

Here Comes the Son: Providential Theme and Symbolic Pattern in *Paradise Lost*, Book 3

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The invocation to light commences by collapsing distinctions between temporal and eternal, physical and spiritual, a nonconfusing confusion since the former kind of light traditionally symbolizes the latter. Although the blind poet, entirely "cut off" from created light, must himself directly seek the inward vision of "Celestial Light," he fully deploys the metaphoric resources of light and sight imagery for his reader's illumination. Shifting into narration, the poet presents God the Father, beholding his creation, "past, present, future."¹ He views "Our two first Parents" working happily in the garden and, simultaneously, Satan approaching the world at the end of the voyage out of chaos. He explains to his Son the meaning of Satan's action and predicts that man will fall, thereby actuating the divine dialogue of justice and mercy.

The synecdoche of God functioning as vision ("th' Almighty father . . . / . . . bent down his eye, / His own works and their works at once to view" [3.56, 58–59]), oddly, has lent ammunition to those critics who complain of the anthropomorphism of Milton's God. Leland Ryken observes that "the most frequently mentioned of God's physical parts is his eye" but defends the technique: "The effect of the portrayal of God in human terms is not a composite human form but a series of anthropomorphic fragments, each describing concretely a function of the Deity or suggesting his whole being."² In the practice, of course, Milton is acting upon his own recommendation that "our safest way is to form in our minds such a conception of God, as shall correspond with his own delineation and representation of himself in the sacred writings";³ and, in this particular instance, he draws upon the frequent Old Testament epithet of the "eye of the Lord"—for example, Ps. 33:18: "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy"; Ps. 11:4: "The Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men"; or Prov. 15:3: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Indeed, such scriptural quotations serve themselves to advance us a stage beyond Ryken's proposition; in them, as in Milton's description, one does not visualize an "anthropomorphic

¹Milton's poetry is quoted from *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes

fragment" but responds directly to the "function of the Deity," his omniscience, his eternal watchfulness. Rather than something which might quicken an optometrist's pulse, the Eye of God is as immediately figurative as an emblem.

While Milton chooses a representation of God with scriptural authority, such a "correspondence" does not prevent him from drawing upon extrabiblical metaphoric traditions which accord with his conception, and he does so here. The image of God bending down his eye to view his creation deftly evokes a number of complexly interrelated, metaphoric traditions. First, there is the epithet "the eye of the world," which for two millennia had described the sun. The Orphic hymn "To the Sun" begins: "Hear golden Titan, whose eternal eye / With broad survey, illumines all the sky . . .," and the phrase echoes through the writings of the Platonic philosopher Secundus, the poet Ovid, St. Ambrose, Macrobius, Kepler, to Milton's contemporaries Alexander Ross and John Swann, who asserts that "the sunne may well be called *Oculus mundi*, *The eye of the world*. For he is indeed the chief fountain from whence the whole world receiveth luster."⁴ Milton's appositive "Lordly eye" (3.578) for "The golden Sun" (3.572) thus comes freighted with every sort of authority; and the morning prayer of Adam and Eve, "Thou Sun, of this great World both Eye and Soul, / Acknowledge him thy Greater, sound his praise / In thy eternal course" (5.171–73), recognizes both the similarity and the distinction which had exercised Ambrose: "Do not, therefore, without due consideration put your trust in the sun. It is true that it is the eye of the world, the joy of the day, the beauty of the heavens, the charm of nature and the most conspicuous object in creation. When you behold it, reflect on its Author. When you admire it, give praise to its Creator."⁵

This pious and conventional distinction between the created and the Creator, the symbol and the reality symbolized, allows us to trace a splitting of our first figure into vehicle and tenor. On the one hand, the image of an eye frequently is reduced to an attribute of divinity—as it is in the hieroglyphics of Horapollo and Valeriano and when mounted upon a sceptre. Leon Battista Alberti explains: "The ancients likened God to an eye seeing all and everything. Thus we are admonished . . . to conceive of God as ever present, seeing all our deeds and thoughts."⁶ On the other hand, the sun itself metamorphoses from tenor to vehicle, for, as Hugo Rahner has remarked, "Christian theologians have from the very beginning used the sun to express the fundamental truths of their revelation."⁷

