The Kingdom Within: Radical Religious Culture and the Politics of Paradise Regained

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'Christ hath a government of his own', Milton wrote in 1659, 'it governs not by outward force . . . it deals only with the inward man and his actions . . . [it shows us] the divine excellence of his spiritual kingdom, able without worldly force to subdue all the powers and kingdoms of this world'.[1] And a year later, the Quaker prophet Edward Burrough told the saints that 'in the *Day* of *Temptations* and *Tryals*' they should 'put on *strength*, that you may *stand*, and never *be moved* from the *hope* of *Eternal Life*, and *feel* the *renewing* of your *inward man*'.[2] These two passages, written close to the Restoration, capture essential qualities dramatized in Milton's last spiritual epic: its striking revision of external forms of politics and kingship; its emphasis on the mighty power of a spiritual kingdom within; and its depiction of Jesus as a pious and inward saint, armed with the power of the Lord and unmoved in the midst of the greatest worldly temptations.

Yet despite recent attempts to address the political implications of *Paradise Regained*, no critical consensus has emerged.[3] Does this spiritually inward poem altogether repudiate politics after Milton's disappointments in the Restoration? Does it espouse political quietism and withdrawal and suggest that Milton himself, near the end of his career, assumes a more pacifist outlook?[4] Early modern historians have themselves sometimes noted the political inactivity and quietist resignation of religious radicals after 1660; and yet there is now increasing evidence which suggests greater continuities between pre- and post-1660 radical Puritan dissent, religious beliefs, and writing than we have previously recognized[5] – a

recent perspective that may challenge us to revise our sense of the politics of Milton's great poems and the nature of their engagement. Arguments claiming that *Paradise Regained* espouses pacifism and passivity, for example, would distinguish it from the violent apocalypticism characterizing some of Milton's earlier revolutionary works; and they would also distinguish it from its companion poem dramatizing the spectacular destruction of Dagon's power. How, then, can we consider this interior epic as an engaged and imaginative response to the worldly trials, temptations, and politics of Restoration England?

One way is to consider the contemporary cultural milieu in which *Paradise Regained* is deeply embedded – the radical religious world of the mid-seventeenth century which helped to shape Milton's poem and whose beliefs it often imaginatively expresses and represents. In this period of unprecedented social and religious ferment, the realms of politics and religion were inseparable: spiritual convictions found expression in political discourse.[6] By emphasizing this rich religious and sociopolitical matrix – a cultural context still not adequately examined in relation to *Paradise Regained*[7] – we can illuminate its intense inwardness, its apocalyptic subversiveness in relation to worldly powers and kingdoms, as well as the political and verbal engagement manifested by Jesus in his firm, often contentious responses to Satan's smooth rhetoric and spectacular temptations in the wilderness.

My discussion thus connects *Paradise Regained* with important aspects of Quaker writings on politics and religion from the 1650s and 1660s, though it draws upon other contemporary texts as well – works by Gerrard Winstanley,[8] George Wither, and others. But the early Quakers, who represented the largest and most dynamic movement of social, political and religious protest in the period's radical culture,[9] deserve special emphasis because of Milton's close connection with them in the 1660s when one of their greatest strongholds was London and its surrounding counties. Besides his close contact with Thomas Ellwood, his Quaker friend and reader who allegedly prompted Milton to write the poem,[10] the poet admired Isaac Penington the younger, one of the more intellectual and sophisticated early Quaker writers, and a passionate defender of that republican ideal, the Good Old Cause: when he wasn't incarcerated in Aylesbury prison during the 1660s, Penington, the most prominent Quaker of Buckinghamshire, lived close to Chalfont St. Giles where Ellwood found Milton a temporary home in 1665.[11] My essay nevertheless draws upon a wide range of Quaker prophetic writers and texts in order to situate *Paradise Regained* more richly in the cultural milieu of its historical moment. The emphasis in early Quaker writings on the interiorization of power and kingship, on exhortation and the denunciation of temporal authorities, on unadorned prophetic speech, on unusual perseverance in the midst of spiritual trials, temptations, and warfare – these and other issues can illuminate the political and religious radicalism of a poem whose inward-oriented Jesus, led into the wilderness by the Spirit, remains unmoved, demonstrating 'firm obedience' (1.4) after every kind of temptation the guileful Satan devises or assault he attempts, as he applies 'All his vast force' (153). Yet my aim is not to claim that the political and religious meanings and language of this Puritan epic can be illuminated exclusively in terms of a single sectarian movement or set of beliefs. *Paradise Regained* imaginatively reproduces some of the most compelling radical cultural beliefs and themes of Milton's age, as Milton creates his own variations upon them, often investing them with his distinctive aesthetic concerns.

Tried Through All Temptation

The religious politics of trial and temptation were particularly urgent when Milton published his spiritual epic in 1671. Among radical religious groups, the Quakers endured particularly severe trials and adversities in the Interregnum and Restoration as their faith was constantly being tested by worldly powers and authorities:[12] their 'firm obedience', both as a group and as individual saints, was, in the words of *Paradise Regained*, 'fully tried / Through all temptation' (1.4–5); like Milton's Jesus, God would 'exercise [them] in the wilderness' (1.156) of the world with all its dangers, as well as its enchantments. The sense of enduring 'various exercises, trials, and troubles' as strenuous preparation for a godly vocation is pervasive in Fox's famous *Journal*,[13] and it is central to the writings and life of Isaac Penington (1616–1679), who converted to Quakerism in 1658 and then spent six periods in prison between 1661 and 1671. 'The Lord', wrote Ellwood in his testimony concerning Penington, 'had led him through many a strait and difficulty, through many temptations, tryals and exercises (by which he had tryed and proved him)', and Penington himself observed in 1661 that the saint should indeed expect '*Straits*, *Wants*, *Tryals*, *Temptations*, *inward Weaknesses*, *buffetings from the Enemy* ... which God seeth necessary to Exercise the Spirits of his with, that he might fit them for himself'.[14] Known for his learning, sharp wit and retired spirit – as well as his denunciation of the Cavaliers for their abuses of Friends – Penington himself showed during the Restoration era a 'constant perseverance' (1.148) and 'saintly patience' (3.93), phrases applied in *Paradise Regained* to Job who, as a model, Milton's Jesus surpasses.[15] Indeed, the quiet heroism of trial, patience, and suffering so central to *Paradise Regained* and its inwardly-focused Jesus, who conquers 'Satanic strength' by 'humiliation and strong sufferance' (1.160–1), takes on a more specific religious resonance and emotional force when we consider Milton's spiritual epic in relation to the politics of Quakerism – that religious and political movement

profoundly defined by a sense of trial and suffering in the 1650s, 1660s, and beyond.[16]

Thus Jesus's description of his own series of trials, adversities and dangers, later repeated by Satan himself (4.386–8, 478–9), would have had a more urgent resonance in the poem's Restoration context, when the persecution of the Quakers and other religious dissenters had become increasingly acute – especially during the early and mid-1660s and in 1670–1:[17]

> What if he hath decreed that I shall first
> Be tried in humble state, and things adverse,
> By tribulations, injuries, insults,
> Contempts, and scorns, and snares, and violence,
> Suffering, abstaining, quietly expecting
> Without distrust or doubt, that he may know
> What I can suffer, how obey? (3.188–94)

In 1660 Margaret Fell had called the Quakers 'a *suffering people*, under every *Power & Change*', and Fox himself stressed the great suffering and persecutions endured by the Quakers during the Interregnum, as well as the Restoration.[18] Indeed, no other radical Puritan group in the 1650s and 1660s would illustrate more poignantly than the Quakers Milton's embittered historical vision at the end of *Paradise Lost* that 'heavy persecution shall arise / On all who in the worship persevere / Of spirit and truth' (12.531–3). But in *Paradise Regained* the poet's emphasis is less on the severity of the persecution Milton registered at the end of his first sacred epic and more on the inner faith and quiet expectation exemplified by the patient messianic hero who endures constant trials and temptations – and who perseveres, overcomes, and ultimately regains 'lost Paradise' (4.608), while vigorously engaging with his great spiritual and political adversary. Those saints who have 'come through great Tribulations', wrote the Quaker leader Edward Burrough, 'are refined and purified' by that arduous process:[19] for the early Quakers inward strength, obedience and faith were indeed fully tested and proven by trials and tribulations in the hostile wilderness of this world. In the wilderness of *Paradise Regained*, the inward and human Messiah himself undergoes 'just trial' (3.196) and thus 'by merit' (1.166) more than anything else proves his right to become the King of Kings.

