

OF MILTON'S FIRST DISOBEDIENCE AND THE FRUIT OF THE TREE:
"AD PATREM" AS PROLOGUE TO PARADISE LOST

A Thesis Presented

by

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ABSTRACT

OF MILTON'S FIRST DISOBEDIENCE AND THE FRUIT OF THE TREE:
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In *Paradise Lost*, first published in 1667, John Milton assumes the role of God's advocate to make the case that God's decrees are beyond reproach; humankind's eternal death sentence and the banishment from Eden, issued as a result of Adam and Eve's disobedience, are not excessive punishments. Twelve books and nearly ten thousand lines later, however, Milton's argument seems to contradict itself. The Archangel Michael tells Adam that in the fullness of time, a new Paradise will be established as a place of joy and wonder far superior to the original Eden; and ironically, this wondrous ending is an eventuality only made possible because Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Milton sets out explicitly seeking to justify God's ways to mankind but he implicitly justifies man's first

disobedience against God by arguing that mankind would never have known anything better than Eden if Adam and Eve had simply been content to obey God.

“Ad Patrem,” composed within a few years of Milton’s finishing his M.A. at Cambridge College in 1632, followed his rejection of a career in either the clergy or the courts; he chose instead to devote himself to a more secluded life of study and authorship. Explicitly written as an epistle of thanks to his father, within the space of seventeen lines, it becomes a challenge to the father’s authority. The poet contradicts his stated purpose, arguing that even though he is grateful for his father’s generosity, it would be wrong for him not to disobey the father and pursue his own ends.

In order to better understand why Milton came to write *Paradise Lost*, a close reading of “Ad Patrem” is not merely incidental; it is essential. Milton’s apparent contradiction in *Paradise Lost*—beginning with his justification of God to man and yet ending with a justification of man’s disobedience to God—is neither a contradiction nor an unintended accident. Indeed, *Paradise Lost*, Milton’s mature masterpiece, perfects an argument that the poet first articulated in his little-known work of Latin juvenilia entitled “Ad Patrem” (“To His Father”).

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Of Milton's First Disobedience and the Fruit of the Tree:

"Ad Patrem" as Prologue to *Paradise Lost*

"Of man's first disobedience and the fruit/ Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste/ Brought death into the world and all our woe/ With loss of Eden till one greater Man/ Restore us and regain the blissful seat/ Sing Heav'nly Muse" (PL 1.1-6).

John Milton begins *Paradise Lost*, first published in 1667, with the audacious assertion that its central theme will be "man's first disobedience" and its central purpose to "justify the ways of God to men" (1.1, 26).¹ Boldly assuming the role of God's advocate, Milton proposes to make the case that the foreclosure of Eden and the eternal, transhistorical death sentence, issued for the trivial transgression of a simple dietary rule, are not excessive, but perfectly "just" punishments. God's decrees, like God Himself, are beyond reproach. Twelve books and nearly ten thousand lines later, however, Milton's argument seems to contradict itself. The Archangel Michael tells Adam that Evil will be destroyed by the Redeemer at the end of history: "... for then the Earth/ Shall all be Paradise, far happier place/ Than this of Eden, and far happier days" (12.463-5). The Archangel's grand revelation leaves Adam "replete with joy and wonder" (12.468). In the fullness of time, the new Paradise will be a place of joy and wonder far superior to the original Eden; and ironically, this wondrous ending is an eventuality only made possible

¹ All Milton quotes and translations are from the Modern Library edition of The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton listed in my bibliography.

because Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Milton sets out explicitly seeking to justify God's ways to mankind but by endorsing the theological concept of the *felix culpa* or "fortunate fall," he ends up implicitly justifying man's first disobedience against God. Even though Milton's God is right to characterize Man as an "ingrate" (3.97), the epic itself makes clear that mankind would never have known anything better than Eden if Adam and Eve had simply been content to obey God. In this paper I will argue that Milton's apparent contradiction—beginning with an attempt to "justify the ways of God to man" and yet ending with a justification of man's disobedience to God—is neither a contradiction nor an unintended accident. Indeed, *Paradise Lost*, Milton's mature masterpiece, perfects an argument that the poet first articulated in a little-known work of Latin juvenilia entitled "Ad Patrem" ("To the Father").²

It is generally believed that "Ad Patrem" was composed between 1632 and 1638, within a few years of Milton's finishing his M.A. at Cambridge College in 1632. Barbara Lewalski, in her 2000 biography of John Milton, writes:

At some point during his "studious retirement" Milton wrote "Ad Patrem," a sophisticated Latin verse epistle which is in part a praise of his father for fostering his education and self-education, in part a defense of poetry against his father's supposed disparagement of it, and in part an implicit persuasion to his father to accept his vocation as a poet and continue to support him in it.

(Lewalski, *The Life...* 71)

² All Latin translations are from *The New College Latin and English Dictionary*, NY: Bantam, 2007.

The poem itself suggests that its composition followed Milton's rejection of a career in either the clergy or the courts; he chose instead to devote himself to a more secluded life of study and authorship. It is explicitly written as an epistle of thanks to a generous father. Yet, within the space of seventeen lines, it becomes a challenge to the father's authority and an assertion of Milton's entry into adulthood; the poet contradicts his clearly stated purpose, arguing that even though he is grateful for his father's generosity, it would be wrong for him not to pursue his own ends. As *Paradise Lost* gradually becomes a justification of mankind's disobedience to God the Father, "Ad Patrem" becomes a justification of the poet's first disobedience to his own father. In order to arrive at a better understanding and appreciation of why Milton came to rewrite the *Book of Genesis* as *Paradise Lost*, a close reading of "Ad Patrem" is not merely incidental; it is essential.

By making Adam and Eve's disobedience the focal point of *Paradise Lost*, Milton explicitly rationalizes God's severe punishment. However, rather than absolving God, the poet confuses the issue of perfect justice by offering the paradoxical proposition: "That all this good of evil shall produce" (12.470). Because the Archangel Michael tells Adam that his disobedience of God and the loss of Paradise will ultimately produce a greater good than Eden, Milton critics have long argued for and against the position that Milton espoused the belief that Adam's Original Sin is a "fortunate fall," a *felix culpa*. It being the same argument put to the father by the son in "Ad Patrem," suggests that Milton came to accept *felix culpa* for personal, rather than theological or intellectual reasons.

Fortunate Fall or Unfortunate Cliché?

Dennis Danielson makes a bad pun of his complaint that *felix culpa* is “an unfortunate cliché of Milton criticism...[To] read *Paradise Lost* in the light of that doctrine, is highly uncritical” (Danielson 156). He argues that in order to take the position that the Fall was “fortunate,” one must ignore the evolutionary step that an uncorrupted human race is promised by the Archangel Raphael:

Your bodies may at last turn to all spirit,
Improved by tract of time, and winged ascend
Ethereal as we, or may at choice
Here or in Heav'nly paradises dwell—
If ye be found obedient and retain
Unalterably firm His love entire
Whose progeny you are” (5.497-503).

