

# Satan's Apostles and the Nature of Faith in *Paradise Lost* Book I

by Lee Erickson

IF one counts the number of names in the catalogue of the chief fallen angels that Satan calls upon as the first action of his reign in Hell, one finds that there are twelve names in all: Moloch, Chemos also called Peor, Baalim, Astoroth, Astoreth also called Astarte, Tham-muz, Dagon, Rimmon, Osiris, Isis, Orus, and, last, Belial. The demonic, iconographic parody is obvious: Satan is summoning his chief fallen angels while standing on "the bare strand" of the burning lake (1.379),<sup>1</sup> just as in the gospels of Matthew and Mark, Jesus begins his ministry by calling his disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.<sup>2</sup> The vehemence of the scorn directed toward the chief fallen angels, however, makes Milton's list of Satan's apostles more than a mere travesty and suggests connections with Milton's radical Protestant distrust of the cults of sainthood associated with the disciples, with his consistent dislike of the authority for a special priesthood derived from the twelve disciples, and with his polemic against the primacy of Peter among the disciples on which the Catholic Church based its claims for papal authority. The implicit attack upon the perversions of holiness associated with the disciples underlines Milton's belief that all salvation occurs not as the result of corporate membership, but as the result of divine grace visited upon the faithful individual. Further, the biblical stories of

<sup>1</sup> My text is *Paradise Lost*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey Press, 1962). For Milton's other poetry, my text is *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey Press, 1957).

<sup>2</sup> Merritt Hughes's annotation is silent on this point, as is that of Roy Flannagan in *John Milton: Paradise Lost* (New York: Macmillan, 1992). The chief authority on biblical allusion, which has compiled the work of past Milton editors, indicates that no one has observed this; see, James H. Sims, *The Bible in Milton's Epic* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1962); see also, J. B. Broadbent, *Some Graver Subject: An Essay on Paradise Lost* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1960).

salvation and damnation from which the catalogue of Satan's apostles is constructed repeatedly illustrate Milton's view of faith.

Although it is surprising that the powerful and suggestive christological antitype of Satan's chief devils has gone unnoticed, one realizes what has created difficulty for scholars when one examines the accumulated annotation of the individual names of the pagan gods given to the fallen angels. Because they know so much, the annotators have counted only ten separate gods. Learned readers have known that Baalim was a plural form of Baal, and that both Chemos and Peor are alternative names for a local manifestation of Baal. Similarly, Astoroth is a plural form of Astoreth, which is followed immediately by a local manifestation of her, namely Astarte. Scholars have evidently conflated two names into one entity in both cases,<sup>3</sup> and so, if they have bothered to count the names of the pagan deities, have arrived at only ten.<sup>4</sup>

In examining the New Testament sources for what insight they have to offer, and in starting with the list of apostles in Matthew, we find, "The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew, the publican; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him" (Matthew 10:2-4). Beyond the obvious initial verbal parallel ("The first, Simon"/"First, Moloch"), both the list in Matthew and the one in *Paradise Lost* have duplicate names that are distinguished one from the other by a secondary identification—

<sup>3</sup> For an example of this distinction being made explicit, see William B. Hunter, "Belial's Presence in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 19 (1985): 8-9n.

<sup>4</sup> The scholarly exception that illustrates the difficulty of overcoming the problem with numbers here is provided by Alastair Fowler, who has ingeniously argued that the catalogue of the chief fallen angels is a Satanic travesty of Jesus' twelve disciples, but has not convinced subsequent editors. In agreement with previous scholars, he, too, has decided that Chemos or Peor is the same as Baal, and that Astoroth is the same as Astarte. But in order to arrive at twelve, Fowler has unaccountably left Rimmon out, and then has added Titan, Saturn, and Jupiter, even though Milton pointedly says that Belial is the last of the chief fallen angels (1.490), and even though the classical gods named come after Belial and are said to belong to the rest of the fallen legions (1.507). Thus, even the one scholar who has previously sought to find a parallel with the twelve disciples in the catalogue has been stymied by the apparent duplication of names of the gods in Milton's poem. See, *The Poems of Milton*, ed. John Carey and Alastair Fowler (London: Longman, 1968), 485.

