"Warr wearied hath perform'd what Warr can do": Towards a New Understanding of the Representations of War in John Milton's Work

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Willemina Albertha (Wil) van der Wijk, who instilled in me a pride for teaching.

May she rest in peace.

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Introduction: Exploring John Milton's Understanding of War

Justifications of ethics within the framework of religion are by their very nature complex, as theistic ideologies inadvertently must grapple with dogma that extends beyond themselves and the natural world. Take for example the dichotomy between the "various traditional understandings of just war theory and Christian pacifism" as explored by Lisa Sowle Cahill (1). Cahill speaks at length of intriguing religious conflicts, such as the Crusades, and concludes that indeed "Christians on most sides of any question were willing to use force to quell their opponents. Even wars fought for the sake of public welfare or justice, rather than for properly religious causes, have been given indirect religious justifications" (119). Endeavours such as Cahill's are not new, however; the Christian tradition has long struggled with the inherently incompatible coexistence of the violent and pacifist elements of scripture. Similar dilemmas haunted the seventeenth-century poet John Milton. Milton openly acknowledged that "men may Treat like Beasts as well as fight. If som fighting were not man-like, then either fortitude were no vertue, or no fortitude in fighting" (Milton, *Eikonoklastes*). However, Milton's works contain both explicit praise and stern criticism of warfare and violence. These incongruities allude to a complex understanding of warfare, one which warrants research. The dominant connotation of warfare as a "perennial [reality] of human existence" (DeForrest 1997) is that of a violent conflict fought with arms. War to John Milton, however, has broader implications, as this thesis will explore.

The analysis of the theme of war in John Milton's work has a significant scholarly history. Michael Lieb has argued that "Milton cultivated a holy war ideology that manifests itself throughout his works" (Lieb 265). David Loewenstein has spoken at length about the "militant Protestantism, fiery prose and aggressive polemic" of John Milton (2016). More broadly, Andrew Shifflet speaks on the widespread acceptance of war during the seventeenth century, which in his opinion may aid in understanding the ambivalent relationship Milton

has with war, arguing that "we should not expect our cultural heroes to be immune to war's necessities, nor their texts to be untouched by the physical and rhetorical violence that always surrounded them" (Shifflett 12). James A. Freeman in turn has argued for a similar approach:

> Western civilization and seventeenth-century Englishmen approved of war and understood its parlance. War was both easy to visualize and thrilling to contemplate. While Milton himself habitually mistrusted war, the widespread belief in its efficacy prompted him to study it closely and evolve a subtle, learned, and progressive argument against it. (Freeman 61)

Milton's ambivalent stance towards warfare in his writing has led many critics, foremost amongst them John Wooten, to see Milton's work as riddled with "incongruities that undermine it" (Wooten 137). This thesis acknowledges the existence of paradoxical and incompatible perceptions of war and peace in Milton's work; distinctions between "glorious Warr" and "tedious and bloody [war]" based on little more than Milton's perception (Milton, *Eikonoklastes*). This thesis will attempt to look beyond these paradoxes in order to analyse whether John Milton's work contains some internal consistency.

To analyse John Milton's stance on war I have made a selection of prose and poetic works this thesis will closely inspect. I will analyse a selection of works from Milton's regicide tract; *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, the *Eikonoklastes* and *The Second Defense of the English People*, which deal extensively with war against tyranny and tyrants, and the justification of such wars. Complementing these prose works are *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes*, poetic works which concern themselves less openly with tyrants, but more with spiritual conflict, defined by Milton as a tyranny of the self. Scholars like Achsah Guibbory and Joan Bennet have argued that Milton's complex relationship with war manifests itself across a significant portion of his writing. They found Milton's ambivalent stance on war in works as early as *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*,

a piece published extraordinarily quickly after Charles I's execution, that treats with war through the lens of the English Civil war that preceded Charles' execution (Guibbory 299). Similarly, those ambivalent tensions still exist in works as late as *Samson Agonistes*, Milton's poetic take on the tale of the biblical Samson (Bennet 2006). Indeed, many of the themes of *The Tenure,* tyranny, violence, and righteous rebellion, return in *Samson Agonistes*.

What existing criticism on John Milton's stance on warfare has not yet explored is the possibility that Milton had a more complex, multifaceted, comprehension of warfare: an understanding of warfare that has two distinct subcategories. Previous criticism of Milton has concerned itself with the question of whether Milton was in opposition or in favour of warfare, and has at times concluded that if neither stance could be sufficiently proved, then "the poetic intention [must have been] betrayed by the poetry itself" (Wooten 136). This thesis will explore Milton's understanding of warfare as a concept that is multifaceted. I will argue that when speaking on Milton, the term 'warfare' is too general to understand Milton's stance, rather, it needs further qualifying.

What I intend to argue in fact, is that John Milton does not have a singular opinion on war, but rather that he holds two distinct views on warfare; Righteous warfare, defined within the framework of this thesis as any wars that Milton believed had the protestant God's support, is approved of; and unrighteous warfare, defined within the framework of this thesis as any wars fought for wealth, territory, or political gain, is disapproved of. Moreover, I will argue that Milton's two distinct perspectives on warfare find consistent expression across *The Tenure of Kings,* the *Eikonoklastes, The Second Defense, Paradise Lost, Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes*. In short, Milton's righteous wars are religiously motivated, and explore a metaphorical understanding of war, in which combat can extend beyond the realm of the physical, into the realm of the polemic, or spiritual. By contrast, unrighteous are less complex physical conflicts for territory or wealth. Through the contextualisation of various

descriptions of warfare in Milton's writing I will argue that Milton's opinion on warfare is malleable, and that this malleability is caused by Milton's ideology, in which the predominant determiner is religious, specifically Protestant, virtuousness. By analysing six pieces of John Milton's writing I will characterize his specific and complex perspective on warfare, and argue that that perspective does not alter across the six works I analyse.

I mean to demonstrate how deeply the notion of warfare was intertwined with John Milton's life and writing. As my analysis will confirm, Milton's prose and poetic works never truly shake their ambivalent relation with war. My thesis will trace such incompatibilities in order to deepen our understanding of Milton's perception of war, and answer not whether they are indeed truly incompatible by objective standards, but why Milton specifically deemed them to be compatible.

The arguments of this thesis may assist in better understanding Milton's ambivalent perspective on warfare, by defining the parameters by which Milton distinguishes between wars he approves or disapproves of. This knowledge in turn aids in comprehending certain hitherto paradoxical claims expressed by Milton.

In order to analyse Milton's understanding of war, I will employ a tripartite approach in this thesis. The first chapter is dedicated to analysing Milton's writing on war in his prose works. I will perform a close reading of *The Tenure*, the *Eikonoklastes* and *The Second Defense*, specifically focussing on the close relationship between civil war, righteous war and tyranny. I will attempt to delineate Milton's definition of war within these prose works by separating his praise and criticism of warfare. This separation will reveal shared parameters and patterns by which Milton differentiates between types of wars. These three prose works will then form the basis for an analysis of similar patterns resurfacing in the poetic *Paradise Lost* in the second chapter. I will compile and analyse pre-existing criticism of the War in Heaven by William McQueen, Ronald Bedford and others with my own close reading of the

text in order to analyse why *Paradise Lost* presents Milton's ideology less clearly than his other works. My analysis of *Paradise Lost* focusses specifically on what differentiates this poetic work from all the other works being considered in this thesis: Milton's attempt to meld narrative, theodicy and ideology into a single comprehensive whole. Finally, my analysis of *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* focusses on the significant relation of both works to Milton's *Second Defense*. Through a close reading of both texts I will demonstrate that Milton draws significant ideological parallels between these works. I will analyse how the characterisation of both Christ and Samson demonstrate Milton's perspective on warfare: Samson serves as an example of warfare through action, consisting of "Single Rebellion" and "Hostile Acts" (*Samson Agonistes* 1210), and Christ as his opposite; warfare through temperate patience and pacifism. Furthermore, I will define the individual facets of Milton's ideology with regard to warfare, action and tyranny with the aid of previous work by Elizabeth Oldman and Anne Krook. Having analysed these three distinct eras of John Milton's writing then allows me to characterize John Milton's specific and arguably insufficiently expressed perspective on warfare, and whether that perspective altered over time.

1. War in Milton's Polemical Prose

John Milton's prose reveals that his stance on warfare is complex; Warfare to Milton is either righteous or unrighteous, and can take on a variety of forms. Wars therefor can be of a physical nature, but also of a polemic or spiritual nature. By including the realms of the polemic and spiritual into his understanding of warfare, Milton creates a metaphorical dimension to warfare. In order to trace the development of Milton's stance on war, I will start by analysing a selection of prose works by Milton that deal extensively with warfare. This chapter will analyse passages from *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, the *Eikonoklastes*, and *The Second Defense* in order to provide insight into two parallel patterns of thought, specifically pertaining to war, that exist across these prose works. I analyse selected passages from *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, the *Eikonoklastes* and *The Second Defense* in which Milton speaks favourably on war, focussing primarily on the close relationship between war and tyranny, the historical precedent Milton cites for righteous civil warfare against tyranny and lastly, Milton's metaphorical understanding of warfare. Righteous warfare is then contrasted with unrighteous warfare, for which I will analyse examples cited by Milton himself; the Presbyterian unwillingness to execute Charles, and the lengthy history of Charles' wars. I will analyse how Milton's broader definition of warfare presents three distinct types of warfare: physical warfare, polemic warfare and spiritual warfare.

1.1 Milton's Righteous War Examined and Defined

Milton's righteous wars are a complex, multifaceted concept. Milton explores the notion of righteous warfare through the military campaign of the English people against Charles I, which he determined to be "the deliverance of thir Countrie" (Milton, *The Tenure*). Similarly, *The Second Defense* Milton describes the regicide as having "freed the state from grievous tyranny and the church from unworthy servitude" (*The Second Defense* 325). Milton,

therefore, did have a concept of a just war. This section argues that this concept that Milton puts forth consist of three parts: physical warfare against tyranny; polemical warfare against tyranny; spiritual warfare against inner tyranny. Milton determines that in the case of a righteous war, all three forms of warfare have God's support, either through divine inspiration in the case of physical and polemic warfare, or through Christian acts in the case of spiritual warfare. Within the prose, three forms of righteous war are put forward: war against tyranny, war in defence of religion, war against inner tyranny. War against tyranny encompasses both physical rebellion, but also Milton's polemic writing. War against inner tyranny is defined by Milton as the conflict to overcome one's inner vices. Milton believes all three cases to be valid forms of warfare. Therefore, Milton's righteous warfare can have a physical and metaphorical dimension.

