

SEIJO ENGLISH MONOGRAPHS

— NO. 27 —

GOD'S GRACE AND MAN'S SINFULNESS

— THEODICY IN *PARADISE LOST* —

BY

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Milton sings in his *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 heavenly Muse, . . .
 That to the highth of this great argument
 I may assert eternal providence,
 And justify the ways of God to men. (I 1-26)

It is well known that Milton studied the classical European tradition of epics and put it to good use in his English poem, trying to emulate it in order to sing the *adventurous song* (I 13). This fact has given rise to much controversy among critics. It seems he was never able to "sing" it without constructing in his own right a very fervent theodicy for himself through studious reading of the Bible.

For his own theodicy, I believe, he must have considered the following questions:

1. If God is almighty and absolute in His rule on the creations, why is the devil allowed to exist?
2. If God is a just God, why does He condone evil spirits and leave them at large as they work toward their evil designs in His universe?
3. If God intervenes in the history of the world, what justification does He have for doing so?

In his answers to these questions lies Milton's theory of free

will. In other words, his theodicy totally depends on the matter of freedom as God's principle of creation, and hence his advocacy of free will, which is put forth and developed most clearly and unequivocally in *Paradise Lost*.

2

Milton's defense of free will has God's abounding goodness as its basis. God's goodness is one of the outstanding themes which we cannot ignore throughout *Paradise Lost*. When the poet writes about God, he often refers to His goodness, and believes that God carefully illustrates what His goodness means; first His creation was executed according to His free will.

...my goodness, which is free
To act or not, necessity and chance
Approach not me, and what I will is fate. (VII 171–3)

And secondly, God's works of creation were originally perfectly good.

Here finished he, and all that he had made
Viewed, and behold all was entirely good (VII 548–9)

The poet thinks that the Omnipotent can neither be ruled by something else, nor is He governed by necessity or chance, and that the creation was accomplished by God's good and free will¹.

The poet repeats in *Paradise Lost* that the goodness is the boundless riches² that God can afford freely and unsparingly.³

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These are thy glorious works, parent of good,
Almighty, thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair; thy self how wondrous then!
Unspeakable, who sit'st above these heavens
To us invisible or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works, yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine

(V 153–59)

Hail universal Lord, be bounteous still
To give us only good; and if the night
Have gathered aught of evil or concealed,
Disperse it, as now light dispels the dark.

(V 205–8)

To Milton, God's goodness meant the universal riches ubiquitously witnessed in all areas of creation, unilaterally offered by God's immeasurable good will. He has Adam refer to this goodness of God time and again, with gratitude, in the epic:

O by what name, for thou above all these,
Above mankind, or aught than mankind higher,
Surpassest far my naming, how may I
Adore thee, author of this universe,
And all this good to man, for whose well being
So amply, and with hands so liberal
Thou hast provided all things . . .

(VIII 357–63)

This goodness is the very principle and part of the immeasurable riches with which God created the universe out of the chaos and with which God can beat any destructive power of Satan. Not only can He beat him but can also use Satan's evil to create more good for His ultimate purpose. The angels of Heaven sing:

Thy thunders magnified; but to create
Is greater than created to destroy.
Who can impair thee, mighty king, or bound
Thy empire? Easily the proud attempt

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Of spirits apostate and their counsels vain
Thou hast repelled, while impiously they thought
Thee to diminish, and from thee withdraw
The number of thy worshippers. Who seeks
To lessen thee, against his purpose serves
To manifest the more thy might: his evil
Thou usest, and from thence createst more good.

(VII 606–16)

We find that the irreconcilability between God and Satan comes from their diametrical opposition, in that God is entirely good and Satan, entirely evil, and that God's goodness uses Satan's evil to amplify His providence, while Satan endlessly finds it his pleasure to attempt to turn God's goodness into evil:

. . . but of this be sure,
To do aught good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight,
As being the contrary to his high will
Whom we resist. If then his providence
Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,
Our labour must be to pervert that end,
And out of good still to find means of evil

(I 158–65)

Thus man who was ruined by the guile of Satan will be saved not by his own power, but solely by God's good will and abundant grace through His Son's redemption. The poet has the Son speak:

Man shall not quite be lost, but saved who will,
Yet not of will in him, but grace in me [=the Son]
Freely vouchsafed; once more I will renew
His lapsed powers, though forfeit and enthralled
By sin to foul exorbitant desires;
Upheld by me, yet once more he shall stand
On even ground against his mortal foe,
By me upheld, that he may know how frail
His fallen condition is, and to me owe