William Blake in *Milton*, Book 2, plate 37 associates Milton's catalogue of the chief fallen angels with the "Twelve monstrous dishumanized terrors Synagogues of Satan"; however, to arrive at twelve Blake sees Astoroth in a subordinate and unworshipped role, omits Astoreth, says Belial is unworshipped, and then adds Saturn, Jove, and Rhea (*The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman and Harold Bloom [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965], 136-37).

Matthew's by parentage and nationality, Milton's by locality. The two slightly differentiated forms of Baal and Astoreth in the catalogue of the chief fallen angels are evidently deliberate, and intended by Milton to mirror the repetition of names in the list of Jesus' disciples; and this subtlety of Milton's artistry has apparently long misled scholars and prevented them from recognizing that there are twelve names given in the catalogue of the fallen angels.

Contributing to the general scholarly blindness has been the traditional classical focus of most Milton criticism, which has concentrated on identifying the formal elements of the epic in the poem, and has long rightly pointed to the list of the fallen angels as its first example of an epic catalogue. Scholars have concentrated on the parallel with the beginning of Homer's catalogue of the ships from the second book of the *Iliad* in "Say Muse, thir Names then known, who first, who last" (1.376). Further complicating readers' understanding of the catalogue of the chief fallen angels has been their recognition that it is a revised version of the catalogue of pagan gods whom Milton names in "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," and who in the poem's vision of Christ's triumph cease to be worshipped after he is born. The very familiarity of readers with the gods' names has confined scholarly efforts to identifying the deities and their biblical sources, and has ironically led them to overlook the significance of Milton's revisions in the catalogue from the ode to the epic.

## I

Once one sees that Satan's first action as the ruler of Hell is a travesty of the beginning of Jesus' ministry, one naturally wishes to consider further parallels between the catalogue of the chief fallen angels and the list of Jesus' apostles. First, in speaking of the devils' "roaming to seek their prey on Earth" (1.382), the narrator sees their proselytizing as a Satanic perversion of apostolic evangelism. This is especially important, when one recalls that Milton's only references to the disciples as a group in *Paradise Lost* appear in Michael's revelation of the divine history of the world to Adam, and emphasize their evangelical activities: "his Disciples, Men who in his Life / Still follow'd him; to them shall leave in charge / To teach all nations who of him they heard"; and "the Spirit / Pour'd first on his Apostles, whom he sends / To evangelize the Nations" (12.238-40, 497-99). The narrator's subsequent scathing remarks on the proximity of the false gods' temples to

Jehovah's—"Thir Altars by his Altar" (1.384)—attack the worship of the apostles as saints in the Catholic and Anglican Churches, especially when he disapprovingly intones, "yea, often plac'd / Within his Sanctuary itself thir Shrines, / Abominations" (1.387–89).<sup>5</sup> The disapproving description of the worship of Satan's apostles clearly is informed by a Protestant polemic. Later, at the end of the catalogue of the fallen angels, we learn that

All these and more came flocking; but with looks  
Downcast and damp, yet such wherein appear'd  
Obscure some glimpse of joy, to have found thir chief  
Not in despair, to have found themselves not lost  
In loss itself.

(1.522–26)

The phrase "to have found thir chief" would appear to be an ironic parallel with Andrew's discovery of Jesus in the gospel of John: "We have found the Messias" (John 1:41). The word "flocking" recalls the multitudes who listen to Jesus' sermons around the Sea of Galilee, who are often described with pastoral metaphors. One also should note that earlier the multitude of devils has been called "the promiscuous crowd" (1.380), pointing to the essential fickleness of the fallen angels in their faithlessness. Thus while Jesus' disciples find the promise of salvation, the fallen angels find Satan and reenact their fall, the enjambment carrying them from momentary joy ("not lost") to the perverse qualification—"In loss itself." Instead of the spiritual enlightenment that Christ's apostles have, the devils have only an obscure "glimpse of joy," which they can no longer experience directly. They see but cannot feel heavenly being.

