

Learning to Stand: *Paradise Regained* Today

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Abstract: *Paradise Regained* deals with the testing of personal and political resolve that follows 40 days of self-isolation. It thus merits our immediate attention. The seventeenth-century poem which houses a nonconformist argument for liberty of conscience within its narration of Satan's temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is both pertinent and challenging for today's readers. We can apply God's exercise of his Son to current post-quarantine deliberations regarding how we wish to live now—specifically questions of privacy, good governance (for both self and state), shared values, and the future of political engagement.

Keywords: bonds slave, voluntary submission, Deuteronomy, law, *Paradise Regained*

As literary critics and political theorists seek to re-interrogate the roots of our current democratic structures, they find themselves engaged in research on the latter half of the seventeenth century and the birth of the modern nation state.¹ Such work offers new insight into the recalcitrant political and religious divisions found in this period, and its anxieties over the sway of emotive rhetoric, the power of bigotry, and the troubling infidelities of popular leadership. In England, this was the timeframe for not only the Restoration of Stuart monarchy but also the subsequent debates over toleration and the rise of an adversarial two-party parliamentary structure. This context can inform our

reading of John Milton's *Paradise Regained* (1671), a poem that focuses on a head-to-head debate between two opposed tacticians.

Towards the close of the temptation of worldly power in *Paradise Regained*, Satan directly encourages Jesus to overthrow Rome's imperial rule. "Might'st thou expel this monster from his Throne / Now made a stye, and in his place ascending, / A victor people free from servile yoke?"² It is understandable to want to see the corrupt Emperor Tiberius ousted. Yet, the more relevant inquiry is to ask exactly what such action might achieve. The Son of God has already come to the conclusion that liberation of his own people cannot be achieved simply by a change in leadership. He can see no benefit in action that restores external freedom to Israel when that nation remains disinclined to any recovery of its inner rectitude. The imperial yoke is no more than a symptom of Israel's current moral degradation, and the Son's chosen terms for those who have acquiesced to such a life are "degenerate" and "slaves." He asks, "What wise and valiant man would seek to free / These thus degenerate, by themselves enslav'd, / Or could of inward slaves make outward free?" (4.143-45).

The term *bondslave* is used in the Old Testament for an individual who sells themselves for their own advantage, either for basic provision and sustenance or for a share in profits. This meaning is central to both the Son's concept of self-enslavement and an aggregated argument drawn across the two poems that Milton published together in 1671, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*.³ The dialectic that contrasts liberty with slavery and bondage with Sonship across these poems merits further critical attention, but here we can note that the shackles of the slave drop away only through the Son's choice of voluntary submission to God's will.⁴ This is spelt out in the active verb that, at the close of *Paradise Regained*, defines the Son's ongoing mission: "Now enter, and begin to *save* mankind" (4.635, emphasis added). Nonetheless, any lexis of servitude

or slavery carries with it a weight of complex ethical, economic, and historical connections. In a later seventeenth-century composition, the terminology suggests more than just the intense controversies inherent in translation of the Hebrew term, *ebed*, and the Greek, *doulos*.⁵ Milton's political thinking attaches readily to a classical Neo-Roman matrix, whilst his Protestant faith understands the import of both Pauline theology and Luther's doctrine of the bondage of the will.⁶ In addition, the Son's specific use of "degenerate," when linked to wider contemporary European socio-economics, brings to bear the realities of collective racial injustice.⁷

