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THE MORAL USE OF RHETORIC IN
PARADISE REGAINED

DISSertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

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CHAPTER I

THE MORAL PROBLEM OF RHETORIC

In *Paradise Regained* Milton makes what is perhaps his final comment on the moral problems inherent in the use of rhetoric. The style of the poem, especially in the rhetoric used in the debate, thoroughly reveals Milton's belief that good or evil is manifest in a person's speech, that clarity and straightforwardness are in direct proportion to the speaker's goodness and honesty. Moreover, Satan's using a classical education to tempt Jesus elicits an explicit devaluation of the Greek art of rhetoric in favor of a Hebrew mode of discourse. Along with poetry and philosophy Satan offers the study of oratory as an aid to the Son's becoming the Messiah, the ruler of the restored Kingdom of Israel:

Thence to the famous Orators repair,  
Those antient, whose resistless eloquence  
Wielded at will that fierce Democratie,  
Shook the Arsenal and fulmin'd over Greece,  
To Macedon, and Artaxerxes Throne.\(^1\)

Even though there is no apparent irony in Satan's praises of ancient learning and art, Jesus' blunt response casts out the noble two-thousand-year-old tradition of eloquence and replaces it with the belief that only simple unadorned truth, as found in Scripture, can certainly move men to right judgment and ethical action:
Thir Orators thou then extoll'st, as those
The top of Eloquence, Statists indeed,
And lovers of thir Country, as may seem;
But herein to our Prophets far beneath,
As men divinely taught, and better teaching
The solid rules of Civil Government
In thir majestic unaffected stile
Then all the Oratory of Greece and Rome.
In them is plainest taught, and easiest learnt,
What makes a Nation happy, and keeps it so,
What ruins Kingdoms, and lays Cities flat.
(IV, 353-63)

It is, of course, possible to see the rejection by Christ as a poetic one and not Milton's own conclusion on the arts; that is, the response to Satan may be simply dramatically correct. Yet when we consider Milton's own belief in both the actuality and the eternal meaning of most of the basic events in the poem, and when we remember that the temptation of classical learning was his addition to the gospel account, we may want to ask further what the full implications of the rejection are. In one sense the question becomes one of what is involved in the choice of Scripture over classical political and rhetorical theory. And as soon as we ask, we are deep into the enduring debate over the conditions necessary for a morally responsible use of rhetoric.

A consideration of this moral problem posed by rhetoric does not require a detailed comparison of the Greek worldview to the Christian, but rather it asks a comparison of the effects on rhetorical theory of two opposite views of truth: one which sees truth as eternally stable and visible to man and another which sees it as orderly yet growing and incomplete. Moreover, focusing on the essential moral problem in rhetoric as that problem is related to the
two major opposing views of truth precludes the necessity for a historical survey of rhetorical theory. Even the large number of Renaissance handbooks of rhetoric do not demand attention since they are derived from classical material and do not in any way change the effects that a belief in absolute Good has on rhetoric. A Milton who held to the certainty of the truth of Scripture was as aware as a Socrates with his knowledge of the Good that rhetoric must serve the Truth.

On one side of the moral issue is the Aristotelian position that truth is not absolute in any given situation and that because rhetoric is always in use it should be cultivated by those seeking the truth. On the other side is the position of Socrates and Plato that before persuading an audience the speaker must ask what he is persuading them to. He must establish the ultimate Good and a hierarchy of values descending from that. A. P. Duhamel states the conflict between the Aristotelian and Platonic positions as a general principle:

The content of the idea "rhetoric," or of the conception of what constitutes effective expression, is dependent upon the epistemology, psychology, and metaphysic of the system in which it occurs. The rhetorical is determined by the epistemological. The rhetorician's conception of the value of argument, the process of invention by which arguments are to be discovered, the extent to which the devices of elocution are to be employed, is the result of his evaluation of the reliability of the intellect, the nature and availability of truth, and the existence of certitude. Thus Aristotle's idea of rhetoric, or of what constitutes effective expression, differs from Plato's mainly because he conceived of probable truth as value in se and frequently the best human intelligence can expect.

In *Paradise Regained* Jesus states both a rhetorical method and an ultimate Good in preferring to the Greek arts prophetic style and biblical revelation on the basis of their absolute conformity to God's
truth, and in doing so he is aligning himself completely with one side (the ultimate Platonic) of the continuing debate over the morality of rhetoric.

