2018

Mysteries of the sky

Clark Xu

<u>Mysteries of the Sky</u>

English 300-55
Senior Thesis--Spring 2018

Written by: Clark Xu
Evaluated by: Prof. DeMaria

Table of Contents

Clark Xu

Introduction

After the initial bewilderment of dense language and diverse allusions, a new reader of Milton's *Paradise Lost* soon encounters a more intractable problem: the interpretation of God's role in the epic poem. This is a problem because the God of *Paradise Lost* is not a convincing representation of omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, absolute goodness, justice, or wisdom. In this essay, I consider descriptions of God, God's interactions with other characters, and God's speeches as three kinds of evidence for the separation in the poem between Milton's literary representation of God and Christian metaphysical claims about the true form of God.

The representation of God becomes more complex as the poem progresses. Milton starts the poem by comparing Satan and God to mythological figures in classical antiquity. God speaks from the third book on, and Raphael speaks about God's acts from the fifth book on. In the second half of the poem, all three modes of the representation of God by myth, personal speech, and action are actively at play in the literary construction of the divine being.

Most orthodox Christians along with Milton would consider God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit as a unity of the divine. Each part of the trinity supports the other two parts. For example, the Holy Spirit provides believers with a direct connection to the divine, when God seems unapproachably great and Jesus feels distant in biblical history. While God and the Holy Spirit are both incorporeal, Jesus embodies divinity in human form and

Clark Xu

provides a role model to believers for leading a good life. Jesus is also decidedly heroic in his role as the redeemer and savior of all people. Understanding how the parts of the trinity fit together is a crucial point in the study of orthodox Christian doctrine. In this way, the harshness of God's moral judgments may be tempered by Jesus' promise of redemption, and Jesus' apparent helplessness in being crucified on Calvary with common prisoners becomes a token of sacrifice. This is evident in *Paradise Lost*.

In *Paradise Lost*, however, the trinity is not as prominent as it is in orthodox Christian doctrine. In fact, Milton by and large omitted the Holy Spirit from his biblical epic. Having examined all references to the Holy Spirit in the Bible, Milton observes in *De Doctrina Christiana*, "Scripture nowhere expressly teach[es] the doctrine of his [the Holy Spirit's] divinity, not even in the passages where his office is explained at large, nor in those where the unity of God is explicitly asserted."[1] Both Milton's literary and theological works deemphasize the role of the Holy Spirit when discussing God and, given this consideration, I find that the Holy Spirit is a separate topic from the literary representation of God in the poem.[2]

The relationship between God and Jesus in *Paradise Lost* is much more intricate. God and Jesus appear in the poem as separate characters. They hold conversations in heaven with other angels in attendance. The relationship between God and Jesus is one of father

---

[1] John Milton, *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine*, trans. Charles A. Sumner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1825), p.161.

[2] The only passages of *Paradise Lost* that may be interpreted as a reference to the Holy Spirit are I.1-26 and III.1-36. However, it is also reasonable to interpret the opening passage of the third book as a reference to physical light. Likewise, the opening passage of the first book should instead be read as an invocation of God's creative power if it is to be consistent with Milton's account of the Holy Spirit in the sixth chapter of *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine*. See page 35 of this essay for further discussion.

Clark Xu

and son, king and courtier, commander and subordinate, but Jesus clearly expresses an independent will when he volunteers for crucifixion and leads the heavenly host in the struggle against Satan. These actions make Jesus a hero on earth and in heaven, and it is enough to make a convincing argument that Jesus is the heroic protagonist of the epic. Jesus, then, is a key figure in *Paradise Lost*, but in his own right and not as a second representation of God in true form. Furthermore, the numerous interactions between God and Jesus make it all the more urgent to isolate Milton's representation of God and to understand its modes of operation.

As a subject of philosophical debate, God is unlike any other character that might feature in an epic poem. In the Christian worldview familiar to Milton, God exists outside of time and space, and therefore has simultaneous access to all times and all spaces. God also has every power to transform physical reality and yet remain unchanged. Finally, God embodies the absolute good that all things strive to become. Can an omnipresent, omnipotent, and absolutely good being be a fictional character in any usual sense of the word? Such a character, if it existed, would not be susceptible to the human flaws and inconsistencies that make most fictional characters interesting.

Human characters captivate my interest with their inner motives and hidden thoughts. I want to understand their lives and, through those lives, understand my own. The most compelling characters are the most relatable. But to express an interest in the motives and reasoning of God is another matter. This interest touches on a metaphysical being of a

nature totally different from what I know. With God, I have a mystery in the sense of a thing unknown.

Thus, a divide emerges between God in true form and God as a character in the poem who does not appear to occupy every space, hold every power, and embody goodness. This divide is necessary for the inclusion of God in *Paradise Lost* as a complete character and introduces an ambiguity in the poem about the true nature of God that appears throughout the mythological descriptions, character development, and speeches of God. I will consider this ambiguity in the depiction of God as a mystery of the sky.

Clark Xu

<u>Mythological Mimesis</u>

Any writing about the nature of God is an attempt to find words for the inexpressible. A sense of the unknown in the universe provides an existential impulse for engaging in this project. The impulse to characterize God's being in the universe, when applied to the composition of epic poetry, never departs from Milton's *Paradise Lost*. However much *Paradise Lost* seeks to work out legal and political issues related to democratic versus monarchical governance, revolutionary violence, rhetoric as a basis for authority, marriage and divorce in the family unit, forms of human labor, free speech and censorship, and the existence of evil, the most compelling aspect of the poem remains the poet's struggles to capture the essence of the divine.

Early in the poem, Satan's relationship to God serves to portray the divine essence. Mirroring the individual's sense of mystery in God, the antagonism of Satan and his subordinates to God reflects the immersion of the self in something greater and the sensibility of an incomprehensibly superior power that accompanies Christian religious experience. Milton encapsulates part of this mysticism using a classical mythological past. In his explanation of non-Christian religious traditions, Milton affiliates Satan's subordinate Mulciber with Mulciber the Roman god of craftsmen and he affiliates God with Jove the Roman god of lightning, ruler of the Olympians. His translation between Christian theological structures and Greco-Roman mythological structures portrays the grandeur of Milton's God without committing the poet to any concrete statement about the divine essence. There is a metonymic element in this translation. When Milton writes,

"Men call'd him *Mulciber*, and how he fell/ From Heav'n, they fabl'd, thrown by angry *Jove*/ Sheer o're the Chrystal Battlements", he establishes an association between *Heav'n* and *Chrystal Battlements* through a parallel syntax that positions each noun before a caesura in the subordinate clause.[3] The syntactic association between these two words is strengthened by a semantic association as place names that directly describe the space occupied by God. In this way, the reader understands that Milton's God lives in a space that is fortified against attack and well-defended, as well as made of a very fine material that is both clear and strong. But the translation between Christian and Greco-Roman structures keeps enough distance to prevent the reader from actually thinking of heaven as a fortification or a crystal, of God as a berserker or a thrower of thunderbolts. Milton uses the metonymy of this translation to associate qualities with God and the space inhabited by God without attributing these qualities to God or space. This ambiguity reflects Milton's discourse about the divine essence, an open way of thinking that is perfectly willing to say that God is much more than the gods of classical mythology, but unwilling to directly pronounce the nature of God.

Milton plays with the distance once established between Christian and Greco-Roman structures. His sentence about Mulciber's fall from Olympus observes, "nor aught avail'd him now/ To have built in Heav'n high Towrs" (*PL* I.748-749). The phrase *Heav'n high Towrs*, like *Heav'n* and *Chrystal Battlements* before it, comes after a preposition, before a caesura, and refers again to the space occupied by God. By arranging the syntactic units *in Heav'n* and *high Towrs* so that they are read together in the sentence, Milton puts in

---

[3] John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (1667; 2nd Edition 1674), ed. Barbara Lewalski (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), I.740-742. All subsequent references to this edition are indicated by *PL*.

close proximity a Christian idea of heaven as an abstract space inhabited by God and a

Greco-Roman idea of heaven as a glorified city-state of immortal beings. Despite this

close proximity, the distance that remains between religious traditions synthesizes a new

religious tradition that has faith in God without being able to articulate the qualities of

God in concrete terms. The parallels of these passages shows that God has the strength,

splendid isolation and self-reliance of a tower, but neglects to explain how or why this

relates to the world we humans know. Milton's God reclaims the shadows of other

religious traditions long after the original sources of those traditions have been turned off

and kept hidden from view.

There is also a metaphoric element in this translation. In the passage where Jove throws

Mulciber, the poet associates physical falling with moral failure, the act of throwing with

moral punishment. Milton describes the fall, "from Morn/ To Noon he fell, from Noon to

dewy Eve,/ A summers day; and with the setting Sun/ Dropt from the Zenith like a falling

Star,/ On *Lemnos* th' *Ægean* Ile" (*PL* I.742-746). Previous commentators have noted that

the enjambment on *Morn* and *Sun*, as well as the three-fold repetition of the preposition

from, gives form to a cascading flow of words that mimic the lengthy duration of the

fall.[4] With the dense net of nouns *Morn*, *Noon*, *summers*, *day*, *Sun*, *Zenith*, and *Star*

referring to celestial luminosity, the cascade becomes an extended metaphor in which the

physical fall from a place of light stands for an ethical transgression from a state of moral

wholeness. This cascade ends on the proper nouns *Lemnos* and *Ægean Ile*, which

reiterate Milton's allusions to Greco-Roman religious tradition and with the connotation

of being earthy, rugged and rudimentary, relate Mulciber's landing on earth to the moral

---

[4] Christopher Ricks, *Milton's Grand Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p.36.

imperfection of society. Thus, in Milton's translation between Christian and Greco-Roman religious traditions the metaphor tenors are moral grace, striving to perfection, moral transgression, sinners, the world and the divine essence, while the metaphor vehicles are respectively light, distance, falling, Mulciber, Lemnos and Jove. Not only does the dense net bathed in divine light characterize the prelapsarian state of grace as close to God, but also the extended syntax of the poem itself communicates the poet's sense of estrangement from the divine essence in the realm of human affairs.