Paradise Regained is a powerful piece of resistance. Milton's challenge to the repressive religious and political orthodoxies of the 1660s underpins the poem's construction, and he promotes liberty of conscience, expresses a distrust of popularism and the leadership it endorses, and objects to the self-interest of a political establishment. It was a radical undertaking 350 years ago. But however much the importance of resolute thinking is evidenced in the Son's successful defence against Satan's wiles during the desert temptations, the poem's fundamental argument is premised upon unequal conditions of existence and a fear of punitive judgement. For twenty-first-century readers to critique that premise and what it might reveal about our inherited cultural and political values, we need to allow that a binary of freedom to slavery "frequently erases relevant contexts, stigmatizes those who carry the burden of inherited or newly devised injustices, and perpetuates pseudo-universalizing ideologies of 'freedom.'"⁸ Reading *Paradise Regained* today can again become a radical activity, but not necessarily with the results that Milton envisaged. Where the Son resists the lures of Satan, and where Milton resisted resurgent monarchical government, the question now is how best to continue to resist complacencies. Twenty-first century readers may no longer be able to affirm the conclusions endorsed by a later seventeenth-century poet, but we can use the rigour of a

text that insists on a fundamental review of personal integrity and societal expectations to test our own contemporary responses at a time when democracy is in crisis and civil liberties are under unprecedented strain. It will be a strenuous and disconcerting activity, and this essay is both preliminary and intentionally provocative.⁹

The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness as recalled in the three synoptic gospels occurs at the very start of his public office.¹⁰ Immediately following his baptism by John at the river Jordan, Jesus retreats into the desert. As the narrator of *Paradise Regained* explains, the Son of God

Musing and much revolving in his brest,
How best the mighty work he might begin
Of Saviour to mankind, and which way first
Publish his God-like office now mature,
One day forth walk'd alone, the Spirit leading;
And his deep thoughts, the better to converse
With solitude, till far from track of men,
Thought following thought, and step by step led on,
He entred now the bordering Desert wild,
And with dark shades and rocks environ'd round,
His holy Meditations thus persu'd. (1.185-95)

The Son has a lot to think about. At his baptism in the Jordan, he heard “my Father’s voice / Audibly heard from heaven, pronounce me his, / Me his beloved Son” (1.283-85). The desert location frees him from distractions and gives him the opportunity to think and

pray.¹¹ The Son's first action is a period of personal reflection away from worldly influences. This underscores the seventeenth-century poem's claim for the priority of independent reasoning and freedom of worship. It means that *Paradise Regained* is a text about privacy, a subject which remains of immediate relevance today. Our current experience of the incessant interpolations of online connectivity can provide even secular readers with some inkling of the difficulties faced by those who would withstand diabolical onslaughts.¹²

Across all four books of the poem, the tempter will angle to secure more data about the Son of God, repeatedly integrating analysis of the Son's responses into his subsequent methods of engagement. Satan admits that he wants to know more, but the Son is aware from the start that it is not altruism but an information economy that drives that objective. His adversary seeks to profit from the acquisition of personal information and will use it to predict the Son's behavior and to control what we today would call his "knowledge parameters." Two thousand years ago, the wilderness of Bethabara beyond the river Jordan may well have been "far from track of men" (1.195), but both the Son and Satan would comprehend all too well our current meaning of "tracking" as a digital technology that gathers information on an individual's online movements. After the Son dismisses Satan's first temptation by quoting scripture—"is it not written / . . . Man lives not by Bread only, but each Word / Proceeding from the mouth of God" (1.347-50)—Satan begins to cite scripture in his turn. For those less well attuned to biblical allusions than Milton expected of his readers, the battle of words between Satan and the Son has been carefully explicated by critics.¹³ However, the battle of wits over citation from Scripture is itself for Milton an integral part of the temptation. One aspect of the sustained challenge faced by the Son in Milton's poem is that he must remain constant to Scripture and yet avoid any validation of the method of Satanic engagement. Were he to like the

competitive intellectual challenge for its own sake or to take pride in his own learning, then he would concede victory to the tempter. Milton's Satan can dominate simply through coalescence. He seeks to understand and control behaviors and would be happy both to supply the Son with platforms for thought and to facilitate ease of application.