George Kennedy writes of this basic two-sided choice, essentially the one Milton has Jesus faced with in the poem, and not only insists on the complete opposition of the two views of rhetoric and morality, but even offers Milton as a possible example of the Platonic side. As representative spokesmen for the two sides Kennedy offers Protagoras and Socrates and gives both full credit for honesty in their views.

For Protagoras, as Kennedy sees it,

absolute truth was unknowable and perhaps nonexistent. Man is the measure and measurer of all things . . . and truth must be approximated in each individual time and place somewhat in the manner that the just is determined in a court of law.4

On the other hand, "if . . . one were to argue that absolute truth both exists and is knowable, then certain principles deducible from this truth ought to guide its activity." And this is, of course, Socrates' position, that knowledge of the Good dictates a moral standard for the use of rhetoric. The remainder of Kennedy's comment is worth quoting fully, for it sets up exactly the basis of all choices on moral grounds for or against the study and use of rhetoric. It should be noted that Kennedy's broad use of the term sophist includes Aristotle:

The disagreement between Plato and the sophists over rhetoric was not simply an historical contingency, but reflects a fundamental cleavage between two irreconcilable ways of viewing the world. There have always been those, especially among philosophers and religious thinkers, who have emphasized goals and absolute standards and have talked much about truth,
while there have been as many others to whom these concepts seem shadowy or imaginary and who find the only certain reality in the process of life and the present moment. In general, rhetoricians and orators, with certain distinguished exceptions, have held the latter view, which is the logical, if unconscious, basis of their common view of art as a response to a rhetorical challenge unconstrained by external principles. The difference is not only between Plato and Gorgias, but between Demosthenes and Isocrates, Virgil and Ovid, Dante and Petrarch, and perhaps Milton and Shakespeare.\(^5\)

The works of Harris Fletcher and Donald L. Clark\(^6\) have shown how thoroughly acquainted Milton must have become with the rhetorical tradition in the course of his education; thus, the purpose here is to see as clearly as possible the nature of the moral problem involved in the use of rhetoric: the relationship of rhetoric to the two major contending views of truth and knowledge. To this end we will review the conflict between Platonic and Aristotelian views, since these represent in any age the essence of the moral problem. And because the Christian student of rhetoric has the added element of belief in revealed truth when he faces the split between Plato and Aristotle, we will look also at Augustine's attempted synthesis of classicism and Christianity in his rhetorical teaching in the *De Doctrina Christiana*. In focusing on these basic treatments of the morality of rhetoric we may come to see the great implications of Milton's struggle with vital elements in his education and culture as he tried to bring the power of classical art and the demands of Christian ideals into play in the political arena of the seventeenth century.

It is necessary here, before proceeding, to call attention to the always bothersome variety of meanings and connotations of the word
rhetoric. Even when used by serious rhetoricians the word can denote different mental and verbal processes (analysis, invention, ornament), or even suggest something that is not a process at all (flattery, for example). Moreover it is not generally discriminated from such related words as eloquence, oratory, or even persuasion or sophistry. And further compounding the problem is the fact that there is really no proper term for what is vaguely called "bad rhetoric." Each user of the word rhetoric has his own idea of "bad rhetoric," but often the negative term needs definition even more than does its opposite. And when we consider Plato on the subject we find that the standard terms are even more confused since rhetoric itself is often viewed as a distraction from the search for truth.

Let us then make a basic distinction between the two rhetorics that develop in response to the two opposing views of knowledge discerned by Kennedy and others. In the most ideal and honest non-Platonic understanding (basically Aristotle's), the moral function of rhetoric is to discern what is the best decision or course of action in any particular situation. Assuming the honesty of the orator and the success of his method of invention (discovery), we may say that his job is to communicate the limited truth he grasps by establishing his own credibility and character, by employing sound arguments, and by engaging the emotions of his audience. On the other hand, in the Platonic view, the philosopher-orator's job is to use dialectic to discover what the situation actually is and what its relation to absolute truth is and then to lead the audience into that truth. In
this Platonic mode at its best the speaker is inspired and the audience rapturously introduced to the will of God. In any case, the Platonic vision demands that any user of rhetoric must first be in touch with Truth (virtue) itself; thus from this point of view the trouble with other practices of rhetoric is that either the speaker may not know what is really best, despite his sincerity, or the listeners may be diverted from the truth by their emotions. 7

Let us then call the Platonic absolutist rhetoric "scientific rhetoric" and the Aristotelian or any other honorable kind "humanistic rhetoric." Then the term "nonscientific" can be applied, from the Platonic point of view, to any kind— including the humanistic— which is not primarily directed by knowledge of the Good. "Bad rhetoric" can then be the term applied to any which falls from the humanistic standards of honesty in purpose or method.

