Chapter-III

Human predicament in *Paradise Lost*

In literature Puritan Age was one of the confusions, due to the breaking up of old ideals. Medieval standards of chivalry, the impossible love and romances of which Spenser furnished the types, perished no less surely than the ideal of the national church; and in the absence of any fixed slandered of literary criticism there was nothing to prevent the exaggeration of the “metaphysical” poets, who are the literary parallels to religious sects like Anabaptists. Poetry took new and startling forms in Donne and Herbert, and prose became as somber as Burton’s Anatomy of Melancholy. The spiritual gloom, which eventually fastens upon all the writers of this age, which unjustly attributed to Puritan Influence, is due to breaking up of accepted standards in government and religion. This so-called gloomy age produced some minor poems of exquisite workmanship, and one great master of verse whose work would glorify any age or people,- Jhon Milton, in whom the indomitable Puritan spirit finds its noblest expression. We have already discussed the life and work of Milton in the first introductory chapter in this present work of research. The process of finding human predicament in the text Paradise Lost will be methodical. First, we will study Paradise lost as an epic. Second the theme and the plot construction of the epic and then we will try to apply our term Human predicament in the Paradise lost to find the results. So let us start the further course of action to study paradise lost as an epic.

Epic Conventions or characteristics common to both types include the hero is a figure of great national or even cosmic importance, usually the ideal man of his culture. He often has superhuman or divine traits. He has an imposing physical
stature and is greater in all ways than the common man. This is the fundamental criteria for any epic that its hero must be extraordinary; he must be the representative of the Nation and culture. In paradise lost the hero, it is still debatable in the ring of the critics where some firmly believes that satan is the hero of the protagonist of the epic where as some argue that adam and eve are the heroic personality of the epic which has eye catching things as they were the first creatures created by God himself.

The setting is vast in scope. It covers great geographical distances, perhaps even visiting the underworld, other worlds, and other times. See in paradise lost the setting of the action consists of deeds of valor or superhuman courage (especially in battle) Supernatural forces interest themselves in the action and intervene at times. The intervention of the gods is been called "machinery." The style of writing is elevated, even ceremonial.

Theme

Book I of Paradise Lost begins with a prologue in which Milton performs the traditional epic task of invoking the Muse and stating his purpose. He invokes the classical Muse, Urania, but also refers to her as the "Heavenly Muse," implying the Christian nature of this work. He also says that the poem will deal with man's disobedience toward God and the results of that disobedience. He concludes the prologue by saying he will attempt to justify God's ways to men.

Following the prologue and invocation, Milton begins the epic with a description of Satan, lying on his back with the other rebellious angels, chained on a lake of fire. The poem thus commences in the middle of the story, as epics traditionally do. Satan, who had been Lucifer, the greatest angel, and his
compatriots, warred against God. They were defeated and cast from Heaven into the fires of Hell.

Lying on the lake, Satan is described as gigantic; he is compared to a Titan or the Leviathan. Next to Satan lies Beelzebub, Satan's second in command. Satan comments on how Beelzebub has been transformed for the worse by the punishment of God. Still he adds that it is his intention to continue the struggle against God, saying, "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven" (263).

With effort, Satan is able to free himself from his chains and rise from the fire. He flies to a barren plain, followed by Beelzebub. From the plain, Satan calls the other fallen angels to join him, and one by one they rise from the lake and fly to their leader. As they come, Milton is able to list the major devils that now occupy Hell: Moloch, Chemos, Baalem, Ashtaroth, Astarte, Astoreth, Dagon, Rimmon, Osiris, Isis, Orus, Mammon, and Belial. Each devil is introduced in a formal cataloguing of demons. These fallen angels think that they have escaped from their chains through their own power, but Milton makes it clear that God alone has allowed them to do this.

This devil army is large and impressive but also aware of its recent ignominious defeat. Satan addresses them and rallies them. He tells them that they still have power and that their purpose will be to oppose God, adding, "War then, War / Open or understood, must be resolv'd" (661-62).

This speech inspires the devil host, and under Mammon's direction, they immediately begin work on a capital city for their Hellish empire. They find mineral resources in the mountains of Hell and quickly begin to construct a city. Under the direction of their architect, Mulciber, they construct a great tower that comes to symbolize the capital of Hell, Pandemonium. The devil army, flying this
way and that, is compared to a great swarm of bees. When the work is done and the capital completed, they all assemble for the first great council.

At the start of Book II, Satan sits on his throne like a Middle Eastern potentate and addresses the assembled devils as to the course of action they should follow. Four of the devils speak — Moloch, Belial, Mammon, and Beelzebub — with Beelzebub being Satan's mouthpiece. Each speaker offers a different attitude concerning a solution for their Hellish predicament: Moloch proposes open warfare on Heaven; Belial proposes that they do nothing; Mammon argues that Hell may not be so bad, that it can be livable, even comfortable, if all the devils will work to improve it; and Beelzebub, Satan's mouthpiece, argues that the only way to secure revenge on Heaven is to corrupt God's newest creation: Man.

Beelzebub's (Satan's) plan carries the day, and Satan begins his journey up from Hell. At Hell's Gate, he is confronted by his daughter, Sin, a being whose upper torso is that of a beautiful woman but whose lower body is serpent-like. All around her waist are hellish, barking dogs. Across from Sin is her phantom-like son, Death.

Satan persuades Sin to open the gates, which she does, but she cannot close them again. Satan ventures forth into the realm of Chaos and Night, the companions that inhabit the void that separates Hell from Heaven. From Chaos, Satan learns that Earth is suspended from Heaven by a golden chain, and he immediately begins to make his way there. As Satan creates the path from Hell to Earth, Sin and Death follow him, constructing a broad highway.

Book III opens with a prologue, often called "The Prologue to Light," that is addressed to the "holy light" of God and Heaven. In this prologue, Milton asks for God's light to shine inwardly so that he can reveal what no man has seen
Following the prologue, Milton reveals God, the Son (Jesus), and the Heavenly Host in Heaven. God looks toward Earth and sees Satan approaching the home of Man. A council takes place in Heaven. This council is mainly made up of a discussion between God and the Son on how Man will respond to Satan's wiles and what the ultimate resolution will be. God says that Man will be corrupted by Satan's treachery but that the evil will redound to Satan himself.

Man's failure to resist temptation will, however, be Man's fault since God has provided Man with both the reason and the will to resist these temptations. Nevertheless, because the fall of Satan and the other rebellious angels is worse than Man's (the angels fell because of personal failures; Man will fall only because of outside forces), God will offer Man mercy through grace. God adds, however, that unless someone is willing to die for Man, Man will have to face death: Divine justice requires that penalty for Man's transgression. The Son says that he will suffer death but also overcome it and, through this sacrifice, redeem Man from Man's sin.

The scene of Book III now shifts from Heaven to Satan who has landed on the border between Earth and Chaos. From this seat in darkness, Satan sees a light and moves toward it. The light is a golden stairway leading to Heaven. From this new vantage point, Satan views the magnificence of the Earth and of the beautiful sun that illumines it. As Satan moves toward the sun, he sees the archangel Uriel and quickly transforms himself into a cherub. Satan deceives Uriel and asks where Man may be found. Uriel directs Satan toward Earth.

Book IV opens with a soliloquy by Satan. As he looks from Mt. Niphrates toward Earth, he thinks on all that he has done and the options open to him. He concludes that his only recourse is evil, and from now on, all his efforts will be to,
if not destroy, at least divide God's kingdom. He will carve out a place where he can reign. As Satan considers these ideas, his face changes, revealing his conflicting emotions. On the sun, Uriel notices these emotions and realizes that the cherub cannot be an angel because the minds of angels are always at peace. Uriel sets off to find Gabriel to inform him of the being in the guise of a cherub.

Satan meanwhile moves toward Earth and Paradise — the Garden of Eden. The Garden is on top of a mountain offering only limited and difficult access. Satan gains access to the Garden by leaping the wall like an animal or thief. Once there, he sits in the Tree of Life in the form of a cormorant, a bird of prey. From this vantage, Satan is impressed with the beauty of Eden and the pure air he breathes. Even so, he begins to plot the destruction of God's new creation. Satan sees Man for the first time as Adam and Eve walk through the Garden. While Satan admires the pair and admits that he could love them, he adds that he, nonetheless, means to destroy them and their peaceful life in Paradise.

Uriel arrives at the gate of Eden to inform Gabriel about the interloper in the form of a cherub. Gabriel responds that no one unauthorized has come to the gate. He adds that if someone has managed to come into the Garden by crossing the wall, he and his assistants will find them by morning.

In Eden, Adam and Eve prepare for bed. Adam reminds Eve that they must work tending the Garden, keeping nature within bounds. He also reminds her of their one proscription from God — not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Then, hand in hand, they enter their bower for bed, where they enjoy the sexual love of husband and wife and fall asleep.

Outside Gabriel assembles his troops and sends them to search Eden for the interloper. Zephron and Ithuriel find Satan in the bower of Adam and Eve. The
devil, "squat like a toad," is beside Eve, whispering in her ear, trying to produce nightmares. The two angels bring him out to face Gabriel, who questions Satan about his motives for entering Eden. Satan craftily replies that those in Hell seek a better place. He had come to scout out Earth but not to do evil. After further discussion, Gabriel accuses Satan of shifting arguments and threatens to drag the demon back to Hell in chains if he does not immediately return on his own. In anger, Satan rises to his full height, still magnificent even though diminished. Gabriel and his troops prepare for battle, but God cuts the conflict short by holding up a pair of golden scales in the sky. Both Satan and Gabriel recognize the symbol and the power behind it. Satan especially realizes that he cannot overcome God's will and flies away into the night, muttering to himself.

As Adam and Eve wake up, Eve reports a troublesome dream in which an angel-like being tempted her to eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. After first hesitating, she ate from the fruit the being held up to her. Adam is troubled by Eve's dream but, after discussing possible sources of the images with her, concludes that the dream is not necessarily evil, that Eve is too pure to do evil, and that the events of the dream will not actually come true.

As Adam and Eve turn to their daily obligations, God and the seraphim Raphael look down on them from Heaven. God says that he pityes the humans because he knows they will yield to temptation. Still, he sends Raphael to Eden to remind Adam that he and Eve have free will, that Satan intends to tempt them to evil, and that they have the power to resist Satan, as well as the free will to give in.

In the Garden, Raphael explains to Adam that eventually he and Eve may be able to attain a purer state and be like the angels. He adds the caveat, though, that Adam must remain obedient to God. When Adam questions whether he can
actually be disobedient, Raphael reminds Adam that God has given the humans free will; Adam's obedience to God is up to him. Adam is sure that he could never disobey God, but some questions have entered his mind. He asks Raphael to tell him the story of the rebellious angels.

Here Raphael begins the story of the great rebellion in Heaven: When God introduced his newly begotten Son, destined to become King of the Angels in Heaven, the angels rejoiced. However, Satan (Raphael explains that his former name, Lucifer, is no longer used) was not pleased. As the principal archangel, Satan had seen himself as second only to God and had no wish to acknowledge the Son as his superior. Satan and his second in command roused his legions against the Son and, through their cunning arguments, convinced a third of the angels to follow them to the North. God and the Son were aware of Satan's actions and amused at his presumption. The Son indicated that the rebellion would simply allow him to reveal his power by overcoming the rebels.

In the North, Satan addressed his followers, attempting to harden their hearts totally against God. Only one of Satan's followers, Abdiel, opposed him. Satan tried to sway Abdiel and, when he failed, told Abdiel to leave and inform God that Satan and his hosts would rule themselves and test their power against God's. Abdiel left, not because of Satan's order, but because he was faithful to God. He alone of Satan's followers remained loyal to God.

Book VI continues Raphael's account of the war in Heaven and opens as Abdiel makes his way back to God from Satan's hosts in the North. The other angels welcome Abdiel and take him before God, who praises the loyal angel for standing for truth even though none stood with him. God then appoints Michael
and Gabriel to lead the Heavenly forces against Satan's army. However, God limits
the number of the Heavenly force and its power to equal that of Satan's hosts.

The battle lasts two days. On the first day, the angels easily beat the
rebellious angels back; on the second day, under the assault of a cannon that the
demons have built, the angels' victory is not so easy. In response to the cannon fire,
the Heavenly hosts grab mountains, hills, and boulders and pelt the rebels, literally
burying them and their cannon. The rebels dig out and begin to respond in kind,
and the air is soon filled with the landscape. At this point, God, fearing for the
physical safety of Heaven (he knows that Satan is no real threat to his power, but
the rebels are literally uprooting the landscape), calls forth the Son, who attacks the
rebels single-handedly in his chariot and easily herds them into a gap that opens
into Hell. Afraid to go forward or back, the rebels are eventually forced through
the gap into Hell.

Raphael concludes his narrative and tells Adam that Satan now envies Man's
position and will try to tempt the two humans into disobedience. Raphael reminds
Adam of the fate of the rebellious angels and warns him not to yield to temptation.

Book VII opens with another prologue to Urania, who in classical
mythology was the Muse of Astronomy but whom Milton has transformed into a
heavenly or Christian inspiration. In this prologue, Milton asks Urania to bring his
thoughts down from Heaven and back to Earth and to inspire him once more to rise
above his physical limitations.

