

# God as a totalitarian figure in Milton's Paradise Lost

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Levak, Helena

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Sveučilište J. J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

Filozofski fakultet Osijek

Studij: Dvopredmetni sveučilišni studij engleskog jezika i književnosti -  
nastavnički smjer i hrvatskog jezika i književnosti - nastavnički smjer

Helena Levak

**Bog kao totalitarni vladar u Miltonovom *Izgubljenom raj***

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Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Borislav Berić

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## SUMMARY:

This paper explores the character of God in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the characteristics he shares with totalitarian leaders. God is evaluated not as an all-knowing, always right ethereal being but through "human standards". His morals, actions, and tactics are compared to human behaviour through history. In *Paradise Lost*, the eternal dichotomy of God as a force of Good, and Satan as a force of Evil, is shaken, and both characters are found in a grey area, each led by what they believe to be right. Satan can be seen a tragic character, once in one of the top positions of God's "regime", and now a failed revolutionary, trying desperately to change the system, for better or for worse. He is hungry for the "truth" and hopes that current state of the world is not finite and that there is possibility for a change in the leadership, making him a representative of a leftist revolutionary leader. The character of God is not as prominent and strong in appearance as the character of Satan, but his influence is that much greater. God is not as avid a speaker as Satan is, nor is he as directly involved in events, but he has a "blind following" who do work for him. He has a cult of personality, well-developed propaganda tactics, and his rule of fear stretches even beyond the covers of the book.

## KEY WORDS:

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Totalitarianism, God

## INTRODUCTION

*Paradise Lost* is an epic poem written by John Milton, firstly published in 1667, and it is considered by many to be a crown of Milton's poetic work. *Paradise Lost* is based on Christian mythology, specifically on the Old Testament stories of the Fall of Man, and the Fall of Lucifer. The characters in the poem are not only based on their biblical counterparts, but are also influenced by political figures and events of Milton's time. Since the poem was written during the time of great political changes and turmoil in England, and Milton was greatly involved in them, it is logical to assume that they had influenced his work. Milton even regarded poetry as the supreme form of rhetoric and he argued that "to imbued and cherish in a great people the seeds of vertu and publick civility" is one of poetry's chief aims (Rahe 127). This poem is reflective of Milton's political views and moral standards. Milton was very vocal about his political standpoints and his support for Cromwell in his publication *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, written during the trial of Charles I. He claimed that the individual right of resistance to tyranny is justified, "arguing that rebellion against tyrants is due obedience to God" (von Maltzahn 41). Even though Milton supported Cromwell, he did not agree with every aspect of his rule, but he always had to remember the alternative: the rule of the Stuarts (von Maltzahn 43). The Restoration did eventually happen, and Milton barely escaped the death penalty. After all this political turmoil, and the Great Fire of London, Milton finally publishes *Paradise Lost*, a long-planned epic poem, parts of which were presumably written in his earlier days.

It can be said that Milton gave Satan the characteristics of both Charles I and Cromwell to illustrate the flaws of "false" rulers, but he, maybe unknowingly, made his God "worse" than Satan, exceeding the cruelty of any ruler known to humans. Milton depicts Satan as a Machiavellian schemer, and in *Paradise Lost* he is to represent all "false" rulers who are moved by their own wish for glory and power, but we discover in the poem that Satan's wish for government is not an end to itself and that his new regime "serves a putatively higher end" (Rahe, 129). Satan actually has some similarities with Milton himself, since Milton also rebelled against someone who he revered to be a tyrant, but Milton thought he rebelled against an unworthy king (Rahe 131), while Satan rebelled against God, who, according to Milton, cannot be in the wrong. A question then arises whether God as a character in *Paradise Lost* can be judged by human moral standards, and if he can, how does he compare to earthly rulers? Even if God is viewed as a Creator and an omnipotent being, his methods



and actions are hard to justify, and the only redeeming thing that can be said about his character is that he is, in fact, God, so his every decision is good and beyond the comprehension of a mere human.

Even if it were so, it is difficult not to notice the similarities between God's method of ruling with totalitarian regimes, namely Adolf Hitler's and Joseph Stalin's, who had a God-like public image and following. Milton suggests that the replication of God's methods spawns bad rulers on Earth, and God's methods work only for God, but the rebellion of the third of the angels suggests that God's regime is not as good and ideal as one would like to think. Some definitions of totalitarianism include positive vision of social and cultural utopia, often described as political religion, which, in reality, got distorted and could not be followed through (Overy, XXXII). Both Hitler's and Stalin's regimes had a vision of utopia which would be reached if their leadership was followed. God certainly has the same premise in his rule – he has literal Heaven and Paradise under his command, and it does not seem that the conditions in them are perfect – in a relatively short period of time there is a rebellion in one, and an eviction in the other.

The characters of God and Satan in *Paradise Lost* do not represent a traditional dichotomy of Good and Evil, but two characters with a different view of justice and world order. God represents the elite ruler: unreachable to commons, seemingly all-knowing, all-powerful, and indestructible; Satan represents revolutionaries: hungry for change, freedom, and willingness to do anything to achieve it. Satan is a relatable character; he shows humanity in his speeches and his actions, while the character of God is cold and distant, with unlimited powers, and is thus unrelatable. This attitude towards characters can be projected into the real world as well – people tend to dislike the rulers because they are powerful and seemingly untouchable, while “the heroes of the people” are loved because they are simply one of them and thus seemingly reflect their values and lifestyles. The only reason God would be liked by the reader is the fact that he is God and he “exists” in a realm outside *Paradise Lost*. The readers of *Paradise Lost* usually have a preconceived notion about God, and that is that he has ultimate power and is infinitely good, thus all his suspicious actions are overlooked, and the impression of God is always that he is ultimately right in his actions, while Satan is always wrong, whatever his motivation might be, since he is “The Father of Lies” and is not to be trusted. The same effect would be in place if the character was Adolf Hitler – all his actions and thoughts would immediately be perceived as negative, even if he were to do something innocuous. For this reason, it seems impossible, and even ridiculous to compare

God to totalitarian rulers of the twentieth century, but if stripped from their preconceived labels, they have much more in common than one would think. Since God is an absolute ruler, who is in no way limited in his actions, his reign exerts some of the elements of the totalitarian rule. The most prominent elements of God's totalitarianism in *Paradise Lost* are the cult of personality, propaganda, and rule of terror. Even though totalitarianism is considered the twentieth century "invention", its roots go back in history, and some of its elements can be observed in every ruler with a God complex, even God himself.

# 1. IDEOLOGY AND MORALITY

## 1.1. Totalitarianism

To describe God or any part of his rule as totalitarian, first it is necessary to define and elaborate on the term. The dictionary definition of the term totalitarianism is “a system of government in which the ruler has unlimited power” (Merriam-Webster). This definition in itself perfectly describes God's scope of power, and by this definition alone, God is the epitome of totalitarian rule, but the negative connotations and “baggage“ that come with the term tend to muddy the waters and the question arises whether God really can be characterised as a totalitarian ruler. Totalitarianism as a term was coined in the early 1920s with the rise of fascism, and is today mainly used to describe Stalin’s Russia and Hitler’s Germany.

This does not mean that elements of totalitarian rule were not present before the twentieth century – many rulers throughout history held and abused great amounts of power, but never before in such a “god-like” manner. Their rule can be described as authoritarian, which seems similar, but the differences between being an authoritarian and being a totalitarian ruler are in the amount of power and the relationship with the ruled. Unlike authoritarian rulers, who only hold political power, totalitarian rulers, in addition to that, also hold social power, i.e. they are in total control of the population. As for the relationship with the ruled, totalitarian dictator has the acceptance of everybody – he has a charisma to keep the attention of his population. On the other hand, an authoritarian leader uses only fear to remain in power. For these reasons, authoritarian leaders were often easily disposed of when they got out of hand, which is not the case with totalitarian leaders – they stay in power until the bitter end (López).

To better understand what totalitarianism entails, it is necessary to examine some of its prominent elements, which will later be compared with elements of God’s rule in greater detail. Even though it seems absurd to compare God to Stalin and Hitler, it is not as far-fetched as it seems, since both dictators enjoyed God-like status in their respective countries. This cult of personality is an important element of totalitarianism since both Stalin’s and Hitler’s dictatorships flourished by creating and spreading the cult, making them to be above a regular human, which was the cause and the consequence of their power (Overy 99-100). A great example of this cultish effect is witnessed by the American journalist Virginia Cowles

on a Hitler's rally in 1934:"Hitler's voice rasped into the night and every now and then the multitude broke into a roar of cheers. Some of the audience began swaying back and forth, chanting *Sieg Heil* over and over again in a frenzy of delirium. I looked at the faces around me and saw tears streaming down people's cheeks." Then she continues to say that this successful image of an exaggerated Hitler was accentuated by a confusing image of a man who was leaving the stage, suddenly turning into a seamy, pathetic character (Cowles 147). This leads into an important fact about all cults of personality - that they are all more or less fictitious. Hitler and Stalin created a grand image of themselves which they showed in public, but were much less impressive in private.