As suggested already, the conflict between the two major views of the art of rhetoric concerns not only knowledge but also morality. For rhetoric in Plato's terms cannot exist except in a moral context, since it always posits a minor "good" and man's relation to it, whether it is analyzing or persuading; and thus the art is always finally reduced to one or the other of the opposing conceptions (Platonic and Aristotelian) of reality, of the true, of the good, and of the moral man. In the Platonic view the Good is absolute, one, and universally knowable; and in the Aristotelian it is growing, unfulfilled, and partly apprehendable, though nonetheless certain for not being fixed. In the Platonic conception, the existence of
the Good means that there is a definitely right way to behave and to
direct the behavior of others in every situation. In the Aristotelian,
no definitely right, ascertainable way is thought possible; therefore,
invention is seen as the process of finding the most probable truth of
a situation. 8

The major charges of weakness to which each of these views of
rhetoric and the Good is subject are quite simple and clearly reveal
the basic division between the two. Against the Platonic position,
the Aristotelian may protest that devotion to a vision of absolute
truth may keep one from responding effectively to immediate demands
for amelioration of even some present wrongs; thus the absolutist
may be entirely ineffective in any attempts to improve society,
Socrates' own death being a prime example of his failure to prevent
injustice even in his own city and to his own person. On the other
hand the Platonist may charge that even the ideal Aristotelian orator—
aiming as he does to find only probable truth and only for a particu-
lar situation and emphasizing the practical—may be forced to assume
in certain situations that he knows what is best without having time
to make certain that he does and may frequently even be in danger of
making expediency the best criterion for action rather than what he
may eventually decide to be the most probable good.

In the two attitudes, then, the one insisting on knowing the
ultimate meaning of things and the other on being able to control
society effectively, we have the two views of rhetoric, based on
entirely different understandings of man's responsibility to reality
and truth.
Plato's most central statements on the nature of rhetoric—both scientific (or what he considers right rhetoric) and non-scientific (or what he considers bad rhetoric)—are to be found in the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*. In the *Gorgias*, the earlier work, we may consider the criticism of rhetoric to be meant in a positive, helpful way since the negative-sounding analysis of non-scientific rhetoric is set up against what Plato considers the ideal kind of scientific rhetoric. It is clear, then, that rhetoric when properly and rightly practiced is a proper and right entity. Nonetheless, what we are struck by in the give-and-take of the debate is Socrates' constant focus on the essential failure of the art to deal with truth. As W. C. Helmbold says in the introduction to his translation:

The apparently guileless query "What is Gorgias' profession?" leads, in the end, to an examination of how life itself should be lived and how rhetoric is to be linked to the Good Life.\(^9\)

And, of course, this line of questioning leads to the definition of Gorgias' rhetoric as a kind of knack, analogous to cookery, make-up and sophistry. In a word, rhetoric falls short of philosophy in its failure to be necessarily and utterly directed by the good and, worse, in its being a specious art, a sham which pretends to pursue and teach truth while it actually does not know it and often does not really seek it.\(^{10}\)

Socrates first establishes that Gorgias thinks his profession deals with words and particularly with words whose subject is "the greatest good of mankind." Gorgias' profession turns out to be, however, as Socrates puts it almost immediately, concerned purely with persuasion in the listeners' soul.\(^{11}\)
It is then established by Socrates that, although it deals with justice and injustice, rhetoric creates only belief, not real knowledge, about them. There is, of course, a considerable section of dialogue on Gorgias' responsibility to teach the virtue which will discern justice and injustice truly, but the point is never changed: rhetoric and the rhetorician are concerned with creating belief about the justice or injustice of something in audiences too large and diverse to bear instruction which leads to real knowledge. The result is "a case of the ignorant being more persuasive than the expert in the company of the ignorant." The simple claim that the teacher of rhetoric, Gorgias, knows justice from injustice does not stand up to Socrates' questions and their discovery of inconsistencies. Thus Socrates' conclusion is given in "geometrical form":

as make-up is to gymnastics, so is sophistic to legislation;
and as cookery to medicine, so rhetoric is to justice.
As I have said, however, though there is this natural distinction between them, yet because they are closely related and deal with the same matters, sophists and rhetoricians become confused and do not know either what to make of themselves nor do others know what to make of them.  

