

Economy of Damnation: Satan's Fall in *Paradise Lost*

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1. Introduction

In a recent article, Diana Trevino Benet argues that Satan's soliloquy in Book 4,32-113 must be taken seriously when it shows Satan considering the possibility of repentance, for it has parallels to Adam's soliloquy in Book 10,720-844 (Benet 2005). Their fallen conditions are similar, Satan, carrying hell within himself, fears that "in the lowest deep a lower deep / Still threatening to devour me opens wide" (*PL* 4,76-77), and Adam, describing himself as driven into an "abyss of fears," finds himself "from deep to deeper plunged" (10,844). Adam is "[t]o Satan only like [in] both crime and doom" (10,841). But as Benet shows, "the most important similarity they share is the eruption within them of a divine voice . . . [in] the guise of evil conscience" (Benet, "Adam's Evil Conscience" 2; cf. *PL* 4,23-24; 10,842) that reminds them of their own choice to disobey and of God's justice in punishing them (4,66-68, 71-72; 10,758-768).

Does conscience play a role beyond this? It certainly does so for human beings. Some individuals receive salvation through special grace (3,183-184), but the rest will hear the call of God's "umpire conscience," and often be warned about their sinful state even as grace invites them to repent (3,185-195). Those who hear will find God's day of grace, but those who scorn will harden their hearts and fall deeper into sin to find themselves excluded from God's mercy (3,195-202). God's "umpire conscience" thus plays the role of deciding between the saved and the damned depending upon whether they hear or scorn its promptings. Since Satan has a conscience, he would seem to confront this same choice between hearing or scorning. But if Satan has this libertarian freedom after the fall that he had prior to it (3,102), then the possibility of

his repentance and grace is genuine. Yet, how would this cohere with God's having "Ordained without redemption, without end" the place of those angels who choose to reject the reign of God's anointed Son (5,615)? I suggest that Satan does not have libertarian freedom after his fall. Rather, he is enthralled to his own self (3,125; 6,181), which means that although he is free from any external chain of causality operating by force to determine his decisions against his will, he is not free from an internal chain of causality flowing from his character and determining his decisions by informing his will of what he wants. For Satan to regain his libertarian free will, God would have to endow him with the same prevenient grace that is provided to Adam and Eve to enable them to repent through prayer and thereby eventually find saving grace through the Son's merit (11,1-44). Yet, God nowhere in *Paradise Lost* endows Satan with prevenient grace, for God knows by his Arminian-Molinarian middle knowledge (a species of foreknowledge) that Satan would not use his regained libertarian free will to repent. He would not do so because his character is so far fallen that in his depravity, he would not choose saving grace despite his being free and able to choose it. For Satan to use any restored libertarian free will to repent, God would also need to alter Satan's character so that he not only could but also would repent, but to do this, God would have to redeem Satan against Satan's will. Satan's conscience therefore serves to condemn him rather than to lead him toward repentance.

2. Ordained Without Redemption

In *Paradise Lost* 5,600-615, Raphael tells Adam of God's decree that the divine Son shall reign in heaven as the anointed "vicegerent" (viceregent) to whom everyone shall bow and acknowledge as Lord:

Hear, all ye angels, progeny of light,
 Thrones, dominations, principdoms, virtues, powers,
 Hear my decree, which unrevoked shall stand:
 This day I have begot whom I declare
 My only Son, and on this holy hill

Him have appointed, whom ye now behold
 At my right hand: your head I him appoint:
 And by myself have sworn, to him shall bow
 All knees in heaven, and shall confess him Lord:
 Under his great vicegerent reign abide
 United as one individual soul,
 For ever happy: him who disobeys,
 Me disobeys, breaks union, and that day,
 Cast out from God and blessed vision, falls
 Into utter darkness, deep ingulfed, his place
 Ordained without redemption, without end. (*PL* 5.600-615)

This passage ends with a statement that expresses rather starkly the punishment ordained for those who disobey the Son: eternal damnation.

God decrees these formal terms from his imperial throne in his official status as heavenly ruler (*PL* 5.584-585). He speaks, as it were, *ex cathedra*. His decision cannot be revoked, not even by himself (5.602), for he has sworn by that which is most holy: himself (5.607). He has stated these terms before all of the assembled angels, so none can plead ignorance. The terms are strict, judgement is merciless, and the consequence is dire. Disobey the Son? Go to hell forever. God decreed it.

