

## The Passion of Christ Hidden: Epic Similes in *Paradise Regained*

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### 要 旨

『復樂園』は『失樂園』の後編である。キリスト教の教義では、アダムとイヴの墮罪（創世記）により人類が喪失した樂園はイエスの受難と死によって贖われ、回復される。ミルトンは『復樂園』で、イエスが荒野においてサタンの誘惑を退け、勝利したとき、樂園が回復されたとする独自の見解を示しているが、イエスとサタンの対話に終始する『復樂園』は倫理的に過ぎると不評である。だが、古典叙事詩に通暁するミルトンが詩中に挿入するエピック・シミリには、イエスの受難と死が巧妙に秘められている。特に最初と最後のシミリを入念に読み解くと、旧約聖書のモーセとエリヤのミッションや、古代ギリシャ神話のヘラクレスとオイディプスの受難の生涯への言及によって、誘惑に勝ったイエスを待ち受ける苦難と死が暗示されていることがわかる。また、第1巻初めの「武器ではなく知恵によって、地獄の策略に打ち勝つ決闘にかかる神の子よ」(PR I 173-5) という一節に、第4巻フィナーレの「サタンの鎮圧者、いと高き神の子よ、人類を救う輝かしい任務にかかれ」(PR IV 633-35) の一節が呼応し、サタンの誘惑への勝利が来たるべき受難と死への基礎となっていることを示唆している。

**キーワード**：荒野の誘惑、贖罪、モーセとエリヤ、ヘラクレスとオイディプス、ギリシャ文学

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## Introduction

*Paradise Regained* concludes when Jesus, the second Adam, returns to his mother's (Second Eve's) house from the wilderness, having repulsed Satan's temptation. This is exactly the reverse experience of Adam and Eve, who are expelled from Paradise to the wilderness, having fallen to Satan's temptation. A host of angels extols Jesus's deed. They sing that he recovered Paradise for Adam and his sons by defeating Satan, opening the possibility that mankind could reenter Paradise:

by vanquishing  
Temptation, hast regained lost Paradise,  
And frustrated the conquest fraudulent:  
He never more henceforth will dare set foot  
In Paradise to tempt; his snares are broke:  
For though that seat of earthly bliss be failed,  
A fairer Paradise is founded now  
For Adam and his chosen sons, whom thou  
A saviour art come down to reinstall. (PR IV 607-15)

However, the recovery of Paradise cannot occur until the original sin of Adam and Eve is redeemed. Jesus's triumph over Satan's temptation is, as it were, a precursor of the Redemption. It is the foundation for the Salvation of the sin of Adam and Eve, not its accomplishment, for which the Passion and Death of Jesus are required as God the Father has proclaimed in *Paradise Lost* (PL III 209-16).

The main theme of *Paradise Regained* is Jesus's victory against Satan: "deeds/ Above heroic" (PR I 14-15). Their fight is not a physical or violent duel, but a mental or spiritual battle. *Paradise Regained* was unpopular at the time of its publication. But Edward Phillips, Milton's nephew, said that Milton had not been able to hear with patience such negative criticism:

He (Milton) was justly proud of *Paradise Regained*. As Edward Phillips said later: 'Possibly the subject may not afford such variety of invention [as *Paradise Lost*], but it is thought by the most judicious to be little or nothing inferior to the other for style and decorum.' Phillips pointed this out because

*Paradise Regained* was 'generally censured to be much inferior to the other', and Milton 'could not hear with patience any such thing, when related to him'. (Parker, 615)

## 1. The ethicalness of *Paradise Regained*

R. W. Condee interprets that impatience of Milton's as below:

I propose another theory for Milton's impatience with this preference of *Paradise Lost* over *Paradise Regained*, and that is that *Paradise Regained* is a more flawless embodiment of what Milton intended to do than *Paradise Lost* is; further, that as Milton's theories of epic poetry developed from his youth to the end of his life, they developed toward ideas more consonant with *Paradise Regained* than with *Paradise Lost*; and that actually *Paradise Lost* represents a transitional stage; at some points *Paradise Lost* proposes a theory of the epic that tends to contradict what the poem itself does. *Paradise Regained* never does this. (Condee, 357-58)

