


A Critical Analysis of Biblical and Miltonic Images Through John Milton's *Paradise Lost*

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ABSTRACT

In literature, imagery plays the crucial role because it delineates truthful projections with symbolic language. It is the function of imagery to visualize the figurative implications in the literature. It also intensifies the intellectual capacity of the readers and tells them which things are occurring around them and how they feel about it. Imagery helps to create several scenes that appeal to the reader's mind. Imagery facilitates to arouse reader imagination and add figurative exquisiteness and creativity to what is being read. In addition, imagery helps contribute to literature's disposition and tenor. The main purpose of this research paper is to investigate and explore the biblical interpretation and validity of truth through the great epic *Paradise Lost* (1667) written by John Milton. The researcher has attempted to explore the truth and its validity through Biblical and Miltonic images of the central characters such as the images of God, Jesus Christ, Satan, Adam and Eve. Milton has projected his views on the basis of Catholicism which denies trinity, i.e. Father, Son and Holy Ghost whereas Christianity is the foundation of trinity. The major emphasis of the present research is to fill the gap between the convictions of Catholic and puritan poet Milton and truthful events narrated by the spiritual writers in the Bible.

Keywords: *Paradise Lost, John Milton, Biblical and Miltonic Images, God, Jesus Christ, Satan, Adam, Eve.*

John Milton (1608-1674) was the greatest contemporary Roman Catholic English writer. He took his education from Christ College, University of Cambridge. His epic 'Paradise Lost' gave him a fame and reputation. Milton was admired by eminent poets such as Thomas Hardy, William Wordsworth, and William Blake. Milton struggled with the great dogmas of the Church amidst the theological perspectives of his times. He has used wide-sided biblical citations in his poems. His greatest and notable works include:

- a. *L'Allegro, and Il Penseroso* (1632)
- b. *Lycidas* (1637)
- c. *Comus* (1637)

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d. *Paradise Lost* (1667)

e. *Paradise Regained* (1671)

f. *Samson Agonistes* (1671). (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Milton)

Sin: The Root Cause of ‘Fall of Man’

‘The fall of man’ is the central concern of this research paper. Basically, the fall of man caused due to sin committed by the first creation Adam and Eve. The sin is the root cause of the destruction of man. Let us have a glance towards the concept ‘sin’, ‘The sin is an action or way of behaving that is not allowed by any religion.’¹ (Oxford Dictionary)

Sin is the activity which is always committed against the will of God. It separates man from God and His heavenly presence. It creates havoc and disappointment in human beings’ life. Sin originates with malevolence longing. It entices the entire human being. Sin has its foundation in some non-agential power or gloomy side of veracity. Genesis 6: 4 says, ‘Adam committed sin and whole human race lost their uprightness of formation in God’s representation.’²

The example of sins are as under: profanity, vexation, imprecation, extermination, pungency, non-belief, resentment, relapse, relentless, sexual desire, distaste, hostility, greed, impure notions, abuse, insult, muttering, miscarriage, abducting, untruthful etc. Galatians 5:19-21 asserts, ‘The works of the flesh are: infidelity, fornication, filth, lewdness, idolization, sorcery, revulsion, arguments, protectiveness, rage, egotism, profanation, spite, massacre, drunkenness, enmity etc. Such people will not take over the sovereignty of God.’³

However transgression does not have a reason. The immorality of chastisement goes behind sin, whereas the iniquity of blunder is indistinguishable with indulgence. James 1:14-16 proclaims, ‘Every human being is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. When desire conceives, it gives birth to sin and sin conceives death.’⁴

In a spiritual milieu, wrongdoing is a misdemeanor against celestial commandment or a regulation of divinity. Each civilization has its own elucidation of what it means to obligate a peccadillo. While sins are usually considered measures, any deliberation, word, or work considered corrupt, egocentric, reprehensible, detrimental, or isolating might be termed aberrant.