Returning to the scene in Eden, Adam asks Raphael to relate the story of the
creation of the world. Raphael replies that after the rebellious angels were
defeated, God wished to add a new creation so that no place in the universe would
seem unpopulated by the absence of the fallen angels. He decided to create
Mankind to live on Earth. Through obedience to God's will, Man would finally unite Earth with Heaven. God sent the Son forth to create Earth and the heavens that surround it. The Son accomplished this creation and hung Earth on a chain suspended from Heaven. Then God began the creation that would lead to Man. Raphael's account here closely follows the story of creation in Genesis, in which over a period of seven days, God creates the foundations of life (light, firmament, the seasons of the year, and so on) and then life itself, beginning with fish and other creatures and culminating in the creation of Man (Adam). Raphael concludes his description of the creation with an account of the rejoicing in Heaven over God's handiwork.

Adam continues his conversation with Raphael in Book VIII. He asks Raphael about the movement of the stars and planets. The angel says that it doesn't matter whether Earth moves or the heavens. God has made some things unknowable. Ultimately, Raphael adds, the complexities of the universe are beyond Man's comprehension and Man should be satisfied with what God allows him to know. Then Adam tells Raphael, who was on a mission to guard Hell when God made Adam, the story of how Man was created.

Adam says that he awoke in a green and flowery bank and was immediately able to stand erect, run and jump, and, even though he was not certain who he was or where he came from, he nonetheless knew the names of the various plants and animals and could speak. Then, when he fell asleep, a dream vision appeared and led him to Eden. When Adam next woke, he saw God, who explained the creation and made the one prohibition — that Adam was not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Aside from that one proscription, Adam would have dominion over the rest of Earth. God then had all the animals come before Adam in pairs, and he named them, discovering that God had provided him with knowledge of the nature
of each animal. At this point, Adam explained to God that he was lonely and needed a companion. God, having already planned a companion for Adam, put him to sleep. Even though unconscious, Adam was aware of what happened through the eye of his "fancy" (imagination), which God kept awake. From Adam's rib, God created a female companion, Eve, with whom Adam immediately fell in love. At first, Eve ran from Adam, but he eventually convinced her to follow him. The two experienced the feelings of love and were wedded.

Adam explains to Raphael that he is overcome with love and desire for Eve because of her physical beauty. He knows that Eve is less close to God than he, but he feels literally weakened by her attractiveness. Raphael takes issue with Adam, explaining that Eve has been created as his inferior. She is outwardly beautiful, but on the interior, spiritually, she is not Adam's equal. Raphael adds that Adam's love for Eve must rise above mere sexual desire. While once again admitting his physical attraction to Eve, Adam says that he loves her for more than the fulfillment of sexual passion. He says that his real love for Eve comes from their spiritual and intellectual companionship.

Finally, Raphael admonishes Adam to remember God's warning and to be on guard for Satan's treachery. He also tells Adam not to allow passion to overcome reason and cause him to disobey God. With that, the two beings, man and angel, part; Raphael toward Heaven, Adam to his bower.

In the prologue to Book IX, Milton says that his work must now take a tragic tone and that this Christian epic, though different, is nonetheless more heroic than earlier epics like the Iliad and the Aeneid. Again, he calls on Urania as the muse of Christian inspiration to help him complete his work and show the true heroism that lies in the Christian idea of sacrifice. Then Milton returns to his story.
Satan returns to Eden eight days after being forced out by Gabriel. He has studied all the animals and has decided to approach Eve in the form of a serpent which he considers to be the "subtlest Beast of all the Field" (86).

The following morning, Adam and Eve prepare for their daily work tending the Garden. Because the Garden's growth seems to surpass their labors, Eve suggests that on this day they work apart. She thinks they can accomplish more working individually. Adam argues the point with Eve, saying that Raphael has warned them of dangers and that she is more vulnerable by herself. He and she continue this argument — she proposing that they work alone; he proposing that they work together — until Adam finally relents; however, he makes Eve promise to return to their bower soon, but Milton comments that she will never return to Adam in the way that she was that morning.

Satan in the form of the serpent is surprised and excited to find Eve alone tending flowers. He watches her and for a few moments becomes enraptured and forgets his evil nature. Then he remembers what his purpose is — to destroy God's creation. The serpent approaches Eve upright upon its tail. His various acts fail to attract Eve's attention because she is used to dealing with animals. However, when the serpent speaks, complimenting Eve on her beauty, playing on both her vanity and curiosity, Eve is suddenly interested. She is especially curious about how the serpent learned to speak. Satan replies through the serpent that he learned speech by eating the fruit of a particular tree in the Garden. He acquired speech and the ability to reason and has, therefore, sought Eve out to worship as the most beautiful of God's creations.

When Eve inquires which tree gave the serpent his abilities, he takes her to the Tree of Knowledge. Eve tells the serpent that God has forbidden Man to eat
from that tree, and she chooses to obey God. Satan, using the same sophistic reasoning he has used throughout the story, tells Eve that God has tricked her and Adam. He has eaten of the tree and is not dead; neither will they die. Instead the tree will give them knowledge, which will make them like God. This fact makes God envious and has caused him to demand that Adam and Eve not eat of the tree. Eve is taken in by the words of the serpent, and after some rationalizing, she convinces herself that she should eat the fruit. And she does.

Now Eve suddenly worships the Tree of Knowledge as a god, even as all nature weeps for her fall. Her thoughts turn to Adam, and she decides that he must eat the fruit also. She cannot bear the idea that she might die and Adam would be given another wife. When Eve approaches Adam, he drops the wreath of flowers that he was weaving for her hair. Eve quickly tells him what she has done, and Adam just as quickly makes his own decision. He allows his physical love and passion for Eve to outweigh his reason. He knowingly eats the fruit and is immediately affected with carnal desire for Eve. The two humans exit to engage in "amorous play" (1045). The description here is not of love but lust.

After sex, Adam and Eve fall into a deep sleep. They awake and are overcome with shame and guilt knowledge. Both are weeping, and they launch into arguments with each other. Adam says Eve is at fault; she replies in kind. Milton describes them as spending "fruitless hours" (1188) in bitter accusation. Each is willing to blame the other, but neither is willing to accept responsibility. Paradise is gone and in its place guilt, blame, and shame. Milton says that both of them have given way to "Appetite" (1129), and reason is lost. Paradise has ended; the earth has begun.
The first scene of Book X takes place in Heaven, where the angels are aware of Adam's and Eve's fall. God assembles the hosts to confirm this fact and to emphasize that he knew Adam and Eve would yield to temptation but that he in no way inclined them to the deed. The act was of their own free wills. Now, however, Adam and Eve must be judged; however, God adds, justice can be tempered with mercy. God sends the Son to pronounce sentence on Adam and Eve.

The Son quickly descends to Eden where he pronounces judgment. God (the Son) first condemns the serpent who allowed Satan to use his body. The snake will now crawl on its belly rather than go upright. Further God establishes an eternal enmity between women (represented by Eve) and serpents. Eve's children will bruise the serpent's head; the serpent, their heel. Eve and all women will be given the pain of childbirth as well as subjugation to their husbands. Finally, men, because of Adam, will have to labor in the ground to make their food and be subject to death, literally returning to the dust from which they were created. As a final act, done so kindly that it presages God's ultimate mercy, the Son clothes Adam and Eve in animal skins.

The scene now switches from Earth to Hell, where Sin and Death, having finished the causeway between Hell and Earth, start toward Earth. Route, they see Satan in his angelic form, winging toward Hell. Satan reveals the events that have transpired, and Sin congratulates her father on his accomplishments and suggests, falsely, that his power has allowed her and Death to escape Hell. She adds, also falsely, that Satan now controls all of humanity while God controls Heaven. Satan is pleased with Sin's comments and tells her to hurry to Earth with Death so that they can take control. He meanwhile proceeds on into Hell.
As Satan enters Hell, it appears deserted, and he has to go all the way into Pandemonium to find the other fallen angels. As the fallen angels see Satan, they welcome him joyously, and he addresses them with a gloating speech filled with pride. He tells them of the temptation of Eve and how he caused both humans to fall with a lowly apple. He says that the rebellious angels can now occupy Paradise (Eden). Expecting applause and plaudits of the assembled demons, Satan hears hissing instead. Snakes are crawling all through Pandemonium, and Satan and his followers are quickly turned into snakes. Trees like the Tree of Knowledge sprout up, but when the snakes eat the tempting fruit, it turns to bitter soot and ash. This scene essentially ends the role of Satan and the fallen angels in the narrative.

Meanwhile, Sin and Death have reached Earth where they see a fertile field for their exploits. God sees the children of Satan on Earth and tells the angels that, because of the fall of Adam and Eve, Sin and Death will continue to live on Earth until the Judgment Day, when they will be cast into Hell with their father and sealed up, never to exit. With this prophecy from God, Sin and Death are seen no more in the poem.

God then tells the angels to transform the Earth. They are to create the seasons and different types of violent weather. Discord is also brought to Earth so that animals will now hunt and kill each other and menace Man. Adam is aware of all these changes and blames himself. He begins with lamentation for what he has done and the consequences. He wishes to take all the blame for what has happened on himself; then he thinks of Eve and feels that she was wicked and deserves blame also. Adam finds himself in a hopeless state. When Eve tries to speak to him, he rebuffs her angrily and questions why God created females.
Eve approaches Adam again and makes what is known as the "Regeneration Speech." She begs Adam not to turn away from her. She explains that the serpent tricked her. She begs Adam to stay with her, that even in their pain they can love each other. She says that she would take all the punishment on herself because she sinned against God and Adam while Adam sinned only against God. Adam is moved by Eve's words, and his feelings for her return. He tells her that they must stop blaming each other. They can become a comfort one to the other and, through love, lighten the burden of death that has been put on them.

When Eve suggests that they might avoid God's curse on the world by either remaining childless or by committing suicide, Adam responds by saying that they should not try to cheat God. He reminds Eve that God said her offspring would bruise the head of the serpent. He analyzes that by the serpent, God meant Satan. Therefore, if they live and produce offspring, eventually their children will bruise the head of the serpent and Satan will be defeated. He then concludes that they should pray and seek God's grace and mercy, which they do.

Adam and Eve offer fervent, sincere prayers to God for forgiveness. In Heaven, God hears the prayers. The Son intercedes with the Father to show grace and mercy to the humans, saying that he will make up for any inadequacies in Man through his own incarnation and death. God accepts the Son's intercession but says that Adam and Eve cannot remain in Eden. They must still suffer the judgments God has proclaimed, and they must die. However, if they lead a good life, they will be able to live with God for eternity. God summons all the angels to hear his final pronouncement and assigns Michael to go to Earth and expel Adam and Eve from the Garden.
After their prayers, Adam and Eve are more reconciled with their new situation. Adam encourages Eve, reminding her that she will be the mother of Mankind and that her offspring will bruise the serpent. Eve answers that she does not feel worthy to be so honored because she has brought Sin and Death into the world. Eve adds that she will be content to live out her allotted life in Eden.

Michael arrives at this point and informs Adam and Eve of God's decree that they must leave Eden. Eve is stunned, lamenting the loss of the flowers, her bridal bower, everything she holds dear. Adam is also shocked but understands that God's decree must be obeyed. He thanks Michael for informing them so gently and adds that he worries that, outside of Eden, he will never be able to talk with or see God again. Michael assures Adam that God is everywhere on Earth. The angel then puts Eve into a peaceful sleep and takes Adam to the highest point in Paradise from which Michael will give Adam a vision of the future of Mankind.

The first part of Adam's vision is of Cain and Abel. Adam sees Cain's murder of Abel and then is told by Michael that the killer and victim are Adam's own sons. Adam laments the brutality of what he has seen and is then given a further vision of all the terrible ways in which death will take humans. Adam is in deep sorrow over what he has caused and asks if there is no other way for a man to die. Michael responds that those who live good and temperate lives may drop "like ripe fruit" (535). Adam answers that he will neither seek death nor fear life but live in the best manner he can an idea to which the angel assents.

Next, Adam is shown a vision based on Genesis IV, 20-22, and an account of the children of Cain who discovered metalwork. The vision shows men on a plain working with metals and playing musical instruments. Then from the hills that border the plain come a group of Godly men. Beautiful women emerge from
tents on the plain, and soon the men pair off and go with the women into the tents. Adam finds this scene much more pleasant than the first. Michael admonishes Adam not to be taken in by a life of pleasure. The people in the vision learned a useful skill but then allowed their craft to become an art, which was more important to them than God. They were the children of Cain.

The men who came down from the hills were the children of Adam and Eve's third child, Seth. They were God-fearing men. Michael calls the women, also descendants of Cain, "Atheists" (625) who have been trained in the arts of sexual love. They lure the men from their godly lives. Adam understands Michael's point, saying that man's downfall starts with women. Michael develops this idea by referring to the fallen men's "effeminate slackness" (634), through which men give over their superiority to women and thus yield to sin. The deeper point, concerning sexual desire that applies to the story of Adam and Eve is not lost on Adam.

Michael now shows Adam a scene of violence — a terrible battle followed by futile negotiations. Only one man speaks with reason. He is Enoch, whose speech for reconciliation is met with such vehement opposition that he faces death until God takes him to Heaven in a cloud. The story of Enoch shifts directly into the story of Noah. By Noah's time, the Earth is filled with decadence and depravity. Only Noah speaks out against the evil that is taking place. God is so revolted by the actions of Mankind that he sends a flood to destroy everyone but Noah and his family. Adam sees the flood and cries out in anguish at the evil that occurs because of his and Eve's fall. All of his children fall into sin and are destroyed, and he has to watch with no way to help.

Michael says that while all of the evil have perished, nonetheless, the righteous man, Noah, survived because he remained obedient to God. Michael
goes through the entire story of Noah. The story ends with an account of the rainbow, God's covenant with Noah and through him all humans, not to destroy the Earth with flood or fire again until all sin is destroyed by the fire at the end of time. Adam is somewhat comforted by the story of Noah's survival. He is pleased that the just have been saved and the world continues.