Physical tyranny is often the cause of war, Milton argues in his prose, because it drives the people to civil war out of necessity. Indeed, Milton praises "*the most righteous Defense of law and religion* that of *necessity* gave them arms" (*The Second Defense 327*; emphasis added). To make "glorious Warr against Tyrants", then, Milton argues, is in the interest of "the common Liberty" (Milton, *Eikonoklastes*). In order to analyse Milton's perspectives on war, therefore, we must also address tyranny's relation to war. Milton states in *The Second Defense* that we are not to read *The Tenure* as applying to Charles specifically, but rather as a means by which to inform the people on how to combat tyranny: "not even then, however, did I write or advise anything concerning Charles, but demonstrated what was in general permissible against tyrants" (*The Second Defense* 347). Martin Dzelzainis has noted that "while *The Tenure* is often assumed to be just a regicide tract, this is not quite how it identifies itself on the title page" (78). Though Milton dissuades us from taking his stance on war as one specifically interested in the justification of the civil war against Charles, it is

difficult to separate the two. Indeed, much of *The Tenure* concerns itself with the "warr against him" (Milton, *The Tenure*).

In *The Tenure,* Milton set out to specifically justify warfare against tyranny. In order to gain a better understanding of Milton's perspective on war, therefore, we must examine tyranny as defined by Milton. In defining tyranny, Milton explicitly juxtaposes it with the rule of a just king. A Miltonic ruler, Fallon states, "rules for the good and profit of his people, he is accountable not only to God . . . but to the people" (4). The Miltonic tyrant, by contrast, is "he who regarding neither Law nor the common good, reigns onely for himself and his faction." (Milton, *The Tenure*). Milton returns to and defends this argument in *Eikonoklastes*, where he states that "never was it heard in all our Story, that Parlaments made Warr on thir Kings, but on thir *Tyrants*" (Milton, *Eikonoklastes*). Milton certainly does not oppose monarchic rule in general; in fact, *The Tenure* stresses the necessity of rulers. Yet a king's necessary and just rule stands in stark contrast with the oppressive rule of a tyrant.

The crux of the distinction is accountability. The just king subjugates himself to the people's best interest and is accountable to them, while the tyrant subjugates the people for his own interest, positioning himself above them. This notion of accountability is echoed in Milton's affirmation that "while as the Magistrate was set above the people, so the Law was set above the Magistrate" (Milton, *The Tenure*). Milton rejects the divine right of kings in favour of the law, and thus "to say Kings are accountable to none but God, is the overturning of all Law and government" (Milton, *The Tenure*). Moreover, Milton seems aware of the complexity of the Divine Right doctrine:

> Kings in these days . . . boast the justness of thir title, by holding it immediately of God, yet cannot show the time when God ever set on the throne them or thir forefathers, but onely when the people chose them, why by the same reason, since God ascribes as oft to himself the casting down of Princes from the throne, it should not be

> thought as lawful, and as much from God, when none are seen to do it but the people, and that for just causes. (Milton, *The Tenure*)

Miltonic rulers, then, are akin to public servants, and those rulers that forsake this duty may be deemed tyrants. Such tyrants, *The Tenure, The Second Defense* and *Eikonoklastes* determine, may be deposed through violent means. Fallon argues that to Milton, these axioms justify the notion of war against corrupt leaders:

> Romans 13: 1 may tell us that 'There is no power but of God' (p. 209) and thus that we should not resist earthly powers, but, in a move reminiscent of his divorce tracts, Milton argues that the powers ordained by God are only those powers that govern for the good of the people. (Fallon 4)

In claiming such, Milton adheres to the contractual understanding of monarchy.

Evidently, at the core of what *The Tenure* defines as righteous war lies Milton's justification of warfare on tyranny, and at the core of justifying open warfare against a nation's leader lies Milton's merging of foreign and domestic threats. Milton argues that if there exists a domestic threat to the people, in this case specifically a tyrant who acts to the detriment of his people, the ensuing domestic or civil war ought not to be treated differently than a foreign war: "from that time forward the Law of civil defensive warr differs nothing from the Law of forren hostility" (Milton, *The Tenure*). Furthermore, Milton allows the right of the people to supersede the law in such scenarios if the law fails to protect the liberties of the people: "what doth the Law decree less against them, then op'n enemies and invaders? or if the Law be not present, or too weake, what doth it warrant us to less then single Defence, or civil war" (Milton, *The Tenure*). To argue that domestic threats are to be treated similarly to foreign ones is important to Milton, as "no one denied that, in the case of a foreign usurper, even a private person could take up arms" (Dzelzainis 79). Dzelzainis argues that in order to achieve such a scenario, "Milton simply erases these distinctions. There is no difference

between foreign usurpers and domestic tyrants" (79). If a domestic tyrant is the equivalent of a foreign oppressor, the people are justified in taking up arms against such a tyrant. Furthermore, Milton presents two additional arguments to support his war.

Firstly, Milton's asserts that his righteousness is in following God. Milton argues that mankind only has one real king, God, and that earthly rulers therefore are only surrogates to that power:

> He who is our only King, the root of David, and whose Kingdom is eternal righteousness, with *all those that Warr under him*, whose happiness and final hopes are laid up in that only just & rightful kingdom (which we pray uncessantly may com soon, and in so praying wish hasty ruin and destruction to all Tyrants)." (Milton, *The Tenure,* Emphasis added)

Milton believes that God was on the rebellion's side, repeatedly addressing God's role in the development of events. If indeed "God and a good cause [gave] them Victory" and "God out of his providence and high disposal hath deliver'd him" as Milton believes (Milton, *The Tenure*), the Presbyterian rebellion is justified and made righteous. The inclusion of "all those that Warr under him" alludes to Milton's understanding of warfare as something more broad than just physical conflict. Later in this chapter I will analyse Milton's metaphorical understanding of warfare in much greater detail.

Secondly, Milton sets out the historical precedent for uprisings against rulers in defence of liberty and religion. Milton recalls events of recent history, foremost of which is the debate between the Presbyterian John Knox and William Lethington. Knox, similarly to Milton, concluded that "Kings, if they offend, have no privilege to be exempted from the punishments of Law more then any other subject; so that if the King be a Murderer, Adulterer, or Idolater, he should suffer, not as a King, but as an offender"(Milton, *The Tenure*). Through Knox, Milton attempts to reason away any apprehension the English

people might have towards resisting their ruler. Milton affirms that the "power of Kings and Magistrates is nothing else, but what is only derivative, transferr'd and committed to them in trust from the People, to the Common good of them al" (Milton, *The Tenure*). As such, as Knox states, they are subject to the same punishments if they break the laws. Similarly, Milton lavishes praise upon "those illustrious Greeks and Romans whom we particularly admire" as they "expelled the tyrants form their cities without other virtues than the zeal for freedom, accompanied by ready weapons and eagers hands" (*Second Defense* 326).

There are certain patterns in the chosen historical events that do prove of interest. What similarities these individual events, from the 1546 war against Charles the Fifth to the 1581 Dutch independence from Philip of Spain, have is that all these wars were justified by what rebel parties saw as the oppressive tyranny of the ruler. Specifically, their oppression of Protestantism. Through these historical precedents, Milton makes an argument of *argumentum ad antiquitatem*. He attempts to justify the war of the present (though technically recent past) through an appeal to historical premises. That Milton specifically chose wars fought in defence of religion, specifically his own Protestantism, is of course no accident, since by pointing out the precedent for a Protestant people to rise against tyrants who act "against faith" (Milton, *The Tenure*) Milton increases the credibility of the civil war against Charles I.

The Tenure and *Eikonklastes* treat with the physical rebellion against Charles I. However, warfare against tyranny extends beyond physical rebellion: Milton considers his own polemical writing to be an equally valuable act of rebellion. Milton addresses his personal engagement with the civil war much more directly in *The Second Defense,* and through that expands our perception of war.

Milton's violent but entirely metaphorical conflict against Charles expands our understanding of Milton's perception: it shifts Milton's position in relation to the war. With

the passage of time he has since metaphorically "met him [the author Charles of the *Eikon Basilike*] in single combat and plunged into his reviling throat this pen, the weapon of his own choice" (*The Second Defense* 329). Up to this point Milton wrote about the war at a distance, and Milton's personal engagement and participation in the war had therefore never been made explicit in his writing. By metaphorically linking his polemical writing with physical combat, Milton presents himself as an active participant in the war. Further evidence in support of this pattern is found in Milton's assertion early in *The Second Defense* that he believes himself to be in service to his fellow countrymen, not unlike a soldier: "For I did not avoid the toils and dangers of military service without rendering to my fellow citizens another kind of service that was much more useful and no less perilous" (*The Second Defense* 327). This assertion reveals two things. Firstly, it contains strands that may allude to the struggle of reason that Milton later in his poetic works deems "the better fight" (*Paradise Lost 6*.ll-30). Secondly, *The Second Defense* expands of our understanding of Milton's war: this work reveals that Milton's understanding of war is in part metaphorical— warfare against tyranny comprises not only physical acts of resistance, but also Milton's own polemical writing. *The Second Defense* reaffirms that that Milton's perspective on war was deeply coloured by the civil war against Charles and Milton's personal ideology. As Lieb argues, this points towards a Miltonic perception of war that at the very least specifically approves of holy or just (civil)-warfare in defence of religion and liberty (Lieb 265).

So far, I have only addressed Milton's justification of war on tyrants, and the outward tyranny they exert. I have argued that warfare against tyranny is righteous, but what Milton defines as tyranny is broader; tyranny can exist from without, through tyrannical oppression, but also from within, through spiritual tyranny of the self. The war on tyranny is therefore both literal and metaphorical; both physical and spiritual. The spiritual and polemic

dimensions of warfare against tyranny are best explained by *The Second Defense of the English People*.