Paradise Regained, moreover, was written in an age when Quaker testimonies themselves began to assert the need to record these extraordinary 'deeds / Above heroic' (1.14–15) performed by those patient and obedient saints with 'pious hearts' (463) who were under a continual state of siege and tried 'Through many a hard assay even to the death' (264). Ellwood's testimony concerning Penington portrayed a steadfast saint who esteemed 'the reproach of Christ greater riches then the Treasures of Egypt' and who, in the process of being led through his many temptations and exercises, had 'turned his back upon . . . all' 'the Preferments and Honours of the world'.[20] Such trials and deliverances of saints in the wilderness of the world, furthermore, could be interpreted as a manifestation of God's providential work in history. So in his memorial of 1662 to the Quaker prophet James Parnell, Stephen Crisp observed that 'if ever any age had cause' in keeping in 'Remembrance the words and sayings, great deliverances and spiritual battles, and mighty and noble acts of God', it was surely this one.[21] Here was the kind of heroic material that was worthy of remembrance: great spiritual deeds of obedience done in an age characterized by suffering, trial, and perseverance in which Quakers themselves, as God's inward people, played a central role and through whom God performed remarkable acts. In its own quiet way, too, *Paradise Regained* announces itself as a new kind of radical Puritan epic, one suited for an unprecedented age of spiritual inwardness, trials, and exercises: its prophetic poet will tell of spiritual struggles, temptations, and perseverance – how the austere Son of God, armed with the spirit of meekness, performed alone in 'his victorious field / Against the spiritual foe' (1.9–10) 'mighty work' (186) 'unrecorded left through many an age' (16).

Regal Temptations

Milton's Puritan epic records for his own age the deeds of an austere and inward Jesus tried by a full range of temptations – sensual, active, and contemplative – indicating that he could have been exercised no more in the wilderness of this world. As Isaac Penington himself noted, 'in the Wilderness' the saint who endures 'many straits' can expect to be tried not only by physical adversities and 'open force', but 'also with enchantments' and more beguiling kinds of temptations.[22] In *Paradise Regained*, the luxurious and sensual temptations themselves display Satan's skill 'in regal arts, / And regal mysteries' (3.248–9) and thus deserve some attention before we consider other aspects of the spiritual epic and its politics in relation to radical religious culture. In Book 2 Milton's Jesus refuses the very temptation – much more enchanting this time around – to which Adam and Eve succumbed in Paradise: 'Alas how simple, to these cates compared, / Was that crude apple that diverted Eve!' (2.348–9), the poet proclaims as he describes the lavish banquet Satan offers the Son of God. Milton's brilliant addition to the Gospel accounts is presented in a particularly alluring manner, conveyed through the texture of his poetic description:

> Our Saviour lifting up his eyes, beheld
> In ample space under the broadest shade

> A table richly spread, in regal mode,
> With dishes piled, and meats of noblest sort
> And savour, beasts of chase, or fowl of game,
> In pastry built, or from the spit, or boiled,
> Grisamber-steamed . . . (2.338–44)

Besides suggesting that the world itself is a great feast for the eyes, this spectacular temptation conveys – and is reinforced by the series of conjunctions 'or' – a sense of the power of the illusion Satan has staged and the range of sensual choices he has made available. Indeed, the poem's depiction of the hungry and pious Jesus refusing this Satanic banquet – a temptation which highlights his long period of fasting 'in the wild wilderness' (2.232) – might well have evoked a historically more specific form of spiritual austerity in Milton's age of radical religion: because Christ had fasted, many early Quakers and their leaders (including Nayler, Fox, and others), to demonstrate divine approval, had fasted seven, twelve, and even twenty days or more.[23]

Milton, moreover, gives this Satanic banqueting scene political implications: spread out attractively 'in regal mode', the banquet resembles the feast of an extravagant Cavalier or French court – its alluring dishes are all symbolic of wealth and privilege – and thus it anticipates the poem's subsequent temptations of riches, regal power, and Roman luxury. In April 1660 Milton, who dared even that late to speak out publicly against 'sumptuous courts', with their 'vast expence and luxurie', was already beginning to notice the 'enticements and preferments' offered by the court of Louis XIV which 'daily draw away and pervert the Protestant Nobilitie': such courtly enticements included 'the eating and drinking of excessive dainties' (*Readie and Easie Way*, *CP* 7:425–6) or what Jesus dismisses in *Paradise Regained*, in response to the temptation of Satan's great banquet, as 'pompous delicacies' (2.390). Even the suggestion of Belial, that Cavalier spirit who is himself associated with 'courts and regal chambers' (2.183) and who believes that Jesus should be enticed with 'amorous arts' and 'enchanting tongues' (158), is not lost on Satan who earlier seemed to reject his advice: the enchanting romance temptation offers 'ladies of the Hesperides, that seemed / Fairer than feigned of old' (357–8). But for the poet of *Paradise Regained*, more than for his austere Quaker contemporaries (who preferred a plain culture without ornamentation in language, dress, the arts, and so on), such an enchanting and sensual temptation would have had a distinctly aesthetic appeal. It evokes, after all, Milton's own earlier poetic ideals which had once included his intense attraction – still evinced in this luxurious description – to the language of romance and its world of enchantment.

Satan's Rome likewise conveys a sense of decadent, luxurious power as Satan shows Jesus, from the 'specular mount' (4.236), the most glorious of 'all / The kingdoms of the world' (4.88–9). With its 'sumptuous gluttonies, and gorgeous feasts' (4.113–21), the Rome temptation resembles in culinary details the earlier Satanic banquet with all its regal temptations, as the poor and hungry Jesus reminds his tempter that he still feels 'thirst / And hunger'. The sumptuous architecture of 'great and glorious Rome' (4.33–7, 44–60), created by the 'skill of noblest architects' and 'famed artificers' and recalling the baroque city of Milton's Italian journey, contributes to the sense of visual magnificence, while evoking a temporal power who, in the words of Milton's *Readie and Easie Way*, 'can display with such vanitie and ostentation his regal splendor so supereminently' (*CP* 7:429). Resemblances between that late tract, with its critique of regal display, and *Paradise Regained*, with its emphasis on the alluring and 'majestic show / Of luxury' (4.110–11), suggest that Satan's imperial Rome is meant to represent the extravagance of regal power in Restoration culture. Roman and Stuart ostentation thus hardly seem remote from each other, Milton's Puritan epic suggests. And when we consider that during the 1660s Milton had been exposed to the plain culture and aesthetic of Quakerism (which extended as well to architecture),[24] the austere Jesus's firm dismissal of Satan's lavish display becomes even more pointed.

Yet, unlike some Quakers in post-revolutionary England – who, though not supporters of hereditary monarchy, were willing to accept regal dominion if it respected religious freedom[25] – Jesus makes no such conciliatory gesture when offered the kingdoms of the world. During the temptation to a luxurious Rome, he altogether dismisses Satan's 'politic maxims' (3.400), without giving a more accommodating political response, like this one made by one of Milton's more moderate Quaker contemporaries in the Restoration: 'though after outward power, authority, rule, government or dominion we seek not, nor do desire it, yet we despise it not, but do own it in its place'.[26] As Satan represents the decadent Tiberius as old and engaging in 'horrid lusts' (4.94), he attempts to persuade Jesus that 'with regal virtues' (98) he can ascend the worldly Roman throne with ease, thereby freeing his servile people. But Jesus's utter rejection of Satan's offer of Rome in the age of Tiberius actually places *Paradise Regained* in a radical antimonarchical tradition even less compromising with regard to temporal monarchy than Milton's contemporary Quakers could sometimes be. Thus one highly provocative radical text of the Restoration period, *Mene Tekel; or the Downfal of Tyranny* (1663), written in the tradition of political resistance associated with John Knox, Christopher Goodman, and the revolutionary Milton himself, singled out Tiberius as one of those cunning rulers who rose to power and then oppressed his people and 'committed all manner of outrages'; and its author proclaimed that though such antichristian rulers spend their time 'in wantonness, luxury, prodigality and tyranny', and though 'they endure long, they will not endure alwayes'.[27] Jesus's ultimate target, however, is not primarily the monstrous

Tiberius, but the 'devil who first made him such' (4.129), as well as other ostentatious earthly monarchies. Conceding nothing to Satan's regal offers, the Son of God will strike at the very origins of temporal power in order to uproot it. Seen in relation to the ongoing radical culture in the Restoration, the disdainful responses of Milton's Jesus towards Satan's temptations of regal power and luxury give this spiritual epic a sharp polemical edge often missed by its commentators.

The Obscurity of Jesus

Indeed, among the more provocative sociopolitical aspects of Milton's Puritan epic is the way it keeps representing the future King of Kings as obscure, private, and poor – particularly in the context of Satan's regal temptations and in the context of seventeenth-century radical religious culture where such a representation could have unsettling social and political implications. Being 'unknown', as Satan observes, as well as 'low of birth' (2.413) and 'Bred up in poverty' (415), the hungry and solitary Jesus, depicted in the process of discovering his ministry, hardly qualifies as an aristocratic epic hero, let alone a traditional monarch surrounded by regal splendor, power, and riches, all signs of what Milton on the eve of the Restoration had called 'regal prodigalitie' (*CP* 7:460). The retiring carpenter's son, after all, has experienced nothing of the world's 'glory, / Empires, and monarchs, and their radiant courts' (3.236–7) and he seems unlikely to rise to the highest position of political power. The poem thus presents Milton's 'Unmarked' (1.25) and inward Messiah as a striking contrast to figures of aristocratic wealth and epic status. Moreover, in terms of his humble background, he is further linked to his humble disciples Andrew, Simon Peter, and others – the gathering we see at the beginning of Book 2 of 'Plain fishermen . . . / Close in a cottage low together' (2.27–8). These pastoral figures contribute to the poem's georgic themes,[28] while highlighting its sense of political and historical urgency; bewildered by the Messiah's retirement into the desert, they anxiously pray for deliverance from oppressive earthly monarchies: 'Behold the kings of the earth how they oppress / Thy chosen, to what highth their power unjust / They have exalted' (2.44–6). The poem's emphasis on the Messiah's own poor and obscure status – and on his being tried 'in humble state' (3.189) – in effect contributes to Milton's redefinition of Jesus's political ministry as a manifestation of mighty weakness able to unsettle 'the kings of the earth'. And this depiction of mighty weakness would have had considerable cultural and symbolic resonance in an age when radical religious prophets, leaders, and writers were especially conscious of their vocational histories and status. They often gave their own humble backgrounds and vocations, as well as the lowly background of King Jesus, a highly politicized meaning which challenged usual assumptions about social hierarchy, nobility, and government. Thus they represented themselves and their followers as 'poor, despised, and rejected', in the words of Edward Burrough, 'yet Dreadful and Mighty, because the Majesty and Presence of the Lord God is with us, who hath called us, and chosen us'.[29] In this age, even those from modest or poor backgrounds and livelihoods had been called to perform godly deeds 'Above heroic', though these prophets and leaders themselves might paradoxically be from below in terms of social rank and appearance.