Book XII continues Michael's presentation of biblical history to Adam. He begins with the story of Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. Nimrod was known as a great hunter, and Michael adds that men "shall be his game" (30). By this the angel refers to Nimrod's rule over men that ultimately lead him to challenge God through the construction of the Tower of Babel. God stops this enterprise by changing the languages of those constructing the tower so that they cannot work together. Adam is upset that some men have dominion over others. Michael explains that because men cannot control their passions, other men take control of societies. God sends unjust rulers to control some groups so that they lose their personal freedom.

Michael goes on to explain that so many people in the world are wicked that God eventually decides to focus on the Israelites and their faithful leader, Abraham, who carries the seed that will ultimately produce the Savior. Here, Michael moves quickly through the stories of Jacob and Joseph followed by the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt to the rise of Moses as leader of the great exodus from Egypt. Moses leads the people into the desert, receives the Commandments from God, and begins to establish laws for the people. Adam asks why men need so many laws, to which Michael responds that the need for laws shows the degeneration of people. The laws help men remember to do those things that they should know to do by themselves. Even so, Man cannot truly be saved until Jesus comes to sacrifice himself for all Mankind.
Joshua eventually leads the Israelites to the Promised Land where they set up a society in which they are ruled by judges and kings. The greatest king is David whose lineage will carry the seed of the Savior. David's son, Solomon, will build the great temple to house the Ark of the Covenant. However, later kings will allow such a falling away from God that God will allow the entire nation to fall into captivity in Babylon. Factions in the society will fight among themselves for long periods of time until, under Roman rule, the Messiah will be born to a virgin.

When Adam expresses interest in the coming battle, Michael then explains that the Messiah's victory over Satan will not occur in a literal fight. Instead, the Son will become human in Jesus, will suffer for his beliefs, and will be executed. However, after three days, Jesus will rise from the dead, thereby overcoming Death that Adam loosed upon the world. Jesus will also send out disciples to spread his message to the entire world. Those who obey God's commands will be saved and have eternal life. At the end of time, Jesus will judge the living and the dead, and the truly faithful will enter the most wonderful paradise of all.

Adam is pleased to learn all that Michael has told him, and his greatest pleasure is to have learned that death will actually lead to a great reward. He says that his fall will now become a happy blame, or what some call felix culpa. The goodness of God will, through death, provide all Mankind with the chance to live eternally with God. Adam sees this possibility as an even greater good than his having remained sinless in Eden. Michael praises Adam for his reason and tells him to add faith, virtue, patience, temperance, and love to his understanding and he will lead a good life and ultimately be with God.

It is time for the humans to leave Eden. Michael instructs Adam to wake Eve and at a later time tell her all that he has learned from the angel. When Eve is
awakened, she says that she has learned much from her dream. She knows that her place is with Adam, and that she will always go where he goes. Further she is comforted, knowing that the Messiah will come from her seed.

Adam and Eve leave Eden. Michael leads them through the Eastern Gate and down to the plain. Behind them they see the flaming sword that protects Eden from intruders. A brand new world lies before them, and they know that God will be with them. Holding hands, they make their way into the world.

Milton begins Paradise Lost in the traditional epic manner with a prologue invoking the muse, in this case Urania, the Muse of Astronomy. He calls her the "Heavenly Muse" (7) and says that he will sing "Of Man's First Disobedience" (1), the story of Adam and Eve and their fall from grace. As the prologue continues, it becomes apparent that this muse is more than just the classical Urania, but also a Christian muse who resides on Mt. Sinai, in fact the Holy Spirit. In these first lines, Milton thus draws on two traditions — the classical epic exemplified by Homer and Virgil and the Christian tradition embodied in the Bible as well as Dante's Divine Comedy and Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene.

Milton further emphasizes in the prologue that his theme will be Man's disobedience to God's will, implying not only Adam's disobedience, but all mankind from first to last. He does add that his subject will include the "greater Man" (4) who saved all others from the original disobedience. Moreover, his intention will be to "justify the ways of God to men" (26) through the aid of "Eternal Providence" (25). By "justify," Milton means more than simply to explain; he means that he will demonstrate that God's actions in regard to man are just. This goal suggests that Milton was not bothered by any sense of false modesty, an idea underscored by his statement that he will write in a high style and
attempt a purpose never tried before. The one truly poignant line in this prologue is Milton's request of the muse, "What in me is dark / Illumine" (22 — 23), with its oblique reference to Milton's blindness, a subject he will return to more directly in the prologue that begins Book III. At no point in this prologue and invocation does Milton mention Satan, who, though he is the main character of the poem, is not the actual subject.

Following the invocation and prologue, Milton continues in the epic style by beginning in medias res, in the middle of things. Satan is first seen lying in the pit of Hell. That a great religious epic focuses on Satan, presents him first, and in many ways makes him the hero of the poem is certainly surprising and something of a risk on Milton's part. Milton does not want his audience to empathize with Satan, yet Satan is an attractive character, struggling against great odds. Of course, Milton's original audience more than his modern one would have been cognizant of the ironies involved in Satan's struggles and his comments concerning power. The power that Satan asserts and thinks he has is illusory. His power to act derives only from God, and his struggle against God has already been lost. To the modern audience, Satan may seem heroic as he struggles to make a Heaven of Hell, but the original audience knew, and Milton's lines confirm, that Satan's war with God had been lost absolutely before the poem begins. God grants Satan and the other devils the power to act for God's purposes, not theirs.

Also, at this point in the narrative, Satan is at his most attractive. He has just fallen from Heaven where he was the closest angel to God. He has not completely lost the angelic aura that was his in Heaven. As the poem progresses, the reader will see that Satan's character and appearance grow worse. Milton has carefully structured his work to show the consequences of Satan's actions.
The catalogue of demons that follows Satan's escape from the burning lake follows an epic pattern of listing heroes — although here the list is of villains. This particular catalogue seems almost an intentional parody of Homer's catalogue of Greek ships and heroes in Book II of the Iliad. The catalogue is a means for Milton to list many of the fallen angels as well as a way to account for many of the gods in pagan religions — they were originally among the angels who rebelled from God. Consequently, among these fallen angels are names such as Isis, Osiris, Baal, and others that the reader associates not with Christianity but with some ancient, pagan belief. Of the devils listed, the two most important are Beelzebub and Belial. (For a complete description of each devil, see the List of Characters.)

The final part of Book I is the construction of Pandemonium, the capital of Hell. A certain unintentional humor pervades this section of Book I as well as Mammon's argument in Book II. In both cases, a sense of civic pride seems to overcome the devils, and they act on the idea that "Hell is bad, but with a few improvements we can make it lots better, even attractive." In both Mammon and the hellish architect, Mulciber, the attitude of the mayor whose small town has been bypassed by the Interstate comes out. They both seem to think that with improvements Hell may be nice enough that others may want to relocate.

Milton's real goal here, though, is to establish Hell's capital, Pandemonium — a word which Milton himself coined from the Latin pan (all) and demonium (demons). Thus, the capital of Hell is literally the place of all demons. With the passage of time, the word came to mean any place of wild disorder, noise, and confusion. This idea is subtly emphasized with Milton's choice of Mulciber as the architect. Mulciber was another name for Hephaestus, the Greek God of the Forge, who was tossed from Olympus by a drunken Zeus. Mulciber is
consequently a figure of some ridicule and not the most likely architect to build a lasting monument.

One other aspect of the construction of Pandemonium is worth consideration. Mammon and the other devils find mineral resources including gemstones in their search for building materials. This discovery of resources suggests that the Hell Milton has imagined is a multifaceted place. In the first scene, as Satan and the others lie chained on the burning lake, Hell seems totally a place of fiery torture and ugliness. The construction of Pandemonium shows that there is more to Hell. Geographic features such as a plain and hill, mineral resources such as gemstones, and even the possibility for beauty seem to exist in Hell. Other aspects of Hell will be brought forward in later books. All in all, Milton depicts a Hell that has more than one essence, or, at least in the opening books, seems to.

Book II divides into two large sections. The first is the debate among the devils concerning the proper course of action. The second section deals with Satan's voyage out of Hell with Sin and Death — the only extended allegory in Paradise Lost.

The council of demons that begins Book II recalls the many assemblies of heroes in both the Iliad and the Aeneid. Further the debates also seem based on the many meetings that Milton attended in his various official capacities. In his speech, each devil reveals both the characteristics of his personality and the type of evil he represents. For example, Moloch, the first to speak, is the unthinking man of action. Like Diomede in the Iliad, he is not adept in speech, but he does know how to fight. He is for continued war and unconcerned about the consequences. But, moreover, the attitude toward violence exhibited by Moloch reveals a
particular type of evil. In the Inferno, Dante had divided evils into three broad categories: sins of appetite, sins of will, and sins of reason. In the Renaissance, these categories still dominated much thought concerning the nature of evil. In Moloch, the reader sees a straightforward example of the evil that comes from the will. Unthinking violence is the result of lack of control of the will. And for Moloch, the "furious king" (VI, 357), violence defines his character.

In contrast to Moloch, Belial as a character type is a sophist, a man skilled in language, an intellectual who uses his powers to deceive and confuse. His basic argument is that the devils should do nothing. Belial wishes to avoid war and action, but he couches his arguments so skillfully that he answers possible objections from Moloch before those objections can be raised. He, in fact, rises to speak so quickly that the assembly is not able to respond to Moloch's idea. Belial also suggests the possibility that at some point God might allow the fallen angels back into Heaven, though these arguments seem specious at best and simply an excuse for cowardly inactivity. In terms of evil, Moloch uses reason for corrupt purposes. The use of reason for evil was theologically the greatest sin because reason separates man from animals. Belial's sophistry is not as corrupting as Beelzebub's and Satan's fraud will be, but it is still a sin of reason. Milton, in fact, introduces Belial as fair and handsome on the outside but "false and hollow" within (112). Milton makes the point about reason straightforwardly at the end of Belial's speech by referring to it as "words cloth'd in reason's garb" (226), as opposed to simply words of reason.

Belial's persuasive speech for nothing is followed by the practical, materialistic assessment of Mammon. Mammon sees the little picture. He finds no profit in war with God or in doing nothing. Hell, he argues can be made into a livable, even pleasurable place. In Heaven, Mammon always looked down at the
streets of gold. In Hell, he sees the gem and mineral wealth and thinks that Hell can be improved. In terms of sin, Mammon exhibits the sin of the appetite. Here the basic instinct of appetite controls the person. Mammon's desire for individual wealth controls his assessment of everything. The proverb that one cannot serve God and Mammon both easily translates to the idea that one cannot serve both God and one's appetite.

Finally, Beelzebub rises to speak — and he speaks for Satan. His argument to attack God by corrupting Man is Satan's argument. This idea is essentially a fait accompli; Satan has intended this plan all along and simply uses Beelzebub to present it. The entire council has been a sham, designed to rubber stamp Satan's design, a design that also allows Satan to leave Hell. Beelzebub's speech and actions are like those of Belial in that they pervert reason. But unlike Belial's arguments, Beelzebub's involve treachery against his fellow demons. All of the devils have involved themselves in treachery against God, but now Beelzebub and Satan compound this treachery by defrauding their own companions. The devils have seemingly been given a choice within a council, but in fact this seeming choice was illusion. They have been set up to do Satan's bidding. For many Renaissance thinkers, this type of treachery would have been considered Compound Fraud, the worst sin of all.

At this point, Satan begins his journey out of Hell to search for Earth and Man. The devils left behind explore Hell, finding various geographic areas including fire and ice, but also mountains and fields. Their exploratory activities along with their sports, songs, and games suggest another concept of Hell — Limbo, the part of Hell Catholicism recognized as reserved for virtuous pagans and unbaptised babies, a part of Hell that is Hell only in that those in it can never be in the presence of God. Limbo is an earthly paradise, and Milton seems to suggest
that the fallen angels could have that for their punishment if they were content to accept their defeat by God.

As the devils explore Hell, Satan makes his way toward the gate out of Hell. This section of Book II begins the one extended allegory in Paradise Lost. An allegory is a literary work in which characters, plot, and action symbolize, in systematic fashion, ideas lying outside the work. While much of Paradise Lost deals with Christian ideas and theology, only in this section does Milton write in a true allegorical manner.

At the locked gate where he may exit Hell, Satan finds two guards: his daughter, Sin, and his grandson, Death. The way Sin and Death were created explains the nature of allegory. Sin was born when Satan, in Heaven, felt envy for Jesus. Sin sprang from Satan's head (symbolically his thoughts) just as Athena (wisdom) sprang from the head of Zeus. Death was born of the unnatural union between Satan and his daughter. Finally, adding to the general nastiness of the story, Death raped his own mother, Sin, creating the Cerberus-like hellhounds that gather around her waist.

The allegorical interpretation of this story is, in its simplest form, easy to follow. Satan's envy for Jesus was a sin, which becomes manifest in the character of his daughter, Sin. That is, the concept of sin in Satan's mind literally becomes Sin, a character. Sin, in conjunction with satanic evil, produces Death. Finally, Sin and Death together produce the hellhounds that will come to plague all mankind. The allegory here can be explored more deeply, but basically it explains, through characters and action, how sin and death entered the universe. Similarly, the fact that Sin opens the gate of Hell for Satan is also allegoric as is her inability to close it. Thus Satan, by leaving Hell, brings Sin and Death into the world.
Next Satan confronts the characters Chaos and Night. These two represent the great void that separates Earth from Hell. They are also part of the complex Renaissance cosmogony, but on the most basic level they represent the vast unorganized part of the universe away from Heaven and Earth. Hell lies on the other side of Chaos, and Night shows just how far removed Hell is, both figuratively and literally, from God.