⁴*The Hymns of Orpheus*, in Thomas Taylor, *The Platonist: Selected Writings*, ed. Kathleen Raine and

Reduplicating the same symbolic doubling which we observed in Milton's invocation to "Holy Light," both the Bible and traditions of commentary permit the sun to symbolize interchangeably God the Father or the Trinity and the Son. The germinal text for the latter is Mal. 4:2, "the Sun of righteousness," an identification amplified by such commentators as Origen, for whom the sun is a symbol of grace, and Hilary of Poitiers, who compares the Logos to the sun, resonances which the Nativity Ode draws together with the image of the infant in the manger as the rising sun emerging from his bed of pillowy clouds.⁸ But, as Christ is the created light emanating from the Father, so the Father is the source of all light. Psalms 84:11 proclaims that "the Lord God is a *sun* and shield"; and Marsilio Ficino muses in *De sole*: ". . . One should not attempt to grasp and state the hidden or occult light of God without noting its resemblance to the sensible light: namely, that of the Sun."⁹ Ficino concludes that "nothing can be found in the world which resembles the divine Trinity more than the Sun," a sentiment shared by Tasso, who begins *Il mondo creato* with an address to the Trinity as "triplicata Sole."¹⁰ Lest Italian Platonists seem too remote from God-fearing Englishmen, we might turn to Milton's respected antagonist Archbishop Ussher, who catechistically propounds: "What be those resemblances that are commonly brought to shadow out unto us the mystery of the Trinity? First, the Sun begotteth his own beams, and from thence proceeds light and heat, and yet is none of them before another, otherwise then in consideration of order and relation, that is to say, that the beams are begotten of the body of the Sun, and the light and heat proceedeth from both."¹¹ Ussher's succeeding points compare with the Trinity the interrelatedness of light and heat to fire, of fountainhead and spring, and the faculties of the human soul.

Milton's image of the Eye of Heaven overseeing the created world, I would maintain, directly evokes Old Testament descriptions of "th' Almighty Father," but simultaneously suggests the *oculus mundi*, the sun of the physical world, a symbolic sun which potentially figures both the Holy Trinity and the Son of God.¹² The figural interplay, however, has an even more specific bent than this. John Steadman once contrasted the presentation of Milton's God to Dante's God of mystical contemplation, arguing that the concept of God in *Paradise Lost* as an active governor of the creation follows logically from Milton's expressed intention to "assert Eternal Providence."¹³ And Isabel MacCaffrey has found the highest

⁸Origen *Commentaria in genesim*, and Hilary *Tractatus in psalmum 118*, both in Rahner, p. 97; for the

illumination of that intention to occur in book 3: the assertion of “the providential design for the future of mankind . . . by the only Being who has a right to do so . . . ,” an assertion dramatized as a “great Argument.”¹⁴ If God’s Providence is the aspect of his nature with which Milton’s epic at large is concerned and the specific purpose of book 3 is to reveal the design of that Providence, we would expect, as well, that the *Imago Dei* would present precisely that facet of divinity. It does so, of course.

Both eye and sun traditionally have been used to symbolize God’s Providence, and the conjunction of symbols particularly underscores the motif. The point of significance in each case is the same: as his eternal watchfulness permits him to foresee everything and therefore to order benevolently the course of the mundane world, so the all-seeing sun, source of light, heat, and life itself, orders the days and seasons of growth. To Ficino the sun alone “. . . is the Illuminating Lord and Regulator of the Skies,” thereby declaring God’s eternal power and divinity.¹⁵ Boethius, explaining the workings of Providence, uses the sun analogy; but—in a verse passage suggestively similar to Milton’s—contrasts the limitations of Phoebus’s vision to that of his Creator:

Not thus the Maker of this great universe:
Him, viewing all things from his height,
No mass of earth obstructs,
No night with black clouds thwarts.
What is, what has been, and what is to come,
In one swift mental stab he sees;
Him, since he only all things sees,
The true sun could you call.¹⁶

Insofar as sun and eye can be said to carry differing connotations in Milton’s usage, the distinction perhaps is the one which he makes in *De doctrina christiana* (DDC) between “general” and “special” Providence. Whereas general Providence is the general government of the whole creation (DDC 1.8)—the kind of Providence which Herbert celebrates in his poem of that title—Milton states: “THE SPECIAL GOVERNMENT is that which embraces with peculiar regard angels and men, as being far superior to the rest of the creation.” Thus, while the sun aptly figures the “Regulator” of the world, the alternative image of the eye is the appropriate one to register the action of Satan’s rebellion:

Meanwhile th’ Eternal eye, whose sight discerns
Abstrusest thoughts, from forth his holy Mount
And from within the golden Lamps that burn
Nightly before him, saw without thir light
Rebellion rising . . .

[5.711–15]

The usage was established as early as Sonnet 7 in which “my great task-Master’s eye” is the image expressing God’s providential concern for the apprentice poet;

¹⁴/Isabel MacCaffrey, “The Theme of *Paradise Lost*, Book III,” *New Essays on Paradise Lost*, ed. Thomas Kranidas (Berkeley, Calif., 1969), pp. 58–85, esp. pp. 84–85.

and it continues beyond *Paradise Lost* to the Samson who describes himself as growing up "Under [God's] special eye" (line 636).¹⁷

Similarly, special Providence precisely is the issue adumbrated in the passage that we have been eying. In viewing "His own works and their works," God's attention is focused not upon a review of the Book of Nature, as is the speaker of Herbert's poem; here actors and actions crowd the cosmic theatre before its director-spectator:

About him all the Sanctities of Heaven
 Stood thick as Stars, and from his sight receiv'd
 Beatitude past utterance; on his right
 The radiant image of his Glory sat,
 His only Son; on Earth he first beheld
 Our two first Parents, yet the only two
 Of mankind, in the happy Garden plac't,
 Reaping immortal fruits of joy and love,
 Uninterrupted joy, unrivall'd love,
 In blissful solitude; he then survey'd
 Hell and the Gulf between, and *Satan* there
 Coasting the wall of Heav'n on this side Night . . .

[3.60–71]

The loyal angels, the Son of God, "Our two first Parents," and the great adversary; the subjects, in other words, of special Providence. This is why the image of the eye here is primary and the sun submerged or secondary. Those secondary connotations resonate importantly, however, anticipating the very action which is to be the subject of the succeeding dialogue: the most extraordinary evidence of special Providence which for Milton justifies the ways of God to man, the redemption of mankind through Christ, the "greater Sun."

Were one to postulate a specific poetic locus upon which Milton's imagination is playing, I might nominate Edward Fairfax's translation of the *Gerusalemme liberata*. Twice in the epic Tasso describes God as turning his eyes to scrutinize the affairs of men (see 1.7–8, 9.55–57). In both episodes the conception of deity is trinitarian ("e de l'Eternita nel trono augusto / risplendea con tre lumi in una luce")¹⁸ and the context providential intervention. Fairfax, perhaps himself influenced by Spenser's employment of "the great eye of heauen" to symbolize "heavenly grace" (*Faerie Queene* 1.3.4), expands the descriptive usage to two apposite passages in later cantos (13.72, 14.2), modifying Tasso's plural "gli occhi" to the singular and rendering Tasso's "turned" ("volse" or "volgea") as "bent." Of the four instances, the most suggestive occurs at the beginning of canto 14: the watchful God sends down to the sleeping Goffredo a dream whereby he reveals his will. The dream descends from the east, via a crystalline gate (Tasso's addition to the Homeric gates of ivory and horn) located next to the golden gate through which the rising sun enters the world. Fairfax, seemingly

¹⁷See also *Samson Agonistes*, lines 1172–73, a passage which virtually echoes *Paradise Lost* 3.191–93. In *Animadversions* God is described as having "ever had this Iland under the special indulgent eye of his providence" (see *Complete Prose Works*, ed. Don M. Wolfe [New Haven, Conn., 1953], 1:704).

