³¹ which the believer needs in order to prevail “usque in finem”³² is God’s *donum*. This is the logical continuation of Augustine’s earlier writings about predestination and free will and removes the last possibility to interpret the teaching of grace in Pelagian terms.³³ Finally, in eternity, the believers can leave behind their frail and fallen nature, which Augustine describes with the words *posse peccare*, and reach the state of *non posse peccare*, not being able to sin.³⁴

3.2 The Patristic and Medieval Periods Before Anselm of Canterbury

The breakdown of the connection between theology and classical education resulted in very realistic modes of presentation in order to express traditional belief.³⁵ This can be very well demonstrated by looking at the imagery in the period before Anselm of Canterbury. The early fathers of the church, such as Irenaeus (c. 130 – c. 200) or Origen (c. 185 – c. 254), served as the fertile soil on which medieval theology before Anselm grew and flourished. Theologians after Anselm rather revived Augustinian concepts. Thus, I decided to subsume the church fathers’ theology as well as the medieval Harrowing of Hell³⁶ under the same chapter heading.

3.2.1 The Notion of *Christus Victor*

3.2.1.1 Christ’s Victory over Sin, Death and the Devil

The popular image of the Nativity is often the pastoral one of a cute little baby being born in the poor but relatively homely surroundings of a stable. A

has reached the Celestial City. It is vital for *Christian*, not only to start his journey as a Christian but also to withstand the host of dangers lurking at the wayside tempting him to turn aside from the “narrow way.” (Matth. 7:14) John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. 2 vols. (London / New York: OUP, 1966), pp. 237f.

³¹St. Augustine, *De dono perseverantiae* (428/9).

³²*De dono perseverantiae* 1.1; cp. Matt. 10:22. Jürgen Moltmann, ‘Perseveranz’. (1996), p. 217.

³³Gotthard Nygren, *Das Prädestinationsproblem in der Theologie Augustins. Eine systematisch-theologische Studie*. Ph.D thesis, (U Lund, Lund/Göttingen, 1956), p. 279.

³⁴Augustine, *Enchiridion* xxviii, 105, cp. C. A. Patrides, *Milton and the Christian Tradition*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), pp. 191f.

³⁵Cp. Ernst Koch, ‘Höllenfahrt Christi’. in: *TRE*. Volume 15, (1986), p. 457.

³⁶The medieval Harrowing (chapter 3.2.1.3) is a continuation of the patristic notion of the *Höllenfahrt*.

typical example of this view is the final scene of *The Wakefield Second Shepherds' Play* (1400–50):³⁷ Christ is depicted as a “little tiny mop” (1046)³⁸ born of a “maiden so mild” (1027). He is a “sweeting” (1033) to whom the apt presents are not the kingly gifts of the Magi (gold, frankincense and myrrh) but “toys” in which a child might delight (cherries, a bird, and a ball; 1036, 1044, 1060).³⁹ Milton’s “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity” presents a stark contrast to this romantic representation. Here, the note is rather grand than sweet, rather heroic than homely. This is not to say that Christ is *not* a child in Milton’s poem:

It was the winter wild,
While the heaven-born child
All meanly wrapped up in the rude manger lies [...].
(ll. 29–31)⁴⁰

However, the poet already envisages the child’s future foreshadowed in the tiny baby. Already at his birth, Christ is seen as the great conqueror of death, hell and sin who “having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Col. 2:15). The gods of antiquity are conquered, their

[...] flocking shadows pale
Troop to the infernal jail,
Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave [...].
(ll. 232–4)

This is the *Christus Victor* motif, strikingly employed by Milton long before his treatment of the Crucifixion in *Paradise Lost*.⁴¹

³⁷Anon., ‘The Wakefield Second Shepherds’ Play’. A. C. Cawley, Martin Stevens. in: M. H. Abrams (Gen. Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Volume 1, 6th edition. (New York / London: Norton, 1993), pp. 319–344.

³⁸“Mop” is a “playful term for a baby” or a “rag doll” J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, *OED*, IX, 1064

³⁹Of course, the shepherds’ gifts are not only chosen in order to depict Christ as a child but also because they are objects poor shepherds might reasonably afford to offer.

⁴⁰J. Milton, “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity,” in John Milton, *CSP*, pp. 101–16.

⁴¹Milton takes up the idea that the flight of the pagan gods took place at Christ’s birth from Plutarch. However, Milton reminds his readers of the preliminariness of this victory, which will not be consummated until “the bitter cross” (152); cp. *PL* XII. 429–33: “[...] this act [i.e. Jesus’ death] / Shall bruise the head of Satan, crush his strength / Defeating Sin and Death, his two main arms / And fix far deeper in his head their stings / Than temporal death shall bruise the victor’s heel.” Cp. *PL* X. 186–91.

Traditionally, the expression “Christus Victor” is connected with Christ’s death on Golgotha rather than his birth in Bethlehem. The term goes back to Gustaf Aulén’s study about the Atonement.⁴² Although it is a little one-sided and biased against medieval scholasticism, this study “has done theology the service of formulating questions and viewing the evidence in a new and stimulating manner.”⁴³ Aulén starts his book with a closer look at Irenaeus’ theology of the Atonement. The church father weaves together the Incarnation and the Atonement pertaining to its motivating force. The reason why the eternal λόλος became incarnate is the same as why the God-man Jesus had to die on the cross, namely, that “He might destroy sin, overcome death, and give life to man.”⁴⁴ The “classic” view of the Atonement perceives Jesus’ death on the cross “in dramatic terms, as a conflict with the powers of evil and a triumph over them.”⁴⁵ It is this notion of the triumphant Christ, whose greatest victory is his death, which is at the core of the “Christus Victor” motif.

3.2.1.2 The Ransom Theory

For the church fathers, this victory over the devil is not achieved by mere force, a conception which would be inconsistent with God’s righteousness. As when a benevolent, liberal-minded citizen wants to set free a slave and an official bargain has to be made, so Christ frees man by paying for him. If man were liberated by force, this would count as a crime. The devil (the slaveowner) had a legal right over sinful man (the slave), as the influential Eastern church father, Gregory of Nyssa, points out:

The case was similar, when we of our own freewill had sold ourselves, and God in His goodness would restore us again to freedom. There was a kind of necessity for Him not to proceed by way of force, but to accomplish our deliverance in a lawful way. It consists in this, that the owner is offered all that he asks as the redemption-price of His

⁴²G. Aulén, *Christus Victor*. 1931, trans. A. G. Herbert. New York: Macmillan, 1979. Thus, the “Christus Victor” view is a technical term of twentieth century theologians describing an important aspect of the theology of the church fathers. The “flight of the pagan gods,” in contrast (at least, as used in this essay) is a notion more akin to the study of literary motifs than theology.

⁴³Daniel Graham Reid, *The Christus Victor Motif in Paul’s Theology*. Ph.D thesis, (Fuller Theological Seminary, Ann Arbor, 1982), p. 1.

⁴⁴“Ut occideret quidem peccatum, evacualet autem mortem, et vivificaret hominem”. (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses III. 18.7*. Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor. An [sic!] Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*. (London: SPCK, 1970), p. 19.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 35.

property;⁴⁶

In this imagery of ransom, Christ is the one who meets the demands and pays the cost. Christ was the only man “without blemish and without spot” and, hence, the only one able to give the ransom money.⁴⁷ The business terminology of the *iustitia diaboli* must have seemed inappropriate to Milton, who was convinced that God was the “mighty king” whom nothing could “impair.”⁴⁸ The church fathers really thought that the all-powerful God had “business dealings” with the devil.⁴⁹

The more the theologians of the patristic period go into detail in their analyses, the more “original” their realistic imagery becomes. One metaphor of Gregory the Great which fleshes out Irenaeus’ ransom theory is particularly astounding. Aulén calls it “even grotesque”:⁵⁰ Christ is compared to a fishing hook with which the devil is deceived. Gregory the Great’s motive to choose such a far-fetched image⁵¹ can be traced back to the same question Irenaeus was grappling with: How can a just and loving God deal with the devil other than by way of sheer force? While Irenaeus (and Origen) saw God bartering with the devil, Gregory introduces a God who plays tricks with Satan. Jesus is sent into the world with a body of flesh and blood, *incognito*, so-to-speak.⁵²

⁴⁶Gregory of Nyssa; Jo. Georgius Krabingerus, editor, *Oratio catechetica. Graece et Latine*. (Monachii: Iosephi Lindaueri, 1838), XXII, 43, quoted in G. Aulén, *Christus Victor*, p. 49: “κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ἐκουσίως ἡμῶν ἑαυτοῦς ἀπεμπολησάντων ἔδει παρὰ τοῦτω δι’ ἀγτότητα πάλιν ἡμᾶς εἰς ἐλευθερίαν ἐξαιρουμένου μὴ τὸν τυραννικόν, ἀλλὰ τὸν δίκαιον τρόπον ἐινοσηθῆαι τῆς ἀνακλήσεως. Οὗτος δέ εἰσὶ τις τῷ ἐικρατοῦντι ποιήσασθαι πᾶν ὅπερ ἂν ἐθέλοι λύτρον ἀντὶ τῆ κατεχομένου λβεῖν.”

⁴⁷Cp. St Peter and St Paul on the topic: “[...] forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot [...]”, 1 Pet. 1:18f. ; cp. Col. 2:14.

⁴⁸*PL*, VII, 608. “Impair” can be understood in two senses: “take something away from him, make him less, or make a pair with him, a rival power and therefore a rival deity” Stanley Fish, *How Milton Works*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Belknap; Harvard UP, 2001), p. 8.

⁴⁹Origen (c.185 – c. 254) thinks that the ransom was paid to the devil himself, G. Aulén, *Christus Victor*, p. 30.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 40f Gregory (540–604) was the last of the Latin fathers of the church.

⁵¹In the Synoptics, Christ’s disciples are called “fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17), trained by their Rabbi Jesus. The transformation of Jesus as a kind of “master fisher for men” into a “fishing-hook for the devil” seems to be far cry from New Testament imagery and could be seen as a conceit.

⁵²In Milton’s *Paradise Regained*, the devil remains unsure of Jesus’ identity until Christ’s repulsion of Satan’s last temptation (IV, 561): “Who this is we must learn, for man he seems / In all his lineaments, though in his face / The glimpses of his father’s glory shine.” (I, 91–93).

The Evil One is lured into the trap of mistaking Jesus for a normal, sinful human being. Everything runs according to the divine plan and the devil goes beyond what is permissible:⁵³ The “father of lies”⁵⁴ has been *deceived*.⁵⁵ Christ, whom he had thought to be an easy prey, suddenly turns out to be a “fishing hook” for him. By these means, light triumphs over darkness:

[...] in order that, as happens with greedy fishes, together with the bait of the flesh the hook of the Godhead might also be swallowed, and so, through Life passing over into death, and the Light arising in the darkness, that which is opposed to Life and Light might be brought to nought;⁵⁶

Whatever images are used, the fulcrum of the *ransom theory* is the metaphor that Christ has paid a ransom to the devil in order that mankind might be saved.⁵⁷

In *Paradise Lost*, the poet uses several soteriological concepts to describe the Atonement. A comparison with Milton’s cosmology may help to elucidate one of the effects of this technique. Milton blends contrasting astronomical models to describe the cosmology of his paradise. He leaves open whether Ptolemy is right and the sun “from the east his flaming road begin[s],” or rather the new theory of Copernicus is true and the spinning earth “from west her silent course advance[s].”⁵⁸ One effect of Milton’s references to multiple cosmologies is to show how intricate and impenetrable God’s creation is.

⁵³Chrysostom argues eschatologically that God will say to the devil at the Last Judgment: “Thou didst smite them all, because thou didst find them guilty of sin; wherefore then didst thou smite Christ? Is it not evident that thou didst this wrongfully? Therefore the whole world shall become righteous through Him.” Ibid., p. 50.

⁵⁴John 8:44.

⁵⁵Cp. “ἀπατεῶν ἀνταπατᾶται”; Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, xxvi, 49.

⁵⁶Ibid., XXIV, 46, quoted in G. Aulén, *Christus Victor*, p. 52: “ἵνα κατὰ τοὺς λίχνους τῶν ἰχθύων τῷ δελέατι τῆς σαρκὸς συγκατασπασθῆ τὸ ἀγκιστρον τῆς θεότητος καὶ οὕτω τῆς ζωῆς τῷ θανάτῳ ἐισοικισθείσης καὶ τῷ σκότῳ τοῦ φωτὸς ἐπιφανέντος, ἐξαφανιστῆ τῷ τῷ φωτὶ καὶ τῇ ζωῇ κατὰ τὸ ἐναντίον νοούμενον.”

⁵⁷However, some early theologians (such as John of Damascus) claimed that the ransom is paid by Jesus to God the Father; Ibid., pp. 50 and 56.

⁵⁸(VIII, 162. 163); when Milton mentions “the prime orb, / Incredible how swift,” he refers to a third cosmological theory of his times: the Tychonic model. The high velocities implied (IV, 592f.) are a give-away for the ideas of the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe (1546–1601). He published his own cosmology in 1588, in which he acknowledges (with Copernicus) that the inferior planets move around the sun, although Tycho still imagines a stationary earth. This arrangement enables him to retain the geocentric world-picture of Ptolemy in spite of the new Copernican observations; John North; Roy Porter, editor, *The Fontana History of Astronomy and Cosmology*. (London: Fontana / Harper Collins, 1994), Fontana History of Science, pp. 303f.

One system is not enough to explain the “fabric of the heavens” (VIII, 76). This scientific vagueness should lead Adam to worship God for the wonders of nature.⁵⁹ Similarly, Milton also uses various soteriological concepts in order to express the magnificence of the Son’s future work of redemption. This multi-faceted description of the Atonement, in its turn, is answered by the hosannas of the angels (344ff.) amazed at God’s “unexampled love” (410). The Son’s speech before the heavenly council in book III is not only reminiscent of Anselmic satisfaction theory⁶⁰ and the medieval notion of Harrowing⁶¹ but also echoes the patriarchs’ teaching on Christ paying the ransom:

[...] on man’s behalf
 Patron or intercessor none appeared,
 Much less that durst upon his own head draw
 The deadly forfeiture, and ransom set.
 (*PL* III, 218–222)

The ransom theory is not explained in full detail. Milton does not answer Origen’s question to whom Christ gave “His soul as a ransom for many.”⁶² Just as the juxtaposition of contrasting astronomical models contributes to the image of the Father as the supreme architect of the enigmatic creation,⁶³ so the simultaneous use of heterogenous theories of the Atonement portrays the Son as the great artisan of redemption, incomprehensibly and indescribably demonstrating divine love.⁶⁴

3.2.1.3 The Harrowing of Hell

Paradise Lost closes with a prospect into the spiritual future of mankind. Thus, the archangel Michael informs Adam about how paradise will be regained through Christ. Then, he warns the first man of the fallacy of materialist imagery pertaining to Christ’s victory over the devil:

Dream not of their fight,
 As of a duel, or the local wounds

⁵⁹Cp. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, pp. 34f.

⁶⁰“So man, as is most just, / Shall satisfy for man, be judged and die [...]” (294f.).

⁶¹Compare 3.2.1.3.

⁶²Cp. footnote ??.

⁶³“And for the heaven’s wide circuit, let it speak / The maker’s high magnificence [...]” (III, 100f.)

⁶⁴With “Admiration seized” (271) the angels “lowly reverent / Towards either throne they bow.” (349f.). The love of the Son is highlighted throughout the whole planning of redemption: “the fulness [...] of love divine” (225), “breathed immortal love” (267), “heavenly love” (298), “in thee / Love hath abounded” (311f.).

Of head or heel: not therefore joins the Son
 Manhood to Godhead [...];
 (*PL*, XII, 386–8)

The fathers' realistic modes of presentation were handed down to the medieval theologians.⁶⁵ From AD 1000 on, the consolidation of the penitential system went hand in hand with a strong focus on hell and its torments.⁶⁶ Thus, the rigid instructions of penance for specific sins, which were described in all detail in the *Summae de poenitentia*, were enforced in the minds of the church-goers.⁶⁷ The *Höllenfahrt* of the patristic epoque developed into warlike scenes depicting the "Harrowing of Hell" in the Middle Ages. One can, indeed, find a Biblical source of this *topos* but the verses are scant and hard to understand. One of these passages is 1 Pet. 3:18–20 where the apostle describes Jesus as having "preached unto the spirits in prison".⁶⁸ This is traditionally understood as the Descent of Christ into Hell during the three days when he was dead. Christ broke down the gates of hell and liberated the people from the time of the Old Testament.⁶⁹ However, the Middle Ages showed the greatest interest in the Descent of Christ into Hell and recounted it mainly in its dramas.⁷⁰ It is very well expressed in the Harrowing scene of the *York Cycle of Mystery Plays* when Christ knocks three times at the gates of "the kingdom of darkness as a bearer of light and joy."⁷¹

Attollite portas, principes,
 Oppen vppe, e princes of paynes sere,
 [...] is steede schall stonde no lenger stoken:
 Opyne vppe, and latte my pepul passe.
 (XXXVII. 122–24, 181–84, 193–4)

Like the *ransom theory*, the Harrowing also expresses the great Christian paradox of the "Christus Victor" view: The hour of death is transformed

⁶⁵Early traces of this interpretation already appear in the first half of the second century, e.g., in the "Apostolic Father" Hermas: *The Shepherd*, "Similitudes" 9,16,5; E. Koch, 'Höllenfahrt', p. 455.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 457.

⁶⁷Gustav Adolf Benrath, 'Buße Historisch'. in: *TRE*. Volume 7, (1981), p. 459.

⁶⁸Cp. 1 Pet. 4:6; "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" (Eph. 4:9); much less clarity as to the concept of *Harrowing* is expressed in the passages from the Gospels about Jesus' Crucifixion which are sometimes quoted in this context (Matt. 27:52f., Luke 23:43).

⁶⁹"[...] when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing [...]" 1 Pet. 3:20.

⁷⁰E. Koch, 'Höllenfahrt', p. 457.

⁷¹Clifford Davidson, *From Creation to Doom. The York Cycle of Mystery Plays*. (New York: AMS Press, 1984), p. 139.

into the moment of Triumph. There is nothing left for the devil than to lament hell's utter defeat:

[...] oure baill is brokynne,
And brosten are alle oure bandis of bras.
(XXXVII.195–96)⁷²

3.2.2 Christ as the *recapitulator generis humani*

According to Irenaeus, Justin Martyr was the first to restate the Pauline doctrine that Christ acts as *recapitulator mundi*.⁷³ For Irenaeus himself, this idea was highly significant and centred on Eph. 1:10:

but when he was incarnate and made man, he recapitulated [or: “summed up”] in himself the long line of the human race, procuring for us salvation thus summarily, so that what we had lost in Adam, that is, the being in the image and likeness of God, that we should regain in Christ Jesus.⁷⁴

In Greek, for “recapitulate” stands the verb ἀνακεθαινώσασθαι. The equivalent noun is ἀνακεθαινώσις, which is translated with the Latin *recapitulatio*.⁷⁵ Antique rhetorians used the word to designate the close of a speech which summarized their main topic.⁷⁶ Irenaeus employs *recapitulatio* with reference to the word incarnate, Jesus Christ.⁷⁷ His main definition is called the cosmic or real recapitulation.⁷⁸ The “real recapitulation” does not merely describe the work of Christ by means of Old Testament typology,⁷⁹ but affects the reality of mankind. This takes place mainly in his incarnation,⁸⁰

⁷²Ibid., p. 142.

⁷³C. A. Patrides, *Christian Tradition*, p. 132.

⁷⁴*Adversus haereses* III. xviii; cp. Henry Bettenson, editor, *Documents of the Christian Church*. 2nd edition. (Oxford: OUP, 1963), p. 30; cp. also Emmeran Scharl, *Recapitulatio Mundi. Der Rekapitulationsbegriff des Heiligen Irenäus und seine Anwendung auf die Körperwelt*. Volume 60, Freiburger Theologische Studien. (Freiburg i. Br: Herder, 1941), pp. 95 and 131; I quote Irenaeus in Latin, although his works are originally written in Greek, because the Greek manuscripts that still exist are fragmentary.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 6.

⁷⁶Quintillian defined: “rerum repetitio et congregatio, quae graece dicitur ἀνακεθαινώσις,” *Istitutiones oratoriae* 6, 1, quoted in Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 31.

⁷⁸“[...] kosmische oder reale Rekapitulation;” Ibid., p. 7.

⁷⁹That would be the so-called “intentional” recapitulation.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 32.

but also in his Crucifixion⁸¹ and his second coming.⁸² Irenaeus understands the Crucifixion as an analogy (*similitudinem*), which nevertheless took place in history. It is as if mankind had died with Christ on the cross and, thus, also will be vivified through him:

Secundum similitudinem carnis peccati in ligno martyrii exaltatur a terra, et omnia trahit ad se, et vivificat mortuos.⁸³

This similitude refers to Christ as the “second Adam,”⁸⁴ a central notion of the *recapitulatio* idea. Thus, mankind is renewed together with Christ in his death and resurrection in reality. Sometimes, instead of the Pauline analogy of Adam – Christ, a second one is introduced, namely that of Adam’s wife and Christ’s mother: Eva – Maria.⁸⁵ Thus, when Milton calls Jesus the “son of Mary second Eve” (*PL* X. 183), he refers to the concept of recapitulation. The use of the simple term the “second Adam” is not merely a typological device to bring a colourful new aspect to the central story. The term is full of the most important soteriological implication. It is a another way of trying to explain and understand the mystery of what actually happened on the cross. Even in the narration of the “loss of Eden” (I. 4), Milton never wholly loses sight of the coming restoration to “the blissful seat” (I. 5).

⁸¹Ibid., p. 34.

⁸²Ibid., p. 38.

⁸³Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 4, 2, 7, quoted in Ibid., p. 36; cp. 2 Cor. 5:14f.

⁸⁴Cp. 1 Cor. 15:45 where Paul contrasts the “first” and the “last” Adam, i.e. Christ: “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit;” cp. Milton’s phrase: “Our second Adam in the wilderness,” *PL* XI. 383, which is already foreshadowing the “waste wilderness” (I. 7) as the setting of the temptation of the Son of God in *Paradise Regained*.

⁸⁵Here, Irenaeus does not use the word *recapitulatio* but *recirculationem*, which is based on the same concept of analogy between the Old and the New Testament: “Et propter hoc Lex eam, quae desponsata erat viro, licet virgo sit adhuc, uxorem eius qui desponsaverat vodat, eam quae est a Maria in Evam recirculationem significans” Hugo Koch, *Virgo Eva – Virgo Maria. Neue Untersuchungen über die Lehre von der Jungfrauschaft und der Ehe Mariens in der ältesten Kirche*. Volume 25, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte. (Berlin / Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1937), p. 20.

3.3 The Middle Ages From Anselm of Canterbury

3.3.1 Anselm of Canterbury: Satisfaction

The theology of the Atonement as taught by Anselm of Canterbury, the “father of Scholasticism”,⁸⁶ is generally considered to be the beginning of “the characteristic thinking of the western church on the means of the redemption of mankind”.⁸⁷ Although Anselm denounces any *ius* the devil might have over man,⁸⁸ he does not deny Satan a “de facto power over humanity.” He merely opposes any notion of his “*de jure* authority [...] firmly grounded in some legal or moral principle.”⁸⁹ Man is a debtor all right. But he does not owe anything to the devil but all to God, his rightful Lord (“hoc Deo debebat non diabolo”).

When Anselm contradicts the *ius diaboli*, he claims at the same time that sinful man is in zugzwang to sort out his relationship with his creator: Actually, it is man, and not Christ, who must satisfy God’s justice and defeat the devil himself:

Deus tamen non egebat ut de caelo descenderet ad vincendum diabolum, neque ut per iustitiam ageret contra illum ad liberandum hominem; sed ab homine Deus exiebat ut diabolum uinceret, et qui per peccatum Deum offenderat, per iustitiam satisfaceret. [...] sed quidquid ab illo exiebat, hoc Deo debebat non diabolo.⁹⁰

The expression “per iustitiam satisfaceret” is of pivotal importance for Anselm’s theology of the Atonement. It marks the transition from the church father’s *ransom theory* to the so-called *satisfaction theory*,⁹¹ which was modelled on

⁸⁶Gregory Schufreider, ‘Anselm’. in: *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*. Volume 1, (Grand Rapids / Leiden: Eerdmans Publishing / Koninklijke Brill, 1999), p. 68.

⁸⁷A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 39.

⁸⁸“Cette minoration du rôle du diable est la grande innovation d’Anselme dans le *CDH*” (*CDH* stands for Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo*, a theological treatise written 1097–99); Jean-François Cottier, ‘Iustitia Diaboli: Anselm, Gilbert Crispin et Rodulfus Monachus’. in: *Cur Deus Homo*. Volume 128, (Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1999), p. 250.

⁸⁹A. McGrath, *Historical Theology*, p. 135.

⁹⁰Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, II, cap. XIX, quoted in J.-F. Cottier, ‘Iustitia Diaboli’, p. 250.

