

The Practical Christ: An Analysis of Christ as Expressed in John Milton's *Paradise
Regained*

BY

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the unique relationship between scripture and poetry. This analysis is primarily conducted through an investigation into the figure of Christ as he appears in poetry outside of scripture, specifically in John Milton's *Paradise Regained*. The poem is distinctive in its treatment and characterisation of Christ and therefore acts as a unique case study with which to study this relationship between scripture and poetry. The main argument of this thesis revolves around how Milton constructs Christ as a literary character at the centre of his chosen narrative. The first chapter discusses the Gospels and the scriptural sources that Milton elects to use for his poem. Having analysed the scriptural material and how Milton has chosen to adapt it, the second chapter develops this by investigating the charges of heresy that have been made against the poem. It is also in this chapter where Milton's personal theology is analysed to provide greater understanding of how this theology is expressed within *Paradise Regained*. The final chapter focuses on the form and genre of the poem, demonstrating that the way in which Milton constructs Christ as a literary figure highlights the intricacies which poets are faced with when it comes to creating a poetic vision of Christ, thus ultimately asking: How does the poet reconcile the elements of scripture that cannot be ignored with their own artistic liberty? This thesis proposes that Milton is conscious of this conundrum and constructs his poem in such a way where this exact question is baked into the conflict between Christ and Satan. *Paradise Regained* is a poem that is concerned with scripture as a collective social and historical narrative and characterises Christ as a historian of this collective narrative. This is done, so as to best articulate the ways in which poetry can be utilised to comment and build upon how the reader may integrate scripture into their own lives and social narratives.

Introduction

Hail Son of the most High, heir of both worlds,
Queller of Satan, on thy glorious work
Now enter, and begin to save mankind. (Bk IV, 633-635)

*These abilities, wheresoever they be found, are the inspired gift of God
rarely bestow'd, but yet to some (though most abuse) in every Nation.*
(John Milton, *The Reason of Church Government*)

The life of Christ, as recollected in the Synoptic Gospels of the New Testament, is perhaps one of the most recognisable narratives in the English speaking world. Not only is this due to the dominance of the Christian faith throughout much of the Western world for much of modern history, but the recognisability of this narrative can in part be attributed to the countless works of art and literature that celebrate and commemorate the life of Christ. Prior to the increasing access to education and the ability to become literate, much of the literature consumed by the masses consisted mainly of scripture and narratives from the Christian Bible. This is most evident in the copious amounts of visual artworks created for the purpose of informing the public of the work and glory of God through his divinely inspired narratives. For example, look no further than the Sistine Chapel and Michelangelo's glorious wall and ceiling paintings of the world's beginning with Adam and Eve, and the world's ultimate end with the *Last Judgement* (1536–1541). Yet, while our increasingly secular world drifts away from this religious dominance, our curiosity in the narratives it has produced continues to inspire and intrigue writers. With works such as *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1955) and *Christ Recrucified* (1948) by Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ* by José Saramago, and *My Name Was Judas* by C. K. Stead, it appears contemporary literature seeks to deconstruct and analyse scripture as a literary form itself. They do so by investigating how our increasingly secular society reconciles itself with how these scriptural narratives initially manifest, as well as analysing the mechanisms through which faith may acquire the weight of reverence that it still continues to hold for many to

this day. However, I propose that it will be more beneficial to analyse these mechanisms and their functions through the work of seventeenth-century writer John Milton who, as a biblical poet, seeks to emulate these mechanisms as found in scripture to further celebrate and disseminate the word of God. If the secular writer is unburdened by the restrictions that scripture can impose, how does the Christian writer such as Milton exercise their artistic liberty while at the same time adhering to scripture?

The first excerpt at the start of this chapter is the words that close Milton's poem *Paradise Regained* (1671) and conclude his epic duology that began with *Paradise Lost*. Following his forty days of fasting in the desert, Christ has overcome the several temptations put forth by Satan. He may now begin his preaching and embark upon his mission to save mankind, having proven himself capable and worthy of the task. The second excerpt comes from Milton's pamphlet *The Reason of Church Government*, where he highlights the distinguished gift that the poet is endowed with by God: the gift of poetry and the art of language to celebrate and disseminate Christian virtues. Paired, these two excerpts provide us with an insight into the reverence that Milton held for this type of material, as well as his grand ambitions as a biblical poet to perform this divinely bestowed task of articulating and disseminating Christian virtue. Yet, ever since the poem's publication, it has been met with criticism and, on several occasions, charges of heresy. Much of this criticism has been derived primarily from its perceived inferiority to its predecessor *Paradise Lost*. Yet, more intriguing is the fact that a major portion of the criticism against the poem has been directed towards the figure of Christ that appears in the poem. Northrop Frye famously described the Christ of *Paradise Regained* as "a pusillanimous quietist in the temptation of Parthia, an inhuman snob in the temptation of Rome, a peevish obscurantist in the temptation of Athens" (234). What could evoke such derision? What is it about Christ's position and characterisation within the poem that allows him to be read as such? Questions such as these continue to abound within Miltonic studies and criticism. The aim of this thesis is to investigate how such questions initially manifest. What is it about Christ that makes him open to such criticisms and complexities upon leaving the realm of scripture and entering the world of poetry? What are Milton's solutions, successes, and failures, when it comes to poeticising Christ? Is Christ ultimately compatible with poetry? If so, what allows him to be? Conversely, if not,

what prevents him from being so? These questions emphasise the dialectical nature that scripture imbues its adaptations with and requires further investigation. However, it is a form of dialectics that is unique to scripture. An analysis of the relationship between scripture and its adaptations will not only build upon the critical theory developed by numerous Milton scholars, but also highlight the types of readings of *Paradise Regained* that have been either neglected or undervalued.

Following Satan's fall from grace and his eventual retaliation against God in the form of tempting Adam and Eve to fall, Milton opens *Paradise Regained* with Christ being called into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. The reader is told from the outset that this is a poem of temptation and tests to determine Christ's worthiness to become the Saviour of Mankind that he is prophesied to be:

Thou spirit who led'st this glorious eremite
Into the desert, his victorious field
Against the spiritual foe, and brought'st him thence
By proof the undoubted Son of God" (Bk1, 8-11).

From the very beginning of the poem, there already appears to be a curious narratological conundrum at play, for the reader is immediately introduced to Christ as the Son of God from the outset. In his book *Heroic Knowledge* (1965), Arnold Stein argues against this, writing:

The venture into the wilderness is a quest, or voyage, or soul-journey, through dangerous and besetting difficulties and labyrinthine ways, toward the "center" of being, the goal of self-realization, the passage of the human to the divine. (9)

The only issue here is that it neglects the fact that Christ is already divine upon entering into the wilderness. Not only has he already been proclaimed the Son of God during his baptism, but as a sequel to *Paradise Lost*, we already know that Christ ventured down to Earth himself. As a result, Milton immediately renders Christ's journey of

self-discovery within the poem as without consequence or stakes. In other words, the goal of our protagonist has already been attained. While this may have been done to acknowledge the fact that the majority of Western readers are already aware of the story of Christ, the decision to acknowledge this fact immediately, speaks to the narrative challenges that accompany Christ upon his induction into the realm of poetry outside of scripture. Therefore the reader is encouraged to enquire as to who drives the narrative force of the poem. If Christ as a character is rendered passive from the outset, then perhaps Satan is the one to take up the reins of driving the narrative forward. Yet, as I shall demonstrate, Milton is highly conscious of this narrative complexity and consequently constructs the poem around precisely this issue. He does so by drawing the reader's attention to the unique relationship between scripture and poetry as embodied in the relationship between Satan and Christ. While such a reading can often require esoteric knowledge of the scripture that Milton is adapting and alluding to, the reader will ultimately be rewarded upon understanding the metatextual elements at play throughout much of the poem.

In order to understand how Milton approaches the figure of Christ within *Paradise Regained* as a poetic exercise, it is important to remember that Milton's poetic relationship with Christ extends much further than *Paradise Regained*. From the earliest moments of his literary career, Milton exercised his relationship with his Christian faith through his poetry, which included several poems relating specifically to Christ that were written from his early twenties onwards. These include poems such as *On the Nativity of Christ* (1629), *The Passion* (1630), and *Upon the Circumcision* (1633), which are some of Milton's earliest poems in the English language.¹ In taking into account the fact that Milton poeticised many of the major events in Christ's life, it becomes evident that Milton has had prior experience when it comes to rendering Christ in a poetic environment. Furthermore, it is curious to see that these poems also have also been met with difficulties and critical puzzlement. For example, in regards to *On the Nativity of Christ*, editor John Carey in the description of the poem in *Milton: The Complete Shorter Poems*, highlights J. M. Evans' observations that the poem is, "the most rigorously

¹ The majority of Milton's early poems were written in Latin. His first poem in English was *On the Death of a Fair Infant Dying of a Cough* (1625-6) which in itself makes several distinct references to Christ.

depersonalized of all Milton's non-dramatic works" (Carey, 103). Evidently, the adaptation of Christ into the realm of poetry seems to be bound for such a puzzled critical reaction, as curious anomalies of Milton's oeuvre.

In this thesis, I seek to investigate the relationship between biblical scripture and poetry and how such a relationship manifests within *Paradise Regained* as envisioned by Milton. It should be noted that while *Paradise Regained* remains the primary text of this investigation, numerous other poets have also tried their hand at poeticising Christ, each in their own distinct ways. Poems such as Giles Fletcher's epic, *Christ's Victorie and Triumph, in Heaven, in Earth, over and after Death* (1610), and Hugo Grotius' tragedy, *Christus Patiens* (1608), are other examples of the same era where poets have attempted to adapt scripture. As I shall demonstrate in this thesis, the juxtaposition of these texts with *Paradise Regained* provide a unique opportunity to assess the methodology each poet employs when it comes to tackling this task, especially when it comes to the figure of Christ. For instance, Milton provides Christ with copious amounts of dialogue; Fletcher provides the Christ of his poem with none. We must therefore inquire as to why each poet undertook the methodology that they did and further ask what the benefits and consequences of each are. These examples further emphasise the necessity for such an investigation into the relationship between the scriptural and the poetic. What artistic measures prove successful in the poeticising of Christ and what measures do not? What is it about certain measures that make them successful or compatible with Christ versus those that do not?

With Christ being the primary focal point of the poem, in juxtaposition with Satan of *Paradise Lost*, I begin this project by analysing the original Gospels and inquiring into which version of Christ Milton chooses to adapt. The purpose of this analysis is to articulate the reasoning behind Milton's utilisation of Christ as the vehicle through which I will investigate the relationship between scripture and poetry. Furthermore, given that there are three separate accounts of the temptation narrative within scripture, I shall also analyse which version of the narrative Milton uses and the consequences of these decisions. As I shall demonstrate, Milton appears to use an amalgamation of the three temptation narratives and further complicates this by inhabiting his newly constructed narrative with a Christ that he seems to have drawn from the Gospel according to John.

To make the matter more complex, Milton frames Christ and his test after the Book of Job, in which Job is the subject of a wager between God and Satan. The latter makes the claim that Job is faithful because of his satisfactory station in life with wealth and family. To prove that faith transcends materialism, God allows Satan to subject Job to various tortures such as the loss of his family and his entire business. The main body of the poem after this initial setup sees Job with three colleagues who argue that Job has lost everything because he has sinned, a view which Job refuses. God then appears to admonish the three friends for their misplaced reasoning and rewards Job tenfold for maintaining his faith. The two narratives are markedly similar, what with the appearance of Satan who has come to test the protagonist's faith, and the fact that both narratives revolve around a dialogue. Thus, given Milton's explicit utilisation of the Book of Job as a model, it is an aspect of the poem that aims to emphasise the humanity of Christ. However, as I shall show, the relationship between Christ and Job as expressed in *Paradise Regained* brings with it numerous literary and even scriptural consequences. Such analyses lay the groundwork for further investigation into the charges of heresy that have been laid upon Milton.

The second chapter will explore this phenomenon, analysing what provokes such charges of heresy, and how such charges fail to address the crux of Milton's poetic exercise with *Paradise Regained*. Michael Lieb describes Milton's theology as "singularly his own" (220). As this chapter shall demonstrate, this statement highlights the complex nature of Milton's personal theology as expressed in his poetry. Critics continue to debate Milton's personal theology with much of the debate surrounding his theological text, *De Doctrina Christiana*. Much of the debate centers around the provenance and authority of the text, yet while it is still generally agreed to be by Milton, the text appears highly unorthodox for its time. The primary element of this unorthodox text is that Milton appears to be an anti-trinitarian. Instead of adhering to the notion of the Trinity as a single entity, as is traditionally accepted since the establishment of the Nicene Creed, Milton goes to great lengths to distinguish Father and the Son as separate entities. This is the primary tenet of Arianism, a belief that critics throughout history have thrust upon Milton. As a result, this chapter shall explore Milton's supposed Arianism and how it manifests within *Paradise Regained*. In conjunction with this, I shall

also address the issue of 'subordinationism', a term used by several critics as an attempt to reaffirm Milton as an orthodox biblical poet. The purpose of such analyses is to establish Milton's own peculiar relationship with scripture and the weight of responsibility he evidently has when it comes to rendering Christ outside of scripture.

The third chapter will address the issue of the poem's form and genre. The critical conversation surrounding this issue is rich with contention, given the poem's elusive qualities that prevent easy categorisation. As Barabara Lewalski writes in *Milton's Brief Epic: The Genre, Meaning, and Art of Paradise Regained*, the poem has been referred to as "a moral allegory, as ecclesiastical allegory, as "closet drama with a prologue and stage directions," as psychological drama staged in the hero's mind, as rhetorical argument "nearer in genre to Dryden's *Religio Laici* than...to *Paradise Lost*," and, most recently, as a formal meditation on the Gospel account of Christ's temptation." (Lewalski, 6). Lewalski herself refers to the poem as a 'brief epic' since its narrative structure echoes that of the Book of Job. By recalling how the Book of Job affects Christ within *Paradise Regained*, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, we are afforded the opportunity to contrast this with the poem's formal characteristic of structure. In doing so, this thesis aims to develop Lewalski's reading of the poem as a brief epic. It will also examine Milton's relationships with various poetic forms, and how his unique brand of the amalgamation of such forms critically highlights his consciousness of the unique relationship between scripture and poetry. By exploring the form of the poem and how Milton constructs his narrative, I will show that the form of the poem ultimately shapes our reading of it. Milton is highly aware of the consequences of his literary practice when he amalgamates various literary forms, yet he capitalises on these potential consequences to construct a poem that best serves his exercise of accommodating New Testament scripture within poetry. It is also within this chapter that I propose my own reading of the poem. Through research pertaining to literary theory and scriptural theology, I put forward the argument that *Paradise Regained* functions as a meditation on the nature of history within the realm of faith and theology. The poem expertly frames Christ as a historian of sorts, who is highly knowledgeable of his Bible and scripture and as such is able to successfully combat Satan's temptations. This reading of Christ as a historian and of *Paradise Regained* as a meditation on history, is

supported by Hayden White's notion of "the practical past". As this thesis shall demonstrate, White's "practical past" as a collective social narrative that individuals may draw from to inform their own lives, can be seen as the crux of the conflict between Satan and Christ. Both are well aware of the stations to which they are condemned: Christ above and Satan below. While this may alert the reader to the question of narrative conflict, I propose that their condemnation further supports the idea that the real battle lies, not in the realm of faith, but rather in the realm of knowledge and the collective social narrative that makes up scriptural history. As Arnold Stein in *Heroic Knowledge* writes, "The drama of feeling is for another stage. This is the drama of knowledge" (5). This drama of knowledge is encapsulated in the relationship between Christ and Satan. Christ seeks to prove to Satan, God, and also the reader, that he is capable and well-educated when it comes to scripture. Satan on the other hand, aims to capitalise on the collective knowledge of scripture and twist it by guile so as to corrupt Christ. While Christ's faith is undoubtedly a critical element of the poem, I argue that the poem speaks more to the role that Christ himself plays within the collective social narrative that has been constructed around scripture and the Bible.

Milton provides the reader with a poem that is emblematic of the relationship between scripture and poetry. From the amalgamation of several scriptural sources, to the charges of heresy, to the meditation on scriptural history, the poem is laden with curiosities and complexities that serve to highlight the difficulty of adapting scripture. Milton constructs *Paradise Regained* in such a way that these curiosities that have dominated the critical discourse surrounding the poem, become its greatest strengths. Upon reapproaching the poem with an understanding of Milton's relationship with scriptural and theological history, the reader will find that the poem speaks more to themselves and their role within this collective social narrative, with Christ functioning as their guide. Just as we fell together in *Paradise Lost*, so shall we be saved and rise together in *Paradise Regained*.

Chapter One: The Gospel According to Milton

When it comes to investigating the literary characterisation of Christ, it is pertinent to first address the version of Christ that the poet utilises for their poem. While most readers of *Paradise Regained* will be aware of the basic narrative of Christ's life, it is important to note that this narrative is retold several times in the New Testament. As such, this chapter will explore how Milton approaches scripture and the scriptural influences that make their way into *Paradise Regained*. Ranging from which Christ Milton elects to adapt, to which particular temptation narrative he adheres to, this chapter will analyse how the process of adaptation and the rendering of Christ as literary are immediately complex even when starting from the source material alone. Furthermore, it is critical to address the scriptural parallels and allusions to biblical figures such as Job, that Milton utilises when constructing his characterisation of Christ. As a result, the Christ of *Paradise Regained* becomes a highly complex literary figure, whose construction indicates that Milton is making use of various literary devices to allow for his specific adaptation of Christ.