Chaos and Night welcome Satan's attempt to cross the space between Heaven and Hell because they too lie outside the purview of Heaven. Satan becomes the pioneer who crosses the wilderness of Chaos and Night to find Earth, and in this effort he gains heroic stature. Within the allegory, however, he is simply charting the path for Sin and Death, since they follow him, building a broad highway. Once again the allegory is clear: Satan brings Sin and Death into the world where they will convey countless souls back across the broad highway to Hell. Also, the gate of Hell has been left open, and evils can now go from Hell to Earth at will.

Book III opens with a prologue as did Book I. This prologue is often called "The Prologue to Light" because it is addressed to the "holy light" of God and Heaven. Light here is associated with the eternal good and stands in contrast to the darkness associated with Hell and evil in Books I and II. The idea that stands out in the well-known "prologue to light" that opens Book III is how personal it is. Milton's blindness prevents him from seeing any light except the light of God, which illuminates the mind and which still allows him to be a poet. He makes references to the greatest classical epic poet, Homer (Maeonides), who according to tradition, was also blind, and to two mythic blind prophets, Tiresias and Phineas, who, even though blind, saw what others could not because of a gift from the gods.
Artistically then, Milton is able to place himself between the erudition of a classical "Invocation of Light" (as in Dante's Paradiso) and a personal, almost lyric, meditation on blindness. In the closing lines of this prologue, Milton brings the entire passage into focus as he asks for God's light to shine inwardly so that he can reveal what no man has seen. In this closing, he is able to transform the evil of his blindness into an intellectual and spiritual insight that surpasses anything possible by normal human sight. This notion of evil transformed to good is picked up thematically in the next section of Book III.

Milton took some risk in making God and the Son characters in Paradise Lost. The overriding problem was how to make a figure who is the embodiment of perfection, who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, into a fictional character. Further, since the Son (Jesus) is, in traditional Christian belief, a part of the trinity and, therefore, a part of the godhead, how does he become a separate character from God? Milton dealt with the first problem in his characterization of God, a characterization that has received a fair amount of criticism. As to the second problem, Milton was not a Trinitarian. He did not accept that God and Jesus were co-eternal, and he believed that Jesus was, in the strict hierarchy of the universe, imperceptibly to man, lower than God. Therefore, he was able to treat the Son as a separate and distinct character from God, even as the Son has powers equal to God and is sometimes referred to as God.

In the second section of Book III, the council in Heaven, Milton presents an obvious contrast with the council of the demons in Hell in Book II. Here the reader sees clearly that God is in control of all, including Satan. Further, in their speeches, God and the Son provide the arguments that begin Milton's justification of the ways of God to man.
Milton runs a great artistic risk in introducing God as a character because God must then make the theological arguments that are introduced. God must explain the creation of Man, Man's temptation by Satan, and Man's fall. But further, God must clearly explain why his foreknowledge of these events in no way means that Man's fall is predestined in the sense that God causes it. Instead, he must show that the fall results from the failure of Man to use the gifts and abilities God has granted to him. Then God must convince the reader that Man deserves punishment for the fall, including eternal death if no one will step forward to accept death in Man's place.

God's argument is essentially that Man has free will, that Man has the power to resist temptation, but that Man will give in to temptation because he does not use his powers. God's foreknowledge that Man will fall in no way indicates predestination. God simply knows what Man will do; God does not cause Man to do it. Since Man falls away from God because of Man's weakness, Man deserves punishment, even death. However, because Man was tempted to the fall by Satan, Man also deserves a chance for redemption and salvation. The entire argument is scholastic, even pedantic, and in making it, God sounds more like a Dickensian schoolmaster than a magnanimous and loving father, and at this point, God's argument seems weakest. He created Man, he allows Satan to tempt Man, and then he blames Man for it. Man can be saved, but he must die. Divine Justice requires the punishment even as Divine Love offers salvation. The only way to resolve the quandary is for someone to take death on for Man.

Intellectually the argument may be sound, but for many readers, God seems to be an administrator more interested in following the written down procedures rather than looking at the specific situation. Still, for Milton's purpose, God's view must be presented in a clear and closely reasoned argument. Who better then to
present God's argument then than God himself? Probably no author can create God as a character and not make him less than the sense of God in a reader's mind. For his purpose of justifying God's ways to man, Milton does what he has to do. The questionable depiction of God is somewhat redeemed by Milton's representation of the Son (called "the Son" since Jesus, in the poem's time, has not yet been born into the world). The Son sees a solution to the problem and steps forward willingly, accepting death in order to overcome it and save Man. The Son seems generous and loving, and through the Son, the reader is able to see God's love and concern for Man and move beyond the legalistic debate points of God's opening argument. Finally, in the hymn the Heavenly Host sings in adoration of the Son, the reader finally sees something of the glory of Heaven that, up until this point, Milton has ignored.

This passage also highlights the contrast between the Son and Satan. Satan asked his council which demon would leave Hell to find Earth and corrupt Man. When no demon volunteered, Satan undertook the task himself. The Son takes on the opposite and more onerous task of becoming man, going to Earth, and suffering death in order to save Man. In motive, spirit, and action, Satan and the Son are almost direct opposites.

In the final section of Book III, Milton turns his attention back to Satan, who sits between Chaos and Earth contemplating his next move. Here Milton interrupts the flow of the narrative to describe a future Limbo of Vanity or Paradise of Fools that will occupy the area where Satan sits. This description is Milton's digressive view of the future and not something that Satan imagines. Over the years, many commentators have questioned the positioning and effect of this passage. Milton stops the flow of his story and argument to describe such foolish sinners as those who built the Tower of Babel and the philosopher Empedocles, who thought to
prove himself immortal by jumping into a volcano only to have the volcano prove the opposite by spewing his dead body back out. To this group of foolish sinners, Milton adds a group of monks, friars, and priests in an obvious satire on Catholicism and such beliefs as Limbo, which Protestantism had rejected. It is difficult to defend Milton's positioning of this digressive passage at this place in the poem.

The last scene of Book III shows Satan as a shape-shifter. He assumes the appearance of a cherub, one of a lesser order of angels, to speak with the archangel, Uriel, on the sun. (The sun itself provides a fitting end to Book III since the book opened with the "Invocation to Light" and will now close with the sun shining over the Earth.) Satan's guise as a cherub graphically demonstrates two thematic ideas that will continue to recur in the poem. First, Satan will, in varying ways, be diminished from the magnificent being the first appears to be in Book I. The cherub disguise, one in which he appears as a much smaller and less significant angel than he once was, is the first of several images that convey this idea. Second, Uriel does not recognize Satan because the disguise exemplifies hypocrisy. Milton says that hypocrisy is the one sin that angels cannot recognize. Only omniscient God can see hypocrisy. In later books, Satan will not always be able to use hypocrisy to hide his identity. Here though, in cherub form, Satan gets from Uriel the information he needs to find Adam, Eve, and the Garden.

In the opening section of Book IV, Satan talks to himself, and for the first time, the reader is allowed to hear the inner workings of the demon's mind. This opening passage is very similar to a soliloquy in a Shakespearean drama, and Milton uses it for the same effect. Traditionally, the soliloquy was a speech given by a character alone on the stage in which his innermost thoughts are revealed. Thoughts expressed in a soliloquy were accepted as true because the speaker has
no motive to lie to himself. The soliloquy then provided the dramatist a means to explain the precise motivations and mental processes of a character. Milton uses Satan's opening soliloquy in Book IV for the same purpose.

In his soliloquy, Satan reveals himself as a complex and conflicted individual. He literally argues with himself, attempting first to blame his misery on God but then admitting that his own free will caused him to rebel. He finally concludes that wherever he is, Hell is there also; in fact, he himself is Hell. In this conclusion, Satan develops a new definition of Hell as a spiritual state of estrangement from God. Yet even as he reaches this conclusion, Satan refuses the idea of reconcilement with God, instead declaring that evil will become his good and through evil he will continue to war with God. The self-portrait that Satan creates in this soliloquy is very close to the modern notion of the anti-hero — a character estranged and alienated who nonetheless will not alter his own attitudes or actions to achieve redemption from or reintegration with society at large.

As Satan debates with himself, he is still in the form of a cherub. The different guises and shapes that Satan assumes become a revealing pattern in the work. In Book I, Satan appeared almost as he had in Heaven — a majestic being. Here at the start of Book IV, he is in the form of a cherub, a much lesser angel. Next, when he leaps the wall into Eden, he sits in the Tree of Life as a cormorant, a large ravening sea bird that symbolizes greed. As he explores Eden and observes Adam and Eve, he takes the forms of a lion and a tiger. Finally, when he is captured whispering in Eve's ear, he is described as "squat like a toad." The devolution or degeneration of Satan in these different shapes is readily apparent. He moves from archangel to lesser angel, from angel to bird — a creature that still flies. Next he is a lion and a tiger — dangerous beasts, feared by Man but nonetheless beautiful and noble in bearing. Finally, he is described as being like
the low and homely frog. The idea that evil corrupts and diminishes is made graphic in Satan's various guises.

Milton goes even further with images of shape shifting. When Zephron captures Satan squatting like a toad, Satan immediately assumes his actual shape. Yet, at this point, his real appearance is so changed that Zephron does not recognize him. The animal forms that Satan has assumed symbolize the actual degradation that is taking place in both Satan's physical appearance and moral character. Milton makes the point that evil is a destructive and degenerative force almost palpable as he describes the different physical changes that Satan goes through.

While Satan's soliloquy and shape shifting are important, the most memorable part of Book IV is Milton's description of Eden and the introduction of Adam and Eve. Eden is described as a garden on a plateau-like mountain. It is surrounded by a wall and has only one entrance, guarded by angels. Milton depicts the Garden itself in lush, sensuous detail with the two trees — the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge — singled out. The image of Satan sitting in the Tree of Life in the shape of a cormorant presages the entrance of Death into Paradise.

A significant aspect of Milton's description of the Garden is the role that Adam and Eve have there. Their duty is to tend Eden, to keep nature from running wild. The implication here is that Man brings order to nature. Nature is beautiful in itself but also without control. Left alone, the beauty of nature can be lost in weeds, unchecked growth, and decay. Eve mentions how difficult it is for the two humans to do all that is necessary. Some commentators see the struggle between Man and nature as one of the basic themes in all literature. Nature represents the Dionysian side of the universe, emotional, unrestrained, without law, while Man represents
the Apollonian side, moral, restrained, lawfully structured. Nature runs rampant: Man civilizes. Milton's description of the Garden and Adam’s and Eve’s duties within it brings this Dionysian / Apollonian contrast into play. Satan's entrance into the Garden shows that both the natural and civilized aspects of the world can be corrupted by evil.

Milton also emphasizes the physical nature of the love between Adam and Eve. Some Puritans felt that sex was part of the fall of man, but Milton literally sings the praises of wedded love, offering an Epithalamion or wedding song at line 743. Milton does emphasize the bliss of wedded love as opposed to animalistic passion, however.

Milton also provides insight into the characters of Adam and Eve. At line 411, Adam reminds Eve of the one charge God has given them — not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. While this short speech reminds the reader of what will happen when Satan gains access to Adam and Eve, it also hints that Adam may think too much about God's proscription concerning the Tree, since there is no particular reason for him to bring the warning concerning the tree up at this point in the poem.

The introduction of Eve even more obviously reveals her character and points to the future. Eve describes how she fell in love with her own image when she first awoke and looked in the water. Only the voice of God prevented this narcissistic event from happening. God turned Eve from herself and toward Adam. The suggestion here is that Eve's vanity can easily get her into trouble. Eve's weakness is further indicated in her relationship with Adam. Adam is superior in strength and intellect while Eve is the ideal companion in her perfect femininity. This relationship is sexist by modern standards but reflects the beliefs of Puritan
England as well as most of the rest of the world at the time. Even so, Eve's dependence on Adam suggests that she could be in trouble if she has to make serious decisions without Adam's aid. Eve's vanity and feminine weakness in conjunction with Adam's warning about the Tree of Knowledge are a clear foreshadowing that Eve will eventually yield to temptation.

The final scene of Book IV, as Satan confronts Gabriel and a small phalanx of angels, has received much criticism from commentators. Milton's description of Satan as he confronts the angels emphasizes the devil's power and magnificence even in his corrupted state. The scene seems to call for a battle, but Milton instead produces a deus ex machina in the form of a golden scale in the heavens. The suggestion that Satan has been weighed and found wanting causes the great demon immediately to fly away. The intense drama of the moment fizzles with the image of the scale and Satan's inglorious departure. Of course, Milton's point is that the only power of Satan or the angels comes from God, and, at this moment, God chooses to exert his own power symbolically. In terms of drama, the ending of Book IV may be unsatisfying, but in terms of theology, it reminds the reader of where the real power in the universe resides.

Eve's dream at the start of Book V is an obvious foreshadowing of the actual temptation scene in Book IX. This foreshadowing, however, is also ironic in that the reader already knows that Eve — and Adam — will yield to the temptation of Satan. Thus, rather than being simply an instance of foreshadowing, Eve's dream is confirmation and emphasis on what the reader knows must and will happen. Further, by bringing up the dream at this point in the text, Milton makes the reader analogous to God. Both God and the reader know that Adam and Eve will fall, but neither the reader nor God is the cause of that fall. Consequently, when Adam tells Eve that the dream will not come true, that it is bred of fear rather than reason, the
reader, once again like God, knows that Adam is wrong but can do nothing to help him.