God’s Purpose behind ‘Creation of Adam and Eve’

It is the universal truth that human beings are created by God. In this sense, God is the creator and we are the creations. Genesis 1:1-2 talks about the creation,

‘In the commencement, God produced heaven and earth. The ground was without shape and dimness was over the countenance of the subterranean. The Spirit of God was floating over the visage of the waters.’⁵

In book of Revelation 4:11, it is written that, ‘God has created all things and they existed by his will.’⁶ Colossians 1:16 says, ‘For by him all things i.e. noticeable and imperceptible, were created, in paradise and on planet. All things were produced through God.’⁷

According to the Bible, Adam was the first creation of God and has been created like the reflection of God. The sole intention of his creation was to live a peaceful life and to follow God’s commandments. God has created man as he wanted to bestow his love on human beings. Bible says in (1 John 4:7-21), ‘God is love. Much-loved people of God let us feel affection for one another because God is the inventor of adoration. Whoever worships God is born from deity and he / she recognizes God very well.’⁸ (<https://www.biblegateway.com>)

The purpose of creation of man is to share love of God in all human beings. In every walk of life, human beings need to experience God’s lovingness, goodness, kindness and his caring nature for all of us.

God: The Originator of Authority

Power is the capability of an individual to manipulate others and change their dealings, behaviours and attitudes. However, it is significant to take a note of the fact that there is a disparity between supremacy versus authority. Basically, authority is the justifiable control that a human being or assemblage is approved to put into practice over others within an association. God's self-government is an indispensable characteristic for human beings. The God has the ultimate influence and unconditional supremacy over all things. God has given the authority to the man to reign over all the creatures. God is the foundation of power. Through this authority, human beings can transmit the rationale of God and would like to move forward into his sovereignty, restore to health, and overpower the mechanisms of Satan and the influence of obscurity. Romans 13: 1 says about the authority of God, ‘All jurisdictions appear from God and this supreme position is placed by God to human beings.’⁹

Power is a personal quality and an attained capacity. Acquaintance and capability is the major source of power. On the contrary, authority is a ceremonial right that is in the hands of high officials. Prominent positions and bureaus establish the influence of a person.

Effects of Obedience and Violation on Human Beings

It is the absolute duty of human beings to obey God. Obedience is the best way to retort God. Human beings need to do the following things in order to cultivate the spirit of conformity.

1. Think about the genuineness of the word of God
2. To gratify God through deference
3. To engender a spirit of submission
4. To prolong to comply with God
5. To contemplate on doing correct things
6. To unite conformity for the magnificence of God.

Jesus has acknowledged great ability because he followed the principle of obedience. He expects the same spirit of obedience from human beings, those who are his followers. In Luke 10:19 it is written that,

‘Look, I have given you the influence to crush the serpents and scorpions and over all the wickedness of the adversary, and nonentity shall damage you.’¹⁰

There is a calling from God to human beings that they should obey and follow God. It is the universal truth that a true relationship with God can be maintained through only obedience. In fact, obedience is the key to know more about God and understanding his will by all means. Our physical and spiritual growth can be attained through obedience. 1 John 5:3 says, ‘We carry on the directives of God because of his loving and caring nature for human beings. Actually, God’s instructions are not troublesome.’¹¹.

The God has bestowed Adam and Eve all sort of liberty. He only instructed them not to consume the fruit of knowledge and ignorance. But Adam and Eve failed in obeying God’s commandment. If they would have followed the command of God, ultimately, they would have eaten the good of the land. In this regard, Isaiah 1:19 says, ‘If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.’¹²

If human beings disobey God, eventually, they experience poignant, corporeal or religious trouncing in their life. Let us have a glance towards the term ‘disobedience,’ ‘Disobedience is defined as a disappointment or rejection to comply with set of laws and authority.’¹³

Disobedience is the rebellion against God and not to trust in God's capability. It is the most serious sin not to obey God. By the spirit of disobedience, we hurt the trinity, Father, Son and the Holy Ghost. Romans 5:19 says, 'By the disobedience of first man (Adam), the people in the whole world became sinners.'¹⁴

When we violate the set of laws offered by God, we become absurd and dishonorable, incapable to deliver fruits of spirit and may lose the privileges. We might be reprimanded, receive a zero position and face inconvenience in life.