Danielson assigns very little importance to the later promise made to Adam by the Archangel Michael that mankind's future, after the Fall, “Shall all be Paradise, far happier place/ Than this of Eden, and far happier days” (12.464-5). He concedes that the eventual fate of a redeemed mankind “may even offer something more glorious and happy than Adam and Eve's original condition” (156), but he discounts the possibility that mankind's revised future will be equal to or better than God's original design. His argument misses the mark in two ways. First, prior to sending His archangels to remove Adam and Eve from Eden, the Father accepts the Son's proposition: “All my redeem'd may dwell in joy and bliss, / Made one with me as I with thee am one” (11.43-4). It is

with this knowledge of God's revised plan that the Archangel Michael arrives in Eden with his message of hope for Adam: "Then wilt thou not be loath/ To leave this Paradise but shalt possess/ A paradise within thee, happier far" (12.585-7). Danielson apparently finds nothing noteworthy here. Yet, were he to consider that it is not possible to achieve perfection beyond oneness with God, the inescapable conclusion is that Adam's disobedience is singularly fortunate. Second, while Raphael's initial lesson to Adam does promise a grand future, Danielson misses the real significance of the Archangel's story of Satan's rebellion, as well as his paradoxical disclosure that humans will improve on perfection. This exchange is far more important because it seems to initiate Adam's first consideration that disobedience of the Father is possible. The assertion that mankind's disobedience of the Father will be justified because it will yield a fortuitous result, echoes Milton's argument, in "Ad Patrem," that in the course of time his disobedience will be regarded as a remarkable act of obeisance.

In *Paradise Lost*, the Archangel Michael's narrative to Adam presents the march of history from the Fall to the Apocalypse; as a result of Adam and Eve's disobedience of God the Father, the human race loses its intuitive connection with the world and gains the unhappy knowledge of good and evil. Sin and Death rule the post-lapsarian world until the Second Coming. How can so much devastation be considered a fortunate fall? Stanley Fish takes the position that the Fall is a singularly fortunate event that carries a significant result: mankind's loss of their automatic understanding of the world is a paradoxical gain because, even though Adam and Eve lose their insight, they and their posterity retain or gain the ability to learn, by trial and error, to build a set of general ideas and universal

laws from particular known facts by the use of inductive reasoning. Fish argues that the Fall resulted in mankind's endless struggle to recover all that was lost, to know everything and to go beyond the fixed limits of existence.

In short, the desire—for absorption into a vision not bounded by time and death—and the resistance to it exist in a symbiotic relationship, each giving life and meaning to the other... What is fortunate about the Fall, about not being in the optimum place, is that there is somewhere for you to go and something for you to do (Fish, How... 564).

The Fall is a fortunate paradox that gives mankind a grand purpose as we are continually energized by the impossibility of the task of reclaiming what was lost as a result of mankind's disobedience of God. It is an exhaustive education that begins from the moment Adam and Eve exit Eden; yet, each failure to transcend our limits, to return to that place of perfect knowing, generates renewed hope. The extraordinary life of John Milton perfectly illustrates Fish's symbiosis of hope and failure; Milton's lifelong effort to increase his knowledge, to surpass the limits of his age, and to achieve more with each renewed effort, begins with his first disobedience of the father in "Ad Patrem."

In support of his argument that one can only know good in contrast to evil, Milton suggests that the Fall was fortunate and even necessary.³ He describes the moment of lost innocence later dramatized in *Paradise Lost*: "It was from the rind of one apple tasted that the knowledge of good and evil as two twins cleaving together leapt forth into the

³ See *Areopagitica*: Published in November 1644.

world. And perhaps this is that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evil, that is to say, of knowing good by evil” (Milton 939). When Adam and Eve are given a choice to obey God or their own appetite, they fail to properly weigh the moral dilemma because, in their innocence, they cannot penetrate the subtleties of good and evil. Yet, from the beginning, God’s bequest to mankind is free will because He does not want worshippers who are simply slaves. Therefore, it must follow that the Fall, if not inherent to God’s design, is certainly an auspicious event. David Hawkes, in *John Milton: A Hero of Our Time*, states his case for *felix culpa*: “Resistance to temptation constitutes virtue. Such resistance would be impossible without the Fall, and the Fall itself is good, because it introduces the faculty of reason into the human soul” (Hawkes 186). It is ironic that *felix* translates to “fruitful and fruit-bearing.” In “Ad Patrem,” Milton justifies his disobedience by arguing that, as a poet, he will be free to pursue greater knowledge and achieve a great purpose. By their disobedience of the Father, Adam and Eve, no longer innocent actors in Eden, are paradoxically freed by evil to conscientiously resist evil.

Critics arguing in support of Milton’s “fortunate fall” in *Paradise Lost* often make their case by citing the textual evidence that God set the stage for the triumph of Satan and then stood aside as Adam and Eve violated His edict not to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. In his 2003 *The Satanic Epic*, Neil Forsyth holds that “according to God’s logic, Satan is actually necessary for [Mankind’s] salvation” (Forsyth, Satanic 13). He argues that Milton, as an adherent of the *felix culpa* idea, casts Satan as the hero. In Forsyth’s view, it is Satan who sets in motion the series of events to free mankind from innocence. His is a compelling argument, however, it is not my position, nor do I

understand *felix culpa* to mean, that God is a grand puppet-master, pulling Satan's strings and minutely orchestrating the events of Adam's Fall. Moreover, each explanation and refutation of the "fortunate fall" at work in *Paradise Lost* misses the most significant point: "Ad Patrem" is *Paradise Lost* in miniature; in his greatest epic, Milton is still making the case to his father that his original rebellion is for the best. Without his personal fall from grace—the pursuit of his own desires over the father's objections—there might have been no *Paradise Lost* or any of John Milton's other works. Milton's *felix culpa* template is first found in "Ad Patrem" where his filial disobedience is ultimately justified and even valued as obedience, though it initially infuriates the father.

The Audacious Wings of Education

As early as the 1630's, in imitation of Virgil and Homer, Milton appeals for divine aid to achieve his purpose with classical epic conventions. In "Ad Patrem," the poet prays for the waters of Pieria—the birthplace of the Muses—to pour into his heart so that he may fulfill his obligation to thank his generous father. To appeal for inspiration in *Paradise Lost*, he flies to the seat of the Muses at the Aeonian Mount. Milton opens "Ad Patrem" as he does *Paradise Lost*, with an impassioned invocation to the Muses to lift him on wings of inspiration. In "Ad Patrem" he pleads to be carried aloft: "So that the Muse, forgetting trivial songs, may rise on bold wings to the duty of reverencing my parent" (Milton 220).⁴ *Paradise Lost* opens:

I thence/ Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous song

⁴ *Ut tenues oblita sonos audacibus alis/ Surgat in officium venerandi Musa parentis*" (5).

That with no middle flight intends to soar

Above th' Aonian mount while it pursues

Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme (1.12-16).

In *Paradise Lost*, the narrator will boldly fly to the seat of the Muses in a grand attempt to achieve the extraordinary, to go beyond a justification of God, in order to justify man's first disobedience. In "Ad Patrem," as Milton is lifted up by the Muses, the high pitch of praise leaves no doubt of the son's genuine love. Yet, since *audacibus* is rendered "bold, courageous, or audacious," even the opening invocation raises doubts about it being only a poem of thanks. Why does the poet pray for the bold wings of the Muse? There is no triumph in a show of gratitude to a benefactor, nor are boldness and courage required to offer heartfelt thanks to a worthy and generous patron. It is my position that this Latin poem is Milton's first audacious attempt at the unattempted. In "Ad Patrem," the poet begs to be lifted on audacious wings in order to explicitly thank his father for the many advantages of education as he attempts to implicitly justify his disobedience of the father.