But how should we understand this decree? Is it arbitrary, such that God might have decreed a different punishment? Or is there some inner logic to this decree that ordains damnation without end? Although we might imagine the God of scholastic nominalism lurking here in all of his willful arbitrariness, Milton believed in a rational God who endowed the angels and mankind with a free rational will (*PL* 3.107-111; 9.653-654). Moreover, God provides reasons for his actions. In fact, by contrasting the fallen angel's failure to find grace with mankind's success in finding it, God specifies a reason for the difference even though both fell through their own free decisions:

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,
 The first sort by their own suggestion fell,
 Self-tempted, self-depraved: man falls, deceived
 By the other first: man, therefore, shall find grace,
 The other none.... (*PL* 3.124-132)

Milton has God explain that Satan and the other fallen angels shall not find grace because they tempted themselves and caused their own self-depravation (compounded, perhaps, by their having deceived mankind). We can *reasonably* assume that this accounts for God's decree in Book 5 lines 600-615, noted above.

Milton's God thus does not appear to be an arbitrary deity, willfully decreeing eternal damnation for those angels who rebel against the Son. He has a reason: different punishments for different sins. Satan's sin is far worse. But is it that bad? Why eternal punishment? Is there still an aspect of the arbitrary to God's decree? Before answering, let us note two things. First, if God is decreeing here, then one would expect all of humanity to "find grace" since the line states that "man, therefore, shall find grace" (*PL* 3.131), but this obviously does not happen (unless prevenient grace is meant, but this will not affect my larger point). Second, Milton's God does not consistently use "shall" to express a decree, for some forty lines earlier, God states that Satan "shall pervert" mankind (3.92), which is certainly no decree since in Milton's theology, man falls freely rather than through some predestinarian choice by God (3.95ff.). Arguably, then, God is not decreeing the fallen angels to damnation against their will. So, perhaps there remains a deeper reason for God's distinction between fallen angels and fallen mankind. Note that 3.128 states that "they themselves ordained their fall" (Milton 1998). This applies to both mankind and the fallen angels, so it suggests that some difference in their fallen natures accounts for their respective punishments. It also powerfully suggests that we more carefully interpret God's statement that any angel who rebels against the Son will find "his place / Ordained without redemption, without end" (*PL* 5.614-615). What, precisely, does this decree mean?

3. His *Place* Ordained

A casual reading might suggest that God is ordaining specifically those particular, individual angels who rebel against the Son to eternal damnation. One might also read Book 1 lines 70–72 in this way:

Such place eternal justice had prepared
For those rebellious: here their prison ordained
In utter darkness...

A closer reading shows that both here and in Book 5, lines 614–615, Milton is constructing his lines carefully to avoid suggesting that God directly ordains the rebellious to eternal damnation. Milton must express carefully what God decrees, for if he implies that God ordains specifically Satan and the fallen angels to eternal damnation in Hell, then this could pose a logical problem for Milton's stipulation that God has already decreed libertarian free will for the angels (cf. *PL* 3,125–128).

I suggest that the angels' case parallels that of human beings, about whom Milton states:

[T]here is no reprobation except for those who do not believe or do not persist, and ... this is rather a matter of consequence than of an express decree by God. Thus there is no reprobation from eternity of particular men. For God predestined to salvation all who use their free will, on one condition, which applies to all. None are predestined to destruction except through their own fault. (*YP* 6: 190)

In short, God predestines *the class of persons* who choose to believe or not believe, but not *particular individuals*, to salvation or reprobation. Similarly, rather than decreeing angels directly to damnation for their foreseen fall, he ordains their prison without redemption, their place in utter darkness. God ordains not those who rebel but the place where the rebels freely choose to be: "they themselves ordained their fall" (*PL* 3,128), "Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (3,99), they freely "decreed their own revolt" (3,116–117) and thus chose to fall (3,102) despite knowing the consequences, thus making

their fall their own free decree. By this indirectness, Milton reduces God's role in the process of damnation.