⁹¹Peter Abailard; Rolf Peppermüller, editor, *Abaelards Auslegung des Römerbriefes*. Volume 10, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters. Texte und Untersuchungen. Neue Folge, ed. Ludwig Hödl and Wolfgang Kluxen. (Münster: Aschendorff, 1972), p. 88.

the penitential system of the church of Anselm's times.⁹²

This leaves one with the dilemma how fallen humans could give God satisfaction. Anselm, who is famed for his daring combination of theology and logic⁹³ struggles to find a solution in his *Proslogion* (c. 1079) and his *Cur Deus Homo*. As the title of the latter work indicates, the solution is that God become man himself and redeem fallen humanity. This is still not an answer to the question why God acted in this unpredictable way. Anselm states that, firstly, God is merciful because one of his characteristics is *bonitas*, i.e. goodness. On the other hand, God, who is the personification of justice itself (“totus et summe iustus”), cannot act in an unjust way “just the unjust to save” (*PL*, III, 215).⁹⁴ This predicament leads to the following syllogism:

- A. Only man ought to make satisfaction for sin – but he cannot.
- B. Only God can make the necessary satisfaction – but he is under no obligation to do so – indeed, he ought not to do so.

According to Anselm, this syllogism leads to the conclusion:⁹⁵ “Only a God-man both can and ought to make such a satisfaction.”

Sed dominum Christum Iesum dicimus verum deum et verum hominem,
unam personam in duabus naturis et duas naturas in una persona.⁹⁶

Thomas Aquinas, the Dominican theologian, who, in later medieval times, was given the epithet “Doctor Angelicus” further elaborated the Anselmian *satisfaction theory* in his best-known book, the *Summa Theologiae*.

⁹²A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 95. Another source could be the Germanic laws of the period; A. McGrath, *Historical Theology*, p. 136.

⁹³Anselm's aim is to demonstrate that the Christian faith is reasonable (*fides quarens intellectum*, i. e. “faith seeking understanding”). *Ibid.*, p. 113. Aulén's critique of the Anselmian view (“juridical,” “rationalising character” and neglecting “every sense of Love's hard work”) seems one-sided because he fails to fully appreciate Anselm's apologetical goal; G. Aulén, *Christus Victor*, pp. 91 and ix; cp. p. 26.

⁹⁴“Verum malis quomodo parcis, si es totus iustus et summe istus? Quomodo enim totus et summe iustus facit aliquid non iustum? Aut quae iustitia est merenti mortem aeternam dare vitam sempiternam? Unde ergo, bone Deus, bone bonis et malis, unde tibi salvare malos, si hoc non est iustum, et tu non facis aliquid non iustum?” (*Proslogion* 9; ed. Schmitt I.106.18–107.3, in A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 55).

⁹⁵Of course, the syllogism could also lead to the opposite conclusion: “A God-man both cannot and ought not to make such a satisfaction.” Anselm chooses the first conclusion because justice demands that a solution be found for man's dilemma; *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁹⁶Anselm of Canterbury; Franciscus Salesius Schmitt, editor, *Liber Cur Deus Homo*. (Bonn: Petri Hanstein, 1929), *Florilegium Patristicum tam veteris quam medii aevi auctores complectens*, ed. Bernhardus Geyer and Johannes Zellinger, pp. I. viii. 16–18.

3.3.2 Duns Scotus: The Voluntarist Interpretation

Against the Greek systematisation of God's qualities, the scholastic Duns Scotus (c. 1265–1308) stressed that God is not bound to any law but is utterly autonomous.⁹⁷ As a Franciscan theologian and philosopher, his thoughts on the person of Christ are modelled on the teaching of St Francis of Assisi. Among the most dominant characteristics of this theology is the importance attached to Christ's humanity and the emphasis on God as the highest, omnipotent being.⁹⁸ The latter aspect leads to a particular definition of God's will:

dico, quod sicut omne aliud a Deo, ideo est bonum, quia a Deo volitum, et non est converso; sic meritum illud tantum bonum erat, pro quanto acceptabatur.⁹⁹

The general principal of this “voluntarist interpretation” (“ideo est bonum, quia a Deo volitum”) is that God alone determines the value of any action that man performs (“pro quanto acceptabatur”).

This so-called *acceptation theory*¹⁰⁰ has consequences for the intra-trinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son. The only inherently good thing in the universe is God's character and, lastly, God himself. Nothing outside God can compel God in any way. God is absolutely free and only bound by his own character, which is *bonitas*. It was not necessary that Christ himself became the mediator for man.¹⁰¹ Another “patron or intercessor” could have “appeared” (*PL*, III. 219) before God in order to redeem mankind. An angel could as well have offered to give “life for life” (236), always provided that God accepted this angelic mediation. “The merit of Christ's passion lies

⁹⁷Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, ‘William Ockam’. in: *APE*. Volume 19, (1966), p. 326.

⁹⁸Werner Dettloff, ‘Duns Scotus’. in: *TRE*. Volume 9, (1982), p. 219.

⁹⁹I say that everything is different [seen] from [the perspective of] God, so-to-speak, hence this is good, what God decided [to be good], and not vice versa; so, this merit [i. e. Christ's death on the cross] was good in so far as it was accepted by God [to be good]; *Opus Oxoniense*, III dist. xix q. I n. 7 in A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 64.

¹⁰⁰W. Dettloff, ‘Duns Scotus’, p. 227.

¹⁰¹For Christ as mediator cp. *Hebr.* 8:6; 9:15 and also *PL* III, 226; Scotus' theology of the Atonement is closely linked with his differentiation between the two wills of God: the *potentia Dei absoluta* and the *potentia Dei ordinata*. The first term, the “absolute power of God”, describes “the possibilities open to God before he entered into any decisions concerning his course of action which led him to establish the ordained order through creation and subsequently redemption. It refers primarily to God's ability to do anything, subject solely to the condition that the outcome should not involve logical contradiction.” The second term, the “ordained power of God” stands for “the established order of salvation, which although contingent, is totally reliable.” A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 398.

solely in the *acceptatio divina*.”¹⁰² This alternative to the Atonement made by Christ is of special interest for the third book of *Paradise Lost*. There, a heavenly council is held before the “heavenly powers” between the Father and the Son (213). The heavenly muse grants a look behind the scenes and the reader witnesses how man’s redemption is planned and “some other, able and as willing” (211) selected in order to die for man. Thus, Duns Scotus opposes Anselm’s view that neither an angel nor a human being could have made satisfaction for man.¹⁰³

3.3.3 The *Pactum* Theology

Duns Scotus’ differentiation of the two wills is important for the *via moderna*, too.¹⁰⁴ Their most characteristic soteriological feature is the so-called *pactum* theology. This interpretation of the biblical notion of a “covenant” between God and his people is directed against the image of a capricious God. God is all-powerful and can, basically, do anything he likes (*potentia Dei absoluta*). However, God freely submits to certain laws which he himself formulated (*potentia Dei ordinata*). An important instance of this *potentia Dei ordinata* is that the omnipotent creator has promised to save mankind according to a divine plan. Modelled on the covenant, God had made with the descendants of Abraham (*Genesis* 17), this contract (*pactum*) demonstrated divine reliability:

The existence of this covenant affirms God’s commitment both to the salvation of mankind and the means ordained towards this end, particularly the sacramental system of the church. [...] It is this *pactum* which forms the fulcrum about which the doctrines of justification associated with the *via moderna* turn.¹⁰⁵

Man must fulfil his part of the *pactum*, too. The theologians of the *via moderna* claimed that man was responsible to fulfil his part of the covenant by *facere quod in se est*. Only if man met this demand of “doing his best,”

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁰³One of the basic questions, Anselm deals with in *Cur Deus homo*, is why this was not possible: “Qua scilicet ratione vel necessitate deus homo factus sit, et morte sua, sicut credimus et confitemur, mundo vitam reddideri, cum hoc aut per aliam personam, *sive angelicam sive humanam*, aut sola voluntate facere potuerit,” as he describes his goal in the introduction [my emphases]; Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus Homo*, pp. I. i. 14-18.

¹⁰⁴Cp. footnote 101; *via moderna*, formerly called “nominalism”, was a wide-spread school of thought in late medieval scholasticism, to which William of Ockham (1285 – c.1349) and Gabriel Biel (1419–95) among others belonged; A. McGrath, *Historical Theology*, p. 151.

¹⁰⁵A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 126.

God would fulfil his part and justify him.¹⁰⁶ The understanding of this doctrine is very important for an understanding of the Reformation. For, the young Luther had shared the view of the *via moderna* on justification, before he developed his “*mira et nova diffinitio iustitiae.*”¹⁰⁷

3.4 The Reformation

The humanist Desiderius Erasmus mocked the petty doctrinal debates of high scholasticism; sects such as the Cathari or the Fraticelli were shocked by the spreading immorality within the Roman Church. By contrast, Martin Luther is said to be the first reformer who directly attacked an important set of beliefs of the church itself.¹⁰⁸

3.4.1 Martin Luther: Imputed Righteousness

The German reformation, which was directed against the doctrines of the church, started by attacking the practices of the church, namely the indulgences. Luther’s condemnation of Johann Tetzel’s practice in the fifty-nine theses of 1517 was, however, already grounded in his “*mira et nova diffinitio iustitiae.*”¹⁰⁹ Luther, who had at first also adhered to the so-called *pactum* theology of the *via moderna*,¹¹⁰ reached his new understanding of justification by way of a new understanding of God’s righteousness. In an autobiographical fragment of 1545, Luther claims that his new theological insights were completed by 1519.¹¹¹ Luther, the Augustinian monk, read Rom. 1:17f. in his cell:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel¹¹² of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

¹⁰⁶ A. McGrath, *Historical Theology*, p. 151.

¹⁰⁷ A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 191.

¹⁰⁸ “He affirmed that what differentiated him from all previous reformers was that they attacked the life and he the teaching of the Roman church.” Roland H. Bainton, ‘Reformation’. in: *American People’s Encyclopaedia*. Volume 15, (New York: Grolier, 1966), p. 486.

¹⁰⁹ Cp. Alister McGrath, “Mira et nova diffinitio iustitiae: Luther and Scholastic Doctrines of Justification,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 74 (1983), 37–60.

¹¹⁰ See 3.4.4.

¹¹¹ A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, pp. 193f.

¹¹² Greek: *εὐαγγέλιον*.

Luther was in a quandary about how the severe righteousness of a just and punishing God could really be an *εὐαγγέλιον*, i.e. a “good and joyful message.” For him, the righteousness of God was inseparably connected with Moses’ decalogue. It seemed as if there was no difference between the Old and the New Covenant, in the end. Finally, after “pondering day and night,” he found the key to the problem. The “gates of paradise had been opened.”¹¹³ Luther’s liberating insight was that God’s righteousness in *Romans* consisted in a “passive” and not an “active” *iustitia*. It was not an interior quality of God on account of which he rewarded good people and punished bad ones. Quite the contrary, verse 17b (“The just shall live by faith”) described a characteristic of God’s “Handeln am Menschen”.¹¹⁴ Man does not attempt to “actively” co-operate with God in justification but remains “passive” while God himself is “active” and justifies him:

[...] revelari per euangelium iustitiam Dei, scilicet passivam, qua nos Deus misericors iustificat per fidem, sicut scriptum est: Iustus ex fide vivit.¹¹⁵

It is telling that Luther uses such personal images as that of the *commercium admirabile* of bride and bridegroom.¹¹⁶ This gives some balance to his theology, when he turns to the comparatively impersonal metaphor of the court. The righteousness, a gift from God, rather than a righteousness which belongs to God, was later to be called *iustitia aliena*, the “alien righteousness”:

Misericordia et miseratione es iustus. Das ist nicht [sic] meus habitus vel qualitas cordis mei, sed extrinsecum quoddam, scilicet misericordia divina.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ “Hic me prorsus renatum esse sensi, et apertis portis in ipsam paradisum intrasse. Ibi continuo alia mihi facies totius scripturae apparuit. “Vorrede Luthers zum ersten Bande der Gesamtausgabe seiner lateinischen Schriften, Wittenberg 1545;” Martin Luther; Karl Drescher, editor, *Schriften 1943/46. Mit 10 Tafeln (11 Papstspottbilder)*. Volume 54, Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1928), pp. 54, 186 and 8–10, cp. Otto Hermann Pesch, *Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin. Versuch eines systematisch-theologischen Dialogs*. Volume 4, Wahlberger Studien der Albertus-Magnus-Akademie, ed. Diego Arenhoevel, Albert Fries and Otto Hermann Pesch. (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1967), p. 164.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 163.

¹¹⁵ “Vorrede Luthers zum ersten Bande der Gesamtausgabe seiner lateinischen Schriften, Wittenberg 1545;” Martin Luther, *Schriften 1943/46*, pp. 54, 186 and 6–8, cp. O. H. Pesch, *Theologie der Rechtfertigung*, p. 164.

¹¹⁶ *Vorlesung über den Römerbrief*, 382, 26–7; 502, 32 – 503, 35 (November 1515 until September 1516), in A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, pp. 199f.

¹¹⁷ *Enarratio Psalmi LI* (1532, printed 1538); quoted in O. H. Pesch, *Theologie der Rechtfertigung*, p. 173.

The word *extrinsecum*, which corresponds to the phrase *extra nobis* used in other texts,¹¹⁸ signifies that God acts before man can even try to do any meritorious works in order to fulfil his part of the covenant. The imagery that lies behind this understanding is that of the court. As in human jurisdiction, everything hinges on the verdict of the judge and not on the moral quality of the accused party. In other words, man is *simul iustus et peccator*, at the same time (declared) righteous and (according to his nature) a sinner.¹¹⁹ In other words, Luther teaches an imputed rather than an inherent righteousness.

Milton did not write about a time of similarly intense anxiety about whether he belonged to the elect as did his Puritan contemporary, the tinker-poet John Bunyan.¹²⁰ Neither does Milton express the Lutheran concept of *iustitia extra nos* in such a clear-cut and moving way as did the 17th century preacher-allegorist.¹²¹ This is not to say, that Luther is unimportant for Milton: It is Christ's "merit / imputed" (*PLIII*. 290f.) which

shall absolve them who renounce
Their own both righteous and unrighteous deeds
And live in thee transplanted, and from thee
Receive new life.¹²²

¹¹⁸Ibid., pp. 141ff.

¹¹⁹This idea of the simultaneity of being righteous and still being a sinner (in view of man's nature) is based on a Pauline concept. In *Romans* 7, Luther sees St. Paul struggling with the fact that he still sins, although his will is bent towards doing good: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." O. H. Pesch argues that Luther transformed Paul's *Kampfesformel* of the *simul peccator et iustus* into a *Seinsformel* (*Rom* 7:19f.); Ibid., pp. 109ff.

¹²⁰Milton's concept is not of election *to* salvation but rather election *for* a specific task in the kingdom of God (cp. the poet's struggle about how to "serve [...] my Maker" (5) with the talent received; sonnet "When I Consider How My Light Is Spent"), cp. *DDC* VI.455. The theological focus is different from Bunyan's desire for assurance of salvation. It was Luther's *Commentary on Galatians* which became "such strong consolation and blessed evidence from heaven touching my interest in his love through Christ;" John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding & The Life and Death of Mr Badman. Introduction by G. B. Harrison*. (London / New York: Dent / Dutton, 1928), p. 132; cp. Christopher Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious, and Factious People. John Bunyan and His Church. 1628-1688*. (Oxford: OUP, 1988), p. 157.

¹²¹"Thy righteousness is in heaven; and methought withal, I saw, with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God's right hand; there, I say, is my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was a-doing, God could not say of me, He wants my righteousness, for that was just before him." John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding & Mr Badman*, p. 229.

¹²²III. 291-4. Note the emphasis on the close personal relationship between the believer and Christ, which reminds one of Luther's image of marriage, becoming "one flesh." However, it also is reminiscent of Calvin's *unio mystica*; cp. p. 40.

3.4.2 Melanchthon: Forensic Justification

The imagery of the court is developed by Melanchthon in fuller detail in the Augsburg Confession (1530), which is the chief statement of faith of the Lutheran church.¹²³ Philipp Melanchthon, who was the chief author of the Confession and thus responsible for a systematization of Lutheran theology, reduces the reformation teaching on justification to a catchy formula: a man is saved *propter Christum per fidem*.¹²⁴ He is not saved on account of his faith (justification *propter fidem* would have been the correct term) but solely on account of Christ's redemptive work on the cross. As the chief author of the Augsburg confession, Melanchthon was responsible for systematizing the Lutheran theology. The theological differences between pupil and teacher increased as time went by.

Whereas Luther consistently employed images and categories of personal relationship to describe the union of the believer and Christ (such as the *commercium admirabile* of a human marriage paralleling that between the soul and Christ), Melanchthon increasingly employed images and categories drawn from the sphere of Roman law.¹²⁵

Thus, Melanchthon emphasised the *forensic* character of justification even more than Luther himself. He compares this notion with the classical incidence of the verdict on Scipio. The people of Rome pronounced Scipio free before the court (*in foro*). The Greek scholar Melanchthon employed this event from Roman history as an analogy of what happens in the Christian faith:

Nam Hebraeis iustificare est forense verbum; ut si dicam, populus Romanus iustificavit Scipionem accusatum a tribunis, id est, absolvit seu iustum pronuntiavit.¹²⁶

Milton's treatment of the Atonement in the heavenly council in book III of *PL* bears forensic overtones, too. Man is in utter need of a "Patron or intercessor" (219) who justifies man, accused in front of the divine tribunal: "Die he or justice must" (210).

¹²³Jürgen Lorz, editor, *Das Augsburgische Bekenntnis. Studienausgabe*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), p. 9.

¹²⁴Fourth article *De iustificatione*.

¹²⁵A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 211.

¹²⁶This passage is taken from Melanchthon's 1533 edition of his *Loci communes rerum theologicarum*, which first appeared in 1521: CR 21.421, quoted in *Ibid*.

3.4.3 Calvin

3.4.3.1 Dissolving the Dilemma: *Unio Mystica*

In contrast to Germany, the English-speaking world has been influenced to a greater extent by John Calvin than by Martin Luther. The development of the doctrine of justification owes a lot to the French reformer. He combined Luther's and Melancthon's views in a very fruitful way:

This [Calvin's; L.A.] new approach to justification may be regarded as a recovery – whether conscious or unconscious – of Luther's realist conception of justification as the personal encounter of the believer with God in Christ, while simultaneously the extrinsicism of the Melancthonian concept of justification is retained.¹²⁷

Calvin solves the dilemma of imputed versus imparted righteousness by his perception of justification as part of a mystical union with the risen Christ. This union with Christ effects justification as well as sanctification in the believer.¹²⁸ So, Calvin was able to explain the alleged discrepancy between faith and works which had so troubled the Tridentine bishops. The believer's life is changed not because he now (in an Erasmian or Pelagian sense) struggles more to lead a good life on his own. The believer does not watch Christ from a distance (*procul speculamur*) but is united with Christ in a spiritual way, just as a plant is united with the soil in a physical way:

Non ergo [Christum] extra nos procul speculamur, ut nobis imputetur eius iustitia: sed quia ipsum induimus, et instit sumus in eius corpus, unum denique nos secum efficere dignatus est: ideo iustitiae societatem novis cum eo esse gloriamur.¹²⁹

Calvin argues that the spiritual *unio mystica* with Christ leads to the justification of the believer and subsequently also to a life which is continually being renewed (sanctification).¹³⁰ Calvin's view can be roughly presented as follows:¹³¹

$$\textit{electio} \rightarrow \textit{unio mystica} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{iustificatio} \\ \textit{glorificatio} \end{array} \right. \rightarrow \textit{sanctificatio}$$

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 225.

¹²⁸In contrast to Osiander, Calvin distinguishes justification from sanctification; Willem Nijenhuis, 'Johannes Calvin'. in: *TRE*. Volume 7, (1981), p. 583.

¹²⁹J. Calvin, *Institutio christianae religionis*, III.xi.10; *OS* 4.191.31–192.4; quoted in A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 224; Cp. O. H. Pesch, *Gnade und Rechtfertigung*, pp. 147f.

¹³⁰This concept of the *unio mystica* is important for Bunyan's covenant theology; cp. p. ??.

¹³¹A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 224.

3.4.3.2 Calvinism and Double Predestination

Calvin did not meet with as harsh opposition to the doctrine of justification as did the German reformers. They had prepared the ground for the new religious movement. Perhaps these theological-political considerations contributed to the fact that Calvin emphasised the individual's *insitio in Christum* rather than the doctrine of *iustificatio* in itself in his *Institutio* of 1536. After Calvin's death, the issue of justification gradually lost importance. In the Reformed (Calvinist) Churches, the doctrine of predestination became prominent and filled this vacuum.¹³² In contrast to the first edition of the *Institutio* of 1536, where the doctrine of predestination is only mentioned in passing in two places, it finds a place in his 1538 catechism. Inserted between the passages about "law" and "faith," Calvin here seeks an explanation of the question why the hearers of the Word respond in different ways.¹³³ Some "bear fruit" (Matt. 13:23) while others turn their back on the message of Christ as if it was a "savour of death" (2 Cor. 2:14). For Calvin, the doctrine of predestination provides an answer to this mystery. God has decreed man's destiny before the creation of the world:

In hoc autem discrimine [i. e. the difference between believers and unbelievers, L. A.] sublime divini consilii arcanum necessario considerandum est. In his enim solis demum verbi Dei semen radicem ducit, ac fructificat, quos Dominus sibi filios regnique coelestis haeredes, aeterna sua electione, praedestinavit.

Reliquis omnibus, qui eodem Dei consilio, ante mundi constitutionem, reprobati sunt, clarissima veritatis praedicatio nihil quam odor mortis in mortem esse potest.¹³⁴

This practical and ecclesiological concern¹³⁵ stands beside a pastoral one. While a right understanding of Calvin's doctrine of predestination can become a "stronghold in times of temptation and trials,"¹³⁶ a misguided ap-

¹³²Ibid., p. 226.

¹³³John Calvin; I. John Hesselink, editor, *Calvin's First Catechism. A Commentary. Featuring Ford Lewis Battles's translation of the 1538 Catechism.* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1997), p. 93.

¹³⁴J. Calvin, "De electione et praedestinatione," *Catechismus seu christianae religionis*, John Calvin; Anette Zillenbiller, editor, *Instruction et confession de foy dont on use en l'Eglise de Genève. Catechismus seu Christianae religionis institutio Ecclesiae Genevensis.* Volume 2, Ioannis Calvini. Opera omnia, ed. B. G. Armstrong and e.a.. (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2002), p. 30.

¹³⁵François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 266f., in John Calvin, *Catechism*, p. 93.

¹³⁶John T. McNeill (ed.), *On the Christian Faith.* (Indianapolis / New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957), p. xxviii, in Ibid., p. 100.

plication is a cause of psychological depression and has pushed some people to the brink of suicide – and beyond. John Child, a former member of John Bunyan’s congregation in Bedford, who went back into the Church of England in 1660, is but one example.¹³⁷ Already in 1538, Calvin feels induced to discourage any mystic curiosity to “penetrate into heaven itself” in order to assure one’s salvation. Apart from perusing the Scriptures, any attempt to figure out God’s secret counsel (*consilium*) would be in vain. Like Luther, Calvin encourages his readers to cling to Christ instead in whom lies man’s eternal life.¹³⁸ While man cannot know God’s secret *consilium*, his election is manifested (*patefacit*) “by calling” (*vocatione*)¹³⁹

Again, a misconception of Calvin’s writings may degenerate into religious legalism. It may have been just this legalism which led to Max Weber’s *Protestantism-These*, which claims that the *Geist des Kapitalismus* originated in the English Calvinists’ struggle to prove their divine calling. According to Weber, the resulting “innerworldly ascetism” led to hard work and, thus, to material success.¹⁴⁰

3.4.4 The Council of Trent: Imparted Righteousness

The Catholic answer to the reformation of the doctrine of justification was delayed for a long period of time. Unfortunately, when the Pope finally summoned the bishops to Santa Maria Maggiore in Trent to restate the Catholic doctrine, the division of the Western church was already advanced beyond repair. During a first gathering from 1545–47, several doctrinal and disciplinary concerns were on the agenda. The “doctrinal masterpiece of the council” was the decree on justification, which was approved of on January 13, 1547.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ *GA*, Miscellaneous Works (OUP), ix. 167, in C. Hill, *A Turbulent People*, p. 185. Hill also points to the severe economic situation in the early seventeenth century, which “may have worked together with Calvinism to induce a sense of desperation [...]”

¹³⁸ “But if while possessing Christ in faith, we at the same time possess life in him, we have no business investigating anything beyond this concerning God’s eternal plan.” John Calvin, *Catechism*, p. 17.

¹³⁹ In *Institutio* III.24.2 and 4, Calvin refers to 1 John 3:24. Thus, the calling can be described as “the outward testimony to it,” i.e. man’s election, which becomes visible “by the whole course of their lives.” Calvin’s commentary on Dan. 12:1, in *Ibid.*, p. 99

¹⁴⁰ Cp. Max Weber; Johannes Winkelmann, editor, *Die protestantische Ethik I. Eine Aufsatzsammlung*. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2000), pp. 39ff. and 115ff. and 66 In the context of my essay, Weber’s thesis is only interesting in so far as his references to *Paradise Lost* and *The Pilgrim’s Progress* as exponents of Puritan literature exhibit a critical sociological approach to Milton’s and Bunyan’s texts; *ibid.*, pp. 73 and 124.