The respective educations of Milton and Adam, provided by doting and generous fathers, are the best available. At the end of his first lessons with the Archangel Raphael, Adam acknowledges the debt owed to his ephemeral guest in an echo of Milton's filial gratitude: "What thanks sufficient, or what recompense/ Equal have I to render thee, Divine/ Historian, who thus largely hast allay'd/ The thirst I had of knowledge" (8.5-8). In "Ad Patrem," the father is showered with similar words of thanks and highly praised for encouraging the son's intellect and opening every opportunity for education to him. "What greater things could a father have bestowed, even if Jove himself had given all

(with the exception of heaven)?⁵ Milton's gratitude is genuine since the father has guided him to the scholar's life. However, the son shows his gratitude does not obligate him to obey his benefactor; he boldly asserts that life in the church or courts is a waste of his talents because destiny now calls him to greatness.

In "Ad Patrem," Milton insists that his fine education makes him over-qualified to pursue a mundane life away from his books. He declares, "Greater things summon me" (Milton 223).⁶ Gratefully acknowledging his father's generosity, the son argues that education compels him to live the life of a poet in pursuit of greater knowledge. "Finally, whatever heaven holds, and parental earth that lies under heaven, and the air flowing between earth and heaven, and whatever the waves and the moving marble of the sea cover, because of you I can learn, if I want to learn it" (Milton 223).⁷ To best facilitate an inquiry into the nature of all things, Milton pleads to be left free to choose his place in the world. Though his father may interpret his actions as ungrateful and disobedient, Milton argues that he is implicitly obedient since it is the education provided by the father that has taught him disobedience; the son exudes confidence that his present disobedience will be justified by the accomplishment of "greater things." In "Ad Patrem," the son suggests that the seeds of disobedience fell within the fruits of his education. Like Milton, Adam first considers the possibility of disobedience after his formal education by the Archangel

⁵ Quae potuit maiora pater tribuisse, vel ipse/ Jupiter excepto, donasset ut omnia, coelo? (95-6).

⁶ "*Me poscunt maiora*" (78).

⁷ Denique quicquid habet caelum, subiectaque coelo/ Terra parens, terraeque et coelo interfluit aer, / Quicquid et unda tegit, pontique agitabile marmor, / Per te nosse licet, per te, si nosse libebit (86-9).

Raphael; each shows their filial gratitude by utilizing, rather than neglecting, the gift of education he is given.

Adam's first formal education is precipitated by Satan's escape from Hell, prompting Adam's Father to send the Archangel Raphael to teach him that he is in danger and to explain the source of that danger. God says:

Happiness in his power left free to will,
Left to his own free Will his Will though free,
Yet mutable; whence warn him to beware
He swerve not too secure: tell him withal
His danger and from whom, what enemy,
Late fall'n himself from Heav'n is plotting now
The fall of others from like state of bliss:
By violence, no, for that shall be withstood,
But by deceit and lies" (5.235-43).

The Father orders his archangel to instruct Adam about the new reality of evil and the danger that is lurking in his midst. At first, the Archangel encounters an innocent Adam who, with no prior formal education or experience with evil, feels nothing but gratitude toward the Father. In an effort to fulfill God's command, the angel relates the story of Satan's rebellion, defeat, and the condemnation of he and his followers in Hell. For Adam, the concepts of evil and good, the relation of willpower to obedience, and the resistance to evil at the heart of the Archangel's story is no more than an intellectual

exercise; he finds it nearly impossible to imagine being anything other than obedient to God. Adam asks:

But say,
What meant that caution join'd, *if ye be found*
Obedient? Can wee want obedience then
To him, or possibly his love desert
Who form'd us from the dust, and plac'd us here
Full to the utmost measure of what bliss
Human desires can seek or apprehend? (5.512-18).

When Adam learns that willpower is made mutable because God requires voluntary obedience, he insists that it is impossible “to forget to love/ Our maker, and obey him whose command/ Single, is yet just” (5.550-2). In response, the archangel teaches him that it is possible for a being to choose to incur the wrath of God the Father, to rebel against the Creator. Adam’s education becomes much more than a mere warning as the discussion ranges far beyond the danger posed by Satan to include Creation, angelic physiology, and the whole nature of the Universe. Paradoxically, like Milton, Adam’s education becomes his first step toward disobedience of the Father. After hearing the account of the Great War in Heaven, the reality of rebellion no longer remains a dark mystery. The result of his first lesson is that Adam carries a new awareness of sin. The apparent result of his formal education is that he is introduced, for the first time, to the possibility of disobedience.

After Adam's disobedience, the Father sends His Archangel Michael to formally instruct Adam a second time in an effort to give him hope. The Archangel Michael foretells the coming of the Son of God who will right the disobedience of Adam and Eve; through his death, he will conquer Satan, and restore the human race to a new Paradise. "Then wilt thou not be loath/ To leave this Paradise but shalt possess/ A paradise within thee, happier far" (12.585-7). Milton is echoing a lesson from the Gospel of Luke. Jesus says, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or lo there! For behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Lu 17:20-1). He learns that his descendants will include men of conscience who will recognize an objective Truth in the Universe; they will serve mankind by obeying the Father, though it cost them their lives. Called to stand in God's spiritual armor, these true heroes are willing to suffer in defense of that Truth. This lesson is the point of Adam's second education: descendants of Adam and Eve will inhabit the Kingdom of God within themselves, where they will achieve a state of ethereal bliss beyond the reward of happiness described by the Angel Raphael (5.497). After his first formal lessons, Adam remained unprepared for Satan's temptation because he still had only vicariously experienced the reality of temptation and disobedience. After his failure to stand and his second education, he is better prepared to assume the role of father of mankind. He declares:

Henceforth I learn that to obey is best,
And love with fear the only God...with good
Still overcoming evil and by small
Accomplishing great things (12.561-7).

Although Adam understands that his primary duty is obedience to the Father, he more fully appreciates the difficulty of resisting evil. Milton's argument to the father in "Ad Patrem" is the same: in order to fully stand, one must be free to fall; it is the paradox of Milton's attempt to achieve greatness and Adam's desire to taste the forbidden fruit. The two poems examine the problem of temptation, disobedience and obedience in pursuit of that which has not been previously attempted; they challenge the reader to consider the indistinct line between obedience and disobedience, temptation and the attempt.

Disobedience as an Implicit Act of Obedience

While Adam's obligation of obedience to God the Father is clearly stated, it is certain that Milton made a search of the *Bible*, in an attempt to learn what his own filial obligations were to John Milton, Sr., only to realize that perfect clarity is a thing not easily found in God's Word. The *Old Testament* says, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Ex 20:12). This passage does not state whether a duty to honor is the same as an obligation to obey, nor does the *New Testament* resolve the issue. A fairly representative example of its opaque guidance is found in St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians where the obligation to honor parents becomes a command to obey every "master" as one would obey Jesus Christ. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; ...doing the will of God from the heart;" (Eph 6:5-6). Where Adam's case in respect to God the Father is clear, the Bible's guidance, with respect to a son's obligations to the father, is contradictory. As

he does in his arguments about divorce⁸, Milton's solution to questions of filial obedience is to reinterpret the *Bible* in order to serve his particular ends. In his poem to the father, Milton justifies his filial disobedience by reordering his relationship, thereby effectively nullifying any obligations to obedience of that same father.