Initially, Satan seeks to "friend" the Son. This tactic is rejected as misinformation, so the devil then moves on through a stock repertoire of cajolment, complicity, and incentivization. To win any level of advisory capacity would allow Satan to influence results and to hold the balance of power through the unseen management of options and search terms. When his power of suggestion fails, Satan will employ coercion. At the climax of the temptations, he carries the Son up to the heights of the temple in Jerusalem in order to compel a choice between two engineered outcomes: either the Son must call on divine intervention or tumble to his death. The Son however makes manifest another option—a way to keep his balance and stand fast—and his rectitude crashes the Satanic system.

When the Satanic temptations begin, the Son has spent 40 days in the desert without food. At this juncture, he becomes aware that he is hungry, and Satan appears in the disguise of an old man. Insinuating friendly concern for the Son's predicament, the old man points out that the Son has the power to turn stones into bread and suggests that he should do so both to avoid imminent starvation and to alleviate the desert's impoverished local inhabitants from want. The Son rejects the premise that he should mitigate his own need. He identifies the proposal not as a temptation based on physical cravings but specifically as a test of trust in God's benevolence and providence.

Since the temptation of appetite is split in Milton's poem into two separate sections, this rejection of a false premise is immediately followed by an extended physical test of temperance. The Son is still fasting when he falls asleep and dreams "as

appetite is wont to dream / Of meats and drinks” (2.264-5). The lengthy Miltonic addition to the gospel stories (2.260-405) allows the devil to provide a banquet of sumptuous dishes and rich delicacies, but the Son will decline what he knows to be Satanic generosity.¹⁴

Tell me if Food were now before thee set,
Would'st thou not eat? Thereafter as I like
The giver, answer'd Jesus. Why should that
Cause thy refusal, said the subtle Fiend. (2.320-03)

The Son prudently advocates background checks before either the acceptance of gifts or entry into any implicit contractual obligation for goods or promotional services received. He knows he must never fail to praise the benevolence of the Creator for all the blessings that heaven bestows. His caution also prevents the possibility of his own actions being misconstrued, and he avoids becoming obligated to those who may have designs upon him.

Although critical reception has focussed far more on the devil's subsequent temptation to worldly power, Milton's warning against over-consumption in this scene speaks forcefully to our current technologically-driven world and its emphasis on a free market. Many within the Western democracies are increasingly aware of the need to ask questions about their own consumer practices. We often start with inquiries into where our food comes from and at what cost. Our contemporary trust issues begin with questions over health or waste, about additives or sustainability, but they soon expand to worries over a franchise economy and the nature of the global supply chains that makes it so difficult to work out exactly what the underlying socio-economic and environmental

production costs are or where the profits go. Such heightening of awareness then brings further misgivings to the fore, such as the difficulty in accepting marketing at face value or the invasive nature of product placements and its undermining of independent judgements. The current generation of students may understand that there is no such thing as a free lunch, but neoliberal capitalism is nevertheless successfully repositioning the citizen as a consumer. When the fee charged for goods and services is data-harvesting, then its toll on our civil liberties is not immediately transparent.

An analyst as much as an antagonist, Satan pretends not to see the problem. His protestation of surprise that the Son should seek to set conditions on whether to accept food when hungry is derisive. It is constructed as a moderate's response to someone who fusses over things indifferent: "Nor proffer'd by an Enemy, though who / Would scruple that with want opprest?" (2.330-01). It may be fair to say that the nutritional value of a product is not necessarily altered by the supply chain, but it does not follow that there has been no adverse impact somewhere along the line. There is an implied sneer within the devil's wording over scruples of conscience, but it is allowed by the Miltonic narrator in order that it may backfire upon Satan's position rather than censure the Son. The tempter here remembers that Adam fell through susceptibility to his wife's "allurement" (2.134) but is apparently unaware that Adam "scrupled not to eat, / . . . not deceived, / But fondly overcome with female charm" (9.997-99). Where Adam wilfully ignored his own better judgement when he assented to eat the apple, the Son retains his integrity through proactive restraint. Such scruples are not a sign of fastidiousness nor of hesitation but rather indicate liberty of conscience and the defence of a well-balanced private regulation of the decision-making process.