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All his deliverance, and to none but me. (III 173–82)

The poet asserts the Son's redemption of mankind:

And now without redemption all mankind
Must have been lost, adjudged to death and hell
By doom severe, had not the Son of God,
In whom the fulness dwells of love divine,
His dearest mediation thus renewed. (III 222–6)

To serve the best purpose of the highest good is, in Milton's concept, to be free. This idea the poet puts in the mouth of Abdiel, the angel rising against Satan. To Abdiel, to know the highest good is to know the highest value, and to live by the highest value means the highest pleasure, glory, blessings, and freedom of the spirit. By the same token, to obey God, who brings about the highest good, sets one free, while to disobey that same God means to be a slave to something low and base.

Unjustly thou deprav'st it with the name
Of servitude to serve whom God ordains,
Or nature; God and nature bid the same,
When he who rules is worthiest, and excels
Them whom he governs. This is servitude,
To serve the unwise, or him who hath rebelled
Against his worthier, as thine now serve thee,
Thy self not free, but to thy self enthralled;
Yet lewdly dar'st our ministering upbraid. (VI 174–82)

God gave man free will, and He intended that the free will should bring man goodness, and that he might enjoy perfect freedom in that pleasant blessing. God ordained that man should have free will because a forcible obedience to God would not make man truly happy. This principle the poet puts in the mouth of God when He speaks to His Son:

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Not free, what proof could they have given sincere
Of true allegiance, constant faith or love,
Where only what they needs must do, appeared,
Not what they would? What praise could they receive?
What pleasure I from such obedience paid,
When will and reason (reason also is choice)
Useless and vain, of freedom both despoiled,
Made passive both, had served necessity,
Not me. (III 103–11)

Free will is rightfully and justly free as it should be only when it obeys God voluntarily. To obey God freely is to obey Him with one's will, without being forced, honestly, faithfully, and with adoration. Prelapsarian Adam and Eve were living in innocent freedom. To them, before they fell, it meant freedom to live in gladness and thankfulness to God for His supreme goodness.

. . . for in their looks divine
The image of their glorious maker shone,
Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure,
Severe but in true filial freedom placed (IV 291–94)

God created both angels and men to be free. In such freedom they are blessed by God. Free will is the abundant gift given one-sidedly by God in His good will. Both angels and men were supposed to exist in their natural freedom, to requite God for their existence, to appreciate the abundance of nature surrounding them, in that blissful state to obey God. That obedience could hold nothing but gladness for them in their prelapsarian condition.

This blessed freedom could not exist outside God's benevolence, from which it comes and originates; it does not come from any angels nor from man himself. Spiritual blessings are given to man by God in his free obedience to Him, but once this freedom serves man independent of God's benevolent intent and comes to be used by man for its own sake away from God's

initial design, it becomes nothing but a curse to man, to his grief.

Milton repeatedly makes it clear that God created both angels and men free creatures — able freely to stand either for or against God, and that this principle of God's creation of angels and men He will not change nor amend for any reason, for God is true to His own principle of creation for ever

...for so

I formed them free, and free they must remain,
Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change
Their nature, and revoke the high decree
Unchangeable, eternal, which ordained
Their freedom, they themselves ordained their fall.

(III 123–7)

And this immutable principle is wholly rooted in His goodness and nothing else, for, in His unchangeable high decree, God wills Himself to owe man ultimate responsibility to see that man will stand at once in felicity and freedom, able to receive His abundant riches of grace and offer of spiritual relations. Then, whether ignorantly or innocently, if you were to respond to this freedom as Satan did⁴ with misdeeds or irresponsibility, you should be bound to find, to your inevitable regret, that the freedom intended for your good and bliss would turn out to be the contrary of what it ought. Then it may well seem that God appears to place a curse to those who do not properly respond to His goodness, while He is benevolent to those who freely obey His governance. They therefore as to right belonged,

So were created, nor can justly accuse
Their maker, or their making, or their fate,
As if predestination overruled
Their will, disposed by absolute decree
Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed
Their own revolt, not I

(III 111–7)

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Such freedom as you might extort as your own, becoming oblivious of God's benevolent "high decree/ . . . which ordained/ Their freedom" (III 126–9) will naturally turn sour without its blessing, becoming displeasing to you sooner or later, producing the seed of woes. The best part of this freedom can be claimed only when it is used as it was purported to be by God. The poet here suggests that anything meant to be good could very possibly be abused whenever and wherever the chances occur, turning it into the worst possible means for the most evil woes. Therefore it follows that a sincere and honest response to God's truthful goodness is, to all intents and purposes, to use it for what it is intended to be by God as good and just. But, on the other hand, an insincere and dishonest response to His goodness through free will in ingratitude constitute sin against Him.