In "Ad Patrem," John Milton's explicit purpose is to acknowledge the debt of thanks owed to his father. However, within the space of a few lines, he recoils at the traditional role of the obedient son and sets aside the traditional Christian hierarchy of father and son by posing a question bristling with hidden meaning. Milton asks his father, "Why should it surprise you if it happened I was begotten a poet?" (Milton 222).⁹ The impact of the question hangs on the translator's interpretation of *mirum*; the Latin word can be translated along a continuum of meaning to suggest "surprise, astonishment, or amazement." As Milton asks his father if he is surprised at his son's choice of careers, at the same time he seems to be suggesting that his father is astonished that a poet was born from the seed of his loins. If the question seems to offer a glimpse at the father's state of mind concerning Milton's desire to be a poet, it also deflects focus away from the son's apparent rebellion by putting the father on the defensive. Although Milton is probably not suggesting that his father is a cuckold, the line of inquiry implicitly calls into question the role of the father in begetting his own son. In order to claim a more equal station and to set aside any obligation of obedience or servility assumed by virtue of their shared blood, the son needs to redefine the relationship between the two men. In *Paradise Lost*, Satan

⁸ See *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*: Anonymously published in August 1643.

⁹ "Nunc tibi quid mirum, si me genuisse poetam" (60).

echoes Milton's question to the father. As with Milton, it is one of Satan's defining moments in the poem, but with a very different outcome.

As Milton seeks a way to justify his disobedience of his father in "Ad Patrem" by implicitly making the father's claim of paternal authority an issue, Satan justifies his rebellion by explicitly denying that God is his father. A resolute Satan defiantly disclaims his Celestial Parent as he inexplicably rejects the apparent fact of his own creation.

We know no time when we were not as now,
Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised
By our own quick'ning power when fatal course
Had circled his full orb, the birth mature
Of this our native Heav'n, ethereal sons.
Our puissance is our own (5.859-864).

Declaring that he is self-begotten, self-created, self-governed, and sustained by armed conflict and conquest, Satan carries Milton's "Ad Patrem" question to its illogical conclusion. He reasons that since he does not remember being made, he must be self-generating and eternal. Stanley Fish traces the absurdity of the fallen angel's logic. "The assertion cannibalizes itself: if the 'I' that comes to this conclusion did not exist at the moment of its claimed potency, then attributing 'puissance' to it is obviously absurd. Satan, in short, is speaking nonsense" (Fish, How Milton 93). By denying his origin, Satan is complicit in his own destruction. Paradoxically, Milton's assuming equal stature with his father is a moment of empowerment as he attempts to justify his disobedience to the father, to better serve God the Father through his poetry.

At line 17 of “Ad Patrem,” the poet moves from gratitude to expressions of frustration with the father’s disapproval of poets and their poetry. “But do not look down on the poet’s work, divine song; nothing more commends our celestial origins and heavenly seeds, nothing, because of its origin, more commends the human mind, keeping the sacred traces of the Promethean fire” (Milton 221).¹⁰ He evokes the old gods and heroes of the Greeks and Romans to support his argument to his father. The fire brought by Prometheus from Mount Olympus to mankind, a metaphor for the spark of human intellect, is offered as evidence of our divine creation, the *imago Dei*. The poet’s inspiration is divine; born from traces of celestial flame, his creativity is evidence of the supreme Creator. Even as Milton tacitly cautions his father against godlessness and atheism, he pleads with him to recognize the importance of poetry because God the Father inspires the poet’s creative energy. “The bard, sitting at the festive banquet, his uncut hair crowned with oak leaves, sang of the actions of heroes, deeds to be imitated, and of chaos and the broad foundations on which the universe is set” (Milton 222).¹¹ Milton boldly claims, for himself, the honored place held by the poets of ancient times to assert that the poet gives expression to the Promethean fires of Creation. Milton argues to the father that he is engaged in a holy work akin to work of the clergy; the poet’s duty to God outweighs duty to all earthly authority.

¹⁰ Nec tu vatis opus despice Carmen, / Quo nihil aethereos orti, et semina caeli, / Nil magis humanum commendat origine mentem, / Sancta Prometheae retinens vestigial flammae (17-20).

¹¹ Tum de more sedens festa ad convivia vates, / Aesculea intonsos redimitus ab arbore crines, / Heroumque actus, imitandaque gesta canebat, / Et Chaos, et positi late fundamina mundi (44-7).

Ironically, justification of Man's disobedience in *Paradise Lost* necessitates Milton's vanquishing the ancient, mythical heroes he champions in "Ad Patrem." Prometheus, the Greek hero, stole fire from the gods and suffered eternal torment for his crime. As a benefactor to the human race, he embodies the best and highest virtues found in any creation of Virgil or Homer. However, in *Paradise Lost*, this classical hero gains a new and sinister role in the guise of Satan. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton describes the ages of Greek and Roman conquest as times of "violence...oppression and sword...and refuge none was found... Such were these giants, men of high renown/ For in those days might only shall be admired/ And Valor and Heroic Virtue called...Thus fame shall be achieved, renown on earth, / And what most merits fame in silence hid" (11.671-99). The Greeks and Romans, with their vast pantheon of gods and traditional epic heroes such as Paris, Agamemnon, and Odysseus, pursue victory and fame by flaunting their physical strength and battle prowess. Satan, in his bold character, with his armor and attitude, is the classical epic hero in its purest form; ironically, he becomes Milton's archetype of Evil. Through Satan and his horde, the old heroes become anti-heroes because the larger Christian story, the inspiration for *Paradise Lost*, includes Satan's defeat and dictates the defeat of those ideals of battle and conquest embraced in the poet's earlier work. Milton's explicit purpose is not the glorification of Satan's rebellion, but the justification of God. Although the disobediences of Milton and Adam produce fruitful ends, the pedagogical purpose in "Ad Patrem" and *Paradise Lost* remains a lesson in obedience.

Like his invocation to the Muses, the plea for audacious wings, and the use of Promethean fire, the divided god is another important device used to accomplish Milton's

ends in “Ad Patrem” and *Paradise Lost*. In “Ad Patrem,” the poet reveals that he and the father are fraternal halves of the god Phoebus-Apollo. In *Paradise Lost*, God the Father’s division of his essence into Father and Son is outside of the poem’s plot. The Father simply declares the Son to be His perfect co-equal. “Son in whose face invisible is beheld/ Visibly what by deity I am/ And in whose hand what by decree I do, / Second Omnipotence” (6.681-84). Like the son in “Ad Patrem,” Jesus is both twin Brother and Son of God the Father. In *Paradise Lost*, the metaphor of divided god is re-imagined in four father-son relationships. God the Father is father to Jesus, Adam, and Satan. And Satan is father to a bastard son, Death. It is not clear how godhood is divided between beings, however, these four pairs dramatize permutations of real life father-son conflicts, from the ideal to the violent, where Milton wrestles with and restates the justification made to his own father in his Latin poem.

Begun with Milton’s explicit gratitude, a tacit suggestion of his own illegitimacy, and the questioning of his father’s attitude about his choice of careers, Milton next tries a truly audacious claim in “Ad Patrem” in order to place the two men on equal footing and establish the son’s autonomy with respect to the father’s wishes. Halfway through the poem Milton reinvents his connection to the father by proclaiming that the two men are co-equals who mysteriously share a divine parent: “Phoebus, wishing to distribute himself between two, gave one gift to me, the other to my parent, and we possess the divided god as father and son” (Milton 222).¹² The father is expected to feel honor, not surprise that Phoebus-Apollo, the patron-god of music and poetry, has blessed the two

¹² Ipse volens Phoebus se dispartire duobus, / Altera dona mihi, dedit altera dona parenti, / Dividuumque deum genitorque puerque tenemus (64-6).

with his genius in equal portion. In one stroke, the son makes a twin brother of his father and a father of the god, Phoebus-Apollo. Since Milton's musician father does not hold poetry in equal esteem with music, the audacious claim of their shared divinity may also settle the question, for the son, of equality between music and poetry. Now free to follow his own path, to fully explore his god-given talent, Milton's imaginative assertion creates an egalitarian relationship with the father and allows the son to be his own guide to the future. The central importance of the divided god to Milton's justification of himself in "Ad Patrem" and of Adam's disobedience to God in *Paradise Lost* strongly supports my argument that Milton came to accept the concept of *felix culpa* for personal rather than political or religious reasons.