He develops his opinion, quoting the passage from *Paradise Lost*:

sad task, yet argument

Not less but more heroic than the wrath  
Of stern Achilles on his foe pursued  
Thrice fugitive about Troy wall; or rage  
Of Turnus for Lavinia disespoused,  
Or Neptune's ire or Juno's, that so long  
Perplexed the Greek and Cytherea's son;  
If answerable style I can obtain  
Of my celestial patroness, who deigns  
Her mighty visitation unimplored,  
And dictates to me slumbering, or inspires  
Easy my unpremeditated verse:  
Since first this subject for heroic song  
Pleased me long choosing, and beginning late;

Not sedulous by nature to indite  
Wars, hitherto the only argument  
Heroic deemed, chief mastery to dissect  
With long and tedious havoc fabled knights  
In battles feigned; the better fortitude  
Of patience and heroic martyrdom  
Unsung; or to describe races and games,  
Or tilting furniture, emblazoned shields,  
Impreses quaint, caparisons and steeds;  
Bases and tinsel trappings, gorgeous knights  
At joust and tournament; then marshalled feast  
Served up in hall with sewers, and seneschals;  
The skill of artifice or office mean,  
Not that which justly gives heroic name  
To person or to poem. (PL IX 13-41)

But while Milton explicitly rejects these epic traits in this passage from *Paradise Lost* and in part of the poem which follows, we must not forget that he included a great many of these epic traits in the preceding parts of *Paradise Lost*; he must have been conscious that he compromises his position at many points;... *Paradise Lost* at times wavers as it now uses and now rejects the “tinsel trappings” of the epic form. (Condee, 363)

Then he concludes that Milton has succeeded in completing the epic by reconciling his ethical theory of the highest virtue with the demands of the epic tradition (Condee, 364), but then that *Paradise Regained* might have resulted in being non-epic or anti-epic, because of being an ethical epic. Merritt Y. Hughes expresses a similar opinion: “It is true that Milton was passionately dedicated to the ethical view of the temptation which was that of Protestant Reformers generally” (Hughes, *John Milton: Complete Poems & Major Prose*, 473).

And the general criticism tends to consider the theme of *Paradise Regained* ethical. But being ethical means to neglect the mystical aspect of Jesus’s Passion and Death, and of the Redemption. This has left quite a few readers and scholars dissatisfied.

Writing from the point of view of an Anglo-Catholic, Ross condemns the poem because its center is ethical rather than mystical, because Milton did not choose the “Eucharistic sacrifice of the Cross” as his subject in preference to the dramatic struggle with Satan which seemed to him to be the necessary preparation and promise of the Cross. (Hughes, *Ibid.*, 473)

Two of the evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Luke, depict three temptations in the wilderness. Milton adopts St. Luke’s account (iv 1-13)—to turn stone into bread, to worship Satan to gain all the power and glory of the world, to cast oneself down from the pinnacle of the temple of Jerusalem—and he adds three more temptations, of the banquet, of the storm, and of the Classical learning included in the second temptation. All the temptations consist of visions Satan raises or of panoramic views from the summit of a mountain with Satan’s eloquent speech. Therefore, there occur no epic actions by Jesus and Satan, only their verbal dispute. Epical or chivalric wars or battles described by Satan are only pictorial or phantasmal actions without reality or presence. As opposed to the world of *Paradise Lost*, where the characters take actions modeled after the ancient epics, *Paradise Regained* only produces visual images by Satan’s talk or magic, passing before the readers’ eyes like kaleidoscopic images or those of revolving lanterns. All of them are unsubstantial and vanish into thin air by Jesus’s words of rejection. Jesus dispels one by one the Satan’s temptations based upon the pagan world and its values of which there are no record in the Gospels, and he lays the foundation for the Christian ethical values.

