

Pedagogy or Gerontagogy: The Education of the Miltonic Deity

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When Gonerill and Regan in *King Lear* squabble with their father concerning the number of his retinue, reducing it by stages from one hundred to five, Shakespeare is parodying the scriptural topos of the divine “debate” whereby the irascible Old Testament Deity is challenged by a presumptuous human intercessor. In one of these encounters in the book of Genesis, Yahweh and Abraham wrestle over the ever-declining number of righteous inhabitants needed to save the city of Sodom—an exercise comparable to that by which the enraged English monarch is coerced by his superior interlocutors into accepting the smallest retinue possible to uphold his honor. Shakespeare’s “debate” is illusory, for Lear is controlled by his daughters, but the question of whether Yahweh is manipulated by his chosen son Abraham, or vice versa, is problematical for biblical exegetes. Milton reencodes this confrontation in his justice debate between father and child in *Paradise Lost*, book III; Milton’s Son of God repeats verbatim Abraham’s challenge to Yahweh in Genesis 18.25: “That be from thee far, / That far be from thee, Father, who art judge / Of all things made, and judgest only right” (III, 153–55).¹ The Miltonic source of this intercessory debate from Genesis, as well as the unmistakable verbal and thematic echoes from two Mosaic encounters with God in Exodus, chapter 32, and Numbers, chapter 14, has been recognized since Thomas Newton’s 1749 edition of *Paradise Lost*, and more recently critics have offered several interpretations to account for Milton’s use of these biblical passages.² However, I will contend that these critics and Milton’s Son of God coalesce in misunderstanding Milton’s God, as well as Milton’s appropriation of the scriptural topos, which results in their mutual misreading of the scene in *Paradise Lost*.

Modern criticism of Milton’s council in heaven starts with Irene Samuel’s “Reconsideration,” in which she correctly argued that the first four hundred lines of book III comprised a divine debate between distinct characters rather than an inartistic presentation of crucial theological material.³ Merritt Y. Hughes responded with a scholarly article which argues two important premises that remain accepted by most critics to this day.

Firstly, Milton's scene is indebted to the medieval morality plays—"tension between justice and mercy was so much a part of the tradition to which *Paradise Lost* belongs that it could not fail to figure in its action." Secondly, the traditional familial hierarchies are inverted such that "the Son seems to be the Father's superior in love, wisdom and even in diplomatic shrewdness," with a result that "modern criticism is rather inclined to contrast him [Milton's Son] with the Father as much the cleverer as well as the wiser and kinder of the two."⁴ This idea is still current, with Michael Bryson arguing in an article published in 2002 that "the Son is a character instrumental in the *development* of the Father. The Son challenges the Father to be better, more merciful, and less destructively violent than he has been."⁵ By designating Milton's council in heaven as a morality play debate which is authorized by the Pentateuchal topos of patriarchal intercession to an unjust Deity hell-bent on mass destruction, Hughes intends to contradict the growing realization that Milton's Son of God is tainted by Arianism, that he is conversely the Father's pupil and a subordinate being:

A truth has been revealed which synthesises the thesis of justice and the antithesis of mercy. But has it been taught to a bigoted father by the diplomatic eloquence of his son, speaking with a plausible mixture of sentimentality and worldly wisdom? . . . If our interest in Milton's development of the dialogue can stand the shock of the exposure of God's vulnerability to the Son's suasion by means of his image in the eyes of the angels, we can suspend contempt for his deity and consider what the Son says in the light of Moses' plea for his panicky people [Numbers 14.15–16].⁶

I believe modern critics are incorrect on both of these points. Milton goes out of his way to confute the justice/mercy antinomy at the very outset of the divine debate, raising the expectations of a traditional literary treatment of the theological impasse only to shatter them. But this does not mean that there really is no debate in Milton's scene. There is a genuine discussion regarding the *method* of the impartation of grace, rather than the *possibility* of its extension to mankind. The Miltonic Deity alone is omniscient; not so his Son (CPW, VI, 227).⁷ Perhaps in no other scene in *Paradise Lost* does Milton so strongly intimate that his Deity really is "all in all" (III, 341; VI, 732), and that the Son of God is a subordinate being. Milton's Son attempts to assume the role of the morality play personification of Mercy, typologically the Abrahamic and Mosaic gerontagocic intercessor, but this debate is redundant, and instead it is the Father who patiently coaxes and educates the Son into his true role as incarnate savior of mankind. The Son is the means by which grace is dispensed rather than the origin of its dispensation—a lesson the Son himself must learn. In a sense Milton's Son

misreads both inspired texts, *Paradise Lost* and the Bible, by failing to comprehend the justice of the ways of God to men. The intercessor of Milton's poem, like that of Genesis, Exodus and Numbers, must be educated by a pedagogic Deity who encourages his interlocutors to offer themselves as sacrificial lambs for the redemption of sinful mankind. This is Milton's divine debate. It is pedagogic and not gerontagogic in substance, debating the method and not the possibility of grace, in a scene in which Milton subtly dramatizes his theologically heterodox notions of the subordinate Son of God in his dealings with an omnipotent and omniscient Deity.

I

Milton's great celestial council scene has the simple structure of a one-on-one debate. This is in stark contrast to almost all other literary treatments of the justice/mercy debate, for in *Paradise Lost* the Holy Spirit is conspicuous by his absence.⁸ There are alternating speeches by God and the Son, each partitioned by very short narratorial introductions, commentaries, or descriptions. The debate is closed by a much longer narration of 83 lines, describing an angelic eulogy at the resolution of the problem. It is God who verbally dominates the colloquy. He offers three lengthy speeches, the Son two shorter responses, resulting in a 174-line to 62-line imbalance in favor of God. The two crucial questions—shall mankind be given grace, and how shall grace be effected—are considered and decided in due turn. The former question is resolved in the affirmative by God, almost immediately, and without any discussion in his first speech; the latter question is solved by the Son in his second and final speech, responding to the call for volunteers by the Father. It is this first question and its answer that has caused so much confusion amongst critics, who duplicate the Son's misreading, which prompts an investigation into Milton's characterization, narrative method, and use of scriptural sources. God's first speech is the crux. In it he moves rapidly through five points, commenting on the behavior and nature of Satan, mankind, and himself—condemning the former, absolving the latter, and promising grace to man. God informs the Son that Satan intends to deceive mankind, and that man will fall; yet man possesses free will sufficient to control his own destiny, for which God is not accountable despite his foreknowledge; nevertheless God shall grant grace to mankind but not to the devils. The speech reaches a crescendo with this glorious declaration of grace—it is the final answer to the crucial question—and the whole of heaven climaxes to the beneficence of God's judgment:

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.

Thus while God spake, ambrosial fragrance filled
All heaven, and in the blessed spirits elect
Sense of new joy ineffable diffused (III, 129–37)

The Son has yet to say a word, and God could not be clearer on this point. Certainly the whole of heaven understands. Milton has his God explicitly forestall any morality play debate, drawing attention to the traditional antinomy in line 132 and resolving the dilemma in favor of mercy just two lines later. Hughes's learned article citing the medieval Justice/Mercy literary tradition as a source for Milton's scene is hereby redundant.⁹ It is not even debated: man shall find grace. The only question is "what this might mean, and whither tend / Wandering" (272–73). In God's next speech there is no mention of justice till line 203, for God's initial reply to the Son concentrates the first thirty-five lines explaining the operation of his grace through mercy. In the structural composition of the scene Milton makes it clear that there is no individualization of mercy and justice, no oppositional dichotomies between the two interlocutors, but that God alone encompasses both principles.

It is an instance of gross misreading to ignore God's triumphant decision in favor of mercy, the celebrations in heaven, and the Son's immediate response to the judgment, for the Son responds with a paean. This would seem to be the end of the debate as to whether God will be merciful. God, the Son, and heaven are in accord, the verdict is passed, and this unanimity is "visibly" (141) expressed in the Son. For in the Son "all his Father shone / Substantially expressed," embodying the qualities of "Divine compassion" and "Love without end, and without measure grace" (139–42). The Son acknowledges unambiguously God's gift of grace to man:

O Father, gracious was that word which closed
Thy sovereign sentence, that man should find grace;
For which both heaven and earth shall high extol
Thy praises, with the innumerable sound
Of hymns and sacred songs, wherewith thy throne
Encompassed shall resound thee ever blessed. (III, 144–49)

Yet amazingly many critics maintain that it is the Son who persuades God to be merciful, that Milton's God presents justice and the Son mercy, or as Gordon Campbell argues, "Milton's God the Father works himself into a rage at the thought of the fall . . . [while] God the Son tries to calm him down."¹⁰ On the contrary, Irene Samuel perceives this as "the passionless

logic of the Father!"¹¹ Anthony Low notes that "Critics almost universally agree that while the Son represents love and mercy in *Paradise Lost*, the Father represents justice—without warmth or sympathy."¹² C. A. Patrides erroneously established this denial of anthropopatheia in the Miltonic Deity, agreeing with Hughes that "if in the dialogue of heaven God seems to speak passionately, it is the reader, and not God, who feels, the passion. Milton believed . . . *nulla passio est in Deo*."¹³ Lieb is correct to reject this passionless Deity, but his interpretation of God's gerontagogic relationship with his Son condemns the Father as a neurotic schizophrenic who threatens to deconstruct both himself and even Milton's epic—"a kind of psychodrama through which inner turmoil comes to the surface in rather disturbing and unsettling ways."¹⁴ J. M. Evans recognizes God's immediate promise of mercy to mankind which invalidates Milton's Father and Son role-playing as the Justice/Mercy antinomy, but fails to perceive the pedagogic tone of the dialogue. This dialogue, for Evans, therefore fails, as Milton's characters reassume their traditional allegorical allegiances, which re-enter, as it were, by the back door.¹⁵ Most recently Bryson opposes the Son as an adversary to a morally suspect Father who habitually commits the oxymoronic "divine evil." Yet Bryson is another critic who conveniently ignores God's unequivocal and immediate promise of mercy, instead arguing quasi-autobiographically that the Son "uses language, diplomacy, persuasion, and argument to confront the Father, thus adopting the tactics of Milton the poet and pamphleteer."¹⁶