Milton approaches war both physically and spiritually in *The Second Defense*, taking time to put forward a definition of liberty that is deeply religiously motivated. *The Second Defense* expands upon Milton's definition of a "true wayfaring Christian" as put forward in the *Areopagictica* (Milton, *Areopagitica*). The warfare of peace is to "apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better" (Milton, *Areopagitica*). In doing so, Milton contrasts one's physical liberty, won through arms but very fickle in nature, with one's spiritual liberty, far stronger, yet requiring constant careful protection. What I discuss here will return with more depth in my analysis of the poetic works. Spiritual warfare as Milton understands it consists of the "warfare of peace" (*Second Defense* 359). This war is a virtuous, that is to say piteous, just and temperate, conflict of fortitude against one's inner vices. Milton forewarns those men whom "war made great" (*Second Defense* 359), that unless they commit to the warfare of peace, their opposition to Charles' tyranny was fruitless and fleeting. What these men will find instead was inner tyranny. Milton defines this metaphorical tyranny as the absence of "genuine religion" (*Second Defense* 359), which in turn might make men liable to strife from within, or deception and abuse from without.

Go Togashi's analysis of Miltonic heroes provides more insight into the relation between inner tyranny and heroism. To explore an example of the conquest of such internal tyranny, I turn back to Togashi's analysis of Milton's heroes. Milton has a concept of praiseworthy, non-biblical exemplars of his ideal heroism (Togashi 218). Such men's most defining trait is the victory they have won over themselves: "at the point where he might begin to admire Cromwell's military achievements, Milton sets out rather to extol his

victories on the mental/spiritual plane" (Togashi 218). Togashi notes that this rhetoric also helps remove the intrinsic edge of violence from the representation of military men:

> It is a way to praise them in the language of war, but for non-military virtue . . . [a] leap from the bloody and disquieting reality to the harmless world of metaphor, from the actual battlefield with armed enemies in it to the figurative one where one fights against 'vain hopes, fears, and desires.'" (Togashi 224)

By virtue of his internal conquest then, Cromwell's external deeds are absolved and made praiseworthy. Yet Cromwell's external actions; his slue of brutal victories over the Scots and the Irish, are no less bloody than those of Charles I. Part of the distinction between tyranny and righteous rule within the framework of Milton's perceptions appears to tie to this internal conquest. Had Charles I possessed a different character, might Milton have praised him too?

To Milton the distinction between the actions of Cromwell and Charles I relies on Milton's religious convictions. Cromwell, Milton determines, "is an instrument of God, God's mighty right arm" (Togashi 227). However, Milton also, in his characteristic unwillingness to wholly commit to a singular, tractable, stance, scrutinises Cromwell's potential to become a tyrant. Where Milton exists in this debate on tyranny is as complex as the larger debate on warfare.

Though we have seen Milton acknowledge the virtue and fortitude of battlefield conflict in Defence of religion and liberty, this passage makes explicit that these mental victories are "hard indeed, but bloodless, and far more noble than the gory victories of war." (*Second Defense* 359). Milton appears to subordinate physical liberty, however necessary, to mental or religious liberty. We will see this argument continued and explored in much greater depth in our discussion of The War in Heaven and *Paradise Regain'd*. This section has put forward three variants of righteous warfare: physical, polemical and spiritual. It has thereby

proven that Milton's understanding of warfare extends beyond the literal into the metaphorical and spiritual.

1.2 Unrighteous Wars and Sedition

Though this paper has shown that Milton approved of righteous warfare for the sake of religious or political liberty, Milton disproved of many other types of warfare. As my analysis has shown, Freeman's argument that "Milton himself habitually mistrusted war" (61) does not apply uniformly to all versions of warfare. Milton argues with fervour in favour of righteous war and righteous war only. The notion of warfare in general, as Wooten has argued, is treated less favourably: "Milton's endorsement of holy war is qualified, even contradicted by his attacks on the "glory" of warfare and by his attempts to transform literal war into Pauline psychomachia" (Wooten 134). As such, Freeman's claim is partially correct; anti-war arguments certainly do exist within the polemical prose, but these arguments are directed at wars that Milton deems unrighteous or senseless. Milton's stance on unrighteous warfare is broad, and best discerned by subtraction: the argument the prose texts make is that any and all warfare whose purpose is not to protect freedom of religion from tyranny is unrighteous. Milton's regicide prose provides historical evidence for the claim that Charles and his compatriots' wars were unrighteous. Milton provides two examples of unrighteous warfare in the Presbyterian relapsing and Charles' previous wars. Milton then utilises this historical precedent to advise the English people against another war. This chapter will analyse Milton's example of the Presbyterian unwillingness to execute Charles, followed by a closer inspection of what, in Milton's eyes, made Charles tyrannical, culminating in an analysis of Milton's stance on the possibility of a new civil war.

So far, I have only dealt with some select passages from the prose works that pertain to righteous warfare. *The Tenure* however does not solely concern itself with Milton's definition

of righteous warfare, but also aids in our understanding of unrighteous warfare. One such example of warfare that Milton disapproved of is what he deemed the internecine struggle between parliamentarians. Milton argues that by "shifting and relapsing" (Milton, *The Tenure*) the Presbyterians had lost right of the purpose of the war against Charles. The war itself therefore became disingenuous and could no longer be considered righteous: "these thir late doings have made it guiltiness, and turn'd thir own warrantable actions into Rebellion" (Milton, *The Tenure*). When the Presbyterians had still fought "fiercest against thir Prince, under the notion of a Tyrant, and no mean incendiaries of the Warr against him" their war had been righteous and thus, in Milton's eyes justified. However, by pivoting their stance to "plead for him, pity him, extoll him, protest against those that talk of bringing him to the trial of Justice, which is the Sword of God" the Presbyterians stirred civil unrest which in turn, Milton argued, prolonged the Civil War:

> [The Presbyterians] who now, to the stirring up of new discord, acquitt him; and against thir own disciplin, which they boast to be the throne and scepter of Christ, absolve him . . . Ministers of sedition, not of the Gospel, who while they saw it manifestly tend to civil Warr and blood shed, never ceasd exasperating the people against him; and now that they see it likely to breed new commotion, cease not to incite others against the people that have sav'd them from him, as if sedition were thir onely aime, whether against him or for him. (Milton, *The Tenure*)

Another example of unrighteous warfare is found in Charles I's tyranny. *The Tenure* explored tyranny and war but urged its readers not to think of it as a piece directed at Charles I specifically. The *Eikonoklastes* by contrast is specifically concerned with Charles and his deeds. Milton crafts a narrative that, though it acknowledges Charles acted with the support of a host of "evil counselers and accomplices" (Milton, *Eikonoklastes*), stresses that it is Charles himself who carries the greatest blame. Narratively this allows Milton to reduce the

enemy into a tangible individual to whom disapproval may be directed. War becomes the vehicle through which Milton attempts to dismantle the "foolish veneration" (Milton, *Eikonoklastes*) of Charles in the *Eikon Basilike*. Clay Daniel has argued Milton purposefully ignores "the man who supervised the peace of the 1630s amid the Thirty Years War" (39) but renders him naught but a tyrant drowning in a "deluge of innocent blood" (Milton, *The Tenure*). Charles becomes the figurative embodiment of the civil war itself: it is he, the individual, that "unsheath'd his Sword against them [the English]" (Milton, *Eikonoklastes*), rather than the actual enemy army. Further symbolism portrays Charles as "dipt from head to foot and staind over with the blood of thousands that were his faithfull subjects, forc'd to thir own Defence against a civil Warr by him first rais'd upon them" (Milton, *Eikonoklastes*). Such metaphors fulfil two purposes: on the one hand they serve a rhetoric that intends to channel an emotional response and on the other hand they dehumanize the target. To expand this argument further, Milton characterise Charles' rule in its entirety as riddled with strife: "his raign also before this Warr was not unbloodie" (Milton, *Eikonoklastes*), and so contrasts Charles' warmongering it with the "peace [the English people] had" (Milton, *Eikonoklastes*). Charles warmongery and tyranny are precisely those traits Milton believes the English people should disavow. Therefore, Milton's antagonism towards Charles is deeply connected to his disapproval of non-righteous wars. The two become one, and Milton approves of neither.

Milton produces *Eikonoklastes* to prevent a third civil war. Its purpose, Milton states, is that the "living", that is the people of England, "may be kept from entring the third time unadvisedly into Warr and bloodshed" (Milton, *Eikonoklastes*). Milton asserts that the Royalists, and likely a subsection of the Presbyterians (Luxon 2020), have become a threat to the "generall peace, so needful to this afflicted Nation, and so nigh obtain'd" (Milton, *Eikonoklastes*). Warren has gone so far as to read *Eikonoklastes* as an attempt to "fracture the fragile trust [between Royalists and Presbyterians] with all the force of [Milton's] poetry and

prose, but to no avail" (Warren 805). By recounting the negative aspects of war, or as Milton puts it, "by onely remembring them [the people] the truth" (Milton, *Eikonoklastes*), Milton juxtaposes the necessity of the civil war for the pursuit of liberty with the senselessness of undoing all that that this war had brought. Milton achieves this by contrasting his own war with previous wars: where Milton's war is "glorious" (Milton, *Eikonoklastes*), the civil war is likely to be "tedious and bloody", "injurious", "most unjust", "needless and dishonourable", "treacherous and Antichristian", "cruel", "endless", "desperate and irreconcileable", and lastsly "foolish" (Milton, *Eikonoklastes*). Milton provides three arguments for that claim. Firstly, many of the wars Milton references in his argument are fought by Charles against his own subjects. These, the Bishop's Wars, in which Charles attempted to impose hegemonic episcopacy upon the Scots, stand in polar opposite to Milton's own beliefs. Secondly, Milton disavows a number of wars which, summarised, he defined as unnecessary. Such wars, like the Cádiz expedition, are those fought for profit or territory. Last and more puzzling is Milton's stance on the Siege of La Rochelle. The siege, Milton argues, disrupted the peace the English people had. Milton acknowledges that the ongoing war against the "poore Protestants of Rochell" is "treacherous and Antichristian" (Milton, *Eikonoklastes*), but rather than support his fellow protestants in defence of their religion (a war which meets Milton's criteria of righteousness), Milton subordinates the notion of righteous warfare to the notion of domestic peace. The negative consequences domestically, both economically and socially, of aiding the French Protestants seem to outweigh the righteous cause of protecting a foreign religious ally.