An element of totalitarianism that is closely connected to the cult of personality is propaganda. Totalitarian regime as such can only attract mobs and elites, but to attract the masses, i.e. regular people, one must use propaganda (Arendt 72). In God's rule in *Paradise Lost*, the unfallen angels would represent the elite – they do not need propaganda or convincing; they are so confident in God's regime that they spread the propaganda themselves. Adam and Eve represent the masses – they are new to the system and do not understand the intricacies of it, so they are in need of some reassuring. The consequence of propaganda is undying loyalty of members of the regime, who, even when punished or banished themselves, or when they witness the banishment of their peers, still believe in the system and support their peers' and their own demise (Arendt 33). The examples of such behaviour can be observed in *Paradise Lost*. The unfallen angels discard their fallen brethren, and fallen humans accept their dire fate – all because of God's propaganda.

Where propaganda fails, terror comes into place. The rule of fear is a popular tool used in totalitarian regimes. Totalitarian regimes use terror even when its political goals are achieved; its real horror lies in the fact that it rules the masses which are already completely subdued. In places where the rule of terror is brought to perfection, propaganda is discontinued (Arendt 75). In totalitarianism, terror is a difficult thing to escape, and sometimes the places closest to the centre of power are the most dangerous ones. In Stalin's Russia, even the slightest transgression, or sometimes seemingly nothing at all, could get one punished, or even killed, especially when one was in a high position of power. To illustrate, five of Stalin's closest colleagues and 98 out of 138 members of the Central committee were executed on his orders (Overy 200). In *Paradise Lost*, God is both feared and loved, especially in his "close circles", i.e. among the angels. Since the third of the angels initiated a mutiny in Heaven, and were stricken down and severely punished for it by God, the remaining angels saw that, even if one

is the closest one to God, one will get heavily punished for ones offences against him. This certainly establishes both God's powers and his willingness to use them against both internal and external "enemies", as well as installs fear into the "good" angels who will probably never embark on the journey of opposing God as Satan did.

## 1.2. God's Morality

When trying to compare God's actions and decisions with aspects of totalitarian rule, a question whether God can be judged by human standards and definitions of morality is raised. Matthew Jordan argues that Heaven and God as its ruler differ from earth and its human rulers: "With regard to Heaven it would seem useful to note that it is different from earth in at least two crucial respects: it is Heaven, and therefore not earth, and it is ruled by a God who created everything we encounter in the poem. The same principles are not at stake in a realm ruled directly by God, and a monarchy, headed by a human, on postlapsarian earth" (Jordan 57). This would mean that realms of humans and the realm of God are incomparable, but why would that be so? God is the ultimate ruler, in fact, He is the one who created mankind and the moral principles by which mankind abides. If God is infallible and inherently good, moral standards He intended for humanity should apply all-round, including Heaven and God himself, especially because humans were created in his own image:

Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,  
Godlike erect, with native Honour clad  
In naked Majestie seemd Lords of all,  
And worthie seemd, for in thir looks Divine  
The image of thir glorious Maker shon,  
Truth, wisdom, Sanctitude severe and pure (PLIV.288-93)

In Satan's description of first humans, it is notable that Adam and Eve have the appearance of God, and even exude some of His characteristics, making it feasible that they will behave, or try to behave, like God. In his works, "Milton condemned earthly monarchs who believed that the pattern of divine government could and should be replicated", and critiques earthly kingship (Jordan 57-8), relating to his relationship with Charles I, and Cromwell. However, if not God, who should the rulers look up to? If rulers should stray from trying to replicate God's system and invent and implement a presumably just and overall better system of government, that would imply that God's system is faulty, and this would mean that God himself is faulty. This implies that the premise of his omnipotence is invalid.

Provided that the presumed newly-invented system works perfectly, why was God unable to implement such a system in the first place? Obviously, there are plenty of questions pertaining to God's rule and its implementations on earth, and the only reason why Milton, and God Himself do not want it replicated is because God does not want to be "a tyrant among tyrants", but the one and only tyrant among commoners. Throughout the poem Milton insists, whenever he speaks about God's motives, that God acted for His own glory, and whatever the effect of God's actions might be, his main objective is to work to enhance His own glory because he includes all value in himself. In the poem, both Satan and Eve act for their own glory, but for this they are severely punished, which goes to show that God values only absolute obedience, not free will (Empson 155-6).

What is then the purpose of God's creation? Since God made Adam and Eve in His own image, practically creating His own clones, He should serve as a teacher and a father figure, but instead He behaves as if they were servants destined to be punished for which ever choice they make for His own amusement. "If God is good, that is, if He is the kind of teacher who wants to produce an independent-minded student, then He will love her [Eve] for eating the apple; her solution of the problem will be correct because she has understood His intention. But if he did not mean that, then He has behaved rather queerly, and it does not appear that He deserves to be obeyed" (Empson 160). This would imply that God does not wish for Eve to use her free will, which He boasts to have given the mankind, but He expects blind, unthinking obedience. "One would expect the morality of a God to be archaic, but this God seems to be wickeder than any recorded society" (Empson 161), meaning that tyrants of earth, and their attempts at following God's footsteps, are pale in comparison to God and His methods. If mimicking God's style of government births only tyrants, then it is safe to say that God's rule is in itself tyrannical.

### 1.3. Satan as a Freedom Fighter

No tyrant can hold his populace in check without a proper enemy, be he imaginary or real, and in *Paradise Lost* this role is filled by Satan. Satan can be characterised as a tragic character, a failed revolutionary, reverting to Machiavellian tactics to spite God, or at least that is how Milton tries to depict him. A typical Machiavellian would be described as "a brilliant tactician who is governed by considerations of necessity rather than morality, and who does not hesitate to use force and fraud to serve his purposes" (Kahn 3). This can certainly describe Satan's tactics, but it is also necessary to say that Machiavelli was

ultimately “an enemy to tyranny” (Kahn 3) and his tactics can be summed up as “the end justifies the means”. After a failed attempt of dethroning God by using direct attack on His forces, Satan proclaims to his fallen brethren that it is time to change the method of work:

So as not either to provoke, or dread  
New warr, provok't; our better part remains  
To work in close design, by fraud or guile  
What force effected not: that he no less  
At length from us may find, who overcomes  
By force, hath overcome but half his foe(*PL* I.644-9)

There are many instances of Satan talking about, or using, Machiavellian tactics in order to achieve his ultimate goal of dethroning God, which is not unusual considering his position. Against such an omnipotent enemy, it is smart to use guerrilla tactics especially since it was demonstrated that a victory in an open field is out of reach. Similar methods were used in totalitarian regimes during WW2 – from *Weisserosein* Nazi Germany, consisting of young German students secretly distributing leaflets opposing the Reich on moral and political grounds, encouraging students to think for themselves (Lisciotto), to *La Résistance* in France and partisans in Yugoslavia, who used guerrilla warfare activities in order to fight off totalitarian occupation. “All rebellions are, at their core, leftist – they are directed against monarchy and tyranny, led by liberals and democrats, or oppressed people, and their slogan is freedom” (Aron 14). It is not unreasonable to assume that Satan's rebellion is the same in spirit, and that its purpose is to bring about change in the society of angels. Whether this change would be good or bad is a question left unanswered, but it is obvious that Heaven is not all roses since the third of its inhabitants rebelled against the current leader – a number not easily ignored. “If the third part of a school or college or nation broke into rebellion we should be driven, or strongly disposed to suspect some mismanagement by the supreme powers” (Empson 95). The difference between this kind of rebellion and Satan's rebellion is that Satan dared to rebel against God, who is considered infallible and whose credentials are not to be questioned. For this reason, Satan is “either a fool or a hero”(Empson 37), but those are not mutually exclusive – the given title depends on the outcome, and Satan certainly got the short end of the stick. If Satan had succeeded in his rebellion and proved the fallibility of God, he would have certainly been revered as a hero who brought down a tyrant, and the story would be told much differently because, after all, winners write history.

After Satan's fall, Milton often asserts that Satan fell out of pride and envy, but Satan's convictions are not false – he genuinely believes that God is a usurper, and even in defeat he does not falter from his stance:

...Here at least  
We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built  
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:  
Here we may reign secure, and in my choyce  
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:  
Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n(*PLI.258-61*)

Satan's motivation is very "human" – he believes to be wronged and he believes himself to be fitter to reign than God. He is wrong solely because he made an intellectual error, and any person in his place might have decided to do the same (Empson 40), thus his illegitimate "conspiracy against Heav'n's King" (*PLII.751*) becomes "legitimate dissent from absolute authority" (Kahn 223). If Satan's only motivation to rebel was his pride and envy, and if his doubt in legitimacy and righteousness of God's omnipotence and rule was not real, he would not dare fight Him because he would be certain of his impending defeat. His three-day battle with God strengthened his convictions even more – if he and his troops can fight against him for that long, "that is enough to prove that he has not got absolute or metaphysical power and therefore he has been cheating them, and to submit to him would be dishonourable" (Empson 41). The question certainly arises whether Satan's troops really managed to hold off God's army for three days, or was it all just manipulation from God's side in order to give Satan a sliver of hope, only to crush it later and start his moral collapse which results in Satan becoming God's personal "eternal enemy".