The set up of Eve's dream segues nicely into another brief discussion of free will — this time between God and Raphael. Here God does what the reader cannot: He sends a warning to Adam, reminding him that Satan will try to tempt Mankind to disobedience and that Adam's and Eve's free will can allow them to give in to that temptation. God's warning stops just short of telling Adam exactly what will happen.

At times Milton seems almost obsessive on his insistence of the idea of free will. Certainly, the idea that Adam has free will is central to Milton's theology, and, like a teacher with a student before a test, Milton wants to drive the point home to the reader. Adam has free will. God is omniscient. He knows Adam will fall, but he does not cause the fall. In fact, God actively tries to thwart the fall. But God, like the reader, ultimately knows that nothing can change the outcome for Adam and Eve.

An interesting sidebar to Raphael's visit to Adam is the fact that the angel can eat, in fact needs to eat, although human food is not his normal fare. The point of the scene is to show Adam that through obedience to God, he may rise to a higher spiritual level and become like the angels. However, the force of the scene comes from the gusto with which Raphael partakes of Eve's meal. For a modern reader, Raphael is reminiscent of John Travolta's portrayal of the angel Michael in the movie Michael. Raphael seems to enjoy human food a little too much. Beyond this unintentional humor though, Milton uses Raphael's appetite for a brief discourse on how all the elements of the universe pass from one to the other in a large circle. The food that Man eats nourishes not only his physical body but also
sustains his reason, Man's highest faculty. In angels, a more sublime food produces the even higher faculty of intuition so that angels know with an immediacy that Man, relying on reason, cannot.

Raphael then goes a step further, showing the hierarchical relationship of all nature. He takes the four basic elements — earth, water, air, and fire — and shows that earth feeds water (the sea). Together, earth and the sea feed air, which, in turn, feeds the eternal fire. The point of this hierarchy, which permeated much Renaissance thought, is to demonstrate that everything tends toward its higher calling. In Man, reason is the highest faculty, and Man (Adam) must use his reason as his highest defense if confronted with temptation. Raphael's discussion and description of these hierarchies then is part of his warning to Adam.

Raphael next turns to the rebellion in Heaven of Satan and his followers. Before he describes the actual events of the rebellion, Raphael tells Adam that humans cannot fully comprehend the spiritual or angelic nature of such events. Raphael, therefore, will tell the story using earthly counterparts to Heavenly notions. In a sense, Raphael explains one of the functions of art, to put difficult concepts into understandable form through metaphor. He will tell Adam what the war in Heaven was like because Adam will be unable to understand the real nature of the conflict.

The story Raphael tells preceded the opening of Paradise Lost. Because of epic tradition, Milton opened his story in the middle of things, in medias res. So now, Milton uses Raphael's story as a means to go back and relate the events that led up to the opening of Book I. Raphael's story, which covers Books V and VI, is a type of flashback, a story that precedes the main action of the epic.
Raphael says that the rebellion began when God presented his newly "begotten" Son to the angels as their new ruler. Many commentators have been troubled by Milton's use of the word "begotten" since it suggests that the Son was "born" to God and thus denies the doctrine of the Trinity. However, Milton also uses the term "anointed" as a synonym for "begotten," and so the generally accepted meaning for the passage is that the Son is now begotten or anointed as the Messiah or King of Heaven to rule over the angels.

The rest of Raphael's description of the rebellion gives the lie to Satan's description of the rebellion in Book I. Satan was not heroic in his opposition to God; instead he sneaked away in the night. Further, he convinced other angels to follow him with sophistic arguments and the magnificence of his appearance in Heaven. The real hero of the last part of Book V is Abdiel who follows his own beliefs and challenges Satan in front of all the Devils' hosts. Abdiel cannot be swayed by Satan's arguments and taunts and heroically deserts Satan. Abdiel is the only one of Satan's hosts who has the fortitude and moral character to oppose the mighty archangel. Milton here gives the reader a direct contrast between pomp without substance (Satan) and substance without pomp (Abdiel).

Abdiel also stands as an example for both Satan and for Adam and Eve. That is, Abdiel responds appropriately when confronted with temptation. Had Satan resisted his own envious thoughts, he would not have rebelled. Had the other angels been like Abdiel, they would not have followed Satan; they would have remained true to God. If Adam and Eve had been like Abdiel, they would not have eaten from the Tree of Knowledge. Abdiel shows that free will exists and can be used.
In Book VI, Milton presents his description of epic warfare. He follows many of the conventions of the great classic epics, such as the Iliad and the Aeneid, by giving graphic descriptions of battles and wounds, highlighting the boasting give and take in individual battles, and developing massive scenes of chaotic violence. However, Milton goes beyond his classical models and, in a sense, mocks the nature of the warfare he describes. The reasons that lie behind this sense of mockery in Book VI have been frequently discussed and disputed by critics and commentators. The general sense of those who see a kind of mocking humor in the battle scenes is that Milton was dealing with two difficulties. First, the combat in Heaven is between combatants who cannot be killed, and second, there is no doubt as to the outcome of the battle.

To begin with, in Book V, Raphael has told Adam that the description of the war must of necessity be metaphoric. That is, the human mind cannot grasp the real nature of war in Heaven, so Raphael must use a comparative, metaphoric technique to make the event understandable to Adam. From the start of Raphael's description then, the idea that immortal angels with God-like powers would need armor, swords, even a special cannon, is ludicrous. The angels, both loyal and rebellious, are so powerful that such weapons would be, at best, superfluous and, at worst, bothersome. So the entire nature of the warfare that Raphael lays out must be understood as only a means to allow Adam's human reason to gain some idea of what actually happened in Heaven.

An alternative view to the angels' use of weapons suggests that Milton was attempting to present all of the types of warfare known, from the swords and spears of Homeric legend, through medieval armor to the gunpowder and cannons of the Renaissance and Restoration. While this reason for the weapons may be valid, it
has no bearing on the seriocomic tone of the warfare in general, a tone that results from Raphael's inability to accurately express Heavenly fighting.

In relating his warfare metaphor, Raphael, either wittingly or unwittingly, creates the feel of a mock-epic rather than true dramatic epic. The individual encounters have a cartoonish aspect about them. Abdiel, whose heroism in standing up to Satan receives deserved praise from God, first confronts Satan and knocks him backwards. Next, Michael splits him down the middle. In the Iliad, such a wound would be the end of the warrior. But, in Paradise Lost, Satan cannot be killed so the wound, like wounds in cartoons, heals. The reader sees Satan split open but knows he will be back. Moloch is similarly chased screaming from the field in ignominious fashion. Everywhere, demons are humiliated, while the angels, limited in numbers and power by God, hardly break ranks. Even if Milton's goal in this scene is not exactly comedy, it is to demonstrate through the one-sidedness of the fight that the rebels have no real power over God. Dramatic tension cannot be produced when the outcome is preordained.

The semi-serious tone of Book VI continues in the description of the second day of battle. Satan has foolishly convinced his troops to build a cannon to continue the fight. The foolishness comes from the notion that a different weapon will be more effective than the first ones. If angels cannot be killed by swords, neither can they be killed by a cannon. The futility of their plans is lost on Satan and his cohorts. Some comedy does ensue when the demons fire their cannon because several rows of angels are bowled over by the cannonball. This result produces mockery and gloating by Satan and Belial. Their gloating, unlike the deep laughter of God at the rebels' presumption, however, is false optimism. Their gloating is simply prelude to the angels' response, which is a barrage of boulders, hills, and mountains that literally bury the rebels and their cannon, another cartoon-
like image. This image is followed by another of the same sort as the rebels dig their way out and begin to lob parts of the landscape back at the angels. This depiction of the hills and mountains flying through the air and landing on unsuspecting angels and devils with no effect is hardly the typical picture of epic warfare.

Finally, even the ultimate assault by the Son in his chariot produces a humorous image. The Son comes forth with no assistance and literally rolls over the rebels. He then herds them like "a Herd / of Goats" (856-57) down a gap toward Hell. The rebels retreat, first from the Son, then back from Hell, unwilling to confront God or place, neither here nor there. Finally, powerless to resist God, they are cast into the burning lake of Hell. The assumed power of their rebellion and fight has been nothing more than ridiculous illusion.

Throughout this battle, Milton's depiction of God's attitude has been one of easy amusement. God limits the number and power of the angel forces as if to give himself a handicap, but actually to emphasize that only his side has real power. When the rebels have small successes, God laughs. When the great geographic fight occurs, God is concerned only with the destruction of the landscape and the chaos that is being wrought. Even here, though, when God sends the Son in for the final assault, it is with limitations on the Son's power. That God will win this battle is never in doubt. That the rebels are without power against God is the lesson he teaches through the ease with which he wins the battle. The power of the rebels and the angels is controlled by God, and the rebels were both hubristic and ludicrous to think they could overthrow their creator. The battle is not treated seriously by Milton because the rebels were in no way serious opposition to God.
Metaphorically, Raphael has made his point. Satan and his cohorts rebelled, but they were no real threat to God. The real threat of the rebels was in the chaos they caused, metaphorically displayed in the uprooting of the landscape on the second day. The affront to God was in the rebellion; that is, using free will in disobedience to God produces chaos. The serious act was the disobedience to God. The battle is Raphael's way of metaphorically representing the chaos produced by disobedience, but the main point Raphael makes is that the power in the act of disobedience is illusory. At any moment he wishes, God can stop the rebellion and punish the disobedience.

The rebels are ultimately guilty of self-delusion, a self-delusion that carries over into Hell. Even though they have just been completely humiliated in battle, the fallen angels still rally to Satan in Book I. They assume that they can still challenge God's authority and oppose him by attacking Man. Their ridiculously easy defeat in battle seems forgotten by most of the rebels.

One final interesting note on Book VI is Raphael's comment that he does not name many of the angels in the battle because fame on Earth is not important when one has fame in Heaven. Conversely, he names only a few of the devils because they do not deserve fame.

The prologue to Book VII is especially interesting on two counts. First, the Muse Milton invokes is again Urania, the classical Muse of Astronomy, who is appropriate since the focus of this book is on the creation of Earth and the heavens, and Book VIII will deal with planetary motions. But, once again, just as he did in Book I, Milton disassociates Urania from the classical tradition and equates her with Christian inspiration, literally (in Book I) with the Holy Spirit. This treatment
of Urania epitomizes one of Milton's goals in Paradise Lost — to compose a Christian epic. He brings together the pagan classical tradition with Christian doctrine; the invocation and transmutation of Urania provides an emblematic image of this goal.

The second point of interest in this prologue is Milton's personal references. He once again alludes to his blindness with the word "darkness" in line 27, but he goes on to mention "dangers" (28) and earlier referred to "evil days." These references appear to be to the political situation in England at the time Milton wrote Paradise Lost. Milton had been an official in Cromwell's government and had been imprisoned briefly after the Restoration. The supporters of Charles II, as well as Charles himself, were not an especially bloodthirsty lot, but Puritans and former supporters of Cromwell had good reasons to be concerned. Milton, because of his notoriety, outspokenness, and blindness, was especially vulnerable. Moreover, his composition, a Christian epic, was not likely to be popular among the Cavaliers, who had more worldly matters on their minds. Consequently, the personal aspects of this prologue reveal Milton's sense of isolation, vulnerability, and perhaps fear at a time when, had circumstances not changed so dramatically, he might have been one of the most celebrated figures in the kingdom.

The rest of Book VII, following the prologue, needs less comment than most books since it follows the account of creation in Genesis quite closely. Some important differences, distinctions, and additions do exist, however. Perhaps the most apparent difference between Milton's account of creation and that in Genesis is that the Son, rather than God the Father, goes forth to create Earth and the heavens. Milton seems to be developing a Christian version of creation here to contrast with the Old Testament / Judaic one in Genesis. The Son sets forth in his chariot followed by "Cherub and Seraph, Potentates and Thrones, / And Virtues"
(197-98). As he creates, the Son uses golden compasses to make Earth and the heavens surrounding it — an image that was made famous a century or so later in William Blake's illustrations for Paradise Lost. Following the Son's initial, triumphant creation of Earth, Milton returns to the creation account in Genesis in both context and cadence. As the day-by-day events are described, the actions are credited to God, although it is unclear in this section whether Milton means God the Father or God the Son.

As the events of each day of creation occur, Milton incorporates his own knowledge and interpretations. For example, in describing the creation of dry land on Day 3, Milton attributes the formation of mountains to God and also suggests that the highest mountains correspond to the lowest depths in the oceans. Neither of these ideas is in Genesis, and both were matters of theological debate in the seventeenth century. Milton simply adds his own ideas about geology and creation to the account. Similarly, in his account of Day 4, Milton adds scientific description and information about the stars. On Day 5, the description of certain fish is detailed and precise, reflecting Milton's study of natural history. So, on the one hand, Milton simply repeats the biblical account of creation, but, on the other, he is adding, from his own vast store of knowledge, much detailed insight and information not found in Genesis. In a sense, Book VII is Milton's improved scientific and Christian account of the story of creation. Of course, all of these changes are presented by Raphael, so it is more precise to call this version of creation Raphael's.

One last feature of Book VII, as well as of Books VI and VIII, is worth consideration. In each of these books, Adam questions Raphael concerning God, nature, and the universe. In many ways, Adam's questions seem to be simple and understandable curiosity on his part. But on a deeper level, Adam's curiosity points
toward the Tree of Knowledge. Adam constantly wants more information, and this
desire on his part clearly suggests that in the decisive moment, Adam's own
personality may fail him. Further, Raphael, as a character, may abet Adam's
eventual fall. The "affable angel" was sent by God to warn Adam of Satan's plans.
Raphael has delivered and will deliver this warning piecemeal and vaguely.
Raphael can explain the war in Heaven with precision. He can explain creation
clearly. But he warns Adam in generalities. Raphael's vague warnings may be
necessitated by God's instructions, but, even so, they lack the specificity that might
truly help Adam and Eve be prepared for Satan.