1.3 War within and War without

This chapter set out to define and distinguish between righteous and unrighteous wars as perceived by Milton. Insofar as the prose works are concerned, those wars that Milton

supports, appear to be wars fought in Defence of the civil and religious liberties of the English. Contrastively, all other wars that do not meet these criteria are disapproved of, including those righteous foreign wars that risk disturbing the domestic peace. Based on the passages analysed, it would seem that Milton's definition of an unrighteous war, though broad, could be distilled to—any and all wars that either don't benefit the English peace and liberty or are fought for any reason other than the liberation of the English people from tyranny. Domestic tyranny seemingly is the sole exceptional case in which righteous warfare does supersede the general peace. Togashi argues that Milton is "exceptionally mindful lest the case [of peace being more important than righteous war] be applied retrospectively to Charles I" (Togashi 222).

Indeed, to Milton, war and tyranny are inextricably entwined with one another. Tyranny, so Milton argues, inevitably leads to wars and therefore war on tyranny itself is justified. Milton's tyrants are indistinguishable from foreign threats and as such are treated similarly. Though there is a breadth of historical precedent for righteous civil war against tyranny, much of which Milton cites, Milton still needed to assert Charles' tyranny. In *The Tenure* Milton defined tyrants as those who place themselves above the people and rule for their personal sake, rather than the people's. Milton contrasted this notion of tyranny with just rule: a just king, by contrast, acts as a servant to the people and rules for their sake. In the *Eikonoklastes* Milton directs himself to Charles specifically and sets out to prove Charles' tyranny. Charles' warmongering, Milton argues, makes him a tyrant.

Combining this information with the revelations of *The Second Defense* a hierarchy of the righteousness of Miltonic warfare can be constructed. At the top of such a hierarchy of righteousness stands spiritual warfare, which Milton approves of most. Second to that are righteous physical domestic conflicts, whose necessity Milton acknowledges. Third comes

any war which fails to meet the criteria of the first and second. Wars that belong to the third category are wholly disapproved of by Milton.

Lastly, and most importantly, this chapter argued that though Milton speaks at great length of physical warfare, it is spiritual warfare that he deems to be far superior to any and all physical conflicts, righteous or not. Milton's war extends into the realm of the metaphorical, both through Milton's personal engagement with the war effort and his assertion that the most virtuous war is the internal war one fights against one's own self. It is this notion that true virtue comes from internal war that informs our understanding of the poetic works that we will discuss in the following chapters.

2. War in Paradise Lost

If what I have tracked in Milton's prose works is correct, and the primary argument of the prose works is the elevation of spiritual warfare over physical warfare, then these attitudes towards warfare, spiritual and physical, ought to carry over into *Paradise Lost*. Indeed, warfare is a topic frequently explored within *Paradise Lost.* Though this chapter focusses on the War in Heaven of Book 6, allusions to war permeate the work. Warfare is inextricably intertwined with the story of *Paradise Lost*: as early as line 121 of Book 1 Satan swears to:

> To wage by force or guile eternal Warr
> Irreconcileable, to our grand Foe,
> Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy
> Sole reigning holds the Tyranny of Heav'n. (*Paradise Lost* 1.121-124)

Similarly, Michael reveals to Adam the warring future of mankind: "Before him, Towns, and rural works between, / Cities of Men with lofty Gates and Towrs, / Concours in Arms, fierce Faces threatning Warr" (*Paradise Lost* 11.639-641).

I will examine how Milton approached the complex matter of portraying an angelic war, in such a manner as to both praise and justify the ways of God, as he himself claims to have intended, while simultaneously reconciling it with his criticism on the notion of warfare itself, as the prose works did before. This chapter argues two things: Firstly, that *Paradise Lost*'s War in Heaven contains a metaphorical element. The physical warfare of heaven can be read as a metaphor for earthly warfare, both physical and spiritual: what applies to Satan in heaven, applies to fallen humanity by extension. Secondly, in writing this heavenly war, Milton argues for the futility of warfare; physical warfare and martial heroism are inferior to spiritual heroism and virtue, thus connecting *Paradise Lost* to the prose works.

I will briefly summarise the purpose of the broader narrative events of the War in Heaven, in order to present an overview of the metaphorical development of the passage.

After this characterisation of the passage I will move on to analyse the various complexities and incongruities that arise upon closer inspection of the passage to signify the complexity of the War in Heaven. Lastly I wish to briefly step away from the narrative and contrast *Paradise Lost's* heavenly war with the previously discussed prose works. Contrasting these works in such a manner will reveal that Milton's ideological perspectives on warfare did not shift between the writing of the prose works and *Paradise Lost*.

2.1 Military Heroism and Military Criticism in The War in Heaven

Paradise Lost's War in Heaven develops in three stages. The first stage is praising military heroism. The second stage is criticising military heroism. The last stage offers a singular path forward: obedience to and faith in the Christian God. I will summarise these three stages as a means of introducing the elements I will analyse in more detail in section 2.3.

Arguably the most critical matter of debate regarding Milton's heavenly war is the nature of Book 6 of *Paradise Lost*. Though Arnold Stein (1951), William McQueen (1974), Paul Rovang (1994) and Ronald Bedford (2013) have all argued for varying interpretations of the War in Heaven, their scholarship unanimously agrees that Milton's heavenly war is a "fulfilment of his epic obligations" but certainly is not "a realistic war to be taken quite seriously" (Stein 201). That is to say, the War in Heaven is not a genuine war with an unknown outcome: First, God is atemporal and omnipotent, and therefore knows of the beginning, development and the outcome of the war all at once. This undermines the validity of the war. Second, God far from exerts his full power, the war therefore is not between equal contestants. Because of this, the war as a narrative event cannot develop or manifest tension as any other piece of literature might. Milton's War in Heaven is metaphorical in the sense that the physical conflict is predominantly a vehicle for the tenor: The futility of resistance to God on all levels (e.g. spiritual resistance or political resistance).

Analysing the nature of the metaphor of the War in Heaven is difficult due to its internal shifting; praise for military heroism and criticism of military heroism are intertwined, making it difficult to discern Milton's stance. These divisions of topics (praise for military heroism, criticism of warfare, praise for spiritual heroism) roughly cohere with the division of the days of battle, McQueen has argued (93-95). In spite of their division however, the various topic matters interact with and inform one another.

The first day of battle depicts a relatively traditional epic military conflict; it is a physical conflict between two opposing armies resolved through violent means. Important to note is that the first day of the War in Heaven is an open conflict, in which both parties openly position their armies across one another in a field of battle. That both the loyal and apostate angels operate their armies in such a manner alludes to the existence of a mutually understood code of battlefield conduct. As Luxon has argued, criticism of military heroism openly exists in *Paradise Lost* (Luxon 2020), but the description of "bright Legions" possessing "Heroic Ardor" is not meant to invite mockery (6.64-66). Even Satan's legion of "upright beams innumerable" (6.82) demands awe, not mockery. This is echoed by Raphael himself, who acknowledges the utter lack of "unbecoming deed[s]" on both sides (*Paradise Lost* 6.237). Bedford has argued that "like its leader, the demonic army surpasses the textbook ideal" (128).This ideal Bedford describes is an army which is "highly organized and disciplined, responsive, silent in formation, loyal, well armed, and has an active programme of research and development of military hardware" (128). William McQueen concurs that this first day of battle "is Milton's main exercise in the depiction of warfare in the epic manner" (McQueen 90).

The second day of battle introduces a perversion of martial heroism: Satan, in search of "[w]eapons more violent" introduces artillery to the battlefield (*Paradise Lost* 6.439). In doing so he crudely transcends the military expectation of a battle between forces "[e]qual in

number" (McQueen 93). Satan's failure to achieve victory within the confines of military heroism drives him to pervert the "mutually assumed code of military behavior" (McQueen 93). To explain the nature of that perversion I need to address the significant contrast between God and Satan's perception of the battle: Satan desires to forge weapons more violent, so that they may "serve to better us, and worse our foes, / Or *equal* what between us made the odds" (*Paradise Lost* 6.441 emphasis added). He believes that he is fighting "Against unequal arms" (6.454), when in reality he is fighting an army that perfectly matches his in strength and number. His acts are a perversion because he fails to fight honourably in a conflict specifically designed to be balanced. Rather than face his adversaries head on, he opts for unheroic subterfuge. What Satan yet fails to comprehend on the first day of battle is that this perceived imbalance stems from the loyal angels' "innocence", which makes them "firm . . . Invulnerable, impenetrably arm'd" (6.399-401).

The war proceeds to rapidly devolve into a "deliberately grotesque subversion of the heroic manner" (Wooten 140). It is on this second day, David Currell argues, that the War in Heaven truly becomes a burlesque mock heroic (75). McQueen, similarly, states that "the introduction of the artillery initiates a new mode of battle and a different tone" (94). A tone which he argues "becomes crudely comic, signalling a corresponding shift from heroic warfare to burlesque" (McQueen 95). What Milton presents us with certainly contains notes of criticism. The epic conflict is replaced with massacre, in which "Angel on Arch-Angel rowl'd" (6.594). The seriousness of the conflict is mocked by the apostate angels, who laugh and deride the loyal angels (6.603-608). Contrasting the heroism of the apostate angels on the first day, as mentioned by Raphael, these same angels now conduct themselves in a "gamesom mood" and "amongst themselves in a pleasant veine / [Stand] scoffing (6.620-629).

The apostate angel's actions are only half of what makes the second day of battle a burlesque; the loyal angels' retaliation further devolves the conflict. Milton is not decisive in his depiction of the loyal angels: Raphael praises "the excellence, the power / Which God hath in his mighty Angels plac'd" (6.637-638), yet simultaneous acknowledges that the tearing up of mountains, initiated by the loyal angels, is what devolves the war into "this uproar; horrid confusion" (6.668). Milton appears to be criticising the corrupting nature of warfare here, corrupting in the sense that it drives both parties to greater and greater lengths to achieve victory. As John Wooten summarised: "the actions of the loyal angels seem compromised; the behavio[u]r of the fallen angels is made grotesque in the extreme . . . Far from making one feel righteous or satisfied, the imagery is offputting and repulsive" (141).