The Gospels

With four versions of Christ as described in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, each author imposes their own preoccupations upon Christ when it comes to what he symbolises. The Gospel according to Matthew, being of Jewish origin, seeks to characterise Christ as the Messiah according to Hebrew tradition, and as a King, as evidenced by the extensive genealogy that opens Matthew's Gospel, tying Christ to King David. Satan capitalises on this technique throughout *Paradise Regained* in his attempts to tempt Christ with glory. The Gospel according to Mark, who wrote to a Gentile audience under Roman rule, often refers to Christ as the Son of Man and places great emphasis upon his miracles and acts of charity. Additionally, Mark is generally considered to be the earliest Gospel to have been written, with Matthew and Luke framing their own Gospels around it, ultimately comprising what is known as the

Synoptic Gospels. Many have thus noted that the Gospel according to Mark is less of a historical document than it is an account “designed to awaken and develop faith” (Chilton and Kee, 497). This explains why Mark leaves out details of Christ’s life such as the events surrounding his birth and his resurrection, instead focusing on miracles and acts of charity. Consequently, the Christ who appears in Mark is more symbolic as a figure of prophecy than as a historical figure. The Gospel of Luke’s characterisation of Christ is curious, especially in relation to Milton since the Gospel according to Luke was written in refined Greek and often refers to Christ as the Son of the Most High, borrowing the tradition of demigods of Greek mythology and literature while at the same time considering Christ to be far superior to such pagan figures. Furthermore, Luke, alongside Matthew, fills in the details of Christ’s life that were eschewed by Mark, such as the Virgin Birth and Resurrection, so as to build upon Mark’s insistence upon prophecy and its fulfilment. John’s account of Christ comes from the point of view of a Christian trying to counter agnostic views of Christ as a spirit simply taking the form of a human rather than actually being human. This agnosticism stems from the contention that the unknowability of divinity prevents a simple human from comprehending and thus disseminating the word of God. John counters this by depicting Christ as a figure who is both man and God simultaneously, often described as the Word made flesh which therefore allows him to fill the role of mediator between God and Man. As I shall demonstrate, Milton is conscious of these nuances and the potential consequences of each.

This more careful approach to Christ as a physical person rather than a symbol marks the Gospel of John out as unique when compared to the Synoptic Gospels. As such it has been noted that the distinct difference between the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel according to John is that the former are primarily concerned with preparation and training for baptism in the faith, whereas John is considered to provide “more advanced, mystical teaching” (Chilton and Kee, 499). With this in mind, it appears Milton takes after John in this respect, as evidenced in his theological manuscript *De Doctrina Christiana*, which explores various aspects of the nature of scripture and the Christian faith ranging from discussions on God and Christ to the Church and duties to the faith. Before proceeding it must be addressed that the *De Doctrina Christiana*, as shall be

further explored in the subsequent chapter, remains a highly controversial text for several reasons ranging from provenance to potential heresy. However, given the singular characteristics of the manuscript that are echoed throughout Milton's oeuvre, especially when it comes to the peculiar way in which he frames the divine relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I will be using the *De Doctrina Christiana* to illuminate certain aspects of scriptural attitudes that can be found in Milton's poetry. When writing about the state in which Christ offered himself, Milton writes:

THE HUMILIATION OF CHRIST is that state in which UNDER HIS CHARACTER OF GOD-MAN HE VOLUNTARILY SUBMITTED HIMSELF TO THE DIVINE JUSTICE, AS WELL AS IN DEATH, FOR THE PURPOSE OF UNDERGOING ALL THINGS REQUISITE TO ACCOMPLISH OUR REDEMPTION. (Milton, 316).

This is further established in the chapter 'On the Son of God', where Milton goes into extensive detail in making the distinction between God and Christ as two separate entities, a distinction Milton makes by differentiating the two in their *essence*. Essence here is the divine, indivisible substance of the Father that according to *De Doctrina Christiana* solely belongs to the Father so as to preserve the nature and hierarchy that accompanies omnipotence. Thus, in distinguishing the Christ that he theologically abides by as a figure distinct from his Father in essence, Milton predominantly cites the Gospel according to John, which in turn lends credence to the notion that he has primarily utilised John's account of Christ within *Paradise Regained* in constructing his own Christ: a Christ that has undergone baptism and is highly learned and astute when it comes to his Bible, thus allowing him to undergo the more advanced, mystical training required of a Christian seeking to fulfil their duty to God. One can even extend this line of thinking by inserting Milton himself as this Christian, utilising his poetic ability to fulfil his duty to God by undergoing this more advanced and mystical training in understanding the faith and the workings of God.

Christ's Role Within Scripture as Characterised by Milton

To Milton, Christ is a mediator on behalf of God. The primary catalyst for Milton's characterisation of Christ as a mediator stems from his understanding of what it means for the Son to be "begotten" of the Father. As Milton writes:

Generation must be an external efficiency, since the Father and Son are different persons; and the divines themselves acknowledge this, who argue that there is a certain emanation of the Son from the Father...for though they teach that the Spirit is co-essential with the Father, they do not deny that it emanates, and goes out, and proceeds, and is breathed from the Father - which are all expressions denoting external efficiency. (Milton, 82)

More orthodox theologians have concluded that while the Son, according to Scripture, was begotten of the Father, thus implying a hierarchy, they prefer to adhere to the metaphorical sense of the word in that the Son existed in the beginning alongside God under the name of the *logos* or Word, and was therefore the first of the whole creation.² Milton, however, in citing scripture such as John (i. 1-3): "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," highlights the genesis of being and the world as the point of difference between the Son and the Father, even if he is the Word. He writes, "All these passages prove the existence of the Son before the world was made, but they conclude nothing respecting his generation from all eternity" (Milton, 83). Thus, Milton surmises that as a result of this generation, the Son cannot be coeval or co-essential, writing:

For to Adam God stood less in the relation of Father, than of Creator,
having only formed him from the dust of the earth; whereas he was

² This distinction of understanding the word 'begotten' as being metaphorical is born from the Nicene Council of 325 AD which sought to settle the debate that had been brought by Arius who declared that the Son was a separate being from the Father. This examination of the relationship between Father and Son shall be elaborated upon in the subsequent chapter.

properly the Father of the Son made of his own substance. Yet it does not follow from hence that the Son is co-essential with the Father, for then the title of Son would be least of all applicable to him, since he who is properly the Son is not coeval with the Father, much less of the same numerical essence, otherwise the father and the Son would be one person; nor did the Father beget him from any natural necessity, but of his own free will, a mode more perfect and more agreeable to the paternal dignity; particularly since the Father is God, all whose works, as has been already proved from Scripture, are executed freely according to his own good pleasure, and consequently the work of generation. (Milton, 85).

This distinction between the Son and the Father allows Milton to frame Christ as a being to whom there are things that are inaccessible, and accessible only to the Father. In conjunction with God breathing through and emanating outwards through Christ, Milton is able to characterise Christ as this mediator. As he writes in his *De Doctrina Christiana*, “But since throughout the Scriptures the Son is never said to be begotten, except...in a metaphorical sense, it seems probable that he is called only begotten principally because he is the one mediator between God and man” (Miltons, 86). Much like the poet himself in having studied his Bible closely, Christ utilises his ability with rhetoric and scriptural study to forgo the temptations set before him. In this light, Christ becomes more than simply a model of virtue and faith. Rather, in *Paradise Regained*, Christ, successful in his battle with Satan, becomes a model of individual liberty in deploying the perceived practicality of Scripture. One need look no further than Milton’s *De Doctrina Christiana* and his antiprelatical tracts to see distinct parallels with this line of thinking. He expresses quite explicitly his championing of the individual being able to approach and grapple with Scripture, so as to better their lives through its practical deployment. For example, in his tract *Of True Religion*, Milton identifies ‘the obstinate Papist’ as “the only Heretick” (Milton, 5). As Michael Lieb highlights:

All other sects and schisms that have arisen within Protestantism as the truly “catholic,” that is, universal, faith are to be not only tolerated but

encouraged as the product of a healthy and energetic church, one in which members seek not to destroy faith but to bolster it. This latitudinarian outlook prevails, as Milton considers Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Arminians, Arians, and Socinians. Milton's attitude toward them is consistent throughout: "all these may have some errors but are not Heretick's" in the sense of knowingly, voluntarily, and maliciously adopting views that seek to subvert the clear teachings of Scripture (205).

It therefore seems appropriate that the Gospel of John would be utilised by Milton to characterise Christ as a figure seeking to attain enlightenment through the practical deployment of Scripture, something that Milton himself does within *De Doctrina Christiana*, where he predominantly cites scripture from the Gospel of John to support his arguments and theological views. This ability of Christ's is echoed and foreshadowed in the Book of Job wherein Job, in conversation with his peers who are attempting to justify his suffering as divine judgment, says:

He is not a mere mortal like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court. If only there were someone to mediate between us, someone to bring us together, someone to remove God's rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more (Job, 9:32-34).

As Barbara Lewalski highlights, "Then, in virtually every aspect of his experience, Job is seen as foreshadowing Christ, and that more completely, declares Gregory, than any other Old Testament type since he prophesies Christ's sufferings "not merely with his lips but also by suffering"" (27). For Milton, Christ is this mediator to alleviate the pain of the unknowability of suffering.

Through the use of scriptural reasoning and precedent, Christ is able to fulfil this role of mediator and therefore becomes the enlightened individual we must model ourselves after. Yet, as should be self-evident, there is a significant problem within this characterisation. In the context of *Paradise Regained*, it is clear that despite the dramatic tension surrounding the question of Christ's divinity, there are numerous

instances throughout the poem where his divinity is distinctly alluded to. Perhaps one of the most curious instances in the poem regarding Christ's dual nature, occurs after his initial setting out into the desert:

So spake our morning star, then in his rise,
And looking round on every side beheld
A pathless desert, dusk with horrid shades;
The way he came not having marked, return
Was difficult, by human steps untrod; (l, 294-298).

The inference behind the image of Christ leaving no mark in the sand is not unlike that of his walking on water, as Milton seemingly has him float across the desert. Therefore, in understanding that Christ is divine, knowingly or otherwise, it is no stretch to surmise that Christ's ability to be a mediator between God and Man is divine in and of itself. As Milton himself writes in *De Doctrina Christiana*, "His Nature is twofold; divine and human" (Milton, 259). As shall later be discussed, it is Christ's very relationship with God that makes him both difficult to adapt, as well as to read and sympathise with. Be it as a Son or as a mediator, Christ's duality lies at the heart of this complexity when it comes to his literary adaptation. Curiously, as will be explored later, Giles Fletcher himself in his poem *Christ's Victorie and Triumph, in Heaven, in Earth, over and after Death*, similarly appears to utilise the Christ that appears in the Gospel of John. He impresses upon the reader the duality of Christ's being in lines such as, 'How God, and Man did both embrace each other, / Met in one person, heav'n, and earth did kiss' (l, 9-10). However, the distinction between Milton's Christ and Fletcher's lies in the fact that Milton takes great pains to reason Christ's refusal of the temptations through the use of scripture. For example, upon being tempted to turn stone to bread, Christ responds by invoking scripture from Deuteronomy:

Is it not written
....Man lives not by bread only, but each word
Proceeding from the mouth of God: who fed

Our fathers here with manna: in the mount
Moses was forty days, nor eat nor drank,
And forty days Eliah without food
Wandered this barren waste, the same I now. (l, 347-354).

Fletcher, on the other hand, relies upon Christ's Godhead as the answer to this quandary of how to reconcile the divine, and the otherwise incomprehensible as comprehensible. For Fletcher, God's existence within Christ is reason enough and needs no explanation beyond demonstration through his existence.

Herein lies what could perhaps be argued to be the crux of why not only God, but also Christ, appear cold and immobile as literary characters versus scriptural ones, as numerous critics have noted since the poem's publication. For example, as we saw earlier, Northrop Frye characterises the Christ of *Paradise Regained*, "a pusillanimous quietist in the temptation of Parthia, an inhuman snob in the temptation of Rome, a peevish obscurantist in the temptation of Athens" (234). If we use what Milton believes to be the inherent incomprehensibility of Christ and God coupled with his insistence on utilising Scripture as the source from which reason should be drawn then it can possibly be said that his literary constructions of their character are such that they neither detract from their scriptural characteristics, nor add to them so as to render them human. These divinities are beyond comprehension, as he argues when quoting scripture ("No man hath seen God at any time" (John, 1.18), "Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto," (1 Tim, 6.16)), emphasising the fact that no man shall know God beyond what we as feeble creatures can comprehend. The same idea is rendered in *Paradise Lost* when Raphael speaks to Adam in terms that he as a mortal man can comprehend:

Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid:
Leave them to God above; him serve and fear.
.....Heaven is for thee too high
To know what passes there; so, lowly wise,
Think only what concerns thee, and thy being;
Dream not of other worlds, what creatures there

Live, in what state, condition, or degree. (VIII, 166-172)

It is perhaps best to allow Milton himself to summarise his thoughts on the comprehension of the character of divinity when he writes:

It follows, finally, that God must be styled by us WONDERFUL, and INCOMPREHENSIBLE. Judges xiii. 18. *why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?* Psal. cxlv. 3. *his greatness is unsearchable.* Isai. xl. 28. *there is no searching of his understanding* (29).

It seems pertinent to address the fact that Milton adhered to past authority and accommodated such authority according to his reason and conscience. This is evidenced, not only in the Biblical adherence throughout the poem, but also in the adoption of images and allusions to other biblical poems such as Giles Fletcher's *Christ's Victorie*, as seen in the disguise of the old hermit adopted by Satan that appears in both poems. The complexity and paradox of Christ's literary existence can be seen as the poet's attempts to accommodate that which is beyond authority.

Yet such a conclusion poses more questions than it answers. While it may illuminate certain hypotheses concerning the coldness of the God of *Paradise Lost*, the same cannot wholly be said for the Christ of *Paradise Regained*. Certainly the argument can be made that Milton's apparent rejection of the unity of the Trinity allows him to divorce Christ from God in their essence, a term he utilises in explaining their separate agencies. However, the consequence of such a divorce is a character teetering on the edge between being God and being *like* God. Either way, the psychic distance readers may feel from Christ in *Paradise Regained*, can be somewhat attributed to the idea that Christ's dual nature results in a character that appears to live a contradictory existence, especially in light of Milton's theological understanding of him. He becomes the embodiment of when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object. For example, after fasting for forty days, Christ begins to hunger, saying to himself:

But now I feel I hunger, which declares,

Nature hath need of what she asks; yet God
Can satisfy that need some other way,
Though hunger still remain; so it remain
Without body's wasting, I content me,
And from the sting of famine fear no harm
Nor mind it, fed with better thoughts that feed
Me hung'ring more to do my Father's will. (Bk II, 252-59)

Despite Christ's acknowledgement of enduring the sensation of hunger, he alludes to his divine self in being able to forgo 'the sting of famine'. Even Satan calls attention to this contradictory state of being: 'To whom thus Jesus; What conclud'st thou hence? / They all had need. I as thou seest have none. / How hast thou hunger then? Satan replied' (Bk II,317-320). Yet even Satan is not exempt from a contradictory existence, as he and Christ appear similar when it comes to the stalemate of their existences. While it has been established that there is difficulty in ascertaining whether Christ is aware of his dual nature, accompanied by discussions surrounding his inability to be tempted because of his nature rather than his training, the same could perhaps be applied to Satan who is honest about the fact that it matters not to him whether Christ wins or loses in the end, for he shall remain lost regardless of the outcome. Thus there appears to be a moment of realisation that Satan's temptations truly are for naught for both parties involved. Not only is Christ condemned to succeed, but Satan is condemned to fail again, regardless of whether he defeats Christ or not:

Let that come when it comes; all hope is lost
Of my reception into grace; what worse?
For where no hope is left, is left no fear;
If there be worse, the expectation more
Of worse torments me then the feeling can.
I would be at the worst; worst is my Port,
My harbour and my ultimate repose,
The end I would attain, my final good.

My error was my error, and my crime
My crime; whatever for itself condemn'd,
And will alike be punish'd; whether thou
Raign or raign not;

(III, 209-215)

This notion of Christ being condemned to succeed echoes God's paradoxical reasoning for Man's fall in *Paradise Lost*, as shall be discussed more in depth in the subsequent chapter concerning Milton's theology. Similar to the question of whether we can call these temptations, 'temptations', if the one being tempted is incorruptible, is it still a success if there is no option to fail? As Satan points out, even if he is the one to succeed instead of Christ, nothing will change his perpetual misery. Milton thus laces the poem with various hints towards this state of condemnation by having Satan unconsciously acknowledge the prophecy of Christ's mission. For example, during his rendezvous with his fallen crew, Satan speaks:

Princes, Heavens antient Sons, Æthereal Thrones,
Demonian Spirits now, from the Element
Each of his reign allotted, rightlier call'd,
Powers of Fire, Air, Water, and Earth beneath,
So may we hold our place and these mild seats
Without new trouble; such an Enemy
Is ris'n to invade us, who no less
Threat'ns then our expulsion down to Hell. (Bk II, 121-128)

It is curious that the language of rising up and invasion is here being used in relation to Christ, when it so suitably reflects the state of the fallen angels during their initial revolution in heaven. Furthermore, it functions as another allusion to the prophecy of Christ's resurrection following his crucifixion. The reader is confronted with Satan's failure from the immediate. As a result, the impact of Satan's claim that his success is equally a failure is heightened. Satan is thus rendered as the more sympathetic

character of the poem. One can extend this observation to touch upon the notion that it is this stalemate that renders Christ's eschewal of temptations vacant, and leads to him being a potentially vacant character in general. Christ's being condemned to succeed and Satan's being condemned to fail implies that God's mantra - that man is just to stand though free to fall - does not apply to Christ. It instead implies that Christ is in fact not human or is unable to be. Further compounding this condemnation to success and failure respectively, Pope writes:

Throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance all orthodox theologians assumed that the unspecified "spirit" which led Christ to the scene of the temptation was the Holy Ghost which had just descended on him at the baptism, and of which he was said to be "full" when he returned from Jordan (27).

This implies that this was not wholly a machination of Satan's doing. Rather it was "an event instituted and permitted by God" (Pope, 27). Therefore, when Milton writes, "Thou spirit who led'st this glorious eremite / Into the desert, his victorious field" (I, 8-9), it has the implication that Christ and his mission is not only ordained by God but constructed by Him also, thus making any narrative arc relating to conflict pale in comparison to the grand scheme of God's plan. This is supported by God in his dialogue with Gabriel where he says:

I sent thee to the Virgin pure
In Galilee, that she should bear a Son
Great in Renown, and call'd the Son of God...
This man born and now up-grown
To show him worthy of his birth divine
And high prediction, henceforth I expose
To Satan (I, 135-143)

Consequently, Milton relies on what internal conflict he can render within Christ to generate what little humanity Christ evidently has, as drawn and reasoned from

scripture. Once again, just as with *Paradise Lost*, Satan remains the easier to identify with for us mortal readers. His misery is something to identify with: to have lost something that can never be returned; to live with the failures of our past regardless of the successes of our present. We, like Satan, are the sum of our parts. Christ on the other hand occupies a more paradoxical position. The acknowledgement of Christ's dual nature recurs throughout the poem, as there is a constant ambiguity as to whether Satan or even Christ himself is aware of it. This preoccupation with duality can also be supported by the fact that of the four Gospels, Milton predominantly cites scripture from Luke and John, both of whom are more nuanced in their approach to characterising Christ and his relationship with God spiritually. I recall Milton's comments on the subject when he writes of the unique relationship shared between Christ and God, as he sees it through his own personal theology:

For he is called the own Son of God merely because he had no other Father besides God, whence he himself said, that *God was his Father*, John v. 18. For to Adam God stood less in the relation of Father, than of Creator, having only formed him from the dust of the earth; whereas he was properly the Father, of the Son made of his own substance. Yet it does not follow from hence that the Son is co-essential with the Father, for then the title of Son would be least of all applicable to him, since he who is properly the Son is not coeval with the Father, much less of the same numerical essence, otherwise the Father and the Son would be one person; nor did the Father beget him from any natural necessity, but of his own free will - a mode more perfect and more agreeable to the paternal dignity; particularly since the Father is God, all whose works, as has been already proved from Scripture, are executed freely according to his own good pleasure, and consequently the work of generation (Milton, 85).