Satan is, more often than not, referred to as "the Father of Lies", and this title suggests that none of his actions and speeches are to be trusted, but he is in fact convinced he is speaking the truth and doing the right thing up until the point when he observes the new world that God has created. Before this, Satan was convinced that God was falsely presenting Himself as the Creator, and believed that the angels were self-created:

who saw  
When this creation was? rememberst thou  
Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?  
We know no time when we were not as now;



Know none before us, self-begot, self-rai'd  
By our own quick'ning power (*PLV.856-61*)

This belief is shattered when disguised Satan speaks to Uriel, and Uriel convinces him that God indeed created this new world, and this makes Satan question everything he believed until this moment, and thus his transformation into a “new character” begins. If God was able to create such a beautiful world, this could mean that he created Satan too, and maybe all God's claims are actually true (Empson 64), making Satan a fool and an actual villain – a realisation that would make anyone lose their mind. In light of his new discovery, he proclaims that, to spite God's intention of “Good”, he will do the opposite, and recognises that, as the opponent of a genuine God, he is morally decaying (Empson 66):

Under what torments inwardly I groane:  
While they adore me on the Throne of Hell,  
With Diadem and Sceptre high advanc'd  
The lower still I fall, onely Supream  
In miserie; such joy Ambition finds (*PL IV.88-92*)

As Satan realises that his revolution might have been futile, he finds it impossible to repent and return to Heaven because he blames God for his fall and misery, and rightfully so, since God's omnipotence would mean that Satan's fall was pre-planned, so Satan concludes that “never can true reconcilment grow/ Where wounds of deadly hate have peirc'd so deep” (*PL IV.98-9*). Satan thus devolves from a freedom fighter and a revolutionary into God's eternal enemy, his sole purpose becoming opposing God's supposed plans, beginning with convincing Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. What he does not realise in his anger is that he is probably just playing into God's hand, and is right where God wants him to be. This will be explored later when delving into God's trickery and propaganda against Satan, turning him from Lucifer, one of Heaven's most revered angels, into Satan, the most hated and feared enemy of God and humanity. In this context, Satan can certainly be seen as a tragic character, as he gives literal meaning to the saying “the road to Hell is paved with good intentions”.

## 2. PERSONALITY CULT

### 2.1. God and angels

The Oxford Dictionary defines a personality cult as an “excessive public admiration for or devotion to a famous person, especially a political leader.” This does not mean that every strong leader has developed a cult of personality, but there is no question that God has excessive public admiration, even in the context of His relationship with the angels in Heaven, and excluding the humans as the later additions to the “cult”. God and the angels reside in Heaven, which in *Paradise Lost* is not made out of clouds, but it has a landscape very similar to earth. Even only by looking at the physical organisation of Heaven, it is noticeable that God has a special position, as He resides on a “sacred hill” (PLV.619) at the centre, higher than others, while the angels live in some sort of pavilions spread all around Heaven. Angels themselves are organised in two groups – armies and choirs. Choir angels are designated to sing praise to God, and they take alternate duty in singing hymns around God’s throne, so the Heaven would not fall silent. Military angels are, as their name suggests, designated to fight, and even though they had no purpose before Satan’s rebellion, they were militarily structured long before that (Raymond 259-73). This makes little sense since there were virtually no enemies of Heaven before Satan’s rebellion; in fact, there was nobody except God and angels in existence. This would suggest that God predicted Satan’s action, or even set it up in order to give His armies some sort of enemy and a purpose, thus strengthening His position as a leader and the protector of Heaven.

The choir angels, even though their role does not seem significant, play an important role in God’s cult of personality. Cult of personality, in its core, is nothing more than systematic flattery to the leader, and the duty of choir angels is to do just that. Their incessant songs are all about God and His glory and the unworthiness of everyone else:

Thee Father first they sung Omnipotent,  
Immutable, Immortal, Infinite,  
Eternal King; thee Author of all being,  
Fountain of Light, thy self invisible  
Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sit'st  
Thron'd inaccessible, but when thou shad'st  
The full blaze of thy beams, and through a cloud  
Drawn round about thee like a radiant Shrine,

Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear,  
Yet dazle Heav'n, that brightest Seraphim  
Approach not, but with both wings veil thir eyes (*PLIII.373-82*)

This kind of praise was also present in totalitarian regimes of Stalin and Hitler, and the texts about their appearance, personality and actions are as excessive as the angels' praise of God. Two speeches published on their birthdays show the level of admiration and cultish aura surrounding the two leaders, and also show how God-like their cults of personality were:

“There is no such name as Stalin’s on the planet. It shines like the glowing torch of freedom, it flies like a battle flag to millions of workers all over the world; it is thundering like a thunderbolt warning the classes of slave-owners and exploiters doomed to die... Stalin is the Lenin of today! Stalin is the brain and the heart of the Party! Stalin is the banner to the millions of people in their fight for a better life” (qtd. in Overy 98).

“My *Führer*! Thus I stand this day in front of your portrait. How powerful, strong, beautiful and exalted it seems! So simple, kindly, warm and unpretentious! Father, mother, brother, all in one and even more...You are the*Führer*, though you utter no commands. You live and are theLaw. You are Love, you are Power” (qtd. in Liebersohn 266).

There are visible similarities in the hymns sung to God, and speeches written for Hitler and Stalin, and that is because both God and totalitarian leaders want a credible signal of support, and merely staying silent and not saying anything negative is not good enough. In order to be credible, the signal of support has to be costly, so one has to be willing to say that the leader is not merely fine, but is magnificent and a being like no other. One must be willing to take some concrete actions to show their undying love for the leader, which includes “denouncing others who fail to say the same thing about the leader, ostentatious displays of the dictators’ image”, doing tasks which would prove the loyalty to the leader, and other similar displays of “affection” (Marquez).

The problem with personality cults is that it is impossible to know how much of the support for the leader is genuine, and how much is not (Marquez). After all, it carries great

risk to show doubt in the totalitarian leader, or even show the lack of enthusiastic adoration for one. In *Paradise Lost* angels have free will, since they are not only warriors and singers but also have “personal” lives. Angels make love, they eat and drink, and this is not for the purpose of sustaining themselves, but is purely hedonistic (Raymond 269): “They eate, they drink, and in communion sweet/ Quaff immortalitie and joy...” (PLV.637-8). Raphael also speaks about angels having senses and emotions, thus it is safe to conclude that angels have the ability to make some of their own decisions and the power of critical thinking. Taking this into account, it is impossible to know how much of the admiration for God is true and how much of it is there because everyone else is practicing it. In Gabriel’s conversation with Satan in Eden, it is visible that Satan once practised the same methods of adoration as the other angels:

And thou sly hypocrite, who now wouldst seem  
Patron of liberty, who more then thou  
Once fawn'd, and cring'd, and servilly ador'd  
Heav'ns awful Monarch?(PLIV.957-60)

In this sarcastic remark to Satan, Gabriel expresses that Satan’s behaviour is hypocritical and that his change of heart is out of desire to rule Heaven himself, but the possibility that Satan was never a “true believer” should be considered. After all, sharing one’s true views in totalitarian regimes exposes one to enormous risks, since others can signal their commitment to the leader by denouncing you, and it makes it very hard to organise against the dictator since one can never be sure who shares their opinion (Marquez). This is certainly true in Satan’s case. Even though he managed to organise a rebellion, a large fraction of angels are genuine supporters and believe in God’s claims, so they stay on God’s side and fight their former friends:

...though strange to us it seemd  
At first, that Angel should with Angel warr,  
And in fierce hosting meet, who wont to meet  
So oft in Festivals of joy and love  
Unanimous, as sons of one great Sire  
Hymning th' Eternal Father...(PLVI.91-6)

In Raphael’s explanation of the war between the angels to Adam and Eve, it is visible that it seemed strange for them to fight other angels. Even though they all used to enjoy themselves

together every day, they still chose to fight each other. “Good” angels did so in the name of their leader who lives on a throne towering above them, and rarely communicates directly with them. This shows the strength of God’s cult of personality.

According to Marquez, “in order for a cult of personality to work, the leader has to start small, and be willing to both reward and punish with sufficient predictability. Control must be established from the beginning, so there must be a group committed to enforcement, capable of slowly increasing the threshold signal of support required from everyone. Once that the cult of personality is in full swing, it runs itself, and people begin to monitor each other, turning every person into a sycophant and slowly destroying everyone’s dignity”. In God’s cult of personality, the angels are his initial “enforcers”, and his “small” beginning of persona building, and after testing the true loyalty of angels with Satan’s rebellion and weeding out the “fakes”, he begins to spread his personality cult by creating new creatures – humans – to worship him.

