

**If Ye Love me (Not):**  
**Love in Milton's Paradise Lost**



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Painting: Benjamin West,  
*The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise*, 1791

*“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”*  
-1 Corinthians 13:4

Throughout Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the poem explores the relationships between characters, be it comrades, family, or lovers. Indeed, it is these connections in all their varieties that motivate the actions of the poem, with Satan striking back at his maker or Adam and Eve's love being tested by the consequences of Satan's temptation. Most significantly, the poem's climax details how Adam and Eve's love was perverted from pure to uncleanly erotic, resulting in their removal from the garden. As such, I am left wondering one question: what is Milton meaning to assert about love and how man interacts with it? Namely, I want to find the similarities and distinctions between three different affections portrayed by Milton. First, Satan's love, principally in the opening books and his episodes with Sin and Death. Next, I will investigate God's love, to be explored mostly in Books Three and Ten. Then, I wish to examine Adam and Eve's love for one another, with Books Four, Nine, and Ten supplying much useful information. What do these different affections, if any affection is at all present, tell us about the relationships these characters forge? The more human question I wish to take on through this investigation is given the value love (or the simple attachment where love does not exist) has for humans, what Milton might want us to see in others or ourselves in associating certain features with one character or another? What does Milton want us to recognize about how we love others and treat those we care for? Indeed, the fundamental nature of love and affection in the human experience will do much to speak about how love might manifest but also speak to the character of the lover that displays it.

Let us begin by examining God and his relationship with the characters of the poem. For example, when God sees Satan traveling towards Earth to corrupt Adam and Eve, he foresees man's fall, knowing Satan will be successful in corrupting man, yet he allows it, declaring:

*"I formed them free: and free they must remain, till they enthrall themselves; I else must change their nature, and revoke the high decree unchangeable, eternal, which ordained their freedom: they themselves ordained their fall. The first sort by their own suggestion fell, self-tempted, self-depraved: man falls, deceived by the other first: man therefore shall find grace, the other none: In mercy and justice both, through Heaven and Earth, so shall my glory excel; but Mercy, first and last, shall brightest shine" <sup>1</sup>*

Thus, God having seen Satan's imminent success, he could have used his immense power to take free will from man, negating Satan's power of temptation. However, God is adamant that man shall remain free, for that was his design. Consequently, they will fall from grace. Yet, God still loves man and a means to repair the damage the fall caused is planned. As a countermand, God declares that man shall be redeemed through his grace, stating:

*"Man shall not quite be lost, but saved who will; yet not of will in him, but grace in me freely vouchsafed; once more I will renew his lapsed powers, though forfeit; and enthralled by sin to foul exorbitant desires; Upheld by me, yet once more he shall stand on even ground against his mortal foe; by me upheld." <sup>2</sup>*

In other words, God has the power to stop man's fall, but doing so would take away their free will, which sets them apart from God's other creations. Instead, God shall let them be tempted by Satan, but forgive them and show mercy to man, giving them a path to redemption. Man, although tempted, need only reject that temptation, putting their trust and faith in God. In so doing, God shall love them in return and return them to grace. Moreover, in the final days of the world, God will cast Death and Sin into Hell with their father, unburdening man of them as the suffering they brought would be no longer needed. In this way, God's love shall forge a path for man to repair that connection that Satan endeavors to break through his corruption. However, to atone for man's sin, a worthy sacrifice must be made. To that end, while all other beings in

<sup>1</sup> Book Three, 124-134

<sup>2</sup> Book Three, 173-180

Heaven were silent, the Son states: "*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 wreak all his rage.*"<sup>3</sup> This course is praised by all of Heaven, God rejoicing that mankind will have salvation through the sacrifice of the Son. The Son is therefore willing to descend to Earth and provide man God's promised redemption through his death as a mortal man. Yet, this death shall serve to both glorify God and benefit man. In addition, when Adam and Eve are made impure by eating the forbidden fruit, rather than expel them outright, God sends the archangel Micheal to show Adam the future of mankind, including the coming redemption that shall be brought to fruition by the Son. In this way, God allows man to see the path to return to grace. Man has fallen, and God will not revoke this besmirching of their purity, but man will be able to recoup God's love. Thus, even in the face of man's disobedience, God bears in mind the importance of the will of humans and acts mercifully in order to regain his connection with man.