¹⁴¹ Guiseppe Alberigo, ‘Council of Trent’. in: Hans J. Hillerbrand, editor, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*. 4 vols. Volume 3, (New York / Oxford: OUP, 1996),

Some bishops, such as the general of the Augustinian Hermits, Girolamo Seripando, struggled to come close to the position of the reformers. He tried to formulate an article that was still open to an interpretation in terms of the *duplex iustitia*. This term, which can be translated as “twofold righteousness”, differentiated between *iustitia imputata* (the Lutheran-Melanchtonian concept) and *iustitia inhaerens* (i.e. sanctification in Luther’s theology).¹⁴² The majority of bishops, however, were opposing the suggestions of Seripando and his supporters. The concept of imputed righteousness was discarded, and it was strongly argued for justification on the grounds of an internal righteousness:

Impii autem iustificationis, quae simul in ablutione peccatorum, simul in sanctificatione et in infusione donorum consistit, causae sunt [...] formalis iustitia una Dei, qua renovamur spiritu mentis nostrae et non modeo reputamur, sed vere iusti nominamur et sumus.¹⁴³

Thus, the September draft, which had closely followed the wording of Seripando’s original version, was rewritten in a manner which excluded the Reformers’ understanding of justification¹⁴⁴ and was closely linked to the *pactum* theology.¹⁴⁵ This formulation of the doctrine could not prevent the deepening of the gulf between the two factions within the Western church.¹⁴⁶

When God the Father classifies the believers as those who “renounce / Their own both righteous and unrighteous deeds” (III. 290f.), this might be seen as a conciliatory position on Justification.¹⁴⁷ Milton’s renunciation of Catholicism was less based on a condemnation of their theology than on a criticism of their theological politics. He held the Pope as Antichrist responsible for the deaths of the Marian martyrs and denounced Catholicism

p. 173.

¹⁴²Luther did not use the term *sanctificatio* (the process of becoming holy) as opposed to *iustificatio* but the problem signified by these terms is recognised and dealt with. O. H. Pesch, *Theologie der Rechtfertigung*, p. 284. Explicitly, one finds *sanctificatio* in Calvin’s writings where it is seen as the natural consequence of the *unio mystica*. Cp. 3.4.3.1.

¹⁴³CT 5.512.12–20, in A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 263.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 262f.

¹⁴⁵Cp. 3.3.3.

¹⁴⁶H. Jedin: “Nicht ohne Grund ist behauptet worden, die Glaubensspaltung hätte vermieden werden oder doch einen anderen Weg nehmen können, wenn dieses Rechtfertigungsdekret auf dem fünften Laterankonzil beschlossen worden wäre.” in Klaus Wittstadt, ‘Tridentinum’. in: *ELTG*. Volume 3, (1998), p. 2003.

¹⁴⁷To “renounce dependance on *righteous* deeds would be justification by faith; but ‘living faith’ (faith issuing in works) would also renounce *unrighteous* deeds” John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, p. 184.

as “a priestly despotism under the cloak of religion,” which “extirpates all religious and civil supremacies.”¹⁴⁸

3.4.5 Protestant Orthodoxy: Covenant Theology

During the period after the reformers' death, their adherents started to systematise the new theological insights. The Reformed Church, which had not acknowledged the *Book of Concord* of 1580, was nonetheless quicker to develop a new scholasticism than the Lutheran Church, which firmly stuck to the *Formula concordiae* as their unshakeable confession of faith.¹⁴⁹ The principal soteriological conception of Reformed orthodoxy was covenant theology, which is based upon the Biblical notion of *foedus*.¹⁵⁰ The Reformed theologians Gomarus, Polanus and Wollebius took up Zwingli's references to a *pactum dei cum homine* and developed it further.¹⁵¹ They differentiated between the *foedus naturae* and the *foedus gratiae*. In the former covenant, God promised eternal life to those men who are obedient, directly to God himself and – after the fall – also indirectly to his law as revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai. In contrast to this covenant, which was made by God with all creatures, the *foedus gratiae* is pertaining to God and the elect only. In it, God promises to adopt those as children whom he has elected.

Compared to the strict Calvinist, John Bunyan,¹⁵² covenant theology does not play a major rôle for Milton's theology. It is, however, important for the plot in book III of *Paradise Lost*, where Milton takes up the notion of people such as the Continental “father of covenant theology,” John Cocceius, that the *foedus gratiae* was not made between Christ and man, but between God the Father and God the Son before the creation of the world.

¹⁴⁸ *C.P.W.*, II, p. 565, IV, pp. 321f., quoted in Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*. (London: Faber, 1977), p. 155.

¹⁴⁹ A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 227.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 228 *Foedus* and its synonym *pactum* are Latin expressions for the Hebrew *b'rit* and the Greek *διαθήκη* respectively, meaning “covenant.” Joachim Guhrt, ‘Covenant, Guarantee, Mediator, *diathēkē*’. in: Colin Brown, editor, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Volume 1, (1986), pp. 365ff. The idea of a *pactum* between God and man also underlies the *pactum* theology of the *via moderna*. However, the Catholic and the Protestant interpretation of the covenant are worlds apart.

¹⁵¹ H. Zwingli, *Opera* v. 71, quoted in Jens G. Møller, ‘The Beginnings of Puritan Covenant Theology’. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 14 (April 1963), p. 47.

¹⁵² John Bunyan's chief covenant tract is *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded* (1659); cp. Richard L. Greaves, ‘John Bunyan and Covenant Thought in the Seventeenth Century’. *Church History*, 36 (June 1967), p. 169.

Chapter 4

Milton and Heresy

Since William Blake has notoriously accused Milton of being “of the devil’s party without knowing it,”¹ Milton’s orthodoxy has been questioned time and again. A concise sketch of recent research in Milton’s heretical belief is conducive for a theological interpretation of the Puritan poet. Until recently, even critics who saw *Paradise Lost* as a statement of Christian orthodoxy did not doubt that Milton was an Arian.² Then, in 1998, William Hunter stirred up the hornets’ nest of Milton criticism concerned with the poet’s religious orthodoxy. Hunter took up the long-forgotten postulation of nineteenth-century Thomas Burgess, bishop of Salisbury, that the thorough theological treatise, *De Doctrina Christiana*, traditionally attributed to Milton, had not

¹William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790), in A. Dyson, *Casebook*, p. 44.

²“[...] we should not from this passage, nor from any passage in the whole poem, have discovered the poet’s Arianism without the aid of external evidence [here, Lewis mainly refers to Milton’s *De Doctrina Christiana*; L. A.]” C. S. Lewis, *Paradise Lost*, pp. 86f. My own explanation for the fact that it is extremely difficult if not impossible to discover Milton’s Arianism on the basis of *Paradise Lost* alone (cp. III. 1- -10, where the Son is described as “increate” (6) and “co-eternal” with the Father (2)), is that it would not have been conducive for the epic’s apologetic aim to “justify the ways of God to men” (I. 26) if its author had plunged into doctrinal differentiations which would have appeared “petty” for a critic of the basics of the Christian faith. Hence, in contrast to his *De Doctrina*, in *Paradise Lost*, Milton set out to describe what C. S. Lewis called “mere Christianity” (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*. (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1952)), the belief common to most Christians at most of the times. (Cp. C. S. Lewis, *Paradise Lost*, p. 82).

Arianism goes back to the presbyter Arius (c. 265 – c. 336) who, in order to keep doctrine in tune with monism, opposed the deity of Christ. The Alexandrian bishop Athanasius (c. 295 – 373) fought Arius because he claimed that Christ’s deity should not be neglected; man’s salvation was inextricably linked with it. The Nicene Creed of Constantinople (381) decided the case in favour of the trinitarian view of Athanasius. Cp. Wolfgang Bienert, ‘Arius/Arianer’. in: *TRE*. Volume 1, (1998), pp. 128f.

been written by Milton himself, but had only been published under his name.³ It does not lie within the scope of my essay to go into a detailed discussion about the question of who wrote *De Doctrina*. I will, however, follow Fish's argumentation that, given Milton's association and involvement with the treatise, the simplest and most economical conclusion is that Milton wrote *De Doctrina*.⁴

Writing about "Milton and heresy," it is also important to distinguish between the actual and the implied author.⁵ As mentioned above, C. S. Lewis held the opinion that, although one knows of Miltonic Arianism and Arminianism from *De Doctrina*, the epic *Paradise Lost* is orthodox provided one does not see the text through extratextually heresy-tinted glasses:

In so far as *Paradise Lost* is Augustinian and Hierarchical it is also Catholic in the sense of basing its poetry on conceptions that have been held "always and everywhere and by all". This Catholic quality is so predominant that it is the first impression any unbiased reader would receive. Heretical elements exist in it, but are only discoverable by search: any criticism which forces them into the foreground is mistaken, and ignores the fact that this poem was accepted as orthodox by many generations of acute readers well grounded in theology.⁶

The modern adherents of Blake's criticism of Milton, such as William Empson, think *Paradise Lost* is not conforming to orthodoxy. One "by-product" of the analysis of the rôle of the Atonement in Milton, is that it might afford a further argument where the actual as well as the implied author(s) of Milton's works stand in the religious matrix of his time.⁷

³William B. Hunter, "Visitation Unimplor'd." *Milton and the Authorship of De Doctrina Christiana*. (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne UP, 1998), pp. 4ff, cp.

S. Fish, *How Milton Works*, pp. 15–19.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 17 and 19.

⁵If William Blake is right, the implied reader would not be a Puritan fond of hierarchy but a Rebell and Regicide, although Milton as the actual author might vow otherwise, cp. Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader. Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*. (Baltimore / London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974).

⁶C. S. Lewis, *Paradise Lost*, p. 82.

⁷For more recent essays which depict Milton as rather heretical see: Stephen B. Dobranski and John P. Rumrich, editors, *Milton and Heresy*. (Cambridge: CUP, 1998).

Chapter 5

Milton's Minor Poems

The young Milton, who imitated the Roman love poets in a series of Latin elegies, turned to short religious poems in his twenties. Of these, I will have a closer look at Milton's three minor religious poems on the life of Christ.¹ I will analyse the role the Atonement plays in these minor poems, because they exemplify Milton's first attempts of writing about the redemption brought about by Christ. In addition, the comparative brevity and clarity of these poems may also shed new light on the function of the Atonement motif in the very complex religious poems of the late Milton.

5.1 Peace and War: "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity"

"On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," a very different Christmas poem in its belligerent tone,² introduces an image of Christ which is very important for *Paradise Lost*, too. I will draw the reader's attention to the implications this Christological understanding has for the motif of the Atonement. Milton's in Latin elegy, "Elegia Sexta" is generally considered³ to relate to "The Nativity:"⁴

Paciferum canimus caelesti semine regem,
Faustaque sacratis saecula pacta libris,
Vagitumque Dei, et stabulantem paupere tecto

¹ "The Nativity," "The Passion," and "Upon the Circumcision."

² Cp. chapter 3.2.1.1.

³ Mother M. Christopher Pecheux, 'The Nativity Tradition in *Elegia Sexta*'. *MS*, 23 (1987), p. 3.

⁴ I avoid the traditional term "Nativity Ode" because the genre is disputed.

Qui suprema suo cum patre regna colit.
 Stelliparumque polum, modulantesque aethere turmas,
 Et subito elisos ad sua fana deos.
 Dona quidem dedimus Christi natalibus illa
 Illa sub auroram lux mihi prima tulit.
 (81–88)

The “Nativity” is a “present to the infant God” on his birthday (16; cp. “Dona quidem dedimus Christi natalibus illa,” 87), apparently composed in an act of early morning inspiration (“sub auroram lux,” 88).⁵

In his first significant English poem, the youthful Milton successfully christianises a classic genre, 38 years before the publication of his christianised epic, sung by the “heavenly Muse” (*PL* I. 7).⁶ Similar to fourth century Prudentius, Milton takes up the hymns, paeans (originally hymns to Apollo), and dithyrambs (celebrations of Dionysus) of such writers as Pindar⁷ and Horace.⁸ The *invocatio* of the muse in the third stanza of the prefatory, which claims the inspiration of the poetry and proves the humbleness of the poet,⁹ is an apt example: Milton’s Muse does not dwell “on the top / Of old Olympus,” but is of heavenly origin (“heav’nly born;” *PL* VII. 7).¹⁰

5.1.1 Dovish Peace

Milton employs three traditional legends related to the Nativity in the poem: “nature’s serenity,”¹¹ the absence of war,¹² and the cessation of pagan oracles.¹³ I will argue that Milton builds these legends into his poem in a way so that they refer to spiritual at-one-ment brought about by Christ’s death.

⁵Cp. Milton’s amanuensis, Cyriack Skinner on *Paradise Lost*, Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton. A Critical Biography*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), Blackwell Critical Biographies, ed. Claude Rawson, p. 448.

⁶M. C. Pecheux, ‘Nativity Tradition’, p. 17.

⁷There are no whole extant hymns of Pindar, only his odes survived completely.

⁸Philip Rollinson, ‘Milton’s Nativity Poem and the Decorum of Genre’. *MS*, 8 (1975), pp. 169, 166.

⁹“Humility *topos*,” cp. ll. 24. 239; cp. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

¹⁰Cp. the beginnings of book one and three of *PL*.

¹¹Cp. the emphasis on nature through the astronomical metaphor in the *Elegia Sexta*: “Stelliparumque polum” (85).

¹²Cp. “Paciferum,” “Faustaque [...] saecula” (81f.).

¹³‘Et subito elisos ad sua fana deos’ (86); C. A. Patrides, *Christian Tradition*, p. 143.

5.1.1.1 Nature's Serenity

The first two stanzas of the hymn transfer a snowy British winter to the Palestinian village of Bethlehem. This not only makes sense because Christmas is celebrated in winter, but also because of the symbolism of snow inherited from the Bible. In Scripture, snow stands for purity and forgiveness of sins. In Isa. 1:18, "scarlet" sin is turned into "white" snow.¹⁴ This imagery of purity stands in contrast with the metaphor of nakedness ("naked shame") and dirtiness ("pollute with sinful blame").¹⁵ The term "Deformities" also has a moral connotation. Maundeville (1400) uses the expression "Purged and clene of all vice and alkyn deformitee."¹⁶ The snow thus has a literal as well as a metaphorical meaning and bears witness of Milton's belief in the *peccatum originale*. Through the metaphors used, Milton emphasises that for him, the actual meaning of the legend "nature's serenity" is a spiritual one. It is not only the serenity expressed in the "the Book of Knowledge fair" (*PL* III. 47),¹⁷ but the peace which results of the at-one-ment made by God with man.

5.1.1.2 Political Peace

The second Christian legend spotted by Patrides in the "Nativity" is that of the absence of war. Throughout church history, the *Pax Romana* of emperor Augustus has been interpreted as a symbol for the "perpetual peace" (7) Christ had promised to give. Aquinas argues why the circumstances of Christ's birth bore spiritual symbolic significance and how he was born at the right time (*congruo tempore*). One reason, among others, that he enlists is the great peace under the wide-spread reign of Augustus:

Tempore etiam illo, quo totus orbis sub uno Principe vivebat, maxime pax fuit in mundo. Et ideo decebat ut illo tempore Christus nasceretur, qui est *pax nostra, faciens utraque unum* ut dicitur *Ephes. 2, [14]*.¹⁸

¹⁴Cp. Ps. 51:7: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Albert S. Cook, 'Notes on Milton's Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity'. *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 15 (1909), p. 321.

¹⁵Both metaphors describe sin in the Bible (Rev. 3:18; 2 Pet. 3:14); cp. *Ibid.*, pp. 305–368.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 322.

¹⁷I.e. nature; cp. C. A. Patrides, *Christian Tradition*, pp. 69f.

¹⁸Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. (Alba: Editiones Paulinae, 1962), pp. III. 35, 8.

Although Milton evokes this Thomist allegorical interpretation of Roman history,¹⁹ it is striking that only one stanza of the hymn (IV) is dedicated to political armistice.

Stanza XV is modelled on the personifications of Ps. 85:10, where Peace is joined by Mercy, Truth and Righteousness.²⁰ This recalls momentarily the paradisaical and sinless past (“age of gold,” 135). The music of the spheres played on the cherubims’ and seraphims’ harps is (IX–XIV) has a similar significance. This “harmony alone” (107) could make an “at-one-ment” of “heaven and earth” (“hold [...] in happier union”). Again, for a brief moment, the reader envisions the gates of Paradise wide opened once more (148). However, “wisest fate says no” (149). The hour of ultimate redemption has not yet come but is only foreshadowed in the Nativity (152f.). It not only is the *Pax Romana*, but the *Pax Christi* which is brought about through the at-one-ment made by God with man and foreshadowed in the Nativity.²¹

5.1.1.3 Peace through Ransom

In the “Nativity,” political peace and nature’s serenity mirror God’s *heilsgeschichtliche* deed of sending his Son, the bringer of peace.²² The immense significance of the Atonement already playing in the young Milton’s theology becomes evident. Patrides opines: “[...] there are few opinions that Milton held more sincerely or more consistently than his [forensic] view of the Atonement.”²³ Already in line 4, Milton hints at the future “great redemption” of Christ. Irenaeus’ metaphor of the bargain is further expressed in stanza I, where it is promised that Christ “our deadly forfeit should release” (6). “Deadly” here has to be understood in the sense of “causing death.”²⁴ Cook’s comparison to the unpublished poem “To the Holy Ghost” by Lord General Fairfax is elucidating. There, Fairfax explicitly links the word “forfeit” to the notion of bargaining: “Release the Forfeit and pay the Debt.”²⁵ In addition, the plan to “redeem our loss” evokes the Anselmic understanding of satisfaction in stanza XVI, which is emphasised by the next stanza’s reference to “Mount Sinai,” i. e. Old Testament times, when Atonement was

¹⁹ Augustine had explained the *Pax Romana* in a similar way in his *De civitate Dei* (413–426/7); A. S. Cook, ‘Milton’s Ode’, p. 326.

²⁰ “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed *each other*.”

²¹ The notion of spiritual and political peace seem to overlap from 1649 for Cromwell’s Secretary for the Foreign Tongues.

²² “[...] work us a perpetual peace,” 7; cp. Rom. 5:1.

²³ C. A. Patrides, *Christian Tradition*, p. 141.

²⁴ Cp. *PL* III. 221: “deadly forfeiture” A. S. Cook, ‘Milton’s Ode’, p. 305.

²⁵ 24; Fairfax might have this line in mind, *Ibid.*, pp. 305–368.

made by sacrificing sheep and goats.²⁶ These expressions place the antique legends in a Christian framework where the Atonement looms large:

The babe [...],
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss;
So both himself and us to glorify [...].
(151–54)

5.1.1.4 Peace In Spite of Sinfulness

If one compares Milton's version of the Nativity to the rendering of Christ's birth by Richard Crashaw, "In the Holy Nativity of Our Lord God: A Hymn Sung as by the Shepherds," which was published one year after Milton had printed the "Nativity" in 1645, a different emphasis becomes evident. In Milton, nature is under the curse of the Fall (cp. Rom. 8:21–23). She must "hide her guilty front" (39) and her "sinful blame" (41). Snow is an image for innocence covering sin. The Catholic Crashaw²⁷ employs snow as a metaphor not for sinfulness but of personified Nature's attempt to please her maker and offer him

[...] whitest sheets of snow
To furnish the fair Infant's bed
(53f.)²⁸

Nature labours with all her might to please her maker, and the "powers of heaven and earth" (41) attempt to provide a soft and clean bed for "this huge birth" (42).

Whether Crashaw merely sees the birth of Christ from a different angle²⁹ or whether this might be seen as betraying the Catholic notion of the *pactum theology* of the *via moderna* according to which man should *facere quod in se est*,³⁰ is of secondary importance. In each case, the comparison underlines the great rôle Luther's *sola gratia* plays for Milton. Just like Grace, the

²⁶Cp. Lev. 16 about Aaron's sin offering and the day of atonement.

²⁷Crashaw fled from the Puritans to the Continent and embraced Catholicism in 1644.

²⁸Richard Crashaw, 'In the Holy Nativity of Our Lord God: A Hymn Sung as by the Shepherds'. in: M. H. Abrams (Gen. Ed.), *Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Volume 1, 6th edition. (New York / London: Norton, 1993), pp. 1391–94.

²⁹Crashaw's approach to the Nativity is "vertical," Milton's is "horizontal," C. A. Patrides, *Christian Tradition*, p. 258.

³⁰Cp. 3.3.3.

“winged messenger” of *PL* (III.229), the winged *prosopopeias* in the “Nativity” also come “unprevented, unimplored, unsought,” (*PL* III. 230f.): Peace, the “ready harbinger, / With turtle wings” (50) and Mercy “With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering” (146). Stanley Fish describes the atmosphere of the “Nativity” as one resisting the “temptation to action,” where the shepherds, for example, “are simply sitting around and doing nothing” and the protagonist “is the least active figure in the landscape,” since “no sooner has he appeared than he lays his head on a pillow and falls asleep.”³¹ This atmosphere of inactivity corresponds to the central concept in Luther’s theology of grace of *iustitia dei passiva* and betrays Milton, the Protestant, even when he is harking back to pre-Protestant theologians and legends.

5.1.2 Hawkish War: The *Christus Victor* Foreshadowed

Charles Williams has rightly called Milton the poet of war.³² The poet, who later on was to consider the composition of an Arthurian epic,³³ has not forsaken his preoccupation in favour of Peace waving his myrtle wand. He merely transposes War to a spiritual level by taking over a third traditional legend: The flight of the pagan Gods and the cessation of the oracles at Delphi cover more lines in the poem than the other two legends (stanzas XVIII–XXV).

At first the enemy’s leader is attacked: The “old dragon underground” (168), “which is the Devil, and Satan” (Rev. 20:2). The Devil is not yet destroyed, he is not yet utterly defeated but only driven back (“in straiter limits bound” so that he cannot “half so far cast[s] his usurped sway;” 169f.). This is not yet a battle “ut occideret quidem peccatum, evacualet autem mortem, et vivificaret hominem,” as Irenaeus had put it into words in *Adversus Haereses*.³⁴ It is true that the pagan Gods of Greece (mainly XIX–XXI), Israel’s neighbouring peoples (XXIIIf.)³⁵ and Egypt (XXIII–XXIV) are put to flight (“Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave,” 234). Sin, however, is not yet destroyed, because Christ’s greatest victory will not be established in the manger but on the “bitter cross” (152). Such is the legend of the cessation

³¹S. Fish, *How Milton Works*, pp. 313f., 319f.

³²“Throughout Milton, from the first poem in his first book to the last choruses of his last, one subject continually recurs, and that is War;” Charles Williams; Anne Ridler, editor, *Selected Writings*. (London: OUP, 1961), p. 23.

³³B. K. Lewalski, *Life of Milton*, pp. 116f.

³⁴III. 18.7. Cp. p. 26.

³⁵Among them the Philistine’s “Sea-Idol,” Dagon, which reappears in *SA* 13.

of the oracles. It comes earlier in the *Heilsgeschichte* than the idea of the *Christus victor*, which directly describes the Crucifixion where "that which is opposed to light and life" will be *deleatur*, totally destroyed.³⁶ Indeed, although some writers like Plutarch thought that the cessation of the oracles happened during Christ's death, the death of "the mighty Pan" (89), the majority already linked the legend to the Nativity.³⁷

With this Christian legend of how

Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving
(176–8),

Milton was drawing on a very long tradition.³⁸ The God Pan has been ascribed special significance in the development of this myth and seafarers are said to have spun the yarn of how they heard a "great & fearful voyce" which commanded that they should deliver the message of Pan's death. Like in Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, nature punishes sailors because they did not obey initially: "[...] and no wind stirred, so that (indeede) they could sayle no further."³⁹ When they finally deliver the message, they hear

so many voyces crying and complaining, that all the Sea resounded the
dreadfull Echoes, and this wofull lamenting continued a long while, to
the no little amazement of all them in the Shippe.⁴⁰

Immediately, the "spell was snapt" and they could sail on "as in gentle weather" again.⁴¹ Milton, however, like seventeenth century commentator

³⁶G. Aulén, *Christus Victor*, p. 52; Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, cap. XXIV; the "Nativity" does not talk about the *Harrowing of Hell* either. Christ does not descend into hell but lies "smiling" (151) in the cradle (31, 228). It is improbable that "Yet first to those ychained [sic!] in sleep" (155) does refer to captive man in hell, but probable only describes the awaiting of the Last Judgment (cp. next stanza).

³⁷E. g., Prudentius, Giles Fletcher, Joseph Mede C. A. Patrides, *Christian Tradition*, p. 116.

³⁸Its ultimate origin is found in Plutarch (c. 46 – c. 127) whose *De defectu oraculorum* was readily available in the 1566 Latin version by Adrien Turnèbe, as well as in the popular translation by Philemon Holland. C. A. Patrides, *Premises and Motifs in Renaissance Thought and Literature*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1982), p. 107.

³⁹Thomas Mille, *The Treasurie of Auncient and Moderne Times* (1613) I, 641–42, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁴⁰T. Mille, *The Treasurie*, I, 641–42, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁴¹Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. in: M. H. Abrams (Gen. Ed.), *Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Volume 1, (New York / London: Norton, 1993), pp. 442, 431.