¹⁸Tasso *Gerusalemme liberata* 9.56.5–6. For the Italian, I have quoted from the *Gerusalemme liberata*, ed. Lanfranco Caretti (Bari, 1961); and, for the Fairfax translation, *Jerusalem Delivered*, ed. Henry Morley, Carisbrooke Library (London, 1890).

responding to the resonances activated by the succeeding sun image, replaces "il Re del mondo" with God bending down his eye:

But He, whose Godhead heav'n and earth doth sway,
 In his eternal light did watch and wake,
 And bend on Godfrey down the gracious ray
 Of his bright eye, still ope for Godfrey's sake
 To whom a silent dream the Lord down sent,
 Which told his will, his pleasure, and intent.

Far in the east (the golden gate beside
 Whence Phoebus comes) a crystal port there is,
 And ere the sun his broad doors open wide,
 The beam of springing day uncloseth this;
 Hence come the dreams, by which heav'n's sacred Guide
 Reveals to man those high decrees of his.

[14.2.3–8, 3.1–6]

The poetic situation here—a God who is simultaneously a watchful eye and an eternal sun beaming rays of celestial light to shine inward and irradiate the mind of a mortal man—is very close to that of Milton's invocation.¹⁹ Prompted by his own Christological vision, he would need only to reemphasize Tasso's Trinitarianism by bringing the Son into prominence—speaking imagistically, to make that golden gate of the rising sun not adjacent but consubstantial.

Milton's symbolic conception is analogous to the one we see in Pontormo's painting of the *Supper in Emmaus* (1525). The artist takes out of time the moment at which Christ "took the bread, and blessed it" (Luke 24:30). The two disciples occupy the left and right foreground, sitting with their backs to us, still incomprehensibly busy with their meal; dominating the center and focal point is the risen Savior, his right hand raised in benediction; on each side the white-robed figures of Carthusian monks crowd about him, both bearing silent witness to the miracle and taking the event out of historical time. Immediately above Christ's head, at the upper center, a conflation of symbols spells out the significance of the heightened but naturalistic scene beneath: at the center of a globe of light is a triangle; at the center of the triangle is an eye.²⁰ The eye within a triangle, surrounded by a radiating circle of light, is a familiar sixteenth-century symbol of the

¹⁹The following dialogue also suggests an interesting imaginative refraction: transported to Heaven by

infinite holiness of the Trinity;²¹ but the version here varies interestingly in two respects. The Eye of God is not an abstract icon, but a human eye, in shape and coloration related to the eyes of the man-God below; and the globe is not a radiating circle but distinctly a sun, whose rays intersect with the nimbus of the risen Christ connecting their identities. The Providence of the Holy Trinity is manifested through the incarnation of the Son, a sacrificed god who is now the risen sun.²²

Milton's descriptive emphasis upon the providential concern of the Trinity follows logically and poetically from the invocation to "holy Light," which—with its metaphors implicitly asserting the indivisibility of sun and ray, light and radiance, fountain and stream, eternal and temporal—seems, as William B. Hunter and others have concluded, addressed to the Son of God as the manifestation through whom the Trinity may be approached.²³ As the narrative bridge between the poet's direct speech in the invocation and the Father-Son speeches of the divine dialogue, this descriptive prelude foreshadows the discursive revelation of that dialogue. Remarking that "Milton differentiates between the Father and the Son *only* during their verbal exchanges in the various councils that took place in heaven, but as soon as these councils end and the Godhead acts beyond the confines of heaven the distinction between the two persons is abruptly dropped," C. A. Patrides cogently has argued that the entire distinction of Father and Son in *Paradise Lost* is a matter of accommodation to human understanding.²⁴