Looking next to Satan, I am curious how his conduct compares to God's in terms of affection. That is, can Satan love? If so, how does it manifest in him and towards the one he loves? If not, what is the cause according to Milton and how is the absence of the capacity for love reflected in Satan's character? On one hand, one might notice plainly how Milton describes Satan quite scornfully, calling him "arch-fiend" and "tempter" in many places. Yet, he describes Satan in a way that is sometimes quite similar to humans, sometimes even in an almost reverential manner. This ambivalent notion of Satan is evidenced in Book One, with Milton describing Satan thus as he addresses his fellow rebel angels after they are cast into Hell:

*"Above them all th' Arch-Angel: but his face deep scars of thunder had intrencht, and care sat on his faded cheek, but under browns of dauntless courage, and considerate pride, waiting revenge: cruel his eye, but cast signs of remorse and passion to behold The fellows of his*

<sup>3</sup> Book Three, 238-241

*crime....He now prepared to speak, thrice he assayed, and thrice in spite of scorn, tears such as angels weep, burst forth: at last words interwove with sighs found out their way.*"<sup>4</sup>

Here, Satan is shown looking upon his fallen siblings, speech restrained in his throat by tears. As such, Satan is here seemingly attempting to unload a tremendous grief over the expulsion of him and his brethren from Heaven. Now, while Milton seems to speak of Satan as commanding a kind of admiration, this noble depiction of the fallen Satan is juxtaposed with his conduct during the Pandæmonium, where Satan volunteers before all the convened fallen angels to wreak revenge on God by corrupted the humans he has created on Earth. However, this is revealed to have been nothing but a ploy, Satan having contrived this plan before the convocation, in order to feign selfless sacrifice. Thus, Satan turns the trust and respect of the angels that followed him into rebellion against them, with Milton commenting that despite the plan serving to undo God's work, "*their spite still serves his glory to augment.*"<sup>5</sup> However, deceit proves to be just one of Satan's many misdeeds revealed in the poem.

Namely, Satan is shown to harbor a grotesque type of love for one in particular: Satan himself. For example, during his journey to Earth, he meets his children Sin and Death in Book Two, chastising and cursing them, before they were recognized, Sin having sprung from Satan's own head. What's more, it is revealed by Sin that "*familiar grown, I pleas'd, and with attractive graces won the most averse, thee chiefly, who full oft thy self in me thy perfect image viewing becam'st enamour'd, and such joy thou took'st With me in secret, that my womb conceiv'd a growing burden.*"<sup>6</sup> That is, Satan is in fact Death's father by his own child, conceived in an episode of great lust around the time the war in Heaven began. Moreover, this incest was sparked by Sin simply looking as her father Satan does. Thus, Milton's implication is that Satan's lust

<sup>4</sup> Book One, 600-609;619-621

<sup>5</sup> Book Two, 385-386

<sup>6</sup> Book Two 762-766

stemmed from a self-love so strong its potency extends to erotic love. Further, after Satan's mission to cause the fall of man succeeds, he speaks to Sin and Death again "*Fair daughter, and thou son and grandchild both; High proof ye now have given to be the race of Satan...My substitutes I send ye, and create plenipotent on earth, of matchless might issuing from me: on your joint vigor now my hold of this new kingdom all depends, through Sin to Death exposed by my exploit.*"<sup>7</sup> Satan here tells his children to make their way to Earth to hold sway over mankind. Yet, Satan speaks to his children almost as if they were two of the angels he commanded in the rebellion against God. To him, they are not his family; they are his subordinates who are needed to undertake a task by his bidding. As such, love appears to have been replaced by the only task on Satan's mind: wreaking vengeance on God for his expulsion.

It is in these passages that we begin to see how Satan's love lacks the sincerity of God's. To begin with, Satan's noble posture taken in leading his faction of angels seems to be motivated by ego rather than love. That is, once Satan persuaded his fellow angels to rebel, he led them almost as pawns in his plan to level at God's authority in Heaven. His tears, rather than out of care for his sibling angels, seems based in anguish caused by his own state, or even another act driven by political maneuvering as leader of the rebel angels. Thus, one might say Satan loves his followers to the extent that a king loves the army he will use to invade an enemy land: they serve his ends, but he cares little for them personally. Yet, he must appear to love them, appear to weep at their misery, and appear to risk his own life for their sake. The only love he feels that is not purely surface-level is for himself. Indeed, this self-love is so great it causes him to be overcome with lust at the sight of his mirror-image child.