The primary evidence for the Son as *agonistes* to the Father is found in the final seventeen lines of the Son's first speech immediately following his acknowledgement of God's mercy. With such juxtaposition these two statements appear contradictory, as the Son paradoxically questions God's decision: "For should man finally be lost . . . ?" (150) The formal structure of intercessory debate between God and his "son," the context of conflict between justice and mercy, punishment and forgiveness, the specific diction and phraseology, the ideas of wholesale destruction, enemy triumph, God's broken promises and his stained reputation, all suggest beyond doubt Miltonic appropriation of the three Pentateuchal sources. In Genesis 18.17–33, Abraham bargains with Yahweh to save the sinful Sodomites from destruction, arguing that the innocent inhabitants should not be punished for the sake of the guilty. In lines 153–55 quoted above, the Son repeats practically verbatim the plea of Abraham in Genesis 18.25: "That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"¹⁷ The two colloquies in Exodus 32.7–14 and Numbers 14.11–24 confront a pleading Moses against a vexed Yahweh who has already passed a sentence of destruction on his own Israelite people. In Exodus Moses seeks to save the Israelites who had worshipped

God tells the Son who man's salvation was never in doubt, as he had previously stated: "All hast thou spoken as my thoughts are, all / As my eternal purpose hath decreed" (171–72). Bryson is incorrect to argue that "*The Father has been caught out*, and he has had neither the courage nor the honesty to admit it. The Father, in short, *lies*."¹⁸ All God has done is repeat himself. We just heard what the Son "spoke": if man is destroyed God's goodness and greatness will be without defense. We have just heard God's "thoughts": man shall receive grace because he is inclined to mercy. The Father is consistent in his thoughts; not so the Son with his words. Like the critics, the Son has misunderstood the Father.

II

If, as I argue, Milton deliberately created this contradiction, credited to the Son's appropriation of the Pentateuchal intercessory role, the reader must wonder what sense it makes. God is not a liar, nor indecisive, but surely the Son is not an idiot? The answer lies in a close examination of these three Old Testament texts, of what Milton thought of them, and why he might have used them in his poem. Randel Helms argues convincingly in his study of the biblical commentaries of Milton's own time that the standard interpretation of these three intercessory debates is pedagogic in nature. Helms quotes from orthodox Protestant theologians including Luther, Calvin, the Bishop of Ely, and Isidorus Clarius, as well as from radical Protestants whom Milton is known to have acknowledged and drawn from in his prose writings such as Andrew Willet, John Diodati, and Andaeus Rivetus, all concurring that "The violence of God's anger is, as it were, a rhetorical strategy intended expressly to elicit the intercession of the mediator; . . . in these scenes God in fact intended mercy even before the mediator's plea, but desired that His plans be revealed through a righteous intercessor's rise to greatness before the Mercy seat."¹⁹ The Renaissance interpretation of these encounters is pedagogic and not gerontagogic, and the frequent insistence that Yahweh intended mercy before the patriarchs had begun to intercede is instructive for us. This quotation from Andrew Willet's *Hexapla in Exodum*, published in 1608, is typical:

Yea, hereby he encourageth Moses rather to pray for the people: like as a father being angrie, and making though he would smite his sonne, saith to one standing by . . . hold me not from smiting, meaning the contrarie, that he would have him interpose himselfe, and mediate for his sonne. . . . And now the Lord was contented to accept of Moses prayers, because he was not in his secret counsel appointed to destroy them.²⁰

Milton's contemporaries had no fears of a vacillating and arbitrary Old Testament Deity, interpreting any potentially disturbing text with a protective accommodatory hermeneutic specifically fashioned to safeguard the supremacy and majesty of their God. Certainly this is true for the professional theologians of the day. Nevertheless Milton was particularly reticent about taking another man's word for it and always put more credence on the very earliest Christian writers; those "who kept thy truth so pure of old / When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones" ("On the Late Massacre in Piedmont," 3-4), as he champions in one of his political sonnets. Particularly relevant are the early argumentative dialogues of writers such as Tertullian, which conduct a genuine defense of what frequently become orthodox Christian truths after the Council of Nicaea in 325 B.C. Ironically the substance of the discussion is virtually identical to that between modern literary critics of Milton and the Bible, who recently have debated whether God may lose his temper and commit unjust acts of violence. At one point in his dialogue *Adversus Marcionem*, written in 207 A.D., Tertullian defends his Deity against accusations of swearing falsely, and in so doing considers the Mosaic intercession to Yahweh regarding the Golden Calf idolatry of the Israelites. Tertullian interprets the encounter as entirely pedagogic, and makes the same typological connection between Moses's behavior and that of Christ that Milton depicts in his appropriation of the incident:

Hence, if He swears both in His promises and His threatenings, and thus extorts faith which at first was difficult, nothing is unworthy of God which causes men to believe in God. But (you say) God was even then mean enough in His very fierceness, when, in His wrath against the people for their consecration of the calf, He makes this request of His servant Moses: "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation." Accordingly, you maintain that Moses is better than his God, as the deprecator, nay the averter, of His anger. "For," said he, "Thou shall not do this; or else destroy me along with them." Pitable are ye also, as well as the people, since you know not Christ, prefigured in the person of Moses as the deprecator of the Father, and the offerer of His own life for the salvation of the people. It is enough, however, that the nation was at the instant really given to Moses. That which he, as a servant, was able to ask of the Lord, the Lord required of Himself. For this purpose did He say to His servant, "Let me alone, that I may consume them," in order that by his entreaty, and by offering himself, he might hinder (the threatened judgment), and that you might by such an Instance learn how much privilege is vouchsafed with God to a faithful man and a prophet.²¹

Milton had studied Tertullian's *Adversus Marcionem*, and considers it in his first published pamphlet *Of Reformation*, while also mentioning it in *Tetrachordon* and *Colasterion* (CPW, I, 552; II, 664, 694, 736). In this complicated passage Tertullian explains that Moses, and by analogy the Son, are encouraged to become God's deprecator, so that "by his [Moses'] entreaty, and by offering himself" the servant and mankind in general might "by such an Instance learn . . . faith that at first was difficult." The enigmatic phrase "the Lord required of Himself" denotes that the whole exchange is part of God's "purpose," a pedagogic manipulation of his servant that according to Tertullian is not "unworthy of God" because it "extorts faith." In the previous chapter Tertullian talks of "the ignorance of our God, which was simulated on this account" of Yahweh's inspection of the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, a simulation that is didactic so "that delinquent man should not be unaware of what he ought to do."²² That Yahweh's supposed ignorance of the crimes of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18.20–21) is a pedagogic tool is ubiquitous in early Christian writings. Take for instance Chrysostom, who argues that "not in ignorance did He say these things . . . in [the case of] that of the Sodomites, that He might teach us never to be positive, till we are present at the very deeds."²³ While asserting God's omniscience in *De Doctrina Christiana* Milton takes as his second proof text a quotation from Genesis 18.14 that nothing can be hidden from Jehovah, who knows everything during this visit to Abraham (CPW, VI, 149). Hilary of Poitiers considers Abraham's plea of mercy for Sodom to be not a challenge of Yahweh's justice but proof of the patriarch's recognition of Yahweh's true status as divine judge. Quoting the phrase from Genesis 18.25, which Milton also appropriates for his Son of God, Hilary stresses the instructional lesson for the faithful reader of Abraham's intercession:

And not only Lord and God, but also Judge, for Abraham stood before the Lord and said, *In no wise shall Thou do this things, to slay the righteous with the wicked, for then the righteous shall be as the wicked. In no wise wilt Thou Who judgest the whole earth, execute this judgment.* Thus by all his words Abraham instructs us in that faith, for which he was justified; he recognises the Lord from among the three [mysterious visitors], he worships Him only, and confesses that He is Lord and Judge.²⁴

Milton's debt to Augustine is well documented,²⁵ with more than forty-five references to the theologian in Milton's prose tracts; in *De Doctrina Christiana* Milton accepts Augustine's definition of Original Sin wholesale (CPW, VI, 389–92), and in *Tetrachordon* discusses Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram* (CPW, II, 596). In Augustine's dissection of the Golden Calf incident Moses opposes Yahweh, but he has no doubt concerning Yahweh's justice or mercy. According to Augustine, the tenor of the passage is the testing of

Moses and not the testing of Yahweh. Yahweh tempts Moses to abandon the sinful Israelites, providing the patriarch with an attractive alternative so that He can gauge Moses's true motive for this act of intercession: "And that he [Moses] might not seem to have acted thus from necessity rather than from love, God offered him another people." Moses passes the test, possessing total "assurance" that Yahweh's behavior is irrefragable:

When God threatened the sacrilegious people, Moses' tender heart trembled, and on their behalf he opposed himself to the wrath of God. "Lord," he says, "if Thou wilt forgive their sin, forgive; but if not, blot me out of Thy book which Thou hast written." With what a father's and mother's fondness, yet with what assurance said he this, as he considered at once the justice and the mercy of God; that in that He is just, He would not destroy the righteous man; and that in that He is merciful, He would pardon the sinners.²⁶