Here, as throughout *Paradise Regained*, the Son resists. His approach is to block each line of argument from his adversary. Access is denied, successfully. This is in direct

contrast to the failure of Eden's topographical defences in *Paradise Lost* (see 4.137). On that occasion, Satan easily raided the (gendered) space of Eden, jumping the wall "as a thief" (4.188). This time round in *Paradise Regained*, with Eden "rais'd in the wast Wilderness" (1.7), neither the Son's body nor his reasoning processes will be violated. The Son succeeds by opting out. His abstinence is an impressive personal accomplishment, and we can learn much from him about the courage of the dissenter and the merit of vigilance when faced with subtle salesmanship.

Yet, the twenty-first century secular reader will find the social exclusivity of the Son's overall approach suspect. In Milton's poem, those who fail to meet the Son's standard of self-discipline are rejected as "degenerate, by themselves enslav'd" (4.144). This statement leaves most modern readers stranded. At a fundamental level, the Son's exercise of deliberate choice throughout the poem is not community-spirited but individually defensive and segregated. The problem can be tellingly brought to our attention through the applied argument concerning our digital consumption. In the recent periods of lockdown caused by the Covid-19 global pandemic, millions have turned to apps that allow social communication and online shopping. We are "Not willingly misdoing, but unaware / Mised" (1.225-26) in that we have had neither the time nor the inclination to focus on the pending problem of how these vastly expanded behavioral norms and the surge of personal data obtained will benefit digital power-brokers. According to the Son, such an excuse is not valid, but our contemporary sympathies lie squarely with contractual bondslaves. We might usefully compare the current argument from Shoshana Zuboff that new legal restraints will be the only effective means to curb the anti-democratic tendencies inherent in surveillance capitalism. As she says, "if I 'opt out' of tracking, I opt out for me, but my action does not challenge or alter the offending practice."¹⁵ Of course, the Son will ultimately lay down his life to provide an opportunity

for all of humanity to receive grace. But the Son's logic in his debate with Satan is that he cannot take responsibility for the decisions of others and, although he identifies Satanic practice as offensive, he accepts the validity of his tempter's presence in the world.

A modern Christian perspective would most likely counter what has just been said about the exclusive nature of a story taken from the gospels because the Christian message is that rejection of sin does not presuppose rejection of the sinner. It is true that Milton's Son does not definitively expunge those who compromise their moral values, and that he is well aware that his role in obedience to his Father is to suffer for the good of all mankind (3.188-97), Yet, it is striking that in the debate with Satan, he actively refuses to focus his attention on those "Who wrought their own captivity" (3.415) and that the term "degenerate" (4.144) would in the early modern period suggest the unalterable decline of a group or race into a lower classification. During the debate in the wilderness, Milton's Son sees no likelihood of reform for such persons, although he accepts that the final determination remains in God's hands (3.427-40).

Milton's poem and its politics require there to be winners and losers. In order to stand, someone must fall. As the Son tells Satan, "Know'st thou not that in my rising is thy fall, / And my promotion will be thy destruction? (3.201-02). This is acceptable as an abstraction that encourages the overthrow of evil, but it has deeply troubling repercussions within any secular society, particularly within a context of political governance. If the current generation of readers approves the Son's own cautionary method and adopts the "thereafter as I like / The giver" argument as their own, then scrutiny is laid on the Miltonic narrator as "giver" of the poem. This seventeenth-century spokesperson is accountable for the supra-scriptural authority he assumes and for the political intent that underpins his way of framing gospel narratives. To reflect on this is to be involved in the revisionary approach of current studies in the humanities, an approach

that encourages present-day scholarship to remain alert to the discriminatory practices and principles that have embedded partiality and injustices into some of the most canonical of texts.¹⁶ Current literary historians acknowledge the immediate political contexts for the publication of *Paradise Regained* in a way that was not always apparent within its reception history.¹⁷ Such critical advances can now help us to reassess the seeming neutrality of Milton's scriptural paraphrase and to look again at how the biblical citations function within his poem.