<sup>7</sup> Book Ten, 384-386, 403-407

However, lust having abated, he is so distant from his own offspring that he initially does not recognize them. Meanwhile, the love he has for himself is great enough to remain always with him. Satan is shown, like a smitten lover, to trust his own deception within himself, seeming to believe God to be at fault for his rebellion. Consequently, the good that Satan knew in Heaven is now repellant to him, saying in Book Four: *“So farewell Hope, and with Hope, farewell Fear, farewell Remorse: all good to me is lost; Evil be thou my good; by thee at least, divided Empire with Heav'ns King I hold by thee, and more then half perhaps will reign; as Man ere long, and this new World shall know.”*<sup>8</sup> Not only is Satan willing to relinquish good in favor of evil, he believes that he might be able to claim Earth as his own, snatching it out of God's power. Given how God has banished him and his fellow angels into Hell, this serves as the ultimate delusion. The devil has, in this way, deceived himself. Consequently, Milton seems to warn us of two key things. First, the danger of vanity is demonstrated. In fact, Satan is almost a caricature of vanity, loving himself to an unprecedented extreme. Yet, the message is clear: not unlike Satan, people too might find themselves taken in by their own lies if they are not careful to check their own pride. Additionally, what might seem exaggerated in human terms seems perfectly in place in the world of Milton's poem. Satan, in falling, strives to be the antagonist to God's every aspect. Thus, where God's actions are perfect in every fashion, Satan's must then be depraved to an equally great degree.

However, this was not always Satan's inner disposition. Satan was not always cut off from love beside a love of self. Satan, once an archangel, was once capable of the greatest love. Namely, a perfect love of God. What, then, occurred to change a being capable of pure divine

<sup>8</sup> Book Four, 107-113

love into a being incapable of any love but the most perverse and self-centered? In Book Five, God the Father states that:

*“Hear, all ye angels, progeny of light, Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers; Hear my decree, which unrevoked shall stand. This day I have begot whom I declare My only Son, and on this holy hill Him have anointed, whom ye now behold at my right hand; your head I him appoint; and by myself have sworn, to him shall bow all knees in Heaven, and shall confess him Lord: under his great vice-gerent reign abide united, as one individual soul, for ever happy: Him who disobeys, Me disobeys, breaks union, and that day, cast out from God and blessed vision, falls into utter darkness, deep engulfed, his place ordained without redemption, without end.”*<sup>9</sup>

That is, God having begotten the Son, he demands the angels obey and serve him, lest they are cast out. God has therefore amended what is required of those creatures who love him, be they angel or mortal being: If you love God the Father, you must also be loyal to God the Son. A few lines later, Satan’s mind is made clear. He cannot bear being surpassed by the Son and he therefore plots rebellion with his companion angels. His love for himself does not allow him to bear the orders of his maker. The addition of the Son into the hierarchy of Heaven seems to upset the balance that had existed for Satan he is evidently unable to tolerate such a change. In due course, Satan and his fellow rebellious angels are cast from Heaven after the failure of their rebellion. Now, we are told in Book Two by Sin at this time she came into being and Satan conceived Death with her. Thus, it appears that it is about this point where Satan has been twisted from an angel, capable of perfect love, into something with the potential for the most extreme sin: Forsaking God’s love.

Yet, though Satan appears incapable of loving, he is still shown to be loved. This is demonstrated most clearly in Book Ten, upon Satan’s return from Earth. Returning towards Hell, he encounters Sin and Death, with Sin telling him:

*“O Parent, these are thy magnific deeds, thy Trophies, which thou view'st as not thine own, Thou art their Author and prime Architect: For I no sooner in my Heart divin'd, My Heart, which by a secret harmony still moves with thine, join'd in connexion sweet, that thou on Earth*

<sup>9</sup> Book Five, 600-615



*hadst prosper'd, which thy looks now also evidence, but straight I felt though distant from thee Worlds between, yet felt that I must after thee with this thy Son;*"<sup>10</sup>.

Thus, Sin, although forgotten and initially disregarded by Satan, still feels the love that a daughter, mother, and lover might. She is bound by love, perverse though it may be. Yet, although perverse, her affection seems more sensible, even natural, to those reading than the lack thereof in Satan's case. It gives the reader more pause to think on an unloving father and husband like Satan rather than one whose love is rooted in grotesque origins. In fact, Satan's reply is to instruct Death and Sin to head into Paradise and rule on Earth, glorifying "the race of Satan."<sup>11</sup> Thus, much like with the angels who fought under him, Sin and Death are seen as mere tools in the unmaking of God's work. Death and Sin's newfound authority on Earth is seen only as another opportunity to bring fame to Satan's name by way of their familial connection to Satan. Satan is connected to those among him insofar as they might assist him in his plot to destroy the work of God.