4. Thralldom and Self

Milton presents the unfallen Satan as having libertarian freedom, a free will untouched by necessity, predestination, decree, foreknowledge, or fate, and therefore equally capable of choosing good or evil (cf. *PL* 3,98–128; 5,519–543). In short, nothing external to the self causes Satan to choose evil, for as Milton also argues in *De Doctrina* (I, 4), "The will which is threatened or overshadowed by any external decree cannot be free, and once force is imposed," the will is not free (*YP* 6: 189). Similarly, *Paradise Lost* 3,99, which applies equally to Satan as to mankind, assures us that those who fell were made "[s]ufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (*PL* 3,99) and thereby entails that Satan was also subject to no internal chain of causation in choosing evil (cf. *YP* 6: 157–162).

This changes after the revolt, for in rebelling against God, Satan and all such rebels "enthrall themselves" (*PL* 3,125). But to what do they enthrall themselves? To themselves, as *Abdiel* declares to Satan: "Thyself not free, but to thyself enthralled" (6,181). Note that *Abdiel* is not saying that Satan is subject to external forces that now have him enthralled. Rather, he means that Satan's subjectivity has altered, such that his choices are now subject to internal causes, whether chains of causation or single causal links.

But what is this "self"? Satan's self is characterized by rebelliousness, groundlessness, chaos, hell. In Book 4, Satan describes himself:

Me miserable! Which way shall I fly
 Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
 Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell;
 And in the lowest deep a lower deep
 Still threatening to devour me opens wide,
 To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven. (4,73–78)

Such insights drive Satan to thoughts of repentance, but only momentarily, for he quickly resolves not to submit to God, then seems to doubt his own resolution before resolving more firmly to commit himself to evil (4, 79-113).

In all of this inner turmoil, Satan is driven by passions, for Milton describes him as such:

Thus while he spake, each passion dimmed his face
 Thrice changed with pale, ire, envy and despair,
 Which maimed his borrowed visage, and betrayed
 Him counterfeit, if any eye beheld.
 For heavenly minds from such distempers foul
 Are ever clear. (4.114-119)

Satan has unbalanced himself, can no longer think clearly, moves swayed by his inner drives, stands enthralled to his divided, plural self. In this type of thralldom, he has lost his libertarian free will, and though he chooses what he himself wills, what he wills flows not through his reason but directly from his unstable, depraved passions. Although still nothing external to Satan causes him to choose evil, a link or chain of causation internal to his self now leads him to make evil choices. Such a will is both free and not free, free from external constraints but enthralled to its irrational self.

5. Proudful Passion

Above all, Satan is internally driven by his impassioned, overweening pride. Milton's first mention of Satan establishes this:

The infernal serpent: he it was, whose
 [...] pride
 Had cast him out from heaven, with all his host
 Of rebel angels, by whose aid aspiring
 To set himself in glory above his peers,
 He trusted to have equalled the most high,

If he opposed: and with ambitious aim
 Against the throne and monarchy of God
 Raised impious war in heaven and battle proud (PL 4.34-43)

Pride drives him to rebel (5,659–665), to seek God's throne (6,86–90), then casts him from heaven (4,34–37). The rebel angels, by aspiring with him, make themselves party with his pride (cf. 5,740; 6,78; 7,609) and thereby share in it and the retribution that it calls down (10,577).

Pride in itself is not necessarily bad, not a "modest pride" (4,310) that satisfies itself with the dignity appropriate to one's proper, assigned position, as would seem to be the case with the archangel Michael, who approaches the fallen Adam in a benign but certainly not humble aspect, for he accepts Adam's bow, does not bow in return, and throughout maintains a regal dignity (11,238–250). Satan, by contrast, distorts his pride to seek above his proper station and to displace God. He fails, but retains his pride. Indeed, it is described as "obdurate" (1,58), and its effect is to further harden his heart (1,571–573) and set him to seek revenge (1,603–604). Satan's pride is mentioned many times in *Paradise Lost*. He is, in short, the embodiment of an immodest, envious, usurping pride.