And so when Satan tempts the poor, unknown Jesus with riches as the means to obtain political influence and kingly power – 'Get riches first, get wealth, and treasure heap' (2.427) – Jesus responds by highlighting the spectacular careers of those leaders risen up from 'lowest poverty' and humble stations to achieve 'highest deeds' and charismatic roles:

> Gideon and Jephtha, and the shepherd lad,
> Whose offspring on the throne of Judah sat
> So many ages, and shall yet regain
> That seat, and reign in Israel without end. (2.438–42)

Gideon of course was engaged in threshing wheat when called by the Lord, while Jephthah, who becomes leader of the people of Gilead in Judges 11, was the son of a harlot and an outcast. Jesus augments this provocative response by adding Roman republican heroes who had led a poor, simple life but 'Who could do mighty things, and could contemn / Riches though offered from the hand of kings' (2.448–9). His challenging speech subverts the traditional epic assumption of the heroic political leader as aristocratic, not to mention the idea that kingship and its power are necessarily associated with honour, riches, and aristocracy: even the obscure Messiah 'in this poverty' might 'as soon / Accomplish' the same kinds of extraordinary deeds and leadership – 'perhaps and more' (2.451–2).

As the Quaker prophet George Fox the younger had dared to warn Charles II at the Restoration, 'many times [God's] instruments, when they begin his . . . work, appear very contemptible', especially in terms of outward appearance and vocation, though 'the Lord God appeare[s] mightily in those his instruments'.[30] In response to Satan's offer of riches as the means to power, Jesus's challenging speech thus gains an even sharper edge when situated in the social context of radical religious culture with its highly inward and unconventional conceptions of authority, calling, and prophecy. Winstanley the Digger, for example, had stressed that 'Fishermen, Shepherds, Husbandmen, and the Carpenters son . . . spake and writ as the Spirit gave them utterance, from an inward testimony' and that Christ 'is now rising in Husbandmen, Shepherds, Fishermen', while Isaac Penington noted that God reproved the kings and princes of Israel 'Not by the eminent Priests and Prophets, whom they expected to

be taught by, but by Herdsmen, by Plowmen, by Prophets they despised'.[31] Moreover, the Quaker Richard Hubberthorne, in an autobiographical testimony of his ministry as one of the active prophets and leaders of God's people in the 1650s, cited the examples of Elisha, who 'was a ploughman ... when the Word of the Lord came to him' and Amos who was a herdsman: 'and I do witness the same Call', added Hubberthorne, 'who was a Husbandman ... till the Word of the Lord came and called me from it, and turned my mind within'.[32] In the radical religious culture of Milton's age, then, the idea of the prophetic leader as a pastoral or georgic figure – humble in appearance and vocation but mighty in the power of the Lord – could possess significant political and social symbolism. Of all the charismatic Quaker leaders, James Nayler particularly impressed the young Thomas Ellwood (who was himself a gentleman) because he had 'the appearance of a husbandman or a shepherd'.[33] Such prophetic leaders, like the obscure and inward hero of Milton's spiritual epic, might indeed seem 'Little suspicious to any king' (2.82). Yet they represented a spiritually unconventional and socially subversive religious culture, both in the Interregnum and Restoration, that was dramatically challenging and revising – as does *Paradise Regained* itself – the received notions, symbols, and language of secular power, hegemony, rule, and kingship.[34]

The Politics of Interiority

The unusual emphasis on interiority in *Paradise Regained* – even when it comes to issues of political authority, rule, and kingship – especially reinforces the poem's deep connections with contemporary radical religious culture. Its Jesus is private, introspective, and solitary, as he relies on the Spirit to guide and lead him in the wilderness of the world. Indeed, in the manner of religious radicals like the Quakers, who associated the inward Spirit with direct 'leadings' and individual guidance,[35] 'this glorious eremite' (1.8) is led by the 'spirit' as he walks 'alone' (1.189) into the hostile wilderness where he muses inwardly on the meaning of his prophetic ministry as Messiah: there he finds himself absorbed in 'holy meditations', 'the spirit leading / And his deep thoughts, the better to converse / With solitude', until he is 'far from track of men, / Thought following thought, and step by step led on' (1.195, 189–92). The Jesus of Milton's poem who undergoes this private ritual – and who descends into himself and is led 'by some strong motion' (1.290) into the desert – manifests the concern with spiritual inwardness and vocation characteristic of radical religious culture of the 1650s and 1660s, including the later Milton's own concern with 'the inward perswasive motions of [God's] spirit' (*CP* 7:261) as the truest guide. Even the earnest and inward qualities of Milton's young Jesus, rehearsed in his first holy meditation, evoke striking connections here: thus as a child, the Quaker prophet Francis Howgill describes how he set his heart to know 'God which the world professed and which [he] had read of in the Scripture ... and [he] attended to much reading and meditation', so that he was 'sober, and serious alone', taking no delight in childish sports and pastimes.[36] And Fox himself as a child, 'being more religious, inward, ... and observing beyond his years', refused 'childish and vain sports' and manifested a 'singular temper'.[37] In a similar manner we find the precocious Jesus of *Paradise Regained* meditating on his messianic office, while recalling that in his early years he took no pleasure in 'childish play', for instead his 'mind was set / Serious to learn and know' the 'Law of God' as he prepared himself 'to promote all truth, / All righteous things' (1.201–7).

The unknown Jesus's mighty deeds are themselves 'in secret done' (1.15) – done in solitude, in retirement, in private.[38] By choosing to dramatize deeds 'Above heroic' done in secret by a deeply introspective Jesus, Milton not only drastically revises the epic heroic ethos: he also signals his poem's relation to radical religious culture in the Interregnum and Restoration. The early Quakers themselves, writes Penington, guided by the Holy Spirit, particularly 'turned [their] minds inwardly towards our Lord and Saviour, to mind his inward appearance, his inward shinings, his inward quicknings', and Penington himself was noted for being 'frequent in retirements, and very inward with the Lord'.[39] But being 'retiring in spirit to the Lord', as Ellwood himself often was,[40] might seem to make the godly individual either ineffective or disengaged politically: in urging the reclusive Jesus to establish his kingdom on earth through heroic and revolutionary actions, Satan reproaches the Son for 'thus retiring' (3.164) inwardly. Satan, however, misconstrues the highly unconventional nature of the prophetic office and power of that 'inward oracle' dwelling in 'pious hearts' (1.463). As this radical Puritan poem reveals, deep spiritual inwardness and vigorous engagement with temporal powers can indeed coexist: even the saintly Penington, who grew intensely inward during the trials of the Restoration period, nevertheless remained, like Milton's firm Jesus, 'unwearied in promoting [the Truth], bold and undaunted in the defence of it'.[41]

During his first soliloquy we see the inward-oriented Son of God, without full knowledge of his ministry, meditating on the nature and means of achieving his 'mighty work', which involves his political role – 'To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke / Thence to subdue and quell o'er all the earth / Brute violence and proud tyrannic power, / Till truth were freed, and equity restored' (1.217–20). But rather than choosing revolution by arms to effect political liberation, the young Jesus decided it was 'more heavenly' to use 'winning words to conquer willing hearts, / And make persuasion do the work of fear' (1.221–3). In this sense Jesus, who fights his own 'great duel' (1.174) in the poem, differs not only from the usual

epic warrior who aspires to achieve 'victorious deeds' and 'heroic acts' (215–16); given the immediate cultural context of *Paradise Regained* – especially Quakerism – he also differs as a revolutionary from extreme militant radicals like the zealous Fifth Monarchists with their chiliastic ideology: during the 1650s and 1660s they taught that the Second Coming of King Jesus would be precipitated by a violent remodelling of society with the saints seizing civil and military power.[42] Temporal kings would then be bound in chains and dashed to pieces. And yet their armed insurrection – Venner's rising in London during January 1661 – had failed, resulting in the widespread arrest of Quakers and other sectaries, including Thomas Ellwood himself. Indeed, from Ellwood's perspective, the Fifth Monarchists 'little understood . . . the nature of His kingdom, though He Himself had declared it was not of this world'.[43] While the early Quakers were by no means consistent pacifists, even during the Restoration,[44] they often proclaimed, stressing the spiritual inwardness and power of the kingdom of Jesus, that Christ's weapons in the war against the world are spiritual weapons: his 'Weapons are not carnal, yet are they mighty through God to . . . overturning the foundation of Satans kingdom'.[45] The introspective Jesus of Milton's poem likewise discovered that there are other kinds of mighty weapons besides those of armed revolt – the sharp, quelling power of the prophetic Word itself, for instance – with which to maintain 'great warfare' (1.158) against the Prince of this world and overturn his temporal kingdoms and strongholds.