Chrysostom goes one step further and psychologically analyses Yahweh's commands to Moses, arguing that, paradoxically, Moses is encouraged to act in direct contradiction to what he is told: "Again, God said to Moses in the hearing of the Jews, 'Let me alone, that I may consume the people,'" [Exod. 32.10] . . . but privately He gives him directions of the opposite tenor. And this, Moses upon constraint revealed afterwards, thus saying, "What? did I conceive them, that thou sayest to me, Carry them, as a nurse would carry the sucking child in her bosom? [Num. 11.12]"²⁷ Yahweh behaves in order "to yield them excellent instruction . . . entreats, and on our account inciteth others to entreat for us, that He may show us favor. And so it was with Moses. For to him He says, 'Let Me alone, that I may blot them out' [Exod. 32.10], that He might drive him upon supplicating on their behalf." Moses does not change the mind of Yahweh—there is no real persuasion, and the judgment has from the start been one of mercy—"But this He doth, not as Himself standing in need of entreaty, but that we might not, from being saved without effort, grow indifferent."²⁸ This understanding of God's pedagogic double-talk is wholly consistent in the period. Jerome concurs that "God said to Moses, 'Let me alone . . . that I may consume this people,' shewing by the words 'let me alone' that he can be withheld from doing what he threatens."²⁹ So too in a further consideration of the Exodus incident Chrysostom opposes Yahweh's just displeasure and anger with the lenity, compassion, and intercession of Moses, arguing that the purpose is that we "may receive a lesson, and the affair may not seem mere stage-playing."³⁰

Chrysostom's theatrical metaphor of "stage-playing" brings us back to Milton's divine drama. As is evident, both the Patristic and the seventeenth century theological understanding of the three Pentateuchal intercessions

are wholly pedagogic. There is no specific theological evidence to conclude, as Campbell does, that Milton would understand these biblical episodes as gerontagogic and that they are therefore an appropriate source to be typologically re-encoded in the condescending behavior of the enlightened Miltonic Son of God in his dealings with a primitive and unjust Father. Far more sagely, John Parish notes the contrast between the exegetical milieu of Milton's own time, which is bound by the straightjacket of an accommodatory hermeneutic, and "the kind of interpretation which an unbiased student of comparative literature would give to the stories. . . . In each tale the man seems more serene, more merciful, and even more intelligent than the Lord."³¹ However, Parish reverses the hermeneutic direction, seeking to draw inferences from God's debates with the Son and Adam in *Paradise Lost* in order to understand how Milton would interpret the biblical encounters. This paper attempts the opposite.

III

I wish to scrutinize five texts from Milton's poetry and prose which provide strong evidence that Milton was theologically orthodox regarding his depiction of God, but heterodox in his portrayal of the Son of God. Milton is obsessed with the idea of "yet once more"; it is to be found at every turn in his poetry, whether early or late. On three occasions Milton rewrites the Abrahamic/Mosaic intercession in *Paradise Lost*, hence providing the reader with great comparative information. This is the more so because the latter two episodes are Miltonic fictions—part of the author's "fleshing out" of the spartan Genesis account which provided so little "meat" for a twelve-book epic—and therefore suggests two things: Milton was particularly interested in these three Pentateuchal encounters, and that his triple rewriting of them provides a composite and agglomerate perspective upon what they mean. The latter two posit Adam as the intercessor, and this in itself provides some alarming analogies that I have elaborated upon elsewhere between Milton's Son of God and his primary fallen hero.³² The first passage is Milton's delightful "tease" scene wherein Adam pleads with God to create him a suitable companion in *Paradise Lost* VIII, 354–451.³³ In this encounter Milton's God is the thoroughly anthropopathic Yahweh of the Pentateuch—teasing, affectionate, smiling and coaxing—and accordingly considered an offensively primitive presentation of God by some readers.³⁴ Yet, ironically, many modern readers consider this as the most attractive depiction of Milton's God in the epic, the one time that he escapes from being either Pope's monotone and dictatorial "school-divine"³⁵ or the coldhearted and logical mouthpiece of the concept of Justice. How times change. Historically theologians were more offended by gross instances of anthropomorphism than by anthropopatheia, considering it a greater

threat to God's transcendent divinity;³⁶ recently however, it is God's behavior rather than his form that has received more negative criticism.

The dramatic structure of this "argument" between God and Adam is almost identical to the divine debate in heaven. Adam voices his query, felt innately, that he lacks a suitable companion, and thereafter the debate moves through the same binary structure: God's three replies are interspersed by Adam's two responses. The whole scene is a retrospective narration, being related by Adam to the angel Raphael as they relax in Adam's bower in Eden, and it starts with Adam carefully noting that he "to the heavenly vision thus presumed" (356). Adam's humility is stressed—a repetition of the rhetorical prostrations of Abraham and Moses—and he informs Raphael that "Thus I presumptuous" (367) posed his question about the suitability of solitude, which elicits the response from "the vision bright, / As with a smile more brightened" (367–68). Adam's daring questioning of his God, polite in its presumption, provokes the loving response of a divine smile. The form of the argument is simple, with God presenting two arguments to justify the status quo of Adam as sole human, each of which Adam dismisses with an impressive flexing of his newly acquired argumentative faculties. Adam rejects the unfit companionship of the other creatures in Eden, and then reveals the spurious nature of the analogy between God's solitary existence and his own. Yet Adam's attitude in his first reply to God is "with leave of speech implored, / And humble deprecation" (377–78), reminding us of Tertullian's identification of "Moses as the deprecator of the Father," prefixing his wise contradiction of God with the supplication of "Let not my words offend thee, heavenly power, / My maker, be propitious while I speak" (37–80). God's attitude in this discussion is also carefully expressed—"Whereto the almighty answered, not displeased" (398)—to which Adam replies that "I lowly answered" (412). Finally the true nature of this pseudo-debate is revealed; it has been a charade on the part of God, what Chrysostom called a mere stage-playing, but with the educative purpose of teasing out from Adam himself the answer to his own question:

Thus I emboldened spake, and freedom used
Permissive, and acceptance found, which gained
This answer from the gracious voice divine.

Thus far to try thee, Adam, I was pleased,
And find thee knowing not of beasts alone,
Which thou hast rightly named, but of thy self,
Expressing well the spirit within thee free,
My image, not imparted to the brute,
Whose fellowship therefore unmeet for thee
Good reason was thou freely shouldst dislike,
And be so minded still; I, ere thou spakest,

Knew it not good for man to be alone,
 And no such company as then thou saw'st
 Intended thee, for trial only brought,
 To see how thou couldst judge of fit and meet (*PL*, VIII, 434–48)

Milton is specific in his legal diction. Adam is plea-bargaining exactly like the Son of God in Milton's divine debate. This scene is a "trial" (447), whereby Adam's ability to "judge" (448) correctly is "tried" (437). God is testing Adam in a pedagogic exercise intended to stretch Adam's fledgling rationality and to assess his ability to differentiate between falsehood and truth. The result was never in doubt. God "ere thou spakest, / Knew it not good" (444–45). Adam's "free" (440) judgment pleases God by its exercising of God's own spirit expressed through the *imago Dei*. He passes the test with flying colors and Adam's faith in God and confidence in his own God-given faculties are enhanced. The Miltonic Adam is the Pentateuchal Abraham and Moses who humbly intercede with an omniscient Deity, not knowing that they are pawns in a game, children in a classroom, the result of which is predetermined but the object of which is the moral education of the suppliant antagonist in a mock fight. This is more than typology. But it is appropriate for Milton to align Adam with these greatest of all patriarchs and to duplicate the Pentateuchal accounts. As in Milton's heavenly council scene God is clearly correct that "All hast thou spoken as my thoughts are, all / As my eternal purpose hath decreed" (III, 171–72), and the creation of Eve is as essential to God's plan as the redemption of sinful mankind. Both scenes exhibit an omniscient Deity arguing with his plaintiff "son"; a son who supplicates himself to procure justice in his ignorance of the given sentence; misunderstanding the nature of divine judgment yet learning from the experience of pedagogic hand-holding; typologically acting the part of the Old Testament patriarch yet achieving not a change in the mind of God but an increase in their own understanding of the ways of God to men. And Milton's God seems to enjoy this rhetorical exercise, smiling as he teases out the answer. But there is a further analogy. The divine debate concerns the fall of man, while this Adamic debate concerns one key agent of that incident, the creation of woman. It is not only Milton's God who smiles knowingly at the intercession of his ignorant children, but also Milton himself it seems: ironically the Son of God pleads for his own fall at the Passion while the second son of God pleads for his own fall in the person of Eve. Yet paradoxically Adam appears as a superior interlocutor than the Son! This scene may portray Milton's God in an attractive light, but it provides a chilling anticipation of the final test which Adam fatally fails.

