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Paradise Lost as a Political Warning

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Abstract

John Milton viewed himself as a prophet and he used his poetry and prose as vehicles for communicating God's will to the people of England. This thesis analyzes *Paradise Lost* having a political message for England. Milton believed language was sacred and that open discourse was the primary target for a tyrant. I will assert that Milton utilizes his epic poem to fulfill his prophetic duty to provide his nation with a method to recognize and expel tyranny.

Paradise Lost as a Political Warning

When writing *Paradise Lost*, John Milton sought to reveal the intricacies of the Genesis story and the untold involvement of Satan. Beyond his intent to fill the gaps in the Christian story, Milton also used the poem to address the ongoing political turmoil of England. Milton witnessed England suffer from what he regarded as the tyrannical hands of Charles I, questioned the legitimacy of the Protectorate, and was briefly jailed by the monarchy of Charles II. Given the seemingly never-ending political battlefield that was England, Milton believed it was his duty to educate his nation on how to recognize and defend themselves from tyranny. To achieve this lofty goal, I propose *Paradise Lost* contains warnings of tyranny and the proper actions to take against it. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton relays, through Satan, his idea of a tyrant as the ultimate deceiver of reason and manipulator of language. In an effort to fulfill his prophetic duty to warn his nation of dangers and lead them towards God, Satan's actions match the descriptions of tyrannical abuse that Milton wrote of in *Areopagitica*, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, and *Eikonoklastes*. Milton's affinity for classical rhetoric is no secret. However, this essay will argue that he utilizes it at key moments for a specific purpose. Satan's combination of authoritative appeal and *aporia* (casting doubt) during the infernal debate and the tempting of Eve exemplifies how the artful misuse of language distracts audiences from their sense of reason. In contrast, the *prohairesis* (reason) displayed by Abdiel and The Father during the celestial war provides his readers assurance that armed intervention is a reasonable course of action against tyranny. This essay does not seek to compare Satan to a specific ruler in English history but rather to demonstrate how Satan represents Milton's understanding of the rhetoric of tyranny and how

Satan's actions provide themselves as a reference for what the people of England ought to recognize and how to reject it.

The claims in this essay reject both William Empson's and Michael Bryson's beliefs that Milton portrays The Father as holding a tyranny over Heaven. While Bryson views Milton's "'fit' audience as an audience capable of seeing through the traditional images of kingship with which he imbued the Father in his great epic" (23), I sustain that Milton applies these traditional characteristics to Satan rather than The Father. Also, though Empson admits that Milton was "following the Old Testament scrupulously" when describing The Father, his idea that Milton used *Paradise Lost* to critique and question The Father conflicts with Milton's self-proclaimed duty as a prophet. Instead, this essay more closely aligns with David Williams, who interprets the epic as a poetic continuation of Milton's politics, which do not view The Father as tyrannical. Bryson and Empson overlook the obvious tyrannical figure in the poem: Satan. If, like Williams, we compare *Paradise Lost* to Milton's shifting political stances embodied in his prose tracts, then we will see clearly that Milton's definitions of tyranny describe Satan, and not The Father, as the poem's real tyrant. Williams states that "the demands placed on readers by [Milton's] progressive political evolution on earth (let alone heaven) are considerable" (24). I follow his method of relating events in *Paradise Lost* to Milton's political tracts, however, I do not explore his argument that *Paradise Lost* aligns with the beliefs of the Levellers. I hope to forward the discussion on the political implications within *Paradise Lost* which support the traditional idea of The Father as a just monarch and Satan as a malevolent tyrant.

Milton's self-identity as a prophet is of utmost importance. He believed his prophetic invocation from God required him to speak to his countrymen about the future of England. In what follows I will demonstrate how Milton's alignment with Old Testament prophets influenced

his perception of England and his prophetic mission. Milton cherished England and envisioned it as crucial to the progress of Christianity. Therefore, to understand Milton's duty to his nation we cannot ignore the context of the political landscape of sixteenth century England. As shown through his numerous political tracts, Milton felt England was susceptible to tyrannical assaults on language and reason. From his early Gunpowder poems to his post-civil war tracts, Milton constantly warned his nation of the Church's, Parliament's, or the Monarchy's attempts to control the commonwealth by disturbing free discourse. In establishing this tendency, we will review *Areopagitica's* defense of free publishing, which cites the people's ability to apply reason to filter through harmful ideas, and his 1649 books *Tenure* and *Eikonoklastes*, which asserts regicide as the correct choice to get rid of a tyrant.

Milton's explicit instructions of how to recognize and reject tyranny remain largely in his prose, however, Milton felt that poetry could benefit the nation in a manner that prose could not. I will explain how Milton seemingly follows the advice of Cicero who insisted that the pleasure of poetry could persuade better than oration or prose. To supplement this idea, Milton inserted classical rhetoric, which he maintained throughout his career as a persuasive poetic tool. At this point in the essay, a brief analysis of Milton's knowledge of and fondness for classical rhetoric becomes needed. It proves essential to my claims that Milton actively tried to incorporate ancient techniques such as *aporia*, and Isocrates's technique of heightening one's reputation to seem more honorable, into his writings to demonstrate the tyrant's corruption of language. These rhetorical devices find their way into *Paradise Lost*, which I will argue are used to provide instructions against tyranny.

The remaining sections of the paper serve to analyze key moments of Milton's retelling of Judeo-Christian History such as the infernal debate and Satan's tempting of Eve. These

moments echo the warnings of deceptive language and the utility of reason found in his earlier political tracts. In particular, Milton uses *aporia* and the aforementioned Isocratic technique in Books II and IX to showcase the dangers of deceptive language. In addition to demonstrating the tyrant's abuse of rhetoric, I will detail how Milton promotes both proper dialogue and physical interference as options to defend against tyranny. In Book VI Milton writes of Abdiel's reason as something to emulate and in Book IX he exemplifies Eve's lack of reason as a mistake to learn from. Though Milton urges his readers to rely on reason and open discourse, he assures his nation that armed intervention is a reasonable reaction when reason is manipulated. The similarities between the angelic war in Book VI and the defense of regicide in *Tenure* and *Eikonoklastes* indicate that Milton uses the civil war in Heaven to ensure his nation that a forceful removal of tyranny is acceptable. Once these resemblances are investigated, it will become clear Milton's epic includes a novel attempt to spread the same warning he had in his political prose.