This extract is key to understanding Milton's distinct theological view of the relationship between the Father and Son. The Christ that appears in *Paradise Regained* is one that is caught between two states of being, with each preventing him from being the other. His divinity prevents him from being able to experience humanity entirely and vice versa.

The Temptation Narratives

It is not just the differences between the Gospels' characterisation of Christ, but also the differences between their telling of the temptation story, that shape Milton's portrayal. Critics are often preoccupied with exploring the specific narratives and their structures when it comes to deciding which Gospel Milton adheres to. The temptation narrative in particular occurs in only three of the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Mark's account of the scene is only a brief two verses, effectively functioning as a paraphrase of the event. Matthew and Luke however, describe the event with specific reference to what the temptations were and Christ's specific responses to them. In regard to the narrative structure of the passage, Milton adheres to Luke's order of temptations.

Much debate, however, has surrounded the difference between Matthew and Luke's records of the event. Matthew describes the temptations as taking place at the end of Christ's forty days of fasting: "Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days, and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungered." (Matthew, 4:1-2). Luke, on the other hand, implies that Christ was tempted throughout the forty days of fasting: "Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered." (Luke, 4:2). While the actual order of the temptations in *Paradise Regained* follows Luke, Elizabeth Pope highlights the critical importance of following Matthew's suit when it comes to poetic ideals, utilising the dramatic opportunities presented by having the temptations come at the end of Christ's forty days to construct a compelling conflict:

Whatever he may have thought of Matthew's version as a theologian, it was the one most likely to appeal to a poet with a narrative to write, and a critic with a predilection for the classic form. The grouping of the temptations together at the end of the forty days prevented any diffusion of energy and interest, centered the attention of the reader on the main issue, and, above all, gave the central situation that special quality of unity or strength which results from the compression of incident within a limited period of time (Pope, 5).

Taking into account this marrying of scriptural elements from separate Gospels, if Milton's decision to utilise Matthew's narrative structure was a means to exercise greater poetic ambitions, then the argument can be made that the same methodology can be applied to his decision to utilise Luke's order of the temptations. It should be noted that despite adhering to Luke's order of temptations, Milton further manipulates the narrative by having Christ hunger after the first temptation rather than immediately after his fasting. As Frye writes:

Christ is not hungry until after the first temptation to turn stones to bread, which consequently has nothing to do with hunger but is superficially an appeal to his charity, corresponding to the miraculous provision of manna in the Exodus (229).

This reading of the temptation as an appeal to charity is further supported by the fact that there is no evidence within the Scripture that Satan approaches Christ in the disguise of an old hermit so as to elicit such charity.

While both Gospels place the turning of stone to bread as the first temptation, they differ on the second and third, with Luke having the temptation of kingdoms as second and the temptation of rescue third, while Matthew reverses the two. Pope acknowledges this discrepancy by highlighting the fact that theologians of the time who attempted to solve the discrepancy "generally came to the conclusion that the order in

Matthew was the correct one" (6). This is attributed to the notion that Matthew's order of temptations is of "orderly consequent", with one temptation being of natural growth from the preceding temptation (Pope, 6). It should also be noted that Giles Fletcher, like the majority of writers of the temptations, sticks to Matthew. Furthermore, if we remind ourselves of Matthew's preoccupation with Christ as King and descendant of David, it is unsurprising that Christ's final temptation should consist of the eschewal of false thrones, in turn proving his virtue and claim to the one true throne according to Christian faith. As such, it once again becomes equally intriguing and pertinent to ask whether Milton envisaged Luke as offering any dramatic or poetic benefits for his narrative, and if so what effect this has on his characterisation of Christ. Does Milton's decision to use Luke perhaps stem from his desire to write a specific type of Christ that he found better suited to Luke's temptations rather than Matthew's? Within Matthew's narrative, Satan's first temptation is thwarted by Christ's faith in God, which leads Satan to exploit this faith by tempting Christ to throw himself from the tower knowing he would be saved by a choir of angels. The final temptation sees Christ state, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew, 4:12). Thus it is fitting that Satan should forfeit any further temptation following such a rebuke by the Son of God.

The question then remains as to why Milton preferred Luke over Matthew. If we apply Pope's methodology of Milton's poetic ambitions, then it becomes apparent that placing Christ's temptation to *fall*, as it were, functions as a continuing motif that began with Satan's own fall that instigated *Paradise Lost*. Furthermore, when Christ rebukes Satan's temptation to fall, 'To whom thus Jesus: Also it is written, / Tempt not the Lord thy God, he said and stood.' (560-561), the emphasis on 'stood' recalls God's declaration in Book Three of *Paradise Lost* when discussing the status of Man: 'I made him just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall' (iii, 98-99). Such an echo potentially highlights Milton's adherence to the Christ of the Gospel of John, who depicts Christ as both human and divine within one being, and consequently his insistence upon depicting and thus communicating Christ as human to a degree. This insistence upon Christ's humanity, and therefore his right to be a model of virtue, is

further emphasised by Milton's utilisation of scripture outside the Gospels, as he calls upon biblical figures from the Old Testament with whom to align Christ.

The Problem of Job in *Paradise Regained*

While the relationship between *Paradise Regained* and the Gospels is complex in its own right, it should be noted that the Book of Job plays an equally prominent role in shaping our reading of Christ and his test. As has been discussed, the Christ of *Paradise Regained* is a figure undergoing a trial of his scriptural knowledge and training. It is thus no surprise that Milton fills *Paradise Regained* to the brim with references, allusions, and direct quotations of scripture. Yet, while David is referred to through the lens of prophecy, no other biblical figure is alluded to more explicitly, as a figure of example, than Job.

As the only other figure within scripture to undergo a test of faith at the hands of Satan, Job bears striking similarities to Christ who, as a biblical scholar, is well aware of this shared experience and often reminds Satan of his previous failure: "As thou to thy reproach mayst well remember, / He ask'd thee, hast thou seen my servant Job?" (III, 66-67). However, despite the similarities in regard to their situation, the differences between the two begin to mount when one considers that Job's was a test of faith whereas Christ's is a test of worth. While both prove to be incorruptible, Job more explicitly suffers at the hands of Satan than Christ. While Satan's infliction of suffering upon Job is a ploy to tempt him towards blasphemy, it is a method unique to Job primarily because he is human. Satan is unable to interfere with Christ physically beyond transporting him to pinnacles. Furthermore, Job is unaware of the deal made between God and Satan and is therefore unaware that it is by Satan's hand that he is suffering. Such a narrative mechanism allows for the potential for Job to waver. As Job highlights in the scripture:

How then can I dispute with him? How can I find words to argue with him?

Though I were innocent, I could not answer him; I could only plead with

my Judge for mercy. Even if I summoned him and he responded, I do not believe he would give me a hearing (Job, 9:14-16).

Be it with God or Satan, the fact that Job is unable to engage with either stands in stark contrast to the predicament Christ finds himself in, for he is able to engage with his adversary. Milton on the other hand is unable to afford Christ the same opportunity of the potential to waver, given his infallible divinity.

Since Christ knows from the outset that it is Satan who is tempting him, all potential for losing his way is eliminated. As Christ himself says to Satan, "Tell me if food were now before thee set, / Wouldst thou not eat? Thereafter as I like / The giver, answered Jesus" (II,320-322). This then leads one to meditate upon the fact that temptation is a starkly different test to suffering. What is more, it is curious to consider that Christ suffers more profoundly at the hands of Man come his crucifixion than he does at Satan's. In reference to God, Job proclaims to his peers, "For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both" (Job, 9:32-34). Until the arrival of Christ as a semi divine being, every sufferer's relationship to their suffering was wholly their own. However, as is traditionally agreed upon, Christ shares his suffering with us. Yet as Milton appears to posit in *Paradise Regained*, this is not inherent but must be earned. He suffers more as an enlightened individual upon leaving the desert to undergo his Passion than he does as a man when entering it. Nowhere is this observation more evident than in the juxtaposition of *Paradise Regained* with Fletcher's *Christ's Victorie* and Hugo Grotius' *Christus Patiens*, both of which choose to adapt the Passion episode of Christ's life, without doubt a far more visceral and explicit account of suffering. We therefore arrive at a marked point of difference that illuminates the complexity of scriptural adaptation when it comes to adapting Christ as a literary figure. Where poets such as Fletcher and Grotius explore Christ through the lens of faith via suffering, Milton is more interested in exploring Christ through the lens of faith via the eschewal of seduction.

During the period in which Milton was writing, contemporary depictions of Job saw him as perhaps the most important Biblical figure to model oneself after, second

only to Christ. Contemporary theological relationships with Job are evidenced in the writings of theologians such as the French Augustine philosopher Jean-Francois Senault, who's *The Pattern of Patience, in the Example of Holy Job* from 1657 explores the purpose of the Job narrative in relation to its function as a dissemination of instruction. The translator's note to the reader states this task explicitly:

Sure, it cannot be unsuitable to the condition of these Times to publish a Discourse of PATIENCE, nor hath the World ever afforded so incomparable an example of that Vertue as Job, whose Historie seems to be written not so much for his Honour as our instruction, to shew us that the highest point of Valour is to suffer bravely, and to be a standing rule to all Ages, how men should deport themselves in their misfortunes (Senault, 2-3).

Such a description of the Job narrative could easily be made for *Paradise Regained*, further emphasised by Senault's own characterisation of Job which can be transplanted onto that of Milton's Christ in particular:

Likewise it is easie to judge, that he who was the Author of it had great lights, and that Revelation or study had taught him all that a man can know; sometimes he reasons like an Excellent Philosopher, and serves himself with all the secrets of Retorick and Morality, to persuade or move; sometimes he Speakes like a sage Politician, and describes all the Maximes which States men hold for the conduct of the people: sometimes he treats like a curious Naturalist, and discovers the most hidden beauties of nature; oftentimes he discourseth like a profound Divine, and describes to us those adorable Perfections, which seperate God so nobly from his works (Senault, Preface).

From reasoning in the vein of a philosopher during the temptation of Athens, and a politician during the temptations of Rome and Parthia, it seems evident that Milton was

aware of these linguistic techniques Job employs and so seeks to emulate them in Christ. However, if we recall Northrop Frye's characterization of Christ as "a pusillanimous quietist in the temptation of Parthia, an inhuman snob in the temptation of Rome, a peevish obscurantist in the temptation of Athens", it appears that there is either a mishandling of these Jobean characteristics that Milton seeks to emulate in Christ, or perhaps it is due to Christ's very nature that these transplanted characteristics become warped upon entering into the realm of literature and art. In further reference to Job, Senault highlights that it was Job's suffering that brought him condemnation from his peers:

Nothing brought more prejudice to this great man, then his Misery, and that which should have given lustre to his vertue, gave it but Obscurity: for his friends who thought that punishment was always an effect of the sin of him, which suffers, believed him faulty because they saw him Miserable and not able to accord his Innocence with divine justice, they had rather condemne a man, than accuse a God (Senault, 6).

Herein lies a key issue that Milton faces when it comes to making Christ literary. Time and again, references are made to likening Christ's predicament in the desert to that of Job, in an effort to remind Satan of Man's ability to stand upright. Yet as has been highlighted, Christ's dual nature as both human and divine prevents an exact juxtaposition with Job as a character. Christ's suffering in the desert, if we can call it that, is in no way comparable to that of Job and so, much like Job's peers, Milton and consequently we as readers are unable to understand Christ's version of suffering precisely because of his divine nature. It can be argued that the Book of Job demonstrates the fact that it is not man's place to understand God and therefore understand our suffering. As Arnold Stein emphasises:

If we think of the Book of Job, as Milton did, we must be impressed with the poetic advantages of a hero who can feel and suffer, who has wife and friends and children and possessions to enlarge the stage of his feelings with their significant reflections. (6)

If we compare this understanding of the poetic advantages of the Book of Job with *Paradise Regained*, the difficulty that biblical poets such as Milton face when it comes to adapting Christ becomes clearer. Stein's observation allows us to ask why it seems difficult to afford Christ the opportunity to enlarge the stage of his feeling. Despite the fact that the reader understands the stakes of Christ's mission, the stage of feeling, or lack thereof, that Milton constructs, is the cause of the psychic distance readers have felt towards Christ as a cold and impassive character. Therefore, it seems Milton is utilising Job, in both character and narrative, to act as a vessel through which the reader is better able to empathise with Christ's mission.

An additional difference of note is the relationship between the protagonist and deity. For Job, He is God, but for Christ He is the Father. As has been discussed it is often said, even by Milton himself, that God and the divine are simply incomprehensible to mortal understanding, which leads to His characterisation in *Paradise Lost* (for example) as being one of cold, almost inhuman reasoning precisely because He is that: inhuman. In juxtaposing Christ with Job, it therefore seems appropriate to approach their relationships with God in much the same way. The precise exercise of the Book of Job is the meditation upon unwavering faith in that which is beyond human comprehension. It then follows that, in being of divine substance, Christ's particular relationship with God is itself incomprehensible. Since it is a relationship between Father and Son, it is one that is inaccessible to mortal man. It is this relationship that will be explored in the next chapter, for Milton himself appears to recognise this complexity when it comes to Christ's being a man while also being simultaneously divine. One may liken the relationship to that of a character existing on a two-dimensional plane of existence interacting with a character that exists and can move within three dimensions. This relationship with the divine also brings to light the question of Christ's divinity within the context of the form of the poem. If we are to understand the poem as an epic in design, we are then required to understand Christ as an epic hero. Much like the poem he inhabits, Christ shares various features with the classical epic hero, from his noble birth and divine guidance and assistance, to his superior cunning and wit. Yet we must ask why he appears in such stark contrast to the likes of Odysseus or Aeneas.

Furthermore, if not Odysseus and Aeneas, what is it about Job that makes him an epic hero, brief or otherwise? Such questions regarding form shall be explored further in Chapter Three. For the purpose of this chapter, it is important to note that the relationship between Christ and God when juxtaposed with Job and God highlights the unique disparities between the two that are further emphasised when the form of their respective poems are taken into account.

Not only is Christ's relationship with God an issue of literary consequence but also his relationship with the literary form itself. How does rendering Christ as a literary character in a literary text affect the form within which he appears? Protestant theological commentary from figures such as Joannes Brentius, Aquace D'Albiac, and Merceus, maintains that the Book of Job is a tragedy. Such a designation has obvious counterintuitive principles, primarily the fact that Job is ultimately rewarded. As Lewalski writes, "the tragedies of the pious unlike those of the Greeks have, as here, a glorious and happy end"(20). Furthermore, Milton frames his poem around the narrative of debate. One also occurs in Job's trial without Satan's involvement, as he debates and discusses the nature and reason for his predicament with his peers. But can we call *Paradise Regained* a tragedy? Once again, we see how Christ being made literary does not necessarily prevent paradoxical complications from occurring. Much like *Paradise Lost*, the tragedy remains with Satan forever unforgiven and forever condemned to suffer. So does *Paradise Regained* belong to Christ or to Satan? It appears that despite Milton's attempts, the poem must, by Christ's very nature, belong to Satan. As Stein writes:

Milton's technical solution is very bold. He shifts much of the dramatic weight to Satan and his anguished consciousness. The tempter finds himself tempted, and has to play a double role. On the other side the perfect man who cannot be moved has a traditional symbolic role that is rich in potential movement for all imperfect men; in the bridging of this gap Milton does not neglect his opportunities. The weakness that is proved strength is both the formal theme of the drama and the permeating conceptual form (8).

But as we have discovered, Christ is equally condemned to succeed. Therefore, is it a success or failure if it is condemned to happen? By this logic, Satan is just as successful in fulfilling the role he is condemned to play as Christ is. It is precisely because of Christ's being that both Milton as poet, and we as readers, arrive at this stalemate, resulting in what is arguably a less satisfactory and recognisable characterisation of a figure whom we culturally recognise as infallible and beyond restriction.

It is this very complexity of the various scriptural sources and elements being appropriated throughout *Paradise Regained* that potentially leads to his often-maligned character. Is Christ, as many critics have noted, a cold and passive character because he takes after his Father's own characterization in *Paradise Lost*? Or is this the result of the complexities of dealing with what many believe to be a historical figure? R. D. Miller highlights this dilemma by emphasising the difference between adapting Old Testament scripture and New Testament scripture:

The Christian Gospels are not pre-historic folklore; they spring from an historical personality. And in making the Son of God of *Paradise Lost* the second Adam of *Paradise Regained*, Milton passes from the mythical and symbolic to the real and subjective. The second Adam, the theological Christ, is the historical Jesus; and incidents upon which the epic is based have come down to us as real personal experiences (Miller, 202).