However, Milton has never forgotten the necessity and importance of the Redemption for regaining Paradise or the Salvation of mankind. W. W. Robson rightly states: “The view to be found in some authors that Milton is covertly substituting the Temptation in the Wilderness for the Passion as the central mystery of Christianity is directly refutable from the text, e. g. i. 155ff. or iv. 633-5” (Robson, 133).

As we all know, Milton has left the theme of Christ’s Passion untouched since his younger days, and in *Paradise Regained* he avoids confronting it. He cleverly and ingeniously charged the task with two epic similes.

In *Paradise Regained*, three characters predict the Passion and Death of the Son of God in their ways. First, “the Most High,” “the Eternal Father,” mentions it in his speech to Archangel Gabriel:

But first I mean  
To exercise him in the wilderness,  
There he shall first lay down the rudiments  
Of his great warfare, ere I send him forth  
To conquer Sin and Death the two grand foes,  
By humiliation and strong sufferance: (PR I 155-60)

Then, Jesus ambiguously anticipates his own tragic death:

this chiefly, that my way must lie  
Through many a hard assay even to the death,  
Ere I the promised kingdom can attain,  
Or work redemption for mankind, whose sins'  
Full weight must be transferred upon my head. (PR I 263-67)

What if he hath decreed that I shall first  
Be tried in humble state, and things adverse,  
By tribulations, injuries, insults,  
Contempts, and scorns, and snares, and violence,  
Suffering, abstaining, quietly expecting  
Without distrust or doubt, that he may know  
What I can suffer, how obey? (PR III 188-94)

Finally, Satan conjectures Jesus's future by reading the astrological sign and oracle:

Now contrary, if I read aught in heaven,  
Or heaven write aught of fate, by what the stars  
Voluminous, or single characters,  
In their conjunction met, give me to spell,  
Sorrows, and labours, opposition, hate,  
Attends thee, scorns, reproaches, injuries,  
Violence and stripes, and lastly cruel death. (PR IV 382-88)

All those prospects of Jesus's Passion are ingeniously hidden, giving no concrete

expressions except for a vague foreknowledge of the future. As Corns indicates that the tortured body of Christ was the campaign of the Counter-Reformation and the standpoint of Catholic Church. The imagination of the Protestant poets defied that image of Christ:

Protestant poets found it difficult to focus on the tortured body of Christ, which appears so central to the devotional practices of the Counter-Reformation. Even Donne, indebted though he was to the Catholic tradition, recognizes the problem, which he makes the informing principle of 'Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward', perhaps the greatest English poem on the topic. There he depicts himself as literally and symbolically travelling away from the site of Golgotha, seeking penitential progression that would allow him to turn to look on the crucifixion.

Milton never did find a way of representing that scene. In *Paradise Lost* the death of the Son receives briefer treatment than Nimrod, while in *Paradise Regained* he averts the reader's gaze from the grisly phase of the Atonement to its more serene precursor. Richard Crashaw, with a Catholic sensibility, shows what could be achieved in the baroque idiom Milton had attempted.

They have left thee naked, Lord, O that they had  
This garment too I would they had deny'd.  
Thee with thyself they have too richly clad,  
Opening the purple wardrobe in thy side. (Campbell & Corns, 53)

Let us consider how Milton superimposed the mystical over the ethical in *Paradise Regained*. I invite your attention to the arrangement of the word "enter." In Book I, the angels sing "Victory and triumph to the Son of God/ Now ent'ring his great duel, not of arms,/ But to vanquish by wisdom hellish wiles" (*PR* I 173-5) to Jesus who begins to confront Satan's temptation. Then, in Book IV, immediately after Satan's fall, angels conclude their hymn to Jesus with "Hail Son of the Most High, heir of both worlds,/ Queller of Satan, on thy glorious work/ Now enter, and begin to save mankind" (*PR* IV 633-35). Milton's arrangement of those two "enter"s is exquisite. The "enter" in Book I exhibits Jesus' embarking on his duel which leads to the triumph. The whole *Paradise Regained* relates how it happened. The "enter" in Book

IV announces that Jesus begins the Salvation of mankind, which also leads to glorious victory. But the process is left to the reader's imagination with their Biblical knowledge. Thus, the word "enter" announces Jesus's Temptation and Triumph at the opening in *Paradise Regained*, and it does Jesus's Passion, Death and Victory at the grand finale. The baton is passed from the ethical to the mystical.