Milton's Prophet

First, we must discuss Milton's perception of himself as a prophet and how *Paradise Lost* acts as Milton's medium for his prophetic warning of tyranny to England. The seriousness of his conviction becomes apparent as William Kerrigan reminds us, "Milton believed himself a prophet. The traditional idea became inseparable from the self who had received that tradition. He spoke as a prophet, rarely of the prophet, and this belief in intimate impulse and divine favor sustained him through most of his life" (Kerrigan found in Hill 77). But how did Milton understand the term? As John Spencer Hill wrote, within the 20 years prior to writing *Paradise Lost* Milton felt a "deepening conviction that he has been marked for special service as God's spokesman to the nation" and "the most important aspect of Milton's prophetic vocation is his

conviction that his own calling is only meaningful within the context of the national mission, and this belief places him firmly in the tradition of Old Testament prophecy” (Hill 77-82). Given his numerous political tracts, the concern Milton had for his nation is evident. *Paradise Lost* incorporates an attempt to facilitate God’s instructions to combat tyranny. This resonates with other scholars such as Achsah Guibbory who writes that Milton attempts “both to defend the nation from its enemies and to speak to it, much as the Hebrew prophets had spoken to Israel” (Guibbory). Milton himself expressed the prophet’s need to address “the corrupt desires of men in fleshly doctrines, [which] stirre them up to presecute with hatred and contempt” by “testify[ing] [the] Truth and the excellence of that heavenly traffick which they bring against what opposition, or danger soever” (*The Reason of Church Government: Book II Prologue*). With England’s volatile government, Milton believed his nation was a potential victim of tyranny and while he could not change the political landscape himself, he attempted to guide England to true liberty.

Also, *Paradise Lost* purports to unearth lost Judeo-Christian History. This intertwines with his prophetic duty, as Hebraic prophetic language has the goal to reveal the past in the present “as something that has been there lying dormant all along” (Crawforth 114). Milton further positions himself as an emulator of Hebraic prophets as he tells of the events before and during the Old Testament. Milton uncovers the unrecorded history of Satan’s rebellion and the fall of man and instills within it numerous religious and civic values for his nation, many of which reflect his political prose.

Milton took pride in England and thought it claimed an important role in the future of Christian History. As other Christians believed, Milton envisioned England as the New Jerusalem, which would usher in an era where England would represent and forward the will of

God. William Haller writes that Puritans foresaw New Jerusalem as “a free field where it could grow in godliness, untroubled by the powers of the world” (191). This led some men, such as Milton, “to grow impatient with the slow processes of reform and to attempt the erection of the true church for themselves in their own time” (175). Just as Joshua, the prophetic successor of Moses, led the Hebrews into the Promised Land and set forth the government of the tribes of Israel, Milton assumed a similar role by teaching the commonwealth the correct political discourse to achieve a godly state. Milton assumed that the commonwealth “must be always endeavoring to learn whom, what and why to obey” (Haller 347). For England to become the New Jerusalem, the threat of tyranny needed attention. In *Of Reformation*, Milton describes a government worth the nation:

that to govern well, is to train up a nation in true wisdom and virtue, and that which springs from thence, magnanimity, (take heed of that,) and that which is our beginning, regeneration, and happiest end, likeness to God, which in one word we call godliness; and that this is the true flourishing of a land” (*Of Reformation Book II*).

Milton’s ideal government prioritizes the spiritual growth of a nation and only then can England flourish. New Jerusalem could not thrive in a state that was not dedicated to uncovering Truth through reasonable discourse, and to remedy this, Milton set out to establish a free and truth-seeking nation. Though Hebrew prophets used the spoken word to relay God’s guidance, Milton applied the written word as his prophetic medium. For much of his life, Milton employed his political tracts to critique institutions that prevented an acceptable environment for God’s new city.

Milton’s Entanglements with Tyranny

Milton routinely challenged The Church of England and Parliament, which he considered susceptible to tyranny, and the Monarchy, which he viewed as inherently tyrannical. If both the religious and social spheres of England succumbed to corruption, the nation could not prosper and become the sacred place for the advancement of Christianity. Nicholas McDowell suggests that Milton's earliest political commentary arises through his Latin Gunpowder poems:

"Milton's 1626 Gunpowder poems might be read as (very) implicit warnings that the Catholic threat to the English State... was at risk of again becoming urgent in the early years of the reign of Charles I" (McDowell 129). Milton's awareness of potential political dangers and his ability to effectively address them sharpens as he ages. While he continues to warn of tyranny in his poetry, Milton primarily combated it in his prose. Milton's political tracts consistently address the tyrannical mutilation of language which distracts or outright denies the commonwealth their freedom.

In 1641, Milton released his pamphlet *Of Reformation* which argued that reformation of the Church of England should result in the self-governance of congregations. He viewed the episcopacy as "a tyrannical crew and corporation of impostors, that have blinded and abused the world so long under that name" (*Reformation*). He believed "under [that] inquisitorious and tyrannical duncery, no free and splendid wit can flourish" (*Reformation*). For England to prosper, Milton attempted to sway his audience to reject a church that would hinder the commonwealth's ability to both participate in proper discourse and acquire spiritual growth. Months later in 1642, Milton published *The Reason of Church Government* in which he unveiled the Church of England's control over language as a reason he left the Church:

...perceiving what tyranny had invaded the Church, that he who would take
Orders must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which unlesse he took with

a conscience that would retch, he must either strait perjure, or split his faith, I thought it better to preferre a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking bought, and begun with servitude and forswearing. (*Reason* Preface)

This may refer to “The Etcaetera Oath” which one must swear by when being ordained into the Church, which Milton was “destin’d of a child” to do (*Reason*). An oath bearer would commit to the following:

I, A. B., do swear that I do approve the doctrine, and discipline, or government established in the Church of England as containing all things necessary to salvation...nor will I ever give my consent to alter the government of this Church by archbishops, bishops, deans, and archdeacons, &c., as it stand now established... (*Etcaetera*).

Though he had been raised and encouraged to join the Church, Milton could not, with good conscience, bow to what he had disapproved of and claimed to be tyrannical in his gunpowder poems. Furthermore, the insistence that one could not propose to alter the Church contradicted Milton’s vision for the nation which, he believed, needed proper reform. Within Milton’s refusal of the oath, he positions freedom of speech as a ‘sacred office’ which should not be constricted by fleshly laws. The text makes clear that speech itself is sacred to Milton. To misuse or deny speech undermined the goal of a Christian state and Milton sought to purge the government of any such actions.

To accomplish a religious *and* social upheaval, Milton found it necessary to address not only the Church of England but the English government as well. New Jerusalem could not thrive unless its government actively promoted godliness and freedom. On numerous occasions, Milton

thought the government was impeding on the language of the people and he took it upon himself to judge them accordingly. Though Parliament was meant to balance the power of the monarchy, it was still an institution governed by men and therefore prone to corruption. As for the monarchy, Milton was of the belief since Jesus had provided liberty with his death, no man should claim reign over a godly state. Milton saw acts such as the Licensing Order of 1643 and King Charles I's claim to Divine Right as a threat to New Jerusalem. He continued his quest for a more pious nation in prose as he wrote on the importance of free and reason-based discourse in *Areopagitica*, and of the extreme actions a nation must take to rid itself of tyranny in *Tenure* and *Eikonoklastes*.