My self and all the angelic host that stand
In sight of God enthroned, our happy state
Hold, as you yours, while our obedience holds;
On other surety none; freely we serve,
Because we freely love, as in our will
To love or not; in this we stand or fall:
And some are fallen, to disobedience fallen,
And so from heaven to deepest hell; O fall
From what high state of bliss into what woe! (V 535–43)

3

God created angels and men to be free. If the pretext holds that freedom is blissfully free only when within God's blessing, the original state of God's creation, then the postlapsarian free

will is no longer an unmitigated blessing. In other words, even if freedom exists, its quality has changed from bliss to curse. Freedom has suffered serious damage. Freedom hasn't brought happiness, but unhappiness to men.

Is God responsible for this change of man's state because in His goodness He gave him freedom? No. Freedom is good when it is used justly. If God were to take away that freedom from man, only because man has come to be agonized through his own ingratitude for, and abuse of, that very freedom, He would make a blunder of self-contradiction, Himself.

Milton's axiom in this poem that freedom is a God-given blessing forever, immutably stands. That freedom will bring blessings to those who gratefully use it for their obedient response to God, while it will bring a curse to those who do not. Not that God changes it into a curse, but that those who abuse it change it into one without realizing it themselves. They are cursed, and they are themselves responsible for it. If, like Satan, they think God has cursed them, they commit, without the grace of Christ, a further sin of ingratitude to God.

Ingrate, he had of me
All he could have; I made him just and right,
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.
Such I created all the ethereal powers
And spirits, both them who stood and them who failed;
Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.

(III 97–102)

Therefore God had no regret over His principle that angels should be free and no qualms in having given them free will, nor will He circumvent their freedom for any cause. He also accepted Satan's escape from Hell where he was contained as a result of his impious war in Heaven. Rather, Satan could escape

through the Hell's gate with His high permission, which Satan took to be his good luck and an auspicious sign for his venture-some design for revenge against God.

The reader may well understand that it was not God's intention to restrict the free action of Satan. God would not further do anything to him by way of intervention against his action once he was cast out of Heaven, for "no bounds/Prescribed, no bars of hell, nor all the chains/Heaped on him there, nor yet the main abyss/Wide interrupt can hold" him (III 81–4).

What is Hell? It means a separation from Heaven, and it is an element of the curse. It could mean a place set aside to receive disobedient evil spirits, Satan and his followers, for whom there was no place in Heaven. It may very well be said that Hell was, in a sense, a refuge for them, after what they had gone through being forced by the Son's mighty pursuit to their tumbling fall from the brink of Heaven.

What when we fled amain, pursued and struck
With heaven's afflicting thunder, and besought
The deep to shelter us? This hell then seemed
A refuge from those wounds: or when we lay
Chained on the burning lake? That sure was worse.

(II 165–9)

Satan as an angel was possessed of the divine blessing of immortal life and tremendous freedom, but that glorious blessing of freedom changed once it ceased to be subservient to God's benevolent will. It could not but be free to seek to thrive, working on its insolence and impious aims. In other words the blessing turned into a curse, and the good into evil. Hence, his revenge redounded upon his own rebellious head.⁵

Thus Satan, through the sin of ingratitude, incurred this curse upon himself even before his fall from Heaven.⁶ He was then

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cast into Hell, which could not help to prevent him from further sin, for the greatness of the freedom inflated his pride to an extreme, inflaming his ingratitude and insolence, and made him perversely stand up in endless opposition to the goodness of God.

Moreover, that greatness of freedom made it possible for him to break away from Hell, but he could not be free from the curse. On the contrary, his freedom meant all the more curse for him.

Thither full fraught with mischievous revenge,
Accursed, and in a cursed hour he hies. (II 1054–5)

The following lines of Satan's soliloquy suggest what Hell actually is for Satan:

... pride and worse ambition threw me down
Warring in heaven against heaven's matchless king:
Ah wherefore! He deserved no such return
From me, whom he created what I was
In that bright eminence, and with his good
Upbraided none; nor was his service hard.
What could be less than to afford him praise,
The easiest recompense, and pay him thanks,
How due! Yet all his good proved ill in me,
And wrought but malice; lifted up so high
I sdeigned subjection, and thought one step higher
Would set me highest, and in a moment quit
The debt immense of endless gratitude,
So burdensome still paying, still to owe;
Forgetful what from him I still received,
And understood not that a grateful mind
By owing owes not, but still pays, at once
Indebted and discharged; what burden then? (IV 40–57)

Be then his love accursed, since love or hate,
To me alike, it deals eternal woe.
Nay cursed be thou: since against his thy will
Chose freely what it now so justly rues.