In *Paradise Lost*, Satan also has a son who declares himself the equal of his father. Satan's daughter is Sin; she springs from Satan's head like Athena from the head of Zeus. The incestuous rape of Sin conceives Satan's bastard son, Death; he declares that he is Satan's co-equal and King of Hell. There is an echo of the moment in "Ad Patrem" when Milton pointedly questions his own paternity. As Milton and his father arrive at an impasse in "Ad Patrem," Satan arrives at the Gates of Hell, to find them guarded by Sin and Death. He recoils as the unexpected sight of his offspring momentarily horrifies him. Satan challenges Death, but Death shows no filial allegiance to him; the two face off, equally matched for the fight in an effort to destroy; each are determined to become sole ruler of Hell. Instead, the two agree to oppose God, whereupon the gates of Hell are thrown open to allow Satan to escape.

Remarkably, Milton did not name his father in a poem "to the father," even

though he declares his explicit purpose is to show the father thanks for his generosity. Instead, the father is *parentis, pater, care pater, and pater optime*. *Pater optime* can be translated as “best father.” Other translations of *optime* include beneficial and excellent. *Pater care* means “dear father,” while *care* or “dear” can also convey exalted meanings such as: noble, and glorious. While these adjectives convey the praise of a loving son, they can also name an object of worship. Like the father of “Ad Patrem,” the Almighty Father of *Paradise Lost* is not named, even after several lines of description, God is never more than a luminous eternity. “God is light/ And never but in unapproached light/ Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee, /Bright effluence of bright essence increate” (3.3-6). The Father in *Paradise Lost*, a light that exists before all light, the light of Eternal Truth and of divine Inspiration, remains an enigmatic luminosity. In both poems, what is significant is what remains unsaid. In “Ad Patrem,” disobedience of the son is an implicit act of obedience; the son’s gratitude, as well as his obligation to obedience, extends to other fathers such as Adam, and directly to God the Father.

“Fit Audience Find, Though Few” (7.31).

At a young age and very early in his career, Milton ranked himself among a select few who champion supremely high values. For Milton and others of his generation, the purpose of education is to recover the lost pre-lapsarian knowledge in order to remake Paradise on Earth. In “Ad Patrem,” the poet asserts that his education entitles him to be counted among this learned company of scholars; he seats himself within this exclusive group as he disparages the uneducated and vulgar: “Therefore I, already part, though at

the lowest rank, of the learned company, will sit among the triumphant ivies and laurels and now I will no longer mingle in obscurity with the witless mob, and our footsteps will shun profane eyes” (Milton 224).¹³ Milton’s use of the Latin *inerti* indicates that he holds the general population in very low esteem; in addition to “witless,” the translator could render the meaning of this derisive adjective: unskilled, incompetent, crude, sluggish, and lazy. Desiring to be apart from the ordinary, “witless and profane” rabble, Milton places himself in the exalted company of learned men. He implicitly suggests that if the father does not recognize the son’s rightful place is among the “ivies and laurels” that he and the father are in danger of being counted with this rabble.

Milton, known to his classmates at Cambridge as “Lady of Christ’s,” and made the butt of jokes about his effeminate appearance and lack of virility, was very likely isolated by his peers. In *The Life of John Milton*, Barbara Lewalski writes, “It is not hard to imagine the taunts that fastened the nickname ‘The Lady of Christ’s’ on a slender, refined, defiantly chaste, highly intellectual and artistically inclined adolescent” (31). It is reasonable to infer that he was happy to escape their derisive insults and, his resistance to a career in the church or courts can be traced to this experience. Milton chooses neither option because school has taught him that he has an exceptional talent and intellect that the mob cannot appreciate. Milton, by his insistence that the reward of his education is a place among enlightened scholars, will answer the call of the harder road in pursuit of a greater knowledge of the whole universe because his destiny is to do the bold things that are made possible only if he disobeys his father’s wishes.

¹³ Ergo ego iam doctae pars quam libet ima catervae/ Victrices hederas inter, laurosque sedebo; /Iamque nec obscurus populo miscebor inerti, /Vitabuntque oculos vestigial nostra profanos (101-4).

In an effort to encourage the father to be more lenient in “Ad Patrem,” Milton offers an alternate meaning to the father’s condemnation of the muses; and continuing with a more conciliatory tone, he lists his father’s demands as if they were suggestions only. “Though you pretend to have hated the soft muses, I do not think you did, for you did not, father, order me to go where the broad way lies open, where the field of wealth is more inviting, and confident, golden hope of making money shines out” (Milton 223).¹⁴ The father could not have meant what he said because Milton knows that the father has prepared him to serve God in more refined places than those found in the church or courts. By echoing two well-known Bible verses,¹⁵ the son avows that he does not want to follow the easy road to status and ease; the pursuit of wealth is an occupation unworthy of one engaged in the sacred pursuit of knowledge. Evidence in *Paradise Lost* suggests that Milton remembers his early effort to justify himself to the father.

Sin and Death amain

Following his track (such was the will of Heav’n)

Paved after him a broad and beaten way,

Over the dark abyss whose boiling gulf

Tamely endured a bridge of wondrous length (2.1026-8).

Milton imagines the open and broad path of “Ad Patrem” and the *Bible* as a bridge, traversing from Earth to Hell, to facilitate the easy passage of sinners to their doom. Also,

¹⁴ Tu tamen ut simules teneras odisse Camenas, / Non odisse reor, neque enim, pater, ire iubebas/ Qua via lata patet, qua pronior area lucri, / Certa que condendi fulget spes aurea nummi; (67-70).

¹⁵ “No man can serve two masters...Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt 6:24)

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat” (Matt 7:13).

the poet personifies his aversion to the pursuit of gold, first expressed in “Ad Patrem,” by the creation of Mammon, a fallen angel.

“Mammon the least erected spirit that fell
From Heav’n, for even in Heav’n his looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of Heav’n’s pavement, trodden gold,
Than aught divine or holy else enjoyed” (2.679-83).

There is something more in “Ad Patrem” than Milton’s aversion to conformity. There is a warning to the father that the laws of God forbid his forcing the son to abandon his sacred vocation. As such, Milton will not be forced to spend his life looking at his earnings, counting his money, and managing his assets; his conscience points him toward an alternative and better way to serve God. He will not follow the path to destruction and he will not be among the damned.

With heroic mythic images, serpentine metaphors, and allusions to *Bible* passages, the poet in “Ad Patrem” expresses a dread of leaving his studies behind to enter the torturous life selected for him by the father. The descriptions of the courts and church as ungodly places are a message to the father that the son intends to live apart from the commonplace, to live as a poet in a studious retirement. “Nor do you hurry me off to the law and the nation’s badly kept statutes, nor do you condemn my ears to that ridiculous clamor” (223).¹⁶ The use of hard consonant sounds vividly creates the din of confused noise; these emphasize the tumultuous assault on the poet’s ears. One can hear the babble

¹⁶ Nec rapis ad leges, male custoditaque gentis/ Iura, nec insulsis damnas clamoribus aures (71-2).

of voices and the confused chorus of mixed noises in the great halls and vaulted ceilings. The same effect is echoed in *Paradise Lost* where memories of the poet's early anxiety seem to suggest themselves in Milton's description of Chaos, the intergalactic realm where God has withdrawn his essence.