When both houses of Parliament put forth the Licensing Order of 1643, which prohibited the printing or sale of books by those not licensed under Parliament, Milton felt it his responsibility to address the government's encroachment on civil liberties (the freedom of language). As Milton witnessed the voices of his countrymen censored by Parliament, he took it upon himself as a prophet to warn his nation:

that if it come to inquisitioning again, and licencing, and that [if] we are timorous of our selvs, and so suspicious of all men, as to fear each book, and the shaking of every leaf, before we know what the contents are, if some who but of late were little better then silnc't from preaching, shall come now to silence us from reading, except what they please, it cannot be guest what is intended by som but a second tyranny over learning. (*Areopagitica*)

Here, Milton showcases his prophetic voice by addressing the future dangers that the nation would face, should the licensing order remain law. He tells his nation this law can only succeed if the common people are fooled into fearing the voice of fellow countrymen. Only then could a

tyrannical government control what is read and therefore influence what is considered truth. Milton contended that readers could apply “the breathe of reason it self” (*Areopagitica*) to parse through “scandalous, seditious, and libellous Books” (*Areopagitica*), and any attempt to disrupt that process was to be seen as an attack on freedom. Milton believed an earnest use of reason could reveal not just the falsehoods of bad books, but also the truths which they intend to hide. Consequently, he saw Parliament’s order as detrimental to the commonwealth’s understanding of what to stay away from and what to strive towards. In particular, Milton detested censorship for he believed it would lead to the output of homogenous ideas and thus away from Truth. To combat this, Milton compared the nation to a physical structure dependent on a diversity of materials: “neither can every peece of the building be of one form; nay rather the perfection consists in this, that out of many moderat varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes that are not vastly disproportionall arises the goodly and the gracefull symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure” (*Areopagitica*). For England to withstand tyranny, it must allow its people the opportunity to use reason as a method to filter out the ungodly. Thus, *Areopagitica* reveals Milton’s answer to tyrannical deception: open discourse directed by reason.

Though Milton viewed The Church and Parliament as vulnerable to tyranny, a man-led Monarchy was fundamentally tyrannical. For Milton, there was only one legitimate monarchy: that of Heaven. Milton understood Charles’s claim of Divine Right as the ultimate deception of reason because it was a manipulation of the word of God. After the execution of Charles I, Milton saw an opportunity to warn his nation against returning to such a system and Milton came to the defense of Parliament and the High Court of Justice with *Eikonoklastes*. This book expands on Milton’s warning of monarchies in *Tenure* and also defends England’s choice of regicide. But more importantly, *Eikonoklastes* denounces Charles’s deceptive claim to Divine

Right that he made in *Eikon Basilike*. Milton writes: “Christian libertie purchas'd with the death of our Redeemer, and establish'd by the sending of his free Spirit to inhabit in us, is not now to depend upon the doubtful consent of any earthly Monarch” (*Eikonoklastes*). Milton alludes to the spiritual consequences of politics and asserts that the death of Jesus led to the uselessness of having a human ruler. Since postlapsarian man cannot achieve divine knowledge, Milton insisted that the nation would spiritually suffer if they took instructions from a man instead of those set forth in The Bible. Milton concludes *Eikonoklastes* asserting that the commonwealth's greatest defense against tyranny is “Truth herself” for it leads to Justice, which will defend “against all violence and oppression on the earth. Shee it is most truly, who accepts no Person, and exempts none from the severity of her stroke” (*Eikonoklastes*). To Milton, truth-based justice is the most powerful defense a nation has against tyranny. No person could rise above Justice, and any attempt should be seen as an affront the monarchy of God. A monarch was not necessary because, as Milton said in *Areopagitica*, the nation could use reason to find Truth, which would lead the people to a righteous future.

Milton was aware that tyranny would not always be overcome with reason and assured his nation that a forceful removal of tyranny is a viable option. This message is found in both *Tenure* and *Eikonoklastes* as he defends the use of regicide against Charles I. In *Tenure* Milton praises the Protectorate for their hand in regicide: “I say not by whose matchless valour next under God...were the men who in the truest sense killd the King” (*Tenure*). The attention to their ‘truest sense’ agrees with his previous stance that through reason Truth could be recognized, and in this case, Milton defends regicide as an acceptable reaction to the dismissal of Truth. In *Eikonoklastes*, Milton rejects Charles's corruption of language: “Tyranny of a negative voice, which he claimes above the unanimous consent and power of a whole nation virtually in the

Parliament. In which negative voice to have bin cast by the doom of Warr, and put to death by those who vanquisht him in thir own defence” (*Eikonklastes*). The negative voice Milton speaks of is Charles’s unquestionable veto power within Parliament which Milton viewed as a violent act against the voice of the nation. As he wrote in *Areopagitica*, New Jerusalem could not grow if free discourse is stifled. By positioning the regicide as an acceptable defense against the corruption of language, Milton provides England with a full defense against tyranny.

A Poet-Prophet

Milton’s life-long involvement in the political realm may seem odd for a poet, but to Milton, attempting to navigate his nation through tyrannical periods was his prophetic calling. McDowell notes that in the years leading to the conception of *Paradise Lost*, Milton’s dedication to liberty “was motivated less by ‘benevolence towards all men’ than by a conviction that *humanitas*, of which poetry was both an embodiment and a key constituent, could only be pursued under religious and civil conditions that enabled freedom of thought and the advancement of learning” (McDowell 78). He remained adamant that free language and reason were necessary for the foundation of New Jerusalem and that poetry was a key part of teaching the nation the importance of these liberties. McDowell further suggests that Milton appreciated Shakespeare’s renditions of British history because they offered “vivid lessons in the nature and consequences of tyranny” (137). It should not be surprising that Milton focuses on Shakespeare’s anti-tyrannical plays since Milton was concerned with both the present and future of the nation. The method of mixing art and teaching intrigued Milton because art transcends the present and allows future generations to learn in a pleasurable way.

