

## The Disobedience of Adam and Eve. The Meaning of Pure Love

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**Abstract** John Milton left a valuable mark on English literature. His deep, thought-provoking, and beautiful creations attract the attention of many people. The main topic of this research is *Paradise Lost*. The title itself attracts one's attention. Upon hearing it, I immediately became interested in getting to know it more closely, analyzing it, and choosing some specific issue on which it would be possible to conduct research. This study mainly covers the lives, decisions, and views of Adam and Eve, and most importantly, the sin that gave birth to humanity. The study is aimed at giving the reader an opportunity to think and make choices about how worthwhile and necessary Adam and Eve's disobedience was. The word "disobedience," of course, is understood in a negative sense, but after reading this poem, some people may understand it in a positive way. The study also explains pure love and its meaning, which readers will understand better as they read.

**Keywords:** Adam and Eve, choice, disobedience, humanity, John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, pure love, sin

### Introduction

Milton's personality arouses great interest among researchers. Why is he such an interesting and profound writer? We must underline the fact that it is impossible for the reader not to consider religion and religious topics. Obviously, we are talking about the reader who is familiar with Milton's work; the one who gets acquainted with his works for the first time will begin to understand how much connection there is between Milton and religion.

When discussing this writer and his work, many researchers - and not just them - engage in debate, and many opinions and views are raised; some are acceptable, and others are devoid of logic. Many people do not understand the meaning of his words, although this is not only due to the extent to which the writer uses metaphors and weaves a certain idea into them. The most common source of misunderstanding is a lack of knowledge of religion and the Bible, as well as its precise meaning and analysis.

Milton analyzes religion to help the reader understand it better. Of course, not everyone will agree with him, but many people will share his ideas and thoughts. His name is primarily associated with the poem *Paradise Lost*, the first version of which was published in 1667. The poem is impressive; a deep meaning is hidden, and the reader is introduced to various aspects of religion through the interpretation of Milton himself, who had an extensive knowledge of the Bible. The research topic is related to *Paradise Lost*. When I first read it, I immediately had the idea to write about Adam and Eve and their disobedience. During such types of research, a question inevitably arises, the answer to which must be sought in the author's work, in his personality, and if we carefully familiarize ourselves with this information, the answer will find us.

### The Research Question

Was Adam and Eve's disobedience necessary and worthwhile? As we know, there are as many opinions as there are readers.

## Method

When talking about the writer's work, we should consider the methods the writer uses to convey his thought. What sources provide necessary information to the writer on the chosen topic? The sources may be books, scholarly articles, or surveys, which also help the reader understand the issue more clearly. Therefore, we can conclude that the reader's knowledge of the sources used by the author is valuable and necessary since it helps him to deepen his knowledge and to be more interested; at the same time, it is possible to arouse the desire to write something valuable and, based on existing sources, find different issues to explore. Close reading is one method that is popular among researchers. This type of method is helpful to the writer or reader in discovering hidden facts that are difficult to discover at first glance.

## Results

### The Life and Times of John Milton

Martyn (1978) writes,

John Milton, one of the grandest names in letters, statesmanship, and Christian philosophy, had his nativity cast, by the blessing of God, in one of those transition ages when great and positive intellects are enabled, through the crumbling of old ideas and principles, to new model their own generation, and to mould the future to a grander destiny. His remarkable genius found ample scope for its exercise in the stirring days of the most momentous epoch in English history. And broadcast in the furrows of the time, lay scattered the seed of a growth destined to be prodigiously effective both for good and evil in the world. (p.15-16).

Martyn (1978) continues,

Thomas Young quitted England in 1623, upon which event Milton was sent at St. Paul's school, London, then in charge of Alexander Gill, with whose son, then acting as usher, he contracted a warm and lasting friendship. Here the young student was initiated into several of the modern languages. His insatiable thirst for knowledge habitually kept him at his books till long past midnight- this precocious boy of fifteen years. His passionate

devotion to letters, making him utterly inattentive to his health, was the unquestionable source of that blindness in which his sight was quenched in after-life. (p. 16).