Related to this metaphoric element are the puns that conclude Milton's description of Mulciber's landing on earth.[5] As the poet notes of Mulciber, "nor did he scape/ By all his Engins, but was headlong sent/ With his industrious crew to build in hell" (*PL* I.749-751). A series of puns connects Mulciber's personal characteristics with his fall. For example, *Engins* refers to both Mulciber's mechanical inventions and his mental schemes; *headlong* combines the physical orientation of his fall with his brazenness; *industrious* contrasts the intensity of his punishment against his diligence; and *build* portrays the ignoble nature of his suffering with his persistent desire to create. These puns also serve to define the qualities of God. By parodying Mulciber's cleverness, self-confidence, effort, and endurance in the ridiculous quality of his fall, Milton suggests that God's abstract nature stands apart from the practical fervency of Mulciber and other creatures under God, rendering the divine essence even more mysterious as God does not embody these qualities which one would otherwise consider to be good.

---

[5] *Ibid*, p.66.

Clark Xu

I refer to the metonymic and metaphoric elements together of Milton's translation between Christian and Greco-Roman traditions with the aim of representing divine reality as mythological mimesis. The ambiguities and unanswered questions of that mimesis define the borders of what one might interpret as Milton's mysticism about the divine essence.

Instead of looking back to medieval conceptions of divinity held by Christian mystics such as Thomas of Aquinas in the 13th century and Ignatius of Loyola in the 15th century, I look forward to John Keats' formulation of negative capability in his 1817 letter to his brothers for a better analogy to Milton's project of representing God in *Paradise Lost*. Keats indicates that one of the highest functions and best achievements in literature is to focus attention on the unknown, citing Shakespeare's ability to portray unknown depths in the characters of his plays.[6] After dinner with a literary friend who spoke well about his day and explained his work too clearly, Keats returned to his study to ruminate and wrote, "at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean *Negative Capability*".[7] The reference to Shakespeare raises also the question of comparative greatness between Shakespeare and Milton, and I believe that it is precisely Milton's sensitivity to the proper literary representation of God that pushes the poet to the complex struggles of the sort that the bard has with his character portraits. Conceived in this manner, the question of relative greatness between Shakespeare and Milton maintains its critical relevance as a question about the true center of reality, whether this resides in the

---

[6] John Keats, "To George and Tom Keats, 21, 27 December 1817," *Selected Letters: John Keats*, eds. Robert Gittings and John Mee (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.41.
[7] *Ibid*, p.43.

human relationships of a particular social context, or whether it is spiritual immersion in an impersonal universal order. Although Keats would not have distinguished between various forms of negative capability, Milton's treatment of the nature of God in *Paradise Lost* is an achievement in the spirit of Keats' idea insofar as Milton uses mythological mimesis to illustrate a fundamental uncertainty in his observations on God.

As Satan approaches the gates of heaven in the third book, Milton indirectly describes heaven by drawing on the parallel structure of Greek and Persian mythological imagery. The narrator compares the gates of heaven to doors "as of a Kingly Palace Gate/ With Frontispiece of Diamond and Gold/ Imbellisht, thick with sparkling orient Gemmes" (*PL* III.505-507). The metaphor between the gates of heaven and the portal of a palace associate the space occupied by God with the inner chambers of a monarch ruling over an African, Middle Eastern, or Asian empire. The *Kingly* quality of the gates of heaven imbue Milton's God with absolute power and vast dominion, but preserves enough ambiguity for the implication that God's true nature is something greater and beyond the specific details of the palace as the vehicle of the metaphor. The palace is indeed impressive—its materials *Diamond* and *orient Gemmes* allude to European trade with India,[8] while the material *Gold* recalls European trade with Africa for these precious metals.[9] From the collapse of the Roman Empire to the 18th century, both the raw diamonds and the jeweler's expertise in cutting these diamonds were primarily sourced from India.[10] Likewise, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, and Prussia were all actively engaged in establishing extraction sites and military installations to support the diamond

---

[8] Antique Jewelry University, "A History of Diamond Cutting" (San Francisco: Lang Antiques, 2018), n.p.
[9] Winfried Peters, "Trade and Gold Mining in the 15th to 18th Century at the Gold Coast" 1.20 (1986), p.2.
[10] Antique Jewelry University, n.p.

supply from the Gold Coast in Africa, with control over these outposts heavily disputed

in the Thirty Years' War from 1618 to 1648.[11] In addition to suggesting the wide spatial

expanse of God's dominion through the trade origins of these valuable materials, the

narrator employs the adjectives *thick*, *sparkling*, and *orient* to develop a visual image of

heaven as bathed in luxurious light. Of particular interest is the adjective *orient* that in the

passage denotes the non-European origin of the gems and connotes the purity of light at

dawn. 'The Orient' is also a noun for biblical lands. Heaven is at once an imperial

possessor of exotic riches and an abstract entity washed clean of the human scent of

death. God's omnipotence is analogous to imperial regality in perpetuity.

The metaphoric structure of this comparison between heaven and palace operates by

suggesting that the similarity between the tenor and vehicle bridges a fundamental

difference. Regarding this difference, the narrator specifies that "The Portal shon,

inimitable on Earth/ By model, or by shading Pencil drawn" (*PL* III.508-509). Milton

hereby maintains that the divine essence, in contrast to the imperial palace to which it is

compared, eludes visual or verbal representation. The adjective *shading* to the artistic

symbol *Pencil* puns on the painter's technique of chiaroscuro and the liar's shady

dealings. The artist's claim to represent God is, in other words, doomed to infidelity. In

direct contrast to the *shading*, the *Portal shon* in the luxurious light of its true, uncaptured

form. With the Portal standing as metonymy for the expanse of the dominion of God, the

poet indicates in the wordplay that the divine essence lies beyond all efforts of the painter

or writer to depict it. The imperial palace, burdened by inadequacy as a description of the

gates of heaven, becomes a myth that provides an intimation of the true form of the

---

[11] Peters, p.4.

divine being, but is in itself an empty image. Myths in Milton's *Paradise Lost* are so

many shadows of God.

   The passage describing Satan's approach to the gates of heaven continues with two

more examples of mythological mimesis linked to the stairs of heaven. Describing the

stairs of heaven, the narrator alludes to the story of Jacob's ladder recounted in Genesis

and observes, "The Stairs were such as whereon *Jacob* saw/ Angels ascending and

descending, bands/ Of Guardians bright, when he from *Esau* fled/ To *Padan-Aram* in the

field of *Luz*" (*PL* III.510-513). As in the case of the imperial palace and the gates of

heaven, the myth of Jacob's ladder is the vehicle of a metaphor with the stairs of heaven

as the tenor; vehicle and tenor together stand in metonymic association with God. In

terms of metonymy and syntax, the gates of heaven imply that God's being is within,

whereas the stairs of heaven with the verbs *ascending* and *descending* imply that God's

being is above. The ambiguity of the metaphoric difference between the imperial palace

and the gates of heaven, Jacob's ladder and the stairs of heaven, allows Milton to make

the positive implication that God is within and above human affairs, but without

theologically committing to this literary representation of God. Furthermore, the archaic

proper names *Esau*, *Padan-Aram*, and *Luz* highlight the mythical quality of Jacob and the

Old Testament by situating it in time and space far back in prehistory, far away in the

deserts of the Middle East. The transformation of Jacob's ladder into myth heightens the

ambiguity generated by metaphoric difference. Likewise, Milton reiterates the imperial

expanse of God's dominion with the detail that underneath the stairs "a bright Sea flow'd/

Of Jasper, or of liquid Pearle" (*PL* III.518-519). That heaven also contains an abundance

of jasper and pearl figuratively indicates the breadth of God's reach as the monarch of the world.

Shifting from Jacob's ladder to Helios' chariot, the narrator puts the stairs of heaven in the Greek myth of the sun. The narrator recounts that the stairs welcome those "Who after came from Earth, sayling arriv'd,/ Wafted by Angels, or flew o're the Lake/ Rapt in a Chariot drawn by fiery Steeds" (*PL* III.520-522). The juxtaposition between the Christian mythology of *Angels* and the Greek mythology of *Chariot* with the conjunction *or* links classical antiquity with Milton's contemporary Christian world in the image of the stairs of heaven. Here the blurring lines of classical Greek with Christian mythology enfold cultural differences and large periods of historical time into a unified entity. By using Greek and Christian images together, Milton suggests that all the myths of the world have a coherent explanation in the Christian worldview, and by metonymic association portrays the unity of God as the constitutive principle of the universe. Furthermore, the lively and wild connotation of *fiery Steeds* adds vivacity as a quality of the space inhabited by God—hell may be fiery and exciting, but in comparison to heaven, only in a bad way. In fact, the juxtaposition of the sun chariot's vivacity against the calmness of the *Lake* attests to God's presence as a giver of harmony to contradictory elements. While fire and water in Satan's hell are all bad in its dissonance with God, fire and water in God's heaven are all good in the divine harmony. The traffic on the stairs of heaven, involving all sorts of Christian and non-Christian spiritual beings, recalls the multicultural empire as an analogy for God's dominion, and at this point suggests as well that it is the presence of God that brings peace to this multicultural scene.