For *Paradise Lost*, Milton often relied on classical beliefs and rhetoric to enhance the appeal of his political insertions. Milton received an extensive education in classical rhetoric and

history. He attended St. Paul's School in London which had "a program of teaching based upon the procedures and purposes of the ancient Roman schools which had educated Cicero and Ovid, and it was still designed to train a picked class of youths in grammar, logic, and rhetoric" (Haller 248). Historians have gathered information from a curriculum used 50 years after Milton attended St. Paul's, curriculums from neighboring grammar schools, and Milton's own narratives to make a conjectured curriculum of study (Clark 119-120). According to Clark, St. Paul's used an ancient method for teaching which used "textbook precepts for theory; literary models for imitation; [and] exercises in theme writing for praxis" (Clark 196) Though many schoolboys shared this experience, William Haller has noted that not only did Milton receive this classical education, but Milton himself "was at all times consistently faithful to the ideals of the classical rhetoric in which he was reared" (Haller 248). Therefore, it is important to understand how classical rhetoric supported his prophetic goal of teaching his audience about tyranny. Prior to *Paradise Lost*, Milton wrote *Tenure* as an attempt to convince the Presbyterians that the execution of King Charles I was supported by scripture and historical precedent. However, it has been argued by Paul Rahe and Michael Neufeld that the effectiveness of *Tenure* relied more on classical rhetoric than Biblical evidence (Neufeld 331). Correspondingly, Clark reminds us Milton's use of rhetoric often leaked from his prose into his poetry. (Clark 202).

His classical and prophetic inclinations meet as Milton seeks to persuade his nation of potential tyranny. Cicero highlights poetry's influence on politics in his *Pro Archia Poeta* when he wrote that men ascended from brutishness "because they founded states and by their divine inspiration were the first to teach all the arts of which we are the heirs today—thanks to their presentation in the alluring disguise of poetry" (Cicero *Pro Archia poeta*, VIII 19; Prolusion I). With the effort to ensure Britain's future security, Milton did as the ancients had suggested and

changed his political warnings from prose to poetry. Along with this change, William Haller suggests that Milton follows William Perkins's instructions for a prophet in his book *Art of Prophecy*: "The minister must go so frame his preaching 'that all, even ignorant persons & unbelievers may judge that it is not so much he that speaketh, as the Spirit of God in him and by him'" and "In the same spirit, Milton...would finally abandon Latin in order to address himself to his fellow citizens in the mother dialect" (Perkins 131-133). Milton addresses this issue in the Front Matter of *Paradise Lost* where he explains his experimental use of blank verse in English: "This neglect then of Rhime so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar Readers, that it rather is to be esteem'd an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recover'd to heroic Poem from the troublesom and modern bondage of Rimeing" (*Paradise Lost* Front Matter). Replicating classical poets such as Virgil and Homer was crucial to advancing out of brutish tyranny. Also, the idea of *recovering* the ancient liberties suggests Milton follows St. Augustine's advice on Christian teaching: "In a word, the function of eloquence in teaching is not to make people like what was once offensive, or to make them do what they were loth to do, but to make clear what was hidden from them" (IV X 25 – XII 27 72-73). Milton positions freedoms as long hidden from the people of England and asserts his new poetic form can uncover those liberties. Milton's unearthing of untold history to bring his nation closer to those ancient liberties intertwines with the prophetic duty Crawford spoke of; and to teach his nation of the unknown, the use of classical rhetoric proved necessary.

To succeed in such instruction, Milton utilizes rhetorical questions and tropes to persuade his readers to believe and learn from his poetic retelling of Judeo-Christian History. Milton expresses classical rhetoric's important role in revealing and teaching the divine in *Of Education*:

[That] sublime art which in Aristotle's Poetics, in Horace, and the Italian commentaries of Castelvetro, Tasso, Mazzoni, and others, teaches what the laws are of a true epic poem, what of a dramatic, what of a lyric, what decorum is, which is the grand masterpiece to observe. This would make them soon perceive what despicable creatures our common rhymers and play-writers be; and show them what religious, what glorious and magnificent use might be made of poetry, both in divine and human things (*Of Education*).

Here, Milton details the importance of rhetoric in relation to poetry, and the importance of poetry's part in understanding the divine. Clearly, Milton saw classical rhetoric as a tool for the prophet to communicate the divine to his nation and because of it, Milton makes his persuasion more easily acceptable while also remaining pleasurable.

As Milton hoped to protect the public good through his poetry, he portrayed Satan like he depicted tyrants in his prose: "The figure of the tyrant in Milton's prose is the worst possible human being imaginable because he is totally enthralled to his passions and self-interest, and so is infinitely dangerous to the public good" (Neufeld 337). Satan's tyranny distracts his audiences from truth and instead points towards his own desires. He accomplishes this with his use of *aporia* [casting doubt] in conjunction with Isocrates's advice of elevating one's status in society. In *Antidosis*, Isocrates claimed a skilled orator would recognize "[An] honourable reputation not only lends greater persuasiveness to the words of the man who possesses it, but adds greater lustre to his deeds" (341). Then, they would take advantage of that by applying *aporia* to express doubt on a subject with hopes that their audience will also become doubtful. One must remember that the beings in *Paradise Lost* possess a sense of reason unimaginable to postlapsarian man. When used in tandem, these techniques create an argument that seems sensible while making

another argument harmful. This occurs in both Pandemonium and The Garden of Eden writes as Satan exemplifies his manipulation of language for tyrannical purposes. In Pandemonium, the fallen angels engage in *aporia* as they “lead their fellow devils into accepting their arguments not through direct speech, but through a series of questions that cast an ever-increasing shadow of doubt on their opponent’s arguments” (Canino 20). After, Beelzebub, who is under the direction of Satan, persuades via *aporia*, Satan follows up with an elevation of status. While in Eden, Satan convinces Eve he rose from a normal serpent to a reason-bearing creature, and then applies *aporia* by doubting the danger of the fruit and The Father’s omniscience. These moments hold within them warnings of a tyrant stifling proper discourse.

Though classical rhetoric is pleasurable, Milton uses Satan’s command of rhetoric to warn against the manipulation of language that Milton wrote of in his prose. Pleasurable rhetoric acts as a powerful tool of language, and for that reason, Milton warns his audience of its potential molestation by a tyrant who would use it to lead astray. Joan S. Bennet notes Milton’s recognition of this: “A successful tyrant must therefore, Milton knew, be a master of rhetoric; for rhetoric is the tool he can employ against the reason of the law to disguise his crime” (451). As Milton created a physically appealing Satan with angelic magnificence in heaven who did not get stripped of his “original brightness” (l. 592) in Hell, Milton purposefully designed the archfiend’s arguments to appeal to the mind. As Milton asserts in *Areopagitica*, one must find the falsehoods in such speech by relying on reason itself: “be assur’d, Lords and Commons, there can be no greater testimony appear, then when your prudent spirit acknowledges and obeyes the voice of reason from what quarter soever it be heard speaking; and renders ye as willing to repeal any Act of your own setting forth, as any set forth by your Predecessors” (*Areopagitica*). Milton guarantees Satan’s speeches are easily refutable, but Eve and the devils are distracted by his

flashy rhetoric. However, Abdiel, though he was initially a member of the rebel crew, successfully outsmarted Satan by debating the sensibility of what he was proposing. Abdiel's appeal to The Father's omniscience represents how both Lords and Commons should confront tyrannical language.