Gilbert Primrose, turns this specific legend upside down.⁴² In Milton's poem, Christ is not only the "greater sun" (83), but also the true shepherd, "the mighty Pan" (91).⁴³ Christ is celebrated as the great *victor*. The heroic convention, which would reach its peak with neoclassicism at the end the century,⁴⁴ here is transferred from man to God. Thus it becomes an intricately baroque⁴⁵ paean to God as well as to (Protestant-Puritan) humility.

The legend of political peace on earth as well as the legend of war in the spiritual realm as a sign of the ultimate victory at Doomsday.⁴⁶ These legends mostly ascribed the flight of the Gods to the time of the Nativity,⁴⁷ rather than to the Crucifixion. Milton shared this view (cp. *PR* I, 455–64). The flight of the demons is a sign of a partial victory of Christ similarly to the expulsion of Legion in the story of the Gadarene swine (Luke 8:27–33), which is alluded to in the grand finale of *PR* (IV. 626–32). Christ's full victory will happen at the cross where "death his death's wound shall then receive" (*PL* III. 251). After this, the devil will only fight a rearguard action. Although his "last and deadliest wound" (*PR* IV. 622)⁴⁸ will not come before the end of the times, his destiny has been decided upon theoretically from eternity (*PR* III) and has been sealed in reality during the Crucifixion. Through the Medieval interpretation of the Christus Victor defeating sin and death on the cross, this victor foreshadowed in the Nativity by the Puritan poet, thus linking the birth and death of Jesus Christ.

⁴²"Who is the great Pan [...] but hee who is all in all, our Lord Iesus Christ?" *The Christian Mans Teares* (1625) I, 132, quoted in C. A. Patrides, *Renaissance Thought*, p. 112. Plutarch's account is reputed to have occurred during the reign of Tiberius (A. D. 14–37), thus encompassing the time of the Crucifixion; *ibid.*, p. 111.

⁴³Christologically, there are similarities to Crashaw's hymn where Christ is also compared to the sun and found to be "Heaven's fairer Eye" (7) and the true shepherd "whose love must keep / The shepherdes more than they the sheep" (101f.).

⁴⁴Cp. E. M. W. Tillyard, *Poetry and its Background. Illustrated by Five Poems. 1470–1870*. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1955), pp. 63–5.

⁴⁵The use of the "conceit" with its many layers of meaning, so excessively loved in Baroque, can be found in many places of the "Nativity:" snow as symbol for Christmas, nature's lack of purity and nature's serenity ("Only with speeches fair," 37, might refer to falling snowflakes); metaphor of the "saintly veil of maiden white" might refer to nature as the bride of Christ; in Rev. 21:2.9, 2 Cor. 11:2 the church (not nature) is imagined as the bride, but St Paul emphasises similarities between church and nature (Rom 8:21ff.). This many-levelled character of metaphor is typical for the metaphysical conceit; cp. Lowry Nelson, *Baroque Lyric Poetry*. (New Haven / London: Yale UP, 1961), p. 13.

⁴⁶Remember, the dragon is not yet killed, although his dominion has become narrower.

⁴⁷C. A. Patrides, *Renaissance Thought*, p. 116.

⁴⁸The "death blow" in *PL* apparently means the blow which leads to death in the long run, while the "deadliest wound" in *PR* means the blow which finishes the enemy off right now.

5.1.3 Jove's Bard, Christ's Poet-Priest and Cromwell's Rebell

Although critics discuss whether Milton also sheds a poetic tear over the departure of the nymphs (181–3, 188), with whom he clearly empathises in "Il Penseroso," written about two and a half years later (136–8), the basic tone of "Nativity" seems "as positive and joyful an affirmation of Christianity as *Elegy 5* was of naturalism." It can be seen as "the beginning of a religious experience which, when completed, was to have a profound effect on Milton's poetry."⁴⁹ "Sonnet 7"⁵⁰ can be seen as the point of "final decision" in this development.⁵¹ Milton wants to serve God through the means of poetry as he famously voiced in *The Reason of Church-Government*:

These abilities⁵² [...] are of power beside the office of a pulpit, to imbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of vertu, and publick civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune, to celebrate in glorious and lofty Hymns the throne and equipage of Gods Almightyesse, and what he works, and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his Church, to sing the victorious agonies of Martyrs and Saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious Nations doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ, to deplore the general relapses of Kingdoms and States from justice and Gods true worship.⁵³

The development of the young poet from priest of Jove ("Elegia sexta," 77f.)⁵⁴ into the Christian poet-priest inspired with "hallowed fire" ("Nativity," 28) and reaches its climax in the religious experience voiced in "Sonnet 7." This experience is reflected in a series of further poems: "On Time" (later in December 1632), "Upon the Circumcision" (January 1, 1633),⁵⁵ and "At a

⁴⁹A. S. P. Woodhouse and Douglas Bush, *A Variorum Commentary on The Poems of John Milton*. 6 vols. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970–75), p. 24.

⁵⁰"How soon hath time, the subtle thief of youth" *Ibid.*, II. 1 and 27. Written in December 1632, Parker; Hunter and Sirluck prefer the date of December 1631; *ibid.*, II. 1 and 162.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵²I. e. the ability to write "Lyrick poesie."

⁵³John Milton; Don M. Wolfe, editor, *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*. 8 vols. (New Haven / London: Yale UP, 1953–82), I, 815–17 quoted in P. Rollinson, 'Decorum of Genre', pp. 166f.

⁵⁴Although some of Milton's latin elegies (c. 1626 – c. 1630) show traces of religious feeling (e.g. ecstatic visions of heaven in the elegies on the two bishops), he mainly imitates the Roman love-poets, Ovid, Propertius, and Tibullus; A. S. P. Woodhouse, D. Bush, *A Variorum Commentary*, II. 1, 23f.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, II. 1 and 163; Parker dates it two years earlier *ibid.*, II. 1 and 164.

Solemn Musick” (not much later, e. g. January – February 1633).⁵⁶

It is true that the strikingly military character of Milton’s version of the Nativity is a witness to the spread of religious radicalism in England, which finally led to the outbreak of the Civil War. Perhaps, one might imagine the “bright-harnessed angels” (244) taking their place beside a “plain russet-coated captain” in the Cromwellian army. However, one must not forget that Milton’s self-image was primarily that of a poet- priest than of a political tract writer;⁵⁷ his political zeal was motivated by his Puritanism.

5.1.4 Dovish War: The Incarnation as Oxymoron

Christopher Hill claimed that in the “*Nativity Ode* the miracle of the Incarnation is avoided,”⁵⁸ and Pecheux has plausibly explained, that the stable and the infant cries are no major theme in Milton’s hymn.⁵⁹ This is an oversimplification. There are several references which remind the reader that the mighty *Christus Victor* at the same time is a tiny “babe” (151, 227) still in his “swaddling bands,” that the eternal λόγος “was made flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). In the prolepsis, Christ is described as one who

forsook the courts of everlasting day
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay
(13f.).

Some lines communicate this fact in something very much like an oxymoron:

Our babe to show his Godhead true,
Can in his swaddling bands control the damned crew.
(228)

The Incarnation could even provide an alternative interpretation to the problem of genre posed by the “Nativity.” Critics have argued about whether

⁵⁶Ibid., II. 1 and 175; Parker dates it in early 1631 *ibid.*, II. 1 and 164 The date of the first publication of the poems falls in 1945.

⁵⁷Milton introduced himself as a prose writer by celebrating his own status as a poet; this bears witness to his comparatively low opinion of the “cool element of prose” (*The Reason of Church Government*, quoted in Richard Bradford, *The Complete Critical Guide to John Milton*. (London / New York: Routledge, 2001), p.27.

⁵⁸C. Hill, *Revolution*, p. 245.

⁵⁹M. C. Pecheux, ‘Nativity Tradition’, *passim*.

the poem is a hymn or an ode.⁶⁰ In the prefatory, both terms are mentioned.⁶¹ This ambiguity might be a further expression of the dual nature of the *deus homo*, so strongly emphasised by Anselm of Canterbury. The dilemma of genre dissolves not into thin air but into substantial orthodox teaching of *una persona in duabus naturis*; it is indeed an ode and a hymn at the same time singing the songs of man and God (*verum deum et verum hominem*). Thus one can conclude with C. A. Patrides – despite the emphasis on the *Christus Victor* in the "Nativity," that Milton "celebrated the Incarnation" in the "Nativity."⁶² It draws attention to the paradox that the war is won in a "dovish" manner by the babe in the manger, and the battle is decided by God having given up his divine privileges.

5.2 Sorrows Too Dark: "The Passion"

5.2.1 Above the Author's Years

Milton's second poem on the life of Christ,⁶³ "The Passion" can be seen as an attempt to spell out the allusions to "the bitter cross" made in the "Nativity" (152). It will be suggested that one of several reasons why Milton left "The Passion" unfinished is the difficulty of the topic of the Atonement. I will also draw attention to the imagery of the "veil of human nature" which will become central in *Paradise Regained*. Summed up, the poem exemplifies an unsuccessful attempt to approach the Atonement in a more direct way than in "The Nativity."

"The Passion," which explicitly refers to the "Nativity," must have been written after 1629.⁶⁴ In contrast to "The Nativity," it gives a very laboured impression and the poet tends to get lost in conceits which are either merely

⁶⁰Paul H. Fry calls it an "ode of presentation;" Paul H. Fry, *The Poet's Calling in the English Ode*. (New Haven / London: Yale UP, 1980), p. 7, many scholars have also taken Milton's description in *The Reason of Church-Government* as a sign that the poet did not differentiate between these two forms; John Milton, *CPW*, pp. I, 815–17, in P. Rollinson, 'Decorum of Genre', pp. 168f. Rollinson thinks that Milton did distinguish between the two genres and that the "Nativity" can be classified as a hymn. Then, Milton probably followed Julius Caesar Scaliger's (1484–1558) definitions in his *Poetices* that hymns celebrate God, while odes celebrate men, *ibid.*, p. 166.

⁶¹"Hast thou [...] no hymn" (17); "thy humble ode" (24).

⁶²C. A. Patrides, *Christian Tradition*, pp. 141 and 143.

⁶³It looks as if Milton planned to write a series of religious poems for successive events in the life of Christ; Hanford, "Youth," (1925), p. 127, in A. S. P. Woodhouse, D. Bush, *A Variorum Commentary*, II. 1 and 151.

⁶⁴John Milton suggests Easter 1630.

decorative (e.g., Christ as the son-god Phoebus, 22–5) or employed on too many levels (e.g., the image of the letters “where my tears have washed a wannish white” invoked in 34f., which is taken up in the not very touching image of the “well instructed” tears that “fall in ordererd characters,” 48f.).⁶⁵

W. R. Parker sees a further reason for the poem’s failure in its self-consciousness:

*He was writing a poem about himself writing a poem; in every stanza except the third he had described himself in the process of composition. It was like making sorrowful faces at a mirror.*⁶⁶

This solipsist character can be seen in the numerous first person pronouns: “My muse” (4), “my song” (8), “my harp” (9), “my roving verse” (22), “my Phoebus” (23), “me softer airs befit” (27), “my flattered fancy” (31), “whereon I write” (34), “my tears” (35) etc. It is not that Milton did not recognise these faults. Quite the contrary, he suddenly broke off the composition after stanza viii and added a note of apology:

This subject the author finding to be above the years he had when he wrote it, nothing satisfied with what was begun, left it unfinished.

The Critics voice in unison their devastating criticism of “The Passion.” Their answers to the crucial question of why Milton still published such an avowed failure, and in both editions of his *Poems*, too, remain varied. They range from the verdict that it constitutes “an act of penance” for not having agreed to follow his father’s plan of becoming an Anglican minister⁶⁷ to the interpretation that Milton wanted to warn his readers that they should not expect devotional poetry from him.⁶⁸ I do not find very satisfying C. A. Patrides’ suggestion that Milton here betrayed a general Protestant preference for the Nativity instead of the Crucifixion.⁶⁹ Such a broadly levelled critique does neither account for George Herbert’s magnificent Easter poem, “Easter” (1633),⁷⁰ nor John Bunyan’s moving description of how a Christian’s burden falls from of his shoulders in the sight of the cross in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Actually, Patrides seems to contradict himself in a way

⁶⁵Cp. Tillyard, *Milton* (1930), p. 44, in *Ibid.*, II. 1, 153.

⁶⁶W. R. Parker, *Milton* (1968), pp. 71f., quoted in *Ibid.*, II. 1 and 155.

⁶⁷A. S. P. Woodhouse, *The Poet and His Faith. Religion and Poetry in England from Spenser to Eliot and Auden*. (Chicago/London: Chicago UP, 1965), p. 93.

⁶⁸C. A. Patrides, *Christian Tradition*, p. 145.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁷⁰Cp. also Herbert’s “shaped verse” “Easter Wings”.

when he talks of there being "few opinions that Milton held more sincerely or more consistently than his [forensic] view of the Atonement."⁷¹

5.2.2 In the Remembrance of a Weeping King

In spite of its poetical failure, the poem tells the reader something about Milton's theological conception of the Atonement. It emphasises the satisfaction aspect of the Atonement only shortly alluded to in the "Nativity." Christ becomes the "great high priest" (Hebr. 4:14) who does not sacrifice goats for God's people but offers himself as the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29):

He sovran priest stooping his regal head
That dropped with odorous oil down his fair eyes,
Poor fleshly tabernacle entered,
His starry front low-roofed beneath the skies;
O what a mask was there, what a disguise!
Yet more; the stroke of death he must abide,
Then lies him meekly down fast by his brethren's side.
(15–21)

The "odorous oil" proves that Christ is the priest who "shall make the atonement" (Lev. 15:32);⁷² Christ himself was anointed by a woman shortly before the Last Supper (Matt. 26:8). The "starry front" might refer to the symbolic woman of Rev. 12:1, whose head is surrounded by "a crown of twelve stars." Perhaps one might even think of Christ's experience in Gethsemane where not oil but "sweat [...] as it were great drops of blood" fell to the ground (Luke 22:44), and of Golgotha where not a crown of stars but a "crown of thorns" (Mark 15:17) was given to this "sovran priest." Such was his Incarnation into the "fleshly tabernacle" of humanity.

Most importantly, this blood is "guiltless" ("The Passion," 40) and thus can atone for humanity by taking its sin upon himself:

Dangers, and snares, and wrongs, and worse than so,
Which he for us did freely undergo.
(11f.)

In the satisfaction view, the suffering is emphasised, as Thomas Aquinas wrote: "propter generalitatem passionis et magnitudinem doloris assumpti"⁷³

⁷¹Ibid., p. 141.

⁷²A. S. P. Woodhouse, D. Bush, *A Variorum Commentary*, II. 1, 157.

⁷³Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, pp. III q. 48, a. 2.

and therefore “superabundans satisfactio fuit pro peccatis humanis generis.”⁷⁴ It is a pity that “The Passion” was not written in the “remembrance of a weeping king”⁷⁵ but rather in the remembrance of a weeping poet.

5.2.3 The Nature of the priestly “disguise”

What kind of “mask” and “disguise” is the speaker referring to when he exclaims: “O what a mask was there, what a disguise!” (19)? The literal sense is clear: God has acquired human form; the tenor is the Incarnation as expressed in the phrase “fleshly tabernacle” (17). It is more difficult to find out about the origin of the vehicle of the metaphor. The answer of A. S. P. Woodhouse and Douglas Bush in their commentary is that Milton took up the image from the court masque, on which genre he was to try his hand some four years later in *Comus*. In a mask’s final scene, which often staged the arrival of a company at a banquet or ball, the *dramatis personae* sometimes conceal their identity beneath masks. This interpretation not only has the advantage on its side that Milton was personally involved with the genre as the (future) mask writer of *Comus*, but also that etymologically “disguise” and “mask” were used synonymously in Old English, as Ben Jonson pointed out.⁷⁶

I want to draw the reader’s attention to another possible source for the imagery. Milton, of whom it was still expected that he become an Anglican minister, had probably read the early church fathers. In the fathers, the disguise of Christ had become an important feature of the Incarnation.⁷⁷ In his discussion, Gregory uses similar metaphors to the ones from “The Passion.” Gregory explains how Christ deceived the devil: “τῷ προκαλύμματι τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν ἐνεκρύφθη τὸ θεῖον, [...]”⁷⁸ The noun τὸ προκαλύμμα describes anything which one hangs before an object in order to cover it while the verb ἐνεκρύφθη⁷⁹ emphasises this metaphor of the realm of clothing.⁸⁰

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. III q.. 48, a. 2.

⁷⁵Cp. W. Shakespeare, *Richard II*, IV, 102–07, where it refers to the Queen; Milton’s priest bears “royal” features (cp. 1 Pet. 2:9): “regal head” (15), “starry front” (18).

⁷⁶*Masque of Augures* 7, 631, in A. S. P. Woodhouse, D. Bush, *A Variorum Commentary*, II 1, 157.

⁷⁷Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, xxvi, 136 cp. p. 27.

⁷⁸Ibid., XXIV, 46 Aulén translates: “God [...] concealed himself under the veil of human nature;” G. Aulén, *Christus Victor*, p. 52 Cp. *Oratio catechetica* XXVI.

⁷⁹This form stems from the verb κρύπτω, prefixed with ἐν.

⁸⁰The commentary of Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica* did not give a suggestion for the origin of this Gregorian metaphor; it might, however, in its turn have been taken from the world of Greek theatre where the actors wore masques too.

This interpretation has the benefit to link the theatrical⁸¹ with the theological connotations of the poem.⁸²

Of course, Milton follows the church fathers more closely when it comes to the heroic elements of the *Christus victor* view, which his suffering priest exhibits: The priest wears a starry crown upon his "regal head." Even when "Cremona's trump"⁸³ is abandoned for "softer strings," and night covers the scene in darkness (V), these are rather signs of mourning than of deception. Milton believed too much in hierarchy and the chain of being to be able to believe in any *ius diaboli*; God was the supreme being of the whole universe and "Who durst defy omnipotent to arms" (*PL* I. 49)? Hence, one might conclude that Milton focuses on the less far-fetched metaphors of the early ransom theory.⁸⁴ On the other hand, what remains a slight allusion in "The Passion" will be developed into full detail in *PR*. There, the identity of Jesus is *ἐνεκρύφθη* and the devil is kept guessing about Jesus' identity until Christ's repulsion of Satan's last temptation (IV, 561):

Who this is we must learn, for man he seems
In all his lineaments, though in his face
The glimpses of his father's glory shine
(I, 91–93).

5.3 Blood and Tears: "Upon the Circumcision"

"Upon the Circumcision," the third text in the series of poems about the life of Christ, gives the impression that this poem is Milton's attempt to make good for the failure of "The Passion." In the latter, Milton had realized how great a poetical challenge it is to approach the Crucifixion *per se*. In "Upon the Circumcision," modelled on Tasso's *canzone* to the Virgin of Loreto, he approached it in an indirect way, which seems to have been more successful. For a better understanding of this indirect, typological approach, at first I will give the definitions of allegory and typology. Then, I will focus on

⁸¹Cp.: The expression "These latest scenes" (22) and the mentioning of musical instruments (26–8) also refer to the word family of a "maks".

⁸²In stanza V, the metaphor of *ἐνεκρύφθη* is taken up when night is invoked: "Over the pole thy thickest mantle throw" (30); this expresses sadness and might also remind one of the solar eclipse at the Crucifixion (Luke 23:44f.).

⁸³Marco Girolamo Vidy published his *Christiad* (1535) in Cremona.

⁸⁴Cp. the interpretation of line 155 in "Nativity", footnote 36.

the specific event of the Circumcision and its typological meaning for the Atonement.

5.3.1 Allegory and Typology – Fiction and Reality

In order to understand Milton's approach, it is conducive to grasp the difference between the literary device of the fourfold interpretation of the Bible, and its specific historical reading by means of typology.⁸⁵ The fourfold interpretation is a special kind of semantic *μεταφέρειν* which was flourishing during the Medieval Period and the Renaissance. It was believed that many incidents in the Bible had a fourfold meaning. A verse attributed to Nicholas of Lyra shrewdly condenses this way of interpretation into two lines:

Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria,
Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia.⁸⁶

While allegorical, moral and anagogic interpretation can serve as a literary refinement of the literal sense of Scripture, typology,⁸⁷ in contrast, is linked to the idea of *Heilsgeschichte*.⁸⁸ God is revealing himself step by step to his people in history:

Gegenstand typologischer Deutung können nur geschichtliche Fakta,
d.h. Personen, Handlungen, Ereignisse und Einrichtungen, sein, Worte
und Darstellungen nur insofern, als sie von solchen handeln.⁸⁹

Thus, Christ is the *antitype* of the Passover lamb, because his death is a "better sacrifice[s]" for sin (Hebr. 9:23ff.).⁹⁰ This idea is backed up by New

⁸⁵According to S. G. Hall, the distinction between allegory and typology was introduced by Thomas Aquinas, and gained importance during the Reformation, Stuart George Hall, 'Typologie'. in: *TRE*. Volume 34, (2002), pp. 209, 212, and 215.

⁸⁶Apparently, not Nicholas of Lyra, but Augustine of Dacia is the author, A. C. Charity, *Events and Their Afterlife. The Dialectics of Christian Typology in the Bible and Dante*. (Cambridge: CUP, 1966), p. 174. Augustine of Dacia hints at the four levels which denote (1) the *literal* or historical level, (2) the *allegorical* level referring to Christ or his church, (3) the tropological or *moral* level concerning the individual believer and (4) the *anagogic* level pertaining to eschatology; cp. Edward L. Greenstein Morton W. Bloomfield, 'Fourfold Method of Interpretation'. in: T. V. F. Brogan Alex Preminger, editor, *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), p. 619.

⁸⁷The word is derived from the Greek *τυπῶς*, i.e. "to strike," and refers to the image of a caster creating a casting form as a model for sculptures; thus, the Old Testament with the old covenant is the *typos* (casting form) for the New Testament with the new covenant (sculpture); Hans-Peter Mathys, 'Typologie'. in: *EKL*. Volume IV, (1996), p. 997.

⁸⁸Dieter Schneider, 'Typologie'. in: *ELTG*. Volume 3, (1994), p. 2046; cp. *ibid.*, p. 2046

⁸⁹Leonard Goppelt, *Typos. Die typologische Deutung des AT im Neuen* (1939), quoted in S. G. Hall, 'Typologie', p. 209.

⁹⁰1 Cor. 5:7 H.-P. Mathys, 'Typologie', p. 998.

Testament authors and understood as a historical fact, which was revealed before the coming of Christ.⁹¹

5.3.2 The Circumcision as New Testament Typology

By definition,⁹² most of the examples for typology are from the Old Testament. However, there are a few instances when New Testament events are taken to represent Christ's death typologically. The circumcision of Christ is one of them. Zacharias Ursinus saw a historical as well as an allegorical meaning of the circumcision:

Christ was circumcised, 1. *That he might signifie that he was also a member of that circumcised people.* 2. *That he might shew that he received & tooke our sins on himselfe, that he might satisfie for them.* 3. *That he might testifie that he did entirely and fully fulfill [sic!] the law in our behalfe.* 4. *The circumcision of Christ was a part also of his humiliation and ransome.*⁹³

For Ursinus, the circumcision has become a *type* of Christ's death.

The event of Christ's circumcision, celebrated on January 1, provides an opportunity for Milton to tackle the issue of "The Passion" again while continuing his series of poems commemorating the life of Christ. In the "Circumcision," Milton has learned from his former mistake. He does not focus on his own emotions (though these are mentioned too)⁹⁴ but upon Christ himself:

He who with all heaven's heraldry whilere
Entered the world, now bleeds to give us ease;
Alas, how soon our sin
Sore doth begin
His infancy to seize!
(10–14)

Milton further elaborates Zacharias Ursinus's typological interpretation and alludes directly to the Crucifixion in the last lines of the poem where he refers to the soldier piercing Christ's side with a spear (John 19:43)

⁹¹Three New Testament passages lay the basis for a typological interpretation: Rom. 6:17, 5:14, 1 Cor. 10:6.11, D. Schneider, 'Typologie', p. 2046.

⁹²Chronology counts: A typological event must come before the event in Christ's life.

⁹³Zacharias Ursinus, *Opera theologica* (Heidelberg, 1612), p. 681, quoted in C. A. Patrides, *Christian Tradition*, p. 145.

⁹⁴"Burn in your sighs, and borrow / Seas wept from *our* deep sorrow," 8f, my emphasis.

And seals obedience first with wounding smart
 This day, but O ere long
 Huge pangs and strong
 Will pierce more near his heart.
 (25–28)

“Circumcision” provides an opportunity for Milton to contrast God’s love with his justice:

O more exceeding love or law more just?
 Just law inded, but more exceeding love!
 (15f.)