Writing in 1641, while his father was yet alive, Milton thus describes his early studies:

"I had from my first years, by the ceaseless diligence and care of my father - whom God recompense - been exercised to the tongues, and some sciences, as my age would suffer, by sundry masters and teachers both at home and at the schools." And again, after his father's death, he writes, "My father destined me, while yet a little child, for the study of humane letters. Both at the grammar school and at home, he caused me to be instructed daily." These sentences summarily describe Milton's education prior to his collegiate course. (pp. 26-27)

### John Milton and *Paradise Lost*

Humans have been here since time immemorial. What is our purpose in this world, or is there one? We may ask the question, "What purpose should each of us serve; or what can we do?" It is impossible not to think of our first responsibility, our task. What is this? Doing good, of course. Is it that simple? Does anyone consider it their duty? Unfortunately not. Denying this raises a second issue, which is negative. It is the doing of bad deeds that results in the birth of evil. When discussing a religious topic, the final destinations that most people call Heaven and Hell automatically come to mind. Who meets where, and on what principle? The answer to this question is simple and justified at first glance.

Those who do good will go to Heaven, and those who do evil will automatically go to Hell. What does the right choice depend on? It is based on free will and free decisions.

It is understandable that people go to either Heaven or Hell after death. But what happens next? Do we stay in that particular place or experience reincarnation? This issue is really controversial and has become the subject of interest for many a critic or researchers. What

happens next? Do we adapt to the place where we are; do we not get to the final destination that we have expected? Perhaps our ultimate destiny is the same as the stars that appear in the sky every night. Those who believe this view also believe that the ancestors are watching from above. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1943) also said in his book, *The Little Prince*, that people fly from the Earth to the sky and become stars, and from there they look back at the Earth and laugh. They laugh so much that if we look closely, we will notice them and remember our ancestors.

Among the significant questions perennially raised by Miltonic criticism, the two most important are the two most variously answered: What is *Paradise Lost*, and why did Milton write it? If the evidence that follows may be regarded as sufficiently exhaustive, I suggest that *Paradise Lost* was designed as a non-sectarian epic and deliberately modeled upon, as well as based upon, conservative religious literature. The second conclusion is that Milton wrote his greatest poem to justify the ways of the Christian God and to give artistic-prophetic expression to beliefs that were both vital and sacred to him.

As professors Frank E. Robbins and Maury Thibaut de Maisieres have amply demonstrated, *Paradise Lost* follows in general scope and major divisions the somewhat amorphous genre known as hexameric literature. This genre began its development at least as early as Philo, and grew in popularity and diversity of treatment until some decades after 1600. (McColley, 1939).

The first words of Adam to Eve in Book IV of *Paradise Lost*, while quite appropriate as an introduction to “the goodliest man of men since born,” are somewhat incongruous in the context in which Milton places them. Adam and Eve have sat themselves down “Under a tuft of shade that on a green / Stood whispering soft, by a fresh Fountain side,” where, cooled by gentle zephyrs and surrounded by all the happily frisking animals of Eden, they eat their supper of Nectarine Fruits and indulge in some of the conventional billing and

cooing we would expect to see between a young couple in such an idyllic setting. When, therefore, Adam delivers his edifying and otherworldly sermon in praise of God’s goodness and power (and mentioning, for the subsequent benefit of the eavesdropping Satan, the one restriction which God has given them), we feel that this is not perhaps what the eager Eve was hoping to hear; we are not surprised that her reply to Adam’s lecture is, though full of indisputable humility and piety, a very short prayer of thanksgiving. The tranquil, pastoral beauty of Paradise, their shady bower at the fountain’s side, and the proximity of her lover, all arouse in Eve a mood of happy nostalgia, and she slides easily into a sentimental reverie in which she recalls her first conscious moments on earth, in just such a setting as this one. (Day, 1961).

To answer the research question, we must consider the views and decisions of each character, in this case, Adam and Eve. As we look at *Paradise Lost* we see that the main disobedience comes from Eve. Researchers say that Adam did not want to go against God and gave Eve a big lecture; they argued but he finally gave in. We will learn why he did this in the following pages. Where does Eve’s disobedience come from? Two options are considered here. The first is that she was uninformed and did not understand many things, and the second can be that she wanted to learn something new. Many people have different answers to this question, so it is up to the reader to decide which one they share.

