

# Satan and Fear of Movement in *Paradise Regained*

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this paper is to reveal the satanic meaning of movement in John Milton's *Paradise Regained*. The book of Job begins with the conversation between Satan and God, which becomes a trigger to put the upright man, Job to the toughest test. Offering explanation for Satan's role in this introductory part, Elaine Pagels stresses the importance of similarity between the sound of *satan* and *sh ût*, the Hebrew word, "to roam." According to her, Satan turns out to be a 'moving existence' that never rests but roams or wanders the entire earth. This paper focuses on the fact that John Milton in his epic poem, *Paradise Regained*, also makes this moving image completely diabolic. Satan, the great adversary of God and tempter of Adam, Eve and Jesus, is homeless and aimlessly or restlessly wandering figure. And this moving image becomes quite opposite to the holy or sacred icon: John Milton formulates the contrary concepts of evil and good by using diametrically opposing images of movement and 'anti-movement.' Thus, the fear of movement or the danger of movement dominates Jesus' triumphing story over Satan in *Paradise Regained*. This paper studies this diabolic image of movement by examining Evil's ontological feature which Christian church fathers like St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas famously had theorized and Milton's great anxiety for writing the biblical origins.

**Keywords:** Satan, Movement, Anti-movement, John Milton, *Paradise Regained*

## 1. Introduction

The book of Job begins with the conversation between Satan and God, which becomes a trigger to put the upright man, Job to the toughest test. One day, in an assembly of angels, God asks Satan, "where have you come from?" Satan soon responds that "from roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it" (1:6). After hearing Satan's short answer, God at once proceeds to his main concern by asking Satan about Job, the tragic hero of this book. Offering explanation for Satan's role in this introductory part, Elaine Pagels stresses the importance of similarity between the sound of *satan* and *sh ût*, the Hebrew word, "to roam." With the importance of resemblance between two words, She explains Satan's special role in that book as follows:

The satan's special role in the heavenly court is that of a kind of roving intelligence agent, like those whom many Jews of the time would have known—and detested—from the king of Persia's elaborate system of secret police and intelligence of officers. Known as "the king's eye," or "the king's ear," these agents roamed the empire looking for signs of disloyalty among the people. (41)

As Elaine Pagels says, it is not clear if Satan appears as evil in this book, because he looks like more God's servant or angel. Satan pops out as one of other angels in the heavenly court. It is obvious, however, that Satan turns out to be a 'moving existence' that never rests but roams or wanders the entire earth. This paper focuses on the fact that John Milton in his epic poem, *Paradise Regained*, makes this moving image completely diabolic. Satan, the great adversary of God and tempter of Adam, Eve and Jesus, is homeless and aimlessly or restlessly wandering figure. And this moving image becomes quite opposite to the holy or sacred icon: John Milton formulates the contrary concepts of evil and good by using diametrically opposing images of movement and 'anti-movement.' The fear of movement or the danger of movement dominates Jesus' triumphing story over Satan in *Paradise Regained*.

## 2. Body

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Like the book of Job, *Paradise Regained* commences with Satan's recognition of God's voice while he is "roving still about the world" (1. 33-34). At the beginning of this epic, Satan keeps moving: he "survey'd with wonder" (1. 37-37), he "flies to his place, nor rests, but in mid air to Council" (1. 40-39-40), simultaneously, to his peers in the hell, Satan says, "a calmer voyage now will waft me" (1. 103-4). In his attempt to tempt Jesus with his eloquent speech, he also entices Jesus to 'move' fast: "Why move thy feet so slow to what is best / Happiest both to thyself and all the world" (3. 224-25). ). At the end of the fourth book, Satan "smitten with amazement" (4. 562) endlessly falls down and never stands firmly. From beginning to the end, Satan never rests: he moves, moves and moves. Contrarily, Milton completely divests Jesus of all moving images, but clothes him with firm, stubborn and unmoving garment: the poet says, "O patient Son of God, yet only stood'st unshaken; nor yet stay'd the terror there" (4. 420-21). Jesus barley moves, but actively seeks for the 'unmoved' truth, "pre-ordain'd and fixt of the most High" (1. 127-8). According to David Loewenstein, Jesus is absolutely "inward-looking saint enduring great opposition and trials and yet remaining, almost in superhuman fashion, firm and unmoved" (quoted in Bryson 103). These opposing images of movement and anti-movement in depicting Satan and Jesus appear so obvious in this epic.

