

**THE THEOLOGY OF FREEDOM IN**  
*PARADISE LOST*

Thesis submitted by

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## ABSTRACT

Milton scholarship remains divided between characterisations of *Paradise Lost*'s theology as either "orthodox" or "heretical." In this study I situate *Paradise Lost* within its complex post-Reformation context, and I argue that its theology is more variegated and more elusive than either straightforwardly orthodox or straightforwardly heretical readings have tended to suggest. This study pursues the theological portrayal of freedom as it unfolds throughout *Paradise Lost*, and seeks to identify and explore the ways in which the poem's theology is continuous and discontinuous with the major post-Reformation theological traditions. By teasing out the complexities of this theology and the distinctive manner in which it draws on diverse post-Reformation traditions, this study offers a nuanced reading of the poem which allows its theology to emerge clearly on its own terms. In particular, this reading of *Paradise Lost* highlights the poem's profound commitment to both human and divine freedom. It is this commitment which underlies the poem's appropriation and reformulation of a wide range of existing theological concepts in its unique and compelling account of the idea of freedom.

*For Elise*

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My greatest debt is to my wife, Elise. Her wedding date was the anniversary of Milton's birth, and she has lived with Milton ever since.



## ABBREVIATIONS

- ANF*      *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. 10 vols. 1885-96; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956-62.
- Bentley      *Milton's Paradise Lost: A New Edition*, ed. Richard Bentley. London, 1732.
- Bush      *The Complete Poetical Works of John Milton*, ed. Douglas Bush. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965.
- Campbell      *John Milton: The Complete Poems*, ed. Gordon Campbell. London: J. M. Dent, 1980.
- CM*      *The Works of John Milton*, ed. Frank A. Patterson et al. 18 vols. in 21. New York: Columbia University Press, 1931-38.
- CPW*      *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Don M. Wolfe et al. 8 vols. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953-82.
- Flannagan      *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannagan. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.
- Fowler      *John Milton: Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler. London: Longman, 1968.
- Heppe      Heinrich Hepppe, *Reformed Dogmatics Set Out and Illustrated From the Sources*. Ed. and rev. Ernst Bizer. Trans. G. T. Thomson. London: Allen & Unwin, 1950.
- Hughes      *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes. New York: Odyssey, 1957.
- Newton      *Paradise Lost: A Poem, in Twelve Books*, ed. Thomas Newton. 2 vols. London, 1749.
- NPNF*      *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff. First Series. 14 vols. 1886-90; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.
- OED*      *Oxford English Dictionary*
- PL*      *Patrologia Latina Cursus Completus*, ed. J. P. Migne. 221 vols. Paris, 1844-55.

- Schaff *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes*, ed. Philip Schaff. 3 vols. 1877; New York, 1919.
- s.l. *sine locus* (used in bibliographic references where no place of publication has been found)
- Todd *The Poetical Works of John Milton, With Notes By Various Authors*, ed. Henry J. Todd. 4 vols. London, 1809.
- Verity *Milton: Paradise Lost*, ed. A. W. Verity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910.

## A NOTE ON THE TEXTS

I have generally used modern editions of primary sources where these are available. Where Latin theological texts exist in modern English editions I have generally cited these English translations, but have freely modified my citations against the original Latin, especially where I have judged it preferable to render technical theological terminology literally rather than idiomatically. Italics in citations are from the original texts unless otherwise indicated. All citations of Milton's poetry are from Helen Darbishire's edition, *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952-55).