Me miserable! Which way shall I fly
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
Which way I fly is hell; my self am hell (IV 69–75)

Fundamentally Hell which God ordained as a place for Satan is not the whole “Hell” for him. The reader may well understand that the place of Hell in the poem is designed by the poet to describe the alienation of the whole apostate angels from Heaven.

The true Hell is in Satan’s mind. Not that God cursed his mind to make it a hell for him, nor that He had any grudge against him through ill-will. On the contrary, His goodness and grace in abundance became the measure by which Satan agonized over his perverse existence.

The perverse Satan changed God’s good into evil (I 255). That perversity has become his main trait since his revolt against God in Heaven. But God’s goodness has turned his evil again into good. As a case in point, the following passage is important in describing the very scene in Paradise in which Satan was carefully prepared to encounter Eve ‘the mother of mankind’ for the first time.

Such pleasure took the serpent to behold
This flowery plat, the sweet recess of Eve
Thus early, thus alone; her heavenly form
Angelic, but more soft, and feminine,
Her graceful innocence, her every air
Of gesture or least action overawed
His malice, and with rapine sweet bereaved
His fierceness of the fierce intent it brought:
That space the evil one abstracted stood
From his own evil, and for the time remained
Stupidly good, of enmity disarmed,
Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge;
But the hot hell that always in him burns,
Though in mid heaven, soon ended his delight,

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And tortures him now more, the more he sees
Of pleasures not for him ordained: then soon
Fierce hate he recollects, and all his thoughts
Of mischief, gratulating, thus excites.

Thoughts, whither have ye led me, with what sweet
Compulsion thus transported to forget
What hither brought us, hate, not love, nor hope
Of Paradise for hell, hope here to taste
Of pleasure, but all pleasure to destroy,
Save what is in destroying, other joy
To me is lost.

(IX 455–79)

Thus Satan freely repeats and reiterates offenses against God, only to cull excruciating curse for himself. God permits his ram-paging venture but it doesn't mean that the quality of goodness with which God created the world has become thin or shaky and turned from good to evil. On the contrary, God, being just,

Left him at large to his own dark designs,
That with reiterated crimes he might
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
Evil to others, and enraged might see
How all his malice served but to bring forth
Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shown
On man by him seduced, but on himself
Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance poured.

(I 209–20)

Satan's unlimited freedom of action in the escapade from Hell and continuous revolt against God even after he was dislodged from Heaven impresses the reader greatly, but it seems that it was carefully designed and intended by the poet to imply that even in his revolt against God with his free will, he is still without knowing it subservient to God's purpose. The reader understands that the freedom of will that he abused in his revolt against God

was corrupt and depraved. And the poet apparently suggests to the reader that Satan's such unwarranted abuse of freedom without bounds leads to the woe of Hell in Satan's mind.

In this poem the freedom of Satan is described as possibly capable of confronting and opposing God so endlessly that his action and words could attract the reader's favor to his side. As God permits his free action, the reader may well misunderstand that Satan has recovered his strength by his own exertions. And reading only the first two books of the poem, the reader may easily be manipulated by Satan's false reasoning (with ingratitude to God), and may be corrupted to think with admiration that Satan is heroic because he is desperately preparing for an impossible act of avenging himself on an almighty power who seems to him madly cruel and tyrannical.

However, if the reader reads through all the books, it will be clear to him that Satan is anything but virtuously heroic because he only bears the ruin and curse which he has brought on himself. Nevertheless it is "free" for the reader to take Satan as truly heroic, contrary to the poet's own voice in the poem, reading only the first two books, but to do so would be a sheerly intentional and wayward misunderstanding of the whole design of the epic story. It would be perverting the poet's intention, just as Satan perverted God's to justify his fighting to change God's goodness into evil as his sole joy.

The reason why the reader is easily charmed by Satan's rebelliousness may be that he seems to the reader audaciously able to achieve whatever he hopes to do.