Christ here is depicted as an “epic hero”⁹⁵ who solves the Anselmian dilemma through his sacrifice:⁹⁶

And that great covenant which we still transgress
 Entirely satisfied,
 And the full wrath beside
 Of vengeful justice bore for our excess.
 (16–24)

The present tense used in the same line is telling (“which we still transgress”). This defines Christ’s Atonement as “no mere historical act; it is given a present and immediate reference.”⁹⁷

The indirect approach of the “Circumcision” will be compared to Milton’s closet drama, *Samson Agonistes*, which also can be read in a typological way. All in all, Milton’s three minor poems demonstrate that the Atonement was an important topic for the Puritan poet. He used Christian legends to foreshadow Christ’s victory on the cross in the “Nativity,” and he expounded on the aspect of the *satisfactio Christi* – with an unsuccessful direct and a more successful indirect approach – in “The Passion” and “Upon the Circumcision” respectively. In his great epic, *Paradise Lost*, the Atonement will provide a framework which structures the account of the Fall.

⁹⁵E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Miltonic Setting. Past & Present*. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1949), p. 177 cp. “Nativity,” 13f.

⁹⁶Cp. p. 34.

⁹⁷Brooks and Hardy (1951), pp. 115f., in A. S. P. Woodhouse, D. Bush, *A Variorum Commentary*, II. 1., 170.

Chapter 6

Paradise Lost

Denis Saurat claims that the teaching of the Atonement is unimportant for *Paradise Lost*, the great epic poem about the Fall of Man, which Milton published in 1667:

Vicarious atonement is no Miltonic conception, and that is why the cruxifixion plays so small a part in his conception of human destiny. He speaks little of it in *Paradise Lost*, and not at all in *Paradise Regained*, which was the poem for it.¹

I will prove that this statement is misleading.² Therefore, I will study the overall structure of *Paradise Lost* and the position of the two main scenes dealing with the Atonement: the heavenly council in III, where the future redemption of mankind is planned; and the vision of man's future, as a foreshadowing of the Crucifixion on Earth, narrated by the archangel Michael in XII.³ I will have a look at the use of metaphors in God's speeches because this provides a counter-argument to the opinion of William Blake and his adherents, who said that the lack of good poetry in book III betrayed Milton's dislike of Puritan theology. Other important theological themes for *Paradise Lost* will be explored: man's and God's *libertas*, new aspects on the *Christus Victor* view and the notion of the Fortunate Fall. The relevance of the Atonement will become evident throughout.

¹Denis Saurat, *Milton. Man and Thinker*. (Hamden/London: Archon Books, 1964), p.149.

²Thus, I follow C. S. Lewis, *Paradise Lost*, ch. XII among others; even the arch-critic of a benevolent Christian interpretation of *PL*, William Empson, does *not* repeat Saurat's claim, but merely draws attention to the fact, that the aspect of torture is not referred to by Milton. William Empson, *Milton's God*. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), p.128.

³Book numbering of 1674 edition; in 1669 the epic counted only ten books.

6.1 The Atonement in the Epic Structure of *Paradise Lost*

6.1.1 The Four Invocations of the Muse

Milton structured his epic according to the Renaissance tradition of *numerositas*.⁴ The whole work can be divided roughly into two parts, books I – VI, and books VII – XII.⁵ The first part deals with the “voluntary”⁶ Fall of “The infernal serpent [...] with all his host / Of rebel angels” (I. 34, 37.) and of the consequences of this Fall, the second one narrates the creation of the world and the Fall of the first human couple, Adam and Eve.⁷

Further structure of *Paradise Lost* is provided by the passages set in the first person singular, all except the fourth accompanied by a traditional *invocatio*, the poet’s plea to the muse for inspiration. Each of the invocations comes at a turning point in the poem. In book I, it contributes to the tone of magnitude, designed to make the reader aware that “*some great thing is now about to begin.*”⁸ Immediately after this *invocatio*, Milton plunges *in medias res* recounting the Satanic Fall (I) and Satan’s famous journey through “Chaos and eternal Night” (II; III. 18). At the threshold of book III, a decisive change of atmosphere takes place from “darkness visible” (I. 63) to the “Fountain of light” itself, a metaphor of God Father (III. 375). This transposition from hell to heaven is expressed through a second invocation of the “heavenly Muse” (III. 19): “Hail, holy light [...]” (1).

The third invocation in VII again introduces a change of scene. The poet’s camera lense is moving from heaven (VI) to “my native element” (VII. 16); after an extreme long shot of the triumphal entry of the Son’s chariot in heaven in front of “each order bright” (VI. 885), the camera is zooming in on Earth and the garden of Eden. The creation of the world is recounted,

⁴Gunnar Qvarnström, ‘Poetry and Numbers. On the Structural Use of Symbolic Numbers’. in: *Scriptura Minora. Regiae Societatis Humaniorum Litterarum Lundensis*. Volume 2, (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1964–1965), p. 14.

⁵Cp.: “The dramatic interest in the first half is in Satan’s efforts; in the second, in the human drama between Adam and Eve. The two parts are linked, Satan’s effort being the cause of the human drama. The scheme is simple, clear, and grand, and bears the imprint of Milton’s mind,” D. Saurat, *Milton*, p. 178.

⁶“Self-tempted, self-depraved,” III. 130.

⁷In III. 130–32, the speaker of the poem draws attention to the parallels between the angelic and the human Fall.

⁸A necessary characteristic for the style of the “secondary epic,” C. S. Lewis, *Paradise Lost*, pp. 40f.

through the refraction of Raphael, who narrates it to Adam in the garden of Eden: “Descend from heav’n Urania [...]”⁹ The introduction of the first person narrator in book IX is the only exception of the four passages set in the first person, where the Muse is not called upon directly but merely mentioned as “my celestial patroness” (21). The bard

now must change
 Those notes to tragic; foul distrust, and breach
 Disloyal on the part of man, revolt,
 And disobedience: on the part of heaven
 Now alienated, distance and distaste,
 Anger and just rebuke, and judgment given
 That brought into this world a world of woe,
 Sin and her shadow Death, and Misery
 Death’s harbinger [...].
 (IX. 5–13)

The indirect reference to the Muse mirrors this new “distance” from heaven, thus foreshadowing the Fall. The four personal prologues provide a structure of *Paradise Lost*, conducive for an interpretation of the passages about the Atonement.

6.1.2 Brave New Worlds

An interpretation of these scenes will not only prove elucidating in view of Milton’s theology, but will also clarify in how far the Atonement contributes to the epic structure of *Paradise Lost*. Thus, the Atonement is described not only at the beginning of postlapsarian human history, but also right before man will appear on the scene in IV. At two times in the poem, man steps into a “brave new world,” which he is commissioned to “replenish and subdue” (Gen. 1:28) as well as to “dress it and to keep it” (Gen. 2:15). The first world is brave and new in a Shakespearian sense,¹⁰ the second one also bears traces of Huxley’s dystopia.¹¹ Into the paradisaical garden, man enters joyfully with childlike curiosity.¹² Into the other world, he steps more slowly and with a certain reluctance, but consoled by the promise of a “paradise within thee, happier far” (XII. 386), and nonetheless facing it in a spirit of

⁹Urania is the ancient Muse of Astronomy and thus aptly named before the creation of the macrocosm, John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, p. 388; mark the ambiguity of this expression: it denotes the invocation, and at the same time introduces the shift of focus.

¹⁰W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest* V. 183.

¹¹Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932).

¹²“Straight toward heaven my wondering eyes I turned [...]” VIII. 257–261.

“this most powerful expression of serious Puritan *Weltzugewandtheit*” as Max Weber proclaimed in his well-known text about the origin of capitalism.¹³ Before the entrance into each world, Milton has placed a passage about the Atonement,¹⁴ thereby underlining its significance for the spiritual history of the human race. The position of the Atonement passages is closely liked with the introduction of a new human world, which is an argument for the centrality of the *articulus iustificationis* in Milton’s theology.

In the audiobook version of *Paradise Lost*, the producer Perry Keenlyside left out the whole of book III (apart from the few lines of Milton’s “Argument” in order to keep up with the plot), while he rendered the first two books unabridged.¹⁵ The omission of this structurally essential book, in which the heavenly protagonists and their relation to man are introduced, is telling. Since Romanticism, critics have found fault with the depiction of the heavenly *personae* time and again.¹⁶ Readers who did not follow the Romantics’ criticism have especially drawn attention to the stylistic reasons that lie behind the poetry of God the Father, which has been described as “cold and impersonal.”¹⁷ It seems, however, to be an interpretative impoverishment if literary critics study only what they personally define to be of “lasting originality in Milton’s thought and especially to disentangle from theological rubbish the permanent and human interest.”¹⁸ This was, in C.S. Lewis’ words, “like asking us to study *Hamlet* after the ‘rubbish’ of the revenge code has been removed.” Thus, a study of the rôle of the Atonement in Milton in the vein of New Historicism can serve to transform a boring monologue into a spell-binding dialogue “with the dead”¹⁹ in the act of reading.

¹³“The world was all before them, where to choose / Their place of rest, and providence their guide: [...]” XII, 646–49; “dieser mächtigste Ausdruck der ernstesten puritanischen Weltzugewandtheit, das heißt: Wertung des innerweltlichen Lebens als *Aufgabe*, [...]” Max Weber, *Protestantische Ethik I*, p. 74.

¹⁴In III, before man is introduced to the reader (IV), in XII, before Adam and Eve leave Eden through its eastern gate.

¹⁵John Milton; P. Keenlyside (prod.), *Paradise Lost. The Abridged Text*. Read by Anton Lesser. With Laura Paton (Eve) and Christ Larkin (paraphrases). (Naxos Audio Books, 1994).

¹⁶W. Empson, *Milton’s God*, pp. 91ff. Earlier attacks include Walter Raleigh, F. R. Leavis, and T. S. Eliot; Anthony Low, ‘Milton’s God. Authority in *Paradise Lost*’. *Milton Studies*, 4 (1972), p. 37.

¹⁷Irene Samuel, “The Dialogue in heaven: A Reconsideration of *Paradise Lost*” (1965), quoted in Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: the Reader in Paradise Lost*. (London/Melbourne/Toronto; New York: Macmillan; St Martin’s Press, 1967), p. 60.

¹⁸D. Saurat, *Milton*, p. 91, cp. C. S. Lewis, *Paradise Lost*, p. 65.

¹⁹As S. Greenblatt quips in S. Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*.



The Dialogue in Heaven, *Paradise Lost*, Book III
(Gustave Doré)

In this drawing of nineteenth century illustrator Gustave Doré, the motif of *Christus Victor* is combined with the notion of the Atonement. The *Christus Victor* view is underlined with the angels moving “[O]rb within orb” encircling God, “the Father infinite” (V. 596), praising God and his Son with their starry dance (V. 620; cp. III. 61). First and foremost, the dance expresses the angels’ joy and delight (V. 639-41). Additionally, it also demonstrates the lordship of the Son because it is done right after the Father has declared him “viceregent” (V. 603f.). The Atonement, of course, is signified with the Son holding “the bitter cross” (“Nativity,” 152; cp. *PL* XII. 413: “nailed to the cross”). Aulén takes the cross as the symbol for the suffering described in book III, although the cross itself is not mentioned explicitly until XII. 413.

6.2 Divine Metaphors

Stanley Fish mentions the fact that one reason why people dislike the “heavenly” side of Milton’s poetry is its lack of metaphor. He quotes Jackson Cope to support his view that the absence of metaphor is depicting God as the utmost reality:

Poetry is human and metaphorical, and the Father’s speeches are intended to express divine Justice as if directly: to seem without seeming: to create the illusion of no illusion.²⁰

The problem, at least for twentieth century readers, is that they do not *feel* the difference Milton tries to express via the linguistic difference between God and the Devil. For J. B. Broadbent, “the fault seems to lie in rhetoric itself.” Rhetoric is not “a flexible enough instrument” for the purpose to distinguish between dramatic characters.²¹ Besides the absence of the rhetorical device of metaphor, God’s speech is characterised by the absence of other means of the antique *rhetor* as well. If God is really the *summum bonum* he claims to be, and his offer of “unexampled love” (410) is genuine, he (a) does not need to persuade man because his offer is incomparably good (“Paradise Regained”), and (b) would not want to push man in the desired direction, as that would go against his promise to leave man his free will.²² Fish even sees rhetoric as mirroring man’s greediness in general:

Rhetoric is the verbal equivalent of the fleshly lures that seek to enthrall us and divert our thoughts from Heaven, the reflection of our own cupidinous desires, while logic comes from God and speaks to that part of us which retains his image. Through rhetoric man continues in the error of the Fall, through logic he can at least attempt a return to the clarity Adam lost.²³

The absence of metaphor in God’s speeches, however, does not correspond to an absence of soteriological metaphors. Eberhard Jüngel has pointed out, that religious language in general is metaphorical.²⁴ This is not necessarily

²⁰J. Cope, *The Metaphorical Structure of 'Paradise Lost'* (1962), p. 168, quoted in S. Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, p. 59.

²¹J. B. Broadbent, *Answerable Style*, p. 128, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 60.

²²A. Low, ‘Milton’s God’, p. 26.

²³S. Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, p. 61.

²⁴“Als Sprache, die einen Seinsgewinn sprachlich Ereignis werden läßt, ist die religiöse Sprache metaphorisch. Als Rede von dem zur Welt kommenden und in Jesus Christus zur Welt gekommenen Gott ist die Sprache des christlichen Glaubens in besonderer Weise metaphorisch;” P. Ricœur, E. Jüngel, *Metapher*, p. 122.

equivalent to the Rortian idea that there is “no truth out there.”²⁵ Harinder Singh Marjara points to the fact that even the factual language of scientist reaches its limits. Metaphoric analogies can overcome this limitation.²⁶ Marjara, then, turns to Milton’s *PL*:

Analogies can be viewed as Milton’s solution to the basic problem of how to “unfold / The secrets of another world” and to accommodate the unseen, spiritual world to the human sense and understanding. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton takes into consideration the possibility that the earth is “but the shadow of Heav’n,” and “By lik’ning spiritual to corporeal forms” (V, 573.–75) and by “measuring things in heav’n by things on Earth” (VI, 893), he describes a plausible and convincing celestial world.²⁷

Marjara is describing mainly living, poetic metaphors, such as the metaphor of planetary motions transposed to the angels.²⁸ Milton’s God, on the other hand, uses metaphors which have been incorporated into language, that is “dead metaphors.”²⁹ It goes without saying that the vehicles for soteriological metaphors are mostly taken from the Bible, as was shown in chapter 2.3. While Milton mainly concentrated on one specific soteriological metaphor in each of his early minor poems³⁰ and only shortly alluded to other ones, one finds the whole, vast spectrum of concepts linked with man’s *σωτηρία* in *Paradise Lost*. He uses the rich fund of theological history in order to express the spiritual reality of the Atonement. One reason why God abstains from metaphors in his speech, is, as was demonstrated above, that he created man with a free will of his own. He did not force him to be “happy” as the test tube men of Huxley’s anti-utopia.

²⁵Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 1989 in A. Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 434; cp. p. 18.

²⁶For instance, Marjara mentions Copernicus, who uses the metaphor of the starry dance in order to describe the cosmos; Copernicus, *Commentariolus*, in Harinder Singh Marjara, ‘Analogy in the Scientific Imagery of *Paradise Lost*’. *Milton Studies*, (1990), p. 84.

²⁷Ibid., p. 85.

²⁸“[...] in Orbes / Of circuit inexpressible [...] / Orb within Orb,” V. 594–96 Ibid., p. 94.

²⁹Cp. p. 17.

³⁰The *Christus Victor* view in the “Nativity,” the satisfacion view (with an emphasis on Christ’s rôle as priest) in “The Passion;” in “The Circumcision,” the metaphor is not so clear. Apparently, Milton here makes equal use of the satisfacion view and the ransom motif.

6.3 Man's *libertas*

One of the most important results of redemption is that man is again adopted into the sonship of God and his *liberum arbitrium captivatum* finally is liberated again.³¹ The doctrine of Christian Liberty is pre-eminent in *Paradise Lost* and deserves to be studied in greater detail. This fact is mentioned by the Father in his dialogue with his Son when Satan arrives at the opaque sphere of the world (75f.). The Father, who foresees “past, present, future” (78) as in a mimetic dance,³² mentions the Fall of man, whom Satan will “By some false guile pervert; and shall pervert” (92). He now further expounds on the grounds for the Fall in Augustine terms. Man's *liberum arbitrium* (“I formed them free, and free they must remain,” 124) will be turned into an *liberum arbitrium captivatum* after the Fall (“Till they enthrall themselves,” 125). This is an important argument in Milton's poetic-philosophical vindication of God's justice.

One of Milton's contemporaries, the poet Andrew Marvell, blends with ease the two opposite concepts of individual choice and supra-individual destiny in two lines of his poem *Upon Appleton House* (early 1650s):

While her glad parents most rejoice,
And make their destiny their choice.³³

In the ideological debate of the day, however, they were two totally different concepts. This can be illustrated very well with the disputation between the popular humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam and the great Reformer Martin Luther which took place about a century earlier.³⁴ Erasmus had published his treatise “De libero arbitrio” (“On free will”) in 1524 that provoked Luther's polemic “De servo arbitrio” (“The Enslaved Will”) a year later.

6.3.1 Predetermination and Foreknowledge

A twentieth century reader who browses through *Paradise Lost* probably will be annoyed when he sees how God is talking about mankind in book III. How can man possess a free will when God knows beforehand that he will be tempted and fall afterwards (III 95ff)? It may look to the reader as if God

³¹E. M. W. Tillyard, *Studies in Milton*. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1951), p. 164.

³²Catherine I. Cox, ‘Dance and the Narration of Providence in *Paradise Lost*’. 26 (1990), p. 159.

³³l. 93f., quoted in Andrew Marvell; H. M. Margoliouth, editor, *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*. 2 vols. Volume 1, 3rd edition. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971).

³⁴Cp. D. R. Danielson, *Milton's Good God*, pp. 62ff.

played games with Adam and Eve.³⁵ One must, therefore, be careful with the usage of terminology. Even the fallen spirits discuss the difference between “providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate, / Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute” (II 559f). This shows, that they at least know that there is a difference between “providence”, “[f]ixed fate” and “foreknowledge”. Foreknowledge means that, when God created the world out of nothing, he already possessed a “simultaneous awareness of Paradise, Fall, Incarnation, Cross, Empty Tomb”.³⁶

Milton visualises foreknowledge by images of dancing:

So spake th' Omnipotent, and with his words
 All seem'd well pleas'd, all seem'd, but were not all.
 That day, as other solemn days, they spent
 In sing and dance about the sacred Hill,
 Mystical dance, which yonder starry Sphere
 Of Planets and of fixt in all her Wheels
 Resembles nearest, mazes intricate,
 Eccentric, intervolv'd, yet regular
 Then most, when most irregular they seem:
 And in thir motions harmony Divine
 So smooths her charming tones, that God's own ear
 Listens delighted.
 (V. 616–27)

This angelic dance, “through its rhythm, gestures, and formations, accentuates and enriches the ideas of time and space, the measures by which Providence moves.”³⁷ Of course, this analogy does not alone explain the mystery of foreknowledge, which for the Christian is grounded in the fact that God is not subject to time; nevertheless, it helps to imagine the unimaginable. Predetermination, on the other hand, in the sense that man had no chance to resist temptation, seems to be refuted in *Paradise Lost*. Man before the Fall is “made just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall” (III 98f). Lewis explains this attitude with the supposition that – given the assumption there was rational life elsewhere in the universe – it was

³⁵Actually, Empson is blaming Milton's God for just that fault; W. Empson, *Milton's God*, p. 152: “Even so, the brutal phrase [V. 245], is liable to excite the doubts of the justice of God with which he had so long wrestled, and might fairly be called a Freudian slip of the tongue.”

³⁶A. E. Dyson and J. Lovelock, ‘Event Perverse: The Epic of Exile’. in: A. E. Dyson and J. Lovelock, editors, *Milton. Paradise Lost. A Casebook*. (London/Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1973), p. 222.

³⁷C. I. Cox, ‘Narration of Providence’, pp. 160f; cp. p. 22.

not improbable that it had resisted temptation.³⁸ Milton himself defines the difference between foreknowledge and predestination in *DDC*

[...] nothing happens because God has foreseen it, but rather he has foreseen each event because each is the result of particular causes which, by his decree, work quite freely and with which he is thoroughly familiar.³⁹

6.3.2 The Fall as Crucial Dividing Line

Milton, who had forsaken Calvin for Arminius over the question of predestination in his thirties,⁴⁰ did not hold to the Calvinist doctrine of Total Depravity. Nevertheless, he “believed fallen nature thoroughly corrupt” and thought that “all human minds have in common” this “depravity.”⁴¹ If the human mind has been depraved through the Fall, it is of importance to distinguish between pre- and postlapsarian mankind when one contemplates the relation between individual choice and free will.

6.3.2.1 Before the Fall

Milton’s great political aim was liberty in all respects of human life. Hence, liberty also figures prominently in the Garden of Eden.⁴² It is only the “reality of freedom” which “makes sense of exile and death”⁴³ without violating the author’s goal to “justify the ways of God to men” (I 26):

Secure from outward force; Within himself
The danger lies, yet lies within his power?
Against his will he can receive no harm.
But God left free the will, for what obeys
Reason, is free, and reason he made right,
But bid her well beware, and still erect,
Lest by some fair appearing good surprised
She dictate false, and misinform the will
To do what God expressly hath forbid.
(IX. 348–356)

³⁸C. S. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, pp. 72f. Cp. also Lewis’s narration of a planet that has resisted temptation in his science fiction novel *Perelandra* (1943).

³⁹*DDC* i 4, *CPW* vi 164, quoted in John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, p. 174.

⁴⁰E. M. W. Tillyard, *Studies in Milton*, p. 162.

⁴¹John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, commentary on X. 825, cp. *DDC* i. 11: “communis haec mentis humanae pravitas,” quoted in *ibid.*

⁴²C. Hill, *Revolution*, p. 262.

⁴³A. E. Dyson and J. Lovelock, ‘Event Perverse’, p. 221.

Here reason is seen as the nerve centre which controls the whole human being (“for what obeys / Reason, is free”). For Milton, who probably refers back to the medieval concept of the “Chain of Beings”, real freedom is only possible through obedience (here: obedience of the feelings to reason). Reason, in its turn, has to obey God and his Word (lest “She dictate false, and misinform the will / To do what God expressly hath forbid,” 355f.).⁴⁴ Eve experiences that reason on its own, independent of God, is an illusionary freedom when she is deceived to eat from the forbidden fruit. In book IX, she confuses the different concepts of freedom. For her, “inward freedom” (762) is to live without rules, to do whatever she conceives good without consulting reason and God’s prohibition first. She does not understand that by following the devil’s advice, she binds herself to her passion. The passion becomes evident in the *asyndeton*, reinforced by alliteration,⁴⁵ of the lines describing the act of eating from the forbidden fruit:

So saying, her rash hand in evil hour
 Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she ate:
 Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat
 Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe,
 That all was lost.
 (IX. 780–784)

The abrupt phrase “That all was lost” marks the finality of the trespass. The fruit has irreversibly been plucked and eaten. The underlying idea is that liberty and happiness can only be achieved if one accepts one’s position in the cosmic order. Egan quotes Martz to show the parallels between Milton’s rhetoric and the writings of St. Augustine: “[T]he Augustinian movement of the mind toward God” is “drawn by intuitive knowledge of the happiness that lies beyond the bounds of man.”⁴⁶ Only in obedience (to God, his word and the Holy Spirit respectively) lies man’s happiness.

⁴⁴This attitude corresponds to the preeminence of reason in the medieval church, which becomes especially evident in the church’s attitude towards marriage. Even “*omnis ardentior amator propriae uxoris adulter est*, passionate love of a man’s own wife is adultery,” as Peter Lombard writes in his *De excusatione coitus*. C. S. Lewis comments on Albertus Magnus’s *In Pet. Lomb. Sentent.* iv, Dist. xxvi, Art 7: “The real trouble about fallen man is not the strength of his pleasures but the weakness of his reason: unfallen man could have enjoyed any degree of pleasure without losing sight, for a moment, of the First Good;” C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love. A Study in Medieval Tradition*. (New York: OUP, 1958), p. 15. Cp. Milton’s definition of reason as the “image of God” in *Areopagitica*.

⁴⁵“Forth,” “fruit,” “felt;” “wounds,” “works,” “woe.”

⁴⁶James Egan, *The Inward Teacher. Milton’s Rhetoric of Christian Liberty*. (Akron/Pennsylvania, 1980), Seventeenth-Century News, p. 1.

6.3.2.2 After the Fall

Before the devil “deceived the mother of mankind” (I 35f) Adam saw Eve as “wisest, virtouousest, discreetest, best” (VIII 550) and felt that “[all] higher knowledge in her presence” fell (551). He ascribes “authority and reason” (554) to her, “[g]reatness of mind and nobleness” (557) and even likens her loveliness to something “angelic” (559f). These characteristics could well come out of a (Patriarchal) love poem. Thus, the great praise of his wife makes the change the more surprising from the “Daughter of God and man, immortal” (IX 291) to the “ingrateful Eve” (1164), as Adam calls Eve after the Fall. He admits he “also erred in overmuch admiring / What seemed in thee [i.e. Eve] so perfect” (1179) and even identifies this as his “crime” (1181).

