

Analysis of the paradise lost

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



The fall of Adam and Eve is the climax of Paradise Lost taking place in Book 9. The fall is preceded by the separation scene in which Adam and Eve chose to work alone in the garden. When they choose to separate, Adam and Eve become more vulnerable to temptation. Their separation is not limited to the physical. They are emotionally separated and commit sin against each other. Satan takes this chance to bring Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This act is against the command given to them by God. The result is the fall of humanity. The separation scene is the catalyst for the fall of humanity. The cause for the separation is undeniably Eve's selfishness.

The separation scene begins with a discussion between Eve and Adam. Eve desires to split up their work for the day; rather than work together, she wants to work alone. The problem is not that Adam and Eve can never be physically separated from each other. Adam even says " For solitude sometimes is best society / And short retirement urges sweet return" (Paradise Lost 9. 249-250). Adam makes it clear that a short time apart can even be good. Eve is not seeking this short physical separation that Adam is talking about. She desires instead a longer emotional separation. Adam explains to Eve that:

Yet not so strictly hath our Lord imposed

Labour, as to debar us when we need

Refreshment, whether food, or talk between,

Food of the mind, or this sweet intercourse

Of looks and smiles, for smiles from reason flow,

To brute denied, and are of love the food,

Love not the lowest end of human life.

For not to irksome toil, but to delight

He made us, and delight to reason joined. (PL 9. 235-43)

The work given to Adam and Eve by God is not strict. They have the freedom to relax and enjoy one another's presence. They are able to enkindle the love between them through emotional bonding by looking and smiling. God made them to love and delight in one another. Therefore Eve's request is not simply to be alone in the garden but to break this emotional bond with Adam. She wants to take a break from the bonding. This emotion separation can be equated to a divorce because Adam and Eve are no longer acting as "one flesh." Their emotions are separated. When she asks that they work apart, Eve is seeking an emotional separation from Adam.

Eve's inclination to separate from Adam comes from her selfish nature. God created her as one who looks inwardly. As Eve wakes after being created by God from the rib of Adam she went to look at her reflection in a lake. This is the first instance in which Eve's self absorption is visible

As I bent down to look, just opposite,

A shape within the watery gleam appeared

Bending to look on me, I started back,

It started back, but pleased I soon returned,

Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks

Of sympathy and love; there I had fixed

Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire... (PL 460-466)

When Eve gazes at her own reflection it is a reminder of the story of Narcissus who falls in love with his reflection. The language used by Eve as she communicates this event to Adam resembles that of one who is in love with themselves. She seems to play lovingly with her reflection. Eve describes this experience as “vain desire” for her self. This is just the beginning of Eve’s narcissistic attitude which eventually leads to her separation from Adam.

Eve’s desire to separate from Adam is against what God commands them. God first commands them to never eat of the tree of knowledge and second says that “...[their] reason is [their] law” (PL 9. 654). The smiles which Adam and Eve share are derived from this reason. If they are separate, they can not share these smiles and lose the emotional bond which they share. Therefore Eve’s wish to separate herself from Adam is against her reason and breaks the command given by God. Since Adam and Eve choose to separate, their fall is not only from eating the fruit but also from their emotional separation.

Eating the apple violates the greatest commandment. The separation scene violates the second greatest commandment. Jesus says that the two greatest

commandments are to "...love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind... [and to] love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets'" (Matthew 22: 37-40 RSV). These commands given by Jesus parallel with the commands given to Adam and Eve. The first greatest commandment is broken when they choose to eat the apple. Eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is an act of sin because it is an act which neglects the love of the Father. It is a failure to love God as commanded. Adam and Eve disobey God by eating the fruit. This is a sin against the greatest commandment. The second greatest commandment is broken before they eat the fruit. When Adam and Eve separate from one another it causes them to sin because they are failing to love. Therefore the separation scene is part of the fall of man because before Adam and Eve sin against God, they sin against each other.

The sin of Adam and Eve against one another brings about their sin against God. Adam and Eve were created to be together and because of that, they compliment each other. The only thing that God said wasn't good, was when he created man. "' It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him...'" (Genesis 2: 18). God created Eve to be a perfect fit for Adam. Without her he is imperfect. When Eve asks Adam to be separate, she is asking that Adam go back to his inferior state of being, absent of his perfect fit. When separate from Adam, Eve reflects upon herself an unhealthy amount. She no longer has Adam to keep her in check by sharing herself with him. It is visible even before she leaves him. Eve puts her own will above Adam's. She leave's even though she should respect the

authority of Adam over her own will. The opposite could be said about Adam. Without Eve, he has no one to project outwardly upon. Adam explains this to Eve:

I from the influence of thy looks receive

Access in every virtue, in thy sight

More wise, more watchful, stronger, if need were

Of outward strength; while shame thou looking on,

Shame to be overcome or overreached

Would utmost vigour raise, and raised unite.