6. Fallen Natures

While Adam and Eve may be "[t]o Satan only like [in] both crime and doom" (10,841), there are some clear differences in their falling and in their fallen conditions. Perhaps one could argue that both Satan and mankind fell due to pride, for Adam does accuse Eve of overreaching due to pride and wandering vanity (10,874–879). Be that as it may, Eve does not wish to usurp the position of one higher than herself; she wishes merely to rise to a higher status and is tricked into breaking God's command in order to do so (cf. 10,880). God himself emphasizes the difference between Satan's fall and that of mankind, who was "[b]y fallacy surprised" (PP 1,155), as already noted above:

The first sort by their own suggestion fell,

Self-tempted, self-depraved: Man falls, deceived
 By the other first: (*PL* 1.129-131)

We can now see that the distinction is not a merely formal one but a formal one that signifies a substantive difference. Satan and his cohorts willfully, pridefully rebel to usurp God's status, whereas Adam and Eve are deceived into rebelling to raise their status without any intention of harming the status of others. Satan and those angels who follow him tempt themselves with self-pride intent on a future glory won through usurping God's position, and they thereby deprave themselves into possessing a prideful nature of a type that cannot submit itself to God. Their fallen state thus follows from the manner of their sin, for they have formed their own character, shaping it by their motives and their actions. Adam and Eve have also shaped their characters, but not by a pride that would preclude submission to God.

Although Satan suffers and has regrets, he remains proud of his rebellion despite his suffering. Pride remains his defining trait, and the other fallen angels share in this. They, too, are enthralled to their prideful natures. This pride leads to Satan's insubordination to God the Father and causes many of the other sins attributed to him throughout the poem. Granted, Satan considers repentance:

O then at last relent: is there no place
 Left for repentance, none for pardon left?
 None left but by submission: and that word
 Disdain forbids me, and my dread of shame
 Among the spirits beneath, whom I seduced
 With other promises and other vaunts
 Than to submit, boasting I could subdue
 The omnipotent. (*PL* 4.79-86)

Despite considering repentance, however, Satan quickly recalls his honor and disdains the shame that he would incur among the fallen angels if he did seek God's grace. Moreover, in his proud fallenness, he does not seriously consider a repentance other than a merely feigned and temporary one anyway (4.93-101;

cf. 2,237-249). Indeed, he reflects with pride upon his accomplishment in 'freeing' nearly half the angels of heaven:

To me shall be the glory sole among
 The infernal powers, in one day to have mared
 What he, almighty styled, six nights and days
 Continued making, and who knows how long
 Before had been contriving, though perhaps
 Not longer than since I in one night freed
 From servitude inglorious wellnigh half
 The angelic name, and thinner left the throng
 Of his adorers. (*PL* 9.135-141)

Satan's concern with honor, pride, and glory led him to his rebellion in an attempt to displace God and Christ and precludes him from repenting and seeking grace. Unlike Adam and Eve, who did not rebel out of envy or pride but from a desire to better their position without displacing anyone, and who were ashamed of their fallen position (cf. 9,1058, 1079, 1094, 1097, 1114, 1119; 10,113, 159, 336), Satan feels no shame in his fallenness.

7. Without Redemption

How, then, could Satan possibly be redeemed? From whom? From himself? Pride prevents it, for a redeemer would have to take Satan's place, and Satan would have to humbly accept this, but how would this be possible? Even an omnipotent God cannot do just anything. Even an all-powerful arbitrary God would be constrained by the principle of noncontradiction, in the sense that he could not decree that a thing simultaneously both exist and not exist in the same way, nor could he ordain that 2 plus 2 be equal to both 4 and some other number. Milton's God, moreover, is not arbitrary but is constrained by his justice—in Milton's understanding of what this "justice" means. For this reason, he must require a substitute to pay the price that mankind cannot pay.

Prevenient grace would restore Satan's libertarian free will, but he still would not repent, for this grace would not alter his character, which is dominated by pride. Why would he not repent? To repent, Satan would have to accept saving grace, but given God's justice as understood by Milton (*PL* 3,203-216), an economy of salvation requires a redeemer. Only the Son could play this preeminent role, but rebelling against the Son's preeminent position is precisely Satan's sin, one that flows from the pride that defines his character. Satan would never accept having his place taken by the Son, for this would displace Satan. Any repentance by Satan would require that he accept the Son as Lord, which is precisely what Satan would refuse to do. God would not only need to restore Satan's libertarian free will, he would also have to alter Satan's character to enable him to repent, but that would involve redeeming Satan against his own will. As such, Satan would not be making a free decision, and Milton's God does not force decisions. Unlike mankind, therefore, Satan occupies an irredeemable position.