And it is precisely at the fall of Adam that Milton dramatizes for the third time the substance of Abraham and Moses's intercessory arguments to Yahweh. As Adam attempts to justify to himself his decision to fall with

Eve he interrogates the idea of divine destruction. Here Milton has Adam repeat exactly the persuasive arguments of the patriarchs in the same biblical phraseology. Abraham at Sodom decries that Yahweh should destroy the innocent with the guilty, and so Adam argues that God would not destroy the whole of his blameless creation because of the sinful behavior of a part of it. At the Golden Calf idolatry Moses argues that the divine destruction of His chosen people would cause His enemies to ridicule Yahweh's behavior and justice: "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?" (Exod. 32.12). Adam makes precisely this claim. Moses argues again in Numbers 14.13–16 that Yahweh's annihilation of his people would be unpropitious for the public perception of his honor; indeed he would be scorned by his foes. Milton's Adam at the very moment of his fall repeats exactly these two arguments for staying God's hand:

Nor can I think that God, creator wise,
 Though threatening, will in earnest so destroy
 Us his prime creatures, dignified so high,
 Set over all his works, which in our fall,
 For us created, needs with us must fail,
 Dependent made; so God shall uncreate,
 Be frustrate, do, undo, and labour loose,
 Not well conceived of God, who though his power
 Creation could repeat, yet would be loath
 Us to abolish, lest the adversary
 Triumph and say; Fickle their state whom God
 Most favours, who can please him long? Me first
 He ruined, now mankind; whom will he next?
 Matter of scorn, not to be given the foe. (IX, 938–51)

The problem here is obvious: Adam is in the process of sinning. A mere forty lines later he eats the apple, and however much critics disagree as to the precise moment of the fall, this pseudo-soliloquy of tortured mock justification reveals Adam's rational and linguistic fall just as clearly as the technical act of forbidden consumption. Yet once more the reader wonders why Milton would so clearly repeat the Pentateuchal episode. If what we have learnt from the creation of Eve "debate" is that it is pedagogic in tenor, albeit of a rather morally dubious subject, what this internal "debate" clearly implies is that this distrust and doubt concerning God's administration of justice is unfounded and indeed impious. The context of Adam's fall demands this. Both episodes radically modify our interpretation of Milton's repeated use of this topos and promote a pedagogic understanding of the divine debate in book III with the involvement of a

rather morally undermined Son of God. Michael Lieb attempts to reconcile these duplicated Pentateuchal accounts by claiming that Milton's last usage is a parody of the first, and that "Through the contrast represented by Adam's statements, we are able to see how the Son's legitimate assumption of the Abrahamic-Mosaic role of challenging God's ways may be perverted to accord with an illegitimate assumption of that role."³⁷ But there is no contrastive or parodic meaning in either of Adam's embodiments as the Patriarchal intercessor. Instead the reader's understanding is accumulative as we digest three poetic reenactments that reveal the identical processes of suppliant misunderstanding, impious doubts concerning divine behavior, God's pedagogic methodology, and the fundamental questions of theodicy which Milton's poem addresses.

Milton is consistent in his understanding of these Pentateuchal confrontations even in his earliest prose writings. In *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* Milton considers Abraham's reaction to the destruction of the Sodomites, and the question of whether it is possible for Yahweh to act unjustly. The context of the passage is that God in the "delivery and execution of his Law . . . requires the observance thereof not otherwise then to the law of nature and of equity imprinted in us seems correspondent." Milton argues that God's laws are axiomatically consistent "not only as they are his, but as they are just and good to everywise and sober understanding," for God cannot act contrary to his innate perfection which is necessarily consonant with the ethical principles man finds within himself. But it is man's responsibility through the exercising of his God-given free will to discover this justice. So Milton illustrates his point from two Old Testament proof texts and two from the New Testament:

Therefore *Abraham* ev'n to the face of God himselfe, seem'd to doubt of divine justice, if it should swerve from that irradiation wherewith it had enlight'ned the mind of man, and bound it selfe to observe its own rule. *Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee; shall not the Judge of the earth doe right?* Therby declaring that God hath created a righteousnesse in right it selfe, against which he cannot doe. So *David*, Psal. 119. *The testimonies which thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful; thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.* Not onely then for the authours sake, but for its owne purity. *He is faithfull*, saith *S. Paul*, *he cannot deny himselfe*, that is, cannot deny his own promises, cannot but be true to his own rules. He often pleads with men the uprightnesse of his ways by their own principles. How should we imitate him els to *be perfect as he is perfect.* (CPW, II, 298)

According to Milton's exegesis of the Sodom incident Abraham would have seemed to doubt God's justice if it appeared to conflict with his

innate ethical understanding of justice, the source of which is God himself. But as the source of justice God cannot act unjustly, for "God hath created a righteousnesse in right it selfe, against which he cannot doe." Milton's God is by very definition just, for "he cannot deny himselfe, that is, cannot deny his own promises, cannot but be true to his own rules." All four scriptural texts support Milton's axiom that God cannot be unjust and that "He often pleads with men the uprightnesse of his ways" when they seem to doubt of divine justice.³⁸ One example of this act of pleading is the pedagogic encounter with Abraham. Abraham learns that God cannot act unjustly nor be persuaded to alter his judgment, but Abraham must discover this through an examination of the God-given principle of justice that inheres within him. Yet once more Lieb is entirely incorrect in claiming that in this prose passage "Milton counsels the kind of healthy defiance reflected in Moses' challenge of God."³⁹ Milton is suggesting no such thing, as the surrounding proof texts make clear. Milton's God replicates the Pentateuchal Deity who pleads with men concerning his upright ways; it is for Abraham and Milton's Son to discover this truth within them.

Nowhere in his prose writings does Milton suggest that God can or should be persuaded from a course of unjust action. In *De Doctrina Christiana* Milton quotes from Moses's confrontation with Yahweh concerning the Golden Calf, citing God's request for Moses to leave him alone so that he can destroy the Israelites, upon which Moses prays to avert the destruction. Milton's point is that "the fact that God's will and providence are made clear to us should not make us less energetic in our prayers for the averting of evil and the promotion of good, but more so: Exod. xxxii.10" (CPW, VI, 676). This is not to argue that Moses's prayers averted an evil action that God would otherwise have committed. Milton never suggests this. As I have shown pre-Nicene exegetes like Jerome and Chrysostom established the standard biblical interpretation of this request by God as intended to incite Moses to pray rather than to leave God alone to commit a heinous act. Milton agrees, and the reader of Exodus learns from Moses's example that God encourages us not less "but more so" to pray for good. On the closing page of *The Reason of Church-Government Urg'd against Prelaty* Milton is humorous yet serious in his comparison between God's righteous destruction of Sodom and (in his opinion) the deserved destruction of contemporary English Prelacy. He asks the reader to judge which one of Sodom or Prelacy deserves to be saved by God, "Not that I dare advise ye to contend with God whether he or you shal be more merciful" (CPW, I, 861). Milton is fully cognizant that Abraham's intercession does not save Sodom, and that God did not alter his judgment but always acts mercifully, and this is precisely his point here: Prelacy like Sodom will be destroyed by God despite anyone's interference for that is what they both deserve. Milton is clearly tongue-in-cheek when he asks "if ye think

ye may with a pious presumption strive to goe beyond God in mercy" (CPW, I, 861) and find even one redeeming feature in Prelacy, for Milton considers this to have been proven inconceivable by the Philippic which he has just completed writing.

Not only in *Paradise Lost* does Milton consider the creation of Eve but also in his early divorce pamphlet *Tetrachordon*. During his analysis of Genesis 2.18 in which God pronounces that man should not live alone and that it is his plan to create Adam a companion—the brief text that the poet expands to such dramatic effect—Milton specifically invokes the strategy of accommodation in order to explain the seeming anthropomorphism of the Genesis portrayal of God: "[*It is not good.*] God heer presents himself like to a man deliberating; both to shew us that the matter is of high consequence, and that he intends to found it according to naturall reason, not impulsive command" (CPW, II, 595). It is Milton's idiosyncratic utilization of this theory of accommodation that provides the fourth piece of evidence of a pedagogic and not a gerontagogic interpretation of the Miltonic Godhead. Accommodation is both a hermeneutic and exegetical tool and dates back to the very earliest days of Christianity. It posits that descriptions of God, and specifically those found in the Old Testament, are not veridical likenesses of the ineffable Deity but divinely sanctioned metaphors that accommodate the unknowable in a manner comprehensible to human minds. This achieves two crucial points: firstly, because God is not *really* like the crude anthropomorphic and anthropathetic descriptions that we read in the Bible, his true gravitas and infinite holiness are reserved and protected; secondly, this acknowledgement of God's accommodated portrayal by the Scriptures means that the Bible retains authority as the vehicle of divinely ordained verisimilitudes. Contra scholars such as Patrides, recent critics have realized that Milton has a more literal, and even substantial, comprehension of the portrayal of God than previously thought.⁴⁰ Milton argues this in great detail in *De Doctrina Christiana*, book 1, chapter 2, and, arguably, illustrates it throughout his great epic. He entirely rejects the idea of anthropomorphic representation in the Bible in favor of theomorphism and theopatheaia, and as I argue elsewhere replaces metaphoric description with synecdoche, such that the biblical images of God retain part, although not all, of the truth of their original.⁴¹ Milton's unusual understanding of accommodated portrayal specifically safeguards the depictions of God from crude anthropomorphic/pathetic interpretations, and he is insistent that God is always portrayed in a manner fully consistent with his true divine nature. The following passage is worth quoting at length, fascinating in its heterodox suggestion that God possesses a form of somatomorphic existence, but also in its strident defense of the veridical nature of the biblical presentation of God:

... if God is said to have created man in his own image, after his own likeness, Gen. i. 26, and not only his mind but also his external appearance (unless the words mean something different when they are used again in Gen. v. 3: *Adam begot his son after his own likeness, in his own image*), and if God attributes to himself again and again a human shape and form, why should we be afraid of assigning to him something he assigns to himself, provided we believe that what is imperfect and weak in us is, when ascribed to God, utterly perfect and utterly beautiful? We may be certain that God's majesty and glory were so dear to him that he could never say anything about himself which was lower or meaner than his real nature, nor would he ever ascribe to himself any property if he did not wish us to ascribe it to him. Let there be no question about it: they understand best what God is like who adjust their understanding to the word of God, for he has adjusted his word to our understanding, and has shown what kind of idea of him he wishes us to have. (CPW, VI, 135–36)

