

Paradise lost vs genesis theology religion essay



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Unlike the Biblical account of the fall in the Book of Genesis, with his epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, John Milton adds a lot of detail about the complete story of Man, the beginning of Satan, his rise and Man's Fall. Although the ideas for *Paradise Lost* came from a few pages in the Book of Genesis, Milton's account kept readers wondering what was going to happen next. Because he was going against the church already with *Paradise Lost*, it was more intriguing for him to take the same ideas in the Bible and extend them into more detail, making Satan look like the Hero and succeeding at what he wanted to do. Satan the perfect angel banished from nothing to the pits of Hell, with no chance of return, conjures up a plan to get revenge, building a legacy and an army to overthrow those who put him there. God created the Son, the angels, Man, Heaven, Earth and everything else. Milton faced a difficult task with creating tension about what would happen since God already knew. In *Paradise Lost*, God is almost emotionless or aloof; he embodies pure reason and pure justice, and every response he gives seems to be cold. In Genesis God is wise and known as the creator and is more the narrator of what is happening than in Milton's epic. Also He is referred to as Lord God, instead of God, like Milton refers to Him. So, in close to the start and fall Man to summarize the creation and reason for human nature is " God gave Man free will, from Man's free will, sin and death came into the world."

Paradise Lost was about Adam and Eve, how they came to be created, the fall of Satan and his journey to get back at God by corrupting Adam and Eve. The main plot of this took place in God's creation called the Garden of Eden. *Paradise Lost* is similar to the book of Genesis because its story comes from the main pages of Genesis, chapters one through four. My thesis is: While

the Book of Genesis portrays Satan as an evil antagonist, Milton's *Paradise Lost* presents him as a more sympathetic character. Perhaps not a hero, but an anti-hero. An anti-hero is someone who lacks the attributes of a hero, such as courage or being morally good. In some ways, Milton presents Satan as a modern Prometheus. Prometheus was a Greek God, who at any cost gave fire to humans; just as it can be argued that, at an even greater cost, Satan gave knowledge to humans. An example of an anti-hero in popular culture would be Samuel L. Jackson's character in the film "Pulp Fiction". His character quotes the Bible to justify his occupation as a hit man, "The path of the righteous man is beset on all sides by the inequities of the selfish and the tyranny of evil men. Blessed is he who in the name of charity and goodwill shepherds the weak through the valley of darkness, for he is truly his brother's keeper and the finder of lost children. And I will strike down upon thee with great vengeance and furious anger those who attempt to poison and destroy my brothers. And you will know my name is the Lord when I lay my vengeance upon thee." [Jeremiah]. In summary, I am comparing Milton's story of *Paradise* with the Bible's story of the Garden of Eden.

Paradise Lost begins with a prologue by Milton which states his purpose and an epic description of Satan who is depicted on his back with the other rebellious angels chained to the lake of fire. Genesis starts out saying "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, And God said, Let there be light and there was light and God separated the light from the dark" (Genesis). Milton depicts God as a being who you can converse with, as if He was an angel, and no higher than anyone else— not even Satan. Before the

rebellion, Satan was formerly known as Lucifer; he had been the greatest angel and second only to God. The other angels who revolted against God were defeated and cast down from Heaven into the fires of Hell with Satan. “ Hell is the place Justice made for those who rebel against God” (www. clifnotes. com). For nine days, Satan and his followers were lying helpless in the fires of Hell, until Satan grew angry, thinking about all the pleasures he had missed and his unending pain. Looking around, Satan saw a lot of suffering. But he only felt stubborn pride and hopelessness. “ He knew the fires would never go out and the torture would never end. As Satan looked to the left and the right, and saw all his defeated followers wallowing in flames and his right hand assistant that Satan later names Beelzebub”(www. paradiselost. org). Surprisingly Satan finally speaks. Milton explains the reason why Satan was cast down into the depths of Hell because Satan became jealous of God’s son.

