
Transgressions, Conflicts and Reconciliations in Satan, Adam and Eve in Paradise Lost

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Abstract:

Paradise lost book ix is the most important because it is the main source of the biggest conflict occurred to the whole of humankind with the Fall of Man. The book presents the conflict in the form of a dialogue between Eve and Satan on one hand and Eve and Adam on the other. The eating of the fruit of tree of knowledge is the greatest conflict leading to the original Sin and ever since man has been subjected to suffering, disease and death.

Satan had already searched far and wide for a suitable creature into which he could enter to carry out his nefarious purpose. He came to the conclusion that the serpent is the most suitable of the beasts for his wicked purposes. He is the most cunning and crafty of the beasts. He is so crafty that if he enters its body, nobody, would suspect that his actions were not the result of his own guile, hat of some diabolical power that possessed it and animated it. Satan's reconciliation comes about with his decision to assume the shape of a serpent to tempt Eve to take to Sin.

Satan's Long Soliloquy : Its Significance

In this Book there are three long soliloquies, one of which is assigned to each of the three chief characters, the longest being the present soliloquy of Satan. The soliloquy reveals not only his inner anguish, his passion for revenge, but also his consciousness of his own degradation. There was a time when he could wage war against the Almighty, and considerably reduce the number of his adorers so much so that He was obliged to create this new race of man to make up the numbers thus impaired. His resolve

to have revenge on God through the ruin of this newly created race, whom, he finds, God was,

“Determined to advance into our room
A creature formed of earth, and him
endow.

Exalted from so base original,
With Heavenly spoils, our spoils. What
he decreed

He effected; Man he made, and for him
built

Magnificent this World, and Earth his
seat,

Him lord pronounced, and, O indignity !

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Subjected to his service Angel-wings,
And flaming ministers to watch and tend
Their earthy charge.”

He was afraid of the vigilance of these
angels and had catered Eden like a thief,
under cover of darkness, and enveloped
in mist.

His Foul Descent into a Serpent

Not only that, he now searched for a serpent in which to hide himself and carry out his wicked design. It was a 'foul descent' for one who had once dared fight with gods and had aspired to become the God himself. He knows that revenge recoils on itself, but such is his passion for revenge that he does not care as to what may happen to himself. God created Mao to spite them, and now he is determined to return spite with spite by ruining this, "man of clay, son of despite." So saying he began his midnight search for the serpent, and at last found him sleeping on a grassy herb, "fearless, unfeared," and entered its body through its mouth:

“In at his mouth
The Devil entered, and his brutal sense,
In heart or head, possessing soon
inspired
With act intelligential; but his sleep
Disturbed not, waiting close the
approach of morn.”

The reconciliation begins in Act II in which Adam and Eve prepare of a day's labour in a blissful mood.

First element of Transgression : Eve's Suggestion

At this stage Eve suggested what on the face of it is logical enough. They had so far been working together in fields and pastures, tending and watering the plants and shaping the flower beds.

This day, however, she proposes to Adam that they should work separately so that they can compare how much work each can perform independently:

“Let us divide our labours—thou where
choice
Leads thee, or where most needs,
whether to wind
The woodbine round this arbors, or
direct
The clasping ivy where to climb ; while
I,
In yonder spring of roses intermixed
With myrtle, find what to redress till
noon.”

When they work together, much of their time is wasted in exchanging looks of love or in conversation. They would, therefore, put in more work if they work separately.

Adams Warning

This suggestion was not liked by Adam although his resistance was very feeble. He cautioned her

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against Satanic powers that may be lurking around. He told her that it will not be good for her to be away from him alone in the fields, for there could be danger for her. This suggestion hurt the feelings of Eve, for it implied that she may not be able to withstand the Satanic powers alone, "as one who loves and some unkindness meets." Eve's resentment was very much like the resentment of children when they are told that they will not be able to do something alone. She seemed to say, like a modern adolescent, "How can I ever grow up if you won't let me?" Ultimately, Adam allows Eve to go alone but adds:

"Go; for thy stay, not free, absents thee more
Go in thy native innocence, rely
On what thou hast of virtue; summon
all,
For God toward thee hath done His part;
do thine."

Here we get an account of Milton's favourite doctrine of free will:

"Within himself
The danger lies, yet lies within his
power:
Against his will he can receive no harm.

But God left free the will, for what
obeys
Reason is free, and Reason He made
right,
But bid her well beware, and still erect,

Lest by some fair-appearing good
surprised,
She dictate false and misinform the Will
To do what God expressly hath forbid."