At length a universal hubbub wild
Of stunning sounds and voices all confused
Borne through the hollow dark assaults his ear
With loudest vehemence (2.951-4).

Calamitous, irresistible sound is Satan's first sensation when he enters Chaos. Cacophonies of noises, "universal hubbub, stunning sounds, confused, dark assaults, and loudest vehemence" overwhelm the fallen angel in the great hollow of space. Young Milton may have imagined himself lost in a life among a noisy, vulgar workforce; made to traverse Chaos by circumstances beyond his control, Satan is nearly lost when its clangorous din assaults his ears. Education has rendered the son incapable of assuming a normal life; for the father to force the son into such degraded vocations risks offending God and the loss of both of their eternal souls. His refusal to obey the father is a truer obedience because his choice is in harmony with his conscience and his ability to do God's work. The precepts of conscience lead him to bolder service as his disobedience is justified by virtue of a talent that enables him to better serve God through his poetry.

Milton's satanic and serpentine images, central to *Paradise Lost*, are also found in "Ad Patrem" where the poet emphasizes his revulsion and opposition to the father's desire that he choose a life among the rabble. After staking his claim to an exalted place

away from the “witless mob,” Milton turns his attention from the father, to express his horror and disgust, to his tormentors. By a series of diabolic metaphors placed in the sentence¹⁷ that follows the poet’s avowal to live away from the “witless mob,” these serpentine images relate back to the “witless mob” to enhance each other. “Be far away, wide-eyed worries, be far away, complaints and invidious looks twisted askance like a goat; do not reach your snake-bearing jaws toward me, savage Calumny. (Milton 224).¹⁸ The metaphor of a wide-awake insomniac oppressed by worry suggests the unblinking visage of reptilian eyes leering with menace to steal Milton’s sleep. In the next line is placed Envy, one of the seven deadly sins; leering like a goat, it is a very old image of the devil with horns and cloven hooves. The following clause, at the middle of a long Miltonic sentence, continues to build on images already presented as the poet rebuffs a “savage Calumny” with his “snake-bearing jaws.” I note that Satan is often known as the Father of Lies and Calumny is treated as a proper name.

The juxtaposition of the “foul gang” in the following clause to the “witless mob” from the previous sentence creates an intentional association to Calumny; they are Satan’s host, later to be written as the fallen angels of Pandemonium in *Paradise Lost*. “The foul gang of you can do nothing painful to me, nor am I under your law; safe in an untroubled heart, I shall walk above the viperous stroke” (Milton 224).¹⁹ Through his

¹⁷ The Latin is one sentence of six lines. My translation is two sentences, diluting the effect of association between the “witless mob” and the “foul gang” that was probably intended by Milton. Therefore, I will address myself to the Latin.

¹⁸ Este procul vigiles curae, procul este querelae, / Invidiaeque acies transverso tortilis hirquo; / Saeva nec anguiferos extende Calumnia rictus; (105-7).

¹⁹ In me triste nihil foedissima turba potestis, / Nec vestri sum iuris ego; securaque tutus/ Pectora, vipereo gradiar sublimis ab ictu (107-10).

demonstration of moral courage in the face of evil, Milton defiantly proclaims spiritual victory over the serpentine foe. Milton's long series of serpentine images serves as a warning to the father: life away from poetry will be a demonic torment. But, there is also a very significant connection with *Paradise Lost*; it is here in "Ad Patrem" that the poet first arrays himself in spiritual armor, a central theme of *Paradise Lost*.

The spiritual armor of Milton's hero, the spiritual warrior, is a New Testament concept presented by St. Paul in his letters to the churches. He writes to the church at Ephesus, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Eph 6:11-13). The sword and shield worn by the angels of *Paradise Lost* are a conceptualization of the armor of God. In "Ad Patrem," Milton portrays himself in the role of the spiritual hero who overcomes and escapes Calumny and his host. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton creates Abdiel, an angelic spiritual hero; he serves in the throng of those who have followed the rebel Satan to the northern regions. When Abdiel hears Satan's seditious speech calling for rebellion against God, he knows it is a violation of every principle at the core of his being as he courageously speaks out in opposition "and in flame of zeal severe/ the current of his fury thus opposed" (5.807-8). Milton's speech to Calumny in "Ad Patrem," would have been entirely appropriate for Abdiel, "The foul gang of you can do nothing painful to me, nor am I under your law; safe in an untroubled heart, I shall walk above the viperous stroke." The lone hero, having said what needs to be said, departs, sustained by the power and courage of his own convictions.

From amidst them forth he passed
Long way through hostile scorn which he sustained
Superior, nor of violence feared aught
And with retorted scorn his back he turned
On those proud tow'rs to swift destruction doomed (5.903-7).

During the angel's departure, Milton's brilliant phrasing emphasizes Abdiel's courage. Milton produces a steady cadence of sound to frame the solemnity of this scene with a glorious drumbeat of hard consonants and a smooth counterpoint of soft vowels. His use of descriptive words such as "faithful found" and "faithful among the faithless" proclaim Abdiel's moral victory.

The ascension of King Charles II, prison, ostracism, the treachery of family and friends, and blindness are all in his future when Milton pens "Ad Patrem." Like the angel Abdiel, Milton could have chosen obedience to the father and by entering into the ranks of the common man, he may have been a fine clerk of court or preacher, and disappeared into the mists of time. The hero grown old, virtually alone, ignored by the public, and abandoned by his friends, it is interesting to speculate that Milton drew Abdiel, the only original character in the entire epic, as he pondered what might have been had he obeyed his father and entered the church or the courts. The name Abdiel means 'servant of God;' it is this seraph with the paradoxical name who most clearly lives by the explicit lesson of obedience in *Paradise Lost*; he demonstrates that happiness is gained by a full and willing service to God. Ironically, the angel's obedience to the Father stands in sharp contrast to Adam's disobedience and Milton's ideals of a justified disobedience.

In “Ad Patrem,” John Milton takes a seat among a select audience of scholars and then rests his hope for a measure of literary immortality on the possibility that the Latin homage to his father will outlive its author and serve as an example to benefit audiences of a future time. He closes “Ad Patrem” with these words: “And you, O our playthings, poems of our youth, if only you dare hope for endless years and to outlive your master’s pyre and see the light, and black oblivion does not hurry you beneath crowded Orcus, Perhaps these praises and this singing of my father’s name you will preserve as an example for a later age” (Milton 224).²⁰ Ironically, the poem to the father is only accessible to the learned company Milton claims as companions by virtue of their ability to read Latin. The closing lines of “Ad Patrem” are more appropriate as a postscript to *Paradise Lost* since it is his late epic that bestowed Milton with literary immortality.