It follows, therefore, that the dialogue itself is a ritual of accommodation, God talking to himself for the benefit of the overhearer, about which the only drama is the drama of apprehension taking place in the reader's mind.²⁵ As such, the

21/See George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* (New York, 1954); and James Hall, *Dictio-*

dialogue spells out what already had been implicit in the imagery of invocation and description: the Eye of Providence, both *oculus divini* and *oculus mundi*, manifests its benevolent design for the redemption of mankind through the incarnation of the man who proclaimed himself "the light of the world." While the Son's offer, "Behold mee then, mee for him, life for life / I offer, on mee let thine anger fall; / Account mee man" (3.236–38), verbally confirms the redemption, throughout the scene he has presented a visual affirmation:²⁶

Beyond compare the Son of God was seen
 Most glorious, in him all his Father shone
 Substantially express'd, and in his face,
 Divine compassion visibly appear'd,
 Love without end, and without measure Grace . . .
 [3.138–41]

With the completion of the dialogue, the angelic choir mediates between invocation and dialogue by overtly applying the sun and light/fountain and stream imagery of the former to the persons of the latter.²⁷ The Father, "Fountain of Light, thyself invisible / Amidst the glorious brightness" (3.375–76), appears to his angels only when he shades "the full blaze of [his] beams" in a cloud, permitting them to apprehend the adjuncts of his presence: "Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear" (3.380). Conversely, the immediately accessible Son presents not an image of himself but a mediated comprehension of the Father: "Begotten Son, Divine Similitude, / In whose conspicuous count'nance, without cloud / Made visible, th' Almighty Father shines" (3.384–86). Even more pointedly, the entire episode returns in full circle to the invocation as, at the culmination of the choral hymn, the angelic voices ("Thus they in Heav'n") reduce to a solitary singer, who echoes the "Hail holy light" formula shorn of metaphor:

Hail Son of God, Savior of Men, thy Name
 Shall be the copious matter of my Song
 Henceforth, and never shall my Harp thy praise
 Forget, nor from thy Father's praise disjoin.
 [3.412–15]

Patently, image and theme are woven into a seamless whole through the first half of book 3. But MacCaffrey's account of the thematic coherence of the entire book serves to alert us that we should respond to larger imagistic patterns, as well. The segment of book 3 which we have been discussing is itself only the most conspicuous portion of a pattern of sun imagery constituting a symbolic structure extending through and beyond this book. After following Satan's journey from the utter darkness of Hell to the middle darkness of Chaos, book 2 concludes with the "glimmering dawn" of the natural sun, illuminating the created world. The Invocation of "holy Light" transports us from sun to Son, defining the temporal and the eternal sides of Christ's nature, thereby presenting the providential agent. The subjects of his agency, the actions which require his intervention, and the form that intervention shall take, are clarified successively by the description of God's omniscient vision and by the dialogue. With the Limbo of Vanity episode we

26/As Cope has pointed out, p. 170.

27/Michael Fixler's comment upon the function of the angelic choruses is apposite: ". . . They mark with climactic devotion crucial phases in the unfolding of the scheme of Providence" (see "The Apocalypse within *Paradise Lost*," in Kranidas, ed. [n. 14 above], p. 142).

modulate back from metaphysical to physical sun, the "gleam / Of dawning light" (3.499–500) recapitulating the "glimmering dawn" at the end of book 2; but the symbolic overtones have become inescapable.