The catalogue of the chief fallen angels has in Milton's poetry earlier antitypical associations with Christ, since the epic catalogue incorporates in much the same order most of the list of "peculiar" powers from Milton's "Nativity Ode." The pagan gods, who have ceased to be worshipped, have been accorded greater significance in *Paradise Lost* by having been elevated to such signal prominence in Satan's realm. In the "Nativity Ode," Milton presents eleven names of pagan gods in this order: Peor, Baalim, Astaroth, Hammon, Thammuz, Moloch, Isis, Orus, Anubis, Osiris, and Typhon. From this list Milton omits Ham-

<sup>5</sup>J. B. Broadbent has recognized Milton as forging here "the link between devils and Papists" and as engaging in a polemic against "the abuses of the English church" (*Some Graver Subject*, 88–89).

mon, Anubis, and Typhon in *Paradise Lost*. He evidently has left out Hammon (a ram), Anubis (a dog), and Typhon (a snake) because they are wholly animal gods. To bring his catalogue up to twelve in *Paradise Lost*, he adds Astoreth or Astarte, Dagon, Rimmon, and Belial, all of whom have at least some human qualities, even though like Dagon, for instance, who is "upward Man / And downward Fish" (1.462-63), some are half-human, half-animal in nature and represent a more infernal version of Comus's crew in their appearance. Although the added gods are still all monsters, they are in *Paradise Lost* deformed persons; that is, angels who have fallen from grace.

Beyond observing these general ironic inversions of the apostolate and human nature, once one realizes that the catalogue of the chief fallen angels is a demonic parody of the list of Jesus' disciples, one is inclined to pursue the allegory and to propose specific parallels between the disciples and the chief fallen angels. It seems to me that this makes sense for the first and last members of the list, but otherwise presents great difficulties because of the problem of determining precisely the order of Jesus's disciples from the lists in the synoptic gospels, since there are substantial differences among the texts. Parallelling the passage from Matthew, we have in Mark, "and Simon he surnamed Peter; and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him" (3:16-19). We also have in Luke: "Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor" (6:14-16).<sup>6</sup> In their lists the synoptic gospels all agree that Peter was the first of the disciples and that the last was Judas Iscariot. Besides the agreed order of Peter and Judas, one notes that Philip, Bartholomew, and James, son of Alphaeus, remain in the same order: fifth, sixth, and ninth, respectively. But this doesn't seem very significant, especially when these three disciples do not have large roles in the gospels. Further, in the context of Milton's borrowing of his list of pagan gods from his "Nativity

<sup>6</sup> I have provided the Authorized Version of the biblical passages for the reader's convenience. Since Milton is likely to have had both Greek and Latin texts of the New Testament in mind, it should be noted that, as one would expect, the Authorized Version like the Vulgate faithfully follows the various orders of the disciples given in the Greek.

Ode," a continuous, one-to-one allegory of the elements seems unlikely to have been intended, when we know that Milton has kept his list of peculiar powers largely intact and in much the same order. Moreover, aside from removing the purely animal gods from the catalogue, the most notable changes in the list of Satan's apostles are Milton's promotion of Moloch and his addition of Belial. To the first and last of the chief fallen angels, then, we may attach some special significance since Milton has deliberately altered the list in those places. Thus, it would appear that Milton intends Moloch to be the antitype of Peter, and Belial that of Judas.