Why shouldst not thou like sense within thee feel

When I am present, and thy trial choose

With me, best witness of thy virtue tried. (PL 309-317)

Adam receives virtue solely from Eve's presence. Since he was made to protect and look over God's creation, he needs Eve to express these virtues. Her presence keeps him accountable to remain virtuous. Likewise, Eve will pervert her inner reflection without Adam to keep her accountable. She won't have any other obligations and will only worry about herself. Adam and Eve's separation turns out to be problematic because they were made to be together.

The obvious result of Adam and Eve's separation is their eventual separation from God. This comes about when they eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Eve is the first to eat of the fruit. After working alone, Eve has time to contemplate about herself to a greater extent. She is now emotionally and physically separate from Adam. The serpent observes Eve "...mindless the while, / Herself, though fairest unsupported flower, / From her best prop so far, and storm so nigh" (PL 9. 431-433). Eve is unaware of her surroundings because she is reflecting inwardly. This makes her vulnerable like an unsupported flower as a storm approaches. Adam is not there to support Eve as Satan comes to tempt her. He also catches Eve in a weaker mental state as her narcissistic mindset has been developing to a more selfish state. Eve's emotional and physical separation from Adam as well as her narcissistic flaw, lead to her falling into the temptation of Satan.

Eve's inward reflection is preparation for Satan to tempt her successfully. Satan is able to use Eve's selfishness against her. First he flatters her which elevates her trust. As they arrive at the tree Eve at first does not want to disobey God and eat the fruit. Satan tells her that she is forbidden to eat of the tree "...to keep ye low and ignorant..." (PL 9. 704). He claims that "...ye shall be as gods, / knowing both good and evil as they know" (PL 9. 708-709). The serpent's words hit the selfish side of Eve. She desires not to be low and ignorant but to be like a god. She questions God's command " But if death / Bind us after-bands, what profits then / Our inward freedom?" (PL 9. 760-762). Eve doesn't think her inward freedom should be restricted like God has decided. Once again Eve is seeking separation. This time she seeks

separation from the will of God instead of Adam. By eating the fruit, Eve emotionally leaves God and commits sin to a greater degree.

Just like Eve's inward reflection elevates upon their separation, Adam's outward reflection also grows. Without Eve to project his love upon, his desires are built up inside of him instead. Adam realizes to a greater extent how much he needs Eve.

Waiting desirous her return, had wove

Of choicest flowers a garland to adorn

Her tresses, and her rural labours crown

As reapers oft are wont their harvest queen

Great joy he promised to his thoughts, and new

Solace in her return, so long delayed... (PL 9. 839-844)

Adam's passion for Eve is so great that he needs to provide for her even when she is absent. He creates a garland out of flowers to give to her out of love. At the same time he is brought happiness just by the thought of her return. A short amount of time without Eve feels like an eternity to Adam. His desires for her increase exponentially. Adam creates Eve a garland to curb his yearning for his beloved.

By the time Eve is reunited with Adam, it is too late. Adam no longer has the ability to depart from her again. He too must indulge in the sin against God. Adam is "Certain [his] resolution is to die..." (PL 907). Because Eve fell, he

knows he too must fall. “ I feel / The link of nature draw me: flesh of flesh, / Bone of my bone thou art, and from thy state / Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe” (PL 913-916). By this point Adam has learned the repercussions of being without Eve. This feeling combined with his natural desire to be with her causes him to follow her even into sin. He describes them as one entity in which they will not be parted again. If Adam hadn't already known what it felt like to be without Eve, he would not have indulged in this sin with her. Therefore the separation of Adam from Eve is integral to his own fall.

The sin of Adam and Eve come about by their failure to follow the commands given to them by God. First he commands them never to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Then he tells them to use their reason to govern themselves. Adam and Eve fail in both of these commands. Eve's narcissism brings about their separation. This is against the reason that is given to them by God. Their failure to reason brings about their final separation from God. Eve is the first to fall. Her inward reflection without the help of Adam is her failing point. Adam's outward reflection of Eve brings him along to their pitfall. In the end, Adam and Eve's failure to follow the commands given to them brings sin upon all of humanity.