Lingering by the foot of the mysterious stairs which the narrator associates with Jacob's ladder, Satan glimpses something like the Father's view of his creation: "Looks down with wonder at the sudden view / Of all this World at once" (3.542–43). But the wonder, the *admiratio* appropriate to angelic witnesses (cf. 3.271–73), is too soon replaced by Satan's stock response: "but much more envy seiz'd / At sight of all this World beheld so fair" (3.553–54). Plunging precipitously into this fair new world, Satan inevitably is drawn to its eye: ". . . above them all / The golden Sun in splendor likest Heaven / Allur'd his eye: Thither his course he bends" (3.571–73). Landing on the surface of the sun, "the place he found beyond expression bright" (3.591). "Undazzl'd," the Devil gazes upon "matter new," including stones comparable "to the Twelve that shone / In Aaron's Breastplate, and a stone besides / Imagin'd rather oft than elsewhere seen" (3.597–99), the fabled Philosophers' Stone. Aaron was accepted as an Old Testament type of Christ in his priestly office; and, in the metaphor of spiritual alchemy, Christ is the Philosophers' Stone and the Great Elixir who transmutes the base metal of unredeemed souls to gold.²⁸ "Th' Arch-chemic Sun," like the vantage point of Jacob's ladder from which Satan spotted it, symbolizes Christ the mediator.²⁹ Satan, as A. B. Chambers remarks, "is surrounded with more light—both physical and metaphoric—than he will ever again be privileged to behold."³⁰ But, rather than Christ as the way to Heaven, Satan opts to follow—or, more accurately, forerun—the futile examples adumbrated in the Paradise of Fools, seeking to enter Heaven by force or by fraud. In his book 4 soliloquy to the sun, "O thou that with surpassing Glory crown'd, / Look'st from thy sole Dominion like the God / Of this new World" (4.32–34), Satan not only confesses the justness of his punishment and his inability to repent his sins, but intimates his undying enmity to the Son of God, his own assumption of the role of Antichrist: ". . . to thee I call, / But with no friendly voice, and add thy name / O Sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams / That bring to my remembrance from what state / I fell" (4.35–39).³¹

Complacent at his easy deception of Uriel, Satan has no inkling that the "glorious Angel," "the same whom *John* saw also in the Sun" (3.623), offers a less amenable type of Christ and a more threatening phase of the workings of Providence. Revelation 19:17 initiates St. John's vision of the feast of destruction

28/On Aaron see A. B. Chambers, "Milton's Proteus and Satan's Visit to the Sun," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 62 (1963): 286–87; and Herbert's poem, "Aaron." For Christ as the Philosophers' Stone, see R. B. Waddington, "Melancholy against Melancholy: *Samson Agonistes* as Renaissance Tragedy," *Calm of Mind*, ed. J. A. Wittreich, Jr. (Cleveland, 1971), pp. 280–81. The twelve stones of Aaron's breastplate (Exod. 28:17–21) further are related to the vision of the New Jerusalem, in which the foundations of the wall are ornamented with twelve precious stones (Rev. 21:19–21). The allusion prepares for the association of Uriel with the angel of Rev. 19:17.

29/On the typology of Jacob's ladder, see MacCaffrey, pp. 78–79; and C. A. Patrides, "Renaissance Interpretations of Jacob's Ladder," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 18 (1962): 411–18.

30/Chambers, "Milton's Proteus," p. 287.

of the wicked; and, according to the Geneva Bible gloss, the sun "signifieth [that] the day of iudgement shalbe cleare and evident. . . ." ³² The angel standing in the sun commentaries commonly link with the "mighty angel" of Revelation 10, "which was Jesus Christ [that] came to comfort his Church against [the] furious assaltes of Satan and Antichrist." ³³ Milton literally bridges Satan's two solar episodes, the journey to the sun and the soliloquy to the sun, with a Johannine invocation:

O for that warning voice, which he who saw
Th' *Apocalypse*, heard cry in Heav'n aloud,
Then when the Dragon, put to second rout,
Came furious down to be reveng'd on men,
Woe to the inhabitants on earth!