## 2.2. The Role of Adam and Eve

Milton does not explain in *Paradise Lost* how the angels came to existence, and it seems they are not sure either. It is unclear how the cult of personality began forming in Heaven, but the creation of humans and the process of their cultism can be observed. The reason God created Paradise and Adam and Eve was to spread His influence and dominion even further – there is no point in being a leader if there is no one to lead. Since one third of the angels were banished from Heaven, the number of God’s worshipers became significantly lower, and thus the creation of creatures who were “little inferior” (*PLIV.362*) to angels was the next logical step.

Adam and Eve are first observed by Satan when talking to each other about their creation and duties. In their conversation, it is noticeable that they already have a level of admiration for God, even though they do not seem to understand the scope of His power, or anything about him except that He created them:

...needs must the Power  
That made us, and for us this ample World  
Be infinitely good, and of his good  
As liberal and free as infinite,

That rais'd us from the dust and plac't us here

In all this happiness...(PLIV.411-17)

Even though they show respect and admiration for God, Adam and Eve are at this stage not yet a part of his cult of personality. For a good cult of personality to develop, there is a need for both rewards and punishment, and Adam and Eve have at this point experienced only the rewards. They are given dominion over everything in Paradise and are seemingly free to do and enjoy whatever they please. They only have one rule in place and that is not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. They also do not focus as much on God as do the angels, who devote most of their days singing praise to God and fulfilling His requests. Adam and Eve will become enthralled in God's cult of personality after their Fall – after they experience the punishment. Their path to God's cult of personality does not seem to be accidental, or even a consequence of Satan's trickery, but a planned scheme of God. Series of events which led to the Fall of Adam and Eve are directly or indirectly, but certainly purposefully, concocted by God. This implies it was His intention from the beginning to expel them from Paradise, ever since He named His heir and preordained him to die for the future sins of humanity.

The first instance of God obviously intervening in the events, and thus paving Adam and Eve's path to the Fall, is His intervention in Paradise when Satan is caught whispering into Eve's ear and has to face Gabriel. Gabriel and Satan were just about to fight and, judging by his behaviour, Satan would have lost and the crisis would have been averted. However, God appears and stops it, allegedly to spare the Paradise of possible destruction:

had not soon

Th' Eternal to prevent such horrid fray

Hung forth in Heav'n his golden Scales

...

In counterpoise, now ponders all events,

Battels and Realms: in these he put two weights

The sequel each of parting and of fight;

The latter quick up flew, and kickt the beam (PLIV.955-7;1001-4)

Since God is the one who ordered the angels to guard Paradise from possible breaches, and there is no one else to guard it from but from the fallen angels, there is seemingly no logic in letting the culprit go when angelic guards do actually catch him. The reason God sent angels to guard the Paradise is nothing more than a political stunt; it was done just so it would

appear that He wanted to prevent Satan from “ruining” humans, when He was actually opening doors for him. Satan may seem like he is a focal point in *Paradise Lost* as he gets a lot of “screen time”, when God rarely makes an appearance, but God is the one who sets events in motion and controls the narrative.

Next event which will push Adam and Eve a little further to the Fall is Raphael’s visit. God sends Raphael to speak to Adam and “mind him of his state and of his enemy” (*PLV* “The argument”), basically to spread propaganda to them. It can be said that Adam and Eve never would have fallen if God had not sent Raphael to speak with them. God gives Raphael instructions on what to say to Adam and Eve, but does not instruct him to tell them that Satan is in the garden and will probably try to reach them in disguise, which would be a sensible thing to do. Even though Raphael does possess this information, he is not sure how much God will allow him to tell, which is to be expected from the emissary of a tyrant (Empson 147-51). The only effect which Raphael’s visit had on Adam and Eve was that it flamed their imaginations and made them even more susceptible to manipulation as they heard stories about the world outside their garden. The final act which led to their dismay was, of course, Satan convincing Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge.

After they tasted the fruit from the Tree, word of their transgression reaches Heaven, where God claims it could not have been prevented. Even though He has foretold it, God still claims that it is the consequence of their free will and lack of trust in Him:

On his bad Errand, Man should be seduc't  
And flatter'd out of all, believing lies  
Against his Maker; no Decree of mine  
Concurring to necessitate his Fall (*PLX.41-4*)

God then continues to deal punishments to Adam and Eve for their transgression, thus adding the necessary ingredient for the cult of personality. After hearing their fate, Adam and Eve repented for their sin, and “in lowliest plight repentant stood/ Praying, for from the Mercie-seat above” (*PL XI.1-2*). Even though Adam and Eve's path to God's cult of personality is now finished, their role in it is far greater. As they are banished from Paradise, God sends Michael to tell them about their future and the future of their descendants which they caused, finishing with a reassuring promise of Christ’s Coming. By doing this, he is promising a reward – they will be saved in the end. As a consequence, Adam and Eve become vessels of

God's propaganda, sharing and spreading God's cult of personality, up to the point where it transforms from a cult into a religion.

### 2.3. Utopian society

The reason cults of personality develop is not only because of the image people have of their leader and his power, but also because there is a need for believing in a possibility of a better, perfect society which these leaders would provide. In the case of Germany and Russia, there was a lot of political instability, civil wars, violence and scarcity, which caused people to put more faith than normal into Hitler and Stalin, believing that they would solve all problems and create a utopian society (Overy 130). In case of Heaven and Eden, it is needless to say that they are considered the golden standard for utopian societies in Christianity. However, even though Milton describes the beauty of Heaven and Eden, these societies do have some problems of their own. What makes a society a utopia is not the scenery and resources, but its government and people, who are of individual minds, which is the reason why utopias are unattainable.

Although it cannot be said that angels live bad lives in Heaven, based on Raphael's description of it, they are still susceptible to whims of God; their very existence is dependent on God's will, and the angels do not seem to be worried about that fact. When reading about the "good" angels' daily life, many would be jealous – they engage in hedonistic behaviour for eternity and have nothing to do except to sing a few hymns to God now and then. This may sound like a true utopia, but the reality is that they have no purpose in their lives; they have nothing to drive them. The "good" angels never have any fulfilment at all; even when God sends them on some sort of a mission, it is always a wild goose chase: "they never feel they have carried through something they had undertaken" (Empson 108). Even if ignoring the fact that one third of Heaven's population rebelled against God and heavenly society, which in itself implies that "God had produced a very unattractive Heaven before Satan's fall" (Empson 111), God's actions towards "good" angels make a few dents in a theory that living in Heaven is easy. The angels' first military mission was to defeat Satan and his rebel army, a battle which lasted for three days, but they practically did not play an important part in it – God removed the rebels with "contemptuous omnipotence" as soon as He chose to do so, which must have been intended to humiliate them (Empson 110). The second purposeless mission was sending an angelic guard with Gabriel to guard Paradise, and as soon as the guards seem to be succeeding He prevents them (Empson 112). After the Fall of Adam and



Eve, God forgives the angels for their “failure”, remarking with His usual grinding contempt for them that they could not have done it anyway (Empson 113):

Assembl'd Angels, and ye Powers return'd  
From unsuccessful charge, be not dismay'd,  
Nor troubl'd at these tidings from the Earth,  
Which your sincerest care could not prevent (*PLX.34-7*)

Considering that God seemingly uses angels for nothing more than a foil to His own plans, and gives them no real purpose, their morale must be pretty low, especially when God actually does give purpose to the Son, a political move which led to self-realisation in the ranks of angels. It can be concluded that utopia could not be reached even with angels and God, who are presumably perfect creatures, because they are intellectual individual beings with differing opinions and characters and thus can never reach a perfect mutual understanding.

Unlike any other totalitarian leader, God has built his second utopia and created people in His own image to inhabit it. When Satan first arrives to the Garden of Eden, its beauty and riches are described in great detail, and its sight is certainly befitting a potential utopia:

And higher then that Wall a circling row  
Of goodliest Trees loaden with fairest Fruit,  
Blossoms and Fruits at once of golden hue  
Appeerd, with gay enameld colours mixt:  
On which the Sun more glad impress'd his beams (*PLIV.146-50*)

Unfortunately, Adam and Eve's utopian society was short-lived because of their transgression, and they were evicted from Eden. This leads to the conclusion that utopian societies do not exist and cannot exist. They are in their core ideal but unreachable because of the faulty nature of people. Both Soviet and German experiment of social reconstruction failed and turned into a dystopia (Overy 260). It cannot be said that Paradise, or Heaven for that matter, is the epitome of dystopian societies, but some of the famous paradoxical slogans from Orwell's dystopian novel *1984* can be applied to the principles of God's utopias. INGSOC or English Socialist Party, the ruling party in Oceania, one of the three countries in *1984*, has three official slogans: “War Is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength” (pt.1 ch.1.), which can be observed in heavenly societies. “War is Peace” regards to always

having an enemy, which keeps people united. This role is in *Paradise Lost* filled by Satan and the fallen angels, who become an eternal “threat” to God, angels, and humans, even though Satan's power apparently does not even closely match up to that of God. Satan is only used as a tool of fear to keep humans and angels in God's cult of personality. In turn for absolute obedience, God offers his “protection” against Satan. In reality, God never attempts to destroy Satan, just as Oceania never truly defeats other countries in *1984*. Losing the “eternal enemy” means losing control over the population, which is why God must keep his world under the state of perpetual false war with Satan. “Freedom is Slavery” refers to the relationship between individualism and collectivism – differing from the collective eventually leads to downfall. In *Paradise Lost*, collectivism is forced in heavenly societies, and freedom is seen as obeying the true leader, in this case God. “Variety of opinion, while a rallying cry in his [Milton's] prose works, seems almost absent in the idealized portrait of the heavenly community in *Paradise Lost*, where angels are bound in uniform obedience to God. For God, unity is a sign of true obedience” (Achinstein 226):