The identification of Moloch as the antitype of Peter makes some sense.<sup>7</sup> Peter is the most ferocious and violent of the disciples, the one who with his sword cuts off the ear of a servant of the high priest in the Garden of Gethsemane. However, why Peter would have as his Satanic inversion a god whose violence is associated with the sacrifice and the blood of children might at first seem difficult to explain. But in *De Doctrina Christiana* Milton is critical of the primacy of Peter among the disciples and thus of the Catholic Church's claim to have inherited the apostolic authority attributed to him. Milton specifically associates Peter, who argued strenuously for maintaining the Judaic character of Christianity, with the practice of circumcision, and by implication with the blood of children. In Book I, chapter 29 of *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton dismisses the elevation of Peter above the other disciples, saying, "Nay, he was the apostle of the circumcision only, as was Paul of the Gentiles."<sup>8</sup> The only mention of the disciples in *Paradise Regained* also provides evidence of Milton's pointed deemphasis of Peter when he places Andrew first in his dramatization of the enlightenment of the original disciples, following the account in John (1:35-42), where as one of two disciples of John the Baptist, Andrew, not Peter, finds Jesus first and is the first of the traditional twelve to acknowledge him as the Messiah. In addition, the insistence upon Peter's being one among equals and only notable for advocating circumcision follows a long discussion in Book I, chapter 28, where Milton asserts that the baptism of the gospel has replaced the circumcision of the law, noting that "circumcision

<sup>7</sup> Joseph A. Wittreich summarizes the commentary on Moloch in *A Milton Encyclopedia*, 8 vols., ed. William B. Hunter et al. (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1979), 5:150-52.

<sup>8</sup> "Immo circumcisorum duntaxat apostolus fuit, sicut Paulus gentium" (*The Works of John Milton*, 20 vols. in 23, ed. Frank Allen Patterson et al. [New York: Columbia University Press, 1931-40], 16:228-29). Hereafter cited as *Works*.

was given under the law and the sacrifices."<sup>9</sup> One should also remember in this context Milton's "On the Circumcision," in which he sees the practice as the first visitation of violence upon Jesus and as symbolic of his suffering on the cross for mankind's sins. As the antitype of Peter, Moloch thus reminds us of Milton's deep antipathy toward Peter and of his decided preference for Paul. This theological association of Peter with circumcision apparently provides Milton's iconographical and typological motivation for promoting Moloch to the first in the catalogue of fallen angels (1.392), since in the "Nativity Ode" the list of the pagan gods begins with Peor, Baalim, and Astoroth in the same order, while Moloch is sixth (stanzas xxii-xxiii).

The implied identification of Belial as an antitype of Judas Iscariot is perhaps even more provocative. Imagining the antitype of Judas seems a particularly difficult poetic and theological problem, since it would seem that the fallen angel who was Judas's antitype would have to be the one closest to salvation. In Book II Milton seems to offer some confirmation that this is so, since Belial is said to be "in act more graceful and humane; / A fairer person lost not Heav'n" (2.109-10).<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, Belial certainly belongs to the unregenerate, loving "Vice for itself" and frequenting temples where "the Priest / Turns Atheist" (1.491, 494-95). In *Paradise Regained* a much longer fallen and much more dissolute Belial urges Satan to "set women in his eye and in his walk" (2.153) and thus tempt Jesus into falling, and is rebuked by Satan for thinking that his sinful weakness is necessarily universal. Belial's sexual perversion and violence are in part, perhaps, Satanic antitypes of Judas's kiss of betrayal, symbolizing love that has turned to evil. Moreover, just as Judas betrays Christ's revelation by selling spiritual promises for money in his hand, so Belial protests against Satan's continued rebellion, counselling against further struggle with God and in favor of slothfully enjoying what life there is in Hell, holding out hope for God's forgiveness, but in his "ignoble ease" failing to repent (2.227).<sup>11</sup> One should note here that in *De Doctrina Christiana* Milton emphasizes

<sup>9</sup> "Circumcisio sub lege et sacrificiis data erat" (*Works*, 16:178-79).