Milton's method in *Paradise Regained* is to employ scriptural citations chronologically within a still unfolding divine redemptive plan.¹⁸ When his narrative of the contest between the Son and Satan over the use of scriptural authority reaches its climax, Milton follows the ordering of the temptations in the Gospel of Luke. This means that the final assault on the Son's integrity provides both a welcome moment of narrative drama and an epistemological focal point: "To whom thus Jesus; Also, it is written, / Tempt not the Lord thy God, he said and stood. / But Satan smitten with amazement fell" (4.560-62).¹⁹

It would be a simple enough assumption that the Christian poet is quoting obediently from the New Testament but, as the order of the temptations is different in the Gospel of Matthew, he has also made a directive choice. The Son during his own lifetime cannot read a gospel text. The written scripture to which he has access is the Old Testament. This is clear from the gospel narratives where, throughout his desert trials, Jesus only cites Deuteronomy. On the pinnacle of the Jewish temple, he specifically quotes Deuteronomy 6.16. In Milton's poem, this climactic answer to Satan expresses in brief God's recurrent message to the Jewish nation within the Old Testament and offers further expansion of God's providential plan. The fifth and sixth chapters of Deuteronomy make repeated reference to the Israelites' captivity in Egypt, to the Lord's

might in securing their liberation from this bondage, and to an imperative that the chosen people must now fear God and follow His commandments. The Son's citation clearly foregrounds the requirement of obedience to God's word, but both he and the poet Milton know that his chosen quotation has a context that warns directly against backsliding into idolatrous self-enslavement:

Beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, & shalt sweare by his Name.

\Ye shal not walke after other gods, after anie of the gods of the people which are round about you,

(For the Lord thy God is a jelous God among you:) lest the wrathe of the Lord thy God be kindeled against thee, and destroy thee from the face of the earth.

Ye shal not tempt the Lord your God, as ye did tempt him in Massah. (6.12-16)

It is significant that the sixth chapter in Deuteronomy specifically addresses future readers, in that it both prompts and answers the question of what to tell the next generation when they ask for the meaning of God's commandments. The Son knows the teaching of the Jewish scriptures intimately and seeks to act in accordance with God's law. In so doing, he brings new witness and frees the signification of extant scripture to allow future generations access to a salvatory Christian covenant.

The sequential unfolding of the divine redemptive plan within human history is further enhanced in the poem's fine calibration of the living Son's speech act. Milton's syntax is as poised as his hero, with Satan felled by an embodied declarative that is affirmative of Son's status as the Messiah. This balance initiates the possibility of a new

Christian dispensation whereby a covenant of grace can succeed Mosaic law because, at the moment when one “perfect Man” (1.166) proves that it is possible to make life choices in complete obedience to Deuteronomy, the axis of interpretative possibility shifts from law to gospel. As a voluntary submission to the divine will, this response is the Son’s opt-in, a declaration of complete obedience to God in defiance of Satan and all his empty promises.

Just as the Son’s voice both inhabits and supersedes the text of the Old Testament, so the narrator promotes the poem as an advance on the evangelists’ texts. To be delivered from bondage it would seem that we are to read not the variant synoptic gospels’ accounts of the temptation in the desert but the newly authorized version, i.e., the inspired and most fully informed text of John Milton’s *Paradise Regained*. It remains, however, a product of its times, constructed within the given parameters of a socio-political moment and its Eurocentric priorities. As it is written, the victory of Milton’s Son foregrounds the same lexis of self-enslavement that is found repeatedly in the political prose Milton published a decade earlier on the cusp of his country’s return to Stuart rule. A palimpsest of Miltonic political thinking attaches to the Savior’s final citation from Deuteronomy, as the righteousness of punishment for recidivism and the threat of exclusion from God’s favor drive the poem’s argument. Many of Milton’s late 1650s tracts warn insistently against the voluntary return by an unfaithful nation to the bondage of Egypt.²⁰