Three-fourths of the way through the dialogue and after a long interchange with Callicles about expediency, Socrates once more drives home the central question, which, he says, "should engage the most serious attention of anyone who has a particle of intelligence: in what way should one live one's life?" Thus again rhetoric, because it has never been shown to make men better, but rather, like cookery, to give them pleasure, is judged to be no art but a form of flattery. If there is a true rhetorician, a "moral artist," he will be really concerned with "justice and self-control"; he must be "a just man
himself and conversant with the principles of justice."^{13}

Finally when Socrates does give Gorgias' rhetoric its most innocuous rendering he says that it is a facility like the art of navigation which keeps men from harm but does not necessarily bring them to good. And so even at its best it is not a true art, that which puts men into a relationship with what is "noble and good."^{14}

In the Phaedrus, as in the Gorgias, there is no lack of criticism of current standards and methods in rhetoric. But an important difference between the two is the attempt in the later work to discover the principles and ends of a really philosophical method of discourse that brings men to the truth.\(^{15}\) Just as the bad rhetoric of the Gorgias was compared to cookery, so the noble art suggested by the Phaedrus is compared to medicine, the art which discovers not only what controls men's biological functions but what health is and what brings men to that state. According to Socrates, the task of scientific rhetoric is to establish first the nature of the good and the just, the nature of wisdom and folly, and then to discover the nature of men's souls, just as true medicine teaches the nature of health in the body not merely the ways to induce physical reactions. Thus Socrates concludes when describing his true rhetoric:

Since the function of oratory is in fact to influence men's souls, the intending orator must know what types of souls there are. Now these are of a determinate number, and their variety results in a variety of individuals. To the types of soul thus discriminated there corresponds a determinate number of types of discourse.\(^{16}\)

The conclusion of this emphasis is no mere variation in ways to make the plausible or probable look more like the truth than it did in
other methods of persuasion, but a wholly different end from other theories of rhetoric, the end not only of perfecting man, but of making him pleasing to the divine will. Socrates concludes that the great labor which is, of course, involved in becoming a true rhetorician thus has its goal far above the practical demands of a moment. The wise man will make the effort necessary to become an orator "not for the sake of speaking to and dealing with his fellowmen, but that he may be able to speak what is pleasing to the gods, and in all his dealings to do their pleasure to the best of his ability." As Claude A. Thompson says, the orator in this description is infused with the divine madness and is "an inspired philosopher." And so also Richard Weaver, who shows in a detailed analysis that the dialogue itself is an example of the highest rhetoric, says that

What Plato has prepared us to see is that the virtuous rhetorician, who is a lover of truth, has a soul of such movement that its dialectical perceptions are consonant with those of the divine mind.

According to Weaver's interpretation such a soul in action, inspired like the soul of the noble lover of the dialogue, desires to lead its hearer (or its beloved) into oneness with the Good. This "virtuous rhetorician" by using dialectic sets up the truth and then by using "analogical association" to make it felt—as in Socrates' own inspired speech—brings the beloved listener to it.

Werner Jaeger's comments are even more detailed than Weaver's and perhaps even more insistent on the reality of Plato's faith in the true knowledge and morality in Socrates' words. In Jaeger's view, words find their ultimate value in the Platonic conception of the virtuous
rhetorician, the ideal embodied in Socrates. Thus he says:

The effort of the logos to reach its aim becomes the direct expression of the life that is entirely given up to that aim. What is for others nothing but words, which they hear without being convinced, is the revelation of Socrates' true existence. Plato describes it to us in the firm conviction that in his master speech and reality were one and the same. Gorgias shows us a new way of estimating life, which has its origin in Socrates' knowledge of the nature of the soul.20

Probably nowhere does the modern reader feel himself more at a loss than in trying to evaluate properly the moment of divine madness when, according to the Platonic position, ultimate truth is revealed. Yet this deep spiritual experience which concludes Socrates' teaching of Phaedrus has immeasurable implications for the rhetorician. Of the effects which can be easily seen the one given the most attention by critics is the necessary condemnation by the Platonic rhetorician of all forms of the art which fall short of his transcendent goal. Albert P. Duhamel's summary of the meaning of Socrates' position is typical.21 Of Plato's new ideal he says:

A thing was no longer valuable because it improved the political life of the individual, but only in so far as it contributed to the knowledge of transcendentals. Truth was no longer to be determined by political expediency: it was something withdrawn and abstract, apart from time and place. Rhetoric could be expected, a priori, to fall from its former important position unless it could demonstrate an ability to reach truth, or enable man to acquire the Good.22

Even without granting the possibility of divine inspiration, the Platonic position condemns as immoral ordinary (non-scientific) forms of rhetoric, as Kennedy shows by noting that the movement of the Gorgias increasingly reveals the viciousness inherent in the position that "belief and illusion" are sufficient ends without true
knowledge:

Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles are presented as progressively more and more practical politicians of the breed believing in expediency and force.\(^3\)

D. L. Clark in his survey of Greek rhetoric says somewhat caustically that "Platonic metaphysics, which postulate as the only truth, the only reality, an idea or form in the mind of God," cause Plato to devalue not only Callicles' position but everything in his society:

Plato disapproved of almost everything in human life as he saw it about him in Athens. He disapproved of Athenian democracy, poetry, art, education, and religion as well as of Athenian rhetoric—all fundamentally on the same grounds.\(^4\)

This point about the scope of Plato's dissatisfaction with his contemporaries is well taken, but to understand the basis of his disapproval we must look further at what he himself was offering rather than at what he was condemning. To help us to this, we have a number of modern critics who have labored to acquaint us with the exact nature and importance of Plato's distinctions concerning the ideal rhetorician's way into the Truth. Edwin Black, for example, makes a major point of discriminating between the moral-philosophical view in the rhetoric Plato condemned and the view he projected in the Phaedrus. Black points out that Plato was attacking a definition (in the Platonic sense) of rhetoric and in doing so was seeking himself to define, that is, isolate the true Form of, rhetoric:

Gorgias' definition implicatively claimed a moral feature for rhetoric which in fact rhetoric does not have. A logical consequence of the Gorgian definition is that there can be no such thing as morally bad rhetoric, or rhetoric which is unjust. Plato knew, as we know, that there is
morally bad and unjust rhetorical discourse.

A simple but very important point which is included in Black's analysis is that the nature of the dialectic which Plato's scientific rhetoric depends on is not merely logical method but rather the perception of the pattern of reality, of Form:

When Plato sought the meaning of "rhetoric," he was seeking a series of true propositions about an existential class.25

The insistence by Plato on the recognition of ultimate Form should not obscure the rigid demands at the practical level of definition. As G. M. A. Grube reminds us, the difference between the sophist and Platonic conceptions of knowledge originates in Plato's very specific criteria for any art to be called true. Thus Grube says of Plato's search for a true art or technê of rhetoric:

Any technê must study the object of its concern, analyze it into its parts, know how it acts on other things and is affected by them. Otherwise it is not a technê but an empirical routine. . . . The true rhetor must therefore study human psychology and know the various kinds of soul.

Grube is helpful in seeing Plato's distinct requirements for a true scientific art of rhetoric, but he finally is not certain that the requirements are realistic:

Plato seems to be trying hard to be practical, to isolate the true art of rhetoric and its requirements. . . . But, as Aristotle once remarked in a different context, however much Plato wants to be practical, he soon swings back to the ideal. When he reasserts in the end that argument from probability is not enough and that his orator must know the truth, we are reminded by his very language that there is only one kind of knowledge of Truth, and that is the knowledge of the Forms.26

To get a fully developed presentation of the literal Platonic awareness of the largest Truth we must go to Werner Jaeger's already
quoted study, Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture, the most thorough of all explanations of Plato's requirement of superior knowledge as the basis of any scientific art of rhetoric. In his evaluation of the contribution of Socrates and Plato, he begins by pointing out that he believes the sophist did not understand "the assumptions on which his profession was based." Socrates, on the other hand, is felt by Jaeger to be the very teacher the age needed. And he is so precisely because he insists on the moral implications of any teaching or use of rhetoric. Our realization of Socrates' importance, says Jaeger,

is not created by some difference of method, or by the mysterious power of personality, but chiefly by the fact that, by referring the moral problem to the problem of knowledge, he has for the first time given teaching the fundamental assumption which the sophists failed to see.27