The astronomical discussion between Adam and Raphael reflects the
scientific debate that existed in England in the seventeenth century. The
discoveries and theories of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo were well known
throughout England and Europe, but the ideas were also hotly debated. Milton,
who had read extensively on the subjects and may even have met Galileo,
nonetheless chooses to sidestep the issues in Paradise Lost. Adam and Raphael
present varying viewpoints but do not reach a conclusion. Rather Raphael ends the
discussion by saying that God left the questions concerning the heavens open to
dispute, "perhaps to move / His laughter" (77-78). He adds that Adam should be
"lowly wise" (169) and "Dream not of other worlds" (175).

Even though Milton chooses not to reach a conclusion on Adam's questions
and ends the debate with homiletic advice from Raphael, it would be misleading to
assume that either Milton or Raphael intends to discourage questions about the
universe. Milton's interest in science is well established, and Raphael seems
pleased with the questions that Adam asks. It was commonplace in the Restoration
period to refer to nature as God's Book of Works, which was entirely compatible
with God's Book of Words (the Bible). So questions about nature and the heavens

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were not considered presumptuous, though they could lead to incorrect, even evil, conclusions. Therefore, Adam, in opening up the abstruse topic of the geocentric / heliocentric universe is advised to stick to more down-to-earth queries — not to avoid questions at all.

By today's standards, Raphael's (God's) advice to Adam seems to limit Man's ability to learn, but, within the context of the time, God suggests that Man should be content with what he can learn about the world rather than what must remain theory. In other words, Man should learn the practical ways of the physical world and leave metaphysical concerns to God.

The idea that God laughs at Man's attempts to theorize about the universe continues Milton's problematic portrayal of God the Father. How to make an omniscient being who is the embodiment of pure reason empathetic is a difficult task. God the Father often seems austere and condescending although those qualities are built into the notion of making the Supreme Being a fictional character. God the Son, who will become Man, naturally seems more human, and perhaps the Son is Milton's way of humanizing the Father.

Eve's attitude toward the conversation between Adam and Raphael is frequently misunderstood. She walks away as the discussion of planetary motion begins, and some readers have assumed that the subject is beyond her female understanding. However, Milton says directly that such is not the case. Rather, Eve prefers to hear the explanation privately and directly from Adam. This explanation is consistent with Milton's attitude toward Eve and women in general throughout the work. Women are intellectually inferior to men but not significantly. Eve is interested in the subject, but will both enjoy the explanation more and understand it better if Adam explains it to her. This attitude also establishes the role of Eve and
women as helpmates to their husbands. The husband's role is in the world; the wife's at home. But, within the privacy of the home, the two may operate on equal footing as the anticipated conversation between Adam and Eve would prove.

Adam's description of his creation is similar to Raphael's description of the creation of Earth in Book VII — both accounts follow the biblical versions but also contain significant additions by Milton. Milton shows Adam standing erect, running, jumping, discovering his reason, and deducing information about the world into which he has just been created. Further, Milton adds Adam's trance-like sleep and the Divine Guide who takes Adam to Eden and explains creation to him.

The scene in which Adam asks God for a companion is one of the intentionally lighthearted scenes in Paradise Lost. In this scene, God is like a teacher or parent who already knows the answer to a child's request but wants to make the child work a bit before revealing it. God knows that Adam needs companionship but makes him go through a scholarly disputation to explain the reasoning behind his need. Adam argues well and pleases God through the use of his reason.

Some commentators on Paradise Lost have been troubled by Adam's statement at line 415. In explaining why God does not need companionship, Adam says, "Thou in Thyself art perfect." To some, this line suggest Unitarianism, especially when coupled with Adam's further comment to God that God is, "through all numbers absolute, though one" (421). In examining the context, however, it seems doubtful that Milton actually intended to challenge the doctrine of the Trinity here. Rather, Adam is establishing the basic difference between Man and God. God is perfect and, by definition, needs nothing else to be complete; Man is imperfect and needs companionship and much more. Many critics have pointed
out that Milton is following Aristotle's discussion of God in the Eudemian Ethics and probably did not consider the lines' implications in terms of the Trinity.

For Adam, Eve is the greatest of God's creations on Earth. As Adam explains his love for Eve to Raphael, both the angel and the reader become aware of how Adam's feelings for Eve pose a danger for him. Adam adores Eve. His paean to her character and beauty reaches the level of adulation. Adam does note some of the ways that Eve is inferior to him, but the overall tenor of his description reveals a depth of love that makes Raphael frown with concern. Milton uses Adam's feelings for Eve to set up the temptation scene in Book IX. To this point, Adam has been presented as a strong and intelligent character, able to debate successfully with God. Adam has listened and learned from Raphael. Further, he has heard and understood Raphael's warnings. Adam knows that he and Eve must not be disobedient to God's command. The question, thus, is how, given the strength of Adam's character, how can he believably yield to temptation in Book IX?

The answer to this question lies mainly in Adam's discussion of Eve in Book VIII. The reader knows from Book I that Eve is vain and moreover that she is in a number of ways inferior to Adam. She needs Adam's help and counsel so the idea that she might be deluded by Satan is not farfetched. Adam's weakness is not so obvious until Book VIII when he tells Raphael about Eve. If Paradise Lost were a Greek tragedy, Adam's love for Eve would be his flaw. His reason can be overcome by Eve's beauty. His sexual passion for her literally makes him weak. Through this passion, Milton makes the point that love, especially love expressed as sexual desire, can be excessive. Raphael tells Adam that his love for Eve's beauty may be excessive, and Adam tries to explain that his spiritual and intellectual love for her is even greater. However, Adam's attempt to put his love
for Eve on a higher plane seems an afterthought. The focus of Adam's speech on Eve makes Raphael and the reader fully aware that Adam's reason can be swayed by his excessive passion for Eve.

For modern readers, Raphael's warning to Adam about sexual passion may seem old fashioned, even prudish, but the reality of the problem — that a man can lose his reason over a woman (and vice versa) — is only as far away as today's newspaper. Milton's point that love, especially the love that is driven by sexual desire, can cause people to act without reason is an idea both ancient and modern. Raphael again warns Adam of danger from Satan, and Adam promises vigilance, but Milton has carefully set the stage for the drama that will take place in Book IX.

As Raphael prepares to leave, Adam asks about love and sex among the angels, and Raphael blushes, "rosy red" (620). This brief, suggestive interlude is like comic relief in a tragedy, a last, lighthearted moment before the serious matters of Book IX.

Milton's fourth invocation differs from earlier ones in that he does not call on Urania, except obliquely, and he does not mention his blindness. Rather he offers an explanation for his epic and says that the tone must now become "Tragic" (6). The word "tragic" had two connotations for Milton. First, it carried the simple moral meaning of something terribly bad or unfortunate. Christians since the Middle Ages had always considered the falls of Lucifer and Adam tragic. But 'tragic' also refers to the dramatic concept of tragedy as first defined by Aristotle and developed through the centuries to its high achievement in Elizabethan England. Milton knew the nature of dramatic tragedy from his study of the Greeks (he patterned Samson Agonistes on Greek tragedy) as well as from reading
Shakespeare and other Elizabethan dramatists (he wrote an essay On Shakespeare for the Second Folio).

By the seventeenth century, tragedies had assumed a basic format. The play would have a noble hero who had a tragic flaw in either personality or actions. The fortunes of the hero would reverse during the play from good to bad with the hero recognizing his own responsibility for these consequences that resulted from his flaw. The end of the play would result in the death of the hero. Throughout the play, fate would, in one form or another, control the action, and, at the end, the audience would experience acatharsis or purging of emotions, resulting from their empathy with the hero. They should feel pity for the hero and fear for themselves.

To see that Paradise Lost has an underlying tragic structure is not difficult. Adam is a noble character. He has a flaw in his passion for Eve that overrides his reason. He makes the mistake of eating the fruit. He recognizes, eventually, his responsibility for his actions. Death, though not occurring in the epic, is the main result of Adam's action. Fate (God) knows what will happen throughout the poem. And finally, Milton wanted his audience to experience pity for Adam and all mankind but fear for the consequences of their own sinful lives. So when Milton speaks of changing his "Notes to Tragic" (6), he means more than a passing remark.

Yet for all of these connections to tragedy, Paradise Lost is not a tragedy; it is a Christian epic with a tragic core. Adam is a noble hero, but as Milton notes in this prologue, he is not a hero like Achilles, Aeneas, or Odysseus. He is, in Milton's words, a hero of "Patience and Heroic Martyrdom" (33). Ultimately too, Adam is regenerated and reconciled rather than just killed. Paradise Lost will end on a hopeful — even joyful — note, since through Adam's fall, salvation and
eternal life will come to Man through God's mercy and grace. This felix culpa or "happy fault" is not the stuff of tragedy.

Moreover, even as an epic, Milton says that he was attempting something different in Paradise Lost. He did not want to glorify warfare as in earlier epics like the Iliad. Instead, in his only description of warfare (Book VI), he creates parody rather than magnificence. Rather Milton's goal was to write a Christian epic, specifically a Protestant Christian epic with a new sort of hero, one who wins ultimately through patience and suffering. At the time Milton wrote this particular invocation, he still prayed to the Muse (Urania, Christian inspiration) to help him complete his work and to let it gain acceptance in a time when such a work's fate was unclear.

After the invocation, Milton begins this book with Satan who has been absent for the three books in which Adam and Raphael talked. Satan has degenerated as a character. In his speech in Eden, he is unable to make his thoughts logical. He thinks Earth may be more beautiful than Heaven since God created it after Heaven. He thinks he might be happy on Earth but then argues that he could not be happy in Heaven. He fusses about Man being tended by angels. Satan's ability to think, which seemed potent in Book I, now appears weak and confused. An even greater indication of Satan's character degeneration is that he is now self-delusional. In the early books, he lied but only to get others to do his bidding. In this speech, he lies to himself. He questions whether God actually created the angels, he sees Man as God's revenge on him, he says he took half of all the angels out of Heaven. Satan who seemed somewhat heroic in his rebellion now seems to be a dangerous con man who has come to believe his own lies. In the early books, the reader can at least see reasoning as well as envy behind Satan's actions, but, here in Book IX, Satan has become the delusional psychopath who believes his
The concept of heroism cannot be stretched to include Satan's attitude and thinking at this point in the epic.

Milton reinforces Satan's degeneration with visual images. Satan creeps along the ground of Eden in a low-lying mist and ultimately takes on the form of the serpent who crawls along the ground. The shape changes Satan has made in Paradise Lost show a pattern. From angel to cherub, from cherub to cormorant, then to lion and tiger, and finally to toad and snake, Satan has progressively made himself more and more earthbound and lowly. The irony of these shifts in shape is not lost on Satan. As he searches for a serpent to enter, he complains of the bestial nature of the animal that he must "incarnate and imbrute, / That to the highth of deity aspired" (166-167). That is, as he tries to become like God, he takes on lower and lower forms.

The next scene of Book IX involves the argument between Adam and Eve over whether they should work alone or separately. Some commentators have seen Eve's arguments as a kind of calculated sophistry akin to Satan's that demonstrates Eve's complicity in her own fall. Her argument, however, is more of innocence. She has played the proper womanly role during Raphael's visit, and now she simply wants more freedom and responsibility. Perhaps she wants to show that she can be Adam's equal. To read Eve as a conniver is to overlook her naiveté and innocent desire to be more like Adam.

Satan's attitude when he finds Eve alone shows that the two humans made the wrong decision in separating. When Satan sees Eve by herself, he is pleased that she is not with Adam, who would have been a "Foe not informidable" (486). Eve's only real defense against Satan seems to be her basic beauty and goodness. Satan is so astounded when he first sees her that for a brief period he forgets his
purpose and stands "Stupidly good" (465). The scene makes two points: First, the goodness expressed just by Eve's physical person is overwhelming. And second, Satan has lost the capacity for real goodness. He may be momentarily struck dumb and be "stupidly good," but he quickly recovers and is not in any way deflected from his evil purpose.

Satan's temptation of Eve is a cunning masterpiece. As a prelapsarian serpent, he is able to approach her standing upright upon his tail, a "Circular base of rising folds, that tow'r'd / Fold above fold, a surging maze" (498-99). The images of circuitous, folding mazes occur intermittently throughout Paradise Lost and reach their culmination in this image of the serpent rising to tempt Eve with his body a coiling labyrinth. Visually, Eve is pure, simple innocence; the serpent, unfathomable, complex evil. Eve will soon be lost in his labyrinthine argument and plot.

Satan as serpent first uses his physical beauty and speech to impress Eve, who finds him beautiful. A number of writers have found sexual undertones in the description of the serpent: "pleasing was his shape, / And lovely" (503-04). An old Jewish tradition even had it that Eve made love with the serpent. Milton's subtle sexualizing of the serpent followed this tradition and adds another element to Eve's fall. William Blake, in his illustration for this scene, certainly noticed sexual imagery. At first glance, Eve appears to kiss the serpent, but is, in fact, taking a bite of a very phallic apple in the serpent's mouth. The fruit hanging from the Tree of Life in Blake's illustration suggests nothing so much as male genitalia.

Eve is also taken with the fact that the serpent talks. Further, the snake is not in the angelic form of the tempter in Eve's dream, so she is not put on guard by the creature. (Milton has made it clear earlier that Adam and Eve were never
threatened by any animal in Eden.) Satan first flatters Eve. He licks the ground. He says he worships her beauty. The reader recalls that Eve narcissistically became enamored of her own image in the water at her creation. She is vain, but she is also secondary to Adam. Here a talking snake praises her beauty and says he worships her. She is interested though not enraptured.