Clark Xu

Across *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Paradise Lost*, Milton reveals a theology that is oftentimes in tension with his literary representation of God. Evangelin Lawson in the essay *Milton's Theology* identifies omnipresence, omnitemporality, omnipotence, truthfulness, and incorruptibility as attributes of Milton's God.[12] I have shown that the mythological mimesis of the divine essence through myths about Mulciber, imperial palaces, Jacob's ladder, and Helios' chariot represents Milton's attempt to describe God in concrete literary terms as above the fall, above the earth, and within truth. Milton uses enough ambiguity to maintain that God is omnipresent and omnitemporal in a way that cannot be grasped by human understanding. For Milton, Christian experience of God in oral and literary culture can only go so far as indirect analogy and association.

For this reason, the epic poem sometimes refers in a dismissive and condescending tone to non-Christian myths that anthropomorphize God and heaven. While good mythological mimesis consists of ambiguous mythic elements that Milton may use to indirectly illuminate God's metaphysical being, bad mythological mimesis oversimplifies matters by being too direct and thus misrepresents the divine being. At the entrance of Sin and Death into the world, the tenth book describes the Greco-Roman myth of the succession of power from the primordial deities *Ophion* and *Eurynome*, to the Titans *Saturn* and *Ops*, to the Olympian *Dictaean Jove*. The narrator introduces this myth as "some tradition they dispers'd/ Among the Heathen of this purchase got" (*PL* X.578-580). The indefinite article *some* suggests the lack of authority in the Greco-Roman myth,

---

[12] Evangeline Lawson, "Milton's Theology," *The Open Court* (London: The Open Court Publishing Corporation, 1902), p.409.

since it is neither definite nor singular, but merely one among many. The verb choices *dispers'd* and *purchase got* also indicate hostility to the myth. While the former carries the connotation of a barren scattering of seeds at random without reason, the latter frames the myth in terms of a material possession that corrupts the possessor with worldly cares. They play against the biblical symbolism of the Gospel writers in which the word of God is the seed of the good sower, an incorruptible and indestructible possession, whereas all other claims to truth lead to oblivion in death.[13] The proper noun *the Heathen* focuses this dichotomy between the good and bad word as the difference between Christian and non-Christian myth. In naming the identity of the other, the non-Christian, Milton divides myths into those of his Christian tradition that may lead to truth and those of non-Christians which are certainly misleading and tend to false representation.

Milton's dismissive tone toward non-Christian myth echoes a common rhetorical move in conventional religion to defend the legitimacy of its truth claims by denigrating others. What differentiates Milton's approach, however, is the poetic attempt to make these non-Christian myths a vehicle serviceable to describing God in truth. In this way, the passage both discourages a literal reading of non-Christian myth and develops an aptitude for thinking of God with ambiguity. More succinctly, Milton substitutes good for bad mythological mimesis. The narrator elaborates that the non-Christians "Fabl'd how the Serpent, whom they calld/ *Ophion* with *Eurynome*, the wide-/Encroaching *Eve* perhaps, had first the rule/ Of high *Olympus*" (*PL* X.580-584). The verb choice *Fabl'd* brings to attention the fabrication and artifice involved in the formulation of these myths. The syntax of these lines sandwiches the non-Christian proper nouns *Ophion* and *Eurynome*

---

[13] John 4:37 KJV.

between their Christian parallels *Serpent* and *Eve*. This chiasmic structure serves to substitute the *Serpent* for *Ophion* and *Eve* for *Eurynome*. In the place of primordial deities on par with God, Milton has identified animals and humans that are clearly inferior to the divine being. Furthermore, the phrase *whom they calld* and the interjection *perhaps* serve as markers of ambiguity. This ambiguity is the basis for making the transformation between non-Christian and Christian myth one of literal to metaphorical reading, rather than literal to literal reading. The space occupied by God, likewise, remains exalted with the epithet *high Olympus* that conveys grandeur and power, but does not literally describe heaven as a mountain peak. The overall effect is to obfuscate the literal reading of the Greco-Roman creation myth and suggest a Christian reading of this myth that is generally unclear, except for its affirmation of the unfathomable greatness of God.

The narrator completes the description of the myth with the lines, "thence by *Saturn* driv'n/ And *Ops*, ere yet *Dictaean Jove* was born" (*PL* X.583-584). Instead of drawing explicit parallels between the non-Christian deities and their Christian counterparts, the narrator remains uncommitted. In the passage, the forceful vigor of the verb choice *driv'n* illustrates the authority and control with which the Titans take over heaven from the primordial deities. The pairing of *Ophion* and *Eurynome*, *Saturn* and *Ops* sets up a parallel between masculine and feminine elements that culminates with *Dictaean Jove*. In this way, *Jove* embodies an androgyny that is self-sufficient and undivided, compared to the inferior deities who are divided by sex and weakened by their interdependence as a couple. Finally, the epithet *Dictaean* refers to Mount Dicte and reiterates the association

Clark Xu

between the divine being and mountainous terrain (*PL* 268). God is imbued with the power of high altitudes and domination from the heights. On the one hand, with the paronomasia between *Saturn* and *Satan*, it is possible to read the Titans as Satan and the devils, the Olympians as God and the angels. This presentation of the Greco-Roman myth makes the defeat of the primordial deities by the Titans who are in turn overthrown by the Olympians analogous to the seduction of man by Satan who is in turn subdued by God. But this reading is problematic, because it suggests that Satan was at some point in time completely in control of heaven, and because it draws parallels between non-Christian and Christian myths that are not supported by the narration. These considerations suggest, on the other hand, that the reader is meant to see that God encompasses all of the powers of the Titans and Olympians in Greco-Roman myth. This implies that God not only has the power of *Saturn* to drive undesirable elements from heaven, but also embodies the coherent unity of *Jove* which bridges sex difference and occupies exalted space. The rhetorical move makes God greater than the sum of all gods. Parallels between Christian and non-Christian myth that end in ambiguity are a primary mode in which Milton depicts God.

This essay has outlined Mulciber's fall, the gates of heaven, and the entrance of Sin and Death as several instances of mythological mimesis in the epic poem. The most extensive moment of the poem in which Milton employs mythological mimesis is the monumental movement of the stars and the seas. In this moment, God prepares for humanity to inhabit the earth by putting the earth into motion. It is impressive not only for its recapitulation

of myths from Greco-Roman antiquity, the Old Testament, and 'the Orient', but also for

the play of detail that goes to show the grandeur of God.

   After the corruption of Adam and Eve, God changes the order of the universe in the

tenth book to make it a less hospitable place to reside. The first of these changes creates

the objects of astronomy, which the epic poem introduces with the language of Ptolemaic

astrology and Pythagorean metaphysics (*PL* 127). The poem anthropomorphizes one of

these objects when the narrator reports, "The Sun/ Had first his precept so to move" (*PL*

X.651-652). While the indirect voice keeps God a hidden presence in the syntax of the

sentence, the verb choice *to move* echoes classical arguments for God as a prime mover

or first principle that establishes the laws of physical reality. God remains in the abstract

throughout the passage, with the act of creation mediated by naming words or assigning

tasks to angels. The greatness of God is not seen in the direct image, but reflected in its

effects on the world. Milton heightens these effects by using mythological mimesis to

again personify: "To the blanc Moone/ Her office they prescrib'd, to th' other five/ Thir

planetarie motions and aspects" (*PL* X.656-657). Here, the angels referred to in the

subject pronoun *they* mediate the presence of God. The epithet *blanc Moone* intertwines

with the feminine possessive pronoun *Her* and the metaphor of *office* for the lunar

revolution to make this astronomical object an evocative character. Likewise, the

description of *motions and aspects* humanizes the seven planets of Ptolemaic astrology,

Venus, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury in addition to the Sun and the Moon, with the

tactile imagery of body movement and facial expression. By casting physical objects as

personable characters in the process of mythological mimesis, Milton describes the

mystery of God's creation of the celestial objects. God's mystery fills the blankness of

the moon with a prescription and gives motion to the planets as the first mover. These

concrete images for the abstract acts of God become illuminating because the reader

relates to them through myths as characters, not objects.

The mythological mimesis further develops an understanding of God, through physical

objects turned into living characters, as the narrator describes: "In *Sextile*, *Square*, and

Trine, and *Opposite*,/ Of noxious efficacie, and when to joyne/ In Synod unbenigne" (*PL*

X.659-661). These proper nouns allude to geometric angles in Pythagorean metaphysics

(*PL* 270). Although they have a precise mathematical meaning, the various angles take on

a specific character through mythic content. The *Sextile* is a 60 degree angle that

constructs the corner of an equilateral triangle, a wedge of the regular hexagon or a sixth

of the arc-angle of a circle. The *Square* is a 90 degree angle that constructs a corner of a

square or a fourth of the arc-angle of a circle. Furthermore, the *Trine* is a 120 degree

angle that constructs a wedge of an equilateral triangle or a third of the arc-angle of a

circle. In similar fashion, the *Opposite* is a 180 degree angle that constructs a line or a

half of the arc-angle of a circle. All of these angles relate to idealized shapes and

fractions of the circle to suggest the presence of an inner harmony, the music of the

spheres in the world.[14] In Pythagorean metaphysics, this reflects the belief that

mathematical relations between shapes embody the essence of physical reality and, by

extension, God.[15]

---

[14] Patricia Curd, "Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism," *A Presocratics Reader*, trans. Richard
McKirahan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2011), p.24.
[15] *Ibid*, p.28.