In *The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (1660), for example, Milton sets out in detail the alternative options still open for an English commonwealth and, with ever heightening emotive rhetoric, cautions against the tyranny of Stuart absolutism. The resonant plea to the English people to avoid the calamity of a return to the “bondage” of monarchical government pulls no punches.²¹ Milton contends

that kings endorse dissolute behavior and support priestly corruption, and he hopes to win the general approval of a Protestant readership by linking his attack on monarchy to the profanity of Catholic idolatry.²² He supports his plea to the chosen Protestant nation with references to Old Testament history and, in particular, to the moral weakness shown by those Israelites who took the decision to return willingly to servitude in Egypt rather than face further tribulations as a free people. The Jewish people lost their favored status in God's eyes because they failed in this regard, and Milton warns that the same will happen to the English nation.

. . . if lastly, after all this light among us, the same reason shall pass for current to put our necks again under kingship, as was made use of by the *Jews* to return back to *Egypt* and to the worship of this idol queen, because they falsely imagin'd that they liv'd in more plenty and prosperitie, our condition is not sound but rotten both in religion and all civil prudence

In both thematic and episodic terms, the Son's constant rejection of all forms of indulgence is a continuation and reaffirmation of the position held here. The poetic invention of a temptation of appetite in the form of a banquet fit for a king is an especially close parallel to the negative economic and moral cost of kingship that is spelt out in *The Readie and Easie Way* as

. . . the vast and lavish price of our subjection and their debauserie; . . . who for any thing wherein the public really needs him, will have little els to do, but to bestow the eating and drinking of excessive dainties, to set a pompous face upon the superficial actings of State, to pageant himself up and down in progress among the perpetual

bowings and cringings of an abject people, on either side deifying and adorning him for nothing don that can deserve it. (YP 7:426)

The parallel between the prose and the poetic undertaking is further underscored by the Son's lengthy and disdainful dismissal of "lascivious" Tiberius (4. 91) and "majestic show" (4.110). Throughout *Paradise Regained*, the Son remains loyal to his heavenly Father's will. He avoids all forms of idolatry; abhors excessive outlay, pomp, and flattery; refutes any leadership role that would position him as a "captain back for *Egypt*" (YP 7:463); and finally stands firm on a declaration of obedience that is his clarion rejection of backsliding. Sonship is secured through the determination to avoid any breach of faith and an ability (shared, perhaps exclusively, by the Messiah and the poet) to adhere to the ordinances of the Lord. In effect, *Paradise Regained* furthers Milton's republican prose and serves as a proof text that justifies his own political polemic.²³

Milton's Son is an exegete: a practical guide who explains and embodies not only a new Christian perspective but the justification of dissenting politics. In the 1671 poem, he stands as the type for those whom Milton as a 1660 prose polemicist hoped would listen to him and "become children of reviving libertie" (YP 7:463). This is a striking and audacious political strategy whereby the crucial scriptural citation and manifestation of a new pathway into a Christian redemptive promise strikes home as a corroboration of personal partisan politics. To identify the exclusivity at the core of Milton's poem is to see the style's "moral equipoise of purposes long maturing" turn before our eyes into political leverage.²⁴

Adversarial politics became the norm for parliamentary governance in the late seventeenth century, but our current generation has immediate experience of its limitations and of the fractures that develop in public life when meaningful debate is

stifled. It is obvious to many, especially those in the younger generation, that embedded privilege and institutional bias need to be identified and weeded out of civil life. In the aftermath of the 2020 global pandemic, we will still seek to reject empty promises and calculated marketing strategies but we also require policies that unite communities and promote co-operative action on both a national and a global level. The opposition of liberty to enslavement in *Paradise Regained* is empowered by a politics of exclusive virtue and elect status that has had its day. Its poetic framework ties the victory of Jesus in the wilderness not only to intransigent politics but also to a seventeenth-century lexis of degeneracy that admits the racialized justification of European moral and economic supremacy. In the twenty-first century, such usage is glaringly elitist, abusive and categorically untenable. Few would deny that this is a moment to reflect on political leadership and the sustainability of inherited cultural authorities. The status of past heroes is proving increasingly uneasy, whether they stand on plinths, pedestals, or pinnacles.