Under his great Vice-gerent Reign abide  
United as one individual Soule  
For ever happie: him who disobeyes  
Mee disobeyes, breaks union, and that day  
Cast out from God and blessed vision, falls  
Into utter darkness, deep ingulft (*PLV.609-14*)

There is no true individual decision in *Paradise Lost*, and even conscience is not simply a matter of individual decision, but a part of a relationship with God; not simply an action but an embrace of obedience (Achinstein 235). “Ignorance is Strength” can be simply put as –the less you know, the better, because noticing discrepancies in the system would lead to the whole system falling apart. The obvious example of this would be God forbidding Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, the fruit of which turned them from naked, frolicking simpletons into self-aware, problem-ridden humans:

Soon found thir Eyes how op'nd, and thir minds  
How dark'nd; innocence, that as a veile  
Had shadow'd them from knowing ill, was gon,  
Just confidence, and native righteousness

And honour from about them, naked left  
To guiltie shame hee cover'd (*PL IX.1053-8*)

Their transgression did lead to their Fall and consequently to the Fall of God's second attempt at building a utopia. This consolidates the fact that all attempts of building a perfect society fail, even if one building it is God Himself.

### 3. PROPAGANDA

#### 3.1. From Lucifer to Satan

Propaganda is the key element to any totalitarian form of government. It is a tool used to persuade the public, or those who are not directly involved in the totalitarian rule, into believing in the cause and the government. Although propaganda is usually not used for inner circles of the regimes, it can be used on the parts of populace who are seemingly not indoctrinated enough. In this sense, “Hitler’s speeches to the generals during the war are the true models of propaganda, their characteristic being mostly monstrous lies which *Führer* used to entertain his guests trying to win them over” (Arendt 72). In *Paradise Lost*, God is the main “source” of propaganda; even though He is not the one directly spreading it, His decisions and instructions lead to propaganda being spread. That is not to say that Satan does not use propaganda as well, but his propaganda does not have the effect and influence necessary to ultimately be successful. The key element of propaganda is emotion: “most propaganda is primarily emotional rather than rational in content. Emotion is the core of propaganda” (O’Shaughnessy 39). This means that propaganda has to appeal to emotions of the ones meant to be affected by it – whether that emotion be fear, hate, or love is unimportant. In regards to Satan, God uses propaganda to make him feared and hated, even by the angels who personally knew him before his Fall.

Propaganda against Satan in *Paradise Lost* is not initiated by God, but by Milton himself. Milton was well-versed in propaganda, as he was employed as a propagandist during Cromwell. Even though he was a denouncer of censorship who then ironically became a propaganda chief, his actions, at least in his own mind, were justified: “He would think the divine purpose behind the Civil War justified propaganda tricks, and need not have thought this a particularly bad one. The King was dead, and the purpose of the cheat was merely to prevent people from thinking him a martyr” (Empson 122). Milton uses this reasoning when describing Satan: he lost the war, he has fallen, and nobody needs to feel sorry for him because he deserved what he got. This may partially be the reason why “the Poem hasts into the midst of things” (*PL I* The argument), and the first time Satan is presented is when he has already fallen. If Satan had been presented as a “good” angel first, and then “bad” afterwards, the readers of *Paradise Lost* might have felt “sympathy for the devil”, which Milton needed to avoid. When beginning the poem *in medias res*, Milton does not only follow classical

precedents in writing epics, but also uses it as a propaganda tool which prepositions Satan as an evil character who spews “lies” in Hell.

Defamation of Satan’s character in *Paradise Lost* began with his name change. Satan’s original name in Heaven was Lucifer, meaning “light-bringer” derived from Latin, and originally referring to the morning star, Venus. Satan’s former name is mentioned by Raphael in passing when speaking to Adam and Eve:

Know then, that after *Lucifer* from Heav'n  
(So call him, brighter once amidst the Host  
Of Angels, then that Starr the Starrs among)  
Fell with his flaming Legions through the Deep (*PL* VII.131-4)

Raphael explains that this is what Satan used to be called because he was, like the morning star, “brighter” than other angels, implying he was favoured by God and among the angels. At the moment of his rebellion, Lucifer “transformed” into Satan, meaning “the adversary, one who resists” in Hebrew (Dunnett). It is unclear whether God or one of the “good” angels in *Paradise Lost* came up with this “nickname”, but what is clear is that it quickly caught on among his former peers. This kind of “name-calling” propaganda is not unusual, even in current politics. In 2016 presidential elections in the United States of America, this tactic was often used by Donald Trump in order to discredit his opponents. Donald Trump used nicknames like “Lyin’ Ted” (@realDonaldTrump) and “Crooked Hillary” (@realDonaldTrump) to refer to Ted Cruz and Hillary Clinton, which had a certain influence on their perception in the public sphere. In Satan’s case it is obvious that his new name, being literally “The adversary”, influences perception of his character. Satan’s “nickname” certainly made sense in the context of the War in Heaven, since he was the adversary of God and the “good” angels, but it becoming his permanent name is where it enters into the sphere of propaganda. Because “propaganda seldom succeeds by a direct assault on cherished beliefs, and works best by subversion” (O’Shaughnessy 18), Lucifer quickly became Satan. His shine was dimmed and quickly forgotten by his peers with the help of subtle propaganda tactics.

When Satan, while observing the Paradise, admits to himself that he is defeated by God, he decides that his future purpose will be to counter God’s every “good” deed:

So farewell Hope, and with Hope farewell Fear,  
Farewell Remorse: all Good to me is lost;  
Evil be thou my Good; by thee at least  
Divided Empire with Heav'ns King I hold  
By thee, and more then half perhaps will reign;  
As Man ere long, and this new World shall know. (*PL* IV.108-13)

With this proclamation, Satan transforms into what God has been presenting him as – an enemy to humanity and everything that is good. What Satan does not realise is that, with this transformation into God’s eternal enemy, he unintentionally becomes propaganda for God. Not all propaganda is purposeful, in fact, “much propaganda is accidental or unconscious...Unintentional propaganda is produced all the time, much of the best, in fact” (O’Shaughnessy 20). By surrendering himself and his original cause in the face of God’s powers, and merely spiting God’s actions just for the sake of it, Satan is confirming God’s claims and becomes a propaganda tool God is happy to use. God uses Satan to show how important of a role He has. Without God, Satan would destroy everything in existence. In reality, God is the only thing keeping Satan “the adversary” of the world, since Satan’s grievances lie with God himself, and not directly with the “good” angels and humans.

Satan is the key element in all of God’s propaganda; he is the reason why there is a need for the Son to save humanity and why there is a need for God’s protection. According to O’Shaughnessy, “propaganda usually needs an enemy, and if none exist it will create one – the social construction of enemies is one of the key defining characteristics of propaganda. The sense of superiority thus created is attractive to people at the bottom of some social pyramid, and they can be managed by creating a new people lower than they, upon whom they can look down” (124). In *Paradise Lost*, with the Fall of “bad” angels, “good” angels gained a sense of moral superiority and importance they did not have before. Before the Fall, all angels were simply inferior to God and the Son, but with the creation of an enemy, they switched their focus from their inferiority to God to their superiority to Satan. An important function of this sort of social construction of an enemy is that only by reference to enemies groups become united. The need for an enemy grows with the internal discord within a society; the propaganda construction of enemies is the core of social integration (O’Shaughnessy 125). God thus uses Satan to strengthen the loyalty of the angels remaining in Heaven, and to persuade humans to worship Him. This perpetual state of war with Satan is

also a part of God's rule of fear, which is intertwined with propaganda, since propaganda is often used to spread fear.

### 3.2. Adam and Eve

In *Paradise Lost* Adam and Eve are being prepared for their role of spreading propaganda to people who will come after them, but before that they need to be fed some propaganda themselves. For this task, God selects Raphael and instructs him on what to tell them, and the reason Raphael is chosen for this task is because he is "the sociable Spirit" (*PL* V.221) and God knows Raphael can relay His message with tact. He is "like an ambassador, greeting, dining, and conversing politely." He also consciously adapts his speech when speaking to Adam and Eve – he simplifies it so it would be better understood and received (Raymond 274). When God decides that it is necessary to speak to Adam and Eve He instructs Raphael on topics he is to cover:

Go therefore, half this day as friend with friend  
Converse with *Adam*, in what Bowre or shade  
Thou find'st him from the heat of Noon retir'd,  
To respite his day-labour with repast,  
Or with repose; and such discourse bring on,  
As may advise him of his happy state,  
Happiness in his power left free to will,  
Left to his own free Will, his Will though free,  
Yet mutable (*PL* V.229-37)

What God is saying is that Raphael is to educate Adam and Eve on their free will, and he later also states he needs to warn them about Satan and his tactics. Raphael then tells them stories about life and war in Heaven and their duties to God, seemingly educating them on these topics. Under this guise of education lies propaganda, and "the difference between propaganda and education lies in the idea that propaganda teaches people what to think whereas education teaches people how to think" (O'Shaughnessy 31). Propaganda and education are often intertwined, especially in totalitarian states, since the long-term success of propaganda relies on its impression on young minds. Even though Adam and Eve are not children, their minds are just as impressionable, since they are abruptly created into an unknown world without any knowledge of it. This is why God sends "silver-tongued"

Raphael to spread propaganda to them and instruct them on who are their friends and who their enemies.