Clark Xu

But to this classical layer of mythological mimesis Milton adds his own touch when he presents the angles as characters that indicate something about the universe and God. Their traits are unpleasant, with adjectives such as *noxious* and *unbenigne*. Far from being inert or inactive theoretical constructs, the geometric ideas come alive and scheme with a palpable hostility to humanity. They act in a *Synod*, which further humanizes them as either an assembly of rabbis convened in the Middle Ages of Europe to respond to emerging problems between coexisting Jewish and Christian communities,[16] or an ecclesiastical body in the Catholic Church convened on an annual basis by a bishop to resolve parochial issues.[17] Both allusions, from the perspective of a Protestant, add a sinister and foreign flavor to the character portrait of the angles. These details showcase the power of God to make human life thoroughly miserable. Milton employs the adjectives *noxious* and *unbenigne* in the prepositional phrases containing the allusion *Synod* to describe the geometry of planetary motion. As a result, the planets and the angles which I have here considered separately appear in the syntax of the sentence as a coherent whole. The epic poem portrays God, in a single act, populating the world with characters upon characters who will challenge humanity in life on earth.

Delving into myths by Ptolemy and Pythagoras, Milton calls up the elements to elaborate on the space occupied by God. At this point, the narrator recounts that the angels "To the Winds they set/ Thir corners, when with bluster to confound/ Sea, Aire, and Shoar" (*PL* X.664-666). In parallel with the line *To the Moone* from before, the inverted syntax *To the Winds* begins the sentence with a prepositional phrase that buries

---

[16] Joseph Jacobs, "Synod," *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalis, 1906), p.643.
[17] W. Fanning, "Synod," *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), n.p.

Clark Xu

the subject pronoun *they* in the interior of the sentence. This grammatical construction

minimizes the role of the angels, who in turn themselves mediate the will of God. Thus,

all references to God in the passage are not only oblique, but also muted. Any insight into

the nature of God in the moment when God renders the world unfriendly to humanity

springs from the mythic presentation of objects in the universe. The object now is the

Winds, which the narrator personifies as unruly with the verb choices *bluster* and

confound. This state of passionate agitation is made vivid by the personification of the

wind, as well as the proper nouns *Sea*, *Aire*, *Shoar* anthropomorphized with the emotion

of mental confusion. They indicate the destructive force of nature in a world order where

God no longer blesses humanity but presents them with pure struggle and privation. The

detail of the corners, a reference to the cardinal directions north, south, east and west,

emphasizes the grand scale of these elemental forces.

Along with the wind, the narrator personifies "the Thunder when to rowle/ With terror

through the dark Aereal Hall" (*PL* X.666-667). This characterization of *Thunder*, as

proper noun detailed by the cataclysmic imagery of the verb *rowle* and the anguished

sentiment of the prepositional phrase *with terror*, contributes to the ominous tone of the

passage that shows nature in combination against humanity. I hear echoes of Jove in the

thunder and lightning as another indirect manifestation of God's punishing character. The

synecdoche *Aereal Hall* recapitulates the motif of the imperial palace in mythological

mimesis as a symbolic representation of the space occupied by God, which appears

forbidding and unsympathetic with the visual imagery of *dark*. It is the abandonment of

man to the elements. Furthermore, with darkness as the absence of light, the metonymic

association of God with the imperial palace plunged in obscurity emphasizes God's role

as the absent sovereign or hidden presence. At the same time that God makes evident in

the turmoil of elemental nature the punishment of humanity by suffering, Milton renders

this God distant and unknowably abstract.

Of interest to those with the impression that mythological mimesis remains purely

classical is Milton's allusion to the scientific debate between Ptolemaic and Copernican

systems at the center of the passage (*PL* 271). The narrator introduces the Copernican

system first with the suggestion, "Some say he bid his Angels turne ascanse/ The Poles of

Earth twice ten degrees and more/ From the Suns Axle" (*PL* X.668-670). In the subject

pronoun *he*, the reference to God remains oblique and does not directly name the divine

being by proper noun, epithet, or symbol. This choice sharpens the sense that God is a

missing presence for the mythic moments of creation in the poem. Furthermore, the verb

choice *bid* and the motif of *Angels* continue to emphasize the mediation between God's

intent and its effect on the world. By inserting the angels in the place of God, Milton

constructs fictional characters that mimic and portray the qualities of what is eminently

real, the divine being. The acts of angels reflect the will of God when the reader considers

them to be at the heart of an elaborate mythic narrative. As the narrator describes, "they

with labour push'd/ Oblique the Centric Globe," the subject pronoun *they* makes clear

that the angels perform a central role in bringing God's plan for the world to fruition,

while the detail that they act *with labour* humanizes and makes sympathetic their work

(*PL* X.670-671). The adjectives *ascanse* and *Oblique* signal the strange, irregular nature

of this plan and, in contrast to the regularity of the Pythagorean angles *Sextile*, *Square*,

Trine, and *Opposite*, the twenty degree angle stands out as an oddity of the natural world. Milton juxtaposes this oddity against the proper nouns *Poles of Earth*, *Suns Axle*, and *Centric Globe* to convey the destabilization of the world in terms of physical objects turned into living characters. Stability is a character trait of the planets, until their contacts with angels and angles cause a change of heart. When I see objects come alive as characters interacting in a mythic environment, the drama of transformation in the natural world fills it with purpose, even as God seems to be absent from the scene.

   In parallel, the narrator presents the Copernican system with the observation, "Som say the Sun/ Was bid turn Reines from th' Equinoctial Rode" (*PL* X.671-672). The anaphora *Some say* develops the tone of mystery and speculation, which gives room to ambiguity and the play of myth in the representation of God.[18] Here, the indirect voice returns and again masks God from the syntax of the line. All of God's presence in this scene condenses to the verb choice *bid* which, as it also functioned in Milton's exposition of the Copernican system, now presents God's will to be a thing opaque that shows itself by its effect on other beings and objects. Instead of giving orders to angels, however, God gives orders to *the Sun*. As a proper noun, *the Sun* becomes a mythological character through the synecdoche of *Reines* and the metonymy of *Rode* which recall the Greek myth of Helios on a chariot of four fiery steeds.

   When the poem anthropomorphizes astronomical objects in myth, the spaces they occupy also enter into proportion with the spaces one knows. The vast grandeur and unthinkable immensity of the outer spheres that in the Ptolemaic worldview envelop the

---

[18] In *PL*, X.668 begins with the phrase *Some say* and X.671 spells the same phrase as *Som say*.

earth convey first the heroic size of the planetary characters, and second the profundity of

God who can encompass this in turn. In this way, *the Sun* takes an astronomical journey

"Like distant breadth to *Taurus* with the Seav'n/ *Atlantick* Sisters, and the *Spartan* Twins/

Up to the *Tropic* Crab; thence down amaine/ By *Leo* and the *Virgin* and the *Scales*, As

deep as *Capricorne*" (*PL* X.673-677). The narrator builds an epic simile between the

constellations and the reach of God. By adding a separate clause for each constellation,

the sentence embodies in its plodding syntax the range *the Sun* traverses each day. With

the proper nouns of each of these constellations, the voyage of *the Sun* evokes that of a

traveler visiting distant friends on the way to a faraway place. The void fills with

characters from Greek myth. Milton groups together the *Sisters* and the *Twins* in a

parallel that suggests family and kinship among the stars. Likewise, the detail *breadth*

calls to mind the wide shoulders of *Taurus* and the adjective *deep* suggests the length of

the horn on *Capricorne*. These allusions to Greek mythology deploy the immensity of the

heroic legends in order to depict the influence of God, in the background but nevertheless

the source of all change to the order of the world.

   In sum, Milton's comparison of the Copernican and Ptolemaic systems relies on

mythological characters in either case to show the power of an absent God. The angels

that Milton introduces to the Copernican universe and the Greek legends that Milton

includes in the Ptolemaic universe both provide analogies to the grandeur of God in

human terms. The narrator cultivates the vivid viewpoint of mythological mimesis in the

rest of the passage as it describes other places visited in the journey of *the Sun*. Part of the

journey reaches the northeastern coast of North America at *Estotiland* and the southern

cone of South America at *Magellan* (*PL* 271). In combination with the narrator's

allusions to these distant lands, Milton draws on the Greek myth, of Thyestes who

unsuspecting ate his own son's body at dinner, to personify "*The Sun*, as from *Thyestean*

Banquet, turn'd/ His course intended" (*PL* X.688-689). The visceral shock of the original

Greek myth works in Milton's poem to identify the reader's horror with *the Sun's*

revulsion. After the emotional agreement between reader and mythical character,

Milton's discussion of *the Sun's* intentionality and moral decision to turn away seems to

follow naturally.

   Mythological mimesis is central to Milton's technique of making the object personable.

Further in the passage, Milton mentions *Norumbega* in New England and *Samoed* in

Siberia as part of the course of the sun (*PL* 272). Here, differences in weather indicate the

vastness of the realms under God's influence. To portray the intensity of storms in New

England and Siberia, Milton recounts, "snow and haile and stormie gust and flaw,/

Boreas and *Caecias* and *Argestes* loud" (*PL* X.698-699). Clearly the repetition of the

conjunction *and* mimics the pounding rage of a wild storm. But equally important are the

allusions to the Aeolian winds of Greek myth. Their wild characters contribute by

mythological mimesis to the depiction of a strong storm. In particular, the idea that

Aeolus had to keep the winds in check by imprisonment in a cave characterizes them

with an unruly quality that carries over into the image of the storms. Just as natural

terrors may inspire myths, myths in Milton's poetry evoke natural terror and other

emotions. These responses are intuitive, even as they ultimately serve an end that is not

so intuitive: the representation of God.