On the other hand, when Satan first looks upon Adam and Eve, he does not persist in his plotting. Rather, he looks upon them with wonder and laments: "*Oh Hell! What do mine eyes with grief behold? Into our room of bliss thus high advanced creatures of other mould, earth-born perhaps, not Spirits, yet to heavenly Spirits bright, little inferior; whom my thoughts pursue with wonder, and could love, so lively shines in them divine resemblance, and such grace the hand that formed them on their shape hath poured.*"<sup>12</sup> This appears quite unlike the Satan we are familiar with. What good is such musing from the same creature who set out to destroy God's work and wreak vengeance? Further, why does Satan imply that he could love Adam and Eve under different circumstance when love seems so outside his nature? Here, Satan's self-love

<sup>10</sup> Book Ten, 354-363

<sup>11</sup> Book Ten, 385-386

<sup>12</sup> Book Four, 356-363

again comes into play. These lines demonstrate Satan struggling with his own vanity. Indeed, while he has chosen to combat God, he is suffering doubts on the way. It may be the case that Satan does not recognize his lack of love outside himself. To Satan, he believes it is only the circumstances of his rebellion against God that estrange him from the couple. His self-love deludes him so much that his error is unknown to him. In Satan's mind, he loves his children well, honoring them by allowing them the chance to further his goals. He loves his sibling angels and as a result, he shall oust God's influence from Earth and allow them to become residents on Earth, his would-be kingdom. These doubts give way to vowing corruption upon Adam and Eve, Satan stating: "*Accept your Maker's work; he gave it me, which I as freely give: Hell shall unfold, to entertain you two, her widest gates, and send forth all her kings; there will be room, not like these narrow limits, to receive your numerous offspring; if no better place, thank him who puts me loath to this revenge on you who wrong me not for him who wronged.*"<sup>13</sup> Thus, Satan steels himself to continue his quest to corrupt the couple, as well as diverting the blame from himself to God causing his current state and therefore being blameful for Satan's actions. From his point of view, the loving father and commander is not the one at fault.

What, then is Milton's meaning in characterizing Satan's love, if it could be called love, in this way? Satan the archangel is shown to have two modes of being, the one giving way to the other. In Heaven, Satan was seen to be prideful to a fault, unable to bear the added edict by God to bow not only to him but to the Son also. Believing he could stand against God to receive satisfaction for his wounded self-regard, he incited a war in Heaven, costing him and his faction their places in Heaven. In secret, Satan's pride had become an unbridled love of self, profound in its perversity, shut off from giving love to any but himself. As time went on, such a self-love

<sup>13</sup> Book Four, 378-385

consumed Satan, leading him to comport himself as God's adversary. That is, Satan believes himself worthy of working against God. Such a trajectory is certainly plausible in human terms. In the mind of the prideful, there may come a point where they too find themselves "in rebellion". That is, a point where one's arrogance may consume them until their capacity to love outside themselves has been deeply impaired, their reason suppressed by vanity as well as setting them against friends and family for the sake of that love. Moreover, pride appears to be the root of such a state, growing into an overpowering love of self when left unchecked. For example, had Dante not undergone the journey he took in *The Divine Comedy*, his pride would have increased until self-love overtook all other loves within him. Through cases such as these it is seen that it is not a lack of love that builds up pride, but that pride chokes love of others within a being until it is doused entirely and replaced by a love of self. As such, Milton's Satan might be said to be a hyperbolic example of consuming vanity that is by no means unreachable to many people. Indeed, it would appear Satan thinks he does love, but it is a perverse love that is not mutual, but revolves around Satan himself.

In this way, God is motivated in his love by the opposite of Satan's aspirations. Throughout the poem, Satan thinks only of himself and acts in the heat of anger and with prideful vengeance, with Milton telling us after Satan had made his way to Earth: "*Satan, now first inflamed with rage, came down, the tempter ere the accuser of mankind, to wreak on innocent frail man his loss of that first battle, and his flight to Hell*"<sup>14</sup> Satan, full of choler, intends to corrupt man as a means of defiling God's work. By contrast, God the Father coolly observed the chain of events that would soon transpire and put in place what was necessary to best suit mankind. His love for man dictated that while taking free will from them would make

<sup>14</sup> Book Four, 8-12

them lesser, he could provide them with a means to redeem themselves through his compassion. In essence, Satan operates much like Homer's Achilles, but with his rage being focused on only one object: God. However, in attempting to destroy everything God has built, he does not reveal this anger, acting carefully and charismatically to lure his quarry away from God.