When Adam first speaks in Paradise, he praises God for creating them. He mentions how God merited nothing from their creation, and that He did it out of his own goodness. God seemingly gave them only one “sign of obedience” – not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge – and gave them many signs of power and rule:

Among so many signes of power and rule  
Conferrd upon us, and Dominion giv'n  
Over all other Creatures that possess  
Earth, Aire, and Sea. Then let us not think hard  
One easie prohibition, who enjoy  
Free leave so large to all things else, and choice  
Unlimited of manifold delights:  
But let us ever praise him (*PL IV.429-36*)

Even though it does seem God had no ulterior motives when He created Paradise and humans, and that He only created them to enjoy themselves and have dominion over animals, Raphael uncovers this to be untrue:

But least his heart exalt him in the harme  
Already done, to have dispeopl'd Heav'n  
My damage fondly deem'd, I can repaire  
That detriment, if such it be to lose  
Self-lost, and in a moment will create  
Another World, out of one man a Race  
Of men innumerable, there to dwell,  
Not here, till by degrees of merit rais'd  
They open to themselves at length the way  
Up hither, under long obedience tri'd,  
And Earth be chang'd to Heav'n, & Heav'n to Earth (*PL VII.150-60*)

In this instance Raphael reports God “as saying he is going to create us [humans] to spite the devils” (Empson 56). Not only did God create humans to spite the devils and show them they are replaceable, but he also made humans lower in rank than the angels and made a separate



place for them to dwell in. Raphael explains this directly to Adam and Eve, and then he quickly moves on to propaganda: if they are to serve God properly and long enough, they too will live in Heaven like angels do. With Raphael's previous description of Heaven, Adam and Eve wish nothing more than to enter this realm. This wish, combined with their gullibility, heavily contributed to their Fall.

As Adam and Eve are shown every horrible thing they would cause in the future due to their disobedience to God, they slowly sink into despair and hopelessness. While they are in this state, God uses the ultimate propaganda tool on them – the creation of the myth. Myth is an idea, slogan or symbol which can move people into action, especially when they are in a bad position and desperate for a sign of hope or their possible superiority over someone else. “The myth unites them and gives purpose and meaning to their lives far better than logical exposition and reasoning. Myths can take a variety of forms – racial supremacy, racial purity, national superiority and strength, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the resurrection of ancient empires, the emergence of the superhuman and so on” (Macridis 174). The myth God created for Adam and Eve was the Second Coming of Christ, thus making the Son the ultimate propaganda tool.

### 3.3. The Son as a propaganda tool

The character of the Son in *Paradise Lost* plays an important role – his anointment as God's successor serves as a catalyst for Satan's rebellion. The question that arises is why would God need or want a successor when He is himself an eternal being? “When Milton made God the Father plan for His eventual abdication, he ascribed to Him in the high tradition of Plutarch the noblest sentiment that could be found in an absolute ruler” (Empson 144). This would mean that all God's actions are designed to lead to a world where he will no longer be needed, but God's actions and behaviour do not point to that fact. God makes a grandiose speech in Book III where he announces the future absolute reign of the Son:

Equal to God, and equally enjoying  
God-like fruition, quitted all to save  
A World from utter loss, and hast been found  
By Merit more then Birthright Son of God,  
Found worthiest to be so by being Good,  
Farr more then Great or High; because in thee

Love hath abounded more then Glory abounds,  
Therefore thy Humiliation shall exalt  
With thee thy Manhood also to this Throne;  
Here shalt thou sit incarnate, here shalt Reign  
Both God and Man, Son both of God and Man,  
Anointed universal King, all Power  
I give thee, reign for ever (*PL* III.306-18)

In this speech, God insinuates that the Son will, with his future sacrifice, become both God and human, and will thus elevate humankind and make their status equal to those of angels'. God would no longer be necessary, and He would presumably "retire", but this scenario seems unlikely. This speech is "a tremendous moral cleansing for Milton's God, after the greed for power which can be felt in Him everywhere else" (Empson 137). This change of tone from God is what makes it seem like it is just a propaganda tactic which He uses to appear less power hungry. Throughout the poem Milton insists that God does everything for His own glory, so why would this be any different? Through the good-mannered Son, God tries to improve His image with both angels and humans. He uses the "carrot and stick" tactic to manipulate emotions – God is the stick, and deals out punishments, while the Son is the carrot, and sacrifices himself to "save" humans. In reality, God will never give his throne up to the Son; the Son will forever be seated right to him while God basks in humans' praise.

The other way God uses the Son as a propaganda tool is by making him a martyr for the whole of humanity. Even though it does not seem necessary to kill the Son in order to save humanity, since God certainly has the power to "save" them so without it, this is an important part of God's plan. Being sacrificed the Son becomes a powerful propaganda tool, a myth: "deaths and martyrdom have always been fecund sources of myth making. Christ was the ultimate martyr, and all martyrdom has therefore the tincture of divinity. Martyrdom is a particularly persuasive way of inflating a sense of moral grandeur, and has been critical in the establishment of religious faiths and nation states" (O'Shaughnessy 98). By making the Son a martyr, God makes people feel guilty and more willing to succumb to Him. The Son dies in a particularly unsightly way:

For this he shall live hated, be blasphem'd,  
Seis'd on by force, judg'd, and to death condemnd

A shameful and accurst, naild to the Cross

By his own Nation, slaine for bringing Life (*PL XII.411-4*)

This kind of gruesome, public death is more than welcome when creating a martyr: “The martyr does not have to die, but death of course is desirable. The more gory the death, the better” (O’Shaughnessy 99). By creating a martyr, God has a grip on the populace because of the influence martyrdom has on them. Martyrs can move people to revenge, worship, and to confirming their predisposed prejudice, which is why it became a popular propaganda tactic in totalitarian regimes.

Human obsession with death and martyrdom is self-evident, and it certainly reached one of its peaks in Nazi culture: “In some cases nations and groups have consciously sought to create a cult of death, and this was particularly powerful in all European fascist movements. Nazi culture was permeated by a kind of death fixation; a movement which was responsible for the deaths of countless millions was itself animated by a bizarre death cult” (O’Shaughnessy 99). The examples of this death fixation can be observed in the 1935 German propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* directed by Leni Riefenstahl: “*Triumph of the Will* is dominated by memorialist enactments, the rising to hail the memory of Field Marshal Hindenberg, the salutation to the dead of the First World War and the recitation of its battlefields, the solemn march of the *Führer* to the flaming plinths. This funeral quality of Nazi propaganda is one of its many curious aspects, but is made intelligible both in terms of the need for reconciliation with the enormous losses of the First World War and the need for preparation and acceptance of the great blood sacrifices that Hitler would now demand” (O’Shaughnessy 99). In a similar way, God uses the Son so humans could accept the blood sacrifices God requires of them. When Adam and Eve are escorted out of Heaven, Michael reveals horrid deaths and events which will happen as a result of their Fall – God’s blood sacrifices. By sacrificing His own son, God tries to show people that He is also taking losses because of them, even though the Son’s death is ultimately inconsequential since he returns to Heaven and does not actually die. This “sacrifice” causes people to put unconditional trust in God and His love for humans, and also gives them incentive to fight for God and His kingdom, which is ultimately the goal of his propaganda.

## 4. THE RULE OF FEAR

### 4.1. “The eternal enemy”

Even though Satan is used as a propaganda tool, his status as an “eternal enemy” is also intertwined with the rule of fear. The purpose of the rule of fear a.k.a. terror is the easier control of the population, since people act out of character when faced with fear. For a dictatorship to be as successful as possible, the populace needs to be kept in a constant state of fear in order to be controllable: “With terror, one creates a mass of isolated, lonely, powerless and scared individuals. They lose connection with each other, but are united under the Leader, Movement and State” (Ravlić 204). There are many ways to inspire fear in people, and the most effective way is certainly war. Most people are against war under normal circumstances, which is where providing the right enemy comes into play. It is unimportant whether this enemy is real or fake; it is only important that it instils fear into the populace. Herman Göring, one of the major Nazi leaders during Hitler's regime, made an interesting statement during his trial in Nuremberg relating to the use of war and enemies:

“Of course the people don't want war. But after all, it's the leaders of the country who determine the policy, and it's always a simple matter to drag the people along whether it's a democracy, a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism, and exposing the country to greater danger” (qtd. in Khutovsky and Lisciotto).