Milton's extensive use of mythological mimesis requires erudition to make the poetry speak. This may be a flaw for the poem's accessibility, and certainly risks elitism. But, understood as an attempt to bring the metaphysical into the confines of language, the technique is admirable and stands on a par with attempts based in analytical logic by AJ Ayers and other philosophers to clarify the language that people use to speak of God.[19]

---

[19] AJ Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1952), p.72-73.

Clark Xu

<u>Characterizing God</u>

But, to turn matters on their head, *Paradise Lost* does not merely reflect Christian experience; it embodies and constitutes Christian experience. Milton's God exists first and foremost as a fictional character in a narrative, and to read the epic poem is to come into contact with that God in its truest form. It is when *Paradise Lost* reports its own narrative, rather than alluding to and playing with narratives from the myths of other texts and traditions, that the literary work first crosses the line from indirect to direct claims about the nature of God.

As a character in the poem, God reveals much of its character through reported action. God's role as a character in the poem raises questions about the truthfulness and incorruptibility of the God in Milton's theology. In Book V, the angel Raphael presents to Adam a mirror image between Satan's speech to the lieutenant devils and God's speech to Jesus as each side prepares for the war in heaven. Raphael describes God as, "th' Eternal eye, whose sight discernes/ Abstrusest thoughts" (*PL* V.711-712). The synecdoche of the eye for all of God's being and the metonymy between eye and vision emphasize God's capacity to predict and uncover the secrets of Satan's stratagems. The switch from the plural form to the singular form *eye* underscores that the physical organ represents, not only the two corporeal eyes of a human being, but also insight and foresight as an essential, coherent quality of the leader. The reader understands God's power through his ability as commander-in-chief of the heavenly forces to strategically plan for victory in the war against Satan. As strategic planner, God has glory in

prevailing over Satan's forces, not for the simple reason that heaven is stronger than hell, but for the deeper reason that the wisdom of God's way outmaneuvers the tricks of Satan's cunning. From eye and vision, Milton develops a metonymy between vision and light when Raphael recounts that, looking over the movements of Satan's forces, God, "from forth his holy Mount/ And from within the golden Lamps that burne/ Nightly before him, saw without thir light/ Rebellion rising" (*PL* V.712-715). The detail of light in *the golden Lamps that burne* supports the idea that God's true source of power is abstract vision, not physical strength. The paradox that God *saw without thir light* reiterates that God's abstract vision does not refer to sense perception. The myths of the *holy Mount* and *the golden Lamps* create a parallel structure between the Christian mythology of Mount Sinai and the Menorah in the Temple of Jerusalem on the one hand, and the classic mythology of Mount Olympus and the vestal fires on the other hand. This mythic parallel further indicates that Milton is describing God in shadow instead of God in full. In sum, the metonymic chain linking God's being, God's military command, the eye, vision, and light allows Milton to indicate God's power over Satan and all corners of the universe, without reducing his conception of God to mundane terms as a being in space and time subject to physical limitations. The gap between God's being and God's military command is an ambiguity that Milton accepts in his choice to depict God as a character in the poem; the gap between God's military command and various forms of seeing is the literary technique that Milton employs to show God's power.

For example, when Raphael reports that God saw *Rebellion rising*, the negative connotation of rebellion, akin to insubordination, betrayal, cowardice, and treason in the

language of military command, suggests that true authority lies with God and that Satan merely usurps this true authority. Likewise, Raphael continues his report that God saw, "what multitudes/ Were banded to oppose his high Decree;/ And smiling to his onely Son thus said" (*PL* V.716-718). If I think of this passage as referring to God's true being, then God's omnipotence makes the size of Satan's army irrelevant, and God's smile reads as an obnoxious acknowledgement of the superior power of heaven. If, however, I think of this passage as referring to God's role as a character in a position of command, then the detail that *multitudes were banded* highlights the strategic difficulty of the situation that confronts God as commander, and God's smile reflects both a courageous calm in the face of this difficult position and an inner confidence that the wisdom of heaven will prevail over the cunning of hell. The detail of God's *high Decree* similarly transforms from proof that Milton's God is an arbitrary tormentor, to an expression of God's military authority and a call to bravery. Many of God's reported actions are nonsensical if I try to understand them in terms of the true nature of God's being. As a literary construction, they only make sense in terms of God's role as a character in the poem, which in this case is the role of the commander-in-chief responsible for strategic planning and military action. However awe-inspiring Milton can make God appear in the poem, literary technique only obfuscates and does not resolve the tension, between the full array of the true nature of the God Milton believes in and the reduction of God to a character role: that is a fundamental ambiguity of the poem.

As Raphael explains to Adam in the twelfth book the victory of God over Satan at final judgment, God also appears in the character of a triumphant military commander. The

soul who will be saved contributes to the glory of the divine being, in the same way that a

soldier's individual honor reflects the achievement of the soldier's superiors. In this way,

the glory in Jesus and in the virtuous man ultimately reflect on God's glory. Raphael

recounts, "all Nations shall be blest./ Then to the Heav'n of Heav'ns he shall ascend" (*PL*

X.450-451). The phrase *all Nations* frames the passage in terms of the nation-state and

emphasizes the military as a political institution that constitutes the state. Power in this

context is the conquest of one people by another, and it is God's ability to conquer every

people that reflects the authority of the divine being. The repetition *Heav'n of Heav'ns*,

supported by the verb choice *ascend*, depicts the space occupied by God as one of

physical elevation and superiority. When Raphael further explains that the saved soul will

rise "With victory, triumphing through the aire/ Over his foes", the military diction of

victory, *triumphing*, and *foes* confirm that God's character as strategic commander is the

central image of the passage, while the detail of the *aire* reiterates the idea that salvation

involves rising up in space to God (*PL* X.452-453). I cannot truly envision a soul rising

up to God without committing some fallacy about the nature of God, but I can imagine

the relationship between superior and subordinate in an army. Milton maintains that the

space occupied by God is abstract and incomprehensible to human minds when I

understand salvation in concrete terms, not as God in full, but by analogy to God as

commander.

This consideration provides insight into Raphael's portrayal of Satan at judgment day.

If God is the victorious commander, then Satan is the defeated commander whom

humanity under the leadership of God "shall surprise/ The Serpent, Prince of aire, and

drag in Chaines/ Through all his Realme" (*PL* X.453-455). This portrait of Satan is highly problematic if I understand it at a superficial level, without accounting for God's role as a character in the poem. In a naïve view, the epithet *Prince of aire* seems to give Satan some legitimacy, since the motif of *aire* bears a close association to the space occupied by God, and the noble connotation of *Prince* indicates an affinity with God through a bond of kinship and a moral likeness to Jesus who is also described in this way. Following this argument to the extreme, it is possible to draw the conclusion that Satan deserves some sympathy from the reader. Indeed, the image of Satan *in Chaines* at the mercy of God would elicit pity at Satan's degraded state and revulsion at the harshness of God's treatment of Satan. Given a moral similarity between Satan and God, it follows that either Satan is not evil or God is not good. But, if I understand that God in the poem plays the role of a commander, then the likeness between Satan and God comes from the similarity in their roles as military leaders, not from consonance in moral character. With Satan and God, I have two characters who are generals, and it is entirely consistent with this image to say that one general has conquered the other. So the epithet *Prince of aire* merely distinguishes Satan as a rival commander and the repetition of *aire* acts as a marker of the superior rank of God and Satan over the subordinates in each army. Likewise, Satan's public humiliation in chains no longer sparks moral outrage, but alludes to a common practice dating from classical antiquity, in which the victor would show their conquest by parading the enemy commander in chains and showing off the captured goods.[20] Satan's presence illuminates God's glory as a military commander capable of conquest, which is comprehensible to humanity from their experience of war and by analogy refers to God's glory in the full nature of the divine being.

---

[20] "Vercingetorix," *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2018), n.p.

The representation of God in the character of a general continues to operate as Raphael suggests that the saved soul will "enter into glory, and resume/ His Seat at Gods right hand, exalted high/ Above all names in Heav'n" (*PL* X.456-458). The honorable connotation of the details *enter into glory* and *exalted high* bear a close resemblance to military ceremony and the award of a medal. The state of salvation appears in the poem as a celebratory moment that rewards valor in battle. Similarly, the allusion to *Seat* and *all names in Heav'n* ascribe an institutional hierarchy and structure to life in heaven that reflects military ranking. The hosts of heaven appear as an army in which salvation of the soul means promotion in rank for humanity from one that is below the angels to one that is above them and on a par with Jesus. Raphael thus suggests that salvation will be the promotion that brings man closer to God than he is.

Furthermore, the synecdoche of *Gods right hand* draws attention to the part of the body that kills and holds weapons, and thereby identifies God as commander with decisive action. Raphael recapitulates his description of salvation with the promise that God knows "to reward/ His faithful, and receave them into bliss" (*PL* X.461-462). While the tenor of the metaphor is *bliss*, the vehicle is the *reward* that in the imagery of the passage consists of a rank promotion. Among men and angels as subordinates to God, the highest virtue is loyalty in being *faithful*, while the *unfaithful dead* are the army deserters, stragglers, and cowards. The soldier's relationship to a commander is also a model for the Christian believer's relationship to God insofar as soldiers and believers both attain value

by expressing obedience to a leadership and a plan that is not necessary for them to understand.