As Jaeger explains this "problem of knowledge" he defines the meaning of technē to relate the understanding of the Good to the communication of it:

Our word art does not adequately reproduce the sense of the Greek word. Like art, technē emphasizes practical use. But art for us implies individual creation subject to no rule, whereas technē has a sense of well-established knowledge and ability, which we associate with technique or profession. The Greeks used technē far more widely than we use art: they used it for any profession based on special knowledge—not only painting and sculpture, architecture and music, but just as much, or even more, medicine, strategy, or helmsmanship. The word thus connotes the practice of a vocation or profession based not merely on routine experience but on general rules and fixed knowledge.28

If Jaeger is perhaps being a bit reductive in his presentation of the modern use of the term art, he makes a clearly valid point about the Greek ideal and our distance from it. As he says, knowledge
in the Platonic scheme is both absolute and meant to be realized in practice when man is moving toward the Good. Thus he goes on to underline the position of Plato on the certain failure of relativistic practices of statesmanship by saying that

According to context, the word *technē* . . . can be replaced by the word *epistemē*, to emphasize the fact that his political science is based on a complete theoretical understanding of reality.²⁹

Finally, as Jaeger sees it, such knowledge of reality demands a complete revolution in daily living of all questions of value. In the Socratic vision, reality itself must be restructured along new lines. What the politician calls the practical ways of the world are seen to be at odds with the necessity to discover ultimate truth in present experience and to begin to conform to it: "It is as if a chasm opened between appearance and reality: all human things have suddenly taken on a new value." Most especially, says Jaeger, this new view must deal with the question of power since ultimately rhetoric-as-is deals with power in the law court or the assembly, and thus one must weigh in the balance and choose between Plato's *paideia* and power of a local political kind. These two---"*paideia*" and "power"---embody opposing conceptions of human happiness—which means, of human nature. We have to choose between the philosophy of power and the philosophy of culture.³⁰

When we turn from the Platonic to the Aristotelian response to rhetoric we are helped greatly by Everett Lee Hunt's comparison of the two. To expound the basis of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Hunt finds it convenient to show the ways that it differs from Plato's conceptions rather than to discuss its divisions in the abstract. As he works out the contrasts between the two views, his frequent stress on the central
moral issue makes it clear that to him Aristotle was indeed on fundamentally different grounds from Plato. Certain of Plato's distinctions about the nature of rhetoric and his criticisms of other rhetoricians may have contributed to Aristotle's system, but Plato's attraction to the ultimate did not concern the later writer:

While Aristotle agreed with Plato in his contempt for the unscientific nature of the instruction given by other teachers of rhetoric, and in applying the term sophist to false pretenders of knowledge, his approach to rhetoric was affected by certain philosophical and temperamental divergences from Plato. . . . It is, perhaps, a safe generalization to say that Plato sought to reform life, while Aristotle was more interested in reorganizing theory about life. For this reason Aristotle's Rhetoric is largely detached from both morality and pedagogy. . . . It is an unmoral and scientific analysis of the means of persuasion.31

Hunt shows at length that the differences in philosophy and temperament between the two men are due basically to Aristotle's having chosen the "happiness" that is tied to the easily observable political good and to his considering the opinions and wisdom of the multitude as possibly helpful. Aristotle, in Hunt's words, "separated ethics from metaphysics" and "approached the subject of rhetoric with a belief in its necessity as a political instrument." Hunt's analysis even shows that Aristotle in fact sides with Gorgias on the relation of justice to rhetoric (as opposed to Socrates who sees rhetoric as the sham art of justice) and that he gives the definition that Gorgias in the Platonic dialogue needed but could not come up with.32

In the first chapter of his Rhetoric Aristotle says:

Rhetoric is useful because things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites, so that if the decisions of judges are
not what they ought to be, the defeat must be due to
the speakers themselves, and they must be blamed ac-
cordingly. . . . Things that are true and things that
are better are, by their nature, practically always
easier to prove and easier to believe in. 33

Hunt makes the pertinent observation that Aristotle based his moral
assumption—that rhetoric will lead to truth—not on a belief that
rhetoric will make the user a more moral being but rather on a be-
lief that "the nature of things" tends toward justice. Thus he
says that, according to Aristotle,