Eve still insists on working separately. Adam at last allows her to go alone. Before leaving him, Eve very guilefully remarks that she is going away with his permission; later in the book she will blame him for allowing her to go. He should have been more firm and asserted his authority as the head of the family. Eve has fallen even before the Fall and Milton misses no opportunity of exposing the pettiness, the frivolity, and cunning of the fair sex.

Second element of Transgression : Eve Walks away

Eve takes away her hand from the hand of her loving husband and moves away from him. Her majesty and grace have been stressed by comparing her to a number of goddesses of classical mythology. As she walked away, she looked more like a goddess than Diana, Pales or Pomona or Ceres. The wealth of classical allusions here brings out Milton's classical learning besides visualising the grace of Eve's personality. As she moved away, Adam continued to watch her. He urged her to return soon, and Eve promised to return in time for their mid-day meal and afternoon rest:

"Her long with ardent look his eye
pursued
Delighted, but desiring more her stay.

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Oft, he to her his charge of quick return
Repealed ; she to him as oft engaged
To be returned by noon amid the bower,
And all things in best order to invite
Noontide repast, or afternoon's repose.”

But the poet comments, "Eve was very much mistaken. The enemy of Man, Satan, was lying in wait to tempt and seduce her, and thus ruin their blissful state for ever. Never again would she enjoy the bliss, food or rest in the Garden of Eden. Her days of carefree innocence were over :

“O much deceived, much failing,
hapless Eve,
Of thy presumed return event perverse.

Thou never from that hour in Paradise
Found'st either sweet repast or sound
repose ;
Such ambush, hid among sweet flowers
and shades,
Waited with hellish rancor imminent
To intercept thy way, or send thee back
Despoiled of innocence, of faith, of
bliss.”

The conflict again arises in Act III through temptation, seduction and the Fall of Eve.

Third element of Transgression : Act III Satan and Eve

Act III of the sequence is taken up by the temptation, seduction, and the Fall of Eve. Like Act II, this Act, too, is largely in the form of dialogue, between Eve and Satan. Satan had searched for Adam and Eve since day-dawn in every nook and corner of the earthly Paradise. His one great desire was that he should find Eve alone, and now as he found Eve working alone, away from her husband, his joy knew no bounds. She was alone and unprotected, and he was confident of seducing her. She was working among flowers, but she herself was the most beautiful of the flowers :

*“Herself, though fairest unsupported flower
From her best prop so far,
and storm so nigh.”*

Satan, in the form of the snake, moved boldly closer and closer to her, sometimes seen and sometimes hidden in flowers. The spot where she was working was more beautiful than a number of beautiful gardens described in mythology and literature. The idyllic charms of the place have been dwelt upon at length, for soon that idyl would be no more. Satan admired the garden, but he admired Eve much more.

Her heavenly form was like that of angels but softer and more feminine. Her graceful innocence, the manner or expression of every gesture of hers, or the smallest of her actions overawed Satan's malice, and deprived his ferocity of the violent intention with which he had come there. For the moment, the Evil One

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(Satan) stood there absorbed and forgetful of his own evil, and for the time remained good because of being confounded. He was disarmed of his inimical designs, of cunning, of hatred, of envy, and of revenge. But the hot hell that burnt within him constantly, 'even though he might be in the midst of Heaven, quickly ended his delight (in the sights of Paradise), and now tortured him all the more, as he saw more and more of that pleasure which was not destined' for him:

“ That space the Evil One abstracted stood
From his own evil, and for the time remained
Stupidly good, of enmity disarmed,
Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge.
But the hot hell that always in him burns,
Though in mid Heaven, soon ended his delight,
And tortures him now more he sees
Of pleasures not for him ordained ; then soon
Fierce hate he recollects, and all his thoughts
Of mischief, gratulating, thus excites. ”

Satan : His Passion for Revenge

Satan excited his passion for revenge to his former fierceness by talking to himself. He reminds himself that he had not come there not to taste the pleasure of Paradise, but to destroy, for he can get pleasure only in his work of destruction. He must destroy Adam and Eve, for that is the only way in which he can wreck his

vengeance on God. He was lucky in finding Eve alone for it would have been much more difficult to seduce her, if Adam was there to protect her. It appears from his soliloquy that he is afraid both of the intellectual and physical powers of Adam. He realises that he is no longer a formidable enemy exempt from wounds—as he was when he warred in heaven—so much has he been debased by Hell :

Foe not in formidable, exempt from wound,
I not; so much hath Hell debased, and pain
Enfeebled me, to what I was in Heaven.