In Book IX, when Eve withdraws her hand from her husband’s hand and goes alone to tend her garden, to tend “each Flow’r of tender stalk,” what reader does now feel how innocent, how beautiful, and yet how unprotected she is? Who does not wish that there were squadrons of angels sent to drive away the insidious foe? And who does not think that this “fairest unsupported Flow’r” would not be ravished of her innocence if her husband had not permitted her to go forth unprotected? Traditionally critics and readers have responded to the predicament of Eve with compassion and concern. As Revard (1973, p. 69) notes, some, like A. J. A. Waldock, believe that

Eve “attempted to mitigate her ensuing sin by suggesting that circumstance to a large extent caused it: that bad luck is more involved than the deliberate sin of pride. More recently, however, instead of deprecating the circumstances, critics have argued that the cause of Eve’s fall, and thus the responsibility for it, lies with the husband who sanctioned her exposure, not with the circumstance of that exposure. In his book, *The Logical Epic*, Dennis Burden (1967) cogently argues that Milton would not allow so important an event as the fall to occur under circumstances arrived at only by chance. Eve must be alone, but not accidentally so; Adam, by permitting Eve to go forth alone, creates the climate for her fall. Milton, says Burden, intends us to see Adam involved in Eve’s fall, not merely agreeing to it afterward; thus, it must be through Adam’s knowledge and consent that Eve is alone. Adam is the stronger of the pair, and since Eve was “designedly the weaker...more helpless in a very real sense,” his is the greater share of the responsibility for choices made (Revard, 1973, p.69).

As we can see, the line in the above paragraph presents another point of view. If we said that Eve was the main disobedient, we would get a completely different opinion here. According to some scholars, the main source of disobedience is Adam, not Eve. It is a fact that the man is physically stronger than the woman, and therefore Adam should not have left Eve alone. But here we can ask a question, the answer to which, of course, will be different. If, until now, Adam had let Eve alone in the Garden of Eden to do her work, why should he not have let her go alone on this particular day, the day of the sin? Adam did not know in advance what would happen because he learned the news much later from Raphael. Therefore, we can say that the reader himself perceives and discusses the crime through various facts or events. It would probably not be correct to say specifically that the sin is Eve’s fault alone. Can we also consider that both of them are guilty? Each reader should get the answer from within his own mind, everyone has their own opinion and idea.

Let us look at other researchers and find another interpretation. As Bowers (1969) writes “What cause led Adam and Eve to the Fall?” Milton accepts the responsibility to provide an answer to this question. His full explanation turns out to be broader than the question, as any satisfactory answer must be if it is not to provoke the fresh question in turn. The epic answer blames Satan, of course; but to broaden this oversimplified though correct response of his Muse, Milton devotes many lines to what in the language of the drama would be called “motivating” the Fall from the point of view of Man. Indeed, if we are unwilling to accept his psychological analysis of the reasons that led Eve to fall victim to Satan, and in turn Adam a victim to Eve, the poem will fail. Appeal cannot be made to Scripture to justify the events on the ground that they are there recounted. The actions, and their causes, must be credible, and even inevitable, at the level of the reader’s human understanding. Milton accepts this and insists on the challenge that the Fall must be made believable - and acceptable - by a dramatic representation addressed to the human post-lapsarian reason. (p.264).

In the above paragraph, we find another source of disobedience: Satan. Many people will find him guilty, which is not illogical. Yet another question arises: is Satan alone to blame? If we see that Eve has the ability to think, then could she not have taken this step? The same is true of Adam, who could have stayed in Eden but chose to leave, the reason for which is clear in the poem and which we will certainly discuss. Here comes the second point of view. We must not forget that Adam and Eve had not seen evil before; therefore, they did not know its meaning, or in what form it existed in life. Can we just blame Satan for this and not Adam and Eve? Opinions will differ but in the end, we would know the answer to this question based on the root cause, and identifying the root cause can be different for each person.

It is time to think about the main research question because the ground has already been prepared. The main research question is “Was Adam and Eve’s disobedience necessary and

worthwhile?” Before talking about the necessity of the fall, we need to think about the reason for the fall itself, about Eve and her decision. I will repeat myself and say that it is possible that the fall was caused either by the fact that Eve did not have the information to analyze the results or because she simply wanted variety and to discover something new.