In this speech, Göring describes the creation of an enemy from thin air in order to create fear and thus have a good grip on the population. In *Paradise Lost*, God similarly makes an eternal enemy out of Satan so He can spread fear and control his followers. God also uses war as a means to create the enemy and fear. The question is, why would God need to create fear at all when He already holds insurmountable amounts of power? The answer to this again lies in the fact that God always acts for His own glory. As Higgs asserts,

“Even absolute monarchs can get bored. The exercise of great power may become tedious and burdensome— underlings are always disturbing your serenity with questions about details;

victims are always appealing for clemency, pardons, or exemptions from your rules. In wartime, however, rulers come alive. Nothing equals war as an opportunity for greatness and public acclaim, as all such leaders understand. Condemned to spend their time in high office during peacetime, they are necessarily condemned to go down in history as mediocrities at best”.

In the same way, God was simply bored ruling in Heaven in the state of peace. If not for the war in Heaven and the Fall of Satan and later Adam and Eve, God would have never made a name of Himself. War and fear are necessary to keep God relevant.

The war in Heaven was thus the means to instil fear into the angels and to make Satan into an eternal enemy. In order to achieve that effect, God needed to make the war in Heaven seem less futile, and put some weight on its importance. For this reason, God did not use His omnipotent power to immediately defeat Satan and his army. He let the battle rage for three days before He decided it has gone on long enough and ended it by sending the Son to defeat the rebel army:

Hee on the wings of Cherub rode sublime  
On the Chrystallin Skie, in Saphir Thron'd.  
Illustrious farr and wide, but by his own  
First seen, them unexpected joy surpriz'd,  
When the great Ensign of *Messiah* blaz'd (*PL VI.771-5*)

Before God’s intervention, the angels from both sides were having a tough time battling with their former brethren. The concept of war was new to them and it lasted long enough for them to go through emotional distress; they experienced pain, shock, new weaponry, resentment, and ultimately fear. When the war has had a strong enough impact on both sides, God decided to end it because His mission was complete – the seeds of fear and resentment were planted. If God were to strike the rebels instantly, without instigating the war, the feeling of a real threat would not appear among the angels, and the eternal enemy would not be created.

After the war, Satan slowly but surely becomes established as the eternal enemy for God and the angels. With the creation of Adam and Eve, who do not have the notion of fear in the beginning of their existence, it becomes necessary to instil it into them. As Robin states:

“Prior to being afraid, Adam and Eve exist and act in the world, but without any palpable experience of it. Afraid, they are awash in experience, with God promising even more – for Eve the pain of childbirth, for Adam the duress of work, for both the dread knowledge of death...Adam names, Eve succumbs but neither really knows what it is that they do. Afraid, they know. Shallow temptation gives way to dramatic choice, inertial motion to elected action. Their story is ready to begin” (1-2).

After Satan convinces Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, they become self-aware and their isolation from each other begins, which is the key aspect of rule of fear. They begin fighting and blaming each other for their plight, and they experience fear for the first time because they know their action will have consequences. Even though Adam first fears God’s voice, the fear and resentment is soon transferred to Satan who tricked them. In conversation with Adam and Eve, the angels convince them that Satan now resides within them and their world and that only the Son would be able to save them if they are obedient:

...not therefore joynes the Son  
Manhood to God-head, with more strength to foil  
Thy enemie; nor so is overcome  
*Satan*, whose fall from Heav'n, a deadlier bruise,  
Disabl'd not to give thee thy deaths wound:  
Which hee, who comes thy Saviour, shall recure,  
Not by destroying *Satan*, but his works  
In thee and in thy Seed: nor can this be,  
But by fulfilling that which thou didst want,  
Obedience to the Law of God... (*PL XII.388-97*)

Their plight thus becomes the fault of the external enemy, and only God and his Son can rescue them from it. This tactic is often used when people are scared for their welfare, recent example being terrorist attacks across Europe. When afraid, people are more ready to surrender their freedoms and privacy to the government than they would be when they feel safe (Higgs). The problem with both Adam and Eve, and the “war on terrorism” is that this kind of fear is blinding: “One day, the war on terrorism will come to an end. All wars do.

And when it does, we will find ourselves still living in fear: not of terrorism or radical Islam, but of the domestic rulers that fear has left behind” (Robin 25).

God’s creation of the “eternal enemy” only serves as a distraction from the actual amount of fear that the people and the angels should feel for God. As they exit Paradise, Adam and Eve unite again, not because of their love for each other but because of their fearful “love” for God:

Henceforth I learne, that to obey is best,  
And love with feare the onely God, to walk  
As in his presence, ever to observe  
His providence, and on him sole depend, (*PL XII.561-4*)

With the use of fear, God has managed to establish loyalty and obedience, seemingly to defeat a common enemy, but in actuality to assert complete dominance over the population. Satan serves as both the “internal” and the “external” enemy, first being the “internal” enemy in Heaven’s civil war, and then becoming the “external” enemy after his relocation to Hell. Satan is a necessary component in God’s rule of fear because without him the angels and people would have nothing “evil” to focus on – except God. But, the threat of a common enemy is not always enough to keep the population under complete control. They are still capable of transgressions, and they are in a need of setting an example to keep them in their place – this is where the punishments come into play.

#### 4.2. The punishments

The punishments are an essential part of the rule of fear. While the concept of the eternal enemy is used to keep the population’s fear focused on an outside cause, punishments are used to create paranoia inside the community. When one is suspicious of the people surrounding them, ones that used to be closest to them, it creates isolation and the necessity to put all trust into the leader. Both Hitler’s and Stalin’s populace repressions had their “mottos” – Stalin’s was “vigilance” and Hitler’s was “revenge”. Both repressions were first aimed towards greater “inner” enemies, but later devolved into punishing trivial matters. As a result of these punishments, people began to isolate themselves from their peers and began looking up only to the system, which often turned against them (Overy 178-9). In *Paradise Lost*, the first instance of God’s punishment is the banishment of Satan and the rest of the “bad” angels for their rebellion. Like any totalitarian system, God’s is a one-party system, and it does not

tolerate opposition and rebellion. For this reason, God must isolate the rebels and physically remove them from Heaven:

...a spacious Gap disclos'd  
Into the wastful Deep; the monstrous sight  
Strook them with horror backward, but far worse  
Urg'd them behind; headlong themselves they threw  
Down from the verge of Heav'n, Eternal wrath  
Burnt after them to the bottomless pit. (*PL VI.861-6*)

Hell, which God created exclusively for this occasion, is the new “home” for the fallen angels, and it is not very pleasant. Hell is not only a new place where they now reside, but it also carries some other punishments within it, including the deprivation of sex:

...while I to Hell am thrust,  
Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire,  
Among our other torments not the least,  
Still unfulfill'd with pain of longing pines; (*PL IV.508-11*)

In this sense, Hell very much resembles a prison, and fallen angels are its political prisoners. The only difference is that the fallen angels are not physically bound to Hell; their prison follows them around, and is in a way a state of mind. Even though God’s motivation for punishing the rebel angels is somewhat understandable, its only purpose was not only to punish the “bad” angels. It sends a warning to the remaining angels in Heaven –this is how one ends up if one opposes God’s rule.

The fallen angels have obviously transgressed against God, so the reason for their punishment is understandable, however dire it may be. However, some of God’s punishments in *Paradise Lost* are less logical and seem to have more malice behind them. After Adam and Eve’s transgression, God deals out punishments for everyone involved, including the Serpent. Even though the Serpent is only Satan’s vessel in this instance, and was not directly involved in tricking Adam and Eve, God still makes it so it can never return to its original form. Since Serpent does not have the ability to defend itself, Satan’s curse also falls on the Serpent:

Because thou hast done this, thou art accurst  
Above all Cattle, each Beast of the Field;



Upon thy Belly groveling thou shalt goe,  
And dust shalt eat all the dayes of thy Life. (*PL X.175-8*)

This method of punishing anyone even remotely related to the “crime” was also popular in the totalitarian regimes. When someone made a mistake of somehow infringing upon the sensibilities of the government, not only were they themselves punished, but people related to them as well: “The vengeful hand of the soviet security system was capturing friends, casual acquaintances, ‘roommates’ and colleagues as if the ‘contra revolutionary activity’ is some kind of a transmittable disease... In both [Stalin’s and Hitler’s] systems the thousands of victims were turned from prominent and loyal citizens into criminals and outcasts” (Overy 198). Even though the Serpent did not willingly choose to help Satan trick Adam and Eve, it received a permanent punishment for being in a wrong place at the wrong time.