An elder among the scholarly few, Milton seeks an audience for his epic, one capable of being admitted into the select and solitary company of the blind and aged bard. John Milton’s company was always select and few. Milton prays to his Muse, in *Paradise Lost*, to “govern thou my song, / Urania, and fit audience find, though few” (7.30-1). As he pens his seminal work, Milton’s circumstance is not the easy future in the company of learned companions that he dreamt of in “Ad Patrem.” His books and writings are banned and burned by King Charles II; he lives with fear that future censors will continue to ban his prose, and he understands that even if his works survive the ravages of time, they

²⁰ Et vos, O nostri, iuvenilia carmina, lusus, / Si modo perpetuos sperare audebitis annos, / Et domini superesse rogo, lucemque tueri, / Nec spisso rapiunt oblivia nigra sub Orco, / Fortisan has laudes, decantatumque parentis/ Nomen, ad exemplum, sero servabitis aevo (115-20).

might not be studied by future generations. Brimming with many radical ideas about godliness and justice, *Paradise Lost* contains a universal message to the future.

In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton engages with the question of a son's obedience to his fathers and begetters; its explicit lesson is spoken by Adam: "Henceforth I learn that to obey is best, / And love with fear the only God" (12.561-2). This espousal of humble obedience is not a conclusion easily predicted from the evidence found in Milton's anti-authoritarian life and works; he spent his life examining the problem of obedience to hierarchical authority. From youth to old age, the arc of Milton's life carries him from quiet scholar, to iconoclastic author, and finally to advocate of a humble obedience of God the Father. "Ad Patrem" is a preview of his rebel nature wherein he justifies his filial disobedience as tacit obedience; after which he spends the next two decades (1641-1660) writing in opposition to monarchy, popery, and other forms of thralldom to earthly father figures. His prose tracts support republican government and guarantees of individual freedoms. In consequence, upon the return and ascension of King Charles II in 1660, Milton's last years are spent in relative solitude; first as a political prisoner and then as a political outcast whose books are burned and whose ideas are suppressed. The sad fate suffered by Milton in the 1660's is the predictable result of his many frequent stands in outright defiance of kings, bishops, and other authority figures throughout the 1640's and 1650's. But, the calling card for Milton's unique form of rebellion—one that is peculiarly and paradoxically justified as obedience—is the Latin poem from the 1630's.

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Primary Sources

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The King James Bible is my source for checking all imagery, allusions, or verses.

Kerrigan, William, John Rumrich and Stephen M. Fallon, eds. The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton. New York: Random House, 2007.

This comprehensive collection of Milton's works is the primary source for my thesis. The editors offer a good translation of the Latin poem and provide many useful footnotes.

Milton, John. "Ad Patrem." Kerrigan 220-224.

Kerrigan's Modern Library edition of Milton's works is my primary source for the poem and translation unless otherwise noted. It includes useful footnotes and an introduction to place the poem in the context of Milton's life and other works.

---, "Areopagitica." Kerrigan 927-966.

This prose piece is an exhaustive examination of temptation, obedience, virtue, and sin in relationship to God. Milton argues that if one does not know good and evil then all choices are equal; they can carry no just consequence, nor lead to wisdom. The idea is a foundation of Milton's epic.

---, "The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce" Kerrigan 99-110.

Milton's goal is to facilitate the relaxation of England's divorce laws. Allowed in cases of infidelity, the law was based on the instruction of Jesus. Milton argues that the single line of Scripture cannot be read in isolation. His argument rests on three points in the Holy Bible. First, Moses granted a man more latitude in the matter of divorce than did Jesus. Second, while Jesus seems to clearly restrict divorce more harshly than did Moses, Jesus also declared the permanence of Moses' injunction. Finally, Jesus often advocates for the sinner by showing mercy and charity in the application of law. Milton pleads that the law must be relaxed in the name of Christian charity.

---, "Lycidas." Kerrigan 99-110.

The pastoral "Lycidas" illustrates the poet's early use of imagery and illusion. Written at the same period as "Ad Patrem," I turned to it for this project because Barbara Lewalski asserts the poem played a role in assuaging any doubts the father harbored concerning the son's vocational choice.

---, Paradise Lost. Kerrigan 251-630.

Containing many helpful notes, this *Paradise Lost*, from the Modern Library collection of Milton's prose and poetry is my primary source.

---, Paradise Lost. 1674. Ed. Christopher Ricks. New York: Signet Classics, 2001.

I used Ricks's edition as a secondary source for Milton's epic because of its portability. His annotations and footnotes make good supplemental material to Kerrigan. In addition, my own notes and comments became part of my research.

---, Paradise Lost. 1674. Ed. Gordon Teskey. New York: W. W. Norton, 2005.

Teskey's edition is my secondary source for Milton's epic. His annotations and footnotes make good supplemental material to Kerrigan. In addition, since I have owned and read my Teskey edition since December 2006, it has most of my most useful notes and comments written in its margins.

---, "Selections from 'The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates'." Kerrigan 1025-1055.

Milton argues that only God is sovereign, and the people, being created in the image of God, are not born into servitude. Therefore, kings and magistrates derive their just powers from the people who may hold them accountable as one holds any contractor accountable. He gets to the heart of his thoughts on idolatry and obedience to worldly authority.

Secondary Sources

Beer, Anna. Milton: Poet, Pamphleteer, and Patriot. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008.

In addition to its being a well-researched and scholarly work, Anna Beer's biography of Milton puts flesh on the bone. Milton's life and writings are combined with the larger historical events of seventeenth-century England. Her work is an important cross-reference source to aid my understanding of John Milton's life.

Campbell, Gordon and Thomas N. Corns. John Milton: Life, Work, and Thought.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

This biography of Milton is co-written by eminent Milton scholars. They examine Milton's life and writings in the context of recent Milton scholarship and historical studies of seventeenth-century England. To aid my understanding of John Milton's life, it is my primary biographical source.

Carey, John, ed. Milton: The Complete Shorter Poems. Harlow, England: Pearson, 2007.

I used Carey's collection as a secondary source for *Ad Patrem*. His footnotes are useful and he offers a different translation of the work.

---, "Milton's 'Ad Patrem'." The Review of English Studies, New Series 15 (1964): 180-84. JSTOR. UMass Boston. 20 October 2010.

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/513439/>>

Carey makes an analysis of lines 35-37 Milton's poem: the poet describes the musical nature of the heavens. Carey connects its allusions to classical writings and seventeenth century thought. Carey suggests an interesting analysis. He gives the poem a late date of 1640.

Chaplin, Gregory. "Beyond Sacrifice: Milton and the Atonement." PMLA 125.2 (March 2010): 354-69. 7 September 2010.

<http://www.mlajournals.org.ezproxy.lib.umb.edu/doi/abs/10.1632/pmla.2010.125.2>.

Chaplin discusses *Paradise Lost* in the light of Milton's *De doctrina Christiana*. He argues, "The heretical Christology that Milton takes pains to articulate and defend in *De doctrina* is crucial to our understanding of *Paradise Lost*. My research is enriched by Chaplin's discussion of Milton's Arianism and Milton's apparent belief that Jesus is the first of the Father's creations subject to Time.

Danielson, Dennis. "The Fall and Milton's Theodicy." The Cambridge Companion to Milton. 2d ed. Ed. Dennis Danielson. New York: Cambridge UP, 1999.144-59. Danielson approaches Milton's defense of God, with speculation about God. "The theological apologetic that *Paradise Lost* does not undertake concerns not God's existence but his nature, or character" (144). He discusses Milton's balanced, holistic approach to, and the dichotomy of justifying both, God and sinners.

Fish, Stanley. How Milton Works. Cambridge: Belknap Harvard UP, 2001.