In giving his brief epic such a notably spiritual and interior dimension, Milton drastically redefines the very nature of politics and kingship. But this poem does not simply repudiate worldly kingship: it also makes kingship and power inward, just as it later makes learning and wisdom inward matters (4.322–30), redefining them in terms of a spiritual kingdom of the mind.[46] The passage in *Paradise Regained* that gives greatest interiority to politics is immediately preceded by lines in which Jesus, having just demonstrated his spiritual might by rejecting riches, rejects the earthly crown 'Golden in show', noting that it 'Brings dangers, troubles, cares, and sleepless nights' (2.459–60); his condemnation recalls Milton's description of kingship, with its Macbeth-like anxieties and burdens, in *The Readie and Easie Way*: 'though looking big, yet [it is] . . . full of fears, full of jealousies, startl'd at every ombrage' (*CP* 7:457). Jesus's concern is ultimately with an entirely different kind of kingship – an inward rule whose power and discipline over 'the inner man' is not dependent on any worldly 'force' (2.477, 479) or external authority. Indeed, rather than simply repudiating politics, his lines resonate with the political language of radical religious discourse, including Milton's own late pre-Restoration polemics, where interiority and politics are realigned:

> Yet he who reigns within himself, and rules
> Passions, desires, and fears, is more a king;
> Which every wise and virtuous man attains:
> And who attains not, ill aspires to rule
> Cities of men, or headstrong multitudes,
> Subject himself to anarchy within,
> Or lawless passions in him which he serves.
> But to guide nations in the way of truth
> By saving doctrine, and from error lead
> To know, and, knowing worship God aright,
> Is yet more kingly . . . (2.466–76)

This forceful rejoinder to Satan is remarkably close in vision to the inward politics and teaching of Milton's *Treatise of Civil Power* (1659), which I quoted from at the opening of this essay: 'Christ hath a government of his own . . . it governs not by outward force . . . it deals only with the inward man and his actions'. The vision of that late tract – with its unusual emphasis on 'the spirit . . . of God within us', on 'the inward man' and the private conscience, and on God's 'inward power' and kingdom (*CP* 7:244, 257, 261) – is itself close to the radical Quaker notion that the kingdom of Jesus would come 'not by an outward visible shining body, quelling and over-awing the enemies of his Kingdom, but by his inward and invisible Power in the hearts of his people', for, as Penington himself stressed, 'that which we sought without, was to be found within . . . there was the Kingdom'.[47] The Spirit Jesus refers to in *Paradise Regained* – that 'inward oracle' sent to 'teach [God's] final will' (1.461–3) – is mankind's 'teacher and ruler . . . within him', to quote Winstanley, another radical religious writer who perceived acutely how those who pursue the deceptive 'Kingdome without', with its 'outward objects', are subject to 'inward trouble' and 'slavish feare within' since 'they know not how to governe themselves'.[48] Secular kingship, along with its riches, is thus 'oftest better missed' (2.486), Jesus concludes. His polemical response redefines kingship in a way that severs its politics altogether from temporal authorities and outward forms: the authority and ruler he promotes, since he relies wholly on the direct operations of the Spirit within, is completely internalized and yet paradoxically 'more kingly'.

Jesus possesses what Milton's friend Sir Henry Vane defined during the Restoration, in a millennial work prophesying 'the total . . . Ruin of the MONARCHIES of this World', as '*A Kingdom inward*' – that 'commanding, ruling Principle of Life in the true Saint' which prepares the saints to retreat 'into the Wilderness' and continue 'in such a solitary . . . desolate condition, till God calls them out of it'.[49] Indeed, both in his retirement into the wilderness and in his polemical engagements with Satan, the solitary Jesus of *Paradise Regained* exemplifies this radical religious sentiment as it continued to exist after the restoration of the

Stuart monarchy and state church: 'where the Word of God rules in the heart', observed George Fox in reference to Luke 4 and the temptations of Jesus in the desert, 'the Devil hath no power'.[50] In *Paradise Regained*, Jesus demonstrates the power and conviction of that inner spiritual kingdom – a kingdom enabling him to endure the trials of a hostile world and the temptations of a subtle foe as he waits patiently to fulfill his eschatological role.

In his polemical speech concluding Book 2, then, Jesus thoroughly revises kingly politics and its language based upon an internal sense of authority unconstrained by external power, rituals, and kingship. He still speaks of guiding 'nations in the way of truth / By saving doctrine', suggesting that this more internal, spiritual kingship does not result in his complete retreat from the world: there the inward-oriented saint remains a prophetic figure who guides 'nations in the way of truth' by challenging temporal kingship and human authorities, as well as the political language and symbolism which sustains them. Just how provocative his response might sound in an age of Royalist ascendancy, when dissenters were regularly harassed and tried by state and church authorities, is suggested by the opposition a confrontational Margaret Fell set up between the external authority of King Charles and the inner spiritual authority of the King of Kings: on trial in 1664 over the issue of taking the Oath of Allegiance, the Quaker Fell highlighted the great 'controversie' existing 'betwixt Christ Jesus and King *Charles*' – even if she owned allegiance to the King of England, she asserted, 'Christ Jesus is King of my Conscience'.[51] In his own quiet way, the inward Jesus of Milton's poem is himself engaged polemically in turning the world upside down by drastically reconceiving the very terms and authority of kingly government. 'This Monarchical Government of Christ', asserted William Erbery the Seeker, '*shall confound . . . all Worldly Government*';[52] indeed, the vision of the power of Christ's inner spiritual kingdom begins to have something of this unsettling effect during the dramatic confrontation between Jesus and Satan in *Paradise Regained*: startled by the Son of God's forceful rejoinder at the end of Book 2, Satan 'stood / A while as mute confounded what to say' (3.1–2).

Waiting upon God: Jesus as Puritan Saint and Prophet

Paradise Regained, moreover, dramatizes that the Kingdom of God, to use the words of James Nayler, 'cannot be moved, but . . . is able to keep you against all assaults of the enemy'.[53] Radical religious discourse, particularly Quaker writing, often envisioned the inward-looking saint enduring great opposition and trials and yet remaining, almost in a superhuman fashion, firm and unmoved – in the manner indeed of Milton's own unflinching Jesus. Throughout Satan's many kinds of 'fresh assaults' (4.570), Jesus remains unmoved: he is 'not moved' (2.407) by the lavish banquet temptation; he remains 'unmoved' (3.386, 4.109) by the ostentatious display of Parthian military might and the 'majestic show' (4.110) of Roman imperial power and luxury; and, though all alone and hungry in a 'wild solitude' (2.304), he is 'Unshaken' (4.421) by Satan's powerful storm and sits 'unappalled' (425), even as Satan has raised hellish furies and ghosts to terrorize and tempt him. The brow of Jesus, moreover, remains 'unaltered' (1.493) when Satan desires access to him so that he can hear the Son of God's aesthetically appealing 'ways of truth' (1.478). Satan attempts to move the austere Jesus at that moment by praising the poetic qualities of his 'winning words' – qualities central to Milton's own aesthetic sensibility as a prophetic writer: though the ways of truth may be hard, they are 'Smooth on the tongue discoursed, pleasing to the ear, / And tunable as sylvan pipe or song' (1.479–80). As Satan recognizes, Jesus combines religious prophecy with aesthetic expression. Yet even this shrewd appeal on Satan's part fails to move the Son of God.