The third and final day attempts to bring a narrative resolution to war, and a theodical resolution to the question "Is there any sense in fighting God?". Narratively, "Warr wearied hath perform'd what Warr can do" (*Paradise Lost* 6.695). The angelic arms race has turned to chaos, and no further developments are possible. As God states: "Whence in perpetual fight they needs must last / Endless, and no solution will be found" (6.693-694). The third day therefore is a visually remarkable but narratively anticlimactic resolution; God, through the Son, finally acts to resolve the war, yet the Son's borrowed power is so unfathomably far beyond that of the apostate angels' as to be incomparable. Such moments of anti-climax are frequent in *Paradise Lost*, but have been argued to serve to stress the "apocalyptic" nature of rebellion against God (Rovang 33). Apocalyptic here is roughly the same as what I have been describing as futile: God's power is so incomprehensibly vast and incomparable that any resistance to that power is by definition futile. In human terms, it is the equivalent of fighting the forces of nature. Theodically, Milton seems to suggest that resistance against God is so wholly futile as to be unreasonable. This is a point he has already alluded to in the encounter between Satan and Gabriel in the fourth book, which narratively takes places after Satan's

defeat in heaven: “I know thy strength, and thou know’st mine, / Neither our own but giv’n; what follie then / To boast what Arms can doe” (*Paradise Lost* 4.1006-1008). What has passed so far has not been a war but rather “an instructive demonstration [of God’s power] for both the loyal and the rebellious angels” (McQueen 97). God crafts “a response and corrective to Satan” precisely according to those parameters that Satan measures things by: power (McQueen 97). This third day’s prevailing theme appears to be one of true power, and Milton’s attempt at explaining the true scale of God’s power for those, like Satan, who have failed to comprehend it.

2.2 Disingenuous War

There are several elements of the War in Heaven that complicate our understanding of Milton’s metaphor. Firstly, Milton’s War in Heaven is severely complicated by the nature of Angelic warfare: “The epic tradition, upon which Milton relies in Paradise Lost, raises a number of issues in portraying a war in Heaven: angels, fallen or not, are immortal; the fallen angels cannot possibly defeat God” (Currell Abstract). Without a chance of victory and with the lack of mortal danger, the War in Heaven becomes a disingenuous, immortal warfare against an infallible God. Secondly, *Paradise Lost* is unequivocally a “poem . . . structured around a paradox, namely a critique of the ambitions and valuations of epic poetry itself cast in the form, for much of its action, of an epic poem, in which Satan is [an] epic hero but whose heroism is diminished and derided” (Bedford 127). If the War in Heaven is disingenuous, how does that reflect upon Milton’s ideology? This section will provide three examples of complex passages that muddle Milton’s overall argument regarding warfare in *Paradise Lost*.

Firstly, one of these great complexities of *Paradise Lost* as a piece of epic poetry is its strain to create significant narrative suspense in a story that not only starts *in medias res* but

also contains the atemporal and infallible Christian God (Van der Wijk 2020). Milton's Raphael makes it explicit to the reader that God does not intend for the War in Heaven to be test of true strength and wit. Instead, it is a show trial with a predetermined outcome: to protect creation, God has temporarily "over-rul'd / And limited [the] might" of both loyal and apostate angel (*Paradise Lost* 6.228-229). Though this power goes unnoticed and uncomprehended by the apostate angels, it signals to the reader that this war is disingenuous. Similarly, Abdiel's flight before the battle reinforces these notions of anticlimactic warfare. To find "known what [he, Abdiel] for news had thought" (*Paradise Lost* 6.19-20) diminishes the suspense and value of his hastened flight. Readers are made to question the validity of the War in Heaven as they, like Abdiel, are confronted with the magnificent yet anticlimactic portrayal of "all the Plain / Covered with thick embattled Squadrons bright" (*Paradise Lost* 6.15-16).Similarly, in another instance of anti-climax, the readers have already heard God and the Son speak of Satan's coming rebellion long before that rebellion takes place: "such a foe / Is rising, who intends to erect his Throne / Equal to ours" (*Paradise Lost* 5.724-726). These notions of disingenuous warfare are also expressed by the loyal angels, they are confident; they act on the assumption that "the easier conquest now / Remains [them]" (*Paradise* Lost 6.37-38). However, as Wooten has noted: "in what turns out to be a lie (given His divine omniscience), [God] tells Abdiel that victory in the 'brutish' contest will be easy for him and for the other loyal angels to achieve" (139). It is unclear why God would express such a sentiment, given his knowledge of the three days of warfare. Neither myself nor Wooten can provide a satisfactory answer, and that lack of clarity reflects poorly upon God. In fact, it raises an incredibly difficult question; is Milton's God a liar?

Secondly, the corrupting nature of warfare complicates our reading of Milton's metaphor. Not only the fallen angels, but also the loyal angels pervert the notion of honourable military conflict. Wooten has rightly argued that God's intervention into the war

is “precipitated by Abdiel and the loyal angels, not by Satan. For it is not Satan's cannons that bring the Son to battle, but the ‘rage’ (VI, 635) of the loyal angels who wreck Heaven itself when they begin to use the very mountains as weapons” (140). What follows is a deeply confounding passage in which the greatly compromised loyal angels still receive the Son’s praise for their devotion. To at least some readers this praise, perhaps the whole passage, must feel discordant. Marc Cyr argues that “tarring the loyal angels with the same brush of ridicule Milton used to paint Satan and his rebel crew” is a limiting and “unfortunate necessity” to Milton’s writing within the traditional confines of the military epic (Cyr, 312).

Thirdly, expanding McQueen’s theory of the War in Heaven as a lesson to Satan and his apostate host, one might argue that the loyal angels are the victim of God’s lesson. Those who were sent “Equal in number to that Godless crew” (*Paradise Lost* 6.48) are praised for their “impotent warfare—impotent in so far as victory is war's most natural goal, a goal the angels contribute nothing to achieving” (Wooten 143), and their devotion to a righteous cause. To those outside the narrative, however, these angels appear as little more than pawns in God’s play. In order for God to make the difference in power between himself and the apostate host clear, his loyal angels are pushed to such lengths as to suffer corrupting “Rage” for the sake of their devotion (*Paradise Lost* 6.635). Certainly, the “inviolable Saints . . . Invulnerable” (6.398-400) do not suffer any lasting physical wounds, but they are no less submitted to Satan’s belching cannons:

> Iron Globes, which on the Victor Host
> Level’d, with such imteuous furie smote,
> That whom they hit, none on thir feet might stand,
> Though standing else as Rocks, but down they fell
> By thousands, Angel on Arch-Angel rowl’d. (6.590-594)

On the one hand, this disturbing image serves as a good argument against warfare in its entirety, yet on the other hand, theodically, it paints the Christian God as cold and uncaring for his subjects. Was it truly necessary for the loyal angels to be submitted to this? Praise for these loyal angels is severely diminished by the knowledge that their warfare was so impotent. It reduces the amount of characters who succeed within the framework of military heroism to one: the Son, whose fights contrary to the typical military ideal. Rather than seek glory or might, the Son fights out of obedience and love, desiring to "resign" the power temporarily vested in him (6.731). In essence, there are no true military heroes in Milton's war.

Scholarly criticism of the War in Heaven's purpose is divisive and inconclusive. The War in Heaven is a complicated passage, that paints war, specifically against God's will and power, as futile. In fact, the war in Heaven is completely unnecessary; God could have easily defeated Satan. And though God often refuses to meddle with free will, his limiting of the Angels' power makes it clear that he is not above meddling with other things. Why then does God allow the war to happen in the first place? McQueen has argued that the disingenuous nature of the War in Heaven and God's lie (informing his servants that their conquest would be an easy one) are all intricate parts of his instructive demonstration: "God's lesson . . . is that obedience is power; or, to take Satan's obsession as the term to be defined, power is obedience" (97). McQueen argues that this moment is to be seen as a transcendence of the military metaphor in which the "old heroism, presented unsympathetically and shading towards caricature . . . is superseded by a new heroism": a new spiritual heroism consisting of inner virtue, obedience to God and resistance to vice (100). Yet Wooten disagrees:

> What is one supposed to think: that war is indeed brutish but justified when divine or moral truths are at stake, or that such perverted masculine aggression . . . is always

> intolerable and to be rejected totally . . . Or is some untenable combination of the two views being recommended to us? (142)

And yet another, Bedford, has argued that the existence of straightforward praise of military heroism exists to counter the "overwhelming opposition to a direct expression of anti-war sentiments and to [Milton's] 'novel ideas' about the nature of real valour" and that we are thus to read it as a farce (125). Neither of these scholars' conclusions is entirely acceptable. Wooten's proposition that the passage itself simply poses incompatible ideas seems then the least radical, yet no more satisfactory. Marc Cyr's stance on this matter is perhaps somewhat more moderate. Cyr argues that Milton's new heroism "based on patience, humility, and reliance on faith in Christ" is inevitably incompatible with these angelic deeds of warfare, yet that Milton at no point "wholly [dismisses] those efforts as counting for naught." (Cyr 314). Indeed, that certainly seems what the text attempts to say, but the existence of these extraordinarily complex and at times incongruent elements make it so that this passage simply does not lend itself to plain interpretation. *Paradise Lost*'s War in Heaven lacks the clarity of the prose work's stance on war, which has left scholars unable to concur on a proper interpretation of the passage.

2.3 Milton's Perspective on War in *Paradise Lost*

How then, does the deeply confounding passage that is the War in Heaven relate to Milton's previous works? With the context provided by the previous section in mind, I will analyse the parallels between *Paradise Lost* and the prose of chapter one.