This is the ultimate conundrum faced by writers seeking to adapt scripture, and in particular Christ. Scripture is a loaded form of literature that many believe bears truth. While many can argue about the legitimacy these Gospels have in regard to the truths they espouse, it cannot be ignored that each Gospel and account of Christ is inflected by personal agendas and views on divine truth. Such sentiment of inflected readings of *Paradise Regained* continues to this day, with critics such as Miller utilising their understanding of faith to gauge the success or failure of the text. Furthermore, as shall

be explored in the following chapter, critics such as C. A. Patrides and J. H. Adamson, in their reevaluation of Milton's spiritual characterisation of Christ, base their arguments solely on the Christ that appears in *Paradise Lost*, thus failing to account for the peculiarities that accompany Christ as he enters a world of mortality in *Paradise Regained*. Miller finds *Paradise Regained* to be a failure due to Milton's misinterpretation of the temptation episode:

The temptations which are to form the epic are a part of human psychology, and before they can be amplified they must be understood. If Milton does not understand them, but simply uses them as new material that may be worked in somehow with the old, then the second epic becomes merely a repetition of the first - we have the same Satan and the same impersonal Son of God, and the only difference in the ending. (202)

It is here where we see a response to the impersonality of Christ as being a product of repurposing the symbolic and objective Christ of the Old Testament, as Milton describes in *Paradise Lost*, so as to fit the narrative of the temptations. Miller argues this is inherently flawed given that the Christ of the New Testament is born into a real and subjective history. While this is certainly a valid point to make, it seems to ignore Milton's well-noted scholarship on the subject by proclaiming he doesn't understand the psychological elements of the temptations. Pope reminds us that it is complacent to ignore the fact that we cannot necessarily apply modern theological thought to a figure who has no access to it. Given the context of Milton's theological moment in history, especially when juxtaposed with the various other literary Christs of the time, such as those of Fletcher and Grotius, Milton's characterisation in the grand scheme of the seventeenth-century is not exactly an outlier if we are discussing the impersonality of Christ. One can make the argument that Fletcher doesn't even afford Christ a voice, so if anything, Milton provides Christ with more character than most. It is this very issue that lies at the heart of the literary Christ. We must remind ourselves that we are dealing with a character entrenched in a history that for many is unchanging. Furthermore, in

relation to a character entrenched in not only the history of faith, but also literary history, Miller's assessment that *Paradise Regained* is retreading the same narrative as *Paradise Lost* is not without merit. Perhaps it is simply misguided. What if the allusions support the notion that the similar narrative structure is inherent to Satan's plan of attack in tempting Christ? He believes that if he was successful once, he can be successful again. So in his eyes, why fix what isn't broken? Does this feed what Miller perceives to be a 'retreading' of the same narrative structure? If so, the question then has to be asked whether Milton is conscious of this 'retreading' and is aligning himself with Satan, in being a fallen man. This can potentially be supported with the temptation of Athens and Christ eschewing the idea of scholarship and learning since all he needs is the Word of God. If this is the case, then Milton's characterisation of Christ becomes a model for himself more so than anything else. A model of the person he'd like to be, making the text become somewhat more retrospective in nature than didactic and exemplary. This is further emphasised in *Paradise Regained* itself when Milton invokes the Holy Spirit as his Muse in relaying his song:

Thou Spirit who ledst this glorious Eremite
Into the desert, his victorious field
Against the spiritual foe, and brought'st him thence
By proof the undoubted Son of God, inspire,
As thou art wont, my prompted song else mute. (I, 8-12)

It is in this didactic relationship where Milton's inarguably singular theology comes to the fore when it comes to his characterisation of Christ. It is one that invariably reflects upon his unique theological standpoint. Furthermore, in analysing how personal theology is reflected in a poet's work, it provides insight into the entanglement that not only Milton, but also Fletcher and Grotius face when poeticising scripture.

Chapter Two: Orthodoxy and Heresy

In her highly influential text *Milton's Brief Epic: The Genre, Meaning, and Art of Paradise Regained*, Barabara Lewalski identifies "Christ's action of overcoming satanic temptations in the wilderness [as] inextricably linked with his emerging understanding of his nature and his mission" (133). While within the context of the poem this is a perfectly sound reading of the text, there still remains a question about this conclusion. To what degree is Christ's nature and his mission his own? I propose that we cannot read Christ's existence within the poem as solely his own, but rather as an expression of Milton's own mission in composing the text. Yet the question then presents itself as to how Milton's characterisation of Christ influences Christ's mission, not only within the poem itself, but also how such characterisation can influence retrospective readings of scripture itself. Is Milton's expression of Christ's mission an expression that all Christians can identify with? If not, what is it about Milton's expression that prevents them from doing so?

As has been alluded to, the primary issues surrounding this conundrum of adapting Christ as a literary figure are the potential heretical and blasphemous consequences of doing so. It is evident that scripture is a loaded literary form, bringing with it countless caveats with which faithful writers must grapple, while also being cautious to strike the fine balance between adhering to orthodoxy and exercising artistic liberty. For example, the poet Giles Fletcher, in order to avoid tipping into the realm of heresy, has Christ remain silent throughout the entirety of his poem *Christ's Victorie*. Milton, on the other hand, is much more liberal when it comes to putting words into the mouth of Christ, providing numerous passages of dialogue in which Christ combats Satan's temptations. Milton's artistic liberty and its relation to his task of demonstrating and disseminating Christian values has often been met by critics who find difficulty in reading Milton's depiction of Christ. The consequence of which has been the continued evaluation and investigation of his unique theological stances and their expression through his writing.

Milton's artistic liberties, ranging from the liberal marrying of pagan and orthodox imageries as seen in *Paradise Lost* in the various appearances of pagan deities as well as borrowed images of the river Lethe and its Gorgon guardians, to the superimposing of pagan narratives onto Christian ones as seen in Eve's birth as a mirror of Ovid's Narcissus, highlight the often contradictory nature of such a relationship between artistic practice and strict orthodox frameworks. Given the fact that *Paradise Lost* is a theodicy seeking to "justify the ways of God to men" (I, 26), the presence of such pagan material continues to engage critics as to its function and relationship with its religious context. Such skepticism ranges from questioning Milton's orthodox beliefs to the outright labelling of his works as heretical. Curiously, the primary target of this skepticism is Milton's characterisation of Christ. Many critics have highlighted Milton's characterisation of Christ and its place within the poem as the most important yet problematic element when it comes to his theological beliefs and their potential unorthodox nature. Following the last chapter's exploration of *Paradise Regained's* particular relationship with the scripture it is based upon, this chapter will investigate the consequences of such a relationship within the wider context of Milton's poetic practice and the nature of orthodoxy and heresy when applied to biblical poetry.

Heresy

In order to understand the relationship between orthodoxy and heresy, especially within Milton's poetry, it is pertinent to first understand Milton's own understanding of both. In *A Treatise of Civil Power* (1659), Milton explores the issue surrounding the regulation of religion and the Christian faith that was being sought by the Presbyterian majority within the newly formulated Parliament of Richard Cromwell. Cromwell's parliament was characterised as being conservative and centrist, in contrast to the desire of the English Protestant to exercise their religious freedom free of the regulation of state church or civil authority (Mueller, 2). Milton reminds readers what the term heresy means:

Them I would first exhort not thus to terrifie and pose the people with a Greek word: but to teach them better what it is; [heresy] being a most usual and common word...They should first interpret to them, that heresie, by what it signifies in that language, is no word of evil note; meaning only the choise or following of any opinion good or bad in religion or any other learning: and thus not only in heathen authors but in the New Testament it self without censure or blame. *Acts 15.5. certain of the heresie of the Pharises which beleevd.* and *26.5. after the exactest heresie of our religion I livd a Pharise.* In which sense Presbyterian or Independant may without reproach be called a heresie (16).

Evidently, the notion of heresy is not wholly a negative one for Milton. Rather it is a mechanism which allows one to identify beliefs and behaviours that are external to one's own understood beliefs and behaviours. It is perhaps this view of heresy that results in what many critics have perceived as Milton's theology being "singularly his own" (Lieb, 220). As we examine Milton's relationship with heresy in relation to the prescribed orthodoxy of the time, we will begin to understand how this manifests in his poetry and in particular in his characterisation of Christ as a complex figure when made literary.

Milton's outspoken views on organised religion and the Catholic faith are well documented, from his numerous and scathing anti-prelatical tracts in conjunction with other texts such as *Areopogitica* (1644), *Of True Religion* (1673), and *Of Education* (1644), to name but a few. For example, he denied the concept of creation *ex nihilo* (from nothing). Rather he is an adherent to the concept of creation *ex Deo* (from God): the idea that God created the world from Himself rather than nothing (Adamson, 756). When coupled with his apparent antitrinitarianism, as well as his various other beliefs such as an opposition to infant baptism, paid clergy, state interference in religious affairs, his defense of divorce, and approval of polygamy, Milton's stance as a disseminator of unorthodox religious virtue as guided by God appears highly controversial in the eyes of orthodox readers. Such unorthodox beliefs have led many to

label them as potentially heretical. However, Stephen B. Dobranksi and John P. Rumrich point out that:

The search for truth, according to Milton, inevitably entails “much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making”. In this dynamic, non-pejorative sense, “heresy” implies a rational process that ultimately produces conviction and instigates further inquiry (2).

Such inquiry can be seen in *Paradise Regained*, with the driving force of the poem being predicated upon the very nature of inquiry and rational processing. If one takes the view that Christ is a scholar of scripture and that his temptations function as a test, then it provides Christ with the opportunity to put his biblical learning to the test via the use of faith-based reasoning and rhetoric. Thus, it becomes evident why Milton may have chosen the temptation scene as the event in which Paradise is regained, unlike most other poets who prefer to adhere to the more traditional use of the Passion as the event in which Man is redeemed. For Milton, man becomes worthy of salvation not solely through being absolved of sin but in conjunction with concerted and faithful adherence to the Word of God. As such, Christ, as characterised in *Paradise Regained*, becomes the exemplar of this attitude. Look no further than Satan’s offer of the kingdom of Athens as the treasure of wisdom, scholarship, and knowledge and Christ’s subsequent rebuttal of the offer:

Athens the eye of Greece, mother of arts
And eloquence, native to famous wits
Or hospitable, in her sweet recess,
City or suburban, studious walks and shades;
See there the olive-grove of Acadame,
Plato’s retirement, where the attic bird
Trills her thick-warbled notes the summer long

...

To whom our Saviour sagely thus replied.
Think not but that I know these things, or think
I know them not; not therefore am I short
Of knowing what I ought: he who receives
Light from above, from the fountain of light,
No other doctrine needs, though granted true;
But these are false, or little else but dreams,
Conjectures, fancies, built on nothing firm.
The first and wisest of them all professed
To know this only, that he nothing knew. (IV, 240-246, 285-294)

Christ requires no other doctrine than that of the Word of God, even in the face of the earthly wisdom compiled by the ancient philosophers. He even goes so far as to invoke Socrates as the sagest of the ancient philosophers precisely because of his humility in recognising his lack of knowledge. Yet there is a slight hint of uncharacteristic patronising here, in that we have Christ proclaiming intellectual superiority over those ancient philosophers who prodded and questioned their existence and the universe. The only question that can suitably follow this observation is: where does Milton stand in all this? As a highly intelligent individual, not just in his knowledge of the Bible but also of the ancient world, how does Milton reconcile himself to these proclamations he is making through his characterisation of Christ? Not only does this show Christ to be strictly orthodox to the Word of God, which Milton himself is, insofar as his religious life is concerned, but also shows Milton to have led a life and career that is anything but orthodox when it comes to his intellectual interests. Furthermore, as will be further elaborated upon in the subsequent chapter, how does the epic form of poetry, brief or otherwise, stand in contrast to Christ's eschewal of ancient and pagan art? One may argue that Milton is utilising Christ as a literary character to establish what he believes to be the model for mankind that even he must aspire to. As Christ continues:

Who therefore seeks in these
True wisdom finds her not, or by delusion

Far worse, her false resemblance only meets,
An empty cloud. However many books
Wise men have said are wearisome; who reads
Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
A spirit and judgment equal or superior,
(And what he brings, what needs he elsewhere seek)
Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
Deep-versed in books and shallow in himself,
Crude or intoxicate, collecting toys,
And trifles for choice matters, worth a sponge;
As children gathering pebbles on the shore. (IV, 318-330)

To further this line of reasoning, in conjunction with Milton's theological perception of Christ as a mediator, distinct in being from God, it could be said that Christ's eschewing of the temptations is the moment of enlightenment. Only upon the attainment of enlightenment is Christ now capable of performing his duty to Man: 'Hail Son of the Most High, heir of both worlds, / Queller of Satan, on thy glorious work / Now enter, and begin to save mankind' (IV, 633-635). To echo earlier sentiments, this is the moment that salvation is earned, the moment that Christ "by merit" has earned the position of Son of God. Yet herein lies irrefutable evidence of the fact that the Christ that appears in *Paradise Lost* is not the same character as the one that appears in *Paradise Regained*. The Son of God in *Paradise Lost* volunteers for the task of saving and redeeming mankind:

Behold Me then, Me for him, life for life
I offer. On Me let thine anger fall.
Account Me Man, I for his sake will leave
Thy bosom and this glory next to Thee
Freely put off and for him lastly die
Well pleased. On Me let Death wreck all his rage! (*PL*. Bk III, 236-241)

As far as the Son of God of *Paradise Lost* is concerned, he is already worthy and capable of our salvation. For the Christ of *Paradise Regained*, this is something he must come to realise. Coupled with the issue of God's foreknowledge of Man's redemption through his Son, it is vitally important to recognise that the characters of both texts are not the same and therefore their characterisations and theological contexts must be read differently. This echoes Miller's analysis of the Gospels, and in turn the Christ that appears in them, as distinct from the narratives of the Old Testament:

The Christian Gospels are not pre-historic folklore; they spring from an historical personality. And in making the Son of God of *Paradise Lost* the second Adam of *Paradise Regained*, Milton passes from the mythical and symbolic to the real and subjective (202).

In passing from the mythical and symbolic to the real and subjective, Milton is forced to reconcile his artistic practice with the real and subjective historicity of Christ, the consequences of which appear to be charges of heresy and unorthodox behaviour.

This issue of Milton's ever-present potential heresy is an issue that numerous contemporary critics have approached, oftentimes with skepticism as to the veracity of the charges of heresy. William B. Hunter writes:

In view of the heterodoxy of much of the *Christian Doctrine*, Milton is now interpreted in many of his works, not just in the treatise, as a heretic - the opposite from the views that almost everyone held before its publication in 1825 (128-130).

However, one must remember that we must be wary as critics about where and how we apply the term 'heretic', especially in relation to as turbulent a period of religious history as the English Renaissance. As Michael Lieb reminds us, the notion of heresy during this period was a highly amorphous one that could be, and was, applied to everyone by everyone. Despite this however, if we take into account Milton's particular definition of

heresy as dictated in his anti-prelatical tract, *Of True Religion, Haeresie Schism, and Toleration* (1673), we see that to label Milton a heretic is not as simple as it may seem:

I will now as briefly show what is false Religion or Heresie, which will be done as easily: for of contraries the definitions must needs be contrary. Heresie therefore is a Religion taken up and believ'd from the traditions of men and additions to the word of God (5).

By Milton's own standards and definition of what constitutes heresy, he is no such heretic himself, given his strict adherence solely to the word of God and scripture. However, the irony must be addressed that despite Milton's rejection of any 'additions to the word of God', he is happy to provide Christ with pages of dialogue that appear nowhere within scripture. While Christ's scriptural knowledge is sound and exemplary, there appears to be an odd contradiction when it comes to his own existence as a participant within scripture itself. This is further supported by the inclusion of the banquet scene which has no basis in scripture. It is here that the importance of the decision to utilise Luke's narrative of temptations becomes apparent, for as Lewalski highlights, "Luke provides some warrant for conceiving of additional temptations" (3). This is based upon the original scripture where Luke writes, "Being fourty daies tempted of the devill, and in those daies he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, hee afterward hungred" (Luke, 4:2). The phrasing of the passage implies that Christ was tempted throughout the entire forty days of his time in the wilderness but that Luke only feels the need to elaborate upon the three most pivotal ones. Characterisations of Christ aside, the inclusion of such a scene undoes the arguments put forth by critics such as Hunter and Patrides and their assertion that Milton was an orthodox Christian. While we may acknowledge Lewalski's observation that there are grounds for the presence of other temptations, it by no means eliminates the potential for heresy, for there still remains no evidence in scripture for the specific temptation of the banquet that Milton is invoking. By his own standards, Milton is enacting a heretical practice. Therefore we must ask the question: why does artistic liberty appear to require the contradiction of one's faith? Ultimately it appears that Milton's poetic ambitions are the driving force

behind these numerous confusions and complexities regarding his theology and its relationship with poetry.

As has been established, Milton's strict adherence to the scripture of the Bible is well documented. However, his poetry indicates a malleability that he applies to orthodoxy that runs counter to this adherence. For example, the opening to the poem includes Milton's invocation of the Muse wherein he states:

Thou Spirit, who ledst this glorious Eremite
Into the Desert, his Victorious Field
Against the Spiritual Foe, and broughtst him thence
By proof th' undoubted Son of God, inspire,
As thou art wont, my prompted Song else mute,
And bear through highth or depth of natures bounds,
With prosperous wing full summ'd to tell of deeds
Above Heroic, though in secret done,
And unrecorded left through many an Age,
Worthy t' have not remain'd so long unsung. (l, 8-17)

The inference that lies behind the lines "With prosperous wing full summ'd to tell of deeds / Above Heroic, though in secret done, / And unrecorded left through many an Age" implies that there are elements to the temptation narrative that exist outside of the prescribed scripture. If we recall Christ's meditation on the experience of hunger, Milton proves this true within the context of his own poem with the inclusion of a potential fourth temptation: a banquet that functions as an extension of the first temptation to satiate hunger. There is no scriptural evidence for this banquet, therefore we must ask what purpose it serves when it comes to Christ's test and the effects it has on how we perceive Christ. Has Milton included this temptation so as to further a particular line of inquiry with Christ? One may read it as a desire to emphasise the physical experience of hunger that belongs to humans so as to render Christ as more recognisably human. He initially remarks upon his state in the desert:

Where will this end? Four times ten days I have
passed
Wandering this woody maze, and human food
Nor tasted, nor had appetite: that fast
To virtue I impute not, or count part
Of what I suffer here; if nature need not,
Or God support nature without repast
Though needing, what praise is it to endure?
But now I feel I hunger, which declares,
Nature hath need of what she asks; yet God
Can satisfy that need some other way,
Though hunger still remain: so it remain
Without this body's wasting, I content me,
And from the sting of famine fear no harm,
Nor mind it, fed with better thoughts that feed
Me hung'ring more to do my Father's will. (II, 245-259)

As we have already discovered in the previous chapter, here we are faced with several curiosities regarding Christ's situation both physically and spiritually. It is a speech laden with contradiction as Milton attempts to reconcile Christ's dual nature as being both human and divine. Despite recognising the sensations of hunger, Christ alludes to his divine self by remarking that God, through Christ's own godhood, is able to assuage the necessity of food without removing the human sensation for hunger. It is in this rather paradoxical situation that we see the difficulty in communicating Christ's dual nature as something recognisable for readers to utilise as a model for being. Is the sensation of hunger still equatable to the experience of hunger? As Satan prods Christ for an answer, we see him playing on this issue of hunger so as to unveil Christ's true nature:

Behold Nature ashamed, or better to express,
Troubled that thou shouldst hunger, hath purveyed
From all the elements her choicest store

To treat thee as beseems, and as her Lord
With honour, only deign to sit and eat.
He spake no dream, for as his words had end
Our Saviour lifting up his eyes, beheld
In ample space under the broadest shade
A table richly spread, in regal mode,
With dishes piled and meats of noblest sort. (II, 332-341)

Once again, we are forced to ask whether Christ's experience of suffering, and in turn temptation, in the desert as a man can really be labelled as such if he is, by his own admission, able to exempt himself from such suffering. Christ even inadvertently highlights this conundrum himself when he distinctly refers to food as being 'human'. Even Satan calls out this paradox. Upon reminding Christ of the Jewish Exodus from Egypt and their forty years of wandering through the desert, and God's offering of manna from Heaven, Christ replies:

To whom thus Jesus; What conclud'st thou hence?
They all had need, I as thou seest have none.
How hast thou hunger then? Satan replied. (II, 317-319)

Satan continues by asking whether Christ would not eat if a table of food were to be set before him, to which Christ simply responds, "Thereafter as I like / The giver" (II, 321-322). Christ avoids the issue by simply concluding that in knowing the identity of Satan, he knows to refuse whatever is offered him. Not only does this once again highlight the potential futility of these temptations, but also emphasises the fact that Christ is being tempted towards his divine self and away from his humanity. Arnold Stein highlights a peculiar element to Milton's theology, writing:

It is not enough for the protagonist to refuse offers; he must answer, and fully. Milton's own belief in reason is heroic, and he could not be interested in a hero prevented by his drama from giving full expression to the dignity

and responsibility of the human mind - not even in a drama of salvation, which is a highly specialized business, fiercely exclusive, and bound to a particular revelation that must ignore or scorn as irrelevant to the vain and single economy of salvation many other kinds of human interest, and knowledge, and wisdom (10-11).