One of the similes at the opening of Book 4, where Satan is compared to the froth of waves dashing against a rock, underscores the poem's depiction of the unmoved Son of God whose mighty Christian weakness triumphs over the power of Satanic strength:

> Or [as] surging waves against a solid rock,
> Though all to shivers dashed, the assault renew,
> Vain battery, and in froth or bubbles end;
> So Satan, whom repulse upon repulse
> Met ever . . . (4.18–22)

Commentators note classical analogues in Homer and Virgil to illuminate these lines; but equally pertinent, especially given Milton's contemporary cultural context, is the biblical image of the 'solid rock' representing the firm foundation of the Christian faith which cannot be moved by storms or tempests (as in, for instance, Matt. 7:24–5). This biblical image had particular resonance for religious radicals in the turbulent decades of the mid-seventeenth century: in *The New Law of Righteousness* (1649) Winstanley envisioned Christ as 'the one power of Righteousnesse' which 'shall not be shaken nor moved, but stand firm forever'; while 'the kingdom of the flesh and devil . . . must be shaken to pieces and fall', 'the kingdom of heaven or of God . . . is that Rock that cannot be moved'.[54] And Fox, who suffered repeated assaults from both spiritual and physical foes, referred to 'the living unmovable word of the Lord God' and envisioned Christ as the rock which 'will stand when the World is gone, over all the storms and tempests, they cannot move the Rock'.[55] In *Paradise Regained* Milton appropriates the biblical symbol of the impregnable rock – giving it an interpretation more consonant with contemporary radical religious culture – as he represents 'Israel's true King' (3.441) withstanding every

worldly temptation and assault. In the case of dissenters like the Quakers, remaining unmoved like a 'rock / Of adamant' (4.533–4) while enduring repeated temptations and assaults reinforced a sense that these Puritan saints were indomitable in spirit and rectitude: more than any other dissenters in Restoration England, Richard Greaves observes, they 'stood their ground as witness to their faith'.[56] But remaining steadfast as a rock was not necessarily construed by religious radicals as simply a defensive stance: alluding to Psalm 62, Winstanley described 'the Kingdome of heaven within' as 'the Rock of defence and offence', for it is 'the power that makes a man bold as a Lion'.[57] The fervent responses of Milton's inward Messiah in this spiritual epic suggest that remaining unmoved is anything but a simple posture of political quietism.

Nor is the steadfast hero of faith in *Paradise Regained* moved by Satan criticizing his slowness to assume the role of a martial leader who has the opportunity to win glory, fame, and national conquests – all of which Satan, who tries to advise Jesus on political matters, invokes to measure heroic actions and epic-scale achievements: 'Thy years are ripe, and over-ripe' (3.31), Satan tells him, so 'Why move thy feet so slow to what is best' (3.224) having reached 'full age' and 'fulness of time' (4.380)? Yet Jesus's sense of his messianic vocation and its fulfillment in the fulness of time is hardly defined by the pressures associated with martial prowess or traditional heroic values. He intends instead to wait since 'All things are best fulfilled in their due time' (3.182; cf. 3.440), as he shifts the debate to another register altogether, refuting with his Puritan-style responses Satan's pagan conceptions of time and heroism.[58] 'The time prefixed I waited' (1.269), observes Jesus as he rehearses his past attempts to search out the meaning of his identity as the promised Messiah. This notion of 'due time', of waiting and 'quietly expecting' (3.192), itself had crucial implications within Puritan culture and politics during the Revolution and Restoration.[59] It suggested a more inward notion of time and providential fulfillment, one defined by an internal sense of faith, strength, and patience rather than by any external form of power, glory, or temporal authority. It might, furthermore, entail uncertainty or limited knowledge about God's ways, leadings, and schedule as Puritan saints encountered trials and crises in the process of waiting: the solitary and human Jesus of Milton's poem wonders in the midst of the mazelike wilderness, 'Where will this end?' (2.245), for 'to what intent' he is led into this desert he learns 'not yet' (1.291–2). So too Jesus's followers, fearing that they have lost their Messiah, express their anxious thoughts, but then decide to 'wait' (2.49) upon God, as does Mary herself ('But I to wait with patience am inured', 2.102). As the Smectymnuan Thomas Young wrote, 'Though the faithfulnesse of Gods promise is knowne' to the saints, 'yet the particular period or set time, wherein this promise shall take effect, is unknowne to them,' and 'because they [know] not when it should bee,

God requires them to waite'.[60] Likewise, echoing the Psalms (e.g. 37:7, 40:1), Joshua Sprigge observed in the Army Debates at Whitehall (1648) that 'if we could have but patience to wait upon [God], we should see he would bring us out of this labyrinth wherein we are'.[61] And in the Restoration, the poet-prophet George Wither offered his own version of such saintly advice: 'Let not then the length or sharpness of any Persecution discourage from a Constant waiting upon GOD, whose Grace will be a sufficient Assistance in all *Probations*'.[62] This Puritan-style state of 'Constant waiting' is the experience of Milton's Jesus who waits patiently and without full knowledge in the wilderness for the occasion to fulfill his messianic role – and then, unshaken even by his final temptation, makes a dramatic stand on the pinnacle, demonstrating perfect obedience. 'There is as real deliverance witnessed inwardly', wrote the Quaker Penington, 'by those that wait upon the Lord and are faithful to the leadings of his holy Spirit'.[63]

Still, the most effective strategy Satan uses to prompt the reclusive Jesus to move more decisively in establishing his kingdom is to remind him of the career of the revolutionary martial leader Judas Maccabeus. In Book 3 (lines 165ff.) Satan urges the slow-moving Jesus to seize the historical moment and become a political activist like Maccabeus in order to free a Judaea in bondage under the tyrant Tiberius's power and assume David's throne. One striking feature of *Paradise Regained* is the way it imaginatively reengages issues of Milton's revolutionary writings and experiences: not only his profound suspicion of temporal forms of regal power (as opposed to a more spiritual kind of inward power), but also his own temptation in the 1640s and 1650s to become a political activist and zealous radical who might heroically free his countrymen from bondage by means of violent rebellion. Jesus, however, remains 'unmoved' even by political temptations that most clearly recall some of Milton's deepest revolutionary yearnings. But as this interior epic dramatizes, there may be more than one way to respond as a revolutionary: waiting for things to be 'fulfilled in their due time' suggests, rather than political resignation, a prophetic sense of expectation particularly resonant in the culture of radical Puritanism.

Indeed, tempted by great spectacles of power, empire, and kingship, the Jesus who waits patiently like some Puritan saint, can firmly insist that his time 'is not yet come' (3.397), while also responding in a manner that is ominously prophetic. Referring to the fulfillment of his kingdom in due time, Jesus, who has read the Old Testament prophets in order to discover his messianic identity (1.259–63), envisions his apocalyptic role in history when he will dash 'to pieces' all the kingdoms of the world; then he will not be found 'slack' (3.398):

> Know therefore when my season comes to sit
> On David's throne, it shall be like a tree

> Spreading and overshadowing all the earth,
> Or as a stone that shall to pieces dash
> All monarchies besides throughout the world,
> And of my kingdom there shall be no end. (4.146–51)

Humble and obscure Jesus may be, but his role in world history will be truly apocalyptic. Biblical prophecies like the one quoted above were put to threatening political uses during the Revolution and Interregnum: Jesus's reference to Daniel 2:31–35 recalls Milton's own polemical use of this prophetic text in his early apocalyptic prose, where he had envisioned using the 'weapon' of Scriptures to 'throw down' and 'batter' to pieces the '*Nebuchadnezzars* Image' of Laudian episcopacy (*Animadversions*, *CP* 1:700). In his late poem the coming messianic kingdom – an eternal one and, as the lines above suggest, the only kingdom of genuine divine origin and power – is likened to the supernatural stone of Daniel which destroys all temporal kingdoms. During the Interregnum, the Quaker William Dewsbury, in his *True Prophecie of the Mighty Day of the Lord*, had not only urged the saints to 'wait upon [the Lord] to be guided by His Power', but, alluding to Daniel 2:35, had warned the rulers of the Protectorate against setting up the Beast of Nebuchadnezzar since 'the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus . . . shall break down all the Kingdoms of world and shall fill the whole Earth'.[64] Jesus's prophecy in *Paradise Regained*, with its millenarian implications, would have had an ominous resonance after the Stuart Restoration when nonconformist religious writers could still express a similar kind of unsettling vision with regard to temporal monarchy. 'The Kings of the earth are afraid lest Christs Government should un-king them', wrote the Puritan minister William Dyer in a tract proclaiming the power of Christ's eternal kingdom to break mighty kings in pieces and '*put all his enemies under his feet*' (echoing I Cor. 15:25): 'Alas, what are all the Crowns and Kingdomes of the world, all the Thrones and Scepters of Kings to Christ?'.[65] As a prophetic text whose charged tone is sometimes far from moderate, *Paradise Regained* itself can assume a political dimension that is more vigorously engaged – and hence less quietist and passively resigned – than the inward and politically withdrawn Restoration poem it is often assumed to be.

Jesus's increasingly sharp responses dramatize his vigorous polemical engagement rather than withdrawal or quiescence. This is a contentious poem full of dispute and verbal duelling: the Son of God's righteous vehemence is a crucial dimension of his contentious responses to Satan's later temptations, including the immensely attractive temptation to knowledge. Here Satan appeals to a Jesus whose mind is often focused inwardly, as Satan describes Athens as a place of 'sweet recess', 'studious walks', 'studious musing', and 'retirement' (4.242–9): all this learning, eloquence, and philosophy will make Jesus 'a king complete / Within [himself]' (283–4). To be sure, Satan's evocation of Greek poetic arts, political rhetoric, and the wisdom of Socrates recalls some of Milton's own deepest intellectual and aesthetic yearnings, thereby creating an uneasy tension at this point in the poem. Satan's inclusion of Socrates and his philosophy is particularly shrewd since Jesus had earlier singled out the poor Socrates for praise because of his suffering unjustly for 'truth's sake' (3.96–9). But for the Son of God, as for the cultured Quaker William Penn in 1669, the austere Socrates is to be singled out less for his doctrine and more for his 'divine, severe, just, and self-denying life': he is the just man among pagans who most nearly resembles Milton's Jesus or the austere Quakers themselves.[66] Moreover, when Jesus here administers 'a sharp & corrosive sentence', as he dismisses Satan's attractive temptation (pagan culture and learning he calls 'false, or little else but dreams, / Conjectures, fancies, built on nothing firm', 4.291–2), he dramatizes that fierce Miltonic stance of polemical engagement: a countering of rhetorical extreme with rhetorical extreme and an instance of 'the high and vehement speeches of our Saviour' which the controversialist admired in his prose.[67] Milton's spiritual poem shows us the power of verbal weapons to unsettle and overturn.