One of the striking parallels between *Paradise Lost* on the one hand and *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, Eikonoklastes* and *The Second Defense* on the other hand is the continuation of Milton's adherence to "the Cause / Of Truth" (*Paradise Lost* 6.31-32). The War in Heaven is certainly a grim and violent affair, and though the side of God claims an

inevitable victory, that victory is wholly incomplete: Satan and his host do not repent, nor does Satan stop scheming. Satan's personal overconfidence was challenged threefold. First by Abdiel, whose stroke makes him recoil back ten paces. Secondly by Michael, whose stroke cuts through both Satan's armaments and his entire right side, and lastly by the Son himself, whose sheer strength makes Satan disappear, indistinguishable from the "timerous flock" (*Paradise Lost* 6.857). Though Satan may have been wounded, his will was not shattered. In fact, it never truly shatters, regardless of how close Satan comes to redemptive reasoning in the entirety of *Paradise Lost*. War alone, even when against such an incomprehensible foe as God himself, cannot alter one's inner state; one's mind.

Through the War in Heaven, Milton has made the ineptitude of the old (external) heroism manifest and pressed the necessity of his new (internal) heroism. No amount of external pressure is able to alter Satan's mind, and no amount of military power can challenge God. The War in Heaven is necessarily disingenuous because it is impossible for a war against God himself to be genuine; Milton's God knows no equal to challenge him in such a way. Instead, the only path forward possible for Satan (and by extension, fallen humanity) must come from internal reasoning, internal and thus "true" virtue (The *Second Defense* 358). It is precisely the importance of internal and free virtue that God stresses in Book 3 when he states:

> Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.
> Not free, what proof could they have givn sincere
> Of true allegiance, constant Faith or Love,
> Where onely what they needs must do, appeard,
> Not what they would? what praise could they receive?
> What pleasure I from such obedience paid. (*Paradise Lost* 3.102-107)

What the War in Heaven does then, is draw a direct parallel between *Paradise Lost* and the prose works with regard to the means by which one can achieve peace and virtue. War, of any degree, even at the height of heaven, is unable to bring about a true resolution, as it can only affects things externally. Milton's heroism conversely, is one that attempts to affect things internally.

Ironically, the incomprehensible and incompatible stances on war that Wooten determines to be untenable are very similar to what Milton expresses in his prose with regard to righteous warfare. After all, while Milton expressed in some of his prose works that the greatest virtue stems from internal conflict and reason, he never completely disavowed military conflict for selective righteous causes. Wooten argues that Milton's complex relationship to warfare in *Paradise Lost* stems from a shift in Milton's perceptions, yet fails to acknowledge the existence of Milton's severe criticism on warfare pre *Paradise Lost*:

> The failure to secure the Puritan cause by means of a firmly entrenched republic disillusioned Milton about war and government both. Given that Paradise Lost was written on both sides of that split in Milton's life, it is reasonable to assume that what had been projected to be a Homeric narrative about Puritan holy warfare in this poet's great epic was rewritten to reflect the bitter disappointment of the Restoration John Milton. (Wooten 143).

A more sensible approach would be to argue that the precarious balance between praise of "Faithful . . . warfare" (*Paradise Lost* 6.803) and the mockery of the "Wild work in Heav'n" (*Paradise Lost* 6.698) reflects Milton's own ambivalent stance on righteous warfare. *Paradise Lost* is meant to show the futility of warfare, especially against God, whilst simultaneously leaving some room to praise warfare in God's name (the War in Heaven being the single most righteous conflict ever fought in the universe, by Milton's standards). That Milton himself has hitherto never entirely praised or entirely dismissed the notion of

warfare means that his works inevitably follow those same ideological patterns. That is not to say that one is expected to suddenly understand Book 6 as if it were a simple text, but rather that the scholarly difficulty of understanding Milton's *Paradise Lost's* stance on warfare does not deviate as much from other Miltonic works as scholars like Wooten might argue.

2.4 *Paradise Lost* as a Continuation of the Prose Works

This chapter served to develop the overall thesis by analysing whether those patterns I tracked in *The Tenure*, *Eikonoklastes* and *The Second Defense* continue to be upheld by Milton in *Paradise Lost*. While *Paradise Lost* continues down the same ideological path that Milton set out to define in his prose work (that of spiritual warfare being superior to physical warfare), it is more confined by the demands of narrative in *Paradise Lost*. As such, *Paradise Lost*'s perspective on warfare lacks the clear and direct expression found in the prose.

Book 6 instead provides a complex metaphor. This chapter has argued that the function and scope of Milton's military metaphor develops over the three narrative days, transitioning from praising military heroism to scrutinising warfare. I argued that the complexity of the War in Heaven passage stems from four complex points of contention. Firstly, Milton's war is made disingenuous through its context: Angelic warfare derives the narrative of genuine suspense through the lack of consequence and permanence. Secondly, this degree of disingenuousness is furthered through the existence of the Christian God in the poem, a creature which decidedly cannot exist within a linear narrative. One cannot fight a genuine war against God. Lastly, Milton's ambivalent stance on warfare complicates the poem as it attempts to have praise and scrutiny of the loyal angels' corruption to coexist within the same passage. This same ambivalence was also shown to affect the perception of God, whose actions scholars like Wooten have deemed "most offputting" (Wooten 138).

However, this chapter also concluded that parallels between *Paradise Lost's* perspective on warfare and the prose works exist. Milton's new heroism, which contrasts old martial heroism by being predominantly internal, is implicitly brought to the forefront by the failure of the War in Heaven to affect Satan's state of mind sufficiently. As such *Paradise Lost* mirrors statements of *The Second Defense* pertaining to the ineptitude of external heroism. Scholars like Wooten, Bedford and Cyr have been unable to concur upon a proper interpretation of the ambivalent perspectives on war *Paradise Lost* appears to contain. However, this paper argues that these ambivalences are entirely in line with the prose works. Within *Paradise Lost* Milton suggests the following: Spiritual warfare is superior to physical warfare (as it can affect things internally), though there are righteous contexts in which a physical war may be tolerated and praised. *Paradise Lost* certainly presents and ideology that is not too dissimilar from *The Tenure*, *Eikonoklastes* and *The Second Defense*, yet this ideology struggles to manifest itself clearly within the strained and sometimes incompatible demands of narrative and theodicy.

3. War in Paradise Regain'd and Samson Agonistes

This thesis set out to divide a section of Milton's works into three chronologically ordered categories in order to tract the development, or lack thereof, of Milton's stance and perspectives of war and violence. If, within that framework, the polemical prose of the first chapter may be considered a beginning and the poetry of *Paradise Lost* may be considered a middle, I have now arrived at the end. This last chapter will concern itself with *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* and analyses the thematic links that ties both works together as expressions of Milton's perspectives on Christianity and Warfare. I will argue that, as Gregory claims, *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* are "by no means at odds" (192) and exist as complementary works that serve to provide readers with Milton's answer to the question of how a protestant Christian should act under certain circumstances, specifically instances of what Milton determines to be warfare.

Contemporary analyses of *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes*, such as those of Tobias Gregory and Mary Ann Radzinowicz, offer compelling and divergent arguments on the relation between these poems. Where Gregory deems any connection between both works to be "pure conjecture" (Gregory 191), Radzinowicz has determined that the "thematic links between *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* confirm" their relation. In turn, Anne Krook argues that more striking than the relation of these works, is their political interpretation:

> *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* are complex enough in their relation to Milton's contemporary politics if their "heroes" are understood as failed and ineffectual, if Christ and Samson are respectively unattainable and negative role models for the defeated republicans. The poems are still more complex, however, if their heroes are understood to have succeeded as models for political activism. (Krook 130).

In order to analyse whether *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* fit conform to Milton's perspective on war I will first analyse both poems separately. My analysis of *Paradise Regain'd* focusses predominantly on the connection between *Paradise Regain'd* and *The Second Defense* on the topic of inner virtue. Similarly, my analysis of *Samson Agonistes* shows that alternative elements of *The Second Defense* are also incorporated into this other poem; the justification of a one man rebellion and violent action spurred on by divine inspiration. Following this, section 3.4 analyses how Milton considers both Christ and Samson to be heroic Christian examples, rather than incompatible opposites.

3.1 Once more on virtue: *Paradise Regain'd*

Paradise Regain'd is Milton's "more Heroic" (*Paradise Lost* 9.14) ideals made manifest. Milton puts what had thus far only been alluded to with praise in both *Paradise Lost* and *The* into writing through *Paradise Regain'd's* Son—Jesus of Nazareth. *Paradise Regain'd* therefore strongly echoes one half of the argument of *The Second Defense*: the heroism of inner virtue. The Son's tempered and confident withstanding of Satan's temptation is in essence a case study. Its instructive purpose is limited however, the inner virtue of the "warfare of peace" (*The Second Defense* 359) is not to be misequated with permanent inaction and pacifism. In heaven the Son, whose example is perfect, is able to express himself both "patiently" (*Paradise Regain'd* 2.432) and "full of wrauth" (*Paradise Lost* 6.826), signifying how both such emotions can reasonably exist within a perfect Christian being. As Gregory argues:

> Milton's Jesus is not a suffering martyr but a Son of God quietly confident that Satan cannot hurt a hair on his head. He is not pacifist; he is patient. When he dismisses Satan's offers of military and strategic assistance, he does so because he knows that,

> when the time comes, he will command infinitely more powerful war machinery than anything Satan could provide. (Gregory 191).

Paradise Regain'd then is the expression of this single facet of proper Christian behaviour: patience. It is not however, a piece of writing instructing one on how to *always* act. *Paradise Regain'd* provides an example of circumstances in which the appropriate Christian response is patience rather than action.

The Son in *Paradise Regain'd* represents the Christian individual and how this individual should act, as made explicit by Milton in *The Second Defense*. Though Christ is the Son of God, the virtuous tactics with which he retorts Satan's scheme are available to any Christian. Milton's Son leads by example; an example that is by no means unachievable to Milton's readership. Indeed, the similarities between Milton's expression in *The Second Defense* and the acts of the Son are so frequent that it is difficult to see *Paradise Regain'd* as anything less than an exemplum of one of the ideals of *The Second Defense* put into practice, embodied within the Son of God. As Milton writes himself, *Paradise Regain'd* is a "victory / Over temptation and the Tempter proud" (*Paradise Regain'd* 4.594-595).