What emerges from this is that neither in Milton's understanding of Yahweh in his debates with Abraham and Moses in the Bible, nor in Milton's redeployment of this topos in *Paradise Lost*, does Milton envisage an ignorant, unjust, vacillating and arbitrary Deity who is manipulated and cajoled by his morally superior sons. It is in fact quite the opposite, as evidence from both the poetry and prose suggests. Divine pedagogy is a plausible interpretation whereas gerontagogy is not. Further evidence of this can be seen at the close of the divine debate in the reactions of the angels. They begin their final hymnal eulogy with a roll call of divine attributes, firstly describing the Father and then the Son. Although both are entirely conventional the contrast is instructive.⁴² "Thee Father first they sung omnipotent, / Immutable, immortal, infinite, / Eternal king; thee author of all being" (III, 372–74). Nothing is surprising here, but the placement of "immutable" so high on the list and at the beginning of the line gives it considerable weight at the close of a supposed "debate" in which the Son has questioned the decisions of his Father, and in which many critics consider the Father to have changed his mind. Furthermore the emphasis upon "the author of all being," albeit orthodox, is noteworthy in the light of the first accolade with which the angels then laud the Son: "Thee next they sang of all creation first, / Begotten Son, divine similitude" (383–85). Milton establishes a very clear and deliberate hierarchy here, emphasizing the order and priority of the two characters rather than their triunal unity at the mutually achieved resolution of Creation's largest problem. God is king, the Son is son; God is eternal, the Son is begotten; God is the author of all being, the Son is the first of creation; God is first,

the Son is next; God is a whole list of ultimate attributes, the Son is the similitude. While these descriptions of the Son are sufficiently orthodox to protect Milton from arrest for heretical Trinitarian opinions at the poem's publication in 1667 they have nevertheless subsequently provoked endless speculation and critical inquiry into the possibility of a subordination of the Son to the Father, whether Arian or not.⁴³

But more specific for our purpose is the angelic account of the debate just witnessed between Father and Son. Coupled with the narrator's intervening statements that I have already considered it appears as effective commentary upon the verbal sparring of the two central characters. The angels are in no doubt as to which character is undecided and which character is clear about his course of action from the outset:

Not so on man; him [man] through their [devils] malice fallen,
 Father of mercy and grace, thou didst not doom
 So strictly, but much more to pity incline:
 No sooner did thy dear and only Son
 Perceive thee purposed not to doom frail man
 So strictly, but much more to pity inclined,
 He to appease thy wrath, and end the strife
 Of mercy and justice in thy face discerned,
 Regardless of the bliss wherein he sat
 Second to thee, offered himself to die
 For man's offence. Oh unexampled love,
 Love nowhere to be found less than divine! (III, 400–11)

As soon as the angels recall the actual conversation just witnessed they laud God as the Father of mercy and grace who is inclined to pity. This angelic hymn appears as a second account of the narrative that the reader has also just witnessed, and this one moves through the same linear sequence of Satanic rebellion and punishment, the devil's agency in man's fall, God's immediate decision of mercy and grace inspired through pity, the Son's attempt to understand the issue, and finally the Son's decision to intervene personally in order to resolve the dilemma of the mercy/justice dichotomy. The angelic account repeats the exact conversational structure between Father and Son, which has two statements by God with two intervening statements by the Son, finishing with God's final resumé and conclusion. The angels comprehend God's immediate inclination to mercy, grace, and pity that qualifies his strict judgment of doom, and then they note the Son's first response: "*No sooner did thy dear and only Son / Perceive thee purposed not to doom frail man / So strictly, but much more to pity inclined*" (italics added). The angels record what we have also noted, that the Son does not immediately understand God! Initially he fails to

"perceive" God's "purpose." It takes him time, the development of narrative. His perception of God's purpose is initially unclear, and it is only "sooner" that he comes to comprehend. This prompts God, as we have seen, to reiterate his design for mercy in his second speech and to tell the Son that the Son's thoughts are as his own. This is what we also see in the angelic account as they repeat yet once more in the very same words God's true position, that he is "but much more to pity inclined" (402, 405). The angels repeat it twice, in exactly the same short pithy phrase closed off for emphasis by the punctuation, only three lines apart. This reflects God's second speech. Finally comes the climactic last speech of the Son wherein he offers himself as the agent of salvation, the sacrificial victim "to appease thy wrath, and end the strife / Of mercy and justice in thy face discerned." God is stage-playing, in the words of Chrysostom, but for pedagogic reasons. The angels understand that the true purpose of this divine debate is not the resolution of the first question—shall man find grace—but of the second question—how shall grace be actualized, who will be the agent of mercy.⁴⁴ The divine debate is a true debate: its purpose is to persuade the Son to undertake the salvation of mankind.

IV

So what have we learnt from this scrutiny of Old Testament patriarchal intercessions in Milton's verse? What we learn about Milton's God is unsurprising. Modeled closely in *Paradise Lost* upon the scriptural Yahweh, and protected exegetically by the hermeneutic safeguard of the theory of accommodation, Milton's God is portrayed as a benevolent Deity who teaches and teases his "sons" into exercising their own free faculties to comprehend truth. His method is essentially Socratic: never dictatorially imposing the truth, but encouraging the self-expression of his interlocutor who is skillfully guided to articulate the correct form of judgment and behavior. But what we learn of Milton's Son of God is far more unsettling. The substitution of God's Son in the role of human intercessor, albeit an Old Testament patriarch, raises highly uncomfortable analogies in this context. Just how uncomfortable, and possibly heretical, is the final question. We have ascertained that Milton's God is immutable, but to what degree does Milton's Son misunderstand God's justice and the ways of God to men? Can we go so far as to suggest that the poem is a theodicy that desires to educate not only Milton's readership but even the Son of God within the poem itself? If so, this scene dramatizes not only the great chasm between God and fallen man but also that between the Miltonic Deity and the first of his creation. Milton's heavenly debate rehearses these Old Testament divine confrontations specifically because they address the same theodicean problems as his epic, as is evident from recent theological commentary on the Pentateuch:

It is clear that theodicean efforts surface repeatedly in the OT in a variety of genres and theological traditions. In the narratives of the Torah it is Abraham (e.g., Genesis 18) and especially Moses (e.g., in the wilderness wandering narratives, Exodus 15–18, Numbers 10–21) who confront head on the chaos of life in relationship to God with hard questions about divine justice; . . . there is one fundamental characteristic common to almost all of them. It is what Berger calls the “surrender of self” and what Crenshaw describes as “self-abnegation.” Both descriptions focus on the same fact, viz., that in most theodicies the intent is to explain disorder by defending God’s integrity, i.e., God’s innocence, at the expense of human integrity and innocence. As Crenshaw summarizes it, theodicy is an attempt to pronounce God “not guilty.”⁴⁵

But the question one asks is for what reasons Milton chose to reinterpret these stunningly confrontational theodicean episodes into his divine debate? Or more particularly, what are the inferences we can draw regarding God’s purpose and behavior in these Scriptural passages that prompts Milton to appropriate them for his epic and to portray his Son of God as a patriarchal suppliant? Typologically there is a strong link between the sin of Sodom and the Israelites and their judgment and punishment by God, and the Augustinian understanding of the doctrine of Original Sin coupled with the Anselmian “satisfaction theory” of the Atonement which are in evidence in *Paradise Lost*. But the connections are far more fascinating than merely this general analogy, and that is why I believe Milton chose to invoke these tropes in particular. There are two crucial interpretative problems for the reader in the three Old Testament encounters. The first concerns God’s intentions and the second the nature of God’s justice.

In Genesis 18.21 Yahweh announces that he will investigate in person the reputed sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Abraham responds in verses 23–32 by negotiating for mercy and salvation for the whole population of the two towns, before Yahweh has even passed final judgment on them. The narrative makes the reader privy to Yahweh’s intentions by prefacing the debate with an interior monologue: “the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; . . . For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment” (17, 19). According to Victor Hamilton this is the only incident of divine promises being couched in a soliloquy to a patriarch, and suggests that Yahweh is revealing his true thoughts about educating Abraham who will in turn teach his own children.⁴⁶ In Exodus 32.11–14 Moses petitions Yahweh not to execute his sentence of annihilation upon the Israelites, which had just been announced with an accompanying request for noninterference by Moses: “Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them,

and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation." (10). The same pattern is seen in the book of Numbers, with Yahweh pronouncing a judgment of pestilence and disinheritance upon the Israelites (14.12) who will be replaced as the Chosen People by Moses's own offspring. Yet Moses pleads on their behalf in verses 13–19, securing their pardon, with an appeal to Yahweh's merciful nature and operation of justice: "The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation" (18).