In emphasizing that 'he who receives / Light from above . . . No other doctrine needs' (4.288–90), Jesus resembles in his polemical response Milton's Quaker contemporaries who, though thoroughly steeped in the Bible and capable of quoting it to devastating effect, tended to emphasize the Spirit's inner illumination (and the Light within) above the letter of Scripture, as Milton himself does in the *Christian Doctrine*.[68] Jesus's polemical response accords with Milton's radical religious contemporaries, moreover, in scorning verbal ornament ('swelling epithets thick-laid / As varnish on a harlot's cheek', 4.343–4) or what Fox called 'great swelling words of vanity', while praising the 'majestic unaffected style' of the Hebrew prophets over classical oratory: 'In them is plainest taught, and easiest learnt, / What makes a nation happy, and keeps it so, / What ruins kingdoms, and lays cities flat' (359, 361–3).[69] Plain prophetic discourse was itself a rhetorical weapon exploited in radical religious writing and speaking during the Interregnum and Restoration. Thus George Fox the younger, who did not hesitate to admonish and instruct temporal authorities, including the restored monarch, wrote in 1660 that 'As the Lord shall move us, we shall be willing to show the governors in plainness, what is wrong with them, and in the government'.[70] It is in relation to this contemporary milieu – where we see evidence of continued polemical engagement among radical religious authors during the Restoration – that we need to consider the political claims the austere Jesus makes for the unaffected style and power of prophetic discourse, which his own 'sharp, but saving words' (*The Reason of Church-Government*, *CP* 1:804) in *Paradise Regained* exemplify.

In his '*Day of Temptations* and *Tryals*', to recall the words of Edward Burrough, the meek hero of *Paradise Regained* does indeed 'put on *strength*, that he [might] stand, and never *be moved*', thus demonstrating that his mighty weakness has a 'godlike force' (4.602) capable of overcoming the strength of Satanic power. The eschatological thrust of the poem's ending – as Satan falls stunned 'with amazement' (4.562) at the wondrous revelation of Jesus on the pinnacle as both perfect man and God – highlights this dramatic apocalyptic victory, while looking forward to other battles at the end of time. The spiritual kingdom of Jesus is here, *Paradise Regained* suggests, and yet it is also to come at that point in the future when Satan shall 'fall from heaven trod down / Under his feet' (4.620–1). Both deeply inward and mighty in the power of the Lord, Jesus has vanquished all worldly temptations and assaults: in his spiritual epic Milton created a compelling model for radical saints in Restoration England who found themselves exercised in an age of acute trials and who nevertheless chose to wait upon God in the wilderness, even as they wondered, 'Where will this end?'.[71]

The Politics of *Paradise Regained* and the 1671 Volume

The spiritual politics of Milton's late poem, then, by no means suggest that Milton withdrew from vigorous political engagement after the Restoration or that he was even unequivocally a pacifist.[72] *Paradise Regained*, we have seen, is subversive in its political implications and provocative in its revision of conventional political discourse. This Puritan epic – intensely inward looking and yet polemically engaged with the temporal world – is more deeply indebted than is usually recognized to the radical religious culture of both the Interregnum and Restoration years, where we need to emphasize important continuities, not only differences. *Paradise Regained* redefines and dramatizes a model of revolutionary response – one more verbal in its combative nature – that complements but by no means clearly repudiates or supersedes, as some recent commentators insist, the revolutionary violence of its companion poem, *Samson Agonistes*.[73] Indeed, Milton's publishing the two poems together seems to me a much more ambiguous gesture than critics often acknowledge.

Because this point has implications for interpreting the poet's political alignments at the end of his literary career, I wish to address it briefly – and more speculatively – by way of concluding my discussion. After all, can we be certain that Milton wants his readers to see Jesus's sharp rhetoric and 'winning words' in *Paradise Regained* as altogether superseding Samson's 'horrid spectacle' (*SA*, 1542) and militant act of vengeance? In considering this issue, we might keep in mind George Wither's observation, made in the year of the Restoration, that 'the *LORD of Hosts* . . . is General of a two-fold *Militia*, furnished with distinct weapons according to the several services whereby they are to glorifie him; the one *Natural*, and the other *Spiritual*; and . . . he makes use of both to . . . destroy the *Enemies* of his *Kingdom*, as occasion is given. The first he employeth in shedding the blood of his *malicious opposers*, . . . sometime, with hazard or loss of their own'.[74] By publishing *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* together, Milton was making a highly provocative gesture: this poetic volume itself could be construed as a deeply equivocal or double-edged response to the politics of the Restoration. The fit reader of Milton's volume is left to decide which kind of revolutionary response – verbal duelling or iconoclastic violence – is more appropriate in an age of Royalist ascendancy: at the end of his career, Milton has given us a poetic volume in which he represents both revolutionary responses with great imaginative power.

Indeed, by publishing these two poems together, Milton seems even more equivocal in his imaginative and political responses than his Quaker contemporaries – especially in Restoration England. Yet it is worth noting that the professed pacifism of the Quakers after 1660 was often at odds with the militancy and fervor of their apocalyptic rhetoric, which by no means disappeared after the Interregnum; there was in any case ambiguity among Milton's Quaker contemporaries regarding the issue of pacifism. Thus a year after Milton's volume appeared, the prophetic Quaker writer and leader Edward Burrough was depicted by Francis Howgill as a valiant warrior and a mighty Samson destroying the Philistines 'Heaps upon Heaps' with the jawbone of an ass, while William Dewsbury could warn his Restoration countrymen in 1666 of the fierceness of the Lord's wrath and the 'terrible vengeance' with which he will manifest himself: 'then will he come upon you in the fearceness of his wrath, and break you to peeces, like potsherds', wrote Dewsbury of those who delight 'in pride, pleasures, pomp, riches, and glory, in this present World'.[75] Likewise Ellwood, imprisoned with other Quakers in 1662 (after being employed by Milton) and feeling acutely a sense of the 'horrid impieties of the age', observed in verses written to console himself, 'That speedy vengeance He will take on all / Who persecute His saints and them enthrall'.[76] Even after the Restoration, the zeal and violence of Quaker language and exhortation, aimed at engaging an ungodly state and world, was often fueled by a vision of divine power, judgment, and vengeance not far removed from the cataclysmic vision and language of Milton's play dramatizing the destruction which has 'come speedy' upon ungodly 'mortal men / Fallen into wrath divine' (1681–3).

There is, then, a profound indeterminacy about Milton's 1671 volume in terms of political message and imaginative response. This indeterminacy we should resist resolving by insisting that the poet's political and religious radicalism after the Restoration can be firmly aligned with one prophetic poem and its heroic vision more closely than with the other. By publishing

Paradise Regained together with *Samson Agonistes*, Milton created a provocative volume that could itself function like a two-edged sword or even like a two-handed engine. In one poem he envisioned what it might like to repudiate all temporal kingdoms and powers and establish the inward kingdom of Jesus through humble actions and 'winning words'; in the other he envisioned what it might be like, in a spectacular act of cataclysmic violence and revenge, to destroy the idols and theater of Dagon and his worshippers. Years after the Restoration, this radical Puritan prophet and poet was indeed able to smite once and smite no more.

Notes

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1 *A Treatise of Civil Power*, in D. M. Wolfe et al (eds.) the *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 8 vols. (New Haven, 1953–82), 7:255. Subsequent quotations from Milton's prose are taken from this edition and cited parenthetically within my text as *CP*, followed by the volume and page number. Quotations from Milton's poetry are taken from J. Carey and A. Fowler (eds.) *The Poems of Milton* (London, 1968).

2 Edward Burrough, *A General Epistle to all the Saints* (London, 1660), p. 5.

3 Recent attempts to explore the poem's political implications include C. Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1979), ch. 30; David Quint, 'David's Census: Milton's Politics and *Paradise Regained*', in M. Nyquist and M. W. Ferguson (eds.) *Re-membering Milton: Essays on the Texts and Traditions* (New York and London, 1988), pp. 128–47; Michael Wilding, *Dragons Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 249–57; Joan S. Bennett, *Reviving Liberty: Radical Christian Humanism in Milton's Great Poems* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), ch. 6; Laura L. Knoppers, '*Paradise Regained* and the Politics of Martyrdom', *Modern Philology*, 90.2, (1992), 200–19.

4 See esp. S. Marx, 'The Prophet Disarmed: Milton and the Quakers', *SEL*, 32, (1992), 111–28, which aligns Milton with Quaker pacifism. As will become clear from my subsequent discussion, Milton's relation to Quaker radicalism is deeper and more complex than Marx's article suggests. On the pacifism of *Paradise Regained*, see also Wilding's *Dragons Teeth*, pp. 251–7. On the poem as an expression of political quietism, see A. Milner, *John Milton and the English Revolution: A Study in the Sociology of Literature* (London, 1981), pp. 167–70, 174–6, 178, 185–7. On withdrawal and retreat as Milton's response to the Restoration, see N. H. Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Leicester, 1987), p. 19.