The original sin that was brought into existence by Satan's rampant disobedience to God and his guile to "our grand parents" (I 29) brought woe and death to the whole human world. Human sin originated with Adam and Eve by Satan's instigation through an impious abuse of the divine gift of free will, which was originally good and a blessing. But this freedom became a cursed thing through their sin. In other words, the freedom is truly free only when it is used to keep and enhance the rightful relation of faith between God and man, but as a result of man's grievous lapse from the faithful relation with Him, it became a thing for man to claim and abuse, coming to be employed for the sake of man's interest only. Thus the freedom of man became seriously compromised at the moment of commission of the original sin.

The Bible asserts that mankind became mortal by one man's disobedience.⁷ The freedom of man who lives in the flesh and is mortal is far more limited than that of Satan who is an immortal angel though ruined through sin⁸. Man's freedom was hurt, and therefore became depraved and corrupt, bearing evil fruit and a curse to its possessor.

Even so this corrupt and imperfect freedom of man is worth possession and indispensable for human existence. We must not forcibly be robbed of it by someone else, or any authority, however hazardous, foreboding and ominous it may be to its possessor through the great probability of its abuse. It seems even justified and worth the blessing to restore to one his right to live freely if he has been for some reason deprived of it.

Furthermore, even if we are to suffer from an immeasurable

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number of worries and agony from sin resulting from our own free will, no one can say for certain that it would be good for us to become beings without free will. For man was originally created free. But the free will which has lost sight of God will not make him truly free but, rather, will make him a slave to himself.

By the same token, the poet sings of the world's realities of man's woe as the fruit of his disobedience to God, and makes Adam witness them in the visions that the angel Michael shows to him of his progeny's future in the poem's Book XI. Life, which is obviously the most fundamental gift from God, turns very bitter and woeful, and Adam cries at the sights:

Why is life given
To be thus wrested from us? Rather why
Obtruded on us thus? Who if we knew
What we receive, would either not accept
Life offered, or soon beg to lay it down,
Glad to be so dismissed in peace. Can thus
The image of God in man created once
So goodly and erect, though faulty since,
To such unsightly sufferings be debased
Under inhuman pains? Why should not man,
Retaining still divine similitude
In part, from such deformities be free,
And for his maker's image sake exempt? (XI 502–14)

The world goes from bad to worse and it is God's punishment due to man's disfigurement of God's image within him, as the angel tells Adam:

... so abject is their punishment,
Disfiguring not God's likeness, but their own,
Or if his likeness, by themselves defaced
While they pervert pure nature's healthful rules

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To loathsome sickness, worthily, since they
God's image did not reverence in themselves. (XI 520–5)

It could even be said that God would not dare interfere with man's free will, leaving man free to choose his action at Satan's instigation in the garden of Eden⁹. But seeing him wretched and corrupt without any goodness of freedom as a result of the disobedience to God, He resolved

To leave them to their own polluted ways. (XII 110)

This is Biblical, for St. Paul in *Romans* says:

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: (1:24)

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: (1:26)

God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; (1:28)

Is God responsible for this perverse situation of man? The poet has God speak:

. . .for so
I formed them free, and free they must remain,
Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change
Their nature, and revoke the high decree
Unchangeable, eternal, which ordained
Their freedom, they themselves ordained their fall.
(III 123–8)

The words “I formed them free, . . . I else must change/Their nature, and revoke the high decree” (III 124–6) indeed show God's “predicament” as Fowler puts it.¹⁰ Though blameless and just, because of His goodness and benevolence, God took pity

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on man because of this curse, and resolved to take responsibility upon Himself for this miserable human plight which He had foreseen in advance of its actual occurrence as if it had happened already (in Book III). He resolved in His foresight to heap on man "infinite and immense goodness" (XII 469) "more wonderful/Than that which by creation first brought forth/Light out of darkness" (XII 471-3) to turn evil to good, to redeem man from sin through His abundant saving grace.

The poet has God speak again:

Man shall not quite be lost, but saved who will
Yet not of will in him, but grace in me
Freely vouchsafed; once more I will renew
His lapsed powers, though forfeit and enthralled
By sin to foul exorbitant desires (III 173-7)

The poet insists that man's freedom at the time of the original sin was deprived of its initial goodness and that that sin induced man freely to study ambitious ways of life without God. And all this meant that man had lost the right reason.