## 2. The first simile: Moses and Elijah

Almost at the same places where the two "enter"s are set, at the beginning and the end of *Paradise Regained*, two important epic similes refer to Jesus. (*PR* II 13-29 and IV 562-80)

These episodes concerning Jesus in the two epic similes are not recorded in the Gospels. They are Milton's creation. The scenes of Andrew and Simon searching Jesus after the baptism, and of Satan falling from the pinnacle of the temple were created by Milton to develop the splendid similes.

In the first simile, two great prophets in the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah, are depicted:

Sometimes they thought he might be only shown,  
And for a time caught up to God, as once  
Moses was in the mount, and missing long;  
And the great Thisbite who on fiery wheels  
Rode up to heaven, yet once again to come.  
Therefore as those young prophets then with care  
Sought lost Elijah, so in each place these  
Nigh to Bethabara, in Jericho  
The city of palms, Aenon, and Salem old,  
Machaerus and each town or city walled  
On this side the broad lake Genezaret,  
Or in Perea, but returned in vain.  
Then on the banks of Jordan, by a creek:  
Where winds with reeds, and osiers whisp'ring play  
Plain fishermen, no greater men them call,  
Close in a cottage low together got



Their unexpected loss and plaints outbreathed. (PR II 13-29)

Here, Jesus is compared to Moses and Elijah. The disciples looking for Jesus are compared to the Israelite people looking for Moses who disappeared into the summit of Mt. Sinai (Exodus xxxii 1) and to Elisha looking for Elijah gone into heaven by a chariot of fire (II Kings ii 11-12).

Prior to this simile, in the scene of the first temptation, Satan disguised as an aged man in rural weeds says to Jesus to change stone into bread. Jesus answers that God feeds:

in the mount  
Moses was forty days, nor eat nor drank,  
And forty days Elijah without food  
Wandered this barren waste, the same I now. (PR I 351-54)

referring to Moses: “And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. (Exodus xxxiv 28)” and Elijah:

But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise, *and* eat; because the journey *is* too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.  
(I Kings xix 4, 7-8)

Thus, Moses and Elijah allude to Jesus continuously in rapid succession. One will be easily reminded of the only scene in the Bible where Jesus, Moses and Elijah assemble in one place, the event of the Transfiguration, and also of Raphael’s painting ‘the Transfiguration’ in the Vatican Pinacoteca. I believe that Milton saw the painting while he stayed in Rome. At that time, it was installed on the high altar in the Blessed Amadeo’s church in San Pietro in Montorio, Rome, from 1523 to 1797. The event foreshadows the glory of Jesus’s Resurrection.

According to St. Matthew (xvii 1-6) and St. Mark (ix 2-7), six days before the event, Jesus reveals his Passion, Death and Resurrection to his agitated disciples for

the first time. St. Luke records eight days before. Jesus announces his Passion, saying “the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day (ix 22).” The Transfiguration occurs to appease disciples’s anxiety and fear, and gives them a glimpse of Jesus’s glory. Only St. Luke clearly states its connection to the coming Passion and Death of Jesus:

And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. (ix 28-31)

The first epic simile prefigures the Passion, Death and Glory of Jesus to come before the Temptation. Both Moses and Elijah are the elected two who meet God face to face (Deuteronomy xxxiv 10; I Kings xix 11-13) and the typology of Jesus in the Old Testament. They walk the path of affliction, in obedience to God’s command.