In Book One of Paradise Lost Satan is speaking, as if he has free will. Satan is portrayed as this huge angel who rose up against God in jealousy towards God’s son and is now a leader who is frustrated with the limits put on him. “ Through pain and despair Satan speaks, he talks to Beelzebub and his followers he talks about a new way to get revenge and talks about a prophecy of a new world where demons and evil are welcome, And revenge on God’s creation” (www. paradiselost. org). Satan then awakens all his legions and chiefs leaders to rise in numbers, he gives a speech that comforts them with hope of regaining heaven and lastly tells them of a new world. So they build a kingdom known as Pandemonium and create a council. “ A new kind of creature to be created, according to ancient prophecy or

reports from heaven, to find out the truth Satan refers to his council of demons in the place of Pandemonium” (www. cliffnotes. com). Satan takes on the voyage to go to God’s creation, but he encounters his offspring, Sin and Death, guarding the gates of hell. His daughter Sin unlocks the gate and Satan continues his journey across the great gulf of chaos between heaven and hell which ends Book Two.

Before the Fall, Adam is nearly a perfect human being as imagined. “ He is physically attractive, mentally adept, and spiritually profound” (www. gradesaver. com). He stands out in the Garden of Eden at the head of the hierarchical pyramid. Eve is the only one who compares to him, and only in physical beauty. When Satan becomes envious of God’s son, Satan creates sin from his head, and an incestuous relationship with his daughter Sin. They produce an offspring— Death. Sin is a beautiful woman but at the same time hideous. She is half human and half serpent. Hellhounds that surround her and go in and out of her womb. “ The hell hounds are the product of her incestuous relationship with her son Death” who was the product of the relationship she had with her father Satan (www. gradesaver. com). In the book of Genesis, it mentions nothing about the birth of Satan, Sin, and Death. In the book of Genesis, it mainly talks about the creation of the world, the seventh day as the day God rests, the creation of Man and Woman, and their Fall.

About the birth of Man and Woman, the Book of Genesis says, “ Then Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living creature. And the Lord God planted a Garden of Eden, in the east and there he had put the man he had

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formed, the tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”(Genesis)

Milton’s’ version of the birth of Adam in Paradise Lost is somewhat similar to the book of Genesis, “ The first human created by God from the dust of earth, who was created by God after the angels who rebelled were defeated” (www. gradesaver. com). Similar in birth but Genesis did not mention much about the war between God and the angel nor a timeline of when the first man came to be. It was kind of like there was earth and now there is man in Genesis. In Paradise Lost it gave the back story of the war in Heaven and why God created man.

As for the second birth, I would like to examine the birth of Eve in the two books and the birth of Sin. It is an interesting fact that these are two women — one full human being and the other half human - half serpent. In the book of Genesis, God caused sleep to fall upon man, and while sleeping, he took one of Adam’s ribs and made it into a woman and brought her to man, who later named her Eve. Her name is Eve because she was the mother of all “ living.” In Paradise Lost, Eve is created from Adam’s rib as his helper to maintain the Garden of Eden. Before the Fall, Eve was created to serve man. But Sin was created to help destroy man. Eve was presented as submissive to Adam and to an extent dependent on him. Their births are both from the body of who they are serving and yet both books go into depth about only one of how they came to be; Eve from the book of Genesis and Sin from Paradise Lost —light vs. dark. Milton adds a lot of imagery to the relationship between Sin and Satan, which ultimately ends with the incestuous birth of

Death. But Adam and Eve offspring, Cain and Abel, do not come until after the Fall of man and they are barely mentioned in Paradise Lost.