Thinking of Raphael as a subordinate to God the commander in the army of angels, I find that it fits in with Raphael's role as a character in the poem to speak of God as a military superior and to explain God's acts and will from this perspective. In this way, Milton does not construct Raphael as a neutral or objective narrator, and any insight about God when Raphael speaks directly of God consists of an analogy between the nature of a divine being and the nature of human warfare.

Another aspect of God's appearance as a character in *Paradise Lost* is the narrator's characterization of God. Compared to reports by other characters about God's character, narratorial descriptions are more exact. Making definitive statements about the divine essence in order to form a narrative, the narrator describes God's interactions with the other characters of the poem and God's role in its overarching plot. In the third book, the narrator situates God in heaven surrounded by Jesus and the other angels at the moment when God will announce the fall of man and accept Jesus' offer to redeem humanity by his crucifixion. The narrator describes God as, "the Almighty Father from above,/ From the pure Empyrean where he sits/ High Thron'd above all highth"; the preposition *from above* and the repetitive syntax in *High Thron'd above all highth* reintroduce the mythic idea that God occupies a metaphysical space that is greater and better than human reality

(*PL* III.56-58). The Ptolemaic idea of a *pure Empyrean* blends with the Christian idea

that the space inhabited by God transcends this world.[21]

    In every analogy that compares God's space to common human experiences, the

rhetorical move is to push the assertion that God's true nature is more than what can be

known to human reason and experience. The connotations of physical height as

ennobling, uplifting, and morally strong imbue God with these characteristics, but fall

shy of literally suggesting that Milton's God occupies a part of outer space. These

characteristics are reminiscent of representations of classical deities such as Athena. The

narrator continues, "About him all the Sanctities of Heaven/ Stood thick as Starrs, and

from his sight receiv'd/ Beatitude past utterance" (*PL* III.60-62). The simile that

associates the number of angels to the number of stars makes more vivid and compelling

the earlier identification of God's space with the Ptolemaic empyrean, but leaves enough

distance between the vehicle and tenor of the metaphor for the reader to recognize that

God's space is not fully captured in the idea that it is the outermost sphere of the

universe. Confirming this observation is the detail that God's grace to the angels is

Beatitude past utterance.

    Describing Adam and Eve's prelapsarian bliss in the Garden of Eden, and then

recounting Satan's perspective on Adam and Eve, the narrator concludes the passage,

"God beholding from his prospect high,/ Wherein past, present, future he beholds" (*PL*

III.77-78). As before, a metonymic chain links God's true nature and vision. On the one

---

[21] Alexander Raymond Jones, "Ptolemaic System," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, ed. Grace Young (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2008), n.p.

hand, the list *past, present, future* alludes to omnitemporality in God's true nature. On the

other hand, the repetition of *beholding* and *beholds* emphasizes the poem's motifs of

vision and seeing. But in the place in Raphael's speech where God's role as a character

mediated the metonymic association between vision and God's true nature, the abstract

description of God's space in *prospect high*, a position of spectatorship, identifies essence

and seeing. In the former case, vision is the aptitude for outmaneuvering the cunning of

hell. In the latter case, seeing is the divine act of giving form to the world, and I consider

God to be the complete center of all being, instead of the leader of one side in a conflict.

With this substitution, the narration at this point primarily conveys God's control over the

situation as the universal creator.

   At the beginning of the third book, the narrator presents an invocation that seeks poetic

inspiration from God and light. Milton develops light as a character that, in turn, serves as

a point of illumination on the nature of God. The relationship of light to God is one of

"offspring of Heav'n first-born,/ Or of th' Eternal Coeternal beam" (*PL* III.1-2). Milton

considers two possibilities for the link between God and light. Together they contrast

God's androgynous creative power to have *offspring* and *first-born* with God's

timelessness in the repetition *Eternal Coeternal*. The ambiguity of the exact relation

between the two characters is an occasion that shows God to be an all-encompassing

being who embodies all possibilities and potentialities, a higher dimensional entity that

only offers one side at a time to mental contemplation. In the invocation, the narrator asks

of light, "May I express thee unblam'd?" (*PL* III.3). The rhetorical question brings to the

fore the problem of representing metaphysical realities in human expression. The poet

decides to make the attempt after properly acknowledging the possibility of failure. But Milton's placement of the adjective *unblam'd* does not clarify the source or the target of blame. The most natural interpretation is that readers could blame Milton for a faulty image of God. This might indicate a self-conscious moment in which Milton acknowledges the limits of representation, due to differences in taste among readers in their imagination of God, the technical impossibility of fully bringing metaphysical realities into physical language, and Milton's own uncertainty about God. A similar interpretation is that God could blame Milton for an incomplete understanding of light. Since the adjective *unblam'd* modifies *thee*, however, the grammatically correct interpretation is that the narrator could blame light for a faulty image of God. This interpretation of Milton would suggest that the imperfection of light curtails an understanding of the perfection of God, in the same way that a broken glass fragments the image it depicts.

The next line of the invocation does not eliminate competing interpretations. In fact, the narrator's suggestion that "God is light,/ And never but in unapproached light" supports the idea that humanity remains unable to comprehend a God who transcends physical experience (*PL* III.3-4). The adjective *unapproached* that connotes emotional estrangement and ignorance ironically modifies *light* as a symbol of clarity, knowledge and insight. This twist highlights the confusion about the nature of divinity. The confusion stems from the narrator's expression, Milton's understanding, or light's character. As the narrator constructs an image of God, Milton renders explicit the artificiality and experimental nature of this account of God. More precisely, these

problems arise in the relationship between God and light as characters, the accessibility

of God to human knowledge, and limitations of language in determining truth. The

narrator consequently depicts God with definitive clarity, but not final authority.

   The invocation establishes that God is a unity that exists timelessly and in continuous

creation of reality. In a chiasmus that links God to light in timelessness and light to God

in creativity, the narrator apostrophizes light with the observation that God "Dwelt from

Eternitie, dwelt then in thee,/ Bright effluence of bright essence increate" (*PL* III.5-6).

The repetition of *dwelt* and *bright* emphasize that light shares with God the characteristic

of permanence in being and time. The consonance of *effluence* and *essence* further

identifies light and God. Thus, the narrator's claim is that one may look to a personal

experience of light as an illustrative analogy of God's true nature. In parallel to the syntax

of the previous sentence of the invocation, the narrator next employs the conjunction *or*

and asks of light the rhetorical question, "Or hear'st thou rather pure Ethereal stream,/

Whose Fountain who shall tell?" (*PL* X.7-8). As the metaphor compares light to a

fountain jet of ether, the vehicle *stream* depicts the existence of light as steady and

uninterrupted. The modifying adjectives *pure* and *Ethereal*, as well as the euphony of the

long vowels in *Whose Fountain who*, reinforce the image of light as a character that

reflects God's goodness and beauty. The symbolism of a *Fountain* and its life-giving

nature also show that light, and by extension God, contain a creative power that gives

form to the world. At the same time that the chiasmus and the fountain metaphor both

establish that the narrator sees eternity and the constant creation of the universe in God,

Milton's syntax keeps implicit the reservation that the qualities of God are in actuality greater than what one makes them out to be.

There is a contradiction, then, between the characters in the poem who interact with God as another character and the narrator of the poem who seeks to convey God's true nature. While God as a character appears to be fully engaged by various roles in the struggle against Satan, God as universal principle, universal across myth and empire and space and time, freely dictates the rules of this engagement. The unwillingness of Empson to see the imperial God as merely metaphorical forms the basis for his intense dislike of God as an evil entity that willfully inflicts suffering in the universe of *Paradise Lost*—God as universal principle makes up rules that are favorable only to God as a character in the game of life.[22] When I try to make a coherent image of God based on God's actions as a character in the poem, the conclusion that Milton's God for this reason is evil, while interesting and worth considering, does not address the fundamental concern of this essay. The structure of the poem suggests that God's true nature has always been uncaptured by and in some sense beyond the poet's attempts to depict God as a character in the poem. It is naïve to read God's character in *Paradise Lost* as a direct expression of God's true nature; in fact, to speak of God's character is yet another way to speak of God's shadow.

---

[22] William Empson, *Milton's God* (Westport: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1961), p.276.

The Word of God

With God's speech in *Paradise Lost* the ambiguity between God's true nature and God's appearance as a character in the poem persists, especially when one considers the degree to which God claims to speak in isolated truth and, by contrast, the degree to which God addresses speech to other characters.

When God speaks in the third book to Jesus about the fall of Adam and Satan, God's voice carries a self-righteous and indignant tone. The speech seeks to assign blame for the fall of humanity to Adam in the double rhetorical question, "whose fault? Whose but his own?" (*PL* III.96-97). While the first rhetorical question appears to open up the issue of blame for discussion, the second rhetorical question immediately closes with the suggestion that any such discussion would conclude by establishing Adam's guilt. God then calls Adam, "ingrate, he had of mee/ All he could have" (*PL* III.97-98). The epithet *ingrate* alludes to a tradition of love poetry in which the speaker scolds the beloved for being unresponsive to expressions of love. With the vaguely sexual connotation that Adam took everything of God, the speech identifies God with the rhetorical position of a lover spurned by the beloved. This overtone in the speech supports the rhetorical argument that blame belongs to Adam and not to God. God's comment that "I made him just and right,/ Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" further emphasizes the lover and beloved relationship between God and Adam by echoing the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea. In the Greek myth, the sculptor Pygmalion fashions a marble so beautiful that it turns into a flesh-and-blood woman. Pygmalion then falls in love with her, Galatea, but

she refuses his advances. Pygmalion's power to fashion art illustrates God's power to create, just as the sculptor's rejection by his own creation radiates sympathy for God as Adam denies divine love. God also presents the verbs *stood* and *fall* as an antonymous pair. The contrast between the stop consonant *st* and fricative consonant *f*, as well as the balance between two groups of four words separated by a comma in the line, sharpen the manner in which these two verbs act as opposites. To the degree that Adam's *fall* from Eden accrues ignominy, the meaning of *stood* as physically and ethically upright imbues God with an authoritative ethos. The overall effect of the speech is to strike a rhetorical pose that defends God and attacks Adam for the failure of divine love to keep Adam in Eden.