Of course, many trials among Miltonists to explain these opposing images have proceeded. Michael Bryson insists that "the firm and unshaken figure accounts for much of the emphasis on interiority in Jesus' character" (103). According to him, it is external mechanism that Satan emphasizes in his temptations of Jesus and Eve in *Paradise Lost*. Satan always highlights on externals and is engaged in pursuit for turning Jesus into the external values or worth. According to Bryson,

*Paradise Lost* is not a narrative of loss of Eden, but of the loss of the "paradise within," the sense of divine similitude, the realization of connection to all things and to the source of all things. *Paradise Regained* is a corresponding narrative of a reclamation of the, "paradise within" of a restoration of the focus on internals through a successful rejection of the temptations to focus on externals. (108)

Thus, Jesus' anti-movement can embody his "paradise within" while Satan's external movement the loss of it. Satan's endless movement is the reflection of his inner position, which is working only by the external mechanism. And this external and satanic movement is deeply rooted in Evil's ontological feature which Christian church fathers like St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas famously had theorized: "evil is lack of good (being)." Evil is "non-being." For Augustine, evil is "non-existence" mainly because God is "existence in a supreme degree" (473). God is the "highest existence, from which all things [derive] their existence" (473). "Supreme existence" of God is simply proved from his brief statement in the Bible: "I am He who is" (Exod. 3. 14). Since God is good and "highest existence," he fills his whole created world with his presence. In the created world, there is no place for evil, so evil naturally becomes "nothing." Following this Christian orthodox, John Milton in his early poem, "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" already creates the image of evil which is a void of something. Unlike other Christ's Nativity poems of his contemporaries, Milton omits many happy Christmas images while emphasizing the abrupt disappearance of the lamenting devils by the Incarnation. Thomas N. Corns even says that the main theme of this poem is "the impact of the Incarnation on the gods of pagan religions" (228). The impact of the incarnation knocks the pagan gods to be nothing. Apollo is no longer divine "with hollow shriek the steep of *Delphos* leaving," (178), Peor and Baalim "forsake their Temples dim" (198), Moloch, "fled, / hath left in shadows dread / His burning Idol" (205-7), "Nor is Osiris seen / In *Memphian* Grove or Green . . . Nor can he be at rest / Within his sacred chest, / Naught but profoundest Hell can be his shroud" (213-18). The empty or hollow temples symbolize inner statues of the pagan gods: nothing is left in their place after the birth of the Christ. They do not resist against their enemy but simply evaporate into nothing. Milton ingeniously interfuses the image of "nothing" into pagan gods as they rapidly leave their places. As a "non-being," Satan has no 'self.' He ontologically cannot have "paradise within."

Anti-movement of Jesus is rooted in the poet's great anxiety about impious movement. In his analysis *Of Prelatical Episcopacy*, Stanly Fish initially brings out the "danger of movement" which permeates the entire pamphlet. Milton was unquestionably filled with the constant fear in dealing with the Bible because he was aware of that writing biblical story is "a deed of adding" to replace the Scripture:

If Scripture is fully able to satisfy us, there is no need to say anything else, and since the fullness of Scripture is the tract's first assertion, it is over before it begins [ . . . ] Scripture is declared to be the judge of the dispute, and almost immediately the tract finds itself all dressed up with nowhere to go. Indeed, going somewhere is precisely the error it wishes to avoid, as from the outset danger and impiety are associated with movement. (221-22)

"Moving an inch from the center" (223) of the Gospel is a danger or impiety. Thus, movement is connected with impious or obscene behaviors in religious perspective. Regina M. Schwartz also mentions that writing biblical origins was deep anxiety for Milton: "he is not sure that they can be expressed guiltlessly. His creation stories are always mediated-by accounts and accounts of accounts-by Raphael, . . . by a theory that casts doubt on the ability of language to convey origins at all" (1). So, Milton's anxiety about movement is deeply associated with the linguistic ability that makes the origins to be changed.

Milton's fear of movement and preference for anti-movement culminate in the description of Jesus' stubborn resistance against Satan. Resisting Satan's temptation to make him 'move fast' to be a king of the world, Jesus adheres to his own principle, "stand and wait." Unmoved and unshaken by Satan Jesus always stands and waits for his final day. He never tries to do something else except for standing and waiting. Before writing *Paradise Regained*, Milton, soon after losing his eyesight, writes the sonnet, "When I consider. . ." and inserts the same phrase, "stand and wait" into it:

God doth not need  
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best  
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his State  
Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed  
And post o'er Land and Ocean without rest:  
They also serve who only *stand and wait.*" (9-14; italics mine)