8. *Excursus on Prevenient Grace*

Milton introduces the concept of "prevenient grace" in Book 11, where it infuses the hearts of Adam and Eve and restores the freedom of their wills to repent:

Thus they in lowliest plight repentant stood
 Praying, for from the mercy-seat above
 Prevenient grace descending had removed
 The stony from their hearts, and made new flesh
 Regenerate grow instead, which the spirit of prayer
 Inspired, and winged for heaven with speedier flight
 Than loudest oratory.... (*PL* 11.1-7)

Milton's description here of prevenient grace's effects reminds one of a passage in Arminius's works "On the Free Will of Man and its Powers":

[T]he free will of man, as constituted in the third state of Renewed Righteousness [has been restored] ... when new affections, inclinations and motions agreeing with the law of God, have been excited in his heart, and new powers have been produced in him: it comes to pass, that, being liberated from the kingdom of darkness, and being now made "light in the Lord," (Ephes. v, 8,) he understands the true and saving good: that, after the hardness of his stony heart has been changed into the softness of flesh, and the law of God according to the covenant of grace has been inscribed on it, (Jer. 31, 32-35,) (Arminius 11)

When the will is again free, it has "freedom from necessity, whether this proceeds from an external cause compelling, or from a nature inwardly determining absolutely to one thing" (Arminius 11; cf. *YP* 6: 157-162). Such a restored freedom enables one to freely repent.

Arminius wants to enroll Augustine on his side and therefore devery quotes from Augustine's writings against the Pelagians:

Subsequent or following grace does indeed assist the good purpose of man, but this good purpose would have no existence unless through preceding or preventing grace. And though the desire of man, which is called good, be assisted by grace when it begins to be; yet it does not begin without grace, but is inspired by Him, concerning whom the Apostle writes thus, thanks be to God, who put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. If God incites any one to have 'an earnest care' for others, He will 'put it into the heart' of some other person to have 'an earnest care' for him. (Arminius, "Public Disputation 11")

The original Latin in Augustine's text reads:

Hominis autem propositum bonum adiuvat quidem subsequens gratia, sed nec ipsum esset nisi praecederet gratia. Studium quoque hominis, quod dicitur bonum, quamvis, cum esse coeperit, adiuvetur gratia, non tamen incipit sine gratia, sed ab illo inspiratur, de quo dicit Apostolus: Gratias autem Deo, qui dedit idem studium pro vobis in corde Titi. Si studium, quisque ut pro aliis habeat, Deus dat, ut pro se ipso habeat, quis alius est daturus? (Augustinus, Contra . . . Pelagianorum)

Arminius writes of two categories of grace, quoting Augustine's "preceding grace" (*praecedere gratia*) and "subsequent grace" (*subsequens gratia*) in a manner that suggests prior to and following repentance, respectively, but Arminius also writes as if seeing a continuum between the two, as suggested by his reference to Jeremiah 31's "covenant of grace" inscribed on the heart (given that this alludes in part to the change wrought by saving grace). Milton, similarly, speaks of grace and repentance in a manner suggesting a continuum (*PL* 11, 251–258). Milton may have owed an intellectual debt to Arminius or Augustine for the concept of "prevenient grace," but the expression more closely reflects the "*gratia praeveniens*" of Aquinas (*Summa* II, i, qu. cxiv, 6) or Molina (Pohle, "Molinism").

Also possibly lurking in the background to Arminian thought lies the Erasmus–Luther debate over grace and free will. Dennis Danielson quotes Erasmus citing Augustine in an argument for prevenient grace:

Augustine challenges the view that man, subject to sin, can better himself or act to save himself. Only undeserved divine grace can spur man supernaturally to wish that which will lead to eternal life. This is known to some as prevenient grace. (Danielson 52)

Danielson, unfortunately, does not provide the Latin, but since Erasmus is citing Augustine, he is perhaps borrowing Augustine's *praecedere gratia*, which we have already encountered above. Milton would likely have also known of Vondel's "*voorkomende ghenade*" (625). At any rate, the *gratia praeveniens* of Aquinas and Molina remains the closest verbal parallel, but the expression is, undoubtedly, widely used among Medieval scholastics.