The inherent superiority of just and true things is thus in-
creased by the universal use of rhetoric. This is a broader
and sounder view than Plato was able to take. As a reformer
Plato had no patience with the evils which inevitably ac-
company all good things. Aristotle is quite cognizant of
the evils of rhetoric, but is content that the good shall,
on the whole, outweigh it. 34

Perhaps Hunt's comment here does not give full credit to the
Platonic idea of the Good, but it does show the difference between
it and the Aristotelian assumption that good itself is to be had in
the world as we find it. The Aristotelian view gives credit to human
nature and also allows one to believe that the improvement of the
art of rhetoric is an improvement of the good man's chances to strive
logically, ethically and emotionally for truth and justice. Never-
theless since he begins with the assumption that it is better to im-
prove the effectiveness of the art than not to, we might say that he
is silently refusing to open the moral case as far as Plato did.

An even more fundamental point of divergence between the two
philosophers, suggested by the statement that the true is easier "to
believe in," is that Aristotle is satisfied with belief while Plato
insists on knowledge. Socrates' criticism of Gorgias is that all he
needs to do to persuade is to make people believe, not necessarily know what a case demands.\textsuperscript{35} Aristotle frankly accepts the limitations of a general audience and says that belief not knowledge is what rhetoric is concerned with:

Moreover, before some audiences not even the possession of the exactest knowledge will make it easy for what we say to produce conviction. For argument based on knowledge implies instruction, and there are people whom one cannot instruct.\textsuperscript{36}

It is hardly necessary to recall Plato's feelings on the possible conclusion to this: that belief is all one needs in order to influence an audience. Aristotle himself does not actually conclude that knowledge is not requisite for the rhetorician; he simply does not discuss the matter and talks instead about audiences. But from Plato's point of view it is all too easy for the orator to be satisfied with merely knowing that audiences can be moved to action by being made to believe something. It was clear to Plato that the rhetorician could be successful by merely discovering what audiences want to and will believe.

One of Hunt's major points is that the usual consideration of the Phaedrus as a source for Aristotle's Rhetoric is misleading. As he demonstrates, Plato's insistence on the rhetorician's knowing the Truth is very much opposed to Aristotle's understanding of rhetoric as dealing with probabilities. The latter type of rhetoric is, says Hunt, "frankly an art of appearances":

The topics, then, constituted a sort of rhetoricians' first aid. They were to assist him in producing immediately, and perhaps without any special knowledge of the subject, a plausible argument upon either side of a debatable proposition.\textsuperscript{37}
To emphasize his point, Hunt in the rest of his survey of the subject matter of the Rhetoric points out that throughout the text Aristotle has adopted reduced forms of other arts and methods to serve the immediate ends of persuasion. Thus the enthymeme and example are not logical tools to discover truth but only give the appearances of syllogism and induction in order to reassure the audience with a semblance of logic. Further, in the three kinds of oratory Aristotle has not given a true "subject matter" but for deliberative rhetoric a superficial political science; for epideictic rhetoric a conventional ethics; and for forensic rhetoric a very loose and inexact criminal jurisprudence. Hunt finally notes in speaking of the section on ethics that in the Rhetoric "Aristotle's was a scientific and not a moral earnestness."

The only qualification that he makes to this judgment is that Aristotle professed a dislike for the business, but once engaged in the classification of arguments he is concerned with rhetorical effectiveness and not with moral justifiability.

As a final point, perhaps the most fundamental one, Hunt notes the difference between the two philosophers' meanings of "dialectic":

When Plato said that the rhetorician must be a dialectician, he meant that he must be a philosopher. . . . For Plato, dialectic was the whole process of rational analysis by which the soul was led into the knowledge of Ideas.

Aristotle's meaning, on the other hand, was not concerned with any "Platonic doctrine of Ideas" or any "sense of a mystical significance for dialectics." Citing the fact that Plato castigates fallacies and Aristotle classifies them, Hunt draws out the differences between the two men pointedly:

That type of disputation which Plato made a variety of false rhetoric, the very antithesis of true dialectic, is
for Aristotle an integral part of dialectic. Thus it is evident that Aristotle has allowed dialectic to descend into that realm of opinion inhabited by Sophists and rhetoricians. Where Plato had been chiefly impressed by the contrast between rhetoric and dialectic, Aristotle noted the similarities. The realm of opinion, which Plato regarded as unworthy the attention of the philosopher, is thus accorded by Aristotle two distinct disciplines, dialectic and rhetoric.