Satan: A Father of Lies

The failure of Adam and Eve experienced after violating God's motive. This unwise act is turned out to be sin in the form of 'fall of man'. The serpent (Satan) is a great trickster, liar, bloody murderer and father of devil. He is the father of lies. He hates truth. He speaks according to his own desire. Bible says in John 8:44, 'Satan is the liar and father of lies.'¹⁵

'A lie is a term which carries a negative connotation. It refers to deceive someone. Lying is the practice of communicating lies.....deception is called a liar.'¹⁶
(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lie>)

Lying is one of the seven deadly sins written in the Bible. Proverb 6:16-17 claims, 'God hates a lying tongue.'¹⁷

King Solomon writes in Proverbs 26:28, 'Liars hate their victims and flatterers sabotage trust.'¹⁸

The Serpent changed their mind, seduced them, and created a false belief that after consuming the fruit, they would become like God. They both forgot that they had already become like God after their creation because God himself made them of His own image. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit of ignorance and knowledge, they brought rebellion, trials and tribulations in this world and enslaved in a sin. The entire human race has become corrupted and cursed because of them. St. Paul says in Romans 5:12, 'The indulgence penetrates into this universe through Adam and bereavement by transgression and so fatality passed upon all the sinners.'¹⁹

When Adam and Eve committed sin, they both were separated from the glory of God. They brought God's curse, separation and alienation. Thus, eternal death also came into this universe. Bible says about eternal death in Mark 9:43-48, 'Eternal death means disconnection from God in torment and is the punishment for immoral act'²⁰

Eternal death is caused due to rejection the God, gospel of Jesus and seeking pleasure in sinful life. It is everlasting and never ending in nature. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/eternal-death.html>)

God cursed the Serpent, Eve and Adam, respectively. Thus, man broke the relationship with God. Through the sin of Adam and Eve, the entire human being is affected by the sin. The book of Genesis narrates that all human beings' revolt against God, his kindness, affection and excellence.

About the Epic *Paradise Lost*

John Milton, a sightless and bankrupt 17th century poet, has written a biblical epic poem, magnum opus called 'Paradise Lost' in 1667 in blank verse form. The poem is divided into ten chapters. It contains 12 books and 10,500 lines. Let us visualize what the epic is.

'An epic has a grand style. It is a long narrative poem that deals with a serious subject and depicts the heroic deeds and bravery of a person. It is a classical poem that originated in Greece from the word 'epokos' which means a poetic story.'²¹

In this poem, he has expressed desire for freedom. He has composed this poem when there was a spiritual instability and political disturbance. The main subject of the poem is the 'fall of man' in which the Satan tempted both of them, and ultimately, they were driven away from the paradise. Samuel Johnson eulogized Paradise Lost as, 'a poem which has obtained prominent position due to its design and performance and second place due to its capacity to produce human minds'²².

The story of *Paradise Lost* is entirely based on Biblical philosophy. The epic explains Satan's attempt of increasing sin and deprivation and Adam and Eve's inclination towards the salvation. It is an endeavor to make sense of a fallen humanity to rationalize the conduct of God to men. It announces a definitive sanguinity in human prospective. It narrates the biblical tale of the 'fall of mankind'. Here Satan is the protagonist of the story who tries to lead mankind towards destruction by disobeying the will of God. The climax of the story appears in Book IX. Here the Serpent enters into the garden and creates temptation in Eve's mind to have the taste of the fruit of knowledge and ignorance. Later, she offers the fruit to Adam and Adam also tastes the fruit. The tone of the epic is grand and sorrowful. His incantation in Book 1 weeps for the ethical taste of the tree of knowledge which brought bereavement into the world and all our anguish. Morality, marriage, idolatry, criticism of monarchy, approval of spiritual

ways, disobedience and incarnation of everlasting sagacity are its major themes. All these central ideas are inclusive and sustain each other.