Yet, Satan proves unable to best God in the struggle to corrupt God's creations. For instance, the Son, as an extension of God the Father, volunteers to die for the sake of man's absolution, as it is what is required to save man from damnation. Hence, the love of God is such that in the face of the destruction wrought by Satan, God uses mercy and self-sacrifice to remedy man's state. Thus, God the Father is seen to fulfill a planning role, assessing happenings in his universe and determining the best course of action, while the Son himself undertakes what his father prescribed while still being attuned to the divine logic by which God reached such a decision. Therefore, God the Father and God the Son represent a perfect articulation from reasoning to action. God also joins hope to the sorrow of Adam and Eve's banishment, allowing Adam to know that the error of himself and his mate shall be rectified eventually. Yet, God also keeps his work intact through his actions. That is, God could have revoked man's free state but acted such that man would be saved while their nature remained free. In fact, God's love for man is so perfect that no action Satan takes is enough to divorce humanity from God totally. Further, God acts with supreme justice, saying: "*What may suffice, and soften stony hearts to pray, repent, and bring obedience due. To prayer, repentance, and obedience due, though but endeavored with sincere intent, mine ear shall not be slow, mine eye not shut.*"<sup>15</sup> What God states here outlines how his mercy shall guide man back to grace: Man must repent through prayer and begging forgiveness for their sins which God will hear and bestow salvation onto

<sup>15</sup> Book Three, 189-193

them. For example, when the angels guarding Paradise return to Heaven after the fall of man, God forgives them and dispatches the Son to judge their crimes, saying:

*“Assembled angels, and ye Powers returned from unsuccessful charge; be not dismayed, nor troubled at these tidings from the earth, which your sincerest care could not prevent; Foretold so lately what would come to pass, when first this tempter crossed the gulf from Hell...But whom send I to judge them? whom but thee, Vicegerent Son? To thee I have transferred all judgment, whether in Heaven, or Earth, or Hell. Easy it may be seen that I intend mercy colleague with justice, sending thee Man's friend, his Mediator, his designed both ransom and Redeemer voluntary, and destined man himself to judge man fallen.”<sup>16</sup>*

Essentially, God relieves the guarding angels of any guilt, having foreseen Satan's triumph. However, he punishes Adam and Eve for their disobedience, giving the Son leave to punish the offenders as he sees fit. Yet, God's plan to redeem man still stands, so his punishment may therefore be not only mitigated, but his status enhanced should humanity work towards redemption. Thus, even in penalizing man, God still operates with mercy towards their misdeeds.

As a matter of fact, Milton reveals in this way God's supremacy over Satan. For all of Satan's cunning, his selfish vanity curtails his power. While he has taken Paradise from man and cut the bond shared by God and the pair of humans, God's love always makes him reachable. Indeed, the sacrifice of the Son, God's only child, has ensured a path to exoneration. Through the Son's sacrifice, mankind will now have an avenue to return to God through love and faith. Satan, although he may tempt as he did with Eve, is fundamentally weaker without love for another. Thus, it is unfair to place Milton's Satan and God in direct opposition. In this poem, there is God and what his love has created, then there is Satan, whose self-love dictates he work to thwart that love. Thus, one might say the struggle set up between God and Satan is not simply Good versus Evil. Rather, there is “God” and “Not-God”. Satan works to turn man towards “Not-God”, not necessarily Evil as such. Anything beings may be turned to that runs contrary to God's

<sup>16</sup> Book Ten, 34-39

plan, be it outright wicked or not, Satan intends to turn beings to. Whatever God says is good, Satan wishes to oppose.

Thus, Satan is seen to be incapable of kindness and mercy, only seduction and wrath. On the other hand, it is in Satan's interest for his victims to feel good, if only to be tempted to turn their backs on redemption. The temptation of Eve is a quintessential example of such a notion, as to persuade Eve to eat the fruit, Satan pretends to have eaten it himself and feel its great power within him, saying: "*Queen of this universe, do not believe those rigid threats of death: ye shall not die: How should you? By the fruit? it gives you life to knowledge; by the threatener? Look on me, me, who have touched and tasted; yet both live, and life more perfect have attained than Fate meant me, by venturing higher than my lot.*"<sup>17</sup> Through statements such as these, Satan attempts to unravel what God has commanded. If God commands man not to eat the fruit, Satan must defeat their inhibitions and claim to offer them an alternative to God's prescribed way. However, at no point does Satan suggest Eve eat the fruit, rather letting Eve's own desire be stoked into disobeying God's command. Further, while any notion of "love" for his children rings hollow, he speaks of them as significant to his plan to undermine God, much as he does with his fellow angels in his rebellion. Thus, Satan does not love others, but he uses its rudiments to tempt others. He makes his victims feel special, offering them what they desire. The angels wished for a strong hand to lead them in rebellion against their maker and Satan obliged them to achieve his own ends. Sin and Death wished to be reunited with their father and Satan used them by means of this familial connection. Eve was intrigued by the self and Satan intimated that she might achieve advantages if she only rejected God's orders. Therefore, Satan is not a lover, but rather a seducer.