The role of the Son as representative for Christian individuals is stressed by the existences of direct ideological parallels between *Paradise Regain'd* and *The Second Defense*. These parallels regard inner virtue, but also tyranny. Twice Christ speaks on the importance of inner virtue, once within lines 466-478 of Book 2, and in lines 88-91 of Book 3. The Son advocates strongly for inner virtue when he asserts that "he who reigns within himself, and rules / Passions, Desires, and Fears, is more a King" (*Paradise Regain'd* 2.466-467). Furthermore, he is making a direct reference to Milton's definition of "liberty . . . which alone is the fruit of piety, of justice, of temperance, and unadulterated virtue" (*The Second Defense* 358), but also to Milton's stance on tyrants. Additionally, Milton's aforementioned

"warfare of peace" (*The Second Defense* 359) is echoed when the Son speaks on how one might achieve true glory:

> But if there be in glory aught of good,
> It may by means far different be attain'd
> Without ambition, war, or violence;
> By deeds of peace, by wisdom eminent,
> By patience, temperance. (*Paradise Regain'd* 3.88-92)

Lastly, Milton's adherence to the belief that "tyranny was the outward political expression of an inward and personal condition of intemperance" finds expression as well (Luxon 2020): The Son speaks of people who are "[d]eservedly made vassal", and his unwillingness to save those who have turned away from his father. This interpretation of Christ as one more selective in his mercy is entirely in line with *The Second Defense*'s depiction of internal tyranny.

To stand in opposition to tyrants is a pivotal part of Milton's ideology, and to be victorious in one's internal conquest is a victory over internal tyranny. The state of one's internal conquest then, defines virtue. This notion was first explored by Milton in the prose, where he determines that "Men who are unworthy of liberty most often prove ungrateful to their very liberators" and that therefor "it is not fitting . . . for such men to be free." (*Second Defense* 360-361). It finds resurgence in both Christ, whom I have already briefly addressed, and Samson, who states:

> If their servile minds
> Me their Deliverer sent would not receive,
> But to thir Masters gave me up for nought,
> Th' unworthier they. (*Samson Agonistes* 1213-1216)

Togashi determines that "true liberty is virtue; 'to be free is precisely the same as to be pious, wise, just, and temperate'" (232). In extending Togashi's argument, a lack of virtue and liberty then, is in essence the failure of these undesignated individuals to partake in the inner warfare of the "warfare of peace" (*Second Defense* 359). Milton determines that these individuals are unworthy of salvations due to their inability or unwillingness to rise up against tyranny, whether external or internal. Such a polarising attitude does find expression in the Bible, which on multiple occasions expresses that "Whoever is not with me is against me" (*New International Bible*, Matthew. 12.30).

Paradise Regain'd relates to the greater argument of Milton's perspective of war by virtue of antithesis. Krook argues that *Paradise Regain'd* is, in this regard, a means by which Milton "models his Christ into a leader who potentially re-creates the English civil war as something other than complete and final failure, developing a method of resistance that will both account for the republicans' defeat and allow them to survive politically" (Krook 132). To achieve that, Milton expands our understanding of warfare to encompass Christ's patience. Therefore, Christ's "Conquest" and "great warfare" (*Paradise Regain'd* 1.154-158) alter in meaning, no longer referring predominantly to the violent elements of warfare and conquest, but instead relating to a mental triumph, in line with Milton's conceptualisation of his new heroism. Indeed, *Paradise Regain'd* is an exemplum on spiritual triumphs: Christ virtuously resists, and thus conquers, Satan's rhetorical assault.

Additionally, *Paradise Regain'd* serves as an illustration of Milton's belief in the victorious power of reason, as previously illustrated by *Paradise Lost*:

> That he who in debate of Truth hath won,
> Should win in Arms, in both disputes alike
> Victor; though brutish that contest and foule,
> When Reason hath to deal with force, yet so

> Most reason is that Reason overcome. (6.122-126).

The Son's victory through reason in *Paradise Regain'd* thus facilitates the regaining of "lost Paradise" (*Paradise Regain'd* 4.608). This conquest of reason preludes the Son's saving of mankind, Krook argues: "Milton thereby explicitly separates Christ's combat and victory in the battle to regain paradise from his work in saving mankind. Christ's combat and victory are thus complete before his work ever begins" (134). Since the Son has won this battle of reason, Milton determines that "the easier conquest now / Remains [him]" (*Paradise Lost* 6.37-38). Milton, through God, asserts that it ought to be the goal of Christians to emulate the conquest of the Son: "men hereafter may discern, / From what consummate vertue I have chose / This perfect Man, by merit call'd my Son, / To earn Salvation for the Sons of men" (*Paradise Regain'd* 1.164-167).

So far Milton's prose and poetry have made it evident that Milton valued peace and inner virtue more highly than war, but that Milton simultaneously rarely disavowed a war with a righteous and religious cause. Certainly, going to war is mortal men's "most barbarous error" (Oldman 340), but as *Samson Agonistes* will illustrate, it is God's divine right.

3.2 When God Spurs to Action: *Samson Agonistes*

The temperance and piety that constitute Christ's heroism in *Paradise Regain'd* are only part of what Milton deemed constituted true Christian heroism: Where the Son serves as an example of resistance through inaction, *Samson Agonistes* instructs the reader on resistance through action.

Existing theories on the nature of Samson's conflict—whether it is predominantly spiritual or physical—have overlooked the significance of Samson's final act. Both Gregory and Radzinowicz have expressed fierce criticism at any analysis of *Samson Agonistes* that deems it to be a play in opposition to violence and warfare. Certainly, for *Samson Agonistes*

to express pacifist sentiments would make it more homogenous to its published twin, *Paradise Regain'd*. However, Gregory's counterargument correctly poses that the polarising nature of both works is in line with Milton's entire bibliography. The stark contrast between the Son and Samson "does not suggest that the poet had, by 1671, disavowed the use of force in a godly cause . . .[rather], [t]here are times when God calls for patience; there are times when God calls for action. *Paradise Regained* illustrates the former, *Samson Agonistes* the latter" (Gregory 192). Furthermore, Gregory determines that the violence Samson commits is to be taken as a straightforward physical act of violence justified by Samson's divine motive. However, Radzinowicz argues that though Milton certainly approves of Samson's violence, the context of *Samson Agonistes* complicates the issue of violence somewhat. Rather than being predominantly physical, she argues that Samson's violence is essentially spiritual. What Milton praises in *Samson Agonistes* is not simply violence, but rather "a force of mind which overcomes the contrasting force of arms . . . The Chorus is admiring the kind of spiritual warfare which overcomes mere military might" (Radzinowicz 174-175). Exploring Radzinowicz' theory further leads to the conversation between Harapha and Samson, in which the elements of spiritual and martial warfare certainly clash. Harapha questions the nature of Samson's rebellion on multiple occasions, yet to Milton and Samson, the example of the "Notorious murder of those thirty men" (*Samson Agonistes* 1186) is justified within the framework of "Single Rebellion" against tyranny (*Samson Agonistes* 1210). As Samson himself reinforces: "I was no private but a person rais'd / With strength sufficient *and command from Heav'n* / To free my Countrey" (1211-1213, Emphasis added). Certainly, Milton makes Samson win the argument against Harapha through "plain Heroic magnitude of mind" (1279), yet the actions that reasoning justifies are still violent ones. It is that pivotal point that Radzinowicz seems to leave unaddressed. Furthermore, in spite of the presence of spiritual warfare, Samson's ultimate act is one of terrorism, further destabilising

Radzinowicz' assertion that the spiritual in *Samson Agonistes* fully overcomes the physical. Moments of spiritual victory certainly exist, yet the "plain Heroic magnitude of mind / And celestial vigour" (*Samson* Agonistes 1279-1280) fail to outweigh the horrific scope of Samson's final divinely inspired act. Gregory has argued that Samson's final act can be qualified, by modern standards, as no less than terrorism:

> It is fair to describe Samson Agonistes as a work in praise of terrorism, moreover, not only because its hero engages in it, but also because its conditions of justification are debated in the text . . . the questions "when is it justified to kill civilians in a political cause?" and "when is it justified to engage in one-man armed resistance?" were very much on [Milton's] mind. (Gregory 194)

Where Radzinowicz' argument fails is in her assertion that "the weight of lines devoted to assessing the role of the Philistines' will has not been adequately marked by those critics who are determined to force the drama into an amoral pattern of exultant genocide" (177). She determines that the deservedness of the Philistine's deaths means we are to focus more on Samson's own development, in which the Philistines are reduced to victims of circumstance of Samson's spiritual ascension rather than the deliberate target of his wrath. But rather than inconsequential, their deservedness is precisely what makes them pivotal to Milton's stance on justified war: "the decisive factor is also the simplest: the Israelites are God's people, whereas the Philistines are idolatrous Dagon worshipers . . . The nonequivalence between Yahweh worship and Dagon worship is, for Milton, to be taken for granted" (Gregory 198). Indeed, Stanley Fish criticises Radzinowicz's argument by concluding that the essential connection between Samson's personal development and his violent acts is essentially non-existent: had Samson remained as he is in the opening lines of the play—self-pitying and despairing—would he have pulled down the temple? The answer to that question is 'yes'" (Fish 237). Samson's violent act certainly makes him a lesser hero than Christ, but his

heroism is not one Milton disassociates from. Occasion and God cooperatively guided Samson's actions, and those criteria are precisely what justifies Samson. Samson's divine calling is, to Milton, the ultimate justification for violence and warfare which, "since they could claim neither legal authority nor popular support, find their sanction in a subjectively apprehended command from heaven" (Gregory 200).

Similarly, discussions on the ambiguity of Samson's divine inspiration disregard the praise Samson receives for his final act; it is the act that is significant, not the motivation. Understandably, whether Milton had truly intended to propose that a one-man resistance may be justified through divine calling was faced with a breadth of criticism. As John Rogers argued, the cautious apprehension of scholars to accept a Milton with, what we would presently understand as, terrorist sympathies demanded that "the scholarly identification of the source of the 'rousing motions' that impel Samson to tug and shake the pillars of the temple . . . established itself as a necessary labor for all the poem's critics" (Rogers 111). Certainly, the increase in ambiguity between the biblical original and Milton's adaptation of Samson's prayer prevents a confident interpretation of what the source of Samson's divine calling is. Though Gregory has argued that "Samson's heavenly calling and divine assistance are attested in the Bible, and Milton believed that the Bible was the Word of God" (199), that argument disregards Milton's conscious insertion of ambiguity into these final moments. For what reason might Milton have chosen to have Samson appear "as one who pray'd" (*Samson Agonistes* 1637) rather than to make his internal working explicit? This criticism may entice some to then fall back into the supposition that *Samson Agonistes,* like *Paradise Regain'd,* is a work dedicated in opposition to violence. Krook, similarly, has argued *Samson Agonistes* allows for an interpretation "in which Samson's actions can be read as both sanctioned and potentially inadequate, both appropriate and limited. His inadequacy and limits could allow readers to perceive their own limits as signs that they too can resist political passivity." (137).