What is unclear is whether Yahweh's intentions change. At stake is the attribute of divine immutability. Additionally, is it possible that Yahweh would or could have acted unjustly? This questions both His goodness and His ability to understand and act. In Genesis it is crucial to comprehend that Abraham's questioning of Yahweh ("Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?") is situated within the questioning of Abraham by Yahweh ("Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?") so that the dialogue is controlled by the divine monologue. Yahweh engineers the situation as a test of Abraham's judgment, as Robert Letellier argues: "God's availability and patience in the subsequent dialogue provide the opportunity for Abraham to show his righteousness by his concern, and by his dogged negotiating skills. YHWH's question, his self-musing, is another example of the 'feigned divine question' whereby God asks a question that is structural rather than functional: he must know the answer anyway so that the question is hardly necessary, yet by asking it a context is determined."⁴⁷ Thomas Brodie extends this contextualizing idea by arguing that the plea is in fact "framed" fore and aft, such that the initial divine monologue and the closure of Yahweh leaving Abraham after he had finished speaking in Gen. 18.33 reveals to the reader that although "Abraham has been pushing to achieve justice, yet, . . . in a sense it is God who has been pushing within Abraham, pushing not so much to ensure justice, for God would do that in any case, but to bring Abraham, the future teacher of justice, to a knowledge of God's ways. The apparent bargaining is God's revelation to Abraham."⁴⁸ Divine monologue controls dialogue. Hamilton argues that Yahweh is not ignorant or undecided regarding the sinful state of Sodom—despite the suggestion in conversation to Abraham in 18.20–21—for he has already stated in his monologue at 18.17 that he is fully cognizant of the truth of the situation.⁴⁹ The dramatic confrontation is paradoxical, for the intended teacher is himself taught about the justice of God's ways to men: "Abraham approaches YHWH to instruct YHWH in his (Abraham's) understanding of justice (18.25). Yet it is really YHWH who is instructing Abraham even as Abraham tests YHWH."⁵⁰

The Golden Calf idolatry and the Promised Land disobedience reveal similar interpretations of God's intentionality. In both encounters Moses

exercises privileged access to Yahweh who willingly condescends to his one faithful servant and encourages participatory debate. Modern exegesis generally concurs with earlier pedagogic interpretations from Tertullian to Willet that God manipulates Moses to intercede on the Israelites' behalf by his request that the patriarch leave him alone (Exod. 32.10)—what Balentine calls “a form of invitation by prohibition.”⁵¹ So too in rabbinic exegesis this phrase of Yahweh's is interpreted as encouragement to Moses.⁵² The result is a new cooperative relationship between Yahweh and man, with man being encouraged to take responsibility for the reality which God oversees but in which man must also act.

The second interpretive dilemma is the nature of Yahweh's justice. Such an enormous amount of dramatic excitement is generated by these divine encounters, with so many tensions raised and then assuaged in what appears as daring yet successful confrontations, that it is easy to overlook the final results of these encounters. In all three incidents mercy is promised by Yahweh after the patriarchal intercession, but Sodom is nevertheless destroyed, and the offending Israelites are punished with mass killings, plagues, and death in exile. There is great irony in all the accounts. Abraham appears to have won forgiveness for the entire populations of Sodom and Gomorrah on account of their few righteous inhabitants, but Yahweh merely removes the righteous and goes ahead with his wholesale destruction of the cities. Moses appears to have successfully pleaded for the forgiveness of the idolatrous Israelites, but upon his own personal discovery of the enormity of their sin (Exod. 32.19) he himself orders huge retributive killings (27), and Yahweh follows suit with further punishments (35). And despite promising Moses pardon for the Israelites who have accused their God of leading them out into the desert to die, Yahweh ironically now fulfills the Israelites' fears and punishes anyone over twenty years old with death in the wilderness (Num. 14.29). This raises important questions about the dispensation of divine justice in these specific instances, and such doubts become so much more pertinent upon their application by Milton to Everyman and the judgment of Original Sin.

In the judgment of Sodom it is crucial to perceive what Abraham bargains for, what Yahweh acquiesces to, and finally what punishment he actually carries out. In Genesis 18.23–25 Abraham makes a plea that Yahweh should not destroy the righteous inhabitants on account of the condemnation of the wicked ones, and finally obtains the agreement from Yahweh in 18.32 that if even ten righteous inhabitants can be found then the whole city—both righteous and wicked citizens—will be saved. However, in 19.15–16 a very reluctant Lot and his family are removed from Sodom and their lives are saved, followed by Yahweh's destruction of the cities in entirety in 19.24–25. Accordingly the nature of Yahweh's justice both agrees and disagrees with that of Abraham. Yahweh acquiesces with

Abraham that the innocent should not be killed on account of the wicked, but denies that the wicked should be saved on account of the innocent. Yahweh's solution is to separate the innocent from the guilty and to punish only the latter. Judgment balances mercy and justice, with both receiving their due. Abraham's appeal for universal mercy is rejected and justice is served with the destruction of the wicked alone. As James Crenshaw remarks, this narrative "has as its main point the conviction that Yahweh acts in justice, even when destroying whole cities."⁵³

It is sometimes overlooked that Lot and his family do not really qualify as innocent and righteous, looking at their present and future behavior, but they are nevertheless ceded mercy and saved.⁵⁴ Accordingly Yahweh is more merciful than he is normally given credit for. Perhaps the point is that no one is truly innocent; no one possesses the individual righteousness sufficient to save the guilty. Only Abraham is innocent in his role as an external intercessor who pleads on behalf of those that try to follow Yahweh. This is fascinating in the light of Barbara Lewalski's observation that in Milton's divine debate the Son is associated dramatically with Abraham as an intercessor but theologically with the ten righteous men who save Sodom.⁵⁵ However, even if we recognize Lot and his family as "the ten righteous men," they of course *do not* save Sodom, which Lewalski fails to note. The typological analogy of Christ as a vicarious savior here seems to have broken down. Crenshaw takes this line of thinking to its ultimate conclusion, arguing that Lot and his family do not qualify as those righteous inhabitants who could save Sodom, and their salvation by Yahweh is merciful and the ensuing destruction of the city merely just:

To be sure, the narrative in Gen. 18:16–33 depicts a responsive deity, and one could argue that the failure was Abraham's, not God's inasmuch as the absence of a single virtuous person in Sodom and Gomorrah is demonstrated by the unfolding story. Since the cities lacked a saving individual, the Judge of the whole earth acted properly, and the patriarch's stunning question, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (18.25), loses something of its force.⁵⁶

What emerges is how attractive these Scriptural accounts would be to a poet like Milton who wishes to embellish the divine debate in his theodicean epic with typological textual authority. As in the crisis over Original Sin and the problems of eternal damnation and salvation, Milton's God defends his behavior as just, grants mercy to his followers like Lot who are nevertheless far from innocent, separates them from the irredeemably guilty who are punished, all upon the supplication of his innocent "son." A similar pattern of judgment can be discerned in the Mosaic episodes. In Numbers 14.20 Yahweh grants the Israelites the pardon that Moses has

been seeking, but in 14.23–27 he carefully separates the guilty from the innocent and the guilty are punished. Ironically even the intercessor Moses will never enter the Promised Land. Citing Numbers 14.33 and those who must “pay the penalty” as well as “the burning of Sodom,” Milton considers this to be “a constant principle of divine justice” (CPW, VI, 385). In Exodus 32.14 Moses had secured apparent wholesale forgiveness from Yahweh for idolatry, but at 32.26 Moses himself personifies the justly wrathful deity and separates the innocent from the guilty, ordering the former to slaughter the latter; similarly, Yahweh at 32.33–35 judges and punishes those who have sinned against him with plagues and erasure from the Book of Life. In neither episode does Moses doubt the severity of Israel’s wickedness nor the justice of Yahweh’s judgment. Nor does the assuaging of Yahweh’s wrath by the human supplicant remove the punishment of wrongdoing; it merely lessens the sentence of total annihilation. Nevertheless, this is understood as wholly just.⁵⁷ Milton cites Exodus 32.27 and the killing of the wicked by the righteous as a religious duty and wholly consistent with God’s justice (CPW, VI, 743). He also quotes Moses’s request that he be blotted out from the Book of Life in Exodus 32.32–33 and criticizes the patriarch’s failure to understand God’s concept of salvation: “Here Moses, on account of his love for his people, forgot that the faithful cannot be blotted out so long as they remain faithful” (CPW, VI, 178). Yet once more there is no innocent faction that can redeem the guilty. The concept of universal vicarious salvation is unfounded: “The notion that Moses makes YHWH aware of the merits of the patriarchs in hopes that they will induce YHWH not to go through with punishing Israel is without support in the text. The belief, especially held by Jewish exegetes, that the superfluous good works of “saints” can redound to the benefit of others, is also found among Christian expositors.”⁵⁸

V

And so finally we are able to draw some conclusions concerning Milton’s appropriation of the Pentateuchal confrontations and specifically the analogy between the intercessory “sons of God.” In all the accounts it is evident that God never intended to destroy the people wholesale but that a select few who are less culpable would be saved. This must be taught to the intercessor who is encouraged to become instrumental in their salvation, in Milton’s God’s words a “mortal to redeem / Man’s mortal crime, and just the unjust to save,” (III, 214–15). God will separate those to be redeemed from those to be destroyed and justice will be achieved. There is no principle of vicarious salvation stemming from the essential nature and behavior of those who are to be saved, but such a principle is manifested in the one bold supplicant who is found righteous in the presence of God.

Just as there are no righteous inhabitants who can redeem Sodom, so there are no innocent men deserving of salvation on Earth. The supplicant never doubts the justice of God's judgment of "the whole race of mankind," (161) but he does misunderstand, query and question God's "eternal purpose" (172). He fails to "Perceive thee purposed not to doom frail man / So strictly, but much more to pity inclined" (404–05). Like Abraham and Moses, Milton's Son requests that God save both the guilty and the innocent, pleading that the good should not be destroyed on account of the wicked. Yet God reveals that this was never his intention, and that only the irredeemably guilty will be destroyed, having been distinguished from those who are more deserving of mercy. Neither the suppliant's plea for universal salvation nor his fear for universal destruction characterizes the true nature of God's justice. God encompasses both justice and mercy, destruction and salvation. This is the lesson God's sons must learn and this he teaches to them and to the reader. Milton's God teaches his Son his plans for salvation and destruction just as he teaches Adam his intentions regarding the creation of Eve who will initiate the need for salvation and destruction. The author places the same arguments in the mouth of the falling Adam who dramatizes a failure to understand the ways of God to men. As the theologian Laurence Turner notes in his analysis of the Sodom episode, "the intimacy with God experienced by Abraham recalls that of the Man and Woman with the Lord God in the garden. Given that precedent, this encounter might well be disturbing."⁵⁹

And the implications for Milton's Son of God are certainly disturbing. Milton's God instructs the Son, who misunderstands just as Adam does during his education by God, and just as Abraham and Moses do in their encounters with Yahweh. Accordingly Milton's Son is fallible, which is not *theoretically* in doubt in Milton's theology as the Son is the First of Creation and thereby free to decide and act under his own volition. If this is not true then paradoxically and perversely the council in heaven is even more rigged than the council in hell! But being free to choose he is potentially free to fall.⁶⁰ Yet what is unsettling is that Milton *chooses* to dramatize the Son in such a scenario. But the truth is that Milton chooses to dramatize the mutability of the Son repeatedly in *Paradise Lost*—the most stunning example being Milton's creation of a rationale hitherto unknown in the history of Christian biblical exegesis for the rebellion of Satan: envy due to the elevation of the Son by the Father to be his Messiah (V, 661–65). This invention, according to J. M. Evans in *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition*, is one of the most genuine theological innovations in the poem.⁶¹ Only in Milton's epic does the Son's mutability start the whole rot of the Universe!