Moreover, the scene of the Transfiguration prepares the confirmation of Jesus’s identity as the Son of God. In the poem, the identity of Jesus is sought by Jesus himself, by Mother Mary, by the disciples, and above all by Satan. According to the evangelists at the Transfiguration a voice came out of the cloud saying. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (St. Matthew xvii 5; St. Mark ix 7; St. Luke ix 35). In the Gospels, the voice of God mentioned only twice at the Baptism and at the Transfiguration. So, the voice of God the Father mentioned at the Baptism in *Paradise Regained* (I 29-32, and I 283-86: “my Father’s voice/ Audibly heard from heaven, pronounced me his,/ Me his beloved Son, in whom alone/ He was well pleased;”) overlaps and echoes with the voice at the Transfiguration, and consequently establishes Jesus’s identity.

### 3. The second (last) simile: Hercules and Oedipus

The second epic simile concerning Jesus is the climax at the end of the Fourth Book of *Paradise Regained*:

But Satan smitten with amazement fell  
As when Earth's son Antaeus (to compare  
Small things with greatest) in Irassa strove  
With Jove's Alcides, and oft foiled still rose,  
Receiving from his mother Earth new strength,  
Fresh from his fall, and fiercer grapple joined,  
Throttled at length in the air, expired and fell;  
So after many a foil the tempter proud,  
Renewing fresh assaults, amidst his pride  
Fell whence he stood to see his victor fall.  
And as that Theban monster that proposed  
Her riddle, and him, who solved it not, devoured;  
That once found out and solved, for grief and spite  
Cast herself headlong from the Ismenian steep,  
So struck with dread and anguish fell the Fiend,  
And to his crew, that sat consulting, brought  
Joyless triumphals of his hoped success,  
Ruin, and desperation, and dismay,  
Who durst so proudly tempt the Son of God.           (*PR* IV 562-80)

Satan's fall from the pinnacle defeated by Jesus is compared to Antaeus, the son of Earth, flung off by Hercules, and to the Sphinx plunged off a precipice by Oedipus. Consequently, Satan with Antaeus and the Sphinx disappears from readers' presence, and there stands Jesus unyieldingly with his identity as the Son of God confirmed, and with him Hercules and Oedipus stand triumphantly. Hercules and Oedipus are equivalent to Moses and Elijah on either side of Jesus in the first simile. They are distinguished heroes of the Ancient Greek world, who Milton highly appreciates. They, the representatives of the Classical world, are chosen to stand next to the glorious Jesus.

Hercules is Milton's favorite hero and it is commonly known that after 'the Nativity Ode' Milton often coupled Hercules with Jesus. Hughes explicates how Hercules is accepted as a Christian paragon. To have Zeus, the supreme god, as his father and the human Alcmene as his mother makes Hercules's very similar to Jesus's parentage:

As a supreme example of the 'heroic virtue' which masters passion to the point of working body up to spirit, Piccolomini (*Institution Morale*) mentions Hercules. Readers of the Neo-Platonic poets of the French Renaissance will remember that the twelve famous labours were often transcendently interpreted to mean that the hero, like Christ in Milton's exordium to *Of Reformation in England*, triumphed "to the highest pitch of glory in the spirit, which drew up his body also (*CPW* I, 519)."...It was the Neo-Platonic habit of treating Hercules as a supreme example of 'heroic virtue' which led Milton to compare Christ's mysterious final triumph over Satan to one of Hercules' most familiar triumphs.

(Hughes, "The Christ" 268-69)

On the other hand, Oedipus is the hero of Sophocles' masterpiece trilogy, *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone*. *Samson Agonistes* owes much to *Oedipus at Colonus*.

While the exploits of Hercules and Oedipus in their younger days are dazzling, equal to Jesus's success over Satan's temptation, the disastrous fates of suffering and death in wait for their futures, predicts Jesus's Suffering and Death. Unlike the Hebrew Yahweh, no divine blessing and protection accompany the Greek heroes. Only the malice and cruelty of ancient Greek gods pursue and smash human heroes. Sophocles is said being an expert in representing unfair suffering. For example, Oedipus in the Trilogy and Hercules in *Trachiniae* are depicted to live more miserable lives mentally and physically, and to meet more disgraced, humiliating deaths than the biblical Moses and Elijah.