<sup>17</sup> Book Nine, 684-690

Conversely, God is indifferent to pleasure, only that those in his care benefit. Satan used his power to tempt Eve and Adam into defying God, causing them immense suffering. As a result, they are expelled from Paradise by God, with God opening a new path for man post-fall to return to purity through God. Therefore, God is unfazed by Adam and Eve being tormented by regret but offers them and their descendants a means to be redeemed. Further, in time, Sin and Death would be shut away with their father in Hell, as is just. However, one must remember that all Satan achieved within the action of the poem was to undo and make degenerate what God had already set down, acting as a responder to divine creation. In short, Satan only acts on what God has done and is therefore still subservient to God's will.

Hence, we come to the heart of what appears to drive Milton's Satan. It is through his pride that Satan guides himself in his mission: Satan does not create love but only destroys. Satan and his rebellious angels have lost the perfection they had under God. He has not attained any familial bonds with his family, only unleashed them to torment mankind instead. Further, even Satan's children, the only things he has begotten, are agents of destruction. God's son, on the other hand, endeavors to be a creative force on behalf of humans. Moreover, Satan did not replace the love shared by Eve and Adam with something new, he only corrupted the love that existed, perverting what had been already set down by God. Love, being formative, has no place within Satan's character. Rather, Satan loves nobody but himself because the bonds he forges are meant for the benefit of his own ends.

As for Adam and Eve themselves, we see love in more human terms: the tension between God and "Not-God". Initially, the reader is presented with Adam and Eve being depicted as a picture of perfect happiness in Book Four, laboring contentedly in Paradise. However, Eve a few lines later describes seeing herself in a lake in her first moments, telling Adam:

*“As I bent down to look, just opposite a shape within the watery gleam appeared, bending to look on me: I started back, it started back; but pleased I soon returned, pleased it returned as soon with answering looks of sympathy and love: There I had fixed mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire, had not a voice thus warned me; 'What thou seest, what there thou seest, fair Creature, is thyself; with thee it came and goes: but follow me, and I will bring thee where no shadow stays thy coming, and thy soft embraces, he whose image thou art; him thou shalt enjoy inseparably thine, to him shalt bear multitudes like thyself, and thence be called mother of human race.' What could I do, but follow straight, invisibly thus led?”<sup>18</sup>*

Here, Eve reveals a fascination with herself, familiar to the reader by way of Satan’s own love of self. While she may have been enamored, she was guided away to Adam in due time.

Adam’s first memories give us insight into a different type of love. In Book Eight, Adam speaks with Raphael about his first moments of life: saying:

*"By quick instinctive motion, up I sprung, as thitherward endeavoring, and upright stood on my feet: about me round I saw hill, dale, and shady woods, and sunny plains, and liquid lapse of murmuring streams; by these, creatures that lived and moved, and walked, or flew; Birds on the branches warbling; all things smiled; with fragrance and with joy my heart o'erflowed... Tell, if ye saw, how I came thus, how here? Not of myself; by some great Maker then, in goodness and in power pre-eminent: Tell me, how may I know him, how adore, from whom I have that thus I move and live, and feel that I am happier than I know... From where I first drew air, and first beheld this happy light; when, answer none returned, on a green shady bank, profuse of flowers, pensive I sat me down: There gentle sleep first found me, and with soft oppression seized my droused sense, untroubled”<sup>19</sup>*

In contrast to Eve, Adam does not have the same inkling of self-love, but instead, love of the beauty he sees in his surroundings. What’s more, he seeks God, the creator of the natural wonder he takes in, meaning to give glory to him. He is held thus in awe of the natural beauty he sees in the garden and sees it as the proof he needs that God is worthy of adoration.