However, in spite of Milton's ambiguous dealings with Samson's final moment, the praise of the Chorus solidifies that, regardless of the presence of divine guidance, Samson is a Miltonic hero:

> O dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious!
> Living or dying thou hast fulfill'd
> The work for which thou wast foretold
> To Israel, and now ly'st victorious
> Among thy slain self-kill'd
> Not willingly, but tangl'd in the fold
> Of dire necessity. (*Samson Agonistes* 1660-1665)

Samson is praised for his willingness to act out of necessity, rousing his "fierie virtue" (*Samson Agonistes* 1690), and whether he was truly divinely inspired takes a back seat.

3.3 The Duality of Milton's Christianity

This chapter analysed how *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* relate to the works of Milton of the previous chapter. Through these two works Milton has presented a Christian ideology that attempts to teach its adherents the appropriate context for action and inaction in defence of Christianity. *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* are by no means intended as contradictory works, rather, they are significant facets of Milton's Christian whole. Milton's stance on warfare is undeniably religiously motivated at its core, and though peace far outranked the notion of warfare, "Milton prioritized the defence of justice over peace." (Oldman 344). This stance is certainly a complicated one, as Elizabeth Oldman notes: "peaceful and martial means are viable modes of political solution, depending on circumstances" (357) yet it is precisely those circumstances that are intentionally left unexplored. Gregory's analysis concludes the same: "what *Samson Agonistes* leaves open is

not whether Samson is exemplary, but when and how his example is to be followed. On this question the poem says nothing at all, even implicitly" (199). Indeed, the transition from inaction to action within Milton's view rests entirely on divine inspiration, an ideology that proves untenable when scrutinised, but Milton's stance none the less. The difficulty of comprehending and interpreting the will of God, as Krook notes, is precisely what complicates the characters of Samson and Christ, and similarly complicates Milton's entire ideology (139-140).

Furthermore, adherence to Milton's ideology requires an understanding of the circumstances that demand action or inaction, failure to do so, as my analysis of inner tyranny suggests, results in a loss of one's liberty. Wooten argues Milton's stance on war is akin to the "warfaring [Christians] who struggle in the heat and dust of their own spiritual conflicts" (Wooten 148). Such 'spiritual conflict' Wooten refers to is to remain virtuous in spite of exposure to vice and temptation. Milton contrasts this type of virtue with "fugitive and cloister'd" virtue, a virtue which he deems unpraiseworthy. True wayfaring Christians then are those "that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better" (Milton, *Areopagitica*). These Christians acknowledge the occasional necessity of righteous war, but strive for peace above all else, thereby contrasting themselves with their opponents, whom Milton argues seek only "sedition" (Milton, *The Tenure*).

3.4 How *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* prove Milton's consistency

This chapter contrasted *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* with each other and Milton's other work. In doing so it concluded my tripartite approach to John Milton's stance on war, and concluded that John Milton's complex understanding of warfare is consistent across a variety of his works.

This chapter argued that *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* are case studies of Milton' stance on warfare as expressed in *The Second Defense*. It argued that the Son in *Paradise Regain'd* exemplifies temperate inaction and patience, and is contrasted by Samson, who exemplifies virtuous action. Action and inaction in this sense were not incompatible to Milton, but rather appropriate responses under different, mutually exclusive, circumstances.

Furthermore, this knowledge allowed me to conclude that Milton expresses an understanding of war that is multifaceted. *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* add to the consistency with which Milton's stance on warfare has been expressed so far. The duality of Milton's conceptualisation of warfare was thereby argued for: Milton's concept of warfare contains two distinct version of warfare which warrant appropriate actions.

Conclusion: John Milton and War

This thesis attempted to shed light upon John Milton's ambivalent relationship to war. It set out to answer two questions; what John Milton's perspective on war was at the time of writing some of his most pressing polemical prose works, and whether that perspective developed or altered throughout his many years of writing. Whilst attempting to answer the first question, it became clear that question required rephrasing: Milton did not have a singular stance on warfare, as his prose texts, *The Tenure of Kings*, *Eikonoklastes* and *The Second Defense* revealed.

Indeed, Milton's prose presents us with two distinct perceptions of warfare; either righteous or unrighteous. Milton's writing was consistently in favour of righteous wars, not shying away from lavishing extensive praise upon those people who fought for causes Milton deemed worthy. The worthiest of causes, Milton believed, was resistance to tyranny, a subject to which he dedicated the majority of the prose works discussed in this thesis. Righteous wars and righteous deeds were shown to be a broad concept; righteous warfare consists of more than martial deeds. Rather, it encompasses all deeds of resistance in the name of liberty and faith: physical, polemic or mental. Indeed, a pivotal component of Milton's stance is the inclusion of spiritual warfare into our understanding of what precisely warfare meant to Milton. Conversely, wars that operated outside of the parameters of what Milton deemed righteous were met with criticism of no lesser vigour. Milton's works are as dedicated to the scrutiny of unrighteous warfare as they are to the praise of righteous warfare. Milton's writing asserts that the distinction between what defines a righteous or an unrighteous war is self-evident, yet Milton's own examples were shown to be complicated and ambivalent. Milton's ideology seems clear enough in theory, but Milton does not provide significant handholds for its execution.

Paradise Lost is by far Milton's most ambivalent grappling with the notion of warfare. *Paradise Lost* melds a variety of convictions with both theodical aims and narrative demands. It reconciles criticism of warfare in general terms with praise for righteous warfare under God. As such, it paints the War in Heaven as a discordant piece, best characterised by the impotence of angelic warfare. While the War in Heaven adeptly portrays the corrupting nature of warfare, it simultaneously attempts to leave enough room for praiseworthy deeds by God's loyal angels. This research has shown that the disingenuous nature of the war deflates the value of the praise the loyal angels receive. Conversely, *Paradise Lost* does succeed in portraying the ineptitude of martial heroism.

Similarly, *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes,* attempt to relieve the strain of *Paradise Lost* by separating spiritual warfare and righteous physical warfare into two distinct narrative parables. They therefore, are ideologically far clearer than *Paradise Lost*, though even these works are not without their respective complexities. *Paradise Lost* 's Son exemplifies temperate inaction, contrasted by *Samson Agonistes*' righteous action. Though both works appear wholly incompatible, this thesis has in fact proven them to be different approaches to different circumstances, deemed equally valid by Milton. In essence, both works are exemplars of the various faculties a righteous Protestant ought to possess, as portrayed most clearly in *The Second Defense.* They are complementary in nature, not contradictory. Additionally, both works directly echo statements and ideals put forward in *The Second Defense* regarding virtue, tyranny and the victorious power of reason, cementing the continuity of Milton's ideology across all works of this thesis. Rightful criticism of the ideology Milton puts forward across these six works certainly exists.

I have traced John Milton's perspective on warfare across six works, and contrary to what Wooten argues, these works show anything but a "disillusioned Milton" (Wooten 143). Rather, they have portrayed an ideology that, though complex and at times untenable, is

steadfast in its convictions. For these works of Milton to deviate so little ideologically from one another points strongly towards an interpretation of Milton that is as consistent as Michael Lieb has argued for. Wooten's criticism of Lieb's interpretation, that "holy war is qualified, even contradicted, by [Milton's] attacks on the 'glory' of warfare" (Wooten 134) is incomplete. Certainly, if one considers both to be essentially warfare, Milton's stance is paradoxical. However, this thesis has shown that this claim is incorrect. Milton's works do not express a singular stance on warfare; Milton does not write on a singular notion of warfare. His works do not hold one all-encompassing stance on the concept of warfare, but rather two. These two stances pertain to righteous and unrighteous warfare. Holy (and thus righteous) war, which Milton argues can encompass both physical and mental deeds, is essentially different from, for lack of a better term, mortal (unrighteous) war. To elaborate, righteous warfare consists of two parts; inner virtue, the hallmark of a good, patient, Christian; and virtuous resistance, with the caveat that such resistance must be spurred on by some form of divine inspiration. Both of these expressions of virtue have been deemed praiseworthy by Milton across all the works this thesis analysed. Their stark contrast reveals that Milton's ideology was certainly neither pacifist nor war hungry, but rather more concerned with the underlying contextualisation of actions within the framework of Protestantism. Conversely, unrighteous warfare comprises actions motivated by the mental faculties of desire—and by extension, sin. This thesis has shown that such actions are admonished with the same consistency with which righteous actions are praised. Milton perceives these two types of warfare as different things entirely, and can therefore treat them differently in his writing. In conclusion, though Milton's perspective on war is certainly complex, it is internally consistent.

That being said, the fact that this thesis has found consistency within *The Tenure of Kings*, *Eikonoklastes*, *The Second Defense*, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson*

Agonistes is in itself insufficient to claim that Milton's ideology across all his works is generally consistent. Research into the wide breadth of Milton's bibliography falls outside of the scope of this thesis, and thus remains for future endeavours. Furthermore, this thesis has left unexplored the ethical concerns that arise within Milton's ideology, merely addressing their existence. However, what this thesis has done is offer strong opposition to those who would argue Milton's convictions shifted and altered across the span of time between writing *The Tenure* and *Samson Agonistes*, such a claim, this thesis argued, is incorrect.

The conclusions of this thesis are meant to aid in a renewed reading of Milton's works, one in which the strain and complexity of Milton's befuddling expressions towards warfare may be alleviated, and thus better understood, with the knowledge that within Milton's religious ideology, which itself certainly contains untenable elements, there exist multiple conceptualisations of warfare, each warranting different responses. Though this analysis might have left one wearied, our scholarly understanding of John Milton has far from done what it can do.

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