Theological Elucidation of the Epic *Paradise Lost*

God is the creator of this universe. Milton has shown God as omniscient and omnipotent. According to Milton, ‘God has the decisive power to take control of everything which he has created as a creator.’²³

Satan always attempts to make the plans of God as futile one. ‘Paradise Lost’ follows the epic pattern. The middle things are highlighted initially, and the background story is depicted afterwards. Milton narrates the stories of Satan (the fallen angel Lucifer) and the creation of Adam and Eve. Satan employs his emblematic dexterity in Pandemonium, the center city of Hell to systematize his supporters such as Mammon, Beelzebub, Belial, Chemosh, and Moloch. After this battle, God created the world and of course, Adam and Eve. God has given freedom for Adam to reign over the creatures. He also asked them to dwell in the paradise. In the book of Genesis, the readers can witness the formation of human beings. God fashioned man of his own similitude and said, ‘Let us make man in Our own image and according to Our likeness. Let them have command over the whole things. So God formed man in His own resemblance’²⁴ (Genesis 1:26-27)

Adam requests God to give him a life partner,

‘Of camaraderie, I talk
Such as I seek out, fit to contribute
All cogent enjoyment, wherein the beast
Can’t be human escort.’²⁵ (Line No. 392)

God gives a deep sleep to Adam. He made Eve from Adam’s rib. Then Adam became happy and he told God that the woman should call as his life partner and helper.

‘And the Lord God gave a deep sleep to Adam and he slept and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. Then God made a woman from that rib and brought her to the man.’²⁶ (Genesis 2:21-23)

And Adam declares that she should be hailed as a woman as she is made from a man’s bone and flesh. They both were free from sinful life and talked with God face to face. They feel proud in the presence of God and communicate with God. The charisma of God was the enchanting experience for both of them. The Garden of Eden was like a paradise and the happiest and safest place for them. There was an abundant blessing. They both were free from fear.

Fall of Man and Woman

Serpent creates temptation in eve's mind to consume the forbidden fruit:

Milton asserts that Satan is the major source of malevolence. He is shown as the tragic figure.

He declares,

'It is superior to sovereign in torment than serve in paradise'²⁷.

He rebels against God. Ultimately God throws out this disobedient and arrogant angel from heaven and damned to Hell. From that moment onwards, Satan decides to corrupt the minds of people with incorrect philosophy. Satan cannot vent his malice for God but he corrupts the mind of people. The fact is that God's name is highly honored and magnificent. His word is always appreciated. Every creature on this earth bears the name of God. Bible says in Matthew 24:35, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away but the word of the lord retain forever.'²⁸

Satan tries to disfigure the works of God by using unsound doctrines. He tries to weaken the faith of God's people and their power of holiness. He always in a mood to rob godliness from believer's mind. He compels us to commit the blunders because he knows that blunders poison the spirits. (<https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/corrupt.html>)

Then the Satan (Serpent) appeared in the paradise created by God. The narration of 'fall of man' we observe in Genesis chapter 3. The fallen angel appears there in the form of a serpent and enquires Eve, 'Has God indeed alleged not to consume of every tree of the garden?'²⁹ (Genesis 3:1)

Here, Eve is projected as the weak character. She fails to understand the shrewd motives of Satan. She frankly and innocently responds that God has warned them not to consume the fruit of knowledge and ignorance. Here, the readers can witness the solemn attribute of self-importance in Eve. Satan compliments her especially about her attractiveness. He easily encourages her to devour the fruit of unawareness and acquaintance. Satan also tests her astuteness and pious limpidness. Milton demonstrates Eve as:

'Eve, the guardian of all human beings, dearly loved wife of Adam, care taker of civilization, is fragile, stunning, intelligent, unwavering, spirited, liberated woman, easy to be seduced and worthy of all admire for her gorgeousness.'³⁰

God gave Adam and Eve one overt rule not to gobble the forbidden fruit otherwise they will die. Then the snake interrogates to Eve, 'You will not surely die because God knows that if you eat the fruit, your eyes will be unbolted and you will be like God.'³¹ (Genesis 3:4-5)

The statement of Satan ‘and you will be like God’ was absolutely deceptive because already God had created Adam and Eve of his Own image and likeness. Then the query was how they both will be the representation of divine power? There was a noble motive of God that his creation (man and woman should live happily in the Garden of Eden and to experience God’s presence). The snake creates the ill desire in Eve’s mind to consume the forbidden fruit by narrating its qualities. Immediately Eve consumes the fruit and urges her husband to eat the same. Later, he consumed the fruit like an obedient husband. He did so as he has complete faith and great love for his wife Eve.