Apparently Milton perceives the greatest yet fallible Israelite patriarchs as appropriate typological models for his Son of God. One could argue that Milton was obliged to model his Son on someone, and that

the Old Testament patriarchs are as good as it gets; furthermore, the New Testament authorizes the use of patriarchal typology. But this is a weak argument. Milton models the Father on no one but the biblical Deity himself. Not so the Son. Whilst the term "Arian" for Milton's Son continues to be debated and reaffirmed despite Michael Bauman's excellent definitional study, *Milton's Arianism*, which presents convincing evidence to apply this label to the Son of God in both *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina Christiana*, yet once more this is the conclusion we draw from Milton's utilization of the Abrahamic/Mosaic topos.⁶² Anthony Nuttall in his study *The Alternative Trinity* draws the same conclusions from the unorthodox maturing of the Son evidenced in his dual begetting in *Paradise Lost*, arguing that "it is the narrative of filial development and promotion which impresses the Arian scheme upon the informed reader's imagination."⁶³ As I have argued, the theological purpose of the divine debate is twofold: shall mercy be granted to man, and if so how shall this grant of mercy be effected? Although the Son misunderstands God's intentions on the first issue, the second question is a supreme test of the Son's character, which he passes with flying colors, magnificently answering the call to duty. That this is a test is underscored by the reward of "all power" (III, 317) that God confers upon him on his successful completion of the exercise. Yet, any dramatization of the proving of the Son, the establishing of his identity, contradicts the Nicene Trinitarian formula of the Son's perfect existence from eternity; the ability of the Son to learn labels him by definition as a heretically subordinate being. Obviously the fact that Milton's Son is revealed to be potentially fallible denotes fundamental inferiority in comparison to the Father.⁶⁴ Stella Revard goes so far as to argue that in this scene Milton's God tests the Son's obedience and love in precisely the same manner as he does that of Satan and Adam and Eve, and that accordingly the Son shares many of the same essential characteristics of those other "free" but potentially morally fallen characters:

But if the Son were the same Son of Trinitarian orthodoxy, there would be no more real freedom in Heaven than in Hell. The orthodox God the Son, bound by the necessity of total identity, would only be echoing what *he knew* the orthodox God the Father had ordained. . . . But, the Son does *not know*, and that is the whole point.⁶⁵

Ultimately the interpretation of Milton's scene as a genuine dialogue rather than a dual monologue itself implies Arianism. The theological implications for dialogue (characterized by mutuality and deficiency) rather than monologue (self-contained rhetorical questions encompassing all relevant knowledge) have not yet been fully explored, but would seem to suggest a deficiency in the divine economy of knowledge that points

primarily at Milton's Son of God.⁶⁶ Roy Daniells investigates the question of psychological consistency in a debate between two divine beings, concluding that it is in the will of the Father alone that the answers are found, and that "This can be done because the Son's status is less than that of the Father, Milton's Arianism here becoming explicit. . . . Milton is unquestionably heretical."⁶⁷ Lewalski argues that the inclusion of the Son as one of the "works" (III, 59) of God signals his subordinate status to the reader at the onset of the dialogue in which God refrains from revealing his providential plan for man's salvation in order to challenge the Son to discover it. Clearly God effects this same process with the lonely Adam, such that God "promotes the growth of his Divine and his human son . . . challenges them with an apparent dilemma, casts full responsibility upon them to work out its terms in dialogue with him."⁶⁸ The *raison d'être* of these daring dramatisations is radical theology in which Milton foregoes the greater heresy of divine gerontagogy in his depiction of Arian pedagogy.

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NOTES

1. References to Milton's poetry are from the Longman Annotated English Poets, *John Milton: Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey, 2nd edition (London and New York: Longman, 1997), and *John Milton: Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, 2nd edition (London and New York: Longman, 1998); references to Milton's Prose are to *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 8 vols., ed. Don M. Wolfe et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953–82), cited as CPW, volume number, page number.

2. For detailed studies of Milton's divine debate, see Irene Samuel, "The Dialogue in Heaven: A Reconsideration of *Paradise Lost*, III. 1–417," *PMLA* 72, 4 (1957): 601–11; John E. Parish, "Milton and an Anthropomorphic God," *Studies in Philology* LVI (1959): 619–25; Merritt Y. Hughes, "The Filiations of Milton's Celestial Dialogue," *Ten Perspectives on Milton* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1965), 104–35; Randel Helms, "'His Dearest Mediation': The Dialogue in Heaven in Book III of *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 5.3 (1971): 52–57; Gary D. Hamilton, "Milton's Defensive God: A Reappraisal," *Studies in Philology* 69 (1972): 87–100; Anthony Low, "Milton's God: Authority in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 4 (1972): 19–38; Michael Lieb, "*Paradise Lost*, Book III: The Dialogue in Heaven Reconsidered," *Renaissance Papers* 1974 (Southeastern Renaissance Conference, Valencia, 1975): 39–50; Kitty Cohen, *The Throne and the Chariot: Studies in Milton's Hebraism* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), 103–32; Albert C. Labriola, "'God Speaks': Milton's Dialogue in Heaven and the Tradition of Divine Deliberation," *Cithara* 25.2 (1986): 5–30; Hugh R. MacCullum, *Milton and the Sons of God* (Toronto: U of Toronto P: 1986), 513; Michael Lieb, "Milton's 'Dramatic Constitution': The Celestial Dialogue in *Paradise Lost*, Book III," *Milton Studies* 23 (1987): 215–40; Barbara K. Lewalski, "Generic Multiplicity and Milton's Literary God," *A Fine Tuning: Studies of the Religious Poetry of*

Herbert and Milton, ed. Mary A. Maleski (Binghamton, N.Y., 1989), 163–86; Gordon Campbell, “Popular Traditions of God in the Renaissance,” *Reconsidering the Renaissance*, ed. Mario A. Di Cesare (Binghamton, New York, 1992), 501–20; Jeffrey S. Shoulson, “The King and I: The Stance of Theodicy in Midrash and *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Studies* 36 (1998): 59–85; Michael Bryson, “‘That far be from thee’: Divine Evil and Justification in *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Quarterly* 36.2 (2002): 87–105.

3. This latter interpretation is now generally rejected but most forcefully maintained by Jackson Cope and Stanley Fish. See Jackson Cope, *The Metaphoric Structure of “Paradise Lost”* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), esp. 164–76; Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in “Paradise Lost,”* 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997), esp. 80–87.

4. Hughes, “The Filiations of Milton’s Celestial Dialogue,” 109, 119, 111.

5. Bryson, “‘That far be from thee,’” 100.

6. Hughes, “The Filiations of Milton’s Celestial Dialogue,” 114–15.

7. I agree with Steven Fallon that it is unworkable for critics to be forced to justify their every usage of *De Doctrina Christiana* in the light of the recent and unresolved doubt over the treatise’s provenance (“Milton’s Arminianism and the Authorship of *De doctrina Christiana*,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 41 [Spring 1999]: 122). Nevertheless, this paper argues that the Son of God dramatized in *Paradise Lost* demonstrates similar Arian traits to the Son of God anatomized in the treatise. The most recent book-length study of the treatise’s providence concluded that “*De Doctrina Christiana* rightfully belongs in the Milton canon.” Gordon Campbell, Thomas N. Corns, John K. Hale, and Fiona J. Tweedie, *Milton and the Manuscript of De Doctrina Christiana* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007), 161.

8. J. M. Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 234; Larry R. Isitt, *All the Names in Heaven: A Reference Guide to Milton’s Scriptural Names and Epic Similies* (The Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Maryland, 2002), 199–202.

9. Further evidence of Milton’s intentions can be inferred from the successive drafts for a drama on the fall in the Trinity manuscript (CPW, VIII, 554–60). The second draft projects Justice and Mercie as speaking characters, while in the third draft entitled “*Paradise Lost*” these two characters debate with Wisdome concerning “what should become of man if he fall” (554); by the time of the more elaborate fourth draft the debate of Justice, Mercie, and Wisdome is omitted, and replaced by a conversation between Justice and Mercy with Adam after his fall.

10. Campbell, “Popular Traditions of God,” 512.

11. Samuel, “The Dialogue in Heaven,” 603.

12. Low, “Milton’s God: Authority in *Paradise Lost*,” 29.

13. Hughes, “The Filiations of Milton’s Celestial Dialogue,” 125–26; see also C. A. Patrides, “*Paradise Lost* and the Theory of Accommodation,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 5 (1963–64): 58–63.

14. Michael Lieb, *The Sinews of Ulysses: Form and Convention in Milton’s Works* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1989), 84.

15. Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition*, 234–36.

16. Bryson, “‘That far be from thee,’” 94.

17. All quotations from the Bible are from the King James authorized version—the translation which Milton read in English most frequently. The most comprehensive

study of Milton's use of the Bible in his poetry remains James H. Sims's *The Bible in Milton's Epics* (Gainesville: U of Florida P, 1962).