Out of all punishments God has dealt in *Paradise Lost*, the most intricate and horrifying is certainly the punishment Adam and Eve received upon their Fall. The punishment personally concerning them is the eviction from Paradise, but it also reaches many generations coming after them. Throughout Book XI and XII of *Paradise Lost*, Michael describes the events and hardships Adam and Eve’s descendants are to face for millennia to come, including almost complete extermination of human race in the Flood. This kind of elaborate punishment of the entire human race hardly seems reasonable, especially considering that the Fall itself was concocted by God. Examples of unreasonable “punishments” on such a mass scale can unfortunately be found in human history. The most extreme example of this is certainly Adolf Hitler’s persecution of the Jewish people in World War II, but perhaps the more applicable example would be the *Khmer Rouge* regime. The *Khmer Rouge* under Pol Pot tried to implement their radical Maoist and Marxist version of government in Cambodia and in the process targeted and killed intellectuals. Their ideal society was to be based solely on farming and primitive production, so they abolished normal schooling, money, private property and all similar concepts (*Khmer Rouge History*). The similarity Pol Pot’s regime shares with God’s punishment of Adam and Eve is in the motivation for the prosecution – knowledge. Eating from the Tree of Knowledge and gaining knowledge of the world made Adam and Eve unfit to function in God’s society, so they had to be punished severely. Similarly, Pol Pot targeted educated people and intellectuals so they would not interfere with the “ideal” society he had in mind. However, God’s motivation does not stop there. The reason for God’s punishment of Adam and Eve is also to keep them in check; they are shown the consequences of their disobedience, and thus they need to prevent

such disobedience from happening again. Adam and Eve do not retaliate against such punishment; they in fact thank God in the end for giving them a way out of this predicament, showing God's abilities to manipulate emotions.

### 4.3. Breaking the Fourth Wall

The true power of God's rule of fear in *Paradise Lost* is its expansion outside the confinements of the epic. Milton's God is, in fact, a "watered-down" version of a Christian God, but it surely was a risky endeavour to try to represent him. Milton announces in the beginning of the poem that he will "justifie the ways of God to men" (*PL* I.26), and he tries to do so by making his God appear in a better light than the "original" (Empson 11). Even if he tries to do so, God still appears harsh and uncompromising, but also very defensive. Through Milton, God needs to keep explaining that his foreknowledge of the Fall has nothing to do with fate and that Adam and Eve fall of their own free will, and not because of His decree (Luxon and Zukerman). The reason for Milton's constant "reminders" that God is in fact good is nothing else but fear. Offending God or his followers by misrepresentation or a hint of animosity is surely a death sentence for Milton because God is God – whether it is in *The Bible* or in *Paradise Lost*. People do not take too kindly when offending their ultimate authority. The same fate in totalitarian regimes would befall on a person having an unpopular opinion on Hitler or Stalin; often not by the leaders themselves, but by their many sycophants.

*Paradise Lost* contains a lot of heresies, since Milton used the stories from The Old Testament to reflect his own religious ideas and political views. Milton's ideas are "out there" – he considers that earth was created to repopulate heaven, believes that God, the Son and Spirit are separate entities and mentions instances of sexual love in the angelic world (Smith 510-13). Even though many of those views were not judged among Milton's peers, the character of Satan was the one causing many controversies. Even though it seems Milton described Satan as a character who is morally superior to God, and Satan seems to reflect a lot of Milton's political stances, the reason for this is not because Milton preferred Satan. Milton's depiction of God is very bleak, as He does not make very grandiose speeches like Satan does, nor does He show "humanity". The reason for this is also the fear of misrepresentation. Milton does not want not to give God any real human characteristics because God is above humans. Whatever decision God makes, even if it seems cruel, He

makes because it is the best choice possible and it is beyond human comprehension. Any other artistic decision Milton would possibly add would “demean” God in someone’s eyes.

Similar descriptions were used for Hitler and Stalin during their rule. *Pravda* published a poem about Stalin describing him in a following way: “Oh, great Stalin, oh leader of the people/ You who gave life to humans/ You who fertilized the earth”. During the rule of Adolf Hitler, one enthusiastic philologist took it upon himself to analyse his name and concluded it comes from *ath* (godly or spiritual act) and *uolfa* (the creator) (Overy 121-2). It is noticeable that both Hitler and Stalin were described in a very God-like manner, and this was due to the combination of blind adoration and fear. Similarly, blind adoration and fear seemed to have been instrumental in the making of Milton’s God.

The fact that Milton feared God does not mean he was afraid of authority. In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* he writes: “Proving, That it is Lawfull, and hath been held so through all Ages, for any, who have the Power, to call to account a Tyrant, or wicked King, and after due conviction, to depose, and put him to death; if the ordinary Magistrate have neglected, or deny’d to doe it” (qtd. in Fallon). Since this is the same rhetoric wielded by Satan in *Paradise Lost*, it is easy to conclude that Milton is a full-fledged Satanist, but Milton makes an exception for God because God is a true leader “whose authority should never be questioned” (Luxon and Zukerman). Surely Milton did question some of God’s actions, which is why he decided to tone God down in *Paradise Lost*, but he surely attributed it to limited human cognition. This is where the difference between God and authoritarian rulers such as kings can be seen; Milton was not afraid to oppose a king, but he was afraid to oppose God. If exploring the differences between God and totalitarian rulers, there is not much to differentiate; they are both adored and feared, the only difference being one of them seemingly never dies in the process.

## CONCLUSION

The character of God in *Paradise Lost* is very controversial, both in His actions within the poem and His perception outside the realm of literature. Even though it would seem logical that God would be the hero in the poem, *Paradise Lost* does not really have a hero *per se*. Satan and the Son are the main contenders for the spot of the classical literature “hero”, but they are merely puppets in God’s play. The character of God is a silent background character subtly controlling the narrative, while the rest of the characters have their short-lived moments in the spotlight. Since the character of God is based on the God in Christian mythology, God carries a lot of “baggage” from His perception in Judeo-Christian culture. God’s actions are never questioned because He is considered omnipotent and infallible, from another realm, and thus impervious to criticism. Since God is credited with creating objective morality, meaning that everyone is held to God’s moral standards, it is only fair to judge God by the moral standards applied to humans.

Totalitarianism is a system that carries negative connotations, deservingly so, but this does not mean its elements are not comparable to God’s system of rule. Repressive machinery evident in totalitarian regimes is more than evident in God’s rule. Cult of personality is an element of totalitarianism obviously observable in God’s rule in *Paradise Lost*. God is showered with attention and incessant hymns from the angels in Heaven, singing about His glory, while Adam and Eve spread His cult among future generations, ensuring the long life of His cult. Propaganda about the greatness of God and the lying nature of Satan is spread throughout the poem. The Son is used to improve God’s image among both the angels and humans, and is even made a martyr in order to cause a stronger emotional response from the populace. The rule of fear is God’s biggest strength; from the use of war as means to create an eternal enemy, to using punishments as means of controlling the will of the population. His rule of fear is so strong that it even goes beyond the pages of the book and affects the author himself.

The character of Satan in *Paradise Lost* serves as an opposition to God. Even though Satan seems like the one first making a move and controlling the narrative, he is in fact controlled by God. His fall from the “morning star” of Heaven to the “Father of Lies” from Hell is concocted by God, turning Satan into a literal adversary of God for eternity. Satan’s slow moral decay through the poem can be seen as a creation of a tragic character, his once bright existence turned into the eternal mission to spite God. His destiny as a failed

revolutionary can be observed in human society, but with one big difference. Instead of “disposing” of him, God uses him as a foil to His plans, showing that the title of a true Machiavellian schemer belongs to Him, and not to Satan.

Even though there are many similarities between totalitarian rulers and God, there is an insurmountable difference between the two, and that is the difference in capability. Human imagination is certainly great, but the capabilities do not compare to those of God. For God, wielding this amount of power and holding this much control is seemingly a walk in the park; it does not affect Him emotionally or physically. In contrast, humans wielding such power often descend into madness; both Hitler and Stalin met their end in a terrible psychological condition. Constriction of freedom is also evident in both systems, even though they all claim that freedom exists. The reality is that there exists only the freedom to worship either God or the totalitarian leader, while rest of the “freedoms” lead to horrifying punishments. But, totalitarian regimes do have one freedom which God’s rule does not, and that is the freedom of thought. Even though rulers have tried, nobody succeeded to regulate what one thinks in the privacy of their own mind. This is a luxury not allowed in God’s regime, since God has the control over one’s mind. The question then arises whether God is better than human totalitarian regimes or much worse? Since humans copy God’s rule in hope of becoming as close to being gods themselves, they can be only pale copies in comparison. Totalitarian leaders strive to achieve the unachievable – to create a utopia – while it seems God is only interested in creating a utopia for Himself.

It seems that God’s infallibility is in the same range as the infallibility of a person holding a gun to another person’s head – the person holding the gun is always right. With intricate schemes and extensive punishment, God has assured that no one would dare to oppose Him. The reality is that God’s powers are as strong as the angels and humans allow it to be. By taking away the fear and obedience, God is left with nothing; He is doomed to fall into obscurity. Even if God was to utilize His power and destroy everyone, He would then be left with no one to rule over, thus making His power and godliness obsolete since there is no point of being a ruler when there is no one to rule. God thus only has as much power as the angels and humans are willing to give Him, and with the use of fear and cunning He keeps this amount on high levels, both in *Paradise Lost* and outside of it.

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