Adam goes on and admonishes the reader not to overtrust “worth in women” (1183) in general, showing his irritation that now she, who seduced him, is accusing him. Adam does not seem to recognise that his accusations of Eve are highly ironical. In the light of Raphael’s admonition in VIII, he now delivers his own verdict as well. It is him rather than her who has confused “realites” and “show” (VIII. 575); Adam has fallen into the trap and has begun to “accuse nature” (VIII. 561). The change (“oh how unlike / To that first naked glory”, IX 1114f) in the relationship of “our grand parents” (I 29) is brought about by hatred, evoked by the Fall (1124f). Milton summarises this alteration:

Their inward state of mind, calm region once
 And full of peace, now tossed and turbulent:
 For understanding ruled not, and the will
 Heard not her lore, both in subjection now
 To sensual appetite, who from beneath
 Usurping over sovereign reason claimed
 Superior sway: from thus distempered breast,
 Adam, estranged in look and altered style,
 Speech intermitted thus to Eve renewed.
 (IX. 1125–1133)

Again the important role reason plays for liberty becomes clear. Reason, once “calm region” and “full of peace” has become “tossed and turbulent”. Why is this so? A modern reader might suggest that Adam does not give Eve enough room to develop her own personality. Or he might identify himself with Adam: “It spoils everything to have women about and why should God

saddle us with them? Angels don't get distracted by females,"⁴⁷ going on that if Adam just had had more self-assurance, there would have been no problem at all. Milton, however, gives another cause for this first struggle of a married couple: "For understanding *ruled not*" instead being "in *subjection* now to sensual appetite" (my emphases). The importance of obedience for liberty is repeated at this passage, after the Fall. William Empson highlights Milton's emphasis of obedience when he says that "C. S. Lewis said truly enough that the poem's moral of obedience has the 'desolating clarity' of what we were taught in the nursery, adding that he cannot understand why modern scholars have missed it."⁴⁸ At first man is governed by God, whom he adores because the creator deserves to be adored (IV 721). Afterwards, however, man is governed by his "sensual appetite" (IX 1129) and thus enslaved. This belief has had a long theological tradition, which shall briefly be traced back in the next point.⁴⁹

6.3.2.3 The Great Deliverance

Immediately after finishing *Paradise Lost* the poet set off to write the second part of the story: *Paradise Regained*.⁵⁰ The question how paradise will be regained, how "the earth / Shall all be paradise, far happier place / Than this of Eden" is answered by Christ's Incarnation and a foreshadowing of his redeeming deed.⁵¹ This is the key issue seen from God's viewpoint. Milton sees the matter from man's standpoint and refers back to St. Paul when he affirms (in *Christian Doctrine*):

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY means that CHRIST OUR LIBERATOR FREES
US FROM THE SLAVERY OF SIN AND THUS FROM THE RULE
OF THE LAW⁵² AND OF MEN AS IF WE WERE EMANCIPATED

⁴⁷W. Empson, *Milton's God*, p. 165.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 161; a certain irony seems to underscore Empson's last point. I think, that Lewis wants to unearth the "hard facts" of the poet's theology (while Empson apparently is more concerned with the reader's emotional response to the moral of obedience), and apparently chose "desolating" exactly because of its negative connotations.

⁴⁹Some things I have to say do not belong to either chapter 6.3.2.1 or 6.3.2.2: for example, a comparison of the state of man before and after "that foul revolt" (I. 33); therefore, I categorise them under chapter 6.3.2.2 for the simple reason that one has to put them somewhere. Also the emphasis in *Paradise Lost* undeniably is laid on the "loss of Eden" (I. 4), quite in contrast to *Paradise Regained*.

⁵⁰Cp. Ibid., p. 180.

⁵¹Cp. chapter 7.

⁵²Milton seems to link the Old Testament notion of "law" to human dictatorial politics as well. The "sword-law" of *PL*, XI. 672 is a consequence of the Fall as is the Mosaic law. In the same vein, religious liberty should find expression in domestic (see *Of Reformation*,

SLAVES. HE DOES THIS SO THAT, BEING MADE SONS INSTEAD OF SERVANTS AND GROWN MEN INSTEAD OF BOYS, WE MAY SERVE GOD IN CHARITY THROUGH THE GUIDANCE OF THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH.⁵³

This passage is one of the most important statements for Milton's theology of Christian Liberty.

Here, Milton shows the other side of the obedience theme: If Christ becomes "our liberator" we are transformed from slaves into sons. This is "the great deliverance" (*PL* XII. 600): Obedience to the liberator means liberty. One cannot but think of Luther once more. He takes the image of the "beast of burden" (Ps. 72:22) with the intention of making his point in his usual rustic language:

Sic humana uoluntas in medio posita est, ceu iumentum, si insederit Deus, uult (et) uadit, uo uult Deus, ut Psalmus dicit, Factus sum sicut iumentum (et) ego semper tecum. Si insederit Satan, uult (et) uadit, quo uult Satan, nec est in eius arbitrio, ad utrum sessorem currere aut eum quaerere, sed ipsi sessores certant ob ipsum obtinendum (et) possidendum.⁵⁴

6.3.2.4 Adam's Most Existential Moment

The topic can be treated in binary terms. Firstly, God knows everything but does not compel man to adore him, thus leaving open the possibility of his Fall. Secondly, man's liberty is greatest when he lives with, and not against, his creator (e.g. before the Fall or in the state of "paradise regained"). Without Christ, his "liberator", man is enslaved to his various feelings and appetites because he is fallen. Dyson emphasises the importance of a personal, existential approach to Milton's poem:

1641) and civil life (see Milton's divorce pamphlets such as *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, 1643). This passage exemplifies how Milton, sometimes adds a political meaning to a theological concept. C. Hill thinks that Milton opines "went well beyond orthodox Puritanism," C. Hill, *Revolution*, p.108.

⁵³J. Milton, *De doctrina Christiana* VI. 537, quoted in: J. Egan, *Inward Teacher*, p.1.

⁵⁴Martin Luther; Delius, editor, *De seruo arbitrio.*, Luthers Werke, III, 207f. I am being quite one-sided about the Lutheran concept of the enslaved will. The other side of the coin in Luther's theology is the doctrine about God's grace or the differentiation between the matters important for *heilsgeschichte* (of the world and of the individual) and the "carnalia."

We are thrown back on experience, which confronts us in different ways, but at every point. We shall perhaps be less inclined to worry, with Tillyard about the metaphysics of original temptation, if we recognise both the power of the ideal, and the reality of exile, in ourselves.⁵⁵

How one is liable to misinterpret “the power of the ideal” in oneself becomes the focus of attention in Adam’s perhaps most existential moment: his choice to follow Eve into exile famously expressed in one of the most stirring passages of the poem:

How can I live without thee, how forgo
Thy sweet converse and love so dearly joined,
To live again in these wild woods forlorn?
(IX. 907)

The social bond (*socialis necessitudo*)⁵⁶ between Adam and Eve underscored with the ideal of romantic love (“yet loss of thee / Would never from my heart,” 912f.) leads Adam to eat from the fruit (997). The comment that Adam has been “fondly overcome with female charm” seems to re-evaluate romantic chivalric love.⁵⁷ Adam values *eros*⁵⁸ (and *philia*)⁵⁹ higher than *agape*⁶⁰ and thus loses both the superior and the inferior love.⁶¹ By struggling to save the harmony with Eve, he opens the way for “mutual accusation,” “fruitless hours,” and a “vain contést” without end (IX. 1187–9).

⁵⁵A. Dyson, *Casebook*, “Introduction,” p. 24

⁵⁶C. S. Lewis, *Paradise Lost*, p. 67.

⁵⁷The idea that love is not defined by the emotions, as in the medieval *Frauendienst*, but by certain objective standards, can be clearly seen in the high esteem in which marriage is held in Protestantism, where the “romance of adultery” has been replaced by the “romance of marriage;” C. S. Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 340.

⁵⁸Romantic love.

⁵⁹Friendship.

⁶⁰Divine love, charity; cp. C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*. (New York / London: Harcourt Brace, 1960), passim; “Every being is a conductor of superior love or *agape* to the being below it, and of inferior love or *eros* to the being above. Such is the loving inequality between the intelligence who guides a sphere and the sphere which is guided [Abrabanel, *Dialoghi d’ Amore*. Trans. Friedeburg-Seeley and Barnes under the title *Philosophy of Love by Leone Ebreo*. (Socino Press, 1937), p. 184].” C. S. Lewis, *Paradise Lost*, p. 75.

⁶¹That is the opposite of Dante’s “Beatrician experience,” when the beloved plays a role “in the lover’s pilgrimage toward eventual slavation [...] This is the state to which Beatrice has brought Dante by the end of the *Divine Comedy*.” Charles A. Huttar, ‘Arms and the Man: The Place of Beatrice in Charles Williams’s Romantic Theology’. *Studies in Medievalism*, III. 3 (Winter 1991), p. 311.

6.4 God's *libertas*

Paradise Lost is an epic about human liberty. In *The Art of Logic*, Milton contends that human freedom has its origin in God's *libertas* by way of an eternal, divine decree

by which HE DECREED FROM ETERNITY, WITH ABSOLUTE FREEDOM, WITH ABSOLUTE WISDOM AND WITH ABSOLUTE HOLINESS, ALL THOSE THINGS WHICH HE PROPOSED OR WHICH HE WAS GOING TO PERFORM ... singly and by himself [...].⁶²

This Miltonic idea pertains to the Atonement, too. If it had not been for the “dearest mediation” of the Son, (III. 226), mankind must “have been lost, adjudged to death and hell / By doom severe” (223f.). This is not merely one more lesson of God's “School-Divine” as Pope mocked in his *Imitations of Horace*.⁶³ It is a “moment of high drama in Milton's epic,”⁶⁴ because because God in his *libertas* could have said “no” to the redemption of mankind.⁶⁵ The drama also rests on the fact that the Son could have refrained from offering himself. Duns Scotus holds the opinion that an angel could as well have sacrificed himself for mankind if God accepted his mediation.⁶⁶ Milton leaves open this possibility, too, when the Father asks all the “heavenly powers” (213) who would venture to redeem mankind.

6.5 *Christus Victor* Revisited

The *Christus Victor* view introduced in the “Nativity,” reappears in *Paradise Lost*. In book VI, a battle in heaven is recounted, and some readers are annoyed that Milton describes the armies in a very detailed way:

What a heaven! It is enough to disgust one with paradise; one would rather enter Charles I's troops of lackeys, or Cromwell's Ironsides. We have orders of the day, hierarchy, exact submission [...] etiquette, furbished arms, arsenals, depots of chariots and ammunition. Was it

⁶²p. 153f., quoted in William Myers, *Milton and Free Will: An Essay in Criticism and Philosophy*. (London / New York / Sydney: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 7

⁶³Alexander Pope, *Imitations of Horace*, Ep. II, i, 99–102, in A. Dyson, *Casebook*, p. 39.

⁶⁴Michael Lieb, ‘Milton's ‘Dramatick Constitution’: The Celestial Dialogue in *Paradise Lost*, Book III’. *Milton Studies*, 23 (1987), p. 235.

⁶⁵The dramatic effect is hampered by the lack metaphors.

⁶⁶Cp. p. 35.

worthwhile leaving earth to find in heaven carriage-works, buildings,
artillery, a manual of tactics?⁶⁷

Milton's martial heaven will be better understood when one remembers the upcoming of radical religious sects such as the Levellers, Ranters or Socinians,⁶⁸ who did not hesitate to draw the sword for their millenarian cause. Writing after the Restoration in 1660, Milton must have identified with the seraph Abdiel, "among the faithless, faithful only he" (V. 897), the single combatant amongst the rebelling angels.

After the battle between Abdiel and Satan, both angelic armies enter the fight, in which the archangel Michael inflicts on Satan his first feeling of pain,⁶⁹ until night makes both "Victor [the faithful angels] and vanquished [the rebellious angels]" retire (410). A new climax is reached the next morning, when the devils invent their hellish artillery, and, after a first successful attack (580ff.),⁷⁰ are met by the faith of the angels which removes mountains (639ff.),⁷¹ which lets the encounter culminate into a most fierce "uproar" (668) making Cromwell's annihilation of Charles II's Royalist Scottish army at Worcester⁷² resemble "a civil game" (667). The battle is not decided until the Son appears in his chariot with personified, "eagle-winged" Victory (762) at his side. He nearly instantaneously⁷³ drives the rebellious host like the Gadarene swine⁷⁴ over the precipice into "the bottomless pit" of hell (866). This victory foreshadows the final victory on the cross and is thus logically linked to man's redemption:

To execute fierce vengeance on his foes,
not so on man; him through their malice fallen,
Father of mercy and grace, thou didst not doom
So strictly, but much more to pity inclined,

⁶⁷Taine quote in Michael Murrin, *History and Warfare in Renaissance Epic* (Chicago, Ill., 1994), quoted in John Milton; Alastair Fowler John Carey, editor, *The Poems of John Milton*. (London/Harlow: Longmans, 1968), Longmans' Annotated English Poets, p. 341.

⁶⁸C. Hill, *Revolution*, p. 115.

⁶⁹Raphael, who recounts the fight, is unaware that Satan *first knew pain* at the assembly of V. 767, John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, p. 355.

⁷⁰A reason for Satan to mock (unconscious of the dramatic irony) "these victors proud" who "Erewhile [...] fierce were coming" (509f.). The archenemy has no glue that afterwards he will not only "dance" but be chased like a herd of "goats" or Gadarene swine, 856–66.

⁷¹Matt. 17:20.

⁷²One of the battles referred to by Milton in his sonnet "To the Lord General Cromwell" (May 1652).

⁷³"They astonished all resistance lost, / All courage; down their idle weapons dropped" (838f.).

⁷⁴Mark 5:11–13 is conflated with Matt. 25:32–41, *Ibid.*, note on 856f..

He to appease thy wrath, and end the strife
 [...] offered himself to die
 For man's offence. Oh unexampled love,
 Love nowhere to be found less than divine!
 (III. 399–411)

6.6 God's Greater Glory: The Fortunate Fall

The matter of *Paradise Lost*, the Fall of man, implies man's redemption. After the archangel Michael has shown Adam the Atonement which will take place in the future, the first man exclaims:

Oh goodness infinite, goodness immense!
 That all this good of evil shall produce,
 And evil turn to good; more wonderful
 Than that which by creation first brought forth
 Light out of darkness! Full of doubt I stand,
 Whether I should repent me now of sin
 By me done and occasioned, or rejoice
 Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring,
 To God more glory, more good will to men
 From God, and over wrath grace shall abound.⁷⁵

Milton, here refers to the paradox of the Fortunate Fall, of which one finds its classic expression in Roman liturgy:

O certe necessarium Adae peccatum, quod Christi morte deletum est!
 O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere redemptorem!⁷⁶

It was taken up by some Protestant theologians, especially by Calvinists, who saw it as a manifestation of God's predestination.⁷⁷

The Fortunate Fall is a highly disputed concept for two reasons. The first is theological. For a devout anti-Christian such as W. Empson the concept is grist on his mill: "[t]he Fortunate Fall, it seems clear, removes from God the last rag of excuse for his plot to corrupt the whole race of mankind."⁷⁸

⁷⁵ *PL* XII 469–78.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Arthur O. Lovejoy, 'Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall'. *English Literary History*, 4 (1937), pp.169f.

⁷⁷ D. R. Danielson, *Milton's Good God*, p. 207.

⁷⁸ W. Empson, *Milton's God*, p.192.

It infringes on the argument of theodicy, that God is good. If the Fall was Fortunate, it certainly was predestined by God "lest [...] way should be made for the manifestations of Gods glorious works by accident."⁷⁹ Another theological dilemma is the oxymoron *felix culpa* itself, because it borders on Antinomianism.⁸⁰ With the historical Calvinist-Arminian split in mind, it is striking that the staunch defender of free will, Milton, has been credited with unhesitatingly adopting Adam's exclamations about the Fortunate Fall.⁸¹

Secondly, there is the literary dilemma that if Milton really voiced the "orthodox" view of the Fortunate Fall in *Paradise Lost*, the last two and a half books would contradict the first nine and a half and the tragedy would ultimately be turned into a comedy. With W. H. Marshall I do not accept the solution of E. Miner who thinks that the "fall will be regarded as fortunate but only for few", i.e. for the elected ones, but follow Danielson's hypothesis of the "Unfortunate Fall,"⁸² believing that it best explains the epic in its theological (prelapsarian progress; emphasis on obedience; theodicy to "justify the ways of God to men," I 26) literary (clear tragic note of I–IX) and historical (Milton as Arminian) facets. I think, however, that Danielson too extremely minimises the rôle of the paradox of the Fortunate Fall in *Paradise Lost*. All things considered, the reason why Michael did not correct Adam seems to me that the Fall was the second best alternative as it brought about the threefold glory of Christ to "drag in chains [...] the prince of air," to be "exalted high / Above all names in heaven" and to receive man "into bliss."⁸³ In this sense, Adam's mention of the possibility of the Fortunate Fall is only a synthesised paradox whose seeming contradictions best explain the tragedy of the Fall as well as the bliss of Christ's redemption.⁸⁴ Whatever position one prefers, the discussion about the Fortunate Fall demonstrate that one cannot read *Paradise Lost* without having in mind the Atonement.

⁷⁹W. Twisse, *The Riches of God's Love*, pp. 85f., quoted in D. R. Danielson, *Milton's Good God*, p. 207

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 205

⁸¹Lovejoy acknowledges that Adam merely "expresses serious doubt," and not an irrefutable fact. V. R. Mollenkott thinks, that Milton, here, has even "subtly tipped the scales against the concept of the fall as fortunate" because Adam refers to Rom. 5:2 and 6:1f where Paul warns against antinomianism; cp. p. ??; Virginia R. Mollenkott, 'Milton's Rejection of the Fortunate Fall'. *Milton Quarterly*, 6 (1972), p. 2.

⁸²D. R. Danielson, *Milton's Good God*, pp. 224ff; Danielson draws a parallel to the human Fall and sees Satan's expulsion from heaven also as "unfortunate." He argues that man was *not merely* created to fill the gap of the fallen angels, *ibid.*, pp. 230–3.

⁸³XII 454, 457f., 462. Lovejoy rightly compares this triadic structure to Du Bartas, cp. ??.

⁸⁴Cp. Johannes H. Schmid, 'Paradox'. in: *ELTG*. Volume 2, (1998), p. 1513.

Chapter 7

Paradise Regained

Immediately after finishing *Paradise Lost*, the poet set off to write the second part of the story,¹ so to speak: *Paradise Regained*.² Firstly, I will attempt to answer the question why Milton did not write about the suffering Christ in *Paradise Regained*, which actually “was the poem for it.”³ Then, I will explore the main topic of *Paradise Regained*, the notion of “temptation,” and examine how it is linked to the Atonement.

7.1 The Missing Link

Having in mind Michael’s vision of Christ as a man, “shameful and accursed, nailed to the cross” (*PL*, XII 413), who through the paradox of the *theologia crucis* will create a new paradise, “far happier place / Than this of Eden” (464f.), one suspects an epic depicting a suffering⁴ or at least a dying Christ. In the heavenly council, the Son himself had made clear that the redemption of mankind is possible only through the death of the redeemer: “on me let Death wreak all his rage[...].” (*PL* III. 241). Writing about the Atonement in Milton, one cannot circumvent the question why Milton did not write an epic about the Crucifixion. Between the young Milton’s minor poem on

¹The Quaker Thomas Ellwood, who by 1662 had become a friend of Milton, credits himself with a measurable part in the writing of *Paradise Regained* (obviously, he Ellwood did not consider the possibly ironic meaning or merely polite undertone of Milton’s statement): “I pleasantly said to him, Thou hast said much here of *Paradise lost*; but what hast thou to say of *Paradise found*?” Thomas Ellwood, *The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood ... Written by His Own Hand*, London 1714, pp. 233f., quoted in A. S. P. Woodhouse, D. Bush, *A Variorum Commentary*, IV, 1.

²W. Empson, *Milton’s God*, p. 165; *Paradise Regained* was published in 1671, together with *Samson Agonistes*.

³D. Saurat, *Milton*, p. 149.

⁴Cp. A. S. P. Woodhouse, D. Bush, *A Variorum Commentary*, IV, 18.

the Passion of Christ and the aged poet's doctrinal passages in *De Doctrina Christiana* a link is missing: No major poem focuses on the *via dolorosa* of Christ, which culminates in his redeeming death on Golgotha, as the main subject. The Passion of Christ is "too hard for human wight" as Milton confesses in "The Passion" (l. 14). This is not only true for the experience of the Passion but also for its literary treatment. Firstly, according to Christian understanding, Christ's death exhibits the most intense experience of pain imaginable, which, of course, makes it very hard for the poet to write about in a satisfying way. Secondly, it is an immense challenge to write about the Passion itself without falling into mere pastiche: Too many Christian poets and theologians have attempted it before.

There is, thirdly, also a reason related to Milton's poetic diction. Milton is an epic poet,⁵ employing the style of objective contemplation rather than subjective, religious feeling as one finds it in George Herbert, for example.⁶ It seems to be an all but insuperable obstacle to write about the greatest deed of love (John 15:13) in this detached epic manner without becoming either pathetic⁷ or creating the expression of coldness bordering on cruelty.⁸ Fourthly, a special dilemma consists in the choice of metaphor. The writer must describe a static event (i.e., slow death) while expressing the utmost inner dynamic (i.e. the ultimate battle between Good and Evil as found in the *Christus Victor* theology). A – from a pure historical point of view – unspectacular and insignificant event (crucifixion as death penalty was common in the first century A.D.) becomes – on the spiritual level – the greatest battle of world history: the battle against the origin of Evil. Even Bunyan's allegory *The Holy War*, in which the forces of evil wage war for the city Mansoul, appears wooden in comparison with *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The metaphor of life as a war seems too static for an allegory while the metaphor of life as a way would fit better the dynamic quality of life.⁹

The young Milton also faced the genuine human difficulty that he had not experienced real suffering himself. It was Milton's credo that the poet himself should be "a true poem."¹⁰ In the ideal case, the poet should not only excell linguistically and stylistically but also have experienced elements of the Crucifixion in his life (persecution, suffering, embodiment of the archetype

⁵E. M. W. Tillyard thinks that even in the minor poems Christ is introduced as "epic hero;" E. M. W. Tillyard, *Miltonic Setting*, p. 177.

⁶Cp. C. S. Lewis, *Paradise Lost*, p. 132.

⁷As in "The Passion."

⁸That is exactly what readers have complained about in the speeches of God in *PL*.

⁹cp. C. S. Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 69.

¹⁰Cp. C. S. Lewis, *Paradise Lost*, pp. 91f..

of charity). This might be a reason why the aged, blind, and politically defeated Milton had better preconditions than the young one, who led the rather sheltered life of a studious student, nick-named “the Lady of Christ.”¹¹ He recognised his inability and thought “[t]his subject [...] to be above the years he had when he wrote it [...]”¹² This biographical reason will become significant again for *Samson Agonistes*. C. A. Patrides mentions another ground claiming that Protestants – in contrast to Catholics – generally were not fond of writing about the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. This is not very convincing if one comes to think of George Herbert’s magnificent Easter poems (“Easter” and “Easter Wings”) or John Bunyan’s moving description in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* how Christian reaches the hill with the cross and his burden suddenly falls from his shoulders being swallowed by the empty tomb. All in all, Milton well might have had in mind his failure to write a poem on the Passion in March 1630 and wanted to prevent a second embarrassing attempt. C. S. Lewis curtly sums up that Milton did not write an epic about the Atonement because he “had more sense.”¹³ Whatever the reason, Milton “has described the *enfances* and knighting of the Hero, and has really made it quite clear that the dragon-slaying is not part of his subject.” Nevertheless, “Satan’s ‘moral defeat’ has been achieved,” but “[H]is actual defeat still is to come.”¹⁴

While I do not agree that the Crucifixion is a neglected topic with Protestant writers, nevertheless, they seem to approach it in a different manner. While the Catholic Richard Crashaw’s “On the Wounds of Our Crucified Lord” is a mystic meditation on the act of the Crucifixion, Bunyan is more concerned with the effect of the Crucifixion on the individual Christian.¹⁵ This Protestant feature fits on Milton’s treatment of the Crucifixion in *Paradise Regained* as well. He shows the effect of Christ’s atoning death through the metaphor of deliverance. Man is delivered to lead a truly human life in spite of the allurements of the devil:

What wise and valiant man would seek to free
 These thus degenerate, by themselves enslaved,
 Or could of inward slaves make outward free?
 (*PR* IV. 143–45)

¹¹The young Milton’s nickname in Cambridge.

¹²Written below the poem, “The Passion.”

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 90f.

¹⁵Cp. also George Herbert’s “Redemption.”