Look ye, countrymen and Thebans, this is Oedipus the great,  
He who knew the Sphinx's riddle and was mightiest in our state.  
Who of all our townsmen gazed not on his fame with envious eyes?  
Now, in what a sea of troubles sunk and overwhelmed he lies!  
Therefore wait to see life's ending ere thou count one mortal blest;  
Wait till free from pain and sorrow he has gained his final rest.

(*Oedipus the King* 1524-30)

We are blameless, but confess

That the gods are pitiless.  
Children they beget, and claim  
Worship in a father's name.  
Yet with apathetic eye  
Look upon such agony.  
What is yet to be none knows,  
But the present's fraught with woes,  
Woes for us, for them deep shame;  
And of all beneath the sun  
Worse than he hath suffered none.  
Come, maidens, come away!  
Horrors have ye seen this day.  
Dire death and direr fall:  
And Zeus hath wrought it all. (Trachiniae 1266-79)

The cruel suffering of the Greek heroes reminds us of Jesus's dying words on the cross: "Eli Eli lama sabachthani?" (My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? St. Matthew xxvii 46). Jesus's fate (his mission of Redemption) is more cruel and more wretched than those of Moses and Elijah, and more similar to those of the Greek heroes.

## Conclusion

In two epic similes at the introductory and the closing parts of *Paradise Regained*, Milton pictures four distinguished persons who, having accomplished victorious feats, spend lives full of suffering. Associating their fates with Jesus's, Milton not only hides Jesus's Passion and Death behind the Temptation but also superimposes the mystical factor upon the ethical one of the poem.

We have seen that the first simile is restricted to the Biblical world both in the characters and settings, and that the last one is restricted to the ancient Greek world. We wonder why is the important simile at the final scene composed of episodes and characters from Greek literature? And that immediately after Jesus has rejected Satan's extolment of Classical culture, literature and learning. Jesus's rejection of Satan's elegant speech has been long controversial among readers and scholars. Let

us consider, for instance, Hughes' opinion:

Critical opinion is split about the treatment of human learning in *Paradise Regained*. Robert Adams (in *Ikon*, p. 127) sees in it only “that provincial contempt for the classics, that feeling for the Christian dispensation as not only supplementing but cancelling pagan reason, which resounds through *Paradise Regained*.” Ross sees the Savior (in *Royalism*, p. 122) as not only denying “the philosophic spirit, the searching mind of the Greeks (once so dear to Milton), but also as repudiating “their political thinking.” Middle ground is suggested by Douglas Bush (in *Humanism*, p. 125), though he finds it “painful to watch Milton turn and rend some main roots of his being.” But this does not mean “that in old age the puritan has conquered the humanist”; it means simply that “Milton holds the traditional attitude of the humanist with additional fervor.”... Most critics have agreed more or less with Hanford—in *SP*. XV (1918), 183–4—that there was a conscious compromise in Milton’s treatment of the classics, “a half reconciliation between his Puritanism and his love of learning,” which consists in “opposing Hebrew literature to pagan at all points and contending for its superiority.” (Hughes, *John Milton*, 475)

and Lewalski’s:

The beauty of the passage indicates the continued attraction of retired study for Milton, but his hero (like Milton himself) resists that lure to continue his active work in the world. The harshness of Jesus’s responses seems to reveal Milton’s deep-seated anxieties around the issue of learning, for they apparently repudiate the classical learning that has been so important to Milton throughout his life. (Lewalski, 520)

My conviction is that though Milton ought to have had Jesus rejected Paganism, he himself cannot deny his lifelong attachment to Classical literature. The splendid simile set in the grand finale could be understood as a declaration of his unchangeable love of Classical literature and culture.

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