While Milton's belief in reason is certainly heroic and evident in most, if not all, of his writing, *Paradise Regained* presents a peculiar relationship with this belief in reason. Reason is born from man's interaction with the universe and our attempts to understand it. For Milton, reason, much like poetry, is a gift provided by God that provides us with the capabilities of interacting with the created universe. However, upon entering the realm of scripture, we enter into a world that requires faith. Reason can only take us so far, with scripture even admitting as much with proclamations dictating that the true nature of God is unknowable, hence the necessity for faith. Therefore, the presence of reason as a prominent theme in *Paradise Regained* takes on a slightly different form when compared with texts such as *Comus* (1634), where Christian reasonings around chastity and faith are utilised by the Lady to rebuke the temptations of the eponymous villain. Here, reason is justified by faith. Despite all of Christ's reasonings for his eschewal of Satan's temptations, the last step is, and always will be, faith in God. As Stein writes:

The Christ of the poem hungers, thirsts, dreams, apparently without conscious volition; he plans and conjectures consciously. But everything is under the control of his major illumination, and illuminates. He is a pattern of knowledge and virtue. As Origen argues against Celsus, Christ is "the pattern of the most virtuous life," and so to be related to the ideal of the Greek tradition. We are presented with an imitation of God that has roots in Greek rationalistic ethics, though the controlling metaphor is the biblical one of man's being created in God's image. (15)

It seems pertinent to highlight the recurrence of dualities that appear, from the obvious duality of good and evil, to the duality of reason and faith, a duality that is mirrored in Christ's own nature as both mortal and divine.

While this reading is evident to any reader of both the poem and the original scripture, here Milton is attempting to tease out the complexities of this duality, and in doing so approaches several potentially heretical positions. Despite the fact that Christ does not relent and we know he succeeds in the face of these temptations, it cannot be ignored that the option to relent and fall back on his divine self always remains. Unlike Christ, we as humans do not have this luxury. Thus, in Milton's attempts to render Christ as someone recognisable, he is ultimately forced to further unearth the myriad of ways in which Christ is not. The resultant consequences in trying to remedy these unpacked complexities are precisely what has led various critics to debate Milton's potential heresy.

In being conscious of this critical debate surrounding Milton's evidently ambiguous theological perspectives, a rereading of *Paradise Regained* in this light provides the reader with the potential prospect that this debate plays out within the poem itself. Throughout the poem, great concern and attention is given to the question of Christ's true nature and whether he, Satan, and several others are aware of this true nature - all of whom simply want to know what 'Son of God' means. As Lewalski highlights, "The great, controlling ambiguity centers upon the term "Son of God," the title bestowed in a special way upon Christ at his baptism (the event with which the action begins) and insistently applied to him with a variety of meanings throughout the poem" (133). Satan himself remarks upon this conundrum when he states that the title "bears no single sense" (IV.517). The poem thus relies upon what Satan describes when he muses, "In what degree or meaning thou art call'd / The Son of God" (IV. 516-517). Theology aside, if one is to look at this issue through the lens of the narrative, Milton's distinction between Man and God within Christ may potentially be an opportunity for narrative force and impact. Certainly, the argument can be made that the conflict between Satan and Christ is the driving force of the narrative; however, as Lewalski has shown, the primary driving force is the question of the nature of Godhead. Throughout the poem, Satan expresses extreme envy at even the thought of Christ as something

divine. Upon hearing rumours of Christ's baptism, Satan "...then with envy fraught and rage / Flies to his place, nor rests, but in mid air / To council summons all his mighty peers" (I, 38-40). Another possibility is the idea that, given Milton's advocacy for individual liberty and responsibility for conviction instead of group thought and membership, such sentiments can perhaps be seen reflected in his characterisation of Christ as a figure interpreting his scripture through personal conviction and a personal relationship to God. Perhaps this is why he is something of a distant character compared to his characterisation in the Gospels as a symbolic figure of community and communal understanding, leading many to view his characterisation as heretical and antithetical to the Christ of Scripture. One may even extend this line of thinking to include the vast amount of dialogue Milton provides Christ compared to the three lines that appear in the original scripture. What is this process of adaptation, wherein one moulds the very tenets of the story so as to fit personal theological exercises, but a process of potentially heretical practices, especially when taking into account Milton's strict adherence to scripture?

Juxtapose this characterisation of Christ against Giles Fletcher's and it becomes clear that Milton, perhaps unsurprisingly, is singular in his theological and poetic vision. Fletcher opens his poem with what can be described as the complete antithesis to Arian theology by writing, 'The birth of him that no beginning knewe / Yet gives beginning to all that are borne' (1-2). To imply that the Son of God always was, and that his existence coincides with God, is entirely antithetical to the Arian position. Fletcher further extends this theological standpoint when he writes, "How in God, and Man did both embrace each other, / Met in one person, heav'n, and earth did kiss,"(9-10), implying that not only was Christ divine but that he was God incarnate as the Son of God, again clearly anti-Arian and entirely orthodox according to the Nicene Creed which states that the true Christian is faithful to "the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father" (Schaff, 28-29). It is this question of essence that permeates throughout much biblical poetry. However, while this is not an issue of contention for the orthodox poet such as Fletcher, an adherent to the Trinity, it proved, and evidently continues to prove, highly complex for Milton.

Arianism

As has been discussed, it appears Milton predominantly follows the Gospel of John when it comes to his literary construction of Christ. This more nuanced approach to Christ as a person rather than a symbol, coupled with the Gospel being generally agreed upon to be primarily concerned with the more advanced, mystical teaching of scriptural and spiritual study, lays the foundations for what shall be highlighted as Milton's singular theology. It is this scriptural and spiritual study element in particular where *Paradise Regained* sees its greatest strengths, but it is also the catalyst for some of its greatest complexities. These complexities are what commentators and critics throughout the poem's history have investigated and pored over in order to examine Milton's theology and how it manifests in the context of his art. We must remind ourselves that the predominant driving force behind these examinations is Christ's dual nature as both human and divine. We now know that Milton most likely takes after John in this respect, as evidenced in his *De Doctrina Christiana* when writing about the state in which Christ offered himself. The *De Doctrina Christiana*'s assertion of Christ as a God-Man being required to fulfil particular prerequisites for our redemption implies that there are abilities beyond his control that belong solely to God, such as salvation simply by thought. It is this very sentiment that Milton explores in *De Doctrina Christiana* when reasoning for the distinction between the Son and the Father, surmising that if God is omnipotent and omniscient then it follows that the Son cannot be also since it would nullify the idea of God being omnipotent. Therefore, in order for this inherent hierarchy to be maintained, there are and must be truths and gifts that the Son is unaware of or incapable of understanding. This is further established in his chapter 'On the Son of God' where Milton goes into extensive detail in marking the distinction between God and Christ as two separate entities, a distinction that has led numerous critics such as David Masson to classify Milton's theology and views of Christ as 'expressly and emphatically those of high Arianism' (823), the primary tenet of which is the rejection of the Trinity as a single entity. John P. Rumrich summarises the Arian viewpoint as such:

The foundation of the Arian position is the insistence that the essence of true Godhood is unique and unbegotten (*agenetos*). The unbegotten essence belongs only to the paternal God, not to the Son or to the Holy Spirit. As *De Doctrina* states, “really a God cannot be begotten at all,” a blanket statement that covers figurative and literal meaning of begotten...Arians deny the Son the essential divine attribute of unbegottenness - or eternal existence - and also deny him related attributes such as omnipotence, omniscience, and ubiquity. Inferior to the Father, the Son is not “very” or “true” God, but instead, per the formulation in *De Doctrina*, “a God who is not self-existent, who did not beget but was begotten, is not a first cause but an effect, and is therefore not a supreme God (79-80).

However, as Michael Lieb writes, “...anyone who attempts to establish the “Arianism” of [Milton’s] poetry through recourse to the theological tract or even to the so-called Arian doctrines grounded in the discourse of the early church had better be aware of the pitfalls that confront him. Nothing can be taken for granted” (214). This classification of Milton’s personal theological beliefs as Arian is highly contentious within Miltonic studies.

Given that the *De Doctrina Christiana* is such a central text to Miltonic studies, it is not without its controversy. The history of the text has been fraught with debate surrounding its authorship, with numerous critics of the latter half of the 20th century calling into question whether Milton actually composed the text himself. It should be noted however that recent scholarship and analysis has firmly cemented the text as belonging to Milton. Gordon Campbell, Thomas N. Corns, John K. Hale, and Fiona J. Tweedie, in their work, *Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana* (2007), utilised provenancial and stylometric analysis in order to conclude that, “The manuscript rightly belongs in the Milton canon” (161). Despite this however, given the theological concerns that abound within *Paradise Regained*, the debate that has surrounded the *De Doctrina Christiana* points to the complex nature of marrying one’s personal theology

with that of the theology as expressed in art. It hints towards the apparent difficulty in rendering poetic the theological and requires one to analyse where the two meet and where they may differ in the eyes of various critics and readers.

The claim by some contemporary critics that Milton subscribed to Arianism is based upon deductions made from *De Doctrina Christiana*, specifically within his discussion 'On the Son of God'. However, in 1992, with his article "The Provenance of the Christian Doctrine", William B. Hunter called into question the authorship and provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*, concluding that, "Milton did not write the *Christian Doctrine* and that accordingly all of the criticism of his worlds based on the assumption that he did should be rethought" (130). *De Doctrina Christiana* was first translated into English in 1825 by Charles R. Sumner. Subsequent study of the text, the most seminal study being Maurice Kelley's *This Great Argument* published in 1941, utilised the treatise as a gloss upon the Miltonic literary canon. However, late 20th century scholarship, spearheaded by Hunter, called into question the authorship of the treatise, highlighting several discrepancies between the text and Milton's poems. Hunter's claim that Milton did not write *De Doctrina Christiana* stems from what he identifies as a peculiar and questionable provenance. He initially cites the problematic circumstances in which *De Doctrina Christiana* was assumed to be written, highlighting the fact that the copious amounts of scriptural quotations that are used liberally and often in uninterrupted series are difficult to recognise as having been managed by a blind man. Furthermore, Hunter highlights "the lack of any direct allusions in the *Christian Doctrine* to the canonical writings [as] striking" (131). For example, he cites *Paradise Lost* and the fact that "the invocations in Books 1, 3, and 7 address all three persons of the Trinity, something an Arian would avoid" (133). As a result, Hunter dispels the notion of Milton's supposed Arianism. In light of this conclusion and along with other critics such as C. A. Patrides and J. H. Adamson, Hunter would then reevaluate Milton's supposed Arianism, instead surmising that within poems such as *Paradise Lost*, Milton did in fact adhere to orthodox trinitarian belief. He was instead, according to Hunter, a "subordinationist", writing that, "The poem indeed has ... a subordinationist underpinning: the Son is divine but subordinate to the Father as Eve is human but subordinate to Adam" (132-133).

The use of the term subordinationism implies that the scholar is able to hold onto the notion that Milton maintained even slight adherence to the orthodox belief in the Trinity, for subordinationism simply implies that the Son is subordinate but still maintains his Godhood. This is also, perhaps inadvertently, supported by Hunter himself when he refers to “Kelley’s findings of Arianism (or as he prefers to name it anti-Trinitarianism or as I prefer subordinationism)” (132). Furthermore, by rendering the relationship between the Son and the Father as analogous to the relationship between Adam and Eve, proponents of the subordinationist argument such as Hunter face potential blasphemous consequences. If we take the premise that Eve is of the same substance as Adam in the same way that Christ is of the same substance as God, then it follows that given the narrative that Milton provides in *Paradise Lost* with Eve being the source of our Fall, Adam is equally responsible, which runs counter to the orthodox tradition where God chastises Adam for his susceptibility to Eve for our Fall:

“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, / Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life” (Gen. 3.17).

This is further exemplified by the fact that Milton frames Adam’s own fall as one that is contingent on Eve’s due to his love for her: “Our state cannot be severed. We are one, / One flesh: to lose thee were to lose myself” (IX, 958-959). If we are to see Christ in the same way then God must share the responsibility for Christ’s actions on Earth such as his doubting in the Garden of Gethsemane, the blasphemous consequences of which are self-evident.

Yet this appears to be contrary to what Milton is expressing in his own writing, for his Doctrine appears highly explicit in his desire to emphasise the difference in essence between the Father and the Son. Furthermore, even if one concedes that there is doubt as to the authorship of the *De Doctrina Christiana*, there still appears to be ample evidence within the Miltonic literary canon that suggest a unique theology as regards

the relationship between the Father and the Son which, if not outright Arian or heretical, is still not wholly orthodox either as many would evidently like it to be.

While the term subordinationism isn't wholly false, it seems to be a useful case of semantics for those wishing to preserve Milton's appearance as a strictly orthodox theologian. As John P. Rumrich writes, in "suggesting a grammatical model, it lumps together various ways in which the Son has been considered dependent on the main clause of the paternal deity" (81). The hierarchy implied by the term 'subordinationism' appears to contradict the relationship between the Father and the Son as presented in *Paradise Regained*. Christ remains distinctly separate from the Father, who appears even more detached than he is in *Paradise Lost* from Satan's attempts to interfere with not only the affairs of men, but also His declared Son. To say that the Son is dependent on the main clause of the paternal deity immediately implies that the two are not of the same essence of Godhood as Trinitarians traditionally accept. Rather, subordination requires a hierarchy that runs counter to the structure of the Trinity.

Curiously, Hunter and other adherents to the subordinationism argument aim their reading primarily at *Paradise Lost*, neglecting to analyse how such a reading stands in relation to *Paradise Regained*. The consequence of this is that, where *Paradise Lost* provides a Son of God untouched by humanity, *Paradise Regained* provides a Jesus Christ who must prove and become the model Christian. When it comes to *Paradise Regained*, Milton is predominantly concerned with the theological consequences of scripture being put into practice when it comes to affirming one's faith in God. Therefore, Milton requires that Christ affirm his faith in God, an act that highlights and emphasises his humanity and ultimately his distinction from the Son of God of *Paradise Lost*. We must remind ourselves that the two characterisations are not the same and therefore require different readings, for to assert that the Christ of *Paradise Regained* is one that subscribes to subordinationism neglects the very nature of his being in comparison with his existence in *Paradise Lost*. If he is subordinate in *Paradise Lost*, then how does such subordinationism manifest in *Paradise Regained* as a character who has been distanced further from God both physically and spiritually? I propose that it is precisely this distanced relationship that Milton impresses upon the reader, so as to emphasise not only our own distance from God, but also the hope that

we are able to enjoy in knowing that we are capable of returning to God, using Christ as a model for such a return. This can be seen in *De Doctrina Christiana* where Milton writes:

The opinion, however, which now prevails, or rather which has prevailed for many ages, is this: that whereas it was contended in a former stage of the controversy respecting Christ, that the three persons of the Trinity were united in one nature, it is now asserted, on the other hand, that two natures are so combined in the one person of Christ, that he has a real and perfect subsistence in the one nature, independently of that which properly belongs to the other; insomuch that two natures are comprehended in one person. That is what is called in the schools the hypostatic union (265-267).

Not only does this indicate that Milton, within the content of the *De Doctrina Christiana*, is adamant as to his opposition to the unity of personhood in the Trinity, but also highlights his recognition that if Christ is to share some relationship with God, it is via hypostatic union rather than subordinationism. The distinction of the hypostatic union can be seen better represented in the poem than a subordinationist relationship, with Christ exhibiting behaviours that are clearly divinely inspired such as his walking without leaving footsteps and his ability to feel hunger yet forgo its mortal consequences. Milton further supports this view of the relationship between Christ and God by writing:

It may however be observed, that the opinion here given respecting the hypostatic union agrees with what was advanced relative to the Son of God in the fifth chapter, namely, that his essence is not the same with that of the Father; for if it were the same, it could not have coalesced in one person with man, unless the Father were also included in the same union, nay, unless man became one person with the Father as well as with the Son; which is impossible (273).