Reason in man obscured, or not obeyed,
Immediately inordinate desires
And upstart passions catch the government
From reason, and to servitude reduce
Man till then free. Therefore since he permits
Within himself unworthy powers to reign
Over free reason, God in judgment just
Subjects him from without to violent lords;
His outward freedom: tyranny must be,
Though to the tyrant thereby no excuse. (XII 86-96)

Then what shall man have to do to regain the true freedom of the original blessing? The answer to the question is plain enough: man must return to God. In other words, man must

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recover the blissful freedom-without-curse –the curse from the “injured” freedom. Man had the need of God’s intervention to totally recover that freedom. Finding man under the yoke of the evil rule of Satan, God returns to man not only with justice due, but also with forgiveness through mercy to allow him to freely stand up with gladness; free to live again with blissful freedom. God’s design for the cure of man’s ruin is to increase His grace upon man to the degree of overwhelming abundance, to cover his ruin and forgive his sin through the blood of His Son. He lets man choose between good and evil with right reason for himself again. Knowing this Adam cries:

O 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.

(XII 469–78)

God’s intervention in human history is in this poem revealed as a thing of the future to Adam by the angel Michael in his prophecy, which gives Adam and Eve ‘paradise within’ (XII 587) as they are evicted from Paradise at the angel’s order¹¹.

What rationale is there in God’s intervention in human history if He means to recover for man true freedom through His goodness? Does His intervention not suggest a hindering effect on man’s freedom? The reader would do well to remember that He made man as an agent of free will, and that He is true to His own high decree that He set for Himself, and that He will not

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contradict with His own principle. Hence it should be nothing but the same principle of freedom that could justify God to redeem man once again into true freedom.

The Bible asserts that God's intervention was effected through the Son to free man from bondage.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he [=the Son] also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

And deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Heb. 2: 14–5)

The Son's activity claiming the authority of the prophets of the Old Testament, however, did not use such authoritative force on people during his days on earth. He came "not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mat. 20: 28). He was called by John the Baptist "the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

The Son used God's authority not to judge but to forgive, in his mission on earth. But sinless though he was, the Son was later condemned and given capital punishment, and was deserted at death even by all of his disciples.

The death of the Son was a drama that graphically showed how boundlessly patient and merciful was God in sacrificing His Son who took the world of suffering and the sinfulness of man upon Himself. To the same effect the poet has Michael say to Adam:

Proclaiming life to all who shall believe
In his redemption, . . .

. . .

For this he shall live hated, be blasphemed,
Seized on by force, judged, and to death condemned

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A shameful and accurst, nailed to the cross
By his own nation, slain for bringing life;
But to the cross he nails thy enemies,
The law that is against thee, and the sins
Of all mankind, with him there crucified,
Never to hurt them more who rightly trust
In this his satisfaction

(XII 406–9)

This whole drama of the Son draws the groaning souls agonizing in the bondage of corruption¹², but never binds them in any way, but rather delivers them from the wicked curse of sin.

The death of the Son was the result of his reconciliatory mission to remove the sin that separates man from God. Again it was the result of his mission to redeem man from the curse of sin with God's boundless goodness and forgiveness. And again it was the result of God's design through the Son with His omnipotence and overwhelming goodness to overcome the huge power of Satan's evil. The poet obviously hoped that this whole drama which was crowned with Christ's resurrection after death, would give assurance to those who chose to follow the Son in his steps of obedience to a benevolent God, to be "made free from sin" (Rom. 6:18), living thence in His goodness.

The above concept is contained in very compressed form in Book XII of the poem, which essentially agrees with the message of the New Testament gospel. But what stands out in the poet's story is the emphasis on free will as the very keynote of God's basic principle for His governance of the world and for the furtherance of the ever growing relationship between Him and man.

To be sure the concept of freedom, or anything free for that matter, tends to invite misunderstanding. It must be made clear what is freedom and what is obedience, and caution must be taken not to make them appear mutually contradictory. There

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is a discussion about obedience and freedom between the angel Raphael and Adam in Book V. Raphael says to Adam:

. . . that thou art happy, owe to God;
That thou continuest such, owe to thyself,
That is, to thy obedience; therein stand.
This was that caution given thee; be advised.
God made thee perfect, not immutable;
And good he made thee, but to persevere
He left it in thy power, ordained thy will
By nature free, not over-ruled by fate
Inextricable, or strict necessity;
Our voluntary service he requires,

. . .

My self and all the angelic host that stand
In sight of God enthroned, our happy state
Hold, as you yours, while our obedience holds;
On other surety none; freely we serve,
Because we freely love, as in our will
To love or not; in this we stand or fall:
And some are fallen, to disobedience fallen,
And so from heaven to deepest hell; O fall
From what high state of bliss into what woe! (V: 520–43)

On the other hand, in answer to Abdiel's argument that Satan should "cease this impious rage, . . . but hasten to appease the incensed Father and the incensed Son" (V 845–7), Satan says it is unjust for God "to bind with laws the free," (V 819) and he even denies that he was made free. He would not acknowledge the fact that angels were made by God, saying that they were "self-begot, self-raised/By [their]own quickening power," (V 860–1).