Stanley Fish takes the position that Milton is a champion of the religious and orthodox Christian life. While I take some exception to this point of view as too limiting in its analysis of the man's radical ideas, no paper on Milton can be properly done without consulting Stanley Fish.

---, Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2007.

Stanley Fish's 1967 analysis of *Paradise Lost* asserts that Milton creates an admirable and sympathetic Satan to seduce the reader. Later, the reader is forced to assess their early reaction when Milton reveals the true nature of Satan's evil. Leaving aside the idea of reader seduction, I found this Fish analysis compelling because Milton first presents and then overthrows the classical Greco-Roman hero with the new Christian hero.

Forsyth, Neil. John Milton: A Biography. Oxford: Lion Hudson plc, 2008.

Neil Forsyth, author of *The Satanic Epic*, writes this biography. His emphasis is on Milton's life from his political years to his death. He speculates on Milton's emotional life as the political ground shifts. This biography is better for the less serious student. However, the book is valuable as a well-researched and extensive compilation of the work of other scholars: Lewalski, Kerrigan, etc.

---, The Satanic Epic. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003.

Neil Forsyth weaves a history of Satan in western literature into details of Satan's role in *Paradise Lost*. Forsyth places Satan at the center of Milton's story. He looks closely at the many ironic pairs that make up the epic as he argues in favor of the "fortunate fall."

Gore, Jeffrey. "Obedience in 'Of Education' and 'Paradise Lost.'"

Milton Studies 46 (2006): 1-29. RapidILL. Falvey Memorial Library.

Article Rapid#: -3249949. 15 March 2010.

<<http://rapidill.org/III/ViewQueue.aspx?ViewType=PendingByBranch&Id=198>>

Gore examines the problem of obedience in Milton's "Of Education" and "Paradise Lost." He argues "for Milton, obedience is less a submission to external rules and more the very potential for relation among human beings, God, and cosmos" (3). The article paradoxically connects imitation with Adam's conscientious decision to obey his Creator in Book 12 of the poem.

Graves, Robert. Greek Gods and Heroes. New York: Random House, 1960.

Graves's book is a useful reference for Greek and Roman mythology, especially useful with the more obscure Miltonic allusions to classical gods and heroes.

Gutkin, M. "Sufficient to Have Stood': The Mimesis of Free Will in *Paradise Lost*."

English Studies in Canada 10.1 (Mar 1984): 11-21. RapidILL. UMass Amherst.

Article Rapid#: -3249930. 19 March 2010.

<http://rapidill.org/III/ViewQueue.aspx?ViewType=PendingByBranch&Id=198>

Gutkin argues that while free will and obedience are at odds, the lesson of *Paradise Lost* is that the two are coexistent. "[Milton] offers a compelling mimesis of their simultaneity in creation's universal march toward the Creator" (12). His offering helps clarify my solution to the problem of obedience in Milton.

Hale, John K. "Milton Playing With Ovid." Milton Studies 25 (1989): RapidILL. Falvey Memorial Library. Article Rapid#: -3304232. 1 April 2010.

<[http://rapid2.library.colostate.edu/III/ViewQueue.aspx?ViewType=PendingByBranch&Id=](http://rapid2.library.colostate.edu/III/ViewQueue.aspx?ViewType=PendingByBranch&Id=198)>

Hale has extensively studied Milton's Latin works. In this piece, he explains the education-by-imitation method used by Milton is a game with rules that leads to originality. "In the game of Ovidian elegiacs, rules abound... but once learned, they cease to constrain and instead engender a style of playing... that approaches self-expression" (4). Hale takes the paradoxical position imitation leads to natural self-expression; it is a key to the problem of obedience.

Hawkes, David. John Milton: A Hero of Our Time. Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2009.

Hawkes' biography of Milton presents many important events in his life in combination with his ideas. Hawkes demonstrates that Milton's ideas, while out of sync with his own time, informs and influence the twenty-first century.

Lewalski, Barbara K. The Life of John Milton. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003

Barbara Lewalski, Milton scholar writes this biography of Milton. She examines Milton's life and writings with an emphasis on Milton's influences, his early life and his art. It is a very important secondary biographical source, particularly in my understanding of the period around the time of the writing of *Ad Patrem*.

---, "Milton and Idolatry." Select Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 43.1 (2003): 213-32. Project Muse. Johns Hopkins University Press. ISSN 0039-3657. 21 June 2010. <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/sel/summary/v043/43.1lewalski.html>

In this essay, Lewalski discusses Milton's expansive views on idolatry. "Milton, however, insisted that anything could be made into an idol, and he believed that the disposition to attach divinity of special sanctity to any...was idolatrous" (214). The essay connects his polemical prose to *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.

Maisano, Scott. "The Automata in the Garden." Descartes avec Milton.

Forthcoming in 2011, it was emailed to me by the author 4 December 2010. In a comparison of Cartesian and Miltonian cosmologies, Professor Maisano argues that Descartes was an inspiration for Milton. He concludes, "A close reading of *Paradise Lost* alongside Descartes' major writings brings to light a great deal of common ground uniting what we have been taught to regard as two mutually exclusive cosmologies." Maisano's research helped me to clarify my thinking about Adam's pre-lapsarian condition and his post-lapsarian rationality.

Manchester, William. A World Lit Only by Fire: The Medieval Mind and the Renaissance: Portrait of an Age. New York: Back Bay Books, Little Brown, 1993.

Manchester's book is particularly useful in contextualizing Milton with the broader European historical period. Manchester traces Europe's slow trek from the barbarous Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The book features the evolution of ideas and the importance of the printing press in expanding literacy and the sharing of ideas. Manchester ends his book in the mid- 16th century.

Sensabaugh, George F. "Milton and the Doctrine of Passive Obedience."

Huntington Library Quarterly, 13.1 (1949): 19-54. JSTOR. UMass Boston. Article ISSN 0018-7895. 15 March 2010.

<<http://web.ebscohost.com/proxy.lib.umb.edu/ehost/delivery?vid=43&hid=...>>

Sensabaugh's article is an interesting piece detailing the use of Milton's prose in the years immediately following his death. He contrasts the reality of Milton's views on obedience to worldly authority to the doctrine of passive disobedience ascribed to him post-mortem. The article, written in 1949, is dated but useful in helping me better understand obedience in Milton's polemical prose.

Smith, Nigel. Is Milton Better than Shakespeare? Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2008.

Smith's book is a compelling reconsideration of Milton, arguing that Shakespeare is more often studied while Milton remains relevant in the 21st century because his ideas continue to inform and challenge us. Smith is especially interested in Milton's conception of liberty. His connection between "Areopagitica" and *Paradise Lost* in his discussions of free will is useful for my project.

Teskey, Gordon. Delirious Milton. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006.

Teskey engages the reader in a discussion of Milton's struggle with creativity. What is creativity? What is free will? "The Fall of Man is about ...an emergent structure having the potential to explain everything that follows in history" (18). He asserts that Milton's delirium is a result of uncertainty about the nature and existence of God. I see his point. However, Milton's quarrel is with the church-religious hierarchy, not God, as he advocates that each person seek their own personal truth.

Wilson, Frank Percy. Elizabethan and Jacobean. Oxford: University Press, 1969.

Wilson's book is an expanded version of the Alexander Lectures in English, delivered by Professor Wilson at the University of Toronto, in November 1943. Professor Wilson's lectures highlight his views on the similarities and differences between Elizabethan and Jacobean writers. There is little on Milton. However, Wilson's book helps me to place Milton contextually in a particular time among his immediate predecessors and peers.