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Summers has observed the gradually decreasing sinfulness of the catalogue, noting finally that "Belial is an evil which threatens hardly at all" (*The Muse's Method: An Introduction to "Paradise Lost"* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962], 92).

<sup>11</sup> Roy Flannagan has emphasized the perverted sexuality of Belial in "Belial and 'Ef-feminate Slackness' in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*," *Milton Quarterly* 19 (1985): 9-11. See also Joseph A. Wittreich's summary of the scholarship on Belial in *A Milton Encyclopedia*, 1:138-40.

Judas's ineffective confession of sins.<sup>12</sup> Belial's unregenerate contrition thus marks him out as being in part an antitype of Judas,<sup>13</sup> who recognizes his sin but cannot in fact repent. The homicidal Moloch and the dissolute Belial, thus, would appear, arguably, to represent antitypes of Peter and Judas, respectively.

Further, the emphasis upon perverted sexuality among the chief fallen angels is antitypical of the chaste character of the disciples.<sup>14</sup> Peor is associated with "wanton rites" and "lustful Orgies" (1.414-15). The Baalim and Ashtaroth can "either Sex assume, or both" (1.424); and their indeterminate sexuality entices the Israelites to abandon God for bestiality. Similarly, Astoreth, or Astarte, is worshipped by the uxorious Solomon, who is beguiled by his idolatrous wives. The erotic death of Thammuz is seen by Ezekial to inspire "wanton passions" among Sion's daughters in God's temple (1.454). Finally, Belial is associated with lust and lewdness and the crimes of Gibeah and Sodom. The chief fallen angels in their perverted sexuality thus present a sharp, antitypical contrast with Christ's disciples in their self-sacrificing love of God.

## II

However much one emphasizes the antitypical character of Satan's apostles, one cannot help feeling that Milton wishes to avoid investing the disciples with the authority claimed by the Catholic priesthood and that his antipathy towards the chief fallen angels also carries a radical Protestant polemic. Indeed, throughout Milton's poetry and not just in *Paradise Lost*, the mention of a professional, elect ministry consistently brings out his suspicions that "New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ Large." One particularly remembers Peter in "Lycidas" inveighing against the false shepherds who "climb into the fold" and associating their activities with "what the grim Wolf with privy paw / Daily devours apace" (115, 128-29). This is echoed in "Sonnet XVI," where "free

<sup>12</sup> *Works*, 15:359.

<sup>13</sup> William B. Hunter has suggested that Belial is a late addition to the catalogue of the fallen angels and has offered evidence that Belial's remarks have many parallels to Mammon's in the disputation of the fallen angels in Book II. If Hunter is right, then Belial may have replaced Mammon as the last of the Satanic apostles, since Mammon, too, with his love of the material could easily have served as Judas's antitype. See, "Belial's Presence in *Paradise Lost*," 7-9.

<sup>14</sup> Summers has especially commented upon their sexual sinfulness in *The Muse's Method*, 89-92.



Conscience" is endangered by "the paw / Of hireling wolves whose Gospel is their maw" (13-14); and again in Michael's observation that the disciples are to be succeeded in history by "grievous Wolves, / Who all the sacred mysteries of Heav'n / To thir own vile advantages shall turn" (12.508-10). Ultimately, Milton is harkening back to Jesus' warning in Matthew: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (7:15). However comely and innocent corporate religiosity may appear, it has the potential, Milton suggests, for bestiality. And it is precisely this group beastliness that marks not only the chief fallen angels but the multitude of devils who are last seen as swarming snakes in Book X. Thus, the catalogue of Satan's apostles in Book I allows for a more fully imagined vituperation against enforced and corporate belief than would otherwise be theologically possible.