[4.1–5]

The passage echoes Rev. 12:7–13, verses which not only warn the "inhabiters of the earth" against the wrath of the devil now come among them, but proclaim, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of Christ," for the casting out of the dragon prophesies the ultimate victory of Christ over Satan, after he has served his purpose in testing the faithful and separating the wicked. ³⁴ As "a summe of those prophecies, which were written before, but should be fulfilled after the coming of Christ," Revelation "liuely set[s] forthe the Diuinitie of Christ, and the testimonies of our redemption . . . the prouidence of God for his elect, and of their glorie and consolation in the day of vengeance. . . . [and] The liuelie description of Antichrist . . . whose time and power notwithstanding is limited. . . ." ³⁵ The rudiments of that great warfare have been laid down; and, in rejecting the "greater Sun," Satan should have full

Happily, the first inhabitants of the earth are by no means such recalcitrant learners. A book later, in an action which significantly contrasts with Satan's abortive effort to repent, Adam and Eve, troubled by Eve's disturbing dream, offer their morning prayer praising their Creator and petitioning him to disperse any evil, "as now light dispels the dark" (5.208). Complexly patterned upon Ps. 148 and the *Book of Common Prayer* themes for the morning prayer service, this hymn to the Creator seems addressed expressly to the second person of the Trinity. At first glance the setting appears classical: "Soon as they forth were come to open sight / Of day-spring, and the Sun, who scarce up risen / With wheels yet hov'ring o'er the Ocean brim, / Shot parallel to the earth his dewy ray" (5.138–41). But the "day-spring" is Luke's epithet for Christ (1:78), a context

32/I quote glosses from *The Geneva Bible*, facsimile of the 1560 edition (Madison, Wis., 1969); all biblical quotations, however, are from the Authorized Version.

33/Geneva gloss. Cf. Cornelius a Lapide on Rev. 19:17: "Angelus hic stat in sole, ut significet quod in oculis totius mundi fiet haec Antichristianorum per Christum ultio" (*Commentarii in scripturam sacram* [Paris, 1860], 10:1302). See also, e.g., Arthur Dent, *The Ruine of Rome*, 7th ed. (London, 1633), p. 104; and Henry Burton, *The Seven Vials* (London, 1628), p. 86.

34/Fixler, pp. 159–60, relates the passage to Rev. 8:13, which is echoed in 12:12; but that ignores the clear indebtedness of Milton's first four lines to 12:7–13. Hunter finds that Milton builds his general conception of book 6 upon Rev. 12 (see "The War in Heaven: The Exaltation of the Son," in *Bright Essence*, pp. 125–26).

35/Geneva Bible, "Argument" to Revelation. For a brief account of Revelation, emphasizing both its providential thrust and Milton's understanding of it, see Fixler, pp. 132–51.

which may associate the hovering chariot wheels as much with Ezekiel's vision and the Son's ascension over the rebel angels as with the chariot of Phoebus Apollo.³⁶ While Hughes annotates "Fairest of Stars" (5.166) with references to Venus, Lucifer, and Hesperus, Rev. 22:16, "I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star," seems equally relevant. As a result of such thematic cues, the apostrophe to the sun,

Thou Sun, of this great World both Eye and Soul,
Acknowledge him thy Greater, sound his praise
In thy eternal course, both when thou climb'st
And when high Noon hast gain'd, and when thou fall'st.
[5.171-74]

comes to encapsule not only the pattern of providential order, the proper reading of the Book of Nature and the end of knowledge, but to epitomize the action "Of Man's First disobedience" and the effort of "one greater Man" to "Restore us." While the bitter events of two high noons are yet to come, already the sun is on the rise.

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36/Cf. the annotation on Luke in John Diodati, *Pious and Learned Annotations upon the Holy Bible*, 4th ed. (London, 1664). See Milton's adaptation of Ezekiel's vision to the battle of Heaven, 6.750-59, 827-34; Diodati describes Ezekiel's chariot as a "figure of the consonant harmony, which is in all the works of God's providence." Some of the traditional implications of the chariot image are discussed by Maren-Sofie Røstvig, "Images of Perfection," in *Seventeenth-Century Imagery*, ed. Earl Miner (Berkeley, Calif., 1971), pp. 10, 20-23; see also the title-page engraving of Antonius Fernandus, *Commentarii in visiones veteris testamenti* (London, 1617), which Røstvig reproduces. Frye, pp. 156-58, finds strong precedent in the visual arts for Milton's association of the chariot with Christ; see pp. 154-68 for an account of the epic's Christocentricity.