18. Bryson, "That far be from thee," 96 (Bryson's italics).

19. Randel Helms, "His Dearest Mediation," 54, 52. Regarding Milton's use of biblical commentaries, see Arnold Williams, *The Common Expositor: An Account of the Commentaries on Genesis, 1527–1633* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1948), and J. M. Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition*.

20. Randel Helms, "His Dearest Mediation," 53.

21. Tertullian, *The Five Books Against Marcion*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. III, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: WM B. Eerdmans, 1986), 318.

22. Tertullian, *The Five Books Against Marcion*, 317.

23. St. John Chrysostom, *Homily on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, No. LXXVII, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st Series, vol. X, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI: WM B. Eerdmans, 1983), 465. See also Theodoret, *Letter CXIX: To Anatolius the patrician*, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd Series, vol. III, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: WM B. Eerdmans, 1979), 297, and Chrysostom, *Homilies on Second Corinthians*, No. III, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st Series, vol. XII (Grand Rapids, MI: WM B. Eerdmans, 1979), 291.

24. Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity*, Bk. IV, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd Series, vol. IX, ed. Rev. W Sanday (Grand Rapids, MI: WM B. Eerdmans, 1983), 80.

25. See Peter A. Fiore, *Milton and Augustine: Patterns of Augustinian Thought in "Paradise Lost"* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1981).

26. Augustine, *Sermon XXXVIII*, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st Series, vol. VI (Grand Rapids, MI: WM B. Eerdmans, 1979), 387–88.

27. Chrysostom, *Homily on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, No. XXXV, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st Series, vol. X (Grand Rapids, MI: WM B. Eerdmans, 1983), 236.

28. Chrysostom, *Homily on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, No. XIV, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st Series, vol. XI (Grand Rapids, MI: WM B. Eerdmans, 1980), 447–48.

29. Jerome, *Letter CXXVIII: To Gaudentius*, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd Series, vol. VI (Grand Rapids, MI: WM B. Eerdmans, 1983), 260.

30. Chrysostom, *Homily on the Act of the Apostles*, No. XXXIV, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st Series, vol. XI (Grand Rapids, MI: WM B. Eerdmans, 1980), 215.

31. Parish, "Milton and an Anthropomorphic God," 620.

32. See Neil D. Graves, "Typological Aporias in *Paradise Lost*," *Modern Philology* 104 (2006): 173–201.

33. For a contextual study see James Grantham Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 283–84.

34. One of these readers is William Empson, who nevertheless notes the propensity of Milton's God to tease for pedagogic reasons: "Raphael also takes for granted that God hasn't enough control of his temper to carry through a plan if anybody happens to irritate him while he is working on it (*PL*, VIII, 232–34); a theologian might suspect that God only pretends to lose his temper on such occasions (God

endorses this view at x.625)." *Milton's God*, rev. ed. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), 111.

35. Paradoxically, but understandably with regard to his reader-response theory of how *Paradise Lost* functions as a text, Stanley Fish transforms Pope's famous criticism of Milton's God into a compliment: "Pope is correct when he calls God a 'School-Divine'; the pedagogical stance (God does not assume it consciously) is just right," *Surprised by Sin*, 77.

36. Cf. R. Goetz, "Karl Barth, Juergen Moltmann and the Theopaschite Revolution," in *Festschrift: A Tribute to Dr. William Hordern*, ed. W. Freitag (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1985), 17: "The rejection of the ancient doctrine of divine impassibility and immutability among contemporary theologians has become epidemic."

37. Lieb, "*Paradise Lost*, Book III: The Dialogue in Heaven Reconsidered," 49.

38. It is due to this ethical axiom that John Rumrich similarly concludes that Milton's God must procure mercy for repentant mankind, regardless of any arguments or actions of the Son: "Given the accuracy of the Son's analysis of the foreseen Fall (III. 144–66), I would argue that the Father's decision to show mercy—through [sic] arguably made freely—is necessary according to divine goodness. If so, this is an example of 'compatibilism' between necessity and freedom in the divine will. If God dooms man to perdition, allowing Satan to win the battle—or even if he simply annihilates the offenders—He will have acted in a fashion contrary to his 'goodness' and 'greatness' (III. 165). If the only choice consistent with previous decrees and with God's essential character is some form of mercy towards man, then God *must* freely choose to show mercy. Accordingly, the Father's decision to offer redemption to man, along with the details of Milton's doctrine of salvation, are prior to the Son's willingness to expiate man's sin" ("Milton, Duns Scotus, and the Fall of Satan," *JHI* 46.1 [1985]: 48–49).

39. Lieb, "*Paradise Lost*, Book III: The Dialogue in Heaven Reconsidered," 43.

40. See John Peter Rumrich, *Matter of Glory: A New Preface to Paradise Lost* (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh, 1987), 102–04, and Michael Lieb, "Reading God: Milton and the Anthropopathic Tradition," *Milton Studies* 25 (1989): 213–43.

41. See Neil D. Graves, "Milton and the Theory of Accommodation," *Studies in Philology* 98.2 (2001): 251–72.

42. Cf. Isitt, *All the Names in Heaven*, 194–99.

43. See, as classic statements of the opposing perspectives, Maurice Kelley, *This Great Argument: A Study of Milton's "De Doctrina Christiana" as a Gloss upon "Paradise Lost"* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1941), and W. B. Hunter, C. A. Patrides and J. H. Adamson, *Bright Essence: Studies in Milton's Theology* (Salt Lake City: U of Utah P, 1971). For the most recent treatment of Milton's Arianism, see John P. Rumrich, "Milton's Arianism: why it matters," *Milton and Heresy*, ed. Stephen B. Dobranski and John P. Rumrich (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 75–92, and Michael Lieb, "Milton and 'Arianism,'" *Religion and Literature* 32.2 (2000): 197–220.

44. Empson, even with his rather jaundiced view of God and Christianity in general, perceives the whole scene as pedagogic, but also concerning the education of the angels: "The next step is to regard the debate in Heaven, where the Son, but no angel, offers to die for man, as a political trick rigged up to impress the surviving angels." *Milton's God*, 124.

45. Samuel E. Balentine, "Prayers for Justice in the Old Testament: Theodicy and Theology," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 51 (1989): 610–11.

46. Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18:50* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 17. Cf. David W. Cotter, *Berit Olam Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry: Genesis* (The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 2003), 119.

47. Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Day in Mamre, Night in Sodom: Abraham and Lot in Genesis 18 and 19* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 133.

48. Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue* (New York: Oxford UP, 2001), 249. Cf. Cotter, *Berit Olam: Genesis*, 121.

49. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 20; Cf. Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 49–50: "Abraham is drawn into the divine deliberation regarding proper justice for the city. Abraham's questioning and intercession thus lead to both God and Abraham being clear that God's decision is just."

50. Cotter, *Berit Olam: Genesis*, 121.

51. Balentine, "Prayers for Justice in the Old Testament," 607.

52. Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus*, Vol. 3: Ch. 20–40, trans. Sierd Woudstra (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 646. However, Houtman's own interpretation rejects a pedagogic reading of the exchange between Yahweh and Moses. See also Edward G. Newing, "The Rhetoric of Altercation in Numbers 14," in *Perspectives on Language and Text*, ed. Edgar W. Conrad and Edward G. Newing (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 214.

53. James L. Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict: Its Effect upon Israelite Religion* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971), 75.

54. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue*, 244: "The crime-and-punishment story [19.1–29], concerning Lot and the destruction of Sodom, is an illustration of justice. Sodom is destroyed, but not callously. Justice is observed scrupulously, making sure no innocent person is punished. In fact, there is unmerited generosity. Lot's hospitality [19.1–3] is not as generous as Abraham's, but God treats even this relatively ungenerous person with great mercy and kindness." Crenshaw calls the later behavior of Lot and family "shameful": *Prophetic Conflict*, 75.

55. Lewalski, "Generic Multiplicity," 174.

56. James L. Crenshaw, *Urgent Advice and Probing Questions* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1995), 148.

57. Cf. Coats, "The King's Loyal Opposition," 98–99; James L. Crenshaw, *A Whirlpool of Torment: Israelite Traditions of God as an Oppressive Presence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 7.

58. Houtman, *Exodus*, Vol. 3, 651.

59. Laurence A. Turner, *Genesis Readings: A New Biblical Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 83.

60. See Neil D. Graves, "Infelix Culpa: Milton's Son of God and the Incarnation as a Fall in *Paradise Lost*," *Philological Quarterly*, vol. 81 (2002): 159–83.

61. Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition*, 224.

62. See Michael Bauman, *Milton's Arianism* (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1987).

63. A. D. Nuttall, *The Alternative Trinity: Gnostic Heresy in Marlowe, Milton, and Blake* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 140.

64. Awareness of this hierarchy causes even John Peter to doubt his erroneous interpretation of the episode as the education of an irascible Deity by his benevolent

Son: "It is something of a puzzle to see why an Arian like Milton should have given such dignity and refinement, in comparison with the Father, to the figure of the Son." *A Critique of Paradise Lost* (London: Longmans, 1960), 21.

65. Stella P. Revard, "The Dramatic Function of the Son in *Paradise Lost*: A Commentary on Milton's Trinitarianism," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 66 (1967): 52.

66. See Ronald W. Cooley, "Reformed Eloquence: Inability, Questioning, and Correction in *Paradise Lost*," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 62.2 (1992/3): 232-55; Samuel, "The Dialogue in Heaven," 610.

67. Roy Daniells, *Milton, Mannerism and Baroque* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1963), 101-02.

68. Lewalski, "Generic Multiplicity," 175.