5 On the resigned political inactivity and quietist attitude of radicals, see J. R. Jones, *Country and Court: England, 1658–1714* (Cambridge, MA, 1978), pp. 138–9, and J. P. Kenyon, *Stuart England* (Harmondsworth, 1978), p. 185. This view has recently been challenged by R. L. Greaves who explores the continuity of radicalism in the Restoration in *Deliver Us from Evil: The Radical Underground in Britain, 1660–1663* (Oxford and New York, 1986) and *Enemies under his Feet: Radicals and Nonconformists in Britain, 1664–1677* (Stanford, 1990); Greaves has recently argued for the Quakers' engagement in the Restoration in 'Shattered Expectations? George Fox, the Quakers, and the Restoration State, 1660–1685', *Albion*, 24.2, (1992), 237–59. On continuities in seventeenth-century radical experience, see also N. Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion, 1640–1660* (Oxford, 1989), p. 346; T. Harris, 'Introduction: Revising the Restoration', in *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England*, ed. Harris, Paul Seaward and Mark Goldie (Oxford, 1990), pp. 2–4; B. Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (London, 1985), p. 109; J. Scott, 'Radicalism and Restoration: The Shape of the Stuart Experience', *The Historical Journal*, 31.2, (1988), 453–67.

6 For comments on the interaction between politics, religion, and society in Milton's age, see B. Reay's introduction to J. F. McGregor and B. Reay (eds.) *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984), esp. pp. 3, 15–16; see R. Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few: Symbolism of Speaking and Silence Among Seventeenth-Century Quakers* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 72, and G. F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford, 1947), pp. 119, 122.

7 C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1975), pp. 399–400, begins to note some connections between *Paradise Regained* and its radical religious milieu; but the issue still deserves much more detailed investigation. In an important work in progress, 'Milton's Religion of the Spirit', Norman Burns is also investigating the poet's radical religious contexts.

8 For evidence that Winstanley himself later became a Quaker, see James Alsop, 'Gerrard Winstanley's Later Life', *Past and Present*, 82, (1979), 73–81.

9 The Quakers became the dominant radical group by the mid-1650s and by the Restoration they may have had as many as 60,000 members; they reached every county in England and Wales. See Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, for the best recent study of the sect.

10 Having asked Ellwood in 1665 to read *Paradise Lost*, Milton asked the Quaker what he thought of it: 'Thou hast said much here of "Paradise Lost,"', Ellwood responded, 'but what has thou to say of "Paradise Found"? He made me no answer, but sat some time in a muse'. When Ellwood later went to visit Milton in London, Milton showed him the poem: 'This is owing to you, for you put it into my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont, which before I had not thought of' (C. G. Crump (ed.) *The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood* [New York, 1900], p. 145). On Milton's relation with Ellwood, see Elizabeth T. McLaughlin, 'Milton and Thomas Ellwood', *Milton Newsletter*, 2, (1967), 17–28; on Ellwood's possible literary influence, see J. Max Patrick, 'The Influence of Thomas Ellwood upon Milton's Epics', in H. Bluhm (ed.) *Essays in History and Literature* (Chicago, 1965), pp. 119–32.

11 Ellwood tells us that towards Penington Milton 'bore a good respect' (*The Life*, p. 89). Penington indeed helped Ellwood find employment as Milton's reader. Like Milton, Penington attended Cambridge University and at the end of the Interregnum defended the Good Old Cause in *To the Parliament, the Army, and all the Wel-affected in the Nation, who have been faithful to the Good Old Cause* (London, 1659). On Penington in Buckinghamshire, see R. T. Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655–1755* (Cambridge, MA, 1969), pp. 15, 21–3. For a helpful account of Penington's beliefs (though without reference to *Paradise Regained*), see C. Hill, *The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries* (Harmondsworth, 1984), 118–28.

12 For important accounts of the adverse conditions in which the early Quakers emerged, see esp. W. C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*,

2nd ed., rev. by H. J. Cadbury (Cambridge, 1955) and *The Second Period of Quakerism*, 2nd ed., rev. by H. J. Cadbury (Cambridge, 1961); H. Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven, 1964); Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*; and Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism*.

13 J. L. Nickalls (ed.) *The Journal of George Fox* (1952; rpt. London, 1975), p. 1.

14 See Ellwood's testimony in Penington, *The Works of the Long-Mournful and Sorely-Distressed Isaac Penington* (London, 1681[–80]), sig. c2r; Penington. *To all such as Complain that they want Power* (London, 1661), pp. 7–8.

15 See the testimonies by George Fox, William Penn, Ellwood, and others preceding Penington's *Works* and the entry on Penington in R. L. Greaves and R. Zaller (eds.) *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*, 3 vols. (Brighton, 1982–84). Ellwood noted Penington's 'great constancy and quietness of mind' during his periods of tribulation (sig. c4r). For the trials of early Quakers compared to those of Job, see Fox's *Journal*, p. 311.

16 Cf. Knoppers, 'The Politics of Martyrdom', who argues that the poem revises the contemporary politics of martyrdom which can be traced back to John Foxe; she, however, never considers Quaker martyrdom.

17 Among the numerous studies of persecution in this period, see G. R. Gragg, *Puritanism in the Period of the Great Persecution, 1660–1688* (Cambridge, 1957); Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, ch. 2; Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England*, ch. 8; Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism*, ch. 3; Reay, *The Quakers in the English Revolution*, pp. 105–6.

18 Fell, *A Declaration and an Information From us the People of God called Quakers* (London, 1660), p. 2; Fox, *Journal*, esp. pp. 220–1, 352–4, 392, 405–7, 425, 571–2. See also Richard Hubberthorne to George Fox, 29 March 1660, Swarthmore MSS vol. 4, fol. 18 (Friends' House Library, London). During the Protectorate nearly two thousand Quakers suffered imprisonment: Alan Cole, 'The Quakers and the English Revolution', *Past and Present*, 10, (1956), 44.

19 *The Memorable Works of a Son of Thunder and Consolation: Namely, That True Prophet, and Faithful Servant of God ... Edward Burroughs* (London, 1672), p. 462.

20 Penington, *Works*, sig. c2r.

21 See Crisp's *Testimony Concerning James Parnel* (1662) in H. Barbour and A. O. Roberts (eds.) *Early Quaker Writings, 1650–1700* (Grand Rapids, 1973), p. 164; Crisp notes how 'in many travails and trials' the young Parnell 'obeyed' 'the workings of [God's] power in him' (p. 165).

22 *Works*, I, p. 454.

23 Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, pp. 36, 70, and Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, pp. 192, 246, 253, 372. See the entry for 11 April 1656 in *The Diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616–1683*, ed. A. Macfarlane (Oxford, 1991), pp. 366–7, on the Quaker James Parnell undertaking to fast forty days and nights.

24 See Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, p. 119.

25 See Greaves, 'George Fox, the Quakers, and the Restoration State', pp. 238–40.

26 Benjamin Furly, *The World's Honour Detected* (London, 1663), p. 54, quoted in Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*, p. 57.

27 [Roger Jones], *Mene Tekel; or, The Downfal of Tyranny* (n.p., 1663), pp. 49, 43; see also Greaves, *Deliver Us From Evil*, p. 223.

28 See Anthony Low's discussion of the poem's georgic mode in *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton, 1985), pp. 322–52.

29 *Memorable Works*, p. 462; cf. Penington, *Works*, I, p. 344: 'We have been a poor oppressed People, from the day that the power of the Lord broke forth upon us'. The Quakers tended to come from the middling and lower ranks of society, though the movement drew adherents from a wide social range: it attracted some prominent members from the gentry, including Ellwood, William Penn, and Penington himself.

30 *A Noble Salutation and a Faithful Greeting unto Thee Charles Stuart*, in *Early Quaker Writings*, pp. 391–2.

31 G. H. Sabine (ed.) *The Works of Gerrard Winstanley* (Ithaca, 1941), pp. 238, 475; Penington, *Works*, I, p. 309.

32 *A True Testimony of Obedience to the Heavenly Call* [London, 1654], pp. 4–5; cf. James Nayler, *Love to the Lost*, 2nd edn. (London, 1656), p. 25. In his poem *An Improvement of Imprisonment* (London, 1661), George Wither asserted God will call his prophets from 'the *Plow*, / From *Herds*, ... *Fishing*, from a Trade / Which, in the World small reputation had' (p. 51). Cf. Fox, *A General Epistle to Friends* ([London], 1668), p. 9, who stresses that the Word made many fishermen prophetic preachers.

33 *The Life*, p. 13. Nayler himself was at the plow 'meditating on the things of God' when he was called in 1652: see Barbour, *Quakers*, p. 115.