But when the serpent takes Eve to the Tree of Knowledge, his arguments come so fast and so deviously that she cannot follow them. At first, she does what she should. She tells the serpent that she cannot eat from the tree. He argues that he has eaten and did not die. Then he adds that God wants her to eat of the tree and, contradictorily, that he envies what the humans might learn if they did eat. The arguments come so fast that Eve cannot answer, let alone think through them. Her innocence in comparison with Satan's cunning overcomes her reason. She is no match for Satan, and so his sophistic arguments seem reason to her. Unlike Adam, Eve buys into the arguments without grasping what is really happening. Eve eats the fruit, and eats, for the first time, gluttonously, letting her appetite take control of her reason.

After she eats, Eve at first feels elated. She thinks that she has reached a higher level but shows this ironically by starting to worship the tree. Her thoughts turn to Adam. Initially, she thinks she might keep this new power for herself and perhaps become his equal. At this point, Eve is conniving; already the fruit has changed her innocence. Even her reason for telling Adam shows this fact. If the fruit indeed leads to death, she does not want to die and leave Adam to another woman. She selfishly wants him to be in the same condition she is.

Adam's temptation and fall is much less complicated than Eve's. When Adam drops the flowery chaplet that he has been making for Eve, he symbolically
drops all that he has in Eden. He immediately realizes what Eve has done. Adam makes a conscious decision to eat the fruit because he cannot give up Eve. He allows his physical passion for her to outweigh his reason, and so he eats. Adam's decision is willful, unlike Eve's, which was based on fraudulent argument and weak reason.

After the fall, the two are overcome by lust. Adam says to Eve, "if such pleasure be in things to us forbidden, it might be wish'd, For this one Tree had been forbidden ten" (1024-26). The language of the entire scene is charged with sexual imagery and innuendo. Their appetites are in control, and reason is lost. After their lovemaking, they fall into a troubled sleep — no more innocent dreams. When they wake, they are cognizant of what they have done, and their arguing is that of real people. If their argument at the end of Book IX is compared with their discussion of whether to work alone or together at the beginning, the difference in Man before and after the fall is clear. The opening discussion is reasoned and pleasant; the closing, irrational and bitter.

In several ways, Book X is the culmination of the plot of Paradise Lost, with Books XI and XII being an extended denouement or resolution. Milton constructs Book X as a series of short culminating scenes that provide the final appearances for a number of major characters. After Book X, Satan, Sin, Death, the rebellious angels, and, for the most part, God and the Son, will be gone from the story.

The technique Milton uses in Book X contrasts with the stagy-dramatic nature of Book IX, which contained many long soliloquies or monologues by various characters. Book X contains more brief scenes with fewer speeches. The nature of epic writing allows for these shifts in style, focus, and point of view. Because the epic is conceived on such a grand scale, many different styles and
even genres can be incorporated within the single work. Book IX contains all the elements of a tragedy, but Paradise Lost is not a tragedy. A tragedy would end with the fall of Adam and Eve and the arrival of Death in the world, not with the regeneration of the two humans and a promise of ultimate triumph. An epic can contain a tragedy within its structure but still be much more than just a tragedy. Likewise, an epic can contain sections of long set speeches linked to other sections where the action moves with movie-like speed. The epic structure puts demands on both reader and writer, but it also allows for more variety for both as well.

The first three scenes of Book X provide interesting contrasts. In the first scene, God sends the Son to judge Adam, Eve, and the serpent. This judgment takes place in the second scene. In the third scene, Sin and Death meet Satan returning to Hell. These second and third scenes seem intended to be complementary. In both, a creator / father meets with two of his creations / children. In both scenes, the creator provides judgment, advice, and information about the future to the children.

The Son, who in Book VII is revealed as the creator of Earth and of Adam and Eve, is sent forth by the Father to pronounce judgment upon the humans and the serpent. The serpent is judged because he allowed another being to take control of his nature. The reasoning here is quite similar to that behind many of the punishments Dante describes in the eighth circle of Hell in the Inferno. For Dante, and for Milton as well, fraud is involved in allowing one's nature to be usurped, even if that usurpation is unwitting, as the serpent's seems to be.

The Son passes judgment on his own creation (Adam and Eve) as kindly as possible. He is not vengeful, but more fatherly in explaining what the punishment is and why it must occur. After passing judgment, the Son clothes the couple, an
act comparable to Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. Besides the literal clothing of Adam and Eve, the Son also clothes their inward nakedness with a "Robe of Righteousness" which will protect them from God's wrath. The Son here acts "[a]s Father of his Family" (216), and this act begins to show Adam and Eve that grace and mercy are still open to them.

In the following scene, another father meets his children. Satan finds Sin and Death constructing their bridge to Earth. The interrelationship between parent and children here is in direct contrast with the previous scene. The symbolism of the bridge that Sin and Death construct is straightforward. Once Sin and Death enter Earth, the pathway to Hell will be broad and easily traveled, accommodating the millions who will use it. The children of Satan are excited by the prospects of what their father has accomplished, even though both Sin and Satan lie to each other. Sin praises Satan for his "magnific deeds" (354) on Earth. She also tells him that he empowered them to build the bridge and that now Satan rules Earth while God rules Heaven. All that Sin tells her father are lies to build his ego. Her speech is an unwitting set up, raising his self-delusions to their highest pitch just before he will be brought low. The blatant exaggeration and lying here contrasts sharply with the somber, reasoned, and hopeful speech of the Son to Adam and Eve. Further, Satan sends his two children forth to rule Earth, through destruction, promising them that they will "Reign in bliss" (399), an exaggerated lie on his part as the reader will learn in a few more lines. The contrast is between truth with the Son, Adam, and Eve; lies with Satan, Sin, and Death.

Satan's entrance into Hell is not triumphant; the other rebellious angels have retreated into Pandemonium. Satan shifts to the lowest form of angel to walk among his followers and is not recognized. Then, at the moment he reveals himself on his throne and makes his boasting, gloating speech, his last shape change
occurs, but this time he does not cause it. Rather God turns Satan into the serpent form he had occupied in Eden. Along with Satan all the rebels are made snakes, too. Satan had misunderstood God's judgment on the serpent; it was also judgment on Satan. Now he and his followers will go along the ground. The heel of Woman will bruise his head, and though Satan does not realize it, the woman who will bruise his head will be Mary, the Second Eve and mother of Jesus. The glorious plan to become like God has resulted in the rebellious angels having the form of the most detested of earthbound creatures, the reviled snake. And rather than ruling in glory, they will be destroyed by Man as part of the Son's judgment. In his moment of personal triumph, Satan is brought low by God.

Milton creates the scene of the demons turned into snakes with a particularly effective use of sibilance, the alliterative repetition of "s" sounds. Beginning with line 508, "A dismal, universal hiss, the sound / Of public scorn" (508-509) and continuing through line 520, "transformed / Alike to Serpents, all as accessories," Milton repeats the sound of "s" with such persistence that, if the passage is read out loud, the reader literally hisses along with the snakes. It is an especially effective and purposeful use of alliteration.

This scene ends with a forest filled with Trees of Knowledge appearing before the snakes, the fruit of which turns to bitter ash when the snakes try to eat it. The bitter ash represents the result of all the evil that Satan has done. He is not the ruler of Earth; he and his followers are still controlled by God. This scene is the last appearance of Satan and the rebels in Paradise Lost. They end their role in the epic totally defeated by the power of God. Even though they will be allowed to regain their forms, the book suggests that they will be forced into the shape of serpents at regular intervals. Further, their only reward, besides lack of control of their bodies, is the bitter ash from the tree.
The next scene is the final one for Sin and Death. Their gloating on Earth is listened to by God who pronounces their ultimate fate, to be sealed up in Hell on Judgment Day. The sense here is that Milton is working his way through the loose ends and characters of the plot so he can concentrate on Adam and the future of Mankind in the last two books.

The next scene deals with Earth. Earth was created as a perfect place for God's perfect creation. It too has to be transformed. So God sends angels to bring about the necessary transformations: seasons, bad weather, a tilted axis. Here Milton demonstrates again his scientific knowledge and explains much of the natural phenomena and problems on Earth as part of the judgment that occurred when Man fell.

Last Milton returns to Adam and Eve. This scene does not end the story of the two humans. Their story continues through the last two books. But here, in Book X, Milton shows the reconciliation that must occur between Adam and Eve if God's ultimate plan is to work. That is, if Man is to bruise the head of the serpent, Adam and Eve have to produce offspring to populate the Earth. They cannot remain alienated and in despair.

Interestingly, Milton chooses Eve as the agent of reconciliation. Adam's monologue of despair shows that his reason is broken and despair has set in. Eve embodies not reason but love. Her love that shines through as she begs Adam to forgive her helps regenerate Adam. Through Eve's love, Adam begins to find hope. As Adam accepts what Eve offers, his ability to reason returns. Eve, who sinned against Adam and God, has now redeemed herself with Adam. Once again, she stands in proper relationship to her husband. Here she makes the argument for suicide, but Adam, once again utilizing reason and wisdom, explains why suicide
is not right. If God's plan to destroy Satan, Sin, and Death is to be realized, it will occur through Man. They have an obligation to accept their punishment, populate the earth, and begin the process that will redeem themselves and all Mankind. Their prayer at the end of Book X begins their reconciliation with God.

Books XI and XII change the focus of Paradise Lost. The plot of Adam's and Eve's fall has been completed. The final scenes for most characters have occurred. A brief conclusion seems logical. Instead, Milton adds two more books that trace biblical history through Jesus. Many scholars and readers have questioned the artistic justification for these books, and, in truth, the books do seem to needlessly prolong the work. On the other hand, several solid arguments can be adduced to explain the reasons for Books XI and XII, if not their necessity.

Milton's stated purpose in the poem is to justify God's ways to Man. By the end of Book X, Milton has been able to explain his concept of what God did and why, but he has offered little in the way of justification. Can the single instance of disobedience by Eve and then Adam justify death, war, plague, famine — an endless list of evil? To truly accomplish his goal, Milton needs to show the effects of the fall on Adam and Eve over a longer period and at the same time develop the notion that some greater good than innocence and immortality in Paradise could result from the fall. Books XI and XII represent Milton's attempt at justification.

The justification of God's ways is developed in two ways. First, the justification of God's acts is presented to Adam as a part of the plot structure. That is, through the visions Michael shows Adam, Adam gains a greater individual understanding of what he did, why it was wrong, what the consequences are for him and for all Mankind, and why those consequences are truly better than what would have happened if Adam and Eve had remained sinless in the Garden.
Second, the justification for God's ways is developed in a broader scope for the reader as a representative for all Mankind. Through Adam's actions and consequences, the reader gets Milton's explanation of why Man fell and why sin, death, and the myriad of other evils exist on Earth. Through Adam's vision, the reader also sees how Adam's sin will be repeated in various ways and various times throughout history. It is in these final two books that Milton completes his argument for his audience and either does or does not achieve the justification he set as his goal.

In Book XI, Michael is introduced as the second angel, after Raphael, to impart information and education to Adam. Michael and Raphael make an interesting contrast. Both come with messages for Adam, and both speak to Adam outside of Eve's presence. Michael is stern though not unkind while Raphael is often called the "affable archangel." Michael brings pronouncements to Adam; Raphael engaged Adam in a friendly conversation. Michael's statements to Adam are straightforward lessons that cannot be misconstrued; Raphael is much less authoritarian in his tone, causing a number of critics to partially blame Raphael for Adam's failure to be prepared for the serpent. Michael cannot be faulted for lack of clarity. The contrast points up the differences in Man's relationship with the angels before and after the fall. Before the fall, Man had a more personal relationship with Heaven; after the fall, Heaven instructs, Man listens.

The absence of Eve when both Raphael and Michael talk with Adam reinforces the idea that woman is secondary to man. During Raphael's visit, Eve absents herself, preferring to have Raphael's ideas explained to her by Adam. Michael puts Eve into a deep sleep while he talks with Adam. Once again the idea is that Eve will better understand if the message is provided for her by Adam. In
Milton's view of biblical and world history, women have an important role, but in matters of the intellect, men predominate.

A further aspect of Milton's view of women's role in society comes in the second vision that Michael presents. In this vision, a group of godly men are seduced by a group of seductive women. Adam's positive response to this scene points up his weakness for women that led to his fall. Michael says that men often will fall away from God by yielding their superior position to women because of physical and sexual attraction. Michael calls this "effeminate slackness" (634) in men and suggests that the problem results from the reversal of the proper or ordained order of the world. Among humans, men have a certain superiority over women. Milton's ideas on the roles of men and women have provoked much critical debate through the years, particularly among feminist critics.

The first scene that Michael shows Adam, the murder of Abel by Cain followed by the "house of death" is really Adam's introduction to death. Before this scene, Adam has no experience of death. The murder and the grotesque scenes in the "Lazar-house" (479) impress on Adam the monstrosity he has loosed on the world. Also the discussion of grotesque diseases leading to death versus the death of good men, dropping like ripe fruit in old age, seems to suggest that horrible deaths are the result of evil lives. That Milton would suggest this idea seems strange, given his own blindness.