Abdiel reminds Satan how the angels were made by God —made free and glorious by His ordaining and decree not to make them less but to "exalt their happy state under one head

more near/United” (V 829–34). But Satan would “dondemn/
The just decree of God. . ./That to his only Son by right enduced/
With regal sceptre, every soul in heaven/ Shall bend the knee, and
in that honour due/Confess him rightful king” (V 813–8).

But Satan was already firm in his stance that he and his followers were “Natives and sons of heaven possessed before/
By none, . . .free,/Equally free” (V 790–2) and that they could “without law/Err not (V 898–9). He believed that adoration of God was equal to “the abuse/OF those imperial titles which assert/[Their] being ordained to govern, not to serve” (V 800–2). Satan completely denied necessity and value of obedience or discipline in Heaven.

The poet must have seen how much better the reader, an apostate soul himself, might prefer Satan’s view of freedom to Abdiel’s. It seems that, even knowing how attractive Satan’s heroic advocacy of diabolical freedom in Heaven might be to the reader of this poem, the poet intends to fervently champion the “true” meaning of freedom, how important freedom is in obedience to God and “true” meaning of freedom, how important freedom is in obedience to God and becoming apostate, one’s freedom and obedience will become irreconcilable things with the result that freedom becomes to its possessor a curse and punishment.

Concerning human abuse of freedom through disobedience to God and man’s resultant sufferings, Michael, the angel, tells Adam:

Reason in man obscured, or not obeyed,
Immediately inordinate desires
And upstart passions catch the government
From reason, and to servitude reduce
Man till then free. Therefore since he permits

Within himself unworthy powers to reign
Over free reason, God in judgment just
Subjects him from without to violent lords;
Who oft as undeservedly enthral
His outward freedom: tyranny must be,
Though to the tyrant thereby no excuse.
Yet sometimes nations will decline so low
From virtue, which is reason, that no wrong,
But justice, and some fatal curse annexed
Deprives them of their outward liberty,
Their inward lost:

(XII 86–101)

To the poet the matter of freedom is categorically a matter of faith and obedience to God in the first place. Nevertheless, it has great implications for earthly political, cultural, and social matters. We see that what the poet means by freedom in mundane matters is deeply connected with the providence of God, who created the universe and continues to love the whole human race.

CONCLUSION

Milton's idea of freedom should be considered in connection with God's providence. Freedom as God's grace could result in evil if it did not work as good. This conclusion Milton might have gained from keen observation of real life as well as from his study of the Bible, for in real life freedom is often taken not so much as blessing as the seed of a curse, producing evil results or inviting harmful chaotic confusion. What is the reason for this situation if freedom, originally good and blessing, often bears evil fruit?

The poet never talked about freedom without referring to the faith in God. His conviction was that the reason why freedom will often bears evil fruit is attributable to man's original sin, that is, his innate "sinfulness" (XI 360) for which God takes counter-measure by intervening in human history, which Michael prophesies to Adam before he shows him the vision of the future in Book XI:

. . . know I am sent
To shew thee what shall come in future days
To thee and to thy offspring; good with bad
Expect to hear, supernal grace contending
With sinfulness of men; (XI 356–60)

That God's grace contends with man's sinfulness means that it is with supreme goodness that He provides redemption for man's innate sinfulness. In other words, Michael's prophecy is the message that God's overwhelmingly, overflowing goodness will in the future overcome the sinfulness of man through the suffering love of the Son. That shall happen because it is His will. God will defeat the evil power of the world. Good will defeat evil. That is the message of the New Testament, which encourages believers to take part in a war between good and evil¹³, for God will defeat the power of evil on the day of Judgment.

The poet asserts that God gave man free will and that though He did not prevent man's fall, God came to bring man's woe of death upon Himself. He had to pay the precious cost for the seed of sin –free will–, the abuse of which caused man the loss of paradise, though He had warned him in advance. That paradoxical event really happened, the poet thinks, and he put it into the mouth of Michael as a prophecy of the future to Adam, who replied:

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O 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.