Hence, Milton utilizes Adam and Eve’s first moments to outline an inequality in the pair’s states even before the fall. Adam is shown to be naturally disposed to a more “godly” type of love. That is, a love that extends outside himself, looking towards others to express affection and to connect. Now, while Eve is shown in Book Four to be willing to give love to Adam rather than be simply receiving love, her episode by the lake demonstrates a certain vanity,

<sup>18</sup> Book Four, 458-474

<sup>19</sup> Book Eight, 259-266, 277-282, 284-289



foreshadowing the disaster that shall follow through Eve succumbing to it. In addition, once Eve ate the fruit, she takes stock of the knowledge and power it has conferred upon her and considered keeping it from Adam, saying:

*“But to Adam in what sort shall I appear? Shall I to him make known as yet my change, and give him to partake full happiness with me, or rather not, but keeps the odds of knowledge in my power without copartner? So to add what wants in female sex, the more to draw his love, and render me more equal; and perhaps, a thing not undesirable, sometime superior; for, inferior, who is free this may be well”*<sup>20</sup>

Here, Eve considers that it might suit her best to retain an advantage over Adam. Eve believes that she can take this opportunity to mitigate the natural superiority God gave Adam over her. However, this situation seems to sit too tenuously on the border between pragmatism and self-centrism. The knowledge gained from the tree is powerful and it seems Eve believes it is her and her alone that should have it, no matter what Adam may think. Further, Adam reflects a willingness to sacrifice, aligning his disposition more with God’s. For instance, after learning that Eve has been persuaded to eat the forbidden fruit, Adam states: *“If death consort with thee, death is to me as life; So forcible within my heart I feel the bond of Nature draw me to my own; My own in thee, for what thou art is mine; Our state cannot be severed; we are one, One flesh; to lose thee were to lose myself.”*<sup>21</sup> Thus, Adam is prepared to sacrifice his immortality and his place in Paradise for the sake of Eve, as she is one with him and his love for her demands it be so. Adam feels himself compelled by this “bond of nature” which dictates that their fates are linked. Eve was created from Adam’s own flesh and it is therefore unconscionable that Adam can abandon Eve. That is, had Adam eaten the fruit first, Adam would not have considered keeping the fruit from Eve. Rather, his love for Eve would dictate that he must have Eve join with him in this state of knowledge. In reply, Eve declares:

<sup>20</sup> Book Nine, 816-826

<sup>21</sup> Book Nine, 953-959

*“Were it I thought death menaced would ensues this my attempt, I would sustain alone the worst, and not persuade thee, rather die deserted, than oblige thee with a fact pernicious to thy peace; chiefly assured remarkably so late of thy so true, so faithful, love unequalled: but I feel far otherwise the event; not death, but life augmented, opened eyes, new hopes, new joys, taste so divine, that what of sweet before hath touched my sense, flat seems to this, and harsh.”*<sup>22</sup>

Thus, Eve is touched by the devotion shown by Adam’s sacrifice but is especially dazzled by the change brought about by their disobedient act. Eve revels in the new knowledge she has gained, seeming to think out loud to bring Adam’s attention to these changes. To Eve, Adam has proved his devotion for her and they are now bound. Instead, they are bound almost as partners in crime in the seizing of this knowledge from the fruit rather than pure lovers residing in God’s world. They are characterized thus as more like Macbeth and Lady Macbeth than the too curious and too impulsive figures of Genesis.

Upon examination, the analogy between both Adam and Eve and God and Satan begin to appear. Now, one may think that unlike God, Adam’s sacrifice has the implication of real loss. Adam has lost something tangible, whereas the sacrifice of the Son is only temporary, with his death is followed by him being restored. It is through this inquiry that Adam’s sacrifice is shown to be of a lower order than that of God’s. That is, as selfless as it may be, it leads to the corruption of man, making its consequences pernicious in their own way. Conversely, God’s sacrifice, set up proactively of Satan’s corruption of humanity, mends that damage while returning the Son to Heaven after its completion. Thus, God’s sacrifice is shown to be perfect in its aim and execution, while Adam’s sacrifice is shown to result in degeneracy for him and his descendants, albeit being rooted in a deep affection for his partner. Yet, Adam is also shown to be slightly vulnerable to some kind of corruption. For example, while talking to Raphael, Adam asks *“Love not the heavenly Spirits, and how their love express they? By looks only? Or do they*

<sup>22</sup> Book Nine, 977-987

*mix irradiance, virtual or immediate touch?*”<sup>23</sup> As pure as Adam is pre-fall, something about the sensual, or perhaps indeed the erotic, intrigues him, not unlike Eve’s self-allure. In fact, one of the first actions undertaken by Adam post-fall is to engage in carnal pleasure with Eve. But, had Adam not eaten of the fruit, such interest the sinfully erotic would have remained as only an intriguing matter of contemplation. The difference seems to be in the relation to the self. Adam’s noting of the erotic appears benign as it is not tied to the self, whereas Eve’s fascination is. Therefore, that focus on erotic passion was always within Adam, but it is truly unleashed after eating the fruit.