Milton reminds us from the outset that it is not solely by divine intervention that Paradise is recovered but “By one man’s firm obedience fully tried” (I, 4). God Himself reinforces this distinction when he tells the angel Gabriel, “... this man born and now upgrown, / To show him worthy of his birth divine / And high prediction, henceforth I expose / To Satan” (I, 140-143). Christ must *prove* himself worthy instead of simply *being* worthy. This is further emphasised in God’s subsequent remarks to Gabriel when He explains the purpose of Christ’s mission:

That all angels and ethereal powers,
They now, and men hereafter may discern,
From what consummate virtue I have chose
This perfect man, by merit called my Son,
To earn salvation for the sons of men. (I, 163-167)

Salvation is to be earned. Not only does this support the idea that Milton is seeking to render the Father and the Son distinct from each other in essence, it does so by implying that, as stated before, there are things beyond Christ’s control and understanding. Furthermore, the inference behind the line “This perfect man, by merit called my Son” reinforces this characterisation of Christ as someone who has earned his status as the Son of God by merit, rather than simply being born the Son of God. This is further compounded by viewing the relationship as one of hypostatic union, where the mortality of man can be met by the grandiosity of God. Therefore, the degree to which Christ is divine is less straightforward and orthodox than many may traditionally accept.

Critics such as Patrides have noted the fact that, in relation to subordinationism, “Arius wisely discerned that the proposition threatened in particular the monotheism to which Christianity, like Judaism, was always committed” (246). In order to solve this issue and preserve the tenet of monotheism, Arius resolved to conclude that the Father’s substance is entirely unique and therefore the Son must be dissimilar from the Father in his entirety. As Patrides then writes:

Step by relentless step, indeed, Arius was driven from a denial of the Son's divinity to a denial of the dual nature of Christ, now seen not as God-man but as a created being who was (according to [Thomas] Blount's important reminder) "capable of vice" (246).

To be capable of vice requires one to be the antithesis of God as a figure incapable of vice. Once again, the blasphemous consequences of such a sentiment are self-evident in the phrase "antithesis of God". Yet it is this very 'heresy' that appears to weigh on Milton in his poetry, for it touches on the paradox that lies at the heart of *Paradise Regained*. How can a being incapable of vice even be tempted? Is it then even fit to call Satan's attempts 'temptations'? If by orthodox measures we are to accept the infallibility of Christ, then it follows that there is nothing for him to overcome. This ultimately has blatant theological consequences, the most explicit of which is the potential futility of Christ's suffering for our salvation. By orthodox Christian standards, human sin is absolved through the act of suffering as a human experience. It then follows that if we are to subscribe to the notion of Christ being infallible, we negate the idea that his suffering was a human experience even if we are to consider it suffering at all. Yet it also holds literary consequences, for it eliminates the very bedrock of any narrative, least of all a biblical epic, brief or otherwise: conflict. Stein states this also when he writes:

The hero our drama gives us is a *perfect man*, a legitimate subject for poetry but extremely difficult to present in dramatic action. A perfect divine hero would be more difficult, in fact impossible, and a semi-divine hero would be less difficult, for he would not need to be perfect. By the technical rules of this drama, which *are* observed, the protagonist is free to fail, but historically, and by God's prefatory, providential word, he is destined to win - a calculated embarrassment for any drama, and a weakness that must be turned to strength (4).

How does this strength manifest within the poem? As we shall see in the next chapter, I propose that the infallibility that prevents Christ from becoming accessible both for the reader and the narrative is overcome by his role not only as a mediator, but more importantly as a historian.

It should be noted that this criticism of Milton as being heretical is hardly new. In regard to *Paradise Lost*, John P. Rumrich discusses the various more contemporary literary critics closer to Milton's own time who called attention to his potential heretical views. For example he writes:

John Toland indirectly testified in 1698: 'As to the choice of his subject, or the particulars of his story, I shall say nothing in defence of them against those people who brand 'em with heresy and impiety.' Similarly, in 1794, Jonathan Richardson, though defending the orthodoxy of Milton's epic, acknowledges "another Conjecture which some have made; I mean that Milton was an Arian." Antitrinitarianism seems indeed to have been early readers' common complaint (76).

It therefore seems, given the more contemporary accounts of Milton's readership acknowledging the theological curiosities of his writing, that early readers were adept at recognising potential antitrinitarian philosophies and their depictions. We must also remind ourselves that contemporary critics of Milton's era were most likely more alert to the theological issues and discussions of the time. With Toland writing during the Unitarian Controversy which was a major debate in England surrounding the nature of the Trinity, Rumrich notes that, "The resurgence of antitrinitarianism featured an emphasis on the disciplined application of reason - purged of metaphysical complication - and preference for scriptural evidence over human authority" (77). This practice is never clearer than in *De Doctrina Christiana*, where Milton eschews other theological standpoints and explanations in favour of relying solely on the Word of God as delivered through scriptural writings to support his realisation of Christ: "I have chosen, on the contrary, to fill my pages even to redundancy with quotations from Scripture, that so as little space as possible might be left for my own words, even when they arise from the

context of revelation itself" (5). Additionally, if we look once again to the doubts regarding the authorship of the *De Doctrina Christiana*, we can still find such sentiments expressed in texts that undoubtedly belong to Milton. For example, his anti-prelatical tract *Of True Religion*, is highly explicit in his espousal of strict adherence to the word of Scripture rather than theologians and ritualistic interpretations. Milton writes:

True Religion is the true Worship and Service of God, learnt and believed from the Word of God only. No Man or Angel can know how God would be worshipt and serv'd unless God reveal it: He hath Reveal'd and taught it us in the holy Scriptures by inspir'd Ministers, and in the Gospel by his own Son and his Apostles, with strictest command to reject all other traditions or additions whatsoever (3).

Nowhere is Milton's opinion more evident that no other orthodoxy should be adhered to except that found within the Scripture. While this is evidence in itself of this fact, it also supports the ideas espoused within the *De Doctrina Christiana* regardless of its authorship. Furthermore, while the question of provenance regarding *De Doctrina Christiana* still remains contentious within Miltonic studies, it is not hard to see this practice of relying on Scripture in order to inform reason as one of, if not, the central tenets of *Paradise Regained*. As has been discussed, the *raison d'être* of *Paradise Regained* centres on the successful deployment of scriptural study and scholarship. Yet we must now ask ourselves how this manifests within the poem as an art form and the consequences of Christ appearing in such an art form outside of Scripture. Is he more human and recognisable within the realm of human art or does he become more warped and psychically distanced from readers the further he is taken from the divinely inspired word of God?

Chapter Three: How to Read *Paradise Regained*

There is perhaps no more contentious debate surrounding John Milton and his poetry than that which concerns the generic categories into which his poetry falls. Furthermore, this debate is most apparent when engaging with *Paradise Regained*. The scripture of the Bible, as the history of the text has proven, is a particularly complex text when it comes to its literary aspects for it is accompanied by a multitude of components pertaining to literary form and hermeneutical study that make it an intensely difficult mode to adapt into the realm of the more artistic practices of poetry, painting, drama, etc. This is evident in the countless works of art, both literary and visual, that draw from scriptural subject matter, yet all do so in distinctly different ways. This is further emphasised by the juxtaposition of artistic forms in which the works are presented. Take for instance the Deposition scene which takes place as part of the Passion episode of Christ's life following his crucifixion. Christ has been carried down from the cross to lie with his mother amongst the throngs of the weeping faithful. Early Renaissance artist Michelangelo in his sculpture *Pietà* (1499) captures the youthful Mary with the dead Christ across her lap. He is idealised by way of his musculature and pose, as was typical of Michelangelo's style at the time, calling upon neoplatonist ideals. Compare this contemplative and reverent scene with Jacopo Pontormo's painting of the same scene in his *Deposition from the Cross* (1528). The same scene is one that has been translated here into one of unbridled grief and sorrow, characterised by Pontormo's Mannerist style that employs unorthodox proportioning and positioning with twisted figures and even a swooning Mary. Each example highlights the methodologies and theological calculations that demonstrate to the viewer the artist's intentions that in themselves are further informed by the medium and form of their work. From the calm and reverent mourning of Michelangelo's *Pietà*, to Pontormo's emotionally charged Mannerist treatment of the same subject, such differences highlight the amorphous and potentially malleable nature of the artistic treatment of scripture.

We may even extend this reading to literature by comparing Michelangelo and Pontormo to Hugo Grotius' own literary treatment of the same subject. Grotius' tragedy reaches its climax with the crucifixion and its denouement with the deposition; however,

both are reported by a messenger to a chorus of Jewish women. The scene is not staged and therefore stands in stark contrast to the two visual examples of the same scene. Therefore we must ask not only how Grotius' treatment ultimately affects our reading of the Deposition scene, but also how literature allows for such treatments and readings. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the pitfalls that artists face when it comes to adapting scripture are numerous, each with intensely seismic consequences. Interestingly however, these pitfalls and consequences are made apparent primarily through the form in which the poet has decided to cast their story. Be it Giles Fletcher's decision to adapt Christ's life as a classical epic, or Hugo Grotius' decision to adapt the Passion as a tragedy, the form of the writer's narrative allows the reader to better understand the writer's relationship with their material and the purpose of their exercise. Unsurprisingly, Milton complicates this understanding of poetic form, in particular with *Paradise Regained*, which stands out in contrast to not only its predecessor and contemporaries but also the rest of Milton's oeuvre.

In this chapter I propose that much of the foundation for the curiosities and complexities that have been explored in the previous chapters can be found in Milton's poetic medium and the specific poetic form he uses. The primary task of this chapter is to analyse Milton's relationship with poetry as an artform through the lens of his religious and theological stances. From this we shall be able to investigate the literary conditions in which Christ is situated within Milton's poetry and how such conditions influence our readings of Christ within *Paradise Regained*, as well as the theological problems the poem raises. How can *Paradise Regained*, as an exemplary poem of mankind's salvation, possibly be suited to what critics denote as a "brief epic"? Would Christ perhaps be better served in another literary form? If so, what peculiarities, both continued and new, would Christ bring to a different literary form? Such questions highlight the integral part that the literary form plays in framing our readings of a particular character. This is seldom truer, and seldom more complex, than in the case of the Christ of *Paradise Regained*.

The Brief Epic

When it comes to literary form and genre, there are several elements that assist the literary critic in discerning what category a certain literary work may fall into. From narrative structure and voice, to character and arc, critics are able to ascertain what genre the work may belong to, which subsequently leads to the text being read in light of its generic categorisation. The continued critical interest in *Paradise Regained* and its elusive genre categorisation highlights that there are perhaps elements within the poem that do not coalesce or harmonise in a way that allows for easy categorisation. As a sequel to *Paradise Lost*, perhaps Milton would like us to read the poem as another biblical epic? While maintaining various features of the epic poem such as an invocation, divine and supernatural interventions, and a proposition, *Paradise Regained* is markedly shorter than its predecessor with only four books compared to *Paradise Lost*'s twelve. There are also typical elements of the epic form that are absent from the poem, the first and perhaps most typical one being the use of *in medias res*. *Paradise Regained* follows a straightforward narrative compared to its predecessor. However, what are the consequences of this if we are to read the poem as an epic? More crucially, how does this reading affect our reading of Christ? Is Christ an epic hero? Such questions, being the consequence of poetic genre and form, emphasise the integral role that form plays in shaping our readings.

Amidst this debate surrounding the genre of *Paradise Regained*, Barbara Lewalski published what would become a staple of Miltonic criticism and understandings of *Paradise Regained*. Her study, *Milton's Brief Epic: The Genre, Meaning, and Art of Paradise Regained* seeks to classify the poem as an epic in form yet brief in structure. Within Miltonic studies, Lewalski's designation of *Paradise Regained* as a "brief epic" has widely been accepted as the most suitable literary category for the poem to fall under. As Lewalski writes:

Milton's narrative is very much more than an expansion of the Gospel story by means of additional incidents and temptations: it is designed to include and evaluate, through the brilliant, complex arguments of Christ

and Satan about the meaning and implications of the temptations offered, the fundamental values, heroic ideals, conceptions of duty, and standards of personal excellence which derive from the Classical-Judeo-Christian heritage. (Lewalski, 4)

This notion of evaluation is largely derived from what Lewalski identifies as the primary template for the poem, the Book of Job. As has been discussed in the first chapter, The Book of Job provides Milton with the framework for his poem as both narratives centre around a dialogue and debate regarding one's unwavering faith in God. Milton utilises the narrative structure of the Book of Job with an inciting incident in what would be the prologue to the Book of Job (Christ's calling to enter the wilderness), a series of debates with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (Christ's eschewal of the three temptations), and the conclusion where God rebukes the three friends of Job and restores Job to his former state, returning his family and riches twofold (Christ's triumph over Satan and his proven worthiness as the Son of God and Saviour of Mankind). As in the first chapter, we have seen how Christ and Job can be juxtaposed as characters, but what about their respective poems? We have seen how other poets such as Fletcher and Grotius tend to elect to use the Passion episode of Christ's life as the foundation for their poems. While several components are shared between the two narratives as we have seen, there still remains the question of the utility that the literary form of the Book of Job provides for Milton's exercise. What was it about the Book of Job that Milton saw as essential in structuring his poem?

The status of the Book of Job as the epitome of unwavering faith in God was undoubted in Milton's time. Numerous Christian theologians throughout the ages have cited Job as a figure of example and the Book itself as one of unparalleled beauty and logic. For example, St. Jerome remarked:

Then, as for Job, that pattern of patience, what mysteries are there not contained in his discourses? Commencing in prose the book soon glides into verse and at the end once more reverts to prose. By the way in which it lays down propositions, assumes postulates, adduces proofs, and draws

inferences, it illustrates all the laws of logic. Single words occurring in the book are full of meaning (Schaff, 96).

There is certainly no shortage of theologians who set out to stake the Bible's claim as not only an example of poetry worthy of comparison with its classical counterparts, but also the source and foundation of the stylistic and structural elements of classical poetry:

The Venerable Bede (eighth century) explicitly identified Job as the biblical counterpart of classical epic both in form and matter. Citing Job as an example of dactylic hexameter, he explained that this meter is called heroic verse because it sings "of greatest heroes, that is, of the bravest men," and may be used "both in prolix and brief works" (Lewalski, 15-16).

There is even a passage in the 10th century Byzantine encyclopaedia, *Suda*, that furthers this praise, remarking:

Job. You have here the riches of this philosopher. You have his [Job's] book, singing more sweetly than the Homeric and Platonic Muses. It neither sets forth a narration of the fabulous tales nor of the absurd calamities of boldest Achilles or most cunning Ulysses for whom slaughters are a triumph and pollutants of women are illustrious crimes; but it describes Satan conquered by one who was naked and unarmed.
(16)

In relation to Christian theological commentaries on the temptation narrative as it appears in the Bible, Elizabeth Pope highlights that the Fathers of the Church sought to draw the parallel between Adam's failure and Christ's success: "They argue that the three sins which Christ refused to commit were, in essence, the same three which had caused Adam's fall: gluttony, vainglory, and avarice" (Pope, 51-52). Pope further

emphasises this relationship between the Christ of the New Testament and the Adam of the Old Testament with what she calls the 'triple equation'. She writes:

In other words, by overcoming gluttony, vainglory, and avarice, Christ might be said to have overcome all temptation, because all are mere variants of the three basic seductions typified by gluttony, vainglory, and avarice: concupiscence of the flesh, concupiscence of the eye, and the pride of life: the flesh, the world, the devil. The three are arranged on a sort of ascending scale of potency, beginning with the lowest and most venial, and ending with the highest and most deadly. (Pope, 53)

This idea of the ascending scale of potency is further supported by the invocation of Job within the poem due to the increasing potency of his sufferings that equally pertain to the flesh (boils and sores), the world (the loss of his family and fortune), and the devil (his faith). With all these Christian thinkers and theologians praising the Book of Job as worthier than its classical counterparts, specifically the classical epic, it becomes clear that Milton's desire to compose a poem detailing the triumph of unwavering faith and using Job as a precedent is not surprising. Yet how do we reconcile the final iteration of the poem that Milton provides with the notion that the Book of Job is worthy of higher praise than classical poetry?

Lewalski highlights the fact that Milton appears transparent in his desire for the poem to be read as an epic. This is further emphasised by the opening of the poem that implies that the subject of *Paradise Regained* is far more nobler and worthy of record than its predecessor: "I who erewhile the happy Garden sung, / By one man's disobedience lost, now sing / Recover'd Paradise to all mankind" (Bk I, 1-3). This is further supported by the analysis that, "in diction and form these lines echo the verses, now widely accepted as genuine, which introduce the *Aeneid* in most Renaissance editions, supposedly announcing Virgil's movement from pastoral and georgic to epic subject" (Lewalski, 6). Despite the shift in subject, critics of the poem have remarked upon the fact that it still maintains various elements of the georgic style. Critic Louis L. Martz highlights that the primary distinction from *Paradise Lost* and its grand and epic

style is that *Paradise Regained* serves as a poem of interiority and emphasises how the style reflects this interior focus:

A georgic form, a georgic style, a georgic theme: everything combines to suggest that Milton, in *Paradise Regained*, is following out the same design that he set for himself in *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*: to convert the modes of classical poetry into the service of Christianity. In *Paradise Regained* he has done this, I believe, by converting Virgil's georgic mode into a channel for religious meditation, with the result that the poem belongs, simultaneously, to the classical mode of didactic, instructive poetry, and to the Christian genre of formal meditations on the Gospel (351).

This understanding of Milton's utilisation and appropriation of various formal characteristics is perhaps best stated by Charles W. Jones in his discussion of the formal relationship between narrative and form when he writes:

From his earliest youth, Milton, even more than other poets, emphasised the relation of inner and external *form* in poetry. As internal beauty glows externally, so is the beautiful thought inevitably clothed in beautiful expression, the lyric feeling in musical words, or the heroic deed in heroic verse. The internal spirit is the formative essence which determines the outer appearance. (Jones, 209)

When it comes to Milton's own understanding and handling of genre, Lewalski echoes this sentiment, writing, "Such generic conventions were usually respected by Milton: he is the kind of artist who does not discard old wineskins but stretches them somehow, making them fit to contain his heady new wine" (Lewalski, 5). Not only does this apply to Milton as a writer but also to ourselves as readers. *Paradise Regained* requires a different approach to reading, yet this has been hampered by the insistence of critics who comment on the perceived inferiority of the poem compared to its predecessor. W.

B. C. Watkins once described the poem as “more a postscript to *Paradise Lost* than a sequel” (Lewalski, 4). The consequence of such an analysis is the failure to identify the new wine that Milton understands needs to be packaged differently compared to *Paradise Lost*. Through this lens it can be argued that *Paradise Regained* is the biblical poem that Milton has been working towards. *Paradise Lost* remains shackled by the classical influences it embraces, whereas *Paradise Regained* embraces its scriptural heritage wholeheartedly, leaving its classically inspired predecessor behind along with Satan who is otherwise a remnant of the former poem. This poem along with its form is not one that Satan is able to occupy. This reading may go some way to providing a description of why the conflict between Christ and Satan is perceived as static and unmoving. It is because Satan as a corrupted and fallen figure is condemned to his station, not only in Hell but also in poetry.