Milton's ambivalence regarding Jesus' disciples as having a particularly privileged response is perhaps clearer in *Paradise Regained*, where he dramatizes the experience of the first apostles:

the new baptiz'd, who yet remain'd  
 At *Jordan* with the Baptist, and had seen  
 Him whom they heard so late expressly call'd  
 Jesus Messiah, Son of God declar'd,  
 And on that high Authority had believ'd,  
 And with him talkt, and with him lodg'd, I mean  
*Andrew* and *Simon*, famous after known  
 With others though in Holy Writ not nam'd.

(2.1-8)

The phrase "though in Holy Writ not named" is a pointed reference to the fact that the gospel of John never names the other of the two disciples of John the Baptist who was one of the first two who followed Jesus, even though here Milton seems to suggest, as John does not, that Simon was one of them. More important, Milton implies that apostles named in the gospels are merely a few of many believers and are not to be accorded more authority than any others of the faithful. In the subsequent scene, for instance, Andrew and Simon Peter immediately give voice to their doubts regarding the divine promise of the personal revelation of Christ that they have so fortunately had, and find soon that their "joy is turn'd / Into perplexity and new amaze" (2.37-38), since they do not fully understand what they have seen and heard. Here Milton is resolutely skeptical in his theology and refuses to put his faith in the mere men, however much inspired, that Jesus'

disciples are. Milton's Protestant distrust of any privileged intermediary between the individual and God is writ large in his treatment of the disciples, who, if thought to have some independent authority, are transformed by imaginative association into "hireling wolves."

What informs Milton's consideration of Jesus' disciples, then, is his conviction that paradise is always to be found within oneself and is a state of grace that is not to be acquired by belonging to a group, no matter how elite or how hallowed by tradition. This is emphasized constantly in *Paradise Lost* by the attention given to those who remain steadfast in their faith in God, while everyone around them falls away. Readers will remember, of course, Abdiel:

faithful found,  
 Among the faithless, faithful only hee;  
 Among innumerable false, unmov'd,  
 Unshak'n, uneduc'd, unterrifi'd  
 His loyalty he kept, his Love his Zeal;  
 Nor number, nor example with him wrought  
 To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind  
 Though single.

(4.896-903)

The faithful soul does not follow the thundering herd, remains steadfast and constant in his belief, and is without regard for the example or number of others, who have fallen. Similarly, at the end of Book XI, Adam is revived by the vision of Noah who is the "one just Man" on earth (11.890), who is saved by his faith while everyone else outside his family has fallen away from God, and who in saving the world is a type of the "one greater Man" (1.4), Christ. In Milton's vision of individual faithfulness and grace, then, many are called but few chosen; and, inevitably, Milton's own audience is fit though few. And as Judas's example should remind Milton's reader, being called to discipleship is no guarantee in itself of salvation. Thus, the collective behavior of the devils is ultimately representative of a loss of individuality and identity, as Satan unconsciously acknowledges when he first sees Beelzebub—"If thou beest hee" (1.84), since identity flows from God's creation and is defined in terms of God, who alone is self-defined by his own word.

Keeping this faithful, individual vision in mind, readers may then return to the catalogue of Satan's apostles and see embedded in it the individual stories of sin and salvation from which, like a mosaic, the catalogue has been constructed. It is Solomon who faithlessly gave

Moloch his regal imprimatur and who thus converted the landscape around the god's temple into Gehenna, "the type of Hell" on earth (1.405). Peor tempts the people of Israel into lustful wantonness, but then is driven to hell by the "good Josiah" (1.418). The Israelites are similarly lured into bestiality by Baalim and Ashtaroth, while Solomon is beguiled by Astarte. In contrast, Ezekiel's vision allows him to keep his distance from the women who worship Thammuz in God's temple. The shameful fallenness of the worshippers of Dagon is revealed when their idol collapses before the Ark of the Covenant. Naaman is cured through Elisha's faith and is able to resist worshipping Rimmon, while King Ahaz worships at the Syrian god's altar. Israel's people is forced by Jeroboam to worship images of the Egyptian gods (Osiris, Isis, and Orus), from which the Jews of Exodus had once escaped. Finally, Belial reminds us of the faithlessness and vice of Sodom. In these inset stories of the larger catalogue the powerful and the many again and again are enticed to follow others and their gods, and so fall into idolatry. Only a chosen few successfully resist the temptations to which those around them have fallen prey. Loving his many wives more than God, Solomon erects a temple to Astarte. Remaining distant from the lovely daughters of Sion, in contrast, the isolated Ezekiel laments the sinfulness of the people of Israel.