Shifting from the fall of Adam to the fall of Satan, God continues the rhetorical defense of divine love by establishing God's love as normal and natural. The claim by God that "Such I created all th' Ethereal Powers" positions the expression of God's love as the rule and Satan's hatred as the exception (*PL* III.100). Satan's act of rebellion reads as a deviation from the norm set by God. Likewise, God makes a circular claim that "Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell" (*PL* III.102). The repetition of the verbs *stood* and *fell* as an antonym pair solidifies a dichotomy between good and evil that distracts from the issue of the goodness of God as God drops out of the syntax of the line. The rhetorical question, "Not free, what proof could they have givn sincere/ Of true allegiance, constant Faith or Love" also manages to shift the focus away from God and God's potential culpability by omitting grammatical references to God (*PL* III.103-104). The subject pronoun *they* holds Satan and the other fallen creatures responsible for the

failure of divine love to maintain harmony in the universe. The series of *sincere*, *true*, *allegiance*, *constant*, *Faith*, and *Love* strengthens the accusatory nature of God's rhetoric by highlighting all the positive qualities that are absent in Satan's betrayal of God. Satan's disloyalty stands out as unnatural and egregious when the construction of God's speech normalizes loyalty in the series of words it employs.

If I think hard about the state of affairs that God's speech normalizes, I am shocked that an all-powerful being would want to shift the blame for the rejection of divine love to Adam and finally Satan. The pettiness of such a rhetorical maneuver seems to contradict God's alleged greatness, and the weakness implied in the need for defensive justification shakes one's trust in God's power. But these conclusions and others similar to them make the assumption that the depiction of God in the poem corresponds in a straightforward way to God's true nature. This is an untenable assumption that ignores the ambiguity about the divine being in the narration and mythological mimesis throughout the poem. The ambiguity, when properly accounted for, leads to the alternative conclusion that God as a character in the poem is unpleasant insofar as this character responds to vice in Adam and Satan. I see God as a character fighting fire with fire, while the true nature of the divine being remains indeterminate.

The speech now returns to God, who questions, "What pleasure I from such obedience paid,/ When Will and Reason […] had servd necessitie,/ not mee" (*PL* III.107-111). The negation *not mee* referring back to God emphasizes that disobedience in God's creatures does not come from God. This syntax introduces more ambiguity about God's true nature

by identifying the divine being, not with necessity, but with freedom. Milton is not so much concerned with 'the problem of evil', where the existence of evil contradicts the existence of a benevolent and omnipotent God, but with 'the problem of goodness' freely chosen; that is to say, while the terrible aspects of God's struggle with Satan inspire the reader to choose a better life by striving to live in harmony with God, readers cannot comprehend God's true nature unless they themselves are also divinely good.

God speaks as a character for the last time in the eleventh book of the poem with reflections to Jesus about final judgment at the end of time and with instructions to Michael on the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. The narrator prefaces God's final speech as a character with the report that "Th' Almighty thus pronouncd his sovran Will" (*PL* XI.83). The gap between God's role as a character and God's true nature begins to close as the narrator identifies the command of the military leader of the heavenly forces with the universal law of the being at the core of physical reality. The insistence on power in the epithet *Almighty*, the verb choice *pronouncd*, the metonymic adjective *sovran*, and the synecdoche *Will* create a strong sense that God is a source of authority. In the same way that God as commander issues orders that are speech acts requiring service from subordinates in a military system and instituting legal decrees in monarchical governance, God as creator brings into existence reality by the logical power of pronouncement and expression of will, two analogies for the unknowable process of creation. Sensitive to the history of words, Milton crossed the Latin origin *pronuntiatio* of *pronouncd* that denoted the decision of a judge with the Old English origin *willan* of *Will* that denoted personal desire in a pair that combines public and

private expressions of intent.[23] Creation is, analogously, familiar to all but understood by none. God's character role as military and political leader closely aligns with the idea that God's true nature, although beyond human understanding, is clearly in evidence in the world and a force to be obeyed.

   The narrator picks up the narrative again at the end of God's final speech with the closing remark that "He ceas'd" (*PL* XI.126). A fundamental issue with God's appearance in the poem is that God's dialogue and reported action must give way to other characters, action, speech and events in the poem. Thinking of God as a character, the statement that God stopped talking so that his military orders could be carried out by subordinates and his political decrees could go into effect in the world of the poem is not problematic, and even mundane. But thinking of the poem as a justification of God, and as an exposition of God's true nature, the idea that God stopped talking carries a thought that is destructive to the Christian worldview. This thought refers to the silence of God. For the narrator to say that God *ceas'd*, there must exist a time and space in which God is not present. While generals or politicians might, with good reason, consider obedience to their plans in their absence a measure of their power, the same consideration with respect to God is damning, for I must conclude that God is not all-powerful and omnipresent, or God is not all-good, in the moment that God's silence leaves humanity to its own devices. In this way, I find grounds for the Islamic criticism that God as constructed in monotheistic tradition is not representable in image or icon by the artifice of human craft. The character portrait in literature is another example where the artistic medium fails to

---

[23] A.E. Andrews, "Pronuntatio," *Harper's Latin Dictionary*, eds. Charlton Lewis and Charles Short (New York: Harper & Brother, 1878), p.1466.

convey God's nature, however much Milton acknowledges that the imagery of words is insufficient and tries anyway to justify God in the vivid detail. Even at the very end of God's portrayal as a character in the poem, it is necessarily the case that the character representation of God disagrees with a coherent conception of God's true nature, and this ambiguous distance becomes more urgent than ever to a proper understanding of this poem.

Examining God's speech at this point in the narrative, I find also there is little wonder that readers in the time after Milton, faced with a God that is either evil or not representable or absent, have chosen in the first case not to think too hard about God's true nature, in the second case to make God an intellectual abstraction, and in the third case not to believe in God at all. These are all sensible responses to a serious problem with the God in *Paradise Lost*. God announces, "like one of us Man is become/ To know both Good and Evil, since his taste/ Of that defended Fruit; but let him boast/ His knowledge of Good lost, and Evil got" (*PL* XI.84-87). The issue stems from God's role as a character in the poem. This characterization makes it possible for God to say that Adam is *like one of us* and to describe the forbidden fruit as *defended*. Adam can appear in the image of God because God appears in the poem as commander. The pronoun *us* suggests an antagonistic divide between heaven on one side and humanity on the other. Likewise, God's commanding position in the poem implies a game of attack and defense of the kind that God refers to here. In the face of Adam's transgression of God's command, God is content, with dripping verbal irony, to *let him boast* about the failed

attempt to attain divinity. The overall effect is that Milton's God is exclusive, vulnerable and vindictive.

Milton's God gets uglier with the command, "Least therefore his now bolder hand/ Reach also the Tree of Life, and eat,/ And live for ever, dream at least to live/ For ever, to remove him I decree" (*PL* XI.93-96). With the description of humanity in adjectives as boasting and *bolder*, God shows a disproportionate concern with Adam's disobedience as an attack on divine authority and something to be punished in order to reestablish this authority. The moral pettiness of God's concern, when juxtaposed against the assumption that God holds all-encompassing power, calls into question whether God's decree is just and, by extension, whether God fills the model of an equitable lawgiver. The repetition *live for ever* and *dream at least to live/ For ever* emphasizes that in the exercise of command God thoroughly opposes the highest aspirations and interests of humanity. This opposition not only punishes the attempt to live in a way not proscribed by God, but also the inclination to independence, freedom and personal determination. While a clear case can be made that Milton's God is evil, this simple conclusion is compatible with the more subtle point that even though God's characterization in the poem as a commander is supremely unlikable, the structure of the poem has kept ambiguous the relationship between God's characterization and God's true nature, and *Paradise Lost* from this point of view becomes an open meditation on the representability of God in a literary medium, poetry.

God's speech takes a softer turn when considering the meaning of the harsh decree to evict humanity from paradise for disobedience. God subsequently refers to the decree as "the sad Sentence rigorously urg'd" (*PL* XI.109). To some degree, the adjectives *sad* and adverb *rigorously* moderate God's character as a lawgiver, showing divine sympathy with the condition of humanity, an acknowledgement that the decree is harsh, and a faint suggestion that this harshness is necessary to the happiness of humanity. Reading the *Sentence*, not as a court judgment, but as a sentence in a literary work, the paradoxical combination of *sad* and *rigorously* that illustrates the tone of the sentence also obscures in mystery the significance and import of God's will. It is a reiteration of the idea that God's true form does not translate to literary form. Likewise, God tells Michael of the intention to "intermix/ My Cov'nant in womans seed renewd" (*PL* XI.116). The allusion to a *Cov'nant* recalls the speech act in God's authority as commander and Genesis as a source text for the epic poem. Following the latter thread, the imagery of the *Cov'nant* incorporated into human reproduction positions God's promise and human life as parts of a single whole. Life is in language, as much as language is in life; God infuses this combination with a presence, neither fully in, nor fully out, of view.