7.2 The Tempted Eremite

The metaphor of deliverance, which depicts the Augustine notion of the liberation of the *liberum arbitrium captivatum*, is closely related to the main topic of *Paradise Regained*, i.e. temptation. The fact that tempting the Son of God constitutes the central drama of the epic implies a belief in the dual nature of Christ. If Christ's nature was solely divine, tempting him would make no sense, much less provide the plot for a drama. Whereas the Son of God is depicted as glorious Christus Victor in *PL*, this theme is only shortly alluded to in the climactic close of *PR* when Satan, "[w]ho durst so proudly tempt the Son of God," falls from the pinnacle.¹⁶ By and large, however, it is not Christ's victorious divinity but his humble humanity that matters in *PR*. After a parallel beginning to *Paradise Lost*,¹⁷ the author again plunges into *medias res* (18; cp. *PL* I 34). He does not now introduce "the infernal serpent" (*PL* I 34), who through his temptation "brought death into the world" (*PL* I 3), but the "son of Joseph deemed" (*PR* I 23) whose merit was "Recovered Paradise to all mankind" (3). Thus, the action starts ("son of Joseph deemed") and ends ("he unobserved / Home to his mother's house private returned," IV 638f.) in Nazareth. For the uninitiated observer, "Nazareth" stands for the human part of Jesus' dual nature ("verum hominem," as Anselm expressed it).¹⁸ As the Jew Nathaniel of Cana expressed before he became Christ's disciple, Nazareth not only stands for a normal human birthplace but a very low and humble at that:

Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?¹⁹

The focus on the small and insignificant town of Nazareth corresponds to the depiction of the protagonist as "meek" (IV 636) and most of the time replying "calmly" (III 43) and "patiently" (II 432).²⁰ This represents at once a similarity and a dissimilarity between "The Passion" and *Paradise*

¹⁶IV 580; in order to bring home the full irony that the temptor himself is falling down from the insecure position on the topmost spire of the temple, Milton uses a parallel syntactic construction as when describing the first Fall of Satan before the creation of the world in *PL*: "Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms" (I 49).

¹⁷First person speech with the invocation to the Holy Spirit (1–17; cp. *PL* I 1–33).

¹⁸Cp. footnote ??.

¹⁹John 1:46.

²⁰Theologically this is explained by the Incarnation: Jesus is "remote from heaven, enshrined / In fleshly tabernacle, and human form" (IV 596–9). John M. Steadman couches the difference between the classical heroes such as Homer's Achilles or Virgil's Aeneas in pithy words claiming that Milton has brought about a "Copernican revolution" in epic poetry, A. S. P. Woodhouse, D. Bush, *A Variorum Commentary*, IV 16.

Regained. Mentioning a possible source of Milton's use of the notion of "mask" in Gregory of Nyssa,²¹ I hinted at the *kenosis* of Christ, his hiding behind the mask of the human nature. This reference, only shortly alluded to in "The Passion," is fully spelled out in *Paradise Regained*. Christ "τῶ προκαλύμματι τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν ἐνεκρύφθη τὸ θεῖον,[...]"²² and, in the beginning, neither Satan nor even Christ himself can glimpse behind this "veil of human nature."

Satan is highly interested in the nature of Christ, the meandering eremite. The answer to the question, "Who this is we must learn" (*PR* I. 91), is a matter of victory or defeat for the archenemy. For he still remembers the protevangelium²³ which announced his death-pang in the future by the "seed" of the "woman."²⁴ Jesus himself has not yet fully received divine revelation about who he actually is. So, both the protagonists are very much concerned to really unlock the secret of the nature of this man wandering through a "pathless desert, dusk with horrid shades" (I. 296). Christ's nature, which is a purely doctrinal question, at length dealt with in the fifth chapter of *De doctrina Christiana*, now becomes the clue of a drama on which hinges the σωτηρία of all mankind.²⁵

The question of the nature of Christ, which lies at the heart of the poem, is not merely a pivotal dramatic feature for *PR*, but also a possible stone of contention for theology. It has been one of the main doctrinal debates in the patristic period.²⁶ Even in the seventeenth century, people who had favoured and spread the Arian heresy that Christ is not ἀληθινὸς Θεὸς²⁷ were burned

²¹See p. 59.

²²Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, XXIV, 46 Aulén translates: "God [...] concealed himself under the veil of human nature;" G. Aulén, *Christus Victor*, p.52 Cp. *Oratio catechetica* XXVI.

²³Νο εὐαγγέλιον for the antagonist, to be sure; C. A. Patrides, *Renaissance Thought*, ch. 6.

²⁴Gen. 3:15.

²⁵"Milton's unusual conception of an incarnate Christ who has really emptied himself of divine understanding and will, together with the conventional conception of a puzzled and deluded Satan seeking throughout the temptation to learn whether Christ is indeed divine, provides the basis for a genuine dramatic encounter in the poem, and epic duel transmuted into intellectual and spiritual terms." Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Milton's Brief Epic. The Genre, Meaning, and Art of Paradise Regained*. (London: Methuen, 1966), p.159.

²⁶The ecumenical councils at Nicaea (325 AD), Constantinople (381 AD) and Chalcedon (451 AD) bear witness to the theological significance at the time.

²⁷"[...] true God" (Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos*, 1. 5, 6, 9, quoted in C. A. Patrides, 'Milton and Arianism'. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 25 (1964), p.65.

on the stake.²⁸ In *PL*, Michael explains to Adam the Lutheran concept of imputed righteousness: Christ is demonstrated as

Proclaiming life to all who shall believe
In his redemption, and that his obedience
Imputed becomes theirs by faith, his merits
To save them, not their own, though legal works.²⁹

Man has to acknowledge Jesus as the one ordained to make satisfaction for mankind (cp. XII 419). For Athanasius, this saving faith was possible only if Jesus also was true God. Milton, by contrast, accepts the mystery of the incarnation, and he also accepts that salvation comes “AT THE PRICE OF HIS OWN BLOOD,”³⁰ but nevertheless sticks to his antitrinitarianism. This leads him to a Christology, explained in *DDC* I. xiv. (“Of Man’s Restoration and of Christ the Redeemer”), which “cannot be exactly classified in terms of any of the common christological positions.”³¹

Besides the role which the motif of *ἐνεκρύφθη*³² plays for both poems, *Paradise Regained* strikes a totally different tone than “The Passion.” In the latter, imagery of water prevails, which refers to the motif of weeping.³³ In *Paradise Regained*, which in this point is faithful to its Biblical source, the place of action stands for dryness:

He entered now the bordering desert wild,
And with dark shades and rocks environed round,
His holy meditations thus pursued.
(I. 193–95)

Christ is not depicted as a “Phoebus” full of “godlike acts” (“The Passion,” 23f.), but as an eremite (*PR* I. 8),³⁴ who has to withstand basic temptations such as hunger or thirst as well as more subtle ones.

²⁸Ephraim Paget chronicles that “Bartholomew Legate, an obstinate Arrian” was to be burned in Smithfield and Edward Wightman at Lichfield in 1611; *Heresiography, Or a Description of the Hereticks and Sectaries Sprung Up in These Latter Times*. (London, 1661), p. 157, quoted in William B. Hunter, ‘Milton’s Arianism Reconsidered’. *Harvard Theological Review*, 52 (1959), p. 30 For an examination how far Milton can rightly be called an Arian see p. 45.

²⁹For “though legal works” compare Melanchthon’s forensic emphasis: “Nam Hebraeis iustificare est forense verbum,” Philipp Melanchthon, *Loci communes rerum theologicarum* (1521), CR 21.421, quoted in A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 211.

³⁰*DDC*, John Milton, *CPW*, Vol. VI, I. xiv. 183.

³¹B. Lewalski, *Brief Epic*, p. 157.

³²“concealing”; cp. pp. 59 and 89.

³³Cp. the imagery of water, such as “Chebar flood” (37), “pregnant cloud” (56), to the description of weeping: “my tears have washed a wannish white” (35), “my tears [...] fall in ordered characters” (48f.).

³⁴True, it is a “glorious eremite,” but his glory is hidden under the veil of human nature.

Various schemata have been designed in order to figure out the meaning of the three temptations. Milton presents the temptations in the order of the Gospel of Luke (different from that found in Matthew): (1) temptation to make bread out of stones (Luke 4:2–4), (2) temptation to receive the kingdoms of this world, which are presented to Christ on a mountain, out of Satan’s hand (5–8), and (3) the temptation to cast oneself down from the pinnacle of the temple (9–12).³⁵

7.2.1 Bread, Unbelief, and Hidden Identity

More important than the order in itself might be its interpretation pertaining to the category of each single temptation. Catholics normally crack the cipher in the following way:³⁶ The bread temptation stands for gluttony, on the mountain, resistance to avarice is tested and on the tower of the temple vainglory is on stake.³⁷ Usually, this was compared to the warning of the Apostle John to shun the world, namely the “lust of the the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). More important for Milton’s *œuvre*, the triadic structure was also seen in Adam’s temptation in Paradise (Gen. 3).³⁸

Protestant commentaries on Genesis 3 exhibit the typical emphasis on *sola scriptura*. John Calvin, for example, writes that the devil

ne dit pas, Vous gousterez au bout de la langue un fruict qui vous sera delectable: mais il dit, Vous serez pareils à Dieu. Voyla donc l’orgueil dont il vient assaillir Adam et Eve. Et puis il y a l’incrudulite. [...] Et finalement, il y a la rebellion.³⁹

Doubt, ambition-pride, and rebellion are the key words for Calvin’s explanation of Genesis 3. The most important difference to the Gregorian scheme is the first temptation, which also reveals the Protestant fear to lay too much emphasis on abstinence.⁴⁰ Hermetics are similar when the reformers turn to

³⁵Matthew reverses the order of the two last temptations, s. Matt. 4:1–11; cp. Patrick Cullen, *Infernal Triad. The Flesh, the World, and the Devil in Spenser and Milton*. (Princeton/London: Princeton UP, 1974), p. xxx, ?, .

³⁶The classic analogy is Gregorian and is found in *XL homiliarum in evangelia*, cp. Ibid., p. xxvi.

³⁷In Matthew, the tower means avarice and the mount vainglory Ibid., p. xxx.

³⁸Here, the symbols are supposed to be the fruit, the promise of knowledge, and the promise to be like gods; Ibid.

³⁹John Calvin, “Sermon XLIV,” in *Sermons sur l’harmonie évangélique*, quoted in Ibid., p. xxxi.

⁴⁰Calvin thinks the Roman Church “magnifié outre mesure l’abstinence,” in “Sermon XLIV,” in *Sermons sur l’harmonie évangélique*, quoted in Ibid., p. xxx.

Christ's temptation.⁴¹ Thus, it was on the bread temptation that Catholics and Protestants disagreed mostly

with the Catholic into seventeenth century interpreting it as a temptation to an excess of fleshly desire, the Protestant interpreting it as a temptation to disbelief in the word of God.⁴²

The Protestant emphasis on a temptation to unbelief ("I'incredulite" [sic!]),⁴³ proves important for *Paradise Regained*. Although Milton makes use of the Catholic tripartite "capita draconis,"⁴⁴ the notion of distrust is still more important. In contrast to his prose,⁴⁵ Milton does not reject Catholic theology in his poetry merely because it is Catholic.⁴⁶ However, he enriches and modifies Roman views with Protestant theology. In *PR*, the bread temptation surely stands for gluttony.⁴⁷ Satan is not so naive, however, as to imagine that the supposed Son of God would be seduced by such a simple, straightforward attack. In a similar manner, the archfiend rebukes one of his "companions of his fall" (*PL* I. 76), Belial, after the latter had proposed to tempt Jesus with unsophisticated lechery.

Satan estimates Jesus' strength of character high enough in order to withstand mere allurements of his appetite:

Therefore with manlier objects we must try
His constancy, with such as have more show
Of worth, of honour, glory and popular praise.⁴⁸

Satan hopes that Jesus might be dashed to pieces on "Rocks whereon greatest men have ofttest wrecked" (II. 228). In the bread temptation, it is the trust that God will provide for his chosen one on which Satan spends his most venomous arrow. Jesus understands this when he harkens back to Israeli history and reminds Satan of how God took care of Moses while on Mount

⁴¹E.g. John Calvin, "Sermon L," col. 621, in *Ibid.*

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. xxxiv.

⁴³*Sermons sur l'harmonie évangélique*, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. xxxi.

⁴⁴"the heads of the dragon," Isaac of Stella, *Sermones, P.L.* 194:1795, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. xxxiv.

⁴⁵Where he sniped at the Pope as anti-Christ, cp. C. Hill, *Revolution*, p. 85.

⁴⁶Cp. the "glorification" of Mary in the epics (e.g. *PL* v.387), cp. D. Saurat, *Milton*, p. 147 For the juxtaposition of Irenaeus and Lutheran concepts of the Atonement see *PL* III; cp. p. 28f.

⁴⁷I. 324f.; it is supplemented by a pious excuse of charity: "[...] and us relieve / With food" (344f.).

⁴⁸II. 225-7.

Sinai as well as for Elijah during his journey to Mount Horeb.⁴⁹ Here, it becomes evident, that Christ's understanding of himself is essential in order to withstand the temptations.⁵⁰ Christ is more than the Old Testament prophets Moses and Elijah. If they were able to trust in God's loving care, how much more will the faith of the Son of God in his heavenly Father shatter all worries about "what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink" (Matt. 6:25). Thus, it is important that Jesus penetrates Satan's disguise as false shepherd (I. 314f.), at the same time suspecting that he himself is the true shepherd, the "the mighty Pan."⁵¹ Jesus explicitly links distrust with identity:

Why dost thou then suggest to me distrust
Knowing who I am, as I know who thou art?⁵²

Now, Satan reveals himself "undisguised" (357) as "that Spirit unfortunate" (358). One may leave it open whether Walter MacKellar is right that Christ "at once detects who Satan is,"⁵³ or whether Jesus is merely bluffing the Devil.⁵⁴ It is however indisputable fact, that Christ has at least an inkling of the identity of Satan as well as of his own. Solely by human intelligence, he could discover the logical flaws in Satan's speech and that the "aged man in rural weeds" (I. 314) is dissimulating.⁵⁵ Further on, Jesus has already achieved at least a partial understanding of his own nature: through his mother (I. 235–7), through Scripture "to our Scribes known partly" (I. 260f.) and through the "great proclaimer" (I. 18), John the Baptist, whose act of baptising Jesus was accompanied by the divine proclamation of Jesus' sonship (I. 32). But still, he only "sees through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12). Jesus is still meditating on the discrepancies of his feelings ("What from within I feel myself," I. 193) and the uttered prophesies ("What from without comes often to my ears," I. 194).

⁴⁹The typological relevance of Moses and Elijah here is the number "forty." "Moses was in the mount forty days" (Exod. 24:18) and the Elijah travelled for forty days and nights without food (1 Kings 19:8). This corresponds to Jesus' forty days of fasting. Cp. John Milton, *CSP*, p. 437.

⁵⁰"To withstand Satan's temptations Christ must refuse all inadequate, partial, or erroneous version or parodies of himself and his mission and must finally attain to full and perfect understanding." B. Lewalski, *Brief Epic*, p. 161.

⁵¹"Nativity," 89; Spenser calls Christ "great Pan" in the *Shepherd's Calendar* May 54, thus continuing the identification of Christ as the "good shepherd."

⁵²I. 355f.

⁵³A. S. P. Woodhouse, D. Bush, *A Variorum Commentary*, IV. 89.

⁵⁴If Carey is right, this does nevertheless not contradict with Jesus' innocence because EF; John Carey, *Milton*. (London: Evans, 1969), *Literature in Perspective*, ed. Kenneth H. Grose, pp. 124–6 EF.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 124–6.

Jesus needs to “increase his wisdom” (Luke 2:52). B. Lewalski considers the possibility that

perhaps, just as the Son enjoyed occasional accessions of power in *Paradise Lost*, the incarnate Christ is the occasional recipient of special divine illumination activating the divine in himself, and may revert to the merely or nearly human on other occasion. Such a view of Christ, drawn from the statements of *De Doctrina*, would seem to describe precisely the hero presented to us in *Paradise Regained*.⁵⁶

In his comprehensive treatment of Christian doctrine, Milton comments on Luke 2:52 that

after having ‘emptied himself,’ he might ‘increase in wisdom,’ Luke II.52. by means of the understanding which he previously possessed, and might ‘know all things,’ John xxi 17, namely, through the teaching of the Father.⁵⁷

7.2.2 Banquet, Wealth, Glory, and Hidden Kingship

The second temptation, which is basically an attempt to seduce Jesus to the vices of the World.⁵⁸ Satan promises to give Jesus power over an outer, material kingdom, whose tables are “richly spread, in regal mode” (II. 340), which is upheld by the power of money (II. 422), and where “fame and glory” are “the reward” (III. 25; cp. 45f.). Again, whether Jesus falls into the trap of the World hinges on the degree of knowledge Jesus possesses about himself. Christ must successfully enter the “process of regaining [...] the divine understanding which he previously possessed by the means of the teaching of the Father.”⁵⁹ In this way only, can he meet Satan’s “strategy

⁵⁶B. Lewalski, *Brief Epic*, p. 159.

⁵⁷*The Works of John Milton*, ed. Frank A. Patterson (18 vols.) New York, 1931–8), quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁵⁸P. Cullen, *Infernal Triad*, p. 149; Milton uses a composite temptation scene modelled on Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* (for details see *ibid.*, pp. 174ff). Thus, the temptation to the World has a triadic substructure: The banquet corresponds to the Flesh (II. 340ff.), the gold-temptation (II. 406) to the World, and the glory-temptation (III. 25ff.) to the Devil; B. Lewalski, *Brief Epic*, p. 221. Milton, however, labours to outdo his predecessors and doubles the substructure. According to Patric Cullen, the cities fit in a second triadic substructure: Parthia stands for the “Devil’s own sin” (p. 158), Rome for the Flesh, the “horrid lusts” (II. 94; 159ff.), and Athens for the World offering “worldly knowledge in the guise of unworldly knowledge” (p. 163).

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 163.

of placing Christ in a hall of mirrors.”⁶⁰ The Son of God needs to know the answer – at least in part – to the question of identities in order not to be deceived by the distorted images reflected by the devilish mirrors.

The food, then, is repulsed not merely because Jesus does not trust “the giver” (II. 322), but also because of his insight in his divine *auctoritas* over nature.⁶¹ The money, he rejects not only because “wealth without these three [i.e.: virtue, valour, wisdom, 431] is impotent,” but also because he sees – though only in an approximate way at this point – his future work, the “opus mediatorium vel potius passionis.”⁶² On such a thorny path, what counts is self-discipline rather than authority over the multitudes. Jesus remark mirrors Old Testament wisdom:

He who reigns within himself, and rules
Passions, desires, and fears, is more a king;⁶³

Satan also acknowledges Jesus insight when he grants him that “thou know’st what is of use to know” (III. 7). In the repulsion of the glory-temptation, knowledge again looms large when glory is depreciated on the grounds that the “miscellaneous rabble” (III. 50), i.e. the common people,

[...] admire they know not what;
And know not whom, but as one leads the other⁶⁴

It is unimportant how the people sees Jesus. What counts is the divine revelation. Here, again Job is the role model, the type, for Christ: “Famous he was in heaven, on earth less known” (68). As Job (and Socrates, 96), it

⁶⁰Thus, in the opening section, “Satan becomes Christ the good shepherd; Christ Himself becomes the good shepherd, but with Satan becoming the object of His salvation; and Satan and Christ become one;” P. Cullen, *Infernal Triad*, p. 135.

⁶¹II. 379–84: “Said’st thou not that to all things I had right? / And who withholds my power that right ot use? / Shall I receive by gift what of my own, / When and where likes me best, I can command? / I can at will, doubt not, as soon as thou, / Command a table in this wilderness [...]” Cp. John Milton; Carolus Ricardus Sumner, editor, *Joannis Miltoni Angli de doctrina Christiana. Libri duo posthumi*. (Brunsvigae: Vieweg, 1827), I. v. 103 where Milton cites Matt. 28:18: “*data est mihi omnis auctoritas in coelo et in terra.*”

⁶²Ibid., I. v. 107; although the details do not yet seem to be revealed to Jesus, he already perceives that his crown will be “a wreath of thorns” (II. 459); in his passion, he would really bear “for the public all this weight” (465); cp. Isa. 53 about the suffering Messiah.

⁶³II. 466f.; cp. Prov. 16:32: “*He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*”

⁶⁴III. 52f.; the contempt for the common people is a characteristic of the disillusioned Milton from the late 1640s on; C. Hill, *Revolution*, pp. 160–2.

is crucial for Jesus to know who he is and who sent him, only thus will his deeds also “thereby witness whence I am” (106). Jesus’ mission is significant for his ability display the obedience demanded of him if he wants to fulfil his mission to save the world.⁶⁵ This becomes clear in the last temptation on the pinnacle which is a temptation to worship the devil, made the harder through the violence Satan displays in order to frighten his adversary.⁶⁶

The three temptations correspond to the three offices of Jesus. In his *DDC*, Milton follows the traditional Protestant structure of the three offices of Jesus.⁶⁷ Calvin’s comment is typical:

the office whiche is committed to hym [Christ] by hys Father, consys-
teth of three partes. For he is geven [sic] bothe a Prophete, a King,
and a Preest.⁶⁸

Of especial significance for the topic of this essay is the function of the “Preest,” which Milton defines in *DDC* as consisting of the satisfaction and intercession:

The PRIESTLY FUNCTION is that in accordance with which CHRIST
ONCE OFFERED HIMSELF TO GOD THE FATHER AS A SAC-
RIFICE FOR SINNERS, AND HAS ALWAYS MADE, AND STILL
CONTINUES TO MAKE INTERCESSION FOR US.⁶⁹

Thus, when John is about to hand over to Christ “his Heavenly Office” (*PR* I. 28), who ponders on how to “Publish his Godlike office now mature” (I. 188), this term bears definite theological implications in the seventeenth century. The priestly office, above all, refers to the Atonement, the “SACRIFICE FOR SINNERS.”⁷⁰

7.2.3 Revelation of Identity and Kingship on the Pinnacle

In the same way as the three temptations represent three types of seduction, so they are also artfully intertwined with Christ’s three mediatorial rôles.

⁶⁵Cp. Christ as the second Adam who recovers through “firm obedience” what “by one man’s disobedience lost” (I. 4; 2.).

⁶⁶The “many terrors, voices, prodigies” that surrounded Jesus on the stormy night before the last temptation foreshadow this violence as a “sure foregoing sing.” This aspect of the temptation is an addition by Milton to the Biblical account of the temptation.

⁶⁷Some theologians such as Augustine taught about the twofold functions of Christ.

⁶⁸J. Calvin, *Institutes* II. xv, fol. 91^V, quoted in B. Lewalski, *Brief Epic*, p. 183.

⁶⁹John Milton, *CPW*, I. xv. 200, cp. BL66, 185f.

⁷⁰*DDC*, CExv, 287..., B. Lewalski, *Brief Epic*, p. 182.

According to Lewalski, the bread-banquet sequence, where Christ compares his situation with that of the prophets Moses and Elijah, stands for Christ's office as "living oracle" (I. 460), the prophet "worthy of more glory than Moses" (Hebr. 3:3).⁷¹ After the transitional passage of the banquet-wealth-glory temptation,⁷² mention is made of David as a type of Christ as king, who, as Satan acknowledges, is "to a Kingdom [...] born, ordain'd / To sit upon thy Father *David's* Throne" (III. 152f.).⁷³ Only after Christ has implicitly revealed his true identity and kingship by applying an Old Testament quote to himself, Satan does his second fall:

To whom thus Jesus; Also it is written,
 Tempt not the Lord thy God, he said and stood
 But Satan smitten with amazement fell
 [...]
 Who durst so proudly tempt the son of God.
 (IV. 560–80)⁷⁴

7.3 The Dramatic Irony of Satan and the Cross

The "grand climactic moment"⁷⁵ of Christ's epiphany⁷⁶ on the pinnacle of the temple can only be fully appreciated if one recognises its function to foreshadow the Crucifixion. Satan is prophecied to fall

[...] like an autumnal star
 Or lightning thou shalt fall from heaven trod down
 under his feet: for proof, ere this thou feel'st
 Thy wound, yet not thy last and deadliest wound
 By this repulse received, and hold'st in hell

⁷¹At the same time, Satan as false prophet provides a backdrop for Jesus as the true prophet. The arch-enemy is his anti-type, the "liar in four hundred mouths" (I. 428). Cp. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, 'Time and History in Paradise Regained'. in: Balachandra Rajan, editor, *The Prison and the Pinnacle. Papers to Commemorate the Tercentenary of Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes 1671–1971*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 77, B. Lewalski, *Brief Epic*, pp. 204ff.

⁷²The passage in the bower acts "as a link between the temptation of the Flesh on the first day and the temptation of the World on the second." P. Cullen, *Infernal Triad*, p. 144.

⁷³Cp. B. Lewalski, *Brief Epic*, pp. 256ff.

⁷⁴Mark the references to the first fall, whose description ends with a parallel structure, thus emphasising the divine unity (Milton does not profess his Arminianism at this place) between Christ and the Father: "Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms" (*PL I.*).

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 303.

⁷⁶B. K. Lewalski, 'Time and History', p. 79.

No triumph;
 (IV. 619–24)

With this prophecy in mind, Satan's furious anger becomes pure dramatic irony, when he threatens Jesus with a future full of suffering:

Sorrows, and labours, opposition, hate,
 Attends thee, scorns, reproaches, injuries,
 Violence and stripes, and lastly cruel death
 A kingdom they portend thee, but what kingdom,
 Real or allegoric I discern not [...].
 (IV. 385–390)

Without quoting the doctrine of the Fortunate Fall, it becomes evident that Satan is working God's plan to work salvation for mankind through the Atonement on the cross. The way the Christ of *PR* acts and speaks is an example to follow in the vein of *imitatio Dei*.⁷⁷ But the whole book is tinged with the knowledge and the striving to receive the full knowledge of Jesus' future in which the cross and the empty tomb and subsequent glorification provide the culmination.