Let us see the opinion of one of the researchers regarding the above-mentioned opinion and then come to at least the approximate reason for the fall. As Bell (1953, p. 863) asks, “The old question: Why did Milton’s Adam and Eve disobey the Divine Commandment?” continues to provoke conflicting answers and consequently diverse accounts of the meaning of *Paradise Lost*. That Milton’s epic is, like *King Lear*, or *Faust*, or *Moby Dick*, a work able to sustain many seemingly contrary interpretations; that in fact it contains all of them to some degree is clear to anyone who will reread the poem at intervals, following the lead first of one and then another critical guide. But this richness of interpretation has obscured the real logical handicap assumed by anyone who attempts to find the ultimate origins of the narrative action in what is familiar to us as occasion or motivation - in a word, in cause.

Inherent in Milton’s ancient material is the paradox of the essential *causelessness* of the Fall. The many-times-retold story presents us with one - the myth of unfallen perfection, and two - a set of standard observations concerning the human nature visible in Adam and Eve after their sin. The transition between Man and Woman uncorrupt and Mankind corrupted is simply to be accepted as having happened. Yet the mind cannot accept the fact that perfection was capable of corruption without denying the absoluteness of perfection. In terms of the story, we cannot imagine any reason why Adam and Eve should, in the face of repeated warnings, have violated God’s injunction, not, that is, if we conceive the father and mother of the race to have been unfallen before the Fall. For all possible temptations - those traditionally offered and any we might add - appeal to impulses characteristic of *fallen* Mankind. Between

perfection and imperfection, the unimaginable and the familiar, the fable constructs a bridge. This bridge is the temptation, an event that must be explained by motivations characteristic of men as we find them now - ambition, curiosity, vanity, gluttony, or lust. It is a bridge built of the material of fallen human nature, that is, from the substance of only one bank of the chasm, the one nearer us. From the farther bank, the anterior condition of unfallen perfection, the bridge takes nothing at all. For there is nothing in the Paradisal state that can furnish cause for Man’s lapse from perfection. What is commonly identified as cause is actually result (Bell, 1953, p.863).

In the above paragraph, we see the word “temptation.” And indeed, how can one, at first sight, want to go beyond perfection? It is as if Eve’s desire to understand more of the world is already a temptation, since she does not know what really lies beyond it and simply wants to satisfy her curiosity. It should also be noted here that she is warned that she will die after eating the fruit of the tree. What should we think? Is it that Eve does not understand the meaning of this word, or rather, that she thinks that something impressive and valuable to understand is hidden behind it. Maybe a person is tired of perfection and wants some new adventure, even if she does not know what the result will be. Perhaps Eve thought life was routine and wanted to escape from it. And still, answers will vary.

Simply put, free will produces disobedience or submission. In the case of this poem, disobedience is given. Free will means giving a person the right to free choice, free actions. As McColley (1972) notes,

The separation scene in Book IX of *Paradise Lost* is generally regarded as evidence that Milton portrays Eve as vain and willful and Adam as weak and uxorious before the Fall, implying that they are originally flawed and their failure inevitable, and thus blaming their Maker for sin and woe, a notion Milton consistently repudiates in both poetry and prose. Rather, the scene portrays potentially sufficient beings in the

process of healthful growth, facing difficulties and learning the meaning of obedience to God's behests and imitation of God's ways: Adam, in instructing Eve and preserving for her the dignity of choice, and Eve in responding creatively to her calling to help Adam both in caring for the Garden, which teaches the fruitfulness of a loving discipline and in caring for the "happier Eden" of fruitful marriage. (p. 103)

Eve's obedience to Adam and to "God in him" depends on her liberty, preserved here and lost in the Fall, and the health of their mutual love depends on their trust in God and their responsiveness to the whole creation. The separation scene dramatizes not merely weaknesses Satan will exploit but, more importantly, virtues he will pervert, but which will be restored to responsive men in the process of regeneration. When God the Father, surveying "His own works and their works" in Book III of *Paradise Lost*, sees Satan about to alight on the rim of the new world, he foretells to the Son that Man will be seduced from obedience "without least impulse or shadow of Fate," for

he had of mee

All he could have; I made him just and right,

The disobedience of Adam and Eve

Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall. (III, 120, 98-99)

In announcing the Fall to the assembled angels in Book X, God reaffirms that Man fell by choice

no Decree of mine

Concurring to necessitate his Fall,

Or touch with lightest moment of impulse

His free Will, to her own inclining left

In even scale. (X, 43- 47). (p.103).