On this "stand and wait," Cedric Brown comments that "'stand' means not merely being idle (as the complaining laborers thought in the parable) but also to be ready and full of strength of purpose; 'wait' means not simply present inaction but also faithful service and the expectation of the word of Lord (16)." This "wait" implies dynamic forces. 'Stand' and 'wait' refer to the unalterable faith and full readiness, not passive but active pursuit. Interestingly, later in *Paradise Regained*, the poet adds the new concept, "weight" to "stand" and "wait." Jesus not only "stands," and "waits" but also "stands" the "weight" of the burden of "the Public:"

I reject  
Riches and Realms; yet not for that a Crown,  
Golden in show, is but a wreath of thorns,  
Brings dangers, troubles, cares, and sleepless nights  
To him who wears the Regal Diadem,  
When on his shoulders each man's burden lies:  
For therein stands the office of a Kings,  
His honor, Virtue, Merit and chief Praise,  
That for the Public all this weight he bears. (3. 457-465)

Jesus has to bear all the weights and stand all dangers, troubles and sleepless nights. Anti-movement of Jesus, thus, implies two meanings of these 'wait' and 'weight.' In fact, the word, 'weight' itself has a significant meaning in biblical traditions in terms of characteristics of God and Satan. Simply, God or good is heavy and Satan or evil is light. John Peter Rumrich says, "the Hebrew word, *kabod* (God's glory) in the

Old Testament begins with the idea of weight. . . and St. Paul contrasts the early Christian's 'light affliction' with their ultimate reward, an 'eternal weight of glory'" (15). In Rumrich's view, God sometimes refers to 'weight' itself. Likewise, "to Milton, weight signifies true glory . . . while weightiness indicates the visible revelation of glorious truth, lightness suggests vanity and deceit" (Rumrich 17). In this epic, Jesus becomes 'unheroic' hero who only stands and waits bearing the great weight of the world.

In the climax, Jesus ironically comes to a complete standstill symbolizing his dramatic victory while Satan shows endless movement denoting his complete defeat. In the long description about Satan's fall, Satan's endless movement is highlighted:

Tempt not the Lord thy God; he said and stood,  
But Satan smitten with amazement fell  
As when Earth's Son *Antaeus* (to compare  
Small things with greatest), in *Irassa* strove  
With *Jove's Alcides*, and oft foil'd still rose,  
Receiving from his mother Earth new strength,  
Fresh from his fall, and fiercer grapple join'd,  
Throttl'd at length in th' Air, expir'd and fell;  
So after many a foil the Tempter proud,  
Renewing fresh assaults, amidst his pride  
Fell whence he stood to see his Victor fall.

And as that *Theban* Monster that propos'd  
Her riddle, and him who solv'd it not, devour'd,  
That once found out and solv'd, for grief and spite  
Cast herself headlong from th' *Ismenian* steep,  
So struck with dread and anguish fell the Fiend  
And to his crew, that sat consulting, brought  
Joyless triumphal of his hop't success,  
Ruin, and desperation, and dismay,  
Who durst so proudly tempt the Son of God.  
So Satan fell; (4. 561-81)

Interestingly, in the final moment of Jesus' victory, the poet gives rare description about the victor. Jesus briefly says, "Tempt not the Lord thy God" and stands, and so soon, Satan begins to fall. All of a sudden, both Jesus and the poet stop talking and without any decisive behaviors, so simply, win the battle against Satan. Contrarily, the description about Satan's fall continues. The grand epic simile about Antaeus, Alcides and Theban monster runs to several lines in order to highlight Satan's fall. Satan is falling and moving. Satan's movement never stops.

### 3. Conclusion

In *Paradise Lost*, Satan infamously denies his origin. He denies God's creation by insisting on "self-begot" and "self-raised." He proclaims that he is disconnected from this root and his surrounding place. Satan intentionally uproots himself from the place he inhabits to acquire an objective view eye (Kim 479). He never wants to be a part of the place that God creates but wants to be out of it. He stands outside of this relation with the place to get a God's eye view of the creation. So, he never stays in one place. He should be a wanderer who never belongs to or has direct relation with a certain place. He is homeless and solitary figure alienated from any place. He is caught in a trap of forever movement. On the other hand, Jesus always

stays in one place. It is significant to notice that *Paradise Regained* ends with the word, “return’d.” Contrary to Satan, Jesus returns to his home: “hee unobserv’d / Home to his Mother’s house private return’d” (4. 639). In spite of the fact that Jesus joined in the intense battle against Satan, he actually never moved an inch from his home. At last, paradise is regained through Jesus’ motionless motion, and everything is completely restored. Eventually, it is revealed that nothing was moved from the beginning. Satan is still wandering, falling and moving from the center, but ironically it turns out to be Satan who never moved an inch from the beginning.

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