Having explored Adam and Eve, where is human love left on the gradient between God’s love and Satan’s? Upon the eve of their expulsion from the garden, the archangel Micheal tells Adam *“Add faith, add virtue, patience, temperance; add love, by name to come called charity, the soul of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath to leave this Paradise, but shalt possess a Paradise within thee, happier far.”*<sup>24</sup> Through this, it seems that Micheal directs Adam and Eve to cultivate a new kind of love. The shameless love of the pre-fall times is now gone since Adam and Eve have the knowledge of the fruit. Thus, a new normal must be found. Micheal here seems to suggest through a virtuous love, they can achieve something greater than even the pre-fall love of man. To this end, Micheal here points out a key aspect of human love: human love has been forever perverted, but it is not inherently base. That is, if mankind operates with temperance in their love and couple human love with a connection to God, they can achieve something greater than their state before the fall. Moreover, much like the perfect cohesion in the actions of God the Father and the Son, perfect human love requires a cohesion between the spiritual love towards God and the physical love of another human. Rejecting this path, man simply leaves

<sup>23</sup> Book Eight, 615-617

<sup>24</sup> Book Twelve, 582-587

themselves as fallen, lesser through their unwillingness to take up God's clemency. It seems important to note here that the self has as reduced a role as possible. That is to say, a concern with the wants of the self seems dangerously close to the path Satan takes in his business. Thus, Milton turns our attention to a Pascalian view of love. We humans, as fallen creatures, have nothing to lose by turning to God but a tremendous deal to gain by choosing the path of God.

Having investigated the main characters of the poem, let us now return to the earlier quote from Paul of Tarsus. Do any of Milton's main characters meet the criteria of the "love" (*ἀγάπη*) referred to in 1 Corinthians? Regarding God, even his love seems to fall short of keeping no record of wrongs. Rather, God seems intent on noting the wrongs of his creations when his edicts are disregarded. He does, however, offer reconciliation to those that go against his commands. As stated before, if God is obeyed, he offers grace to those beings that abide by his will and seeks to remake the relationship that was marred by disobedience by the means within his power when disobeyed. Satan, on the other hand, does not have a relationship that observes any of these elements. Lastly, Adam and Eve, Adam seems to have partaken in such a love as Paul described pre-fall, while Eve's love is tempered by a selfish focus. Eve's love is then subverted by Satan, taking advantage of her self-regard to tempt her into eating the fruit, Adam then being compelled to eat the fruit as well. Yet, post-fall, while their love is tainted by sin and they are estranged from God through that sin, their trust between one another is heightened. That is, protection, love, hope, and perseverance between Adam and Eve becomes more essential while the imperative to return to God is being worked at. In this way, Adam and Eve must subsist on a reliance on one another motivated by trust and affection while working together to achieve the promised reconciliation with God.

In conclusion, allow me to ask one final question: What bearing do Milton's characters and their love have on us? First, we see the perversity of Satan's so-called "love", perfection through God's love, and the imperfection of Adam and Eve's love improved through human action willingly undertaken. Yet, such actions undertaken by the poem's characters teach Milton's readers what is proper in the loves we engage in. For instance, perverse as Satan's love is, it serves as a grotesquely exaggerated example of pride's danger in our own human lives. Case in point, Satan was able to exploit Eve's fascination with her self to foment the fall of man. Meanwhile, God, displaying perfect love for humans, set down a plan to remove the taint of corruption that the fall caused. God will return us to grace, but it requires work on humanity's part. Namely, while we can never be fully returned to God's faction, we can balance our human desire with God in order to attain God's love. Therefore, it seems Satan wishes to use the self against us to turn us from salvation. For him, our wants, our pleasures, and our habits are tools to draw us towards baseness. Yet, it is when we can set aside what we want for our self and think about those around us that we begin to rise above Satan's influence. This is because concepts like kindness and magnanimity are beyond him, while vanity and selfishness place us squarely in his power. One looking too much inwards will find himself wrapped up in the kind of self-love that Satan partakes in. By contrast, one focused outside himself reaches towards God, but can never quite apprehend him, fallen as we are. Instead, one must do their best, connecting with those around them through kindness and regard while still acting with humility and piety to God. Hence, while we humans may find ourselves tempted in life by Satan's enticement, we set aside the self and look to God for our salvation. In getting away from the devilish consequences of being stuck within the self, Milton opens a path where we may, in the words of Christ, "Pray to

the Father and receive a new comforter that may abide with us forever.”<sup>25</sup> to be delivered by the pure incarnation of what doomed us in the ancient days of creation.

<sup>25</sup> John 14:16