Let us return to the main research question. How valuable and necessary was the disobedience of Adam and Eve? It is natural to have different opinions on this topic. Let us consider two options

that may be more common. Take the word "disobedience;" on the one hand, it is bad, and on the other hand, it can even be necessary. First, let us consider the negative option, that is, what was caused by disobedience. Evil, envy, death, diseases, pain, arrogance, and cruelty are unfortunately present today. After all of these, was it really worth going against God's will? Here is the second option, which can be seen positively. If humanity had not arisen, it would not have understood the meaning of evil. Perhaps many people will say that it would not be necessary to understand all this, but he will forget the other side of the coin. If humanity had not arisen, it would not have known the taste of freedom, the goodness that fortunately still exists in humans. Most importantly, he would not understand love and its deep meaning, which is so precious. After all, love is clearly seen in Adam's personality, and it is possible that this feeling can be considered the reason for his disobedience.

As Milton writes the scene, Adam is suddenly confronted with an Eve who has disobeyed the primary injunction given to the first human pair, not to eat of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. His reaction, at first, is to silently bemoan her decision to disobey God:

Speechless he stood and pale, till thus at length

First to himself he inward silence broke.

O fairest of Creation, last and best

The disobedience of Adam and Eve

Of all God's Works, Creature in whom excell'd

Whatever can to sight or thought be form'd,

Holy, divine, good, amiable, or sweet!

How art thou lost, how on a sudden lost,

Defac't, deflow'r'd, and now to Death devote?

Rather how hast thou yielded to transgress

The strict forbiddance, how to violate

The sacred Fruit forbidd'n!

Adam's love and admiration for Eve come through clearly in these lines, even as he decries her decision: she is the "fairest of Creation", the "last and best / Of all God's works", even though she is - so far as Adam can tell - "lost" and now "to Death devote". He believes this latter, of course, because as he twice relates, God has told him that the penalty for eating the forbidden fruit is death. He speaks of this early on with Eve: "God hath pronounc't it death to taste that Tree", and then later with the angel Raphael, where he tells the story of what God told him:

[...] of the Tree whose operation brings  
Knowledge of good and ill, which I have set  
The Pledge of thy Obedience and thy Faith  
Amid the Garden by the Tree of Life,  
Remember what I warn thee, shun to taste,  
And shun the bitter consequence: for know  
The day thou eat'st thereof, my sole comman  
Transgrest, inevitably thou shalt dye.

As Adam stands before Eve, still processing the gravity of her choice, and the consequences that have been threatened for doing precisely what Eve has now done, he decides, in the space of perhaps only the shortest of awkward pauses, to face with her whatever will ensue, up to and including death:

[...] some cursed fraud  
Of Enemy hath beguil'd thee, yet unknown,  
And mee with thee hath ruin'd, for with thee  
Certain my resolution is to Die;  
How can I live without thee, how forgo  
Thy sweet Converse and Love so dearly join'd,  
To live again in these wild Woods forlorn?...

(Bryson, Movsesian, 2017, pp.469-471)

The above words clearly emphasize Adam's love for Eve. What can we call such a

feeling? The first thing that may come to mind is pure love. This is the kind of love from which you don't expect anything. Despite the difficulties, even though Adam knew what it meant to leave Eden with Eve, he made that decision and went against God.

Many novels, stories, essays, and poems have been written about the meaning of love. About this tender feeling, which is sometimes so sacred that you want to see it all, hear about it, and understand its deep meaning. Adam wanted it too. He didn't want his love to end. He did not want to replace Eve with someone else, even if it was possible, because he really loved her and loved her with pure love. Perhaps everyone should understand love, this sublime feeling that is sometimes sweet and sometimes filled with sadness, but despite this sadness, it is still worth experiencing. As the famous Georgian writer Guram Dochanashvili would say, "Love is turning the earth around."

### Discussion

This study emphasized the importance of obedience and pure love. Milton does not forbid the reader from using his imagination or thinking about the correctness of his own opinion. I emphasize once more that opinions are subjective and that the coin has two sides. What is acceptable to one person may not be acceptable to another. The study explains the behavior of Adam and Eve, their thoughts, and the views and ideas of various researchers. In the paper, Adam's pure love is also given, which may be said to have convinced him to leave Eden.

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