34 Thus the fiery Quaker writer, James Parnell, attempting to level and reform traditional notions of honor and nobility, observed that 'all the true Prophets of God were Noblemen and Gentlemen ... though of the Nobles and great Ones of the Earth' they were disdained 'because according to the World they were of low Degree, some of them Ploughmen, some Herdsmen, some Shepherds'; and Christ too was 'Noble' though he was 'scorned to be the King of the Jews' because 'according to the World he was of low Degree': see *A Collection of the Several Writings* (London, 1675), p. 99.

35 On the Spirit's work in terms of leading and guiding radical Puritans, see Barbour, *Quakers*, pp. 25–8, 115–17.

36 Howgill, *The Inheritance of Jacob* (1655–56), in *Early Quaker Writings*, p. 169.

37 See William Penn's preface to Fox's *Journal*, p. xxxix; cf. Fox's description of his early 'gravity and stayedness of mind and spirit not usual in children' (*Journal*, p. 1). See also M. B. Endy, *William Penn and Early Quakerism* (Princeton, 1973), pp. 54, 58.

38 As Louis L. Martz notes, 'in secret' conveys the Latin *in secreto*: 'in solitude, in a solitary place, in retirement' (*Milton: Poet of Exile* [New Haven, 1980], p. 248).

39 Penington, *Works*, II, p. 188 (cf. II, 322, 391–2), and Ellwood's testimony, sig. c2r.

40 *The Life*, 155; cf. pp. 51, 66.

41 Ellwood's testimony: Penington, *Works*, sig. c2v.

42 Though more prevalent in the 1650s, the Fifth Monarchist movement refused to die in the 1660s: not only did Venner's rising of 1661 make them infamous, but Christopher Feake, a prominent Fifth Monarchist, was still arousing concern in 1664. See Greaves, *Enemies Under His Feet*, p. 123, and, for the most authoritative account of this radical movement, B. S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (London, 1972). On Milton's possible rejection of Fifth Monarchism, see Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*, p. 447.

43 *The Life*, p. 55; Ellwood alludes to John 18:36. He called Venner's insurrection 'that mad prank of those infatuated fifth-monarchy men'. On Venner's rising and the subsequent persecution of religious radicals, see R. Hutton, *The*

Restoration: A Political and Religious History of England and Wales, 1658–1667 (Oxford, 1985), pp. 150–2, 169, 171.

44 See Cole, 'The Quakers and the English Revolution', pp. 39–54; Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, pp. 41–2; Greaves, *Deliver Us from Evil*, pp. 11, 99, 200–1; Greaves, *Enemies Under His Feet*, p. 136; Greaves, 'George Fox, the Quakers, and the Restoration State'; and Christopher Hill, 'Quakers and the English Revolution', *The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society*, 56.3, (1992), 165–79, esp. pp. 170–1, 175. The Quakers were by no means pacifists during the Interregnum.

45 E[dward] B[urrough], *A Declaration of the present Sufferings . . . of the people of God . . . called Quakers* (London, 1659), p. 29. Cf. George Fox, *The Great Mistery of the Great Whore Unfolded* (London, 1659), p. 122.

46 On the poem's redefinition of wisdom in relation to an inner spiritual kingdom, see Barbara K. Lewalski, *Milton's Brief Epic: The Genre, Meaning, and Art of Paradise Regained* (Providence and London, 1966), ch. 11.

47 J. C., *A Defence of the True Church* (1659), p. 29, cited in Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, p. 42; Penington, *Works*, II, p. 322. Cf. Burrough, *General Epistle to all the Saints*, p. 15.

48 See *Fire in the Bush* (1650), in *Works*, pp. 470, 458.

49 *The Face of the Times* ([London], 1662), pp. 59, 73.

50 *The Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of the Church* ([London], 1669), p. 7.

51 *The Examination and Tryall of Margaret Fell and George Fox* (London, 1664), pp. 14–15, 7.

52 *The Testimony of William Erbery* (London, 1658), p. 189.

53 *A Message from the Spirit of Truth* (London, 1658), p. 4.

54 *Works*, p. 234.

55 *Journal*, p. 340; *A general epistle to Friends* ([London?], 1670), p. 8. Fox described Christ as 'the ROCK and FOUNDATION of all the Righteous in their Age' (*Primitive Ordination and Succession, of Bishops, Deacons, Pastors and Teachers in the Church of Christ* [London?], 1675), p. 49.

56 *Enemies Under His Feet*, p. 137.

57 *Works*, pp. 231–2.

58 On Satan's pagan sense of time and vocation, see Barbara K. Lewalski, 'Time and History in *Paradise Regained*' in B. Rajan (ed.) *The Prison and the Pinnacle* (Toronto, 1973), pp. 49–81.

59 For different treatments of 'due time' in the poem, see L. Zwicky, 'Kairos in *Paradise Regained*: The Divine Plan', *ELH*, 31, (1964), 271–7, and E. W. Tayler, *Milton's Poetry: Its Development in Time* (Pittsburgh, 1979), pp. 148–84. On Puritan providentialism in relation to the waiting of the saint, see B. Worden, 'Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England', *Past and Present*, 109, (1985), 65.

60 *Hopes Encouragement* (London, 1644), p. 9.

61 A. S. P. Woodhouse (ed.) *Puritanism and Liberty: Being the Army Debates (1647–49) from the Clarke Manuscripts* (London, 1938), p. 136; cf. Cromwell in the Putney debates, p. 101. See also Erbery, *The Testimony*, p. 18: 'Wait here a while for that Spirit and Power from on high to appear in us . . . and at last . . . we shall be led forth out of this confusion and *Babylon*'.

62 *Paralellogrammaton* ([London], 1662), p. 59; cf. p. 79.

63 *Works*, I, p. 459. Penington, observing in 1659 that the work of the Lord had been set back, passionately urged the whole nation to wait upon the Lord: *To the Parliament*, sig. A2v. On waiting patiently for the Lord's 'mighty appearance', cf. George Fox the younger, *A Noble Salutation* in *Early Quaker Writings*, pp. 403–4, and Burrough, *General Epistle to all the Saints*, p. 16.

64 *A True Prophecie of the Mighty Day of the Lord* (London, 1655), p. 12.

65 *Christ's Famous Titles, And A Believers Golden-Chain* (London, 1666), pp. 5, 67, 7; cf. p. 28: 'Christ is a King that *lives for ever*, and reigns for ever; other Kings they are but of yesterday'. See also *Mene Tekel* and George Wither, *Meditations upon the Lords Prayer* (London, 1665), p. 60, on the coming of Christ's kingdom as the means to freedom from temporal governments.

66 Penn, *No Cross, No Crown* ([London], 1669), pp. 69–72.

67 See *Tetrachordon*, where Milton writes of Christ's harsh response to the Pharisees: 'And as the offence was in one extreme, so the rebuke, to bring more efficaciously to a rectitude . . . stands not in the middle way of duty, but in the other extreme' (*CP* 2:668).

68 See Barbour, *Quakers*, pp. 158–9. For Milton's emphasis on the Spirit's internal illumination and its 'supreme authority', see his *Christian Doctrine*, *CP* 6:579–80, 587–8, 589–90.

69 George Fox, *Trying of Spirits in our Age now* (London, 1683), p. 21, writing of 'the fair speeches' of the ungodly ministers and apostles of Satan. See also Milton's *Civil Power*: 'in matters of religion he is learnedest who is planest' (*CP* 7:272).

70 *A Noble Salutation*, in *Early Quaker Writings*, p. 402; cf. Fell, *A Declaration*, p. 8. On plain style in Quaker discourse and prophecy, see Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*. Other Quaker prophets, critical of the evils of the new regime, consciously evoked in their writings the admonishing tone and spirit of such Hebrew prophets as Jeremiah and Amos and engaged in apocalyptic exhortations: see Greaves, 'George Fox, the Quakers, and the Restoration State', p. 241, for examples from 1662.

71 Cf. Wither's *Meditations upon the Lords Prayer* on Jesus as a model for the saints: 'God leadeth us into some *temptations*, either to be exemplary, or to prove us both for his honour and our own; as when our *Saviour* was *led into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil*' (p. 173; cf. pp. 156–7).

72 See Marx, 'The Prophet Disarmed': *Paradise Regained*'s 'affirmation of Quaker pacifist principles seems ummistakable' (p. 126); cf. Wilding, *Dragons Teeth*. For works challenging the notion of Milton's pacifism, see my study, *Milton and the Drama of History: Historical Vision, Iconoclasm, and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, 1990), ch. 6; Hill, *The Experience of Defeat*, p. 315; and esp. Michael Lieb, *Milton and the Culture of Violence* (Ithaca, 1994).

73 See e.g. Joseph Wittreich, *Interpreting Samson Agonistes* (Princeton, 1986), p. 374; Wilding, *Dragons Teeth*, pp. 255, 257.

74 *Fides-Anglicana* (London, 1660), p. 25.

75 Burrough, *Memorable Works*, sig. (e2)r; Dewsbury, *The Word of the Lord to all the Inhabitants of England* ([London], 1666), pp. 5–7. See also Stephen Crisp's 1666 prophecy concerning 'the mighty overturning Power of the Lord God Almighty . . . against this ungodly generation' (*An Epistle to Friends, Concerning the Present and Succeeding Times* [London, 1666], p. 14).

76 *The Life*, pp. 116, 120. Cf. Ellwood's *Alarum to the Priests; or, A Message from Heaven* (London, 1660).