¹ See, for example, *Democracy and Anti-democracy in Early Modern England 1603-1689*, ed. Cesare Cuttica and Markku Peltonen (Leiden, 2019).

² *Paradise Regained*, 4.100-02, in *The 1671 Poems: "Paradise Regain'd" and "Samson Agonises,"* ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Oxford, 2008), vol. 2 of *The Complete Works of John Milton*, 11 vols., gen eds. Thomas N. Corns and Gordon Campbell (Oxford, 2008-). All subsequent quotations from *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* are taken from this edition and cited parenthetically by book and line numbers.

³ In Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, the opening soliloquy is saturated with the lexis of bondage. Samson considers himself "Lower then bondslave!" (38) and later uses the

same term (411) for his moral decline in yielding to Dalila. He calls it a “servitude, ignoble, / Unmanly, ignominious, infamous, / True slavery, and that blindness worse than this, / That saw not how degeneratly I serv’d.” (406-19). Samson’s confessional point is that things were even worse while he remained unaware of how bad things were rather than any suggestion that he can now recoup his former status. By contrast, however, the Son’s reference to bondage in *Paradise Regained* objectifies others as “degenerate” and refutes for them any compensatory value in outward freedom where there is inward self-enslavement. The Son’s phrasing should be compared with the racialized condemnation found in *Paradise Lost* of Ham and his (African) descendants: “Yet sometimes nations will decline so low / From virtue, which is reason, that no wrong, / But justice, and some fatal curse annexed / Deprives them of their outward liberty, / Their inward lost: witness the irreverent son / Of him who built the ark, who for the shame / Done to his father, heard this heavy curse, / *Servant of servants*, on his vicious race” (12.97-101). This and all subsequent quotations from *Paradise Lost* are taken from Alastair Fowler, ed., *Paradise Lost* (Harlow, 1968).

⁴ In his important essay on the meaning of slavery in *Samson Agonistes*, Martin Dzelzainis identifies the import of the moment in *Samson Agonistes* when Samson gains physical liberty from his shackles but points out that this does not necessarily equate to moral freedom (299-300). See Dzelzainis, “‘In Power of Others, Never in My Own’: The Meaning of Slavery in *Samson Agonistes*” 285-300

⁵ For one guide to this terminology, see Don N. Howell, *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Oregon, 2013), 6-20.

⁶ For the Neo-Roman context, see Martin Dzelzainis, “‘The vulgar only scap’d who stood without’: Milton and the Politics of Exclusion,” in *Democracy and Anti-democracy*, 239-59.

⁷ On the developing European construction of arguments for racial inequality, see Mary Nyquist, *Arbitrary Rule: Slavery, Tyranny, and the Power of Life and Death* (Chicago, 2015); and Justin E. H. Smith, *Nature, Human Nature & Human Difference: Race in Early Modern Philosophy* (Princeton, 2015). The theoretical insights of Gurminder K. Bhabra, *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (New York, 2007), should also now inform our understanding of Milton's import in the development of standard Western accounts of civic liberty.

⁸ Mary Nyquist, "The Liberty of Naming" in *Revisiting Slavery and Antislavery: Towards a Critical Analysis*, ed. Laura Bruce and Julia O'Connell Davidson (Harlow, 2018), 67.

⁹ I consider this to be a topic that requires open discussion and something likely to exercise many Miltonists in the near future. My argument here builds on work that has already identified embedded politics of exclusion and exclusivity in *Poems 1671*. See Dzelzainis, "The vulgar only scap'd," and Thomas N. Corns, "'With Unaltered Brow': Milton and the Son of God," *Milton Studies* 42 (2003): 106-21.