Eve was fair, divinely fair, fit for the love of Gods, and her beauty was certainly awesome. But he would approach her with hatred more terrible and awesome than her beauty. He would conceal his terrible hatred under a fair show of love, and would in this way ruin her.

The Great Temptation as Transgression resultant upon series of Conflicts :

Having thus encouraged himself and having revived his fierce hatred, Satan, in the guise of the serpent, bold moved towards Eve. He did not creep on the ground, as he would do later in / the epic, but moves on "a base of rising folds", with his head raised high. The beauty of the snake is described thus :

*Fold above fold, a surging maze ; his head
Crested aloft, and carbuncle his eyes ;*

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With burnished neck of verdant gold,
erect
Amidst his circling spires, that on the
grass
Floated redundant. Pleasing was his
shape
And lovely ; never since of serpent kind
Lovelier.

There are countless allusions to beautiful snakes in literature and mythology, but no snake was ever lovelier than this one. He comes and plays about close to Eve and within her sight. She was too busy to mind him, but at last he succeeded in attracting her attention. She was very much surprised when she heard it talking to her in a human voice. He was first of the beasts of the field who talked to her in this human way.

Another element of Transgression : Use of Falsehood

Satan now poses as a friend and well-wisher and uses hypocrisy to seduce Eve which Eve could not detect because of her inexperience. Falsely he tells her that he got the power of language and the power of reasoning by eating the fruit of a tree. Eve becomes interested and curious and asks the serpent to lead her to it. But when he brings her to the very tree whose fruit was not allowed to be eaten by her, her first reaction is that of a good and innocent person; She tells him that she cannot touch the fruit :

“Serpant, we might have spared our
coming hither,
Fruitless to me, though fruit
be here to excess ;

The credit of whose virtue
rest with thee ;
Wondrous, indeed, if cause
of such effects.
But of this tree we may not
taste nor touch ;
God so commanded, and
left that command
Sole daughter of his voice :
the rest', we live
Law to ourselves ; our
reason is our law.”

Consequences of Transgression : Nature Wounded and Pained : Eve's Fall

All nature was wounded by the sin that was thus committed. Pain was felt by the various objects and forces of Nature:

“Earth felt the wound, and Nature from
her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave
signs of woe
That all was lost.”

Eve felt elated, and even thought of the possibility of her becoming a God. She felt that she was growing mature in knowledge :

“In knowledge, as the Gods who all
things know;
Though others envy what they cannot
give—
For, had the gift been theirs, it had not
here

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Thus grown. Experience, next to thee I
owe
Best guide : not following thee, I had
remained
In ignorance : thou open'st Wisdom's
way,
And giv'st access, though secret she
retire.”

Her Triviality

The triviality of her mind is revealed when she thinks that, perhaps, God, who is so high and at such a distance, has not seen her, or perhaps He is too busy with other matters to take note of such a petty violation of His command as the eating of the fruit which grow there in such abundance, and which even the beasts can partake of. Then she deliberates whether she should tell all about the days happenings to Adam or not. First, she thinks that she should keep the secret to herself and deny Adam the knowledge and thus claim equality or even superiority over him. But then the fear of death looms large over her imagination. What if she dies and Adam marries again. ? The very idea torments her mind. And then her love for Adam prompts her to share her secret with him:

“But keep the odd of knowledge in my
power
Without copartner ? So to add what
wants
In female sex, the more to draw his love
And render me more equal and perhaps
—
A thing not undesirable — sometimes

Superior ?”

However, pleasure in the idea of superiority over Adam is very short-lived : it is followed by another thought. Suppose, as God said, that by eating the fruit she should die :

“Then I shall be no more

And Adam, wedded to another Eve,
Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct.

A death to think. Confirmed, then I
resolve

Adam shall share with me in bliss or
woe.”

And finally she says,

“So dear I love him that with him all
deaths

I could endure, without him live no
life.”

But she was sure that she had risen in the chain of being while she had actually fallen. Thus she is guilty of the sin of jealousy and pride in addition to that of disobedience and intemperance.

The reconciliation occurs in Act IV when Adam and Eve meet in the Garden of Eden after Eve's fall.

Results of Transgression : Conflict and Search for Hope and Balance as Reconciliation:

To Eve he stresses the audacity of her presumptuous act and the great peril it will eventually provoke. But what is past is done.