Paradise Lost serves many purposes. We will analyze one of them as a guide to identify and defend against tyranny. Given Milton's association with Hebraic prophets, his various political tracts in which he exercises his prophetic role and his connecting of *humanitas* to poetry, it stands to reason that the prophetic poem that is *Paradise Lost* is an effort to ensure the safety of what he believed to be God's chosen nation.

Paradise Lost: A Warning

Milton wastes no time showing the tyrannical nature of Satan's government as he depicts the oppressed nature of Hell. Milton uses Book I to portray the nature of tyranny and how a tyrant relies on trickery. Satan possesses a massive army, as did Charles, but as their arms fail both tyrants resort to deception as means to put their will above their constituents. Joan S. Bennet writes "Both Satan and Charles move in their plan of attack 'from violence to craft'" (446). This craft is not only used against The Father, but Satan also uses it against his followers. In Book I Satan tells the devils they still have a chance at victory:

our better part remains

To work in close design, by fraud or guile

What force effected not: that he no less

At length from us may find, who overcomes

By force, hath overcome but half his foe. (I.645-649)

Satan admits The Father cannot be surpassed physically, and though he knows he cannot outsmart The Father, he distracts his followers from this fact by providing the false hope of a sneak attack. Satan further exemplifies his tyrannical government as he positions himself and his accomplices above the unnamed devils. In Pandemonium he acts not like a tyrant forcing his plans on his subjects, but rather as a ruler open to discussion. Yet, while the nameless and “numberless” devils reduce their size “less then smallest Dwarfs”, the “great Seraphic Lords and Cherubim / In close recess and secret conclave sat” while remaining “in thir own dimensions” (793-795). The separation of the higher lords shows their perceived elevated status and the dismissal of the political opinion of their underlings. A tyrannical government, as Milton shows, feigns concern and equality for those they rule over while furtively manipulating the public discourse for its own benefit.

The outcome of this secretive and aristocratic structure of Satan’s tyrannical government reveals itself in Book II as Satan, fresh from a shameful defeat, instructs Beelzebub to act as his mouthpiece. Even within the already sequestered group of devils, Satan further manipulates the debate as he pretends to oversee the *free* discussion between them. As Moloch calls for war and Belial peace, they can either stay in Hell or once again attack heaven. Since Satan wants to avoid battle, he has Beelzebub “[plead] his devilish Counsel (II. 379) to redirect the fallen angels away from Moloch’s call for war. This reflects Milton’s critique of Charles and the Royalists in *Eikonoklastes* where he says, “when they can no longer do as lions, [they] do as foxes” (XVIII. 68). In Pandemonium, Satan and his partner manipulate the discourse and apply *aporia* to accomplish this goal. Beelzebub casts doubt upon their ability to stay in Hell as he asks, “For what peace will be giv'n / To us enslav'd, but custody severe, / And stripes, and arbitrary punishment / Inflicted?” (II. 332-336). Beelzebub gets his audience to become doubtful of

Belial's option as he questions their safety by reminding them their eternal punishment had just begun. Yet, by doubting Belial it implies that they should listen to Moloch. However, like a lazy man points to the difficulties of the path to success as reasons not to take it, Beelzebub shows his uncertainty by pointing out to the devils that Heaven's: "high walls fear no assault or Siege, / Or ambush from the Deep" (II. 421-2). He uses Heaven's impenetrability to deny Moloch's plan and leaves his audience with no options. Once swaying them into a state of doubtfulness, he offers a more subtle plot and tempts them with an "easier enterprize" (II. 344). Much like how Milton described Charles "follow[ing] at the heels those messengers of peace with a train of covert war" (Eikon), Beelzebub seemingly advocates for peace, then tricks his audience into supporting a such a war. Though this deception is posed as beneficial to the devils, Satan and his supporters act as an enemy of the people as they reject their voices for Satan's own pursuits.

As Beelzebub skirts his true intention by doubting other options, Milton signals to his audience to look at what is being denied rather than proposed by their leaders. Though it seemed like the devils had a choice, the twofold denial of proper discourse put in place by Satan restricted any dissenting views. The rejection of the lesser devils indicates the interests of the common people are second to that of the tyrant and his cohort; Satan's manipulation of the higher devils reveals the only voice that matters in a tyranny is the tyrant's. Not only does Satan create a subtle war against heaven, but by tampering with the supposedly free discourse of the devils with dishonest rhetoric, Satan effectively engages in a war for the minds and obedience of his followers. This mimics Milton's warning of the false rhetoric of tyrants in *Eikonoklastes* "Which words, of themselves, as farr as they are sense, good and Philosophical, yet in the mouth of him who to engross this common libertie to himself, would tred down all other men into the condition of Slaves and beasts, they quite loose thir commendation" (412 found in Bennet). As

Satan subjugates his own supporters, the scene in Pandemonium exemplifies a warning to Milton's readers, showing them how powerful rhetoric can corrupt discourse when in the wrong hands.

Tyrants not only seek to corrupt ongoing dialogue; they also prevent it from beginning. Milton echoes this warning as Satan showers himself with praise and raises himself above the competing devils. This compliments Bennet's assertion that tyranny appears "disguised in a heroic mask as a kind of nobility designed to retain the loyalty and submission of the tyrant's followers" (446). To Milton, a tyrant does not have the people's support. Therefore, Milton's tyrant must elevate themselves and convince those they rule over that their authority is justifiable. Milton is familiar with this as Charles I employed this technique with *Eikon Basilike* where he emphasized his Divine Right to rule. Once in this position, all resistance to the Monarchy was resistance to God, thus halting any discourse. Likewise, after Satan led the failed coup, he could not allow a fellow devil to succeed in tainting The Father's new creation. Realizing this, he announced he would accept the "weight of all and [their] last hope" (II.416). It is then he "rais'd / Above his fellows, with Monarchal pride / Conscious of highest worth" (II. 424-426) and proclaimed:

Wherefore do I assume
These Royalties, and not refuse to Reign,
Refusing to accept as great a share
Of hazard as of honour, due alike
To him who Reigns, and so much to him due
Of hazard more, as he above the rest
High honourd sits?...