¹⁰ Matthew 4.1-11; Mark 1.12-13; Luke 4.1-13. All Biblical quotations are taken from *The Geneva Bible. A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition*, intro. Lloyd E. Berry (Peabody, Mass., 2007).

¹¹ For the wilderness as the appropriate place to avoid inherited approaches and old pathways, see Neil H. Keeble, "Wilderness Exercises: Adversity, Temptation, and Trial in *Paradise Regained*," *Milton Studies* 42 (2003): 86-105. For retirement as preparation for action, see David Norbrook, "Republican Occasions in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*," *Milton Studies* 42 (2003): 122-48.

¹² See Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford, 2013), 245-47, on the Protestant tradition's view of distraction as the devil's work.

¹³ For example, see Barbara K. Lewalski, *Milton's Brief Epic* (Providence, 1966); Mary Ann Radzinowicz, "How Milton read the Bible: the case of *Paradise Regained*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, ed. Dennis Danielson (Cambridge, 1989), 207-23; and Annabel Patterson, *Milton's Words* (Oxford, 2009), 117-45.

¹⁴ Radzinowicz, "How Milton read the Bible" (214), points out neither the dream nor the banquet scene has scriptural authority.

¹⁵ Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (London, 2019), 345.

¹⁶ See Mary Nyquist, "The Liberty of Naming," 65-96.

¹⁷ Important critical works not already referenced include Steven Marx, "The Prophet Disarmed: Milton and the Quakers," *SEL* 32, no. 1 (1992): 111-28; Laura Lunger Knoppers, *Historicizing Milton: Spectacle, Power, and Poetry in Restoration England* (Athens, Ga., 1994); David Loewenstein, *Representing Revolution in Milton and His Contemporaries: Religion, Politics, and Polemics in Radical Puritanism* (Cambridge, 2001), 242-68; John Coffey "Pacifist Quietist, or Patient Militant? John Milton and the Restoration," *Milton Studies* 42 (2003): 149-74; and David R Schmitt, "Heroic Deeds of Conscience: Milton's Stance against Religious Conformity in *Paradise Regained*," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 76, no. 1 (2013): 105-35. The political contexts of nonconformity in the latter years of the 1660s inform the editorial approach to the poem taken by Knoppers in *The 1671 Poems: "Paradise Regain'd" and "Samson Agonises."*

¹⁸ John Hale finds this principle to be employed in *De Doctrina Christiana*. See *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. John K. Hale and J. Donald Cullington (Oxford, 2012), vol. 8 of *The Complete Works of John Milton*.

¹⁹ See Patterson, *Milton's Words*, 138. Thomas N. Corns says that Milton has devised a "sensational resolution"; see Corns, "Satan, the Son of God, and the Brief Epic," in *A New Companion to Milton*, ed. Corns (Oxford, 2016), 524.

²⁰ Elizabeth Sauer, "Disestablishment, Toleration, the New Testament Nation: Milton's Late Religious Tracts," in *The Oxford Handbook to Milton*, ed. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith (Oxford, 2011), 325-41; and Neil H. Keeble "'Nothing Nobler Than a Free Commonwealth': Milton's Later Vernacular Republican Tracts," in *The Oxford Handbook to Milton*, 305-24.

²¹ *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 8 vols., ed. Don M. Wolfe et al. (New Haven, 1953-82), 7:407. All subsequent quotations of Milton's prose are taken from this edition and cited parenthetically as YP.

²² See Sauer, "Disestablishment," for a delineation of the same strategy in *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes* (1659) and in *Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings Out of the Church* (1659).

²³ Knoppers, *Historicizing Milton* (138), makes the connection between the Son's "judgemental tones" and *The Readie and Easie Way*, but her conclusions differ from mine. See also Corns "'With Unaltered Brow.'"

²⁴ Radzinowicz, "How Milton read the Bible," 221-22.