In book three of Paradise Lost " God sees Satan flying towards Earth and foretells the success of his evil mission to tempt man. God then explains his purpose to his son of grace and mercy towards man, but declares justice must be met" (www. paradiselost. org). To get into God's creation, the Garden of Eden, Satan disguises himself as a cherub. Satan then pretends he has come to praise God's new creation and tricks an angel into showing him the way to the creation of " man's home." Satan enters and " lands on Mt. Niphates and has moments of doubt, he looks up and the light from the sun reminds him of the grace he had in heaven" (www. paradiselost. org). Filled with pride, he goes to corrupt mankind. The Garden of Eden was protected on all sides by high walls of trees and plants. Satan gets past the walls, finds Adam and Eve, and " all the animals playing peacefully and lying lazily beside them"(www. gradesaver. com). Satan is speechless as he sees this beauty and the continuous joy of Adam and Eve. He overhears them talk about God's commandment, " not to eat from the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil." Satan plans to change that and cause them to transgress. The sight of Adam and Eve's joy and love crushes Satan, so he takes this opportunity to whisper to Eve what she was looking at and tell her she was the most beautiful thing he had ever saw.

This is the start of the Fall of Man. Eve then " thinks about the moments of her creation as she walks to the lake to get water. There she sees her reflection. Eve then sees Adam and notices he wasn't as beautiful as her in the reflection" (www. paradiselost. org). God's angels take notice that there

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is an intruder in the Garden, and Satan faces Gabriel. Before they engage in battle. Gabriel, one of Gods angels, “ tells him to look up at the stars to see how you are weighted” (www. cliffnotes. com). It is clear to Satan that he will not win, so he leaves on his own accord. Later, God sends another one of his angels named Raphael to warn Adam and Eve about Satan. Raphael tells them how Satan was cast down, and how the world was created so mankind could one day replace the fallen angels in heaven.

Satan then sneaks back into the Garden of Eden, disguised as a serpent. Finding Eve alone he induces her to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. In Paradise Lost, Satan circled the Earth seven continuous nights, staying on the dark side of earth. On the eighth night he found a secret way into the garden. But in Genesis it summarizes the creation of man and earth as done in seven days. Clearly Milton tries to keep the idea of something significant happening in seven days, whether it is Satan sneaking back or the creation of Man and earth.

From the time of Eve’s creation “ she is linked to the flaw of vanity” (www. gradesaver. com) and Satan uses this against her when he becomes a serpent in Milton’s version of Paradise Lost. There is an implied idea that Eve understands her position in the hierarchical arrangement that her and Adam share, which leads me to think that when she sees her reflection, and compares it to Adam, she doesn’t understand why she is beneath him if she is physically more beautiful than Adam, which than adds her insight for why and Satan fuels that. But in the Book of Genesis it refers to Satan as the serpent and how Adam and Eve are tempted by him. But it is unclear how the serpent came to be evil. Not in Genesis, but other parts of the Bible, the <https://assignbuster.com/paradise-lost-vs-genesis-theology-religion-essay/>

writers refer to the serpent as being a representation of Satan. In Genesis “ the serpent is craftier than any other beast in the Garden” (Genesis). Satan said to the woman “ Did God actually say, you shall not eat of any tree in the Garden” (Genesis)? In Paradise Lost we know Satan deceived her, but what exactly did he say? “ We may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden,” says Eve in the Book of Genesis. The serpent told the woman “ you will not surely die for God knows when you eat it, your eyes will surely be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil” (Genesis). “ The woman then saw the tree as good food and with her desire to make one wise she took its fruit and ate and gave some to her husband Adam” (www. cliffnotes. com). During this event, in the book of Genesis, Adam is said to be with her as she ate. After they ate, their eyes were opened and they knew they were naked. According to Milton’s Paradise Lost, after Eve eats the fruit from the tree, she immediately changes. She thinks of ways of becoming equal to Adam or even his superior. But fearful of losing Adam to another female creation, she decides that he must eat the fruit also. Adam does so willingly, in fear of losing Eve.

Milton presents a story and adds a swing more like a small drama of love between the two in order not to lose each other. In Genesis, after the fruit is eaten, the story jumps directly into the sound of the “ Lord God walking in the Garden in the cool of the day of man”(Genesis). Not knowing what has happened until man confesses what has happened, the Bible story blames the serpent for Eves’ deception. In Milton’s version, God already knows what has happened, and man runs and hides. When they hear God’s voice, they still hide. Then, right before God is about to pass judgment on man, He gives

the reasons why in the Book of Genesis and also states what Man will suffer after being banished.