Satan grants himself “Royalties” and highlights the danger he will confront to save the devils: “Against a wakeful foe, while I abroad / Through all the coasts of dark destruction seek / Deliverance for us all” (II. 463-465). He orders the devils: “None shall partake with me...and prevented all reply” (II. 466-7). Satan stops any discussion that may lead to another candidate. He dictates that only he can go since, as their leader, it would be dishonorable to have one of his subordinates take the risk. Though Satan imitates The Son, he believes he must redeem himself from his failure in Heaven.

Later, in Book IV, Satan confesses his lie and his true place in nature:

...the Spirits beneath, whom I seduc'd
With other promises and other vaunts
Then to submit, boasting I could subdue
Th' Omnipotent. Ay me, they little know
How dearily I abide that boast so vain,
Under what torments inwardly I groane (IV. 83-88)

Consequently, Milton describes the capitalization of Satan's status among the Fallen Angels as “winning cheap the high repute / Which he through hazard huge must earn” (II 471-472).

Notably, it coincides with Milton's description of Charles I in his *History of Britain*:

But, when once the superficial zeal and popular fumes that acted [or actuated] their new magistracy, were cooled and spent in them, straight every one betook himself (setting the commonwealth behind, and his private ends before), to do as his own Profit, or Ambition, led him.” (*History*)

Milton emphasizes reputation gained through trickery and suppression as not earned, and a tyrant cannot earn it because his actions are for his own benefit rather than those over whom he reigns.

As Milton repeatedly called for the use of reason to defend against acts of tyranny in his prose, he does so in his poetry. Milton balances his warnings with a depiction of God informing the angels of his plan and then overseeing a free discussion of it. While Satan must trick the devils to execute his secret plan, The Father gives complete transparency of the future of man and the suffering that must occur to absolve man's fall. In contrast to Satan's selfishness, The Father uses his earned superior status in a benevolent manner. Instead of commanding himself sole responsibility, or forcing the responsibility onto someone else, The Father calls upon the congregation of Heaven and asks:

Say Heav'nly Powers, where shall we find such love,
Which of ye will be mortal to redeem
Mans mortal crime, and just th' unjust to save,
Dwels in all Heaven charitie so deare?" (III. 213-216).

Though The Father earlier decreed "Some I have chosen of peculiar grace / Elect above the rest" (III. 185-5), he gives his audience a choice in the matter. No angel could possibly succeed, save The Son, but by allowing the lesser angels an opportunity to fulfill the role, Milton shows that The Father does not fear open discussion. As Milton wrote in *Areopagitica*, proper governance requires discussion between all levels of the nation; though "all the Heav'nly Quire stood mute" (III. 217) and The Son steps forward to assume the role, the opportunity for honest conversation is evident. One may point to the fact The Father withholds information of the reward of "highest bliss / Equal to God, and equally enjoying / God-like fruition" (III. 305-6) as evidence of a nontransparent discussion. However, by detailing only the suffering of the candidate, The Father

assures that whoever steps up is acting out of selflessness. The Father's governance stands in contrast with that of Satan's, which immediately ostracized the lesser devils and denied any of the higher devils to partake in the Hellish conquest. The differing outcomes of these governmental processes demonstrate the spiritual consequences of allowing tyranny. To follow a reasonable leader who values all voices allows the people to produce a better future for the nation. Heaven under The Father's rule is the ideal example of what Milton wishes New Jerusalem to emulate.

Milton envisioned New Jerusalem led not by man but God. To Milton, a ruler who put their own desires and wants above those of God was detrimental to freedom. Saint Augustine wrote of this as the fatal flaw of man: "God commended obedience, which is, in sort, the mother and guardian of all the virtues in the reasonable creature, which was so created that submission is advantageous to it, while the fulfillment of its own will in preference to the Creator's is destruction" (*Civ. Dei, XIV 12*). Charles I did not submit to God but instead believed he had a Divine Right to rule. In *Eikonoklastes* Milton rejects Charles' claim of having equal authority to God and refers to it as "contrary to the plaine teaching of Christ, that *No man can serve two Masters*, but, if he hold to the one, he must reject and forsake the other" (*Eikonoklastes*). To Milton, the lure of power summons pride, and once pride overcomes reason then tyranny is born. Though Charles did not believe he was subverting God's will, Milton insisted England's highest power could be entrusted to God alone.

Once Satan reaches Earth, he knows he must distract Eve from the one Truth of The Father. J.B. Broadbent states that Satan's rhetoric "tends to question-begging... *aporia*; his figures flicker with suspicious speed, sentences wind with serpentine ease" (Broadbent 232). Satan's implementation of *aporia* successfully causes Eve to 'unbelieve' what she once thought

true, for Satan guarantees her The Father does not have their best interest in mind. In the book of Genesis, The Bible offers a brief record of Satan manipulating Eve, and when he finishes, The Bible states that “when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat” (Genesis, 3. 6; emphasis mine). Milton adheres to his prophetic duty to illustrate to his readers what was absent in Genesis so they may learn from Eve’s fall. Milton gives an account of how Satan manipulates Eve and though Satan does not rule over Eve, Satan attempts to convince Eve that his guidance is better than The Father’s. Milton alerts his nation to not believe or allow a ruler who claims to hold power equal to or greater than God’s.

Satan’s goal is to distract Eve from the truth The Father has presented to her and focus instead on her own desire, knowledge. Prior to persuading Eve, in Book Four, Satan details his plan to “excite thir minds / With more desire to know” (IV. 522-23). Bratlinger expands on this and adds: “Satan’s chief bait is science, and his chief trap is curiosity” (Bratlinger 357). Satan recognizes that Adam and Eve are curious, but rational creatures, and therefore seeks to make Eve doubt her current boundary of knowledge. Satan repeats Isocrates’s advice and applies it to himself and The Fruit. In Book IX Satan heightens the nature of a serpent, which puzzles Eve:

What may this mean? Language of man pronounc’t
By Tongue of Brute, and human sense exprest?
The first at lest of these I though deni’d
To Beasts, whom God on thir Creation-Day
Created mute to all articulat sound; (553-557)

This form makes Eve question the natural restrictions which The Father put forth. Satan persists with his manipulation as he capitalizes on her desire to know and praises The Fruit for granting him human-like reason.

I was at first as other Beasts that graze
The trodden Herb, of abject thoughts and low,
As was my food, nor aught but food discern'd
Or Sex, and apprehended nothing high (IX 571-574).