⁷⁷Milton takes care to stress that man is not saved through following the example of Christ but through faith in Jesus' death: "There is no need to be afraid that by this reasoning we shall help to establish the doctrine of human merit. The fact that we shape ourselves to Christ's image does not add anything at all to Christ's full and perfect satisfaction, any more than our good works add anything to our faith." John Milton, *CPW*, Vol. VI. i. xvi. 219.

Chapter 8

Samson Agonistes

Aldous Huxley took the title of the novel succeeding his famous *Brave New World* of Milton's tragedy of the Old Testament hero Samson: *Eyeless in Gaza*.¹ Two and a half centuries later,² this Miltonic influence bears witness to the fact that the late Milton's "αγών of Samson"³ was more successful than the young poet's disappointing and unfinished "Passion of Christ" in 1630, which probably is only known among Milton specialists.⁴ The suffering of *Samson Agonistes*, by contrast, does not fail to evoke pity and terror – in the vein of Aristotle's notion of *κάθαρσις* –⁵ in the reader,⁶ and the drama has been compared to Shakespearean tragedy.⁷ Its poetical success can be sensed, e.g., in the protagonist's soliloquy, when his blindness is poeticised and used metaphorically for his inner hopelessness:

Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.

¹This, of course, refers to the famous lines 40f.: "Ask for this great Deliverer now, and find him / Eyeless in *Gaza* at the Mill with slaves." Huxley, who published his novel in 1936, uses Milton's diction in order to draw attention to the mental blindness and captivity of his times.

²Milton published *Samson Agonistes* in one volume, together with *Paradise Regained* in 1671. However, criticism has been raised whether it had not been written before the publication of *Paradise Lost*; W. R. Parker, "The Date of *Samson Agonistes*," *Philological Quarterly* XXVIII (1949), 145–66.

³The Greek means "contest."

⁴Cp. 5.2.1.

⁵Cp. Milton's bilingual epigram of Aristotle's *Poetics*: "τραγωδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας ... διελέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν." Aristotle, *Poet.* vi, which he also renders in Latin: "Tragoedia est imitatio actionis seriae ... per misericordiam et metum perficiens talium affectuum lustrationem."

⁶The Puritan's "closet drama" has never been staged.

⁷Irene Samuel; Jr. Joseph Anthony Wittreich, editor, *Calm of Mind. Tercentenary Essays on Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes in Honor of John S. Diekhoff*. (Cleveland & London: Case Western Reserve U, 1971), p. 256.

O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
 Irrecoverably dark, total Eclipse
 Without all hope of day!
 (79–82)

The extreme emotion of despair is signalled by the use of the *epizeúxis* “O dark, dark, dark [...]” and intensified by the use of the metaphor of the “moving Grave”: “Myself my Sepulchre, a moving Grave” (102). In this chapter, I will explore how far *Samson Agonistes* can be read as a new Miltonic attempt to write about the Atonement. Therefore, I will compare the tragedy’s features with those found in “The Passion.” The imagery of defeat, victory, and of ransom will be studied.

8.1 Outer Defeat and Inner Victory

So, besides the huge qualitative difference alongside with the use of two distinct genres, the religious poem, “The Passion,” shares the common theme of a suffering hero with the drama “Samson Agonistes”. A concise comparison of the two texts shall serve to elucidate the question whether the Atonement plays any role in *Samson Agonistes*.

8.1.1 Samson’s *κάθαρσις*

The heroism of the ruffian Samson based on his superhuman physical power stands in marked contrast to the patient suffering of Christ as the high priest.

[...] Can this be he,
 That Heroic,⁸ that Renown’d,
 Irresistible *Samson*? [...]
 Who tore the Lion, as the Lion tears the Kid.⁹
 (*SA* 124–128)

Nonetheless, Milton makes clear that even the *Christus Patiens* is seen as heroic.

Most perfect hero, tried in heaviest plight
 Of labours huge and hard, too hard for human wight.
 (“TP,” 13f.)

⁸Cp. *SA* 1710f.: “[...] and heroicy hath finish’d / A life Heroic.”

⁹The main source of Milton’s *Samson* is the Old Testament account of the Nazirite judge of the same name (Judg. 13–16). The episode of Samson killing a lion with his bare hands demonstrates his divine strength before his first marriage to the woman from Timnath (Judg. 14).

However, Samson undergoes a development from the muscular braggart to that of a protagonist who is purged through his patient suffering and, thus, undergoes a *κάθαρσις* himself. Samson, too, like Christ has to suffer “the dangers, snares, and wrongs, and worse than so” (“TP” 11): The “dangers” mainly lie in his youth when he fought the Philistines, now his lot is the sweaty monotony of a tortured prisoner of war. But the “snares” are set up in the present time. It is not only the treacherous Dalilah, his former wife, or the bragging giant, Harapha,¹⁰ but probably also his loving father, Manoah,¹¹ whose temptations he has to repulse. When Manoah questions God’s providence, Samson counters his father’s understandable accusations and confesses himself guilty as “Sole Author” of “all these evils” (*SA* 374–6). Samson’s newfound self-knowledge is the first step towards a *κάθαρσις*, and thus the first step from passive towards active heroism.¹²

In the grand finale, Samson is the active hero all over again and “spends” all his “passion” tearing down the temple. On the other hand, during large parts of the play his is the passivity of the suffering Christ, who finally, the “spirit of God, which strengthened Sampson [sic!], permitting, he was bound, led away, mocked.”¹³ who is Thomas Hayne? This passive heroism of which Samson exhibits a good deal, too, is the Miltonic notion of passive heroism which is

[n]ot less but more Heroic than the wrath
Of stern *Achilles* on his Foes pursu’d [...],¹⁴

i.e. more heroic than active heroism. Thus, passive heroism is the path to glorification for Samson just as Christ’s suffering on Earth was his way to be

¹⁰This is the only major person beside the choir not taken from the Biblical source.

¹¹Also it is not mentioned explicitly in the “TP,” this might remind one of the subtle temptations Jesus said a disciple had to face: Even the next relatives could be turn out to be a hindrance on the narrow way following Christ. “Her that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me [...]” (Matt. 10:37).

¹²Cp. Arnold Stein, *Heroic Knowledge*. (Minneapolis, 1957), *passim*; thus, Samson also learns, in the footsteps of Job and Christ, to “distinguish pain from evil and good from pleasure” ?, .

¹³In Thomas Hayne’s words, this is one of the Christ-like characteristics of Samson, because Christ, too, his “Divinitie permitting it, he was bound, led to the Judgement hall, mocked;” *The General View of the Holy Scriptures* (London, 1640), p. 218, reproduced in J. T. Krouse, *Milton’s Samson and the Christian Tradition*. (Princeton, 1949), pp. facing 69; cp. William G. Madsen, *From Shadowy Types to Truth. Studies in Milton’s Symbolism*. (New Haven / London: Yale UP, 1968), p. 199.

¹⁴(*PL* 9.13–19); cp. Davis P. Harding; Philip Kolb Burton A. Milligan, John R. Frey, editor, *The Club of Hercules. Studies in the Classical Background of Paradise Lost*. Volume 50, Illinois Studies in Language and Literature. (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1962), p. 39.

celebrated as the mighty *Christus Victor*.¹⁵

8.1.2 Samson's Ransom

But it is not only temptations but also the “stroke of death he must abide” (“TP” 20). Samson is going to die for his people. He has a certain sense of foreboding of his final stroke upon his enemies:

If there be aught of presage in the mind,
This day will be remarkable in my life
By some great act, or of my days the last.
(1387–9)

Manoa unwittingly prophesies the Samson's glorious revenge on Israel's enemies when he dreams of his son as used by God “in some great service” in the future (1499). His dream is fulfilled, although more tragic and more magnificent than he has thought, and he comments on Samson's reported death:

[...] but death who sets all free
Hath paid his ransom now and full discharge.

The notion of “ransom” is used on three levels of the plot. Firstly, there is Manoa's attempt to persuade the Philistine lords to “accept ransom for my Son” (1460, cp. 1476), then, in a kind of proverbial expression it refers to death as quoted above. However, implicitly, it also fits to the way the Choir describes that Samson “bought” (!) victory over his enemies and freedom for his people (cp. 1715) with the ransom money of his own life:

O dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious!
Living or dying thou hast fulfilled
The work for which thou wast foretold
To Israel, and now li'st victorious
Among thy slain self-killed [...].
(1660–4)

This textual evidence cited is reminiscent of the concept of the ransom view of Christ as the “sovrän priest stooping his regal head” (“TP,” 15) paying the *λύτρον* for lost mankind.¹⁶

¹⁵Cp. Phil. 2:1–12; Jesus' glorification is foreshadowed in *PL* III; cp. *SA* 1717: “To himself and Father's house eternal fame.”

¹⁶Gregory of Nyssa harking back to St. Peter, cp. p. 26.

Similarities such as these are reinforced through the foreshadowing of the *λύτρον* in the hero's youth. Just like Jesus' act of delivering his people had been prophesied before he was born,¹⁷ so an angel prophesied Manoa's wife the future deliverer of Israel before the birth of Samson.¹⁸ The future after Samson's "work for which thou wast foretold" (1662) is coloured in a tone reminiscent of the life of Jesus. The Phoenix, the legendary bird of Arabia, who was supposed to live for five centuries, then consume itself in fire, and finally rise again to life from the ashes,¹⁹ was a commonplace symbolic for Christ's resurrection.²⁰ The choir takes this simile with respect to the effect of Samson's death:

Like that self-begotten bird²¹
 In the *Arabian* woods embost,
 That no second knows nor third,
 And lay erewhile a Holocaust,
 From out her ashy womb now teem'd
 Revives, reflourishes, then vigorous most
 When most unactive deem'd;
 (1700–05)

The use of metaphor also provides a striking variation between Samson and Christ. Especially in *Paradise Regained*, Christ is depicted as continuously turning Satan's temptations to action into spiritually significant doctrine. Although he will not do a magician's trick turning stones into bread, he draws the fiend's attention to spiritual rather than physical hunger: He is "fed with better thoughts [...] hung'ring more to do [his] Father's will" (2258f.).²² In *SA*, the metaphorical overtones, as exhibited in the "two major motives of blindness and delivery from bondage receive only a limited metaphorical extension that falls far short of Christ's achievement in *Paradise Regained*."²³ This is an instance of the juxtaposition of "letter (or flesh) vs. spirit (or word)."²⁴

¹⁷Matt. 1:21; cp. also Luke 1:31–3.

¹⁸*SA* 361–4: "For this did the Angel twice descend? for this / Ordain'd thy nurture holy, as of a Plant / Select, and Sacred;" cp. 38f., and Judg. 13:4f.

¹⁹Cp. the notes in John Milton; F. T. Prince, editor, *Samson Agonistes*. (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 132.

²⁰W. G. Madsen, *Shadowy Types*, pp. 197f.

²¹Cp. the virgin birth of Jesus.

²²Cp. *Ibid.*, p. 193.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 195; e.g.: 1572f. Death as paying his ransom is nothing more than a pagan conception of death as deliverance from trials and tribulations.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 187; although I see the difference Madsen is hinting at, I would have preferred less ambiguous words; H. R. MacCallum has unearthed evidence that Milton regarded the

These similarities of symbols and major stages in the protagonist's life correspond to the fact that Samson was seen by the Church Fathers as a typological figure foreshadowing Christ.²⁵ Is the evidence cited sufficient to speak of a Samson as a type of Christ? The differences between "The Passion" and *Samson Agonistes* are evident, too, as I have tried to demonstrate. Madsen, who sees the humility and humiliation of Samson and Christ before their death the best argument for a typological reading of *Samson*, sums up what he thinks one of the most important differences:

Although he dimly foreshadows the humiliation of his Savior, Samson remains blind to the spiritual significance of his suffering. Living before the age of the Word, he cannot see the lively image of Christ. Neither he, nor Manoa, nor the Chorus can know that they must all remain in bondage until the death of One Who will in truth, not in shadow, prosecute the means of their deliverance and return them home to their Father's house.²⁶

This variation might, however, be a conscious effort of Milton to present the Messiah as the *antitype* of Samson²⁷ and Madsen's view is a modified typological reading.²⁸ I think Madsen's view a balanced. His arguments are reinforced when one perceives the parallels between the twenty-three year old poet's unsuccessful attempt at the Passion of Christ and the blind bard's tragedy during his last years. Just as the young poet tried to make good for his failure through the typology of his verses about "The Circumcision," so the old writer finally fulfilled the task through the use of typology. This indirect description of the Passion, helped out by the experience of personal suffering, seemed to fit Milton best.²⁹

corresponding terms "letter" and "spirit," for which 2 Cor. 3:6 is the *locus classicus* as referring to "law" and "grace;" thus, Milton places himself in the Protestant tradition (see below) H. R. MacCallum, 'Milton and Figurative Interpretation of the Bible'. *University of Toronto quarterly*, 31 (1962), pp. 397ff.

²⁵Joseph E. Duncan, *Milton's Earthly Paradise. A Historical Study of Eden*. (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1972), p. 243; for other similarites see W. G. Madsen, *Shadowy Types*, pp. ch. 6, J. T. Krouse, *Milton's Samson, passim*.

²⁶Cp. SA 518: "Home to thy country and his sacred house."; 1717: " and Father's house."

²⁷W. G. Madsen, *Shadowy Types*, p. 187: "[...] it is essential for the whole system of typology that the type be different from as well as similar to the antitype."

²⁸Cp.: Ibid.: "It is true, of course, that there are no explicit references to Samson as a type of Christ. How could there be when the words of the drama are confined to Old Testament actors? The meaning of a type cannot be known until the antitype has been revealed, and Samson, Manoa, and the Chorus knew nothing of Christ. That there is an implicit foreshadowin of Christ in Milton's Samson I shall discuss in a moment;"

²⁹Even if one thinks a typological interpretation too far-fetched, the basic similarity of the patient passive suffering which – in its development in *Samson Agonistes* might

In his article about Milton's theology of imagery in his prose tracts and his *De Doctrina Christiana*, H. R. MacCallum argues that Milton vehemently supports the Protestant attitude³⁰ which is directed against the use of the figurative reading. The seventeenth century poet holds that the Bible must not be understood metaphorically but "in their proper signification."³¹ Thus, in *Paradise Lost*, world history is seen as a development "From Shadowie types to truth, from Flesh to Spirit" (*PL*, XII. 303). However, Milton modifies this view in the vein of the so-called "doctrine of the compound sense," where the figurative and the literal together make up the single, "literal" sense of the Biblical text.³² Thus, beside their emphasis on the plain sense of Scripture, the Protestants found a way to account for the allegorical (i.e. referring to Christ) reading of the New Testament by the writers of the New Testament.³³ MacCallum sums up that, although Milton uses typology as rhetorical device in his prose tracts³⁴, he had accepted the Protestant criticism of a figurative reading of Scripture in favour of its plain, literal sense. In MacCallum's view, this provided a serious refutation of reading *Samson Agonistes* as portraying an Old Testament antitype of Christ:

It is improbable that Milton would invest the biblical subject-matter employed in his poetry with more typological significance than his exegetical principles permitted to it. The simple fact that Milton's contemporaries were familiar with the idea of allegorical duality does not justify us in assuming that such duality is essential to the meaning of the poetic drama, particularly since the assumption ignores Milton's expressed views concerning typology.

However, with Milton's "confidence-inspiring example of his own process of growth and renewal of human psychology, of history, of politics, of ethics,

provide the "middle" Jonson found lacking – cannot be explained away. Milton finally had succeeded to describe the hero not only as (*Christus*) *Victor* but also as (*Christus*) *Patiens*.

³⁰ Calvin is the main advocate of this idea; see *Commentary on [...] Corinthians* I, 44, cp. H. R. MacCallum, 'Figurative Interpretation', p. 398; cp. M. A. Radzinowics, *Toward Samson Agonistes*, p. 88.

³¹ "No passage of Scripture is to be interpreted in more than one sense; in the Old Testament, however, this sense is sometimes a compound of the historical and the typical," *DDC* XVI, 263, quoted in J. E. Duncan, *Earthly Paradise*, p. 243.

³² John Weemes, *The Christian Synagogue*, I, 230, quoted in H. R. MacCallum, 'Figurative Interpretation', p. 405.

³³ E.g.: Melchizedek as precursor of Jesus (Hebr. 7); cp. *Ibid.*, pp. 405f.

³⁴ E.g.: Joshua as a type of Jesus (allegory), manna as type of the Lord's supper (tropology), and the translation of Elijah as a type of the Christian's glorification after this world has passed away (anagogy) *Ibid.*, pp. 407f.

of divinity, and of poetry itself,"³⁵ and, I may add, of passive heroism in mind, one may well argue that Milton's poetry should be treated differently from his prose writings. A modified, indirect typological reading of *Samson Agonistes* sheds light on the fact that Milton saw atonement as requiring a "rigid satisfaction," (*PL* III. 212) a "shameful and accursed" (*PL* XII. 413) death on "the bitter cross" ("TP" 152), in short, matter for an act of passive heroism. The outer defeat of Samson, the deliverer, led to an inner *κάθαρσις*, which in its turn led to outer victory for the sake of his people. One can read *Samson* as a drama with an essentially political message how Puritanism coped with the defeat after the Restoration in 1660. One also can read it as a typological text envisaging the Atonement of Christ through an Old Testament antitype. Whatever reading one chooses, it is a drama about vicarious suffering and dying, and it is a drama of deliverance. Milton's unfinished text about suffering has been perfected at last, "all passion spent" (*SA* 1758).

³⁵Mary Anne Radzinowics about *Samson* in her contextual study M. A. Radzinowics, *Toward Samson Agonistes*, p. 364.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

The essay examined how Milton employed the Atonement motif. Its results will be sifted, classified and summed up in the conclusion.

9.1 The Imagery: Metaphors of Conquest and Deliverance

Milton is the poet of war.¹ This characterisation also adequately describes his choice of imagery for the Atonement. Metaphors of conquest predominate when writing about the Son in “The Nativity” and *Paradise Lost*. To a lesser degree, one also finds them in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. The classic theological term which stands behind this imagery is the *Christus Victor* view of the early church Fathers (Gregory of Nyssa) and the mediaeval notion of the “Harrowing of Hell”. Milton does not always relate the figure of the victorious Christ to its *locus classicus*, the Crucifixion. In the Christmas poem, Christ chases away the heathen Gods – at the point of time of his birth. In Milton’s first great epic, the Son in his kingly chariot expells Satan and his followers from their native habitation in heaven, an act that takes place either before or not long after the creation of the world. In his second, brief epic, Milton shows Satan falling from the pinnacle of the temple when Christ reveals his real identity as the Son of God after his temptation in the wilderness, i.e. at the beginning of his preaching, about three years before his death. Lastly, Milton’s closet drama returns to Old Testament times where Samson, whose suffering as a slave and final conquest of his enemies in the temple of Dagon, sometimes was seen as a typological event prefiguring the passion and death of Christ. It can be argued, however, that these various

¹C. Williams, *Selected Writings*, p. 23.

conquests foreshadow Christ's ultimate victory at the cross, as proclaimed in the Son's promise to redeem mankind through his death:

Though now to Death I yield, and am his due
 [...]

 But I shall rise victorious, and subdue
 My vanquisher, spoiled of his vaunted spoil;
 Death his death's wound shall then receive, and stoop
 Inglorious, of his mortal sting disarmed.
 I through the ample air in triumph high
 Shall lead hell captive maugre hell, and show
 The powers of darkness bound. [...]
 (*PL* III. 245-256).

This focus on the *Christus Victor* is based on Milton's experiences during the Civil War and his millenarian hopes. It also is a very apt metaphor to describe the "static" event of the Atonement in a dynamic way.

One result of a successful conquest is the deliverance of the prisoners of war. This is referred to in all Miltonic works which hark back to the *Christus Victor* view. It figures most prominently in the epics. Thus, when the Arminian Milton writes *Paradise Lost*, the notion of man's *liberum arbitrium* before the Fall looms large. Man was *homo liber* before his Fall because "God left free the will, for what obeys / Reason, is free" (IX. 352f.). This standing of man will be restored by "the promised seed" (XII. 623) through its "great deliverance" (XII. 600). In *Paradise Regained*, this deliverance is defined as a liberation not from external foes but from one's own inner, sinful self:

What wise and valiant man would seek to free
 These thus degenerate, by themselves enslaved,
 Or could of inward slaves make outward free?
 (*PR* IV. 143-45)

By withstanding temptation, Christ has morally defeated Satan,² the fiend's "snares are broke" (*PR*, IV. 611). *Samson*, independently of whether one sees in him a type of Christ, is a figure of deliverance, who "To Israel / Honour hath left, and freedom" (*SA* 1714f.). That human liberty does not play such a great part in Milton's early religious poems, might result from his Calvinist point of view. It was in his thirties, that the poet forsook Calvin for Arminius over the question of predestination.³

²The actual defeat of Satan is yet to come, C. S. Lewis, *Paradise Lost*, pp. 90f.

³E. M. W. Tillyard, *Studies in Milton*, p. 162.

It is not very often, that Milton uses the ransom view of the Atonement for his imagery. At the end of *Samson Agonistes*, Milton uses the notion of “ransom” on three levels of the plot. While Manoa unsuccessfully attempts to pay a ransom for his son, Samson successfully pays a ransom for the people of God: “O *dearly-bought* revenge, yet glorious!” [my emphases] (1660). In “The Passion,” this notion appears in the figure of the sacrificing priest, and in “Upon the Circumcision,” the bleeding child foreshadows the redemption not with “silver and gold” but with “the precious blood of Christ” (1. Pet. 1:18f.).

9.2 The Theory: Mere Christianity

While Milton’s texts mainly center on the imagery of conquest and deliverance when referring to the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*, he harks back to a whole kaleidoscope of theological concepts in order to express the richness and significance of the Atonement, a concept not fully to be grasped by the human mind. Besides the *Christus Victor* view, the notion of the liberation of the *liberum arbitrium captivatum* and the ransom theory, traces of Reformation theology and Puritan covenant theology can be found. In his poetry, Milton – although fiercely anti-Catholic – is theologically a com-politan. His subject is what C. S. Lewis called “mere Christianity.”⁴ In this Catholic concept,⁵ other soteriological aspects come in, too, such as predestination and free will, *perseverantia* and suffering.

9.3 Milton’s Approach Towards Suffering

A theological juxtaposition of Milton’s minor and major poetry gives new insights into the poet’s treatment of the Atonement. After Milton had decided to follow the “call of God” to write religious poetry, he began to describe Christ as the mighty conquerer in “The Nativity.” Then, he attempted write a poem about the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* focusing on the suffering Christ in “The Passion.” Recognising that it was a failure, he left it unfinished, and tried his hand at an indirect, typological approach in “Upon the Circumcision.” This pattern seems to repeat itself in the major poetry after the prose period in Milton’s life. In his first epic, *Paradise Lost*, the *Christus Victor* view is the fulcrum about which the other aspects turn. In

⁴C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, cp. C. S. Lewis, *Paradise Lost*, p. 82.

⁵In the sense of basing its poetry on conceptions that have been held “always and everywhere and by all,” Ibid.

his second epic, *Paradise Regained*, an epic about redemption, he has learned from his failure of "The Passion." He does not try to approach Christ's Passion in a direct way, but sets out to demonstrate the Atonement typologically: Just as Christ passively submits to be tempted by Satan, he will submit to be brought to death through the arch-enemy, three years later. And just as he defeated the fiend on the pinnacle of the temple at the beginning of his ministry, he will defeat him on the cross at the end of his (human) life. Finally, Milton chooses a type of Christ who is a stereotype of suffering on the one hand and of a "great deliverance" (*PL XII*. 600) on the other: *Samson Agonistes*. This, in its turn, is the successful method of the "Circumcision." Hence, my thesis that the Atonement plays a central rôle in the works of Milton. Throughout his life, the poet-priest attempted to write about the central Protestant doctrine of the Atonement. The approach, he found most satisfying, was the indirect approach of analogy, metaphor and typology. Thus, "analogies can be viewed as Milton's solution to the basic problem of how to 'unfold / The secrets of another world' and to accommodate the unseen, spiritual world to the human sense and understanding."⁶

⁶H. S. Marjara, 'Scientific Imagery', p. 85.

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Abbreviations:

EKL	<i>Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon</i>
ELTG	<i>Evangelisches Lexikon für Theologie und Gemeinde</i>
GA	<i>Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners</i>
HW	<i>The Holy War</i>
MS	<i>Milton Studies</i>
NA	<i>Norton Anthology of Literature</i>
NPE	<i>The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics</i>
OED	<i>The Oxford English Dictionary</i>
PL	<i>Paradise Lost</i>
PR	<i>Paradise Regained</i>
PP	<i>The Pilgrim's Progress</i>
SA	<i>Samson Agonistes</i>
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i>