9. Brief *Excursus* on Middle Knowledge

Concerning the fallen angels, Fowler holds that "God knows that they will not in fact repent," though Fowler provides no argument (*PL* 175, n. 132). I propose a middle-knowledge argument and suggest that Milton's God knows

that Satan would not repent (even if given prevenient grace) in the same way that he foreknows all free decisions:

[N]othing happens because God has foreseen it, but rather he has foreseen each event because each is the result of particular causes which, by his decree, work quite freely and with which he is thoroughly familiar. So the outcome does not rest with God who foresees it, but only with the man whose action God foresees. As I have demonstrated above, there can be no absolute divine decree about the action of free agents. (YP 6: 164)

Milton derives his analysis of foreknowledge and its compatibility with libertarian free will from the middle-knowledge theology of the Dutch Protestant Jacobus Arminius and the Spanish Jesuit Luis de Molina (and possibly others). Milton states that despite there being no absolute divine decree about the action of free agents, God foresees with certainty what a person will freely do because God "is thoroughly familiar" with the "particular causes" (including reasons) that "work quite freely." The expression "thoroughly familiar" reminds one of Molina's concept of God's "supercomprehension" (Freddoso; cf., Pohle). Thus, I suggest that Milton's Arminian-Molinarian God (cf., Hodges) can foresee through his middle knowledge that although Satan could make use of the gift of prevenient grace to repent, he would not do so. Satan himself seems to have an inkling of this:

This knows my punisher: therefore as far
From granting he, as I from begging peace: (PL 4:103-104)

Knowing Satan's counterfactual refusal, God does not offer him any prevenient grace.

10. Economy of Damnation

Adam and Eve, having rebelled neither explicitly against the Son nor to displace the Father but having been deceived into falling by specious promises of rising rather than by resentful self-pride of place, are potentially redeemable.

Through God's umpire conscience, they can come to truly regret their sin (3,194–197), and since God foreknows their free decision to repent if given back their libertarian free will, he bestows upon them prevenient grace.

Yet, as Benet shows, Satan also seems to hear the voice of conscience (Benet 3). If so, then what role can the umpire conscience play for Satan? It serves to confront Satan with the truth about himself and to offer him a choice that he cannot make in his fallen state and that he would not make in a state of prevenient grace. We see his own reasoning, his implicit rejection of repentance, and since this rejection stems from his prideful character, he would reject repentance with or without prevenient grace, so God has no reason to offer him any prevenient grace and thus does not do so. Satan binds himself in a spiral of ever-deeper fallenness, an economy of damnation:

They who neglect and scorn, shall never taste;
But hard be hardened, blind be blinded more,
That they may stumble on, and deeper fall: (*PL* 3,199–201)

Though the Father speaks these words against men and women who despite the promptings of conscience refuse to repent, they would also seem to apply to Satan:

So farewell hope, and, with hope, farewell fear,
Farewell remorse: all good to me is lost;
Evil, be thou my good: by thee at least
Divided empire with heaven's king I hold,
By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign: (*PL* 4,108–112)

Like Benet, Fowler connects Satan's words here to God's warning in 3,199–201 concerning the hardening of one's heart (4,110–12; cf. Benet 11). Milton presents in Satan a similar prompting of conscience and thought of repentance rejected out of hopelessness in *Paradise Regained* (*PR* 2,203ff.; cf. *YP* 6: 349).

The economy of Satan's damnation is seen clearly in his confrontation with the Son during the war in heaven, where Satan and his rebellious angels harden themselves against the Son's restorative powers that could reclaim even them if they could but bend their pride and themselves toward repentance at

the Son's display of life-giving creativity in repairing the damage wrought by Satan's terrible battle:

This saw his hapless foes, but stood obdured,
 And to rebellious fight rallied their powers,
 Insensate, hope conceiving from despair.
 In heav'nly spirits could such perverseness dwell?
 But to convince the proud what signs avail,
 Or wonders move the obdurate to relent?
 They hardened more by what might most reclaim,
 Grieving to see his glory, at the sight
 Took envy; and, aspiring to his height,
 Stood re-embattled fierce, by force or fraud
 Weening to prosper, and at length prevail
 Against God and Messiah, or to fall
 In universal ruin last.... (*PL* 6.785-797)

Confronted by the Son in his power and glory, presented with the possibility of relenting and being reclaimed, the rebellious host instead harden themselves further in their pride and resolve to resist all the more, even at the risk of losing all—which they do lose.