If we are to see *Paradise Regained* as the progenitor of the kind of biblical poetry that Milton deems appropriate and worthy of God’s favour, then it follows that the narrative and its poetic form are married more closely than first thought. With Christ’s eschewal of classical and pagan material, Satan then ultimately becomes the intrusion, for he does not belong. That is to say he does not belong not only in this type of poetry, but also in the new world of a mankind absolved of sin. Through this reading, it is Satan and not Christ who becomes the obstruction. Such a reading of the narrative as emblematic of the artistic practice of poetry results in the poem becoming a microcosm of its literary context. As Stein writes, “the hunter is also hunted” (Stein, 11). Through this lens, Satan becomes the primary driving force behind the poem. As the sole active agent in the poem, Satan inadvertently finds himself within a trap of his own making. It can be argued that this is Milton’s solution to the handling of Christ within poetry. “Satan does all the acting and “refluxing” around Christ as a still point, and this structural irony of imbalance is Milton’s radical and deliberate intention” (Stein, 12). Such a narrative construction can be seen also in the Book of Job, with Job functioning as the stationary point around which God and Satan engage in their wager. However, as in Chapter One, we must remind ourselves of the distinct difference in agency that both Christ and Job are able to exhibit. Even as stationary points around which their respective narratives revolve, they are afforded markedly different levels of agency with which to respond.

Milton's characterisation of Christ as a still point around which the narrative revolves speaks volumes to the idea that *Paradise Regained* is a poem in which the question of genre and form can be found within the characters themselves. Through this lens, the poem is filled to the brim with meta-textual devices that allow the reader to recognise Christ as a repository of scriptural knowledge and wisdom that allows him to fulfil this role of being stationary. This metatextual element is most evident during Satan's temptation of Athens as the seat of intellectual wisdom:

There thou shalt hear and learn the secret power
Of harmony in tones and numbers hit
By voice or hand, and various-measured verse,
Aeolian charms and Dorian lyrics odes,
And his who gave them breath, but higher sung,
Blind Melesigenes thence Homer called,
Whose poem Phoebus challenged for his own.
Thence what the lofty grave tragedians taught
In chorus or iambic, teachers best
Of moral prudence, with delight received
In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
Of fate, and chance, and change in human life... (Bk IV, 254-265)

The temptation towards the beauty of classical verse as a symbol of wisdom encapsulates several key arguments made above. It reinforces the idea that classical poetry as something pagan is something to be tempted towards, away from the scriptural. Yet Milton's literary career is defined by his embrace of the classical. Consequently, we may see *Paradise Regained* as Milton's attempt to eschew the temptation of his classical learning and instead embrace the poetry of scripture, ultimately using Christ as the vehicle through which to justify such an exercise.

In the first chapter we saw how Milton utilised the figure of Job as an exemplar for the figure of Christ when it comes to his role within the narrative. Much like Job, Christ is faced by Satan and his attacks which Christ must overcome through faith.

However, as Jones writes, Milton's use of the Book of Job as a poetic exemplar falls in line with his analysis that Milton was a firm exponent of the idea of the external form mirroring and complementing the inner form:

If Milton thought that the Book of Job was written in heroic measure he would have overpowering reasons for believing that it was a heroic poem, hence an epic. Milton concurred with the usage of the seventeenth century in regarding heroic and epic as virtual synonyms. Moreover, the honest and studious Milton would check the internal against the external form; if he found that a work like the Book of Job was not essentially heroic, though written in heroic verse, he would call the work *deformed* or *ridiculous* and would reject it as lacking integrity. This he obviously did not do, for he admired the book all his life. (Jones, 210)

We therefore must return to how such a metatextual relationship ultimately shapes our reading of Christ. As we have seen, his position as a stationary point within the narrative mirrors closely the position of Job within his narrative. The parallel emphasises the view of critics such as Martz that *Paradise Regained* is primarily concerned with interiority. Yet while Job fits this reading, with his narrative revolving around his wrestling with his own faith, Christ's interiority is harder to grasp. For a character that has long been described as cold and difficult to relate to, such descriptions make the notion of interiority a challenging one to empathise with. This leads one to speculate as to whose or what interiority we are experiencing. If we adopt the view of Christ as a stationary point around which the narrative revolves, it leads us to reflect upon Satan's position within the poem. Arnold Stein concurs with this methodology, writing:

Milton's technical solution is very bold. He shifts much of the dramatic weight to Satan and his anguished consciousness. The tempter finds himself tempted, and has to play a double role. On the other side the perfect man who cannot be moved has a traditional symbolic role that is rich in potential movement for all imperfect men; in the bridging of this gap

Milton does not neglect his opportunities. The weakness that is proved strength is both the formal theme of the drama and the permeating conceptual form. (8)

As we saw in the first chapter, Satan is the primary driver of the narrative which primarily involves his guile and manipulation of language in his temptations of Christ. This is most prominently displayed in the recurring use of the throne of David as a tactic to tempt Christ:

That thou mayst know I seek not to engage
Thy virtue, and not every way secure
On no slight grounds thy safety; hear, and mark
To what end I have brought thee hither and shown
All this fair sight; thy kingdom though foretold
By prophet or by angel, unless thou
Endeavour, as thy father David did,
Thou never shalt obtain; prediction still
In all things and all men, supposes means,
Without means used, what it predicts revokes. (Bk.III, 347-356)

By recalling the throne of David and the prophecy of Christ's ascension to the throne, Satan is functioning as a demonstration of the misuses of scripture which in turn leads Christ to correct him, fulfilling his role as a learned interpreter of scripture and the correct ways in which it is to be deployed. This juxtaposition further highlights the grim reality of Satan's situation. He has given in to his lot which requires his failure. The argument can be made that Milton reminds Satan of his failure to tempt Job to apostatise, for within the Book of Job, the eponymous hero speaks of the prophecy of the coming of Christ. "For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both" (Job, 9:32-34) With Job being framed as a precursor to Christ, it follows that Satan should meet his match and secondary failure with someone

who is just as unwavering in their faith as Job. As shall be explored later on, Satan's position within the poem as a figure condemned to fail, regardless of the success or failure of Christ, allows him to become the primary source of emotional turmoil and therefore a figure whom we as readers can understand if not sympathise with. As a figure of evil and perversion, it is no surprise that he appeals to the classical and pagan in his temptations, disguising them through the wooden horse that is the throne of David.

Spoiling the Egyptians

Here it is pertinent to highlight Milton's relationship between his classical/pagan material and his orthodox Christian material. The phrase 'spoiling the Egyptians' comes to mind as it very much highlights Milton's practice when it comes to adapting scripture within a classical framework.³ I refer to the phrase 'spoiling the Egyptians' in the context of an individual or culture accruing knowledge from prior cultures, but here arguing that Milton does this in a literary and theological sense. Not only is this visible on a macro level when investigating the forms in which Milton embodies his poetry, but also at a micro level when one takes a look at Christ specifically and his contradictions become more apparent. This is most explicit during the temptation of Athens where he is being tempted with the promise of ruling a kingdom characterised by ancient knowledge and scholarship. Christ refuses on the grounds that the only knowledge he requires is that which can be found in scripture. However, there is an odd contradiction to his justification for his refusal, for during his rebuttal he demonstrates that he is highly knowledgeable about these ancient philosophers whom we are being told to eschew. This comes to an ironic climax when Christ reminds Satan of the philosopher who wisely deduced he knew nothing, a reference to Socrates. It should also be noted that

³ The phrase 'spoiling the Egyptians' comes from Exodus 12:36. Following the plagues of Egypt and the ultimate release of the enslaved Jewish population, the Israelites are said to have taken various goods and items from the Egyptians prior to their exit. "The Lord had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians" (Exodus, 12:36). The phrase has ultimately come to refer to an instance where an individual or collective group of people or culture adopt or take with them ideas or practices that once belonged to a prior peoples, despite the positivity or negativity of the relationship shared between the two.

this is not the first instance in which Socrates is mentioned. During Christ's reminding Satan of his failure with Job, he likens Job to Socrates as figures of moral and intellectual fortitude:

By deeds of peace, by wisdom eminent,
By patience, temperance; I mention still
Him whom thy wrongs with saintly patience borne,
Made famous in a land and times obscure;
Who names not now with honour patient Job?
Poor Socrates (who next more memorable?)
By what he taught and suffered for so doing,
For truth's sake suffering death unjust, lives now
Equal in fame to proudest conquerors. (Bk.III, 91-99)

Given the discussion surrounding the eschewal of the classical in favour of the scriptural, it is curious to see Christ liken Job and Socrates as figures of wisdom to aspire to. Christ even cites Socrates as being almost as memorable as Job, inferring that he is more memorable than other figures within the Bible, just not as much as Job. As we have seen, the reverence that Milton affords Job in *Paradise Regained* is manifested not just through reference but through the form of the poem itself. What is going on here? How does Milton or we as readers reconcile this case of dramatic irony with Christ's methodology? This leads one to investigate how such methodology can be utilised to analyse the poetic form that frames Christ's encounter. It once again recalls the issue surrounding how we are to categorise *Paradise Regained*. There are several critics who have proposed different categories that better suit the poem as "a moral allegory, as ecclesiastical allegory, as "closet drama with a prologue and stage directions," as psychological drama staged in the hero's mind, as rhetorical argument "nearer in genre to Dryden's *Religio Laici* than ... to *Paradise Lost*," and, "as a formal meditation on the Gospel account of Christ's temptation" (Lewalski, 6). However, for the purpose of analysing how Milton "spoils the Egyptians" when it comes to poetic form,

Lewalski proves the most enlightening for the poem is derived from the form that frames the Book of Job.

There is no doubt that Milton was conscious of the relationship between classical pagan poetics and their Christian scriptural counterparts. In his pamphlet, *Reason of Church Government* (1642), Milton writes:

That Epick form whereof the two poems of Homer, and those other two of *Virgil* and *Tasso* are a diffuse, and the book of *Job* a brief model...Or whether those Dramatick constitutions, wherein *Sophocles* and *Euripides* raigne shall be found more doctrinal and exemplary to a Nation, the Scripture also affords us a divine pastoral Drama in the Song of *Salomon* consisting of two persons and a double *Chorus*, as *Origen* rightly judges. And the Apocalyps of Saint *John* is the majestic image of a high and stately Tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn Scenes and Acts with a sevenfold *Chorus* of halleluja's and harping symphonies: and this my opinion the grave authority of *Pareus* commenting that booke is sufficient to confirm. Or if occasion shall lead to imitat those magnifick Odes and Hymns wherein *Pindarus* and *Callimachus* are in most things worthy, some others in their frame judicious, in their matter most an end faulty: But those frequent songs throughout the law and prophets beyond all these, not in their divine argument alone, but in the very critical art of composition may be easily made appear over all the kinds of Lyrick poesy, to be incomparable. (Lewalski, 7)

Lewalski highlights this passage as indicative of Milton's acute awareness of the relationship between scriptural and pagan poetry. I seek here to add to her argument for the utilisation of the Book of Job as the template for *Paradise Regained*. Numerous critics have argued that the poem is anything but an epic due to its perceived failure to fulfil the various qualities of an epic. Critics such as E. M. W. Tillyard writes that "the poem is not an epic, it does not try to be an epic, and it must not be judged by any kind of epic standard" (Tillyard, 447). Yet they neglect the fact that despite Milton's

acknowledgement of several other poetic forms such as drama, tragedy, and hymns, the Book of Job is only ever likened to the epic and not the others. This passage also highlights what Lewalski identifies as Milton's understanding of Job as the scriptural equivalent of the classical epic, despite its brevity. Milton clearly advocated for the superiority of scriptural poetics over their pagan counterparts. This is not to say that he does not admire or even utilise these pagan poetics. His literary career is often defined by his use of various classical poetic devices, imageries, and narratives. When it comes to the genre of poetry he is writing, Milton's oeuvre is typified by the pushing of the boundaries of a particular genre. As Lewalski highlights:

Lycidas achieves a profundity unmatched in any other pastoral elegy, *Comus* has much more dramatic action, characterisation, and dialogue than any other masque, *Paradise Lost* develops an epic subject of quite unprecedented universality and scope, and much of the art of these poems inheres precisely in the tension, between the new matter and the old forms" (Lewalski, 5).

It is curious however, that such a statement, coupled with Martz's comments on Milton's conversion of the classical modes of poetry into the service of Christian worship, implies that the scriptural requires an elevation of sorts to the realm of the classical epic - an elevation that can only take place via an appeal to the classical precedents. Yet here we see a distinct example of Milton's practice when it comes to literary and poetic form and his ingenuity in recognising the numerous literary relationships shared between the classical and the scriptural. It is this understanding that allows for the amalgamation of several poetic forms that provide the path towards works such as *Paradise Lost*. This method of utilising classical and scriptural counterparts is perhaps most prominently displayed in *Paradise Regained*, not necessarily because of its numerous literary influences, but because of the perceived clash and potential misuse of classical and scriptural counterparts that initially proved successful in *Paradise Lost*. R. D. Miller's assertion that the failure of *Paradise Regained* in comparison to its predecessor is due

to this misunderstanding of what worked in *Paradise Lost* and why such a methodology is unable to work in *Paradise Regained*:

The second Adam, the theological Christ, is the historical Jesus; and incidents upon which the epic is based have come down to us as real personal experiences. This new material would seem to demand a different treatment. Satan is no doubt the same as in *Paradise Lost*, and we should expect him to go about his business in much the same way. But the temptations which are to form the epic are a part of human psychology, and before they can be amplified they must be understood. If Milton does not understand them, but simply uses them as new material that may be worked in somehow with the old, then the second epic becomes merely a repetition of the first - we have the same Satan and the same impersonal Son of God, and the only difference is the ending.
(Miller, 404)

There are several key elements at play here. Firstly, it recalls the idea put forth earlier that this is a poem where Satan does not belong or is at least rendered ineffective due to his being a product of the mythic and symbolic Old Testament that acts as a foundation for *Paradise Lost* where he succeeds. Considering that *Paradise Regained* is a poem born from the historic and subjective New Testament, it is a language that Satan is unable to speak. This is made quite literal following the failure of one of his temptations where he remarks:

Perplexed and troubled at his bad success
The tempter stood, nor had what to reply,
Discovered in his fraud, thrown from his hope,
So oft, and the persuasive rhetoric
That sleeked his tongue, and won so much on Eve,
So little here, nay lost; but Eve was Eve,
This far his over-match, who self-deceived

And rash, beforehand had no better weighed
The strength he was to cope with, or his own... (Bk.IV, 1-9)

By recalling his success with Eve, Satan reminds the reader of where his strengths lie. This realm of New Testament material, as embodied by Christ, is foreign to Satan and further supports the argument of the clash of classical and scriptural material. The classical epics such as the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* are entrenched in the mythic and symbolic and therefore are useful precedents to be utilised for the purposes of *Paradise Lost* as an Old Testament narrative. It is within the New Testament of *Paradise Regained* where we see the clash of the mythic and symbolic with the historic and subjective. While critics such as Miller would cite this as the primary reason for the poem's so-called failure, I propose that Milton is conscious of this clash and ultimately utilises it, as exemplified in the emblematic relationship between Christ and Satan. *Paradise Lost* embraces classical form and content whereas *Paradise Regained* eschews it in favour of the example of the Book of Job, for it is the Christian epic that Milton is building towards. Once again, Miller's comments prove useful, as his distinction between the Old Testament as mythical and symbolic and the New Testament as historic and subjective provides us with a greater understanding of what socio-cultural contexts surround scripture, and how this distinction ultimately informs readings of the poem, regardless of Milton's intention. Despite Miller's assertion that *Paradise Regained* is a failure because of Milton's supposed misunderstanding of the material, the dichotomy he highlights between the historical Jesus and the theological Christ is a crucial differentiation to make, for it highlights a key element of Christ's characterisation in any poem that ultimately informs and is informed by the form of the poem he inhabits. As we shall see, the characterisation of Christ as a historian and of his experience as history is not wholly uncommon. For the writers of the 16th century, the historicity of Christ was undoubted. Yet as we have seen in *Paradise Regained*, where does history end and artistic liberty begin? Especially for a figure who is entrenched in social, political, and cultural history. We must then ultimately ask the question: can *Paradise Regained* be read as a potential exercise in the poeticising of history?

Paradise Regained as History; Christ as Historian

Leah Jonas writes in *The Divine Science* (1940) that “The poet’s art is similar to that of the historian, but superior in that he is not confined to the representation of things as they were and are, but may go on to the more god-like task of creating things which are not” (Jonas, 167). Such a claim echoes Aristotle’s own comments on the subject where he writes in chapter nine of his *Poetics* (335 BC):

The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular (8).

We even see the same idea in Milton’s own sentiments on the role of the poet when he writes in *The Reason of Church Government*, “These abilities, wheresoever they be found, are the inspired giuft of God rarely bestow’d, but yet to some (though most abuse) in every Nation” (Milton, 238). This recognition of the role of the poet and the abilities they possess emphasises the reverence toward poetry as an art form that is further impressed upon within the poetry of scriptural subject matter. Giles Fletcher, in the preface to his poem *Christ’s Victory in Heaven, and on Earth; and Triumph over, and after Death* (1610), also writes of the reverence and worthiness of the art of poetry, yet does so by appealing to the poetry of scripture:

There are but few of many that can rightly iudge of Poetry; and yet there are many of those few, that carry so left-handed an opinion of it, as some of them thinke it halfe sacrilege for prophane Poetrie to deale with divine and heavenly matters, as though David wear [sic] to be sentenced by them, for uttering his grave matter upon the harpe: others something more violent in their censure, but sure lesse reasonable (as though Poetrie corrupted all good witts, when, indeed, bad witts corrupt Poetrie) banish it with Plato out of all well-ordered Commonwealths. Both theas I will strive

rather to satisfie then refute. And of the first I would gladlie knowe, whither they suppose it fitter, that the sacred songs in the Scripture of those heroicall Saints, Moses, Deborah, Ieremie, Mary, Simeon, Daud, Salomon (the wisest Scholeman, and wittiest Poet) should bee ejected from the canon, for wante of gravity, or rather this error erased out of their mindes, for wante of truth. But, it maye bee, they will give the Spirit of God leave to breathe through what pipe it please, & will confesse, because they must needs, that all the song dittied by Him, must needs bee, as their Fountaine is, most holy (Preface).