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Unfallen Adam does not fall into recrimination. He tries to find some hope to cling to : that perhaps the death penalty may not be inflicted; that perhaps the deed is not so grave in that the fruit had been already tasted by the serpent; it was profaned before Eve tasted it. And indeed the serpent, the first taster, is still alive, Eve has said,—climbing to manhood—a strong inducement to the two of them who, similarly tasting, may climb to godhead or angelhood. He cannot think that the wise Creator will in earnest destroy the two creatures set over the new Creation, thereby defeating the entire project of which they are key figures. Adam cannot think of God abolishing His creatures and thus enabling the Adversary to mock the precarious condition of those He favours. He cannot see Satan being given the opportunity to say—"God destroyed me ; now He has destroyed man ; whom will He destroy next ?"

Adam Seduced and Fallen

She invites him to taste the fruit:

On my experience, Adam, freely taste And fear of death deliver to the winds.

Adam eats the fruit not out of ignorance of the consequences but overcome with female charms :

With liberal hand; he scrupled not to eat,
Against his better knowledge, not
deceived,
But fondly overcome with female
charm.

Earth trembled from her entrails, as
again

In pangs, and Nature gave a second
groan;

Sky loured, and, muttering thunder,

Wept at completing of the mortal sin

Original.

Nature is wounded once again, all objects and forces of nature tremble with fear and horror at Adam's transgression. Adam has fallen and the original sin has been committed.

Again yet another conflict arises in Act V with the emergence of the immediate consequences of the Fall of Man.

Act V: Immediate Consequences of the Fall

As was the case with Eve so is the case with Adam. The effect of eating the fruit is instantaneous. In the case of Eve the poet described the effect of eating the fruit in terms of gluttony; in the case of Adam, the vocabulary used is that of sexual indulgence :

But that false fruit

Far other Operation first displayed,

Carnal desire inflaming. He on Eve

Began to cast lascivious eyes; she him

As wantonly repaid. In lust they burn :

Till Adam thus 'gan Eve to dalliance
move.

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The use of the phrases like "carnal desire inflaming", "lascivious eyes", "wantonly repaid", and "dalliance move", is extremely significant. The immediate effect of eating the forbidden fruit is the birth of passion in both Adam and Eve. Eve "inflames" Adam's sense "with ardour to enjoy". He "forbore not glance or toy of amorous intent". Eve's eye "darted contagious fire". Naturally they take their "fill of love and love's disport." They seal "their naked guilt" with "amorous play".

Exhausted by their amorous play, they go to sleep, which fails to refresh them because it was caused by the unhealthy vapours, which rising from below, oppressed them and clouded their rational faculties.

The last act of the drama depicts the immediate consequences of their sin. When they awake, the soul irrational however takes over from the soul rational through lust, they weep and are spiritually much agitated:

For understanding ruled not, and the will
Heard not her lore, both in subjection
now

To sensual appetite, who from beneath
Usurping over sovereign reason claimed
Superior sway 'from thus distempered
breast,

Adam, estranged in look and altered
style,

Speech intermitted thus to Eve renewed.

The New Sense of Shame

Now they realise that their celestial bliss had gone and they have become grossly earthly. Their naked bodies now seem shameful—"how unlike to that first naked glory." Their innocence, which had so far protected them, makes them feel shame in their nakedness before each other. So they go to the forest to cover themselves with fig leaves. But the more they cover themselves, the more naked they feel themselves to be. they know both good and evil, and that they have lost all goodness and "evil got" :

Bad fruit of knowledge, if this be to
know

Both good and evil, good lost and evil
got,

Which leaves us naked thus, of honour
void,

Of innocence, of faith, of purity,

Our wonted ornaments, now soil'd and
stain'd.

With their transgression, hate, distrust,
suspicion, discord etc., enter the Garden of
Eden.

They begin to quarrel and accuse each other.
Adam accuses Eve of disobedience and defiance
of his instructions. He says that Eve did not heed

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his warning about going alone to work. He accuses her of bringing God's wrath on them said their race. Eve, in return, tells Adam that the trap laid for her was so great and the temptation so severe that she could not resist them; She accuses Adam of not exercising his authority with a firmer hand :

Being as I am, why didst not thou the head

Command me absolutely not to go,
Going into such danger as thou saidst ?

Thus they continued to quarrel for a long time :

Thus they in mutual accusations spent
The fruitless hour, but neither self-
condemning,

And of their vain contest appear'd no end.

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