False Justification by Adam and Eve

After eating the fruit of forbidden tree, ‘Their eyes were opened and they knew that they were unclothed. They sewed fig leaves jointly and made themselves coverings’³² (Genesis 3:7)

They realized that they have committed a great sin against God. The moment they committed sin, followed disobedience and violated the rules of God, they feel insecurity and fear. God appeared in the garden and called Adam but now they didn’t muster the courage to meet God face to face. They both were in fearful situation and they hid their nakedness. (Genesis 3:10-12)

God asked them the reason to hide from Him. Here, instead of taking the responsibility of guilt on his shoulder, he pushed the responsibility to his companion, Eve. In return of this, Eve blamed to the snake, ‘The Viper deceived us and we ate the fruit.’³³ (Genesis 3:13)

Thus, the tradition of acceptance of guilt and transferring it to on someone else shoulder initiated in the world. In our day-to-day life, when someone is accused, he or she immediately transfers the guilt on another person. People guilt others for their unconstructive judgments or approaches. We also blame others for the sake of tension, pressure, and incapability to take decisions and we generally reveal anger towards other. The tendency of blaming makes us safe and sound and proving our innocence. A blameworthy human being may keep away from answering unswerving questions, decline to offer information that could be used against them, or simply fade away on the whole. He also gives counterfeit elucidations for their conduct.

Curse from God and Eviction of Adam and Eve from Paradise

Eve requests Adam for resolution of their dealings. Her support facilitates them to come closer to God to receive exoneration. The Lord God cursed to the serpent, Eve and Adam respectively.

These three curses are universally truthful because we witness and experience these in serpent and human beings life. Then Almighty Father cursed the python, ‘You have done this disobedience. So there would be a great curse upon your shoulder than others. You will be creep on your tummy and shall guzzle soil all through your days. I will generate contention between you and the human beings. They will injure your head and you shall shatter up their heal’.³⁴ (Genesis 3:14-15)

Then God cursed to the woman, ‘I will gravely reproduce your misery, in tenderness you shall conceive children; your desire shall be for your companion, and he shall regulate over you.’³⁵ (Genesis 3:16)

Lord God turned to Adam and said, ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate the fruit. The land has become cursed because of you. You will work hard and eat your bread by sweating hard. In the end, you will return to the ground. You are manufactured from the dust, you have taken from the ground and again you will return to the ground.’³⁶ (Genesis 3:14-15)

Even though we are sinners, still merciful God loves us and he takes care of us. ‘Likewise God made tunics of skin and clothed Adam and Eve’.³⁷(Genesis 3:14-15). Then God drove away both of them to cultivate the land. He appointed Cherubim to protect the paradise. Milton depicts the fact, ‘Finally the rebellious devil and his cohorts were dismissed out of bliss and the ignominy of human beings when both Adam and Eve shatter the laws of paradise.’³⁸

Conclusion

In this way, John Milton’s Paradise Lost is commended for Biblical thoughts and Milton’s acquaintance about ‘man’s first disobedience’ and the grief-stricken penalty. Present study also deals with several metaphors, inscrutability, and interpretation of nature. The readers witness Satan’s rebellion, God’s purpose in the creation of human beings, the defeat of Satan by Son of God, decline of man, Adam and Eve’s discharge from the paradise, foretelling of angels to human beings etc. Both Adam and Eve are reassured by imaginings and hallucinations and cheered with guarantee of deliverance. Thus the researcher has explored the detailed analysis of Biblical and Miltonic images of God, Jesus Christ, Satan, Adam, and Eve through this study.

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