(XII 469–78)

According to Fowler in his notes on the above passage of the poem¹⁴, Addison was right when he saw that “Adam is left triumphant in the depth of misery, while Satan is miserable in the height of his triumph.” Fowler is right when he says on the same page, “God’s will for man is to be fulfilled in spite of the Fall, though in a more difficult and surprising way.”

The purpose of God’s redoubled grace to man is to give him an ample chance to choose to be transported, by free will, through His “supernal grace” (XI 359) of forgiveness and redemption, to become “a new man” making it possible for him to freely stand in a new obedience through a new spiritual covenant with Him. That is the real purpose of the conflict of His grace with man’s sinfulness –to regain his true freedom to choose between good and evil stemming from the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (see XI 809–18). That freedom will be assured by the Holy Spirit. Michael says to Adam:

from heaven
He to his own a Comforter will send,
The promise of the Father, who shall dwell
His Spirit within them, and the law of faith
Working through love, upon their hearts shall write,
To guide them in all truth, and also arm

With spiritual armour, able to resist
Satan's assaults, and quench his fiery darts,
What man can do against them, not afraid,
Though to the death, against such cruelties
With inward consolations recompensed,
And oft supported so as shall amaze
Their proudest persecutors: for the Spirit
Poured first on his apostles, whom he sends
To evangelize the nations, then on all
Baptized, shall them with wondrous gifts endue
To speak all tongues, and do all miracles,
As did their Lord before them. (XII 485–502)

For Milton, freedom meant the very grounds of the existence of man who was created by God, and that it was freedom of spiritual significance, being the freedom of conscience which is borne witness to by the Holy Spirit. He was against all powers and influences that could compromise that freedom, especially those that could mislead, corrupt, or ruin it.

... Thus they win
Greater numbers of each nation to receive
With joy the tidings brought from heaven: at length
Their ministry performed, and race well run
Their doctrine and their story written left,
They die; but in their room, as they forewarn,
Wolves shall succeed for teachers, grievous wolves,
Who all the sacred mysteries of heaven
To their own vile advantages shall turn
Of lucre and ambition, and the truth
With superstitions and traditions taint,
Left only in those written records pure,
Though not but by the Spirit understood.
Then shall they seek to avail themselves of names,
Places and titles, and with these to join
Secular power, though feigning still to act

By spiritual, to themselves appropriating
The Spirit of God, promised alike and given
To all believers; and from that pretence,
Spiritual laws by carnal power shall force
On every conscience; laws which none shall find
Left them enrolled, or what the Spirit within
Shall on the heart engrave. What will they then
But force the spirit of grace it self, and bind
His consort liberty; what, but unbuild
His living temples, built by faith to stand,
Their own faith not another's: for on earth
Who against faith and conscience can be heard
Infallible? Yet many will presume:
Whence heavy persecution shall arise
On all who in the worship persevere
Of spirit and truth; the rest, far greater part,
Well deem in outward rites and specious forms
Religion satisfied; truth shall retire
Bestuck with slanderous darts, and works of faith
Rarely be found; (XII 502–37)

The poet felt the need not only to oppose all the powers and influences that were detrimental to the freedom of conscience endorsed by the Holy Spirit, but also to urge to stand freely for God those whose hearts became blunt to their need of spiritual freedom upright and true. He went even so far as to declare that if a man believed what someone else said was true “without knowing other reason,” he might be a heretic, “though his belief be true”.¹⁵

To be sure Milton was a leading advocate of freedom in his contemporary society. His voice of liberty is celebrated in English history, but it was deeply rooted in his religious convictions. His conviction of the necessity of man's freedom came from his superior insight into God's providence through His creation,

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goodness, and justice, from his understanding of the depravities of Satan and man, his analysis of the war between good and evil, and his view of God's intervention in history.

NOTES

- 1 *Paradise Lost* VII 171–3
- 2 see Ephesians 1:7
- 3 see *Paradise Regained* III 122–6.
- 4 see *Paradise Lost* IV 63–72, V 525–43
- 5 *Paradise Lost* III 85–6
- 6 *Paradise Lost* IX 468
- 7 Romans 5:12
- 8 *Paradise Lost* I 153–5
- 9 *Paradise Lost* X 40–7
- 10 *The Poems of John Milton*, ed. John Carey and Alastair Flower, Longmans, 1968, p.567
- 11 *Paradise Lost* XII 585–7
- 12 Romans 8:22
- 13 Romans 12:17–21
- 14 *The Poems of Milton*, ed. John Carey and Alastair Fowler, Longmans, 1968, p.1050
- 15 *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, Yale Univ. Press, Vol. II, 1959, p.543

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