When Satan calls the other food in the garden ‘trodden Herbs, of abject thoughts and low,’ he not only calls into question the importance of the food they eat but simultaneously positions The Fruit as the most beneficial food in the garden. Satan elaborates as he tells Eve:

Sated at length, ere long I might perceive
Strange alteration in me, to degree
Of Reason in my inward Powers, and Speech
Wanted not long, though to this shape retain'd. (598-601)

Satan claims that The Fruit heightened his status and expanded his capacity for knowledge which signals to Eve that no other food in the garden can match the benefits of the Forbidden Fruit. These lies prey on Eve’s desire to obtain more knowledge than she has and calls into question the intent of The Father. Satan makes Eve think the food that is available to her is detrimental to her growth, which has Eve questioning why The Father would present them a “delicious Grove” (VII.537) that does not permit spiritual growth. Rather than acting subordinate to The Father, Eve begins to ponder the possibilities of ignoring his instructions.

Through Satan's transfiguration and his admiration of The Fruit, he effectively casts doubt upon Eve's understanding of The Father's love for her. As uncertainty creeps into Eve's mind, she questions The Father's intention behind forbidding her access to The Fruit:

In plain then, what forbids he but to know,
Forbids us good, forbids us to be wise?
Such prohibitions binde not. But if Death
Bind us with after-bands, what profits then
Our inward freedom?

(IX. 758-762)

She questions if God is unfairly *forbidding* and *prohibiting* them access to beneficial wisdom. Aristotle notes that "constant repetition [is] rightly criticized in writing but not in speaking, and the orators use them; for they lend themselves to oral delivery, and it is necessary to speak the same thought in different words" (Aristotle 227). Milton shows that Eve feels oppressed as he includes repeated words of restriction into Eve's thoughts: 'forbids', 'prohibitions', 'binde', and 'bands'. Satan has Eve rethinking everything she has been told about the Fruit as she wonders if God is an overbearing father who threatens the eternal bind of death onto his children should they seek to better themselves. The usefulness of Satan faking transcendence from snake to reason-bearing creature and his exaltation of The Forbidden Fruit are revealed as key factors to Eve's fall:

How dies the Serpent? hee hath eat'n and lives,
And knows, and speaks, and reasons, and discerns,
Irrational till then. For us alone

Was death invented? (IX. 762-67)

Here, Eve's doubt crescendos as she rejects The Father's love and guidance; and though in Book V Eve gathered fruits for Raphael, Satan makes the fruits that were once good enough for angels, not enough for Eve. As noted, The Bible states Eve became doubtful and ate the fruit once she saw it as wise, but by reciting the unrecorded interaction between Eve and Satan, Milton provides greater insight into the mistake of Eve: accepting that one can follow two masters. Milton utilizes this story to warn against a ruler who seeks to convince the nation that the laws of the ruler can supersede those of God. For New Jerusalem to thrive, the populace must not allow themselves to be convinced that their leader knows more than God, or that they can put their desires above God's.

Identifying and Defending Against Tyranny

In the years preceding *Paradise Lost*, the Protectorate fell and then King Charles II reinstated the royal monarchy. For Milton, it was dire that the nation did not allow another King like Charles I. To Milton, England was a body that required a strong immune system to reject future disease or infection. In the case that a new leader would attempt to displace God's law with their own, the nation needed a proper defense. Milton offers many situations which exemplify tyrannical actions but knowing that rhetoric has the potential to be dangerous does nothing unless there is a way to identify or overpower malicious rhetoric. In *Eikonoklastes*, Milton wrote of reason as the answer:

But if these his fair spok'n words shall be heer fairly confronted and laid parallel to his own farr differing deeds, manifest and visible to the whole Nation, then surely we may look on them who notwithstanding shall persist to give to bare

words more credit then to op'n deeds, as men whose judgement was not rationally evinc'd and perswaded, but fatally stupefi'd and bewitch'd, into such a blinde and obstinate beleef. (*Eikonoklastes*)

Milton is positive that rational judgement can save the people from being persuaded by convincing rhetoric. In *Paradise Lost*, Satan's audiences do not question him because he redirects their attention to others. The devils and Eve, had they addressed the inconsistencies in Satan's speeches, might not have fell victim to his rhetoric. For Milton, the nation must undertake a reasonable assessment of a tyrant's actions rather than their words.

This takes form in *Paradise Lost* within the theme of *prohairesis*, which, in the Aristotelian use, is commonly translated as "choice" (Chamberlain 147) or "rational faculty" (Sadler 2). In *Paradise Lost* The Father tells The Son that "Reason also is choice" (III. 108). As an Arminian, Milton believes the choice to accept God is motivated by one's reason. In his essay "On Reason, Faith, and Freedom in *Paradise Lost*" William Walker asserts "that Milton grounds the freedom to believe [in God] in reason" (143). Walker's statement suggests that since God is truth itself, those who use reason have no trouble finding God, whereas those who are unreasonable cannot find truth and therefore cannot find God. Throughout *Paradise Lost*, Milton introduces *prohairesis* as a character-defining tactic to differentiate the reasoning between The Father and those who follow Satan. Satan manipulates and Eve ignores reason, whereas Milton ensures the celestial beings in Heaven adhere to it, thus allowing them to thwart Satan's false rhetoric.

Satan's use of *aporia* and status effectively allow him to undermine Eve's faith in The Father and make her ascension to Godhood seem like a rational choice. However, Milton informs us that Eve was equipped with the proper faculties to easily reject the doubts Satan was

supplanting in her mind. As noted from the passages above, Satan manipulated Eve into viewing disobedience as beneficial to her own life and that The Father's instructions were only restrictions that stunted the growth of Adam and herself. Satan has proved himself a skilled orator, however, the ability to insert eloquence into a speech does not mean what is said is reasonable. Her disobedience was viewed by Augustine as easy to avoid: "so light a burden to the memory,—and, above all, found no resistance to its observance in lust" (*Civ. Dei, XIV 12*). This is found to be true in *Paradise Lost* as well, for Milton writes that Satan "Into her heart too easie entrance won" (IX 733-34). Milton also highlights Adam and Eve's lack of resistance to their desires in Book X: "For still they knew, and ought to have still remember'd / The high Injunction not to taste that Fruit" (X. 12-13). Eve undoubtedly possessed the ability to use her rational faculty in such a way that promoted the truth of The Father. This implies that if Eve, who had prelapsarian reason, fell victim to deception, then postlapsarian reason will fall with less effort. When considering the emphasis on the frailty of man and the importance of reason when identifying tyranny, we can infer that Milton is foretelling the consequences of being tricked by a tyrant and by what means the nation should defend itself.

To complement his call for reason, Milton reveals the events in Heaven as examples of how to put reason into action. A key instance of proper reason occurs in Book VI. As shown in Eden and Hell, Satan successfully tricks his audiences to believe they can defy The Father. However, Milton depicts Heaven and Hell as opposites in their stylistic discussion by showing how doubt is non-existent in Heaven for those who accept the absolutism of The Father. Those who trust The Father know that arguments against him are ineffectual. As Milton wrote in *Areopagitica* "the ingenuity of Truth, who when she gets a free and willing hand, opens herself faster then the pace of method and discours can overtake her" (*Areopagitica*). Milton provides an

example of Satan's discourse failing as the *prohairesis* of Abdiel allows Truth to outpace Satan's quick tongue.

The rhetoric readers witness in Book II and IX is shown as ineffective in Book VI because Abdiel uses proper reason to wade through Satan's series of lies. For example, Satan shows his *prohairesis* does not resemble a reasonable rationale as he argues against serving The Father:

At first I thought that Libertie and Heav'n
To heav'nly Soules had bin all one; but now
I see that most through sloth had rather serve...
Servilitie with freedom to contend (VI. 164-169)

Milton has Satan use the same techniques he uses against the devils and Eve. He argues that the positions of the angels in Heaven are stifled because of their servitude and that they should seek to raise themselves higher than servants. As Satan questions their circumstances in Heaven he hopes to seduce Abdiel to doubt his servitude to The Father by posing it as submission to tyranny. However, since Abdiel pursues open discourse and reason, which Eve and the Fallen Angels did not, Abdiel is able to escape the slippery rhetoric of Satan. Abdiel clarifies that servitude to The Father means following what is true, or reasonable:

Unjustly thou deprav'st it with the name
Of Servitude to serve whom God ordains,
Or Nature; God and Nature bid the same,
When he who rules is worthiest, and excells
Them whom he governs. This is servitude,
To serve th' unwise, or him who hath rebelld
Against his worthier, as thine now serve thee,
Thy self not free, but to thy self enthrall'd; (VI. 174-181)

Satan's rhetoric points towards himself and away from truth, but Abdiel demonstrates how good rhetoric points to truth itself (The Father). Abdiel's proper use of language shows the falsity of Satan's approach to language and reason. While Satan controls the dialogue in Hell and Eden by misusing language to overcome the reasoning of the devils and Eve, he is not able to do so in Heaven. Readers witness the devils question each other, and Eve question The Father, but Milton uses Abdiel to show that one must question the speaker who seeks to persuade. Rather than doubting The Father, Abdiel remains loyal to The Father, and his counterquestions cause Satan's rhetoric to fall flat as it becomes exposed as unreasonable. Through *Paradise Lost* Milton confirms his political stance that reasonable discussion is the most valid means of identifying a tyrant who attempts to manipulate free and proper discourse.

However, reason alone often falls short of dethroning a tyrant, which leads Milton to repeat his advocacy for war against a tyrant. Obviously, a peaceful resignation is exceedingly rare, and in situations like that of Charles I (and Satan), Milton demands action. In *Tenure*, Milton defends regicide by citing Christopher Goodman's *Of Obedience*, which argues: "The people may kill wicked Princes as monsters and cruel beasts" (*Tenure*). Milton positions armed conflict as the solution to his rejection of reason. Steven Marx notes the inclusion of armed intervention as just recourse in *Paradise Lost*: "The account of the war in heaven...begins with the expression of martial enthusiasm on both sides. Satan rallies his troops with the traditional hero's vaunt of self-creation in battle...And God sends out his troops with the assurance that their deeds on the field will make righteousness triumphant" (120). In similar fashion to his defense of regicide in *Tenure* and *Eikonoklastes*, Milton depicts combat against a tyrant who ignores reason as a permissible course of action.

Milton employs faithful Abdiel as the deliverer of this message as he confronts Satan:

whose Reason I have tri'd
Unsound and false; nor is it aught but just,
That he who in debate of Truth hath won,
Should win in Arms... (VI. 120-123).

Undoubtedly, Milton approves of a nation fighting back against tyranny through reason and, if necessary, force. Milton confirms Abdiel's use of *prohairesis* and combat as the correct course against tyranny through The Father's praise:

Servant of God, well done, well hast thou fought
The better fight, who single hast maintaind
Against revolted multitudes the Cause
Of Truth...

The better fight that God speaks of is the fight for reason which Abdiel engaged in during Book V. The Father's praise of Abdiel mirrors Milton's praise of truth-seeking men in *Areopagitica*: "the service of God and of truth, and perhaps that lasting fame and perpetuity of praise which God and good men have consented shall be the reward of those whose publisht labours advance the good of mankind" (*Areopagitica*). Though Abdiel's attempt to dissuade Satan failed, The Father encourages him to employ force to subdue tyranny:

...the easier conquest now
Remains thee, aided by this host of friends,
Back on the foes more glorious to return
Then scornd though didst depart, and to subdue
By force, who reason for thir Law refuse (VI. 37-41)

As Milton wrote in *Tenure* and *Eikonoklastes*, a nation has a duty to remove a tyrant by any means. By having The Father deliver this message, Milton undoubtedly promoted the forceful expulsion of a tyrant. Though *Paradise Lost* deals with celestial matters, The Father's emphasis on refusing the law of reason is strikingly familiar to Milton's defense of regicide in *Tenure*. In which Milton said self-defense of a commonwealth is a natural right; and because Milton wrote that "God and Nature bid the same" (VI. 176) in *Paradise Lost*, The Father's approval of violence in Heaven is also valid on Earth. When pairing Abdiel's appraisal with The Father's promotion of a counterattack, Milton assures his nation, whether they fail or succeed, that an uprising against tyranny is a tolerable action.

When composing *Paradise Lost* scholars such as H.W. Peck believe that Milton "thought he was dealing with real and historical facts. The fundamental matter of his poem is the Christianity of his time as he accepted it. *Paradise Lost* is simply an elaboration of The Christian Epic" (Peck 260). *Paradise Lost* represents more than a story and instead becomes an official alert from God. Since the execution of Charles I did not impede tyranny from entering England, as the ancient Hebrew prophets led their people from danger and towards God's grace, Milton combined his poetic prowess with his prophetic vocation to warn his unstable nation of tyranny and give the people instructions on how to become a God abiding nation. If Britain acts like Eve and allows their leader to put themselves before God's word, then, like the Hebrews of old, England will be delayed in acquiring their promised land that is New Jerusalem. As Raphael told Adam "Great / Or Bright infers not Excellence" (VIII. 9-91), Milton reminds his nation to reject a tyrant who raises himself to greatness and uses craft to deceive the commonwealth. Given the devious speeches of Satan and their comparison to tyrannical acts within England, it should not be surprising that *Paradise Lost* resembles a culmination of Milton's political positions against

tyranny through the medium of poetry. Also, with the use of classical rhetoric, he portrays tyrannical behavior and presents a guide on how to refute such behavior. Perhaps by examining Milton's later poem's as prophetic messages we can better understand how Milton incorporated political beliefs into his poetry with the intent of leading his nation towards a state of godliness.

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