Milton's attempt to display God as a character in *Paradise Lost* takes a turn beyond the polemic of good and evil, then, to concerns about the limits of literary representation and the meaning of the word, a word that is necessarily empty to the contemporary skeptic and necessarily abstract to the contemporary believer.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Words sometimes capture memories. They bring alive an experience that has passed. A good writer in this mode of writing will seek to make the page a clear reflection of the world that surrounds it. Keats and other Romantic poets would develop a kind of poetry that expresses the character of a moment as it slips through the mind. This realism has come to dominate modern poetry and I appreciate poems insofar as they deeply illuminate a thing in my life. But Milton wrote to different ideas in a different time. His world after 1660 was not the bloody insurrection against an English monarch, the fate of battles between royalists and republicans, or the other political concerns that engaged the interests of his contemporaries. The highest aim of Milton's poetry is to give access to the space occupied by God and the metaphysical order of the physical world immediately available to sense experience. This project breathes life into the epic poem when the political arrangements that were the major topic of the day have long since faded into the obscurity of libraries and archives.

Milton's metaphysical project is equally fascinating for the issues it raises and those it leaves unanswered. I imagine with Milton the speeches and acts of God at creation, the creation of humanity and the origin of its current era. I also revisit the myths that I know, as the attempts of other cultures to make sense of the world, for illumination into the nature of the divine being at the root of all life. The story that they spin may be more than entertaining and at times even compelling. But what I find at the end of such a metaphysical project is a mass of ambiguities that leads to confusion and ignorance. As

an epic of all epics, *Paradise Lost* may have sought to surpass the grandeur of heroic

legends in Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Ariosto, and Dante by bringing the focus of the poem

into a divine war between heaven and hell. Its true accomplishment, however, is to bring

into focus the mystery of God's divine being. This uncertainty about the metaphysics that

supposedly underpin physics contributed to the emergence of realism as a primary mode

of contemporary poetry. With *Paradise Lost*, I learn to understand the divinities that

appear in the epic and the epics that preceded it as nothing more than characters in a

fiction that embody a mythic literature without direct correspondence to anything in

existence. In this way, *Paradise Lost* trains a critical focus on the structure of an epic.

   Furthermore, God as a character in the fictional universe of *Paradise Lost* brings unity

to the other characters. God is the focal point that connects the belligerent schemes of

Satan in hell of the first four books, the conversations between Adam and Raphael about

the history of the world of the middle four books, and the astronomical activities of

angels in heaven during the fall of man in the last four books. The narrator also develops

a voice in the poem through meditations on the nature of God. Even without a direct

correspondence to God in full, God as a character stands on its own as a central character

that the other characters of the poem constantly refer back to. In this way, the importance

of God as a character in the structure of the epic poem does serve as a reminder of the

centrality of God as divine being in the Christian worldview of this reality. Readers do

not need to understand something completely in order to appreciate its effect. The friction

between a sharp observation and a solid ignorance is the spark of curiosity that sets

aflame the blaze for knowledge.

Clark Xu

It is too much to say that the God of *Paradise Lost* is evil when Satan and the other fallen angels clearly play the villain in sowing discord among themselves and spreading their dissatisfaction to humanity. To say that God as a character in the poem is good would be to ignore difficult questions about why God would give Satan the opportunity to err and bring humanity to error, or what motive God has for making earth a place of suffering for humanity after the fall, or how God accepts a world that is clearly less than perfect. By detaching God in true form from God in the poem, the debate over whether God is good or evil becomes a false dichotomy. God in true form, as the narrator says, the reader cannot see. God in the poem readers only see from the limited perspective of characters that have a particular relationship to God or from the speech of God in response to these other characters. For these reasons, the reader cannot isolate the character that God plays in the poem from the imperfection of the surrounding world and cast of characters.

Paradise Lost then leaves me with a curiosity about the metaphysical order of the universe that is unsatisfied by all the myths of the past and by a God that is beyond depiction. It may be true that the turn to realism by later artists that operates through a close observation of the natural world and the human mind in the absence of God is a response to this curiosity and its problems. But if I temporarily put aside my hindsight of artistic developments and live fully for the moment when Milton wrote the epic of epics, I see a vast unknown slip free from the long chains of inherited myths. There is nothing more awe-inspiring than walking hand-in-hand from a past life with the freedom to

create. It is the beginning of the universe and the beginning of each life. Into creation,

every glance back is from a place and a time that has never been before.

Bibliography

Achinstein, Sharon. "Milton and the Fit Reader." *British Literature 1640-1789: A Critical Reader*. Ed. Robert DeMaria. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1999. 40-68. Print.

Andrews, A.E. "Pronuntatio." *Harper's Latin Dictionary*. Eds. Charlton Lewis and Charles Short. New York: Harper & Brother, 1878. 1466. Web. 14 Mar. 2018. *Internet Archive*. <https://archive.org/>.

Antique Jewelry University. "A History of Diamond Cutting." *Antique Jewelry University*. San Francisco: Lang Antiques, 2018. Web. 17 Feb. 2018. *Lang Antiques*. <https://www.langantiques.com/>.

Arnold, Matthew. "Hebraism and Hellenism." *Culture and Anarchy*. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1869. Ed. Alfred Drake. 142-166. Web. 16 Mar. 2018. *Project Gutenburg*. <http://www.gutenberg.org/>.

Arnold, Matthew. "Milton." *Essays in Criticism*. London: Macmillan & Co., 1900. 56-68. Print.

Ayer, AJ. *Language, Truth and Logic*. Mineola: Dover Publications, 1952. Print.

Carnes, Valerie. "Time and Language in Milton's Paradise Lost." *English Literary History* 37.4 (1970): 517-539. Web. 23 Jan. 2018. *JSTOR*. <http://www.jstor.org/>.

Cowell, John. *A Law Dictionary: or, the Interpreter of Words and Terms*. London: Browne, 1709. Web. 5 Mar. 2018. *Internet Archive*. <https://archive.org/>.

Curd, Patricia. "Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism." *A Presocratics Reader*. Trans. Richard McKirahan. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2011. 23-30. Print.

DeMaria, Robert. "God." *British Literature 1640-1789: Keywords*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2018. Print.

Digby, Kenelm. "Of Light: what it is." *Two Treatises*. Paris: Blaizot, 1644. Web. 8 April 2018. *Early English Books Online* <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebogroup/>.

Empson, William. *Milton's God*. Westport: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1961. Print.

Fanning, W. "Synod." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. Web. 16 Mar. 2018. *New Advent*. <http://www.newadvent.org>.

Harper, Douglas. "Will." *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Douglas Harper, 2018. Web. 14 Mar. 2018. <https://www.etymonline.com/word/will>.

Issa, Islam. "Paradise Lost in Arabic: Image, Style, and Technique." *Milton in* Translation. Eds. Angelica Duran and Jonathan Olson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 397-414. Print.

Jacobs, Joesph and Judah David Eisenstein. "Synod." *Jewish Encyclopedia*. New York: Funk and Wagnalis, 1906. Vol. 11. 643-645. Web. 16 Mar. 2018. *Jewish Encylopedia*. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com>.

Jones, Alexander Raymond. "Ptolemaic System." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Ed. Grace Young. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2008. Web. 25 Feb. 2018. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. < https://www.britannica.com>.

Keats, John. "To George and Tom Keats, 21, 27 December 1817." *Selected Letters: John Keats*. Eds. Robert Gittings and John Mee. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. 40-42. Print.

Lawson, Evangeline. "Milton's Theology." *The Open Court*. London: The Open Court Publishing Corporation, 1902. Web. 15 Feb. 2018. *Southern Illinois University*. <http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/>.

Matar, Nabil. "Paradise Lost as an Islamic Epic: Muhammad 'Anani's translation." *English Studies* 1.96 (2015): 6-20. Web. 16 Mar. 2018. *Taylor & Francis*. < https://www.tandfonline.com/>.

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Ed. Alastair Fowler. 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge, 2013. Print.

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Ed. Barbara K. Lewalski. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Print.

Milton, John. *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine*. Trans. Charles A. Sumner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1825. Web. 8 Apr. 2018. *University of Virginia* <http://www.virginia.edu/ >.

Muropa, Clyde. "The Johannine Writings: Symbolism and the Symbol of 'Light' in the Gospel of John." *The Asbury Journal* 67.2 (2012): 106-113. Web. 5 Apr. 2018. *Asbury Theological Seminary*. <http://place.asburyseminary.edu/>.

Peters, Winfried. "Gold Trade and Gold Mining in the 15th to 18th Century at the Gold Coast." *Zeitschrift der Foerderer des Bergbaus und des Huettenwesens* 1.20 (1986): 1-19. Web. 17 Feb. 2018. *Geo-Leo*. <https://e-docs.geo-leo.de/>.

Ricks, Christopher. *Milton's Grand Style*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963. Print.

Smith, Nigel. *Is Milton Better than Shakespeare?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008. Print.

The Bible. Authorized King James Version. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.

Webber, Joan. "Milton's God." *English Literary History* 40.4 (1973): 514-531. Web. 23 Jan. 2018. *JSTOR*. <http://www.jstor.org/>.

"Vercingetorix." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2018. Web. 15 April 2018. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/>.