But could the fallen angels have relented, repented? Not as totally depraved fallen creatures lacking free will, no, for their obdurate nature internally, inexorably, causally informs their choices. Then, could they have relented and repented if granted prevenient grace? In principle, yes, they could. But would they have repented if given prevenient grace? No. For the fallen angels to take any supernaturally granted free will and to make use of it toward repenting of their rebellion and submitting themselves to the Son, they would also need to regret their act of rebellion, not just its consequences. Yet, they would not regret having rebelled, for they are "obdurate" in their nature, and their obdurate nature would remain and offer specious reasons (not causes) for rejecting repentance even if granted the prevenient grace that enables one to make free decisions. Unlike Adam and Eve, who are not obdurate but regret their choice and are able to regret it because they fell deceived (*PL* 3.130-131), and therefore submit even in their fallenness to God's fair

judgement (cf. *PL* 10,769), the angels have fallen through their own pride in desiring a higher place to be achieved by displacing God's Son—and even by displacing God himself. From the moment of their rebellion, their pride has been obdurate, making them incapable of submitting to the Son in repentance. We see their obdurate nature confronted by God's Son in the final moments of the war in heaven. We have already seen it in the early lines of Book 1, which ascribe Satan's expulsion from heaven as due to his pride (1,36–37) and describe him in his moment of recovered consciousness as witnessing "obdurate pride and steadfast hate" (1,58) everywhere in hell that he casts his "baleful eyes" (1,56). In short, the fallen angels would never freely repent even if granted the ability. Thus, they never receive prevenient grace.

11. Conclusion

Enthralled to his "self," the fallen Satan resembles postlapsarian Adam and Eve in lacking the libertarian free will that he had possessed in his unfallen state. Mankind is therefore "[t]o Satan only like [in] both crime and doom" (*PL* 10,841). Unlike Adam and Eve, however, nowhere in *Paradise Lost* is he shown receiving prevenient grace. Satan's conscience serves not to lead him to repentance, for he does not wish to repent and would not repent even if he had the free will to do so. Rather, Satan's conscience condemns him further as he hardens his heart against repentance. Milton's God does not decree that Satan will fall further, nor does he decree that Satan will be forever damned, for such would stand at odds with Milton's aim of justifying God's ways (cf. *YP* 6: 164–165, 343). God does decree the place of eternal damnation, but Satan and the other fallen angels freely choose to enter that place. In doing so they alter their character in a way that prevents their redemption. No external causal chain forces them to reject repentance; rather, an internal causal chain rooted in their self-depraved, unstable character informs them to willingly reject repentance. Prevenient grace would free them from this internal causal chain, but because God foresees through his Arminian–Molinarian middle knowledge that the fallen angels would still refuse to freely repent due to fallacious

reasons (not causes) drawn from their obdurate natures, he does not bestow upon them the prevenient grace that enables repentance. The consequence follows that the "[b]ad angels are kept for punishment," as Milton asserts, such that "they utterly despair of their salvation" (*YP* 6: 348, 349). Therefore, the fallen angels, though not predestined to reprobation, do lack the capacity to repent of their rebellion and, in fact, never take other than perverse pride in having rebelled. As such, they stand—and fall—beyond redemption.
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[Keywords: Milton, Satan, self-enthralment, foreknowledge, decree, prevenient grace, libertarian free will, reason.]

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Economy of Damnation: Satan's Fall in Paradise Lost

Abstract

Horace Jeffrey Hodges

The article argues that Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost* cannot repent because in falling he lost his libertarian free will and became enthralled by causal chains to the prideful passions of his own divided self. Unlike the fallen Adam and Eve, Satan never receives the prevenient grace that could restore his freedom. He does not receive it because due to his fallen nature, he would never make use of a restored free will to choose repentance. He has fashioned his own hardened nature through the thoughts and actions stemming from the pride that occasioned his fall, and his pride would stand between him and repentance even if he were once again to possess libertarian freedom. God's decree that those angels who reject the Son's rule will fall into a "place / Ordained without redemption, without end" (5.614–615) thus serves more as a warning about the consequences of character-shaping choices than as a threat

of divine vengeance (and even less a circumlocution implying predestination of the fallen angels), Adam and Eve, having been deceived by Satan and not sharing his overweening pride, have fallen natures of a kind that would motivate them to choose repentance if granted the prevenient grace that restores free will, which explains why God bestows it upon them, Satan, by contrast, remains trapped in an economy of damnation, as do also the other fallen angels,

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