Hunt makes it quite clear that Aristotle agreed with Plato that the rhetorician should be morally good, intellectually acute, and widely educated, and that he further agreed that rhetoricians of the day were not possessed of these qualities. Yet, he goes on, these similarities in the two men's understandings should not hide from us "the equally significant fact that Aristotle's rhetorical theory bears more resemblance to that of Protagoras and Gorgias than to that of Plato."

When we class Aristotle in some respects with Gorgias we must be careful to record the differences between the two as well. Aristotle is different fundamentally from Gorgias and other earlier rhetoricians in his insistence on dialectic as the basis of the art. Unlike Hunt, Richard McKeon says that Aristotle's use of the enthymeme is a rhetorical rather than a logical means of proof. McKeon points out that

There were handbooks of rhetoric before Aristotle wrote his treatise on that art: and the Sophists, Plato, and Isocrates had speculated on its philosophic ramifications; but none of them had anything to say about the enthymeme, which Aristotle thought to be the substance of rhetorical persuasion and what they wrote therefore concerned only the accidental accessories of the art.

When we examine Aristotle's Rhetoric itself, we find that the first chapter from the very opening sentence deals with the bond
between rhetoric and the knowledge-morality problem as Plato understood it. Thus to establish the moral place of rhetoric, Aristotle has to align it with other divisions of knowledge and then assert that it is a legitimate system dealing with real knowledge. Thus, he begins:

Rhetoric is the counterpart of Dialectic. Both alike are concerned with such things as come, more or less, within the general ken of all men and belong to no definite science. Accordingly all men make use, more or less, of both: for to a certain extent all men attempt to discuss statements and to maintain them, to defend themselves and to attack others. Ordinary people do this either at random or through practice and from acquired habit. Both ways being possible, the subject can plainly be handled systematically, for it is possible to inquire why some speakers succeed through practice and others spontaneously; and everyone will at once agree that such an inquiry is the function of an art.43

This statement contains an article of faith that allows rhetoric to be an art: that it is universal (most men use it) and can be systematized and that most men's perceiving or discovering the faculty for dealing with statements means that it is a part of the logos and thus naturally contains system in it if one wishes to discover it.

The belief that the universal or common perception of something is valid evidence of its "reality" is, of course, the point at which Aristotle leaves Plato and becomes "practical" in a particular way. Induction, noting the patterns in widely observed or generally accepted human propensities, is substituted by Aristotle for intuition in the Platonic grasp of truth.44

Aristotle's next statement represents a further attempt to assure the soundness of this commonly used discourse, for he says that only the enthymeme is the proper "substance of rhetorical persuasion" and that arousing of emotion is the misuse of persuasion. Only the real points of an issue, he says, should be used in making decisions.
As he goes on with the discussion, it is clear that he does not think absolute truth is to be achieved—as it is to be in the *Phaedrus*—but in his insistence on the logical as a mode he does have as his goal the nearest thing to it that can be achieved. And again he makes truth practical, for he says that "demonstration" is the most persuasive of presentations, and thus the most effective rhetoric is that which comes closest to demonstration:

> It is clear, then, that rhetorical study, in its strict sense, is concerned with the modes of persuasion. Persuasion is clearly a sort of demonstration, since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated. . . . The true and the approximately true are apprehended by the same faculty: it may also be noted that men have a sufficient natural instinct for what is true, and usually do arrive at the truth. Hence a man who makes a good guess at truth is likely to make a good guess at probabilities.  

The last remarks here contain a view of human nature that is, in a sense, very idealistic, but sees the achieving of the ideal as partial. The orator in Aristotle's view may discover what is the best course of action in a given political situation, but he will not gain Plato's transcendent vision.

Having stated that men are inclined toward the truth, Aristotle follows with the idea that the truth is easier to defend than its opposite. The task of an art of rhetoric then is to help to an awareness of truth men naturally inclined toward it. Thus, for Aristotle here in the beginning, rhetoric sets things in order for honest judges to make accurate perceptions. However, Aristotle in his practicality will not stop with this compact theory, but raises again what proves to be the crux of the whole problem, the issue of knowledge:
Before some audiences not even the possession of the exactest knowledge will make it easy for what we say to produce conviction. For argument based on knowledge implies instruction, and there are people whom one cannot instruct.

Having raised the possibility that logic will not be enough for persuasion, Aristotle allows the Rhetoric to become from this point on a treatise on ways for the