Everywhere in the catalogue there are stories about choices of discipleship: those that lead to salvation, and those that lead to damnation. The narrator tells the reader again and again about choosing between God and manifestations of Satan's disciples, about those lonely, faithful individuals who remained steadfast in their faith and found grace and about those many who worshipped idols and were lost. It should not come as so much of a surprise, then, that these embedded stories of faith and faithlessness should themselves form the picture of the antithetical disciples of Satan, who are in their various manifestations and local loyalties representative of an abandonment of God. Satan's apostles are thus a travesty of the disciples of Christ who learn to love God and not some intermediary.

### III

In reading the catalogue of the chief fallen angels in Book I of *Paradise Lost*, scholars have apparently long been of the devil's party without knowing it. In acknowledging the epic machinery of the catalogue, in tracing its classical poetic antecedents, and in identifying the Old Tes-

tament sources of the pagan gods, readers have missed the more important christological pattern that Milton has offered us and expected us to recognize. The very length of this catalogue, however, has distracted readers from seeing the biblical parallel with Jesus' disciples, while the extent and sophistication of scholarly learning has prevented readers from seeing the biblical import of the duplication of the names of the pagan gods. To see that Satan's first action parallels the first of Christ's ministry should refocus critical thinking about the beginning of *Paradise Lost*, so that, for example, the unholy Trinity of Satan, Sin, and Death will appear less as an isolated demonic parody than as part of a larger christological pattern, and that Satan's expedition to Earth and incorporation within the serpent will be thought of a little more as a travesty of Christ's incarnation. Finally, if from the epic's very beginning one sees that Satan's summoning of his infernal apostles mirrors Christ's calling of his disciples and so is in accord with the theological presentation of Satan as the Antichrist in Raphael's later account of the War in Heaven, one will recognize that from the start Satan's actions antitypically foreshadow Christ's and so are designed in part to have the dramatic effect of undercutting any sympathy that readers may have for the devil.

This consideration of the catalogue of the chief fallen angels in Book I should remind us that much criticism of *Paradise Lost* as an epic is being and has long been driven by the pedagogical concern to save the text for modern readers by concentrating on its epic form at the expense of its religious tenor. Especially at the poem's beginning, we are emphasizing its invocation, the formal statement of the theme, the similes, the catalogues, and inevitably, in however qualified a fashion, the heroic spirit of Satan. But if readers recognize in Satan's first action as ruler in Hell a parody of Christ's first action in his ministry on earth, and learn that even this generally unregarded epic set piece is overdetermined and has a rich and complex set of religious associations and implications, they may have a more expanded understanding of Book I, and may learn to read it both differently and better by taking its biblical details seriously as illustrations of the poem's poetics of salvation. As readers of Milton, then, we need constantly to remind ourselves that at every point a purely formal consideration risks reducing *Paradise Lost* to a mere catalogue of names, the learned annotation of which becomes just an academic exercise. The radical Protestantism that one finds through a careful reading of the catalogue of the chief fallen angels in Book I should remind us that Milton's epic is not designed to be

comforting or easy, and that we are usually mistaken when we think it is. That it has evidently taken Milton critics and scholars so long to read this passage properly is, I think, testimony to how much we as readers have yet to learn about and from *Paradise Lost* and how often we are tempted not to take Milton seriously.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> I wish to thank my colleague, Joan Gilliland, who made several useful suggestions for improving this essay.