Essentially, if language is a gift from God, then the poet is the artist with whom this gift can be utilised. Further still, for the biblical poet, poetry, as a gift from God as demonstrated in the songs and psalms of divinely inspired scripture, is the art with which they can compose and disseminate the teachings and wisdom of God. It appears, for example, that during the temptation of Athens, Milton is using Christ as a mouthpiece to voice the Platonic ideal of a Republic without art or poetry. With this in mind, we can juxtapose this idea with Giles Fletcher's insistence that poetry is the purest form with which to celebrate the word of God and Christ as displayed in the preface of *Christ's Victorie*. Yet as Jonas reminds us, in order for the biblical poet of the seventeenth century to be successful, they must possess a studious and acute understanding of the history of scripture and the narratives they are disseminating. This is primarily due to the fact that for these poets, this type of material is highly loaded, and its mishandling can have highly extreme consequences, the least of which is being branded as a heretic. Jonas highlights this conundrum when she writes, "[Milton] quotes Euripides to the effect that the major merit of the poet is 'the ability to impress adroitly upon the citizens the need of being better men' (Jonas, 168). Just as *Paradise Lost* is a text 'to justify the ways of God to Men', this quote can easily be applied to *Paradise Regained* in its desire to use Christ as an emblem for what Men should aspire to be as learned scholars of scripture. Jonas further supports this ideal of the poet and their craft being utilised for its utilitarian purposes to allow readers into the majesty of God's work when she writes:

That is, poetry is not an art of exact statement; it is far more powerful because it is suggestive, more eloquent because it has freer license. It is subsequent, i.e., last, in Milton's scheme of study, because it is precedent in its power to affect mankind...From the evidence of these statements, too, the purpose of poetry, according to Milton's theory, is to enlist the force of sensuous appeal to aid in the increasing of human virtue and divine glory through the dissemination of knowledge (169).

Our initial thought in response to this conclusion may be that *Paradise Regained* seems to fail to a degree to attain the sumptuousness of language that its predecessor does. This is most probably due in part to the characterisation of Christ, whose nature as a divine being only allows the sensuousness of language to come through in a limiting way. Yet if we read the poem in light of the arguments made above, it becomes apparent that while such a conclusion has its merits, it fails to grasp the sheer weight of responsibility that Milton as a poet must bear when adapting the historic and subjective nature of the New Testament. The weight of this responsibility is most evident in Milton's own writing in the *De Doctrina Christiana*, where he writes:

Since then this mystery is so great, we are admonished by that very consideration not to assert anything respecting it rashly or presumptuously, on mere grounds of philosophical reasoning; not to add to it anything of our own; not even to adduce in its behalf any passage of Scripture of which the purport may be doubtful, but to be contented with the clearest texts, however few in number. If we listen to such passages, and are willing to acquiesce in the simple truth of Scripture, unencumbered by metaphysical comments, to how many prolix and preposterous arguments shall we put an end! How much occasion of heresy shall we remove! How many ponderous volumes of dabblers in theology shall we cast out, purging the temple of God from the contamination of their rubbish!" (De Doctrina, 265)

This responsibility where the poet must refrain from asserting “anything respecting [scripture] rashly or presumptuously” is indicative of the weight of truth that scripture holds for these poets. Coupled with being framed as messengers of God, disseminating Christian virtue to the masses, biblical poets must then, like Christ, be highly learned in their source material, which leads to their roles as potential historians of sorts.

At this point I would like to draw attention to the notion of the “practical past” as a tool that may illuminate how this relationship between art and history manifests within *Paradise Regained*. In the preface to his book, *The Practical Past*, Hayden White writes:

Oakeshott has suggested that in addition to the whole past and the historical past we must take account of what he calls “the practical past” of particular persons, groups, institutions, and agencies - that is to say, the past that people as individuals or members of groups draw upon in order to help them make assessments and make decisions in ordinary everyday life as well as in extreme situations (such as catastrophes, disasters, battles, judicial and other kinds of conflicts in which survival is at issue).
(White, xiii)

Despite White primarily using the historical novel as his case study for the manifestations of what he terms the practical past, his analyses still prove useful for a wide range of literary forms and genres. White describes this type of literature: “Their ultimate referents are “history” even if their manifest form (their “substance of expression”) is imaginary” (White, xv). Such a statement is highly applicable to *Paradise Regained*, for it highlights the role that historicity plays within the poem. We must remind ourselves that much of the dialogue in the poem is comprised of scriptural and classical history. White highlights the narrative structure of history and how such a structure ultimately informs the practice of history as a whole. He identifies literature as the bedrock upon which we are able to provide the chaos that is the past with some semblance of order and understanding. If we also expand upon the idea of a historical Christ versus a literary Christ, it seems curious that, given the numerous references to

Old Testament scripture, Milton through Christ appears to be playing the role of the historian, utilising events from the past to inform decisions of the present. This appears to contradict Miller's assessment of the Old Testament as mythical and symbolic. While it could be argued that Christ is utilising the Old Testament for symbolic purposes, one could possibly apply White's 'practical past' in that it is the very symbolic nature of history and the past that offers practicality for Christ in his battle with Satan. The narrative of the history of the world that has been passed down through scripture provides Christ with his rebuttals to Satan's temptations, thus rendering Christ a historian of sorts. It should also be said, however, that Satan is equally adept at capitalising on the historical narrative that the Christian faith abides by. As we saw earlier, his recurrent use of the prophecy of Christ's ascension to the throne of David as justification for Christ to accept his temptations is the utilisation of a historical narrative that has in this case been twisted to serve Satan's purposes. Therefore, in Christ's refusal to accept the reading of history that Satan puts forth, we see not only an example of a Christian who understands how to deploy their scriptural knowledge, but also a Christian who understands the correct historical narrative of the Bible. Such an analysis inevitably leads to the issue of what constitutes the correct historical narrative of the Bible and the potentiality for charges of heresy. As we saw in Chapter Two, the issue of heresy surrounding Milton and his poetry is highly contentious, yet we must remind ourselves that by his own definition, his literary practice is not as heretical as some critics have claimed. Milton even admonishes the practice of charging certain brands of faith with heresy when he writes:

Are Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Socinians, Arminians, no Hereticks? I answer, all these may have some errors, but are no Hereticks. Heresie is in the Will and choice profestly against Scripture; error is against the Will, in misunderstanding the Scripture after all sincere endeavours to understand it rightly: Hence it was said well by one of the Ancients, Err I may, but a Heretick I will not be. It is a humane frailty to err, and no man is infallible here on earth. But so long as all these profess to set the Word of God only before them as the Rule of faith and obedience;

and use all diligence and sincerity of heart, by reading, by learning, by study, by prayer for Illumination of the holy Spirit, to understand the Rule and obey it, they have done what man can do: God will assuredly pardon them, as he did the friends of Job, good and pious men, though much mistaken, as there it appears, in some Points of Doctrine. (*Of True Religion*, 6)

The notion that various brands of the Christian faith may have errors in their reading and understanding of scripture, and that such errors are by no means heretical, echoes White's classification of the practical past as something that individuals and collectives can call upon to inform their present situations. The collective history that makes up the Bible is informed by centuries of theological debate and sometimes consensus. We see Christ dipping into this collective historical narrative to inform his present situation against Satan.

It should be noted that Milton is not the only poet who utilises the historical as a narrative device. Hugo Grotius, in his tragedy *Christus Patiens* (1608), similarly frames the events of Christ's life as a historical narrative rather than a theological one. The tragedy follows the Passion of Christ, opening in the Garden of Gethsemane and closing with Mary recalling his ascension to Heaven. While the play's narrative does not differ from the scripture, the manner in which the narrative is structured falls in line with what I have identified as the biblical poet performing the role of the historian. The play opens with Christ speaking and we follow him from the Garden of Gethsemane all the way to Calvary. Yet while the reader believes that they are reaching the emotional climax of the poem with Christ's crucifixion at the end of the third act, Grotius opens the fourth act instead with a messenger reporting the events of the crucifixion to a chorus of Jewish women:

I From the horrid'st Act that ever fed
The fire of barbarous Rage, at length am fled:
Yet O too neare! The Object still pursues;
Flotes in mine eyes, that sad Scene renewes. (Act IV, 1-4)

This sharp tonal shift from a scene of heightened grief and tragedy that is perhaps the key moment in the Christian faith to a reportage is highly unusual. The scene continues with the messenger relaying the scene to the chorus of Jewish women and their responses of grief and woe. As such, in light of this discussion surrounding the collective historical narrative of scripture, the scene comes to exemplify Grotius' role as a poet cum historian as he demonstrates the very nature of the collective historical narrative of scripture that the faithful draw from. In utilising this analysis to reflect upon the characterisation of Christ within *Paradise Regained*, his station as a scriptural historian allows him to become a more sympathetic character. For the faithful readers in Milton's direct audience, Christ's utilisation of their collective scriptural history reminds them that it is one they all share and one which they can utilise themselves in Christ's image.

I ultimately propose that seeing through this lens of historicity, coupled with the understanding of the amalgamation of the classical and scriptural, allows the reader to better understand Christ's position as a figure of the historic and subjective New Testament in contrast to Satan as a figure of the mythic and symbolic Old Testament. When we combine this with his position as the stationary point around which the narrative revolves, Milton's characterisation of Christ as a teacher and disseminator of Christian virtue becomes even more apparent. Through this lens, the poem, as structured after the Book of Job, can be seen as adopting (in Milton's view) the most appropriate way in which to depict Christ. When contrasted with other depictions of Christ such as Grotius' and Fletcher's, Milton's treatment of the character, although clearly unorthodox, distinctly highlights the challenge that is faced by all biblical poets when it comes to rendering Christ as a literary character outside of the prescribed scripture. In being conscious of the god-given responsibility of being a biblical poet, Milton is evidently acutely aware of the wealth of complexity that accompanies Christ into whatever form of poetry he inhabits. As a result, *Paradise Regained* goes from being a "postscript" of a poem to being one where every literary decision is meticulously made so as to best accommodate and celebrate the figure of Christ and what he represents within the collective history of its faithful readers. As Lewalski so beautifully

puts it: "His Pegasus does not display the romantic tendency to kick over the generic traces, but on the other hand it does not trot tamely in beaten paths"(Lewalski, 5). Evidently, the question surrounding the form and genre of *Paradise Regained* is a highly complex one that requires the reader and critic to approach the poem as one that, much like Milton's theology, is singularly its own.

Conclusion

[Christ] has a course of action to prepare, and the simplicity which is private wisdom is required to answer publicly the subtle and complex arguments that evil will advance, and answer them fully and clearly, on their own chosen grounds. The intellectual scope of simplicity is here to be demonstrated, and that is no task to trifle with for two thousand lines. (Stein, 5)

Paradise Regained remains one of Milton's most elusive poems in his oeuvre. Its existence has been plagued with dissatisfaction, heretical derision, and countless attempts to settle the matter of what sort of poem it even is. To assert that this is due either to a misguided poetic exercise or a misunderstanding of the scriptural material he is adapting, fails to grasp the dexterity with which Milton is able weave this "drama of knowledge" (Stein, 5). Despite the poem's grand ambition of detailing the moment that Paradise is regained, the poem's briefness of such a momentous event, in comparison with the Fall of *Paradise Lost*, indicates to the reader that Milton is instead asking them to focus on the metatextual relationship between Christ and Satan. As the excerpt above highlights, the narrative of *Paradise Regained* requires simplicity in Christ's rebuttals. If we are to assert that Christ is emblematic of the worthy Christian scholar that we should all aim to imitate, then Stein's observation holds true.

As a drama of knowledge, it is somewhat oxymoronic to think of the poem as one concerned with simplicity, especially given that much of the critical commentary surrounding the poem outlines that the poem is anything but simple. While the poem is certainly anything but simple, Stein touches upon the key element at play in the relationship between scripture and poetry as exemplified in *Paradise Regained* that also speaks to the difficulty poets face when adapting scripture. If one were to open a copy of a Bible to the temptation narrative as written in the Gospel of Matthew for example, they will notice that Christ only speaks three lines. Despite his different treatments in the various Gospels, the simplicity of his rhetoric is crucial to his characterisation within scripture. In order for members of the Christian faith to participate within the collective

historical and social narrative of the Bible, the very same narrative requires simplicity so as to best disseminate Christian virtue. Milton understands this, and as I have shown, he makes strategic use of the collective historical narrative of the Bible in order to comment upon itself.

As I have demonstrated, Milton's literary practice and approach to *Paradise Regained* is unlike any other in his oeuvre. His ability to meld together various poetic forms, coupled with his amalgamation of various scriptural sources within these forms, highlights his unique methodology when it comes to adapting scripture. Thus the poem becomes one of his most unique in this respect, becoming what is possibly Milton's most daring poetic and potentially personal exercise. Milton's theological concerns involve the rest of humanity. He is acutely aware of how malleable scripture can be, with countless denominations and branches of the Christian faith, all drawing from the same scripture. Despite this however, Milton is adamant in his writing to unify Christian followers precisely because of this phenomenon. By utilising numerous scriptural sources, *Paradise Regained* thus becomes a poem whose very construction serves to exemplify the collective narrative that stems from one's faith in Christ. As we saw in Chapter One, Milton is forgiving of those branches of Christianity who adhere to the Bible, despite some errors in their readings. As Milton writes in *De Doctrina Christiana*:

Our Saviour saith, Luke 10. 41, 42. Thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful. If they were ask't, they would be loath to set earthly things, wealth, or honour before the wisdom of salvation. Yet most men in the course and practice of their lives are found to do so; and through unwillingness to take the pains of understanding their Religion by their own diligent study, would fain be sav'd by a Deputy. Hence comes implicit faith, ever learning and never taught, much hearing and small proficiency, till want of Fundamental knowledge easily turns to superstition or Popery: Therefore the Apostle admonishes, Eccles. 4. 14. That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of Doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lye in wait to deceive. Every member of the Church, at least of any breeding or capacity, so well ought to be grounded in spiritual knowledge, as, if need be, to examine their Teachers themselves. (*De Doctrina Christiana*, 15-16).

Through *Paradise Regained*, Milton reminds the faithful reader of their relationship, not just with Christ, but also with their fellow Christians. This is how Milton handles the poeticising of Christ. Much like in the Bible itself, Christ is a vessel for the Christian reader to partake in the collective historical/social narrative of the Christian faith. Consequently, one may argue that through this lens, *Paradise Regained* is a text that seeks to identify itself as the biblical poem that Milton has been building towards. During a literary career defined by the acquisition of knowledge both scriptural and pagan, Milton invites the faithful reader to partake in what he sees as shared salvation through Christ. It thus becomes clear as to why Milton elected to use the temptation narrative as the moment Paradise is regained. Christ has proven himself a worthy vessel for the faithful reader to follow. Upon his success over Satan, Christ is able to usher in the age of the historic and subjective, as exemplified by the countless denominations of the Christian faith. Milton reminds the reader that it is precisely this element of subjectivity that unifies them despite their differences. As Jonas writes, “The duty of the Christian poet was to bring his nation nearer to the Christian ideal by means of an art which had in every century been rightly used by its great exponents to teach the current concept of perfection” (167). In being duty bound to utilise his artform to disseminate Christian virtue, Milton is much like his characterisation of Christ. Both are bound by duty to make use of their respective gifts so as to better mankind.

As we initially saw in Chapter One, Milton’s attempts at rendering Christ as human, or even semi-human, were not without their paradoxical results. While Satan remains the more emotionally identifiable, the ethereal nature in which Milton characterises Christ serves to highlight the difficulty in rendering Christ not only as human, but also as a literary who is able to serve the narrative without being passive. We then saw how Milton utilises the Book of Job so as to elevate Christ’s human nature. Once again, however, more complexities abound when we take into account the fact that while Job suffers, Christ seemingly does not. As such, one must be reminded of the conundrum of whether Christ’s temptations can really be called temptations if he is completely unable to be tempted. This attempt to render Christ as someone recognisably human is further supported by Milton’s theological distinction between the Father and Son as separate entities. By Milton’s own theological standards, the

incomprehensibility of God prevents him from poeticising God as something human. If Christ and God were the same entity, then it follows that Christ would be equally incomprehensible. Consequently, Milton's apparent anti-trinitarianism allows some leeway in this respect, for in distinguishing the essences of the Father and Son, Milton is able to make Christ accessible to the reader.

In Chapter Two, we saw how various charges of heresy can affect our readings of *Paradise Regained*. By highlighting Milton's anti-trinitarianism as expressed through his apparent Arianism, we were able to see the consequences of adapting scripture. Milton was evidently highly learned when it came to scripture. His personal theological convictions in the face of traditional orthodoxy stand out as emblematic of his literary practice. As Michael Lieb tells us, the only real conclusion so far is that Milton's theology was "singularly his own" (220). Despite this however, it is important to remember that by Milton's own definition of heresy, he was no such heretic himself. Once again, such reasoning speaks to the complexities that poets face when adapting scripture.

The third and final chapter saw an analysis of form and genre, and how Milton's unique methodology is manifested. By referring to the poem as a 'brief epic' Lewalski emphasises the formal relationship shared between *Paradise Regained* and the Book of Job. Additionally, in examining Milton's literary practice where he amalgamates several sources, both scriptural and pagan, it becomes clear as to how he frames Christ as a scholar of the world. In being offered Athens as the seat of knowledge, Christ is able to differentiate between the wisdom that is superfluous and the wisdom that is necessary. In understanding the distinction between the two, coupled with Hayden White's "practical past", one is able to see how Christ becomes a historian of the collective historical/social narrative of the Christian faith.

The necessity of analyses such as these can be registered by the fact that these types of questions and readings are not solely reserved for the Miltonic canon. As alluded to at the start of this thesis, the adaptation of scripture continues to this day. Additionally, given the increasingly secular nature of our world, questions such as the ones raised here are more vital than ever. In understanding how Milton approaches adapting scripture, in juxtaposition with other poets of the time, we may juxtapose the biblical fiction of today with that of the biblical poetry of the seventeenth century to

analyse how our literary relationship with scripture has evolved. Is the increasingly secular world exempt from the shackles that Milton is bound to? If so, what is contemporary biblical fiction able to do when free from the strict adherence to scripture? Ultimately this thesis has attempted to provide the reader with an understanding of how we may engage in reading scriptural adaptations, highlighting the various mechanisms and complexities that accompany Christ, or any biblical figure, upon their induction into the realm of poetry.

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