The last two visions that Michael shows Adam deal first with war and then the destruction of the world by flood. The unifying factor in these two scenes, as well as an image that runs throughout the work, is that of the one good man willing to stand up against a host of opponents. First, Enoch tries to resolve the issues of the war with reason and is nearly killed before God takes him to Heaven. Second,
the story of Noah is similar in that Noah alone of the people on Earth speaks out against sin and evil. Eventually, only Noah and his family are saved when the flood comes. Michael explains, "So all shall turn degenerate, all deprav'd, / Justice and Temperance, Truth and Faith forgot; / One Man except, the only Son of light / in a dark Age" (806-809). The examples of Enoch and Noah here recall Abdiel, the only one of Satan's angels who opposed his plan for rebellion. Throughout Paradise Lost, the one just man standing up to the evil has been put forward as the example. The Son, accepting mortality and death to save Mankind, is the ultimate paradigm for this image. The image is of particular importance to Adam because he failed to stand up to Eve and, through her, the serpent, in his moment of testing.

Book XI ends with the rainbow, God's covenant with Noah and the one truly hopeful sign in the entire book. For the most part, Michael's description of history has been what most critics call "degenerative history," showing the steady decline of Mankind. This view of the world is similar to the classic myth of the Four Ages of Man in which Mankind goes from a Golden Age, a paradise, through deteriorating stages of Silver, Bronze, and the present Iron, in which ultimate collapse seems imminent. In the Inferno, Dante had presented this myth in the image of a statue with a golden head, silver shoulders and chest, bronze torso, and iron legs. Dante added clay feet to symbolize the corruption of the church. Paradise Lost and biblical history follow this same pattern to a point. They both begin with paradise in Eden and show successive stages of degeneration until God destroys the world by flood.

The difference between the classic view and Milton's Christian presentation is the rainbow. After Noah finds land, God makes a promise never to destroy the world by fire or flood until sin is burned away for eternity in a final conflagration. Thus, the rainbow represents the hope of salvation for all those who remain
obedient to God. The Abdiels, Enochs, Noahs, and, we presume, Adams and Eves will eventually find eternal life because they do not deviate from God's path. The colors of the rainbow provide the Christian contrast with pagan gold, silver, bronze, and iron and offer a sense of optimism at the end of what has been a very grim and depressing presentation of history.

Book XII appears to be a simple continuation of Book XI, and, in fact, in the first edition of Paradise Lost, Books XI and XII were one book. In the second edition, Milton changed his original ten book format to twelve. One of the changes was the division that created Books XI and XII. Biblical scholars in the seventeenth century dated the Creation at 4,000 b.c. and the flood at 2,000 b.c. So Milton divided his original Book X into two 2,000 year sections, each ending with a savior — Noah in Book XI and Jesus in Book XII. He also arranged for a slightly different presentation in each book. Book XI is presented as a series of almost scene-like visions, each complete in itself. Book XII is much more narrative. Michael says that he will now tell the story, and he presents a grand sweep of historical events rather than a scene-by-scene account.

The historical events that Michael narrates in Book XII continue to develop themes and ideas that have run through all of Paradise Lost. The first event is the story of Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. Adam's concern about this story is the fact that one man has dominion over others. Adam comments that God gave Man dominion over animals but not over his fellow man. Michael admires Adam's reasoning but shows that domination of man over man is a part of Adam's original sin. When a person allows his reason to be controlled by either his appetite or his will, he reverses the proper order that God intended. God, seeing that Man lets "unworthy powers" (91) rule within himself, then allows tyrants to appear among men and assert authority over them.
This emphasis of reason as the pre-eminent faculty in Man is one of Milton's main themes in Paradise Lost. In the Inferno, Dante had divided all sin into three categories: sins of appetite, sins of the will, and sins of reason. The worst sins were those of reason because they perverted the part of man that makes him distinguishable from other creatures. In Paradise Lost, Adam and Eve both commit sins of the appetite: she upon eating the apple, he in his passion for Eve above all else. Adam also commits a sin of the will by eating the apple even though his reason tells him to do so is wrong. However, neither Adam nor Eve commits a sin of reason; they are unable to deny seriously any of their actions. Satan commits the sins of reason. His speech to Eve is a perfect example. He uses reason to persuade Eve to eat the apple. By using his reason for fraudulent purposes, he commits what the Middle Ages and Renaissance would have considered to be the worst type of sinful act.

Milton evidently agrees with Dante's ideas of sin, at least in a general way. Throughout the poem, Milton makes reason stand out as the faculty that Man must rely on. In the story of Nimrod, Michael justifies one man's domination over another on Man's inability to keep reason at the forefront in decision making. All the evils that come into the world, whether they involve appetite or will, are really there because of a breakdown of reason.

In the second part of Michael's recounting of history in Book XII, the angel begins to focus on certain heroes within a specific culture — the Israelites. He tells of Abraham, alludes to Jacob and Joseph, presents Moses as a type of savior, and presents the history of the Israeli kings, beginning with Joshua leading the people into the Promised Land followed by accounts of David and Solomon.
Michael explains that God grew weary of the iniquities of the world, and left most nations to "their own polluted ways" (110). He turned his attention instead to "one peculiar Nation" (111), the Israelites, who were to spring from Abraham, a man faithful to God. This account by Michael explains why the Jews (Israelites) were the "Chosen People." God found the faithful man, Abraham, and decided to concentrate his attention on the people and nations that came from that individual. Rather than destroy the rest of the world for its sinfulness, God simply turned away from it to focus on Abraham and his people. Abraham obeys God's commands and goes into Canaan, a land that God promises to all of his future generations. There, Abraham establishes the beginnings of the Kingdom of Israel.

Another important aspect of the selection of Abraham and the Israelites by God is the passage of "the Seed." God had said that the seed of Eve would bruise the serpent, and in Book XII, Michael makes clear that "By that seed / Is meant thy Great Deliverer" (148-49). The "Great Deliverer" is, of course, Jesus, who will come to save Mankind from sin and death. Therefore, Michael's explanation about the Chosen People becomes clearer to Adam. These people, the Israelites, carry the seed of the Messiah; they are chosen initially because of Abraham's godliness, but they are chosen because the Messiah must come from them. Adam begins to see the point of Michael's history lesson.

The nature of this lesson is extended by the humans that Michael chooses to lift up as examples, particularly Moses. The figures of Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and David are all, in varying degrees, prefigurations of Jesus. The practice of "typological allegory or symbolism" began very early in the Christian church. The basis behind this idea was to make the Old Testament more theologically compatible with New Testament for Christians. The general idea was that figures and events in the Old Testaments were types or prefigurations of characters and
events in the New Testament. That is, Noah, as the savior of the world in Exodus, prefigures Jesus, the savior of the world in the Gospels. This sort of typological study went beyond the Bible. Classical heroes like Aeneas, Hercules, or Dionysus were sometimes presented as types of Jesus or other important New Testament characters. The justification for this sort of analysis was that God had control of the entire world, and so even in pagan societies, he had provided shadows that pointed the way toward Jesus and Christian belief.

Michael's description of Moses shows Milton's typological intentions. When the Israelites want to know God's will, they ask Moses to be their mediator, a function, which Michael says, "Moses in figure bears, to introduce / One greater of whose day he shall foretell" (241-42). In other words, Moses as mediator with God prefigures Jesus performing the same function in the New Testament. Earlier, Michael has stated the general idea that events and characters inform "by types / And shadows, of that destin'd Seed to bruise / The Serpent, by what means he shall achieve / Mankind's deliverance" (232-35). This statement is very close to a definition for typological symbolism. The characters and events Michael describes are "types and shadows" all pointing toward the Christ of the New Testament. Moses is the most fully explained of these types, but Abraham, Joshua, and David all serve similar functions. The Chosen People carry the seed literally and symbolically that will ultimately bruise the serpent.

Finally, Michael comes to the Savior himself. Here at last, in Michael's description of Jesus and his mission, Adam sees the complete working out of his fall and God's transformation of it. The Son, born of God and the seed of Adam and Eve, becomes Man, takes on Man's sins, and accepts death in order to overcome it. Thereafter, those who believe and accept God's laws will be able to overcome death also. Adam, at last, sees the entirety of God's plan and is exultant.
He shouts joyously, "O goodness infinite! goodness immense, / That all this good of evil shall produce, / And evil turn to good" (469-71). Here Adam expresses the idea of the "happy fault" or, in Latin felix culpa. If Adam and Eve had not sinned, Jesus would not have been born, Mary would not have been sanctified, and salvation would not have come into existence. These things are greater than what would have existed if the fall had not occurred; therefore, Adam's fall was ultimately for the good.

The idea of the "happy fall" stands in contrast to the more common notion that Adam's action simply created sin and death and destroyed Man's chance for blissful, paradisiacal immortality. Both concepts of the fall existed in seventeenth-century theology, and Milton chooses to accentuate the felix culpa as part of his justification of God's ways to Man. By emphasizing the good that will emerge from the fall of Man, Milton makes the end of Paradise Lost, if not triumphant, at least optimistic. Adam and Eve are no longer the beautiful, but strangely aloof, innocents of Books I through VIII. At the end of the epic, as they leave Eden, Adam and Eve are truly human. Their innocence has been transformed by experience, and they now approach the world with a greater knowledge of what can happen and what consequences can follow evil actions. The pride they had in their inability to do evil has been replaced with the knowledge of what evil is and how easy it is to give in to both pride and evil.

In the end, Adam expresses what he has learned from Michael:

Henceforth I learn that to obey is best,
And learn to fear that only God, to walk
As in his presence, ever to observe
His providence, and on him sole depend,
Merciful over all his works, with good
Still overcoming evil, and by small
Accomplishing great things, by things deem'd weak
Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise
By simple meek; that suffering for Truth's sake
Is fortitude to highest victory,
And to the faithful Death the Gate of Life (561-571).

This lesson that God is always at work in the world, often through seemingly insignificant people and things, that the greatest heroes are those who suffer for truth, and that death leads to eternal life are the images of hope and possibly triumph at the end of the poem. Adam and Eve go forth at the end with each other — and with God. They know that through obedience, love, and reason, they can live good lives and overcome the evil that they have done. Their knowledge and their hope thus stand as Milton's justification for God's ways.

This is what English poet Milton wants to present to the world through this great piece of literary work and his skillful craftsmanship and justice to the form of an epic, *Paradise Lost*. As we have discussed in this chapter the theme of the epic and there are many things which catch our eyes regarding different aspects of the poem. Where one fills the presented idea as the central theme of the epic but as far as our objective is concern we need to look at few thing from the very different point of view. Let’s see how the concept of human predicament is presented in Paradise Lost. Critics argue that the central objective of the Paradise Lost is to justify God’s way to man and man and his free will. And it is true that these objectives indirectly help us to reach our aim to justify human predicament in paradise Lost.
Many readers and critics believe that Satan is the protagonist of the poem who is opponent of the God wants to be greater than God as he cannot tolerate the greatness of God and his Son. He wants to take revenge and wants to corrupt the god’s creation Human being Adam and his companion Eve. Satan enters into the Garden of Eden in the form of a serpent and he tries to tempt Eve. He talks with her and she was surprise by finding speaking ability of the serpent. He told Eve that he gained the ability of speaking human language by having the fruit of Knowledge. And Eve eats the fruit of knowledge and then the whole chain of action and reaction starts in the progress of the poem as we know God banished them from the Haven. This is the basic story which we know by reading the epic but as the reader I am not satisfy with certain things that why God gave such a big punishment only because of disobedience. Here we can say that the poet’s only objective is to justify God’s way to man. It is a god and the Satan who decides destiny of man. God passed the judgment of man’s banishment from the heaven and Satan strategy to hold man’s mind and corrupt it up to such level that man cannot escape from the clutches of sin and death. Another interesting thing which we see in the epic is the Christian concept of Religion (Dharma). Having committed disobedience by Eve the punishment should be given to Eve only but when Adam comes to know that Eve has eaten the fruit of forbidden tree he also wants to be a part of her punishment as he is so attached to Eve that he cannot leave without her in Haven and though he has not committed any crime but got ready to accept the God’s judgment. And he chose to go out of heaven with Eve. While leaving from the heaven the god’s son took Adam with him on the mountain top and told him what will be the future of mankind and what will be the future of it. Adam knows the future of mankind on earth well before he left Heaven. These are the points we need to keep in mind while discussing Human predicament in the present poem. See the character of the Adam he is a creation of the God and there
we hardly find any godly quality in his personality as he disobeys the words of God and he was banished from the Heaven along with her partner Eve. Even the character of the Eve is presented lower than Adam, though it was Eve who has committed mistake by coming under the influence of the Satan. God passed the judgment of banishing them and Adam Says that he will also accompany Eve. He does not argue with God that he cannot give such a cruel punishment to them. Not only that even Satan and her daughter Sin and her son Death have created a path linking Hell and earth. So they can rule the human mind and take the revenge from the God. In both the way man is becoming the instrument or say puppet in the hands of God and Satan. If we consider even for a moment that it was the fate of the Man that he uses his free will to gain Knowledge by attempting to have the fruit of Knowledge from the forbidden tree. Apart from this there is no slightest symbol in the poem where Adam or Eve uses their free will. Adam tries only ones to say that God that he will go on Earth with Eve, not because of the part of punishment but he is attached towards Eve so much so got ready to leave Heaven. It shows Human predicament that man is helpless in front of his fate. So here the poet presents about the concept of the Religion (Dharma) and irreligion (Adharma) along with the Christian idea of Morality and Immorality. Where the man is bound with his desires and become the victims of the forces which play in the universal consciousness.

Though we know that here the poet’s only motif is to justify the God’s way to man but as a reader I am bit disappointed because man is painted helpless and week how can be easily make a victim of pulls and pushes of the forces, Even though he is a creation of God. Death and Pain is the only fate of the Man is the central idea of the poem according to me and we are not given any greater key to come out of Human Predicament apart from salvation. So ultimately the character
of Adam and Eve accepted their fate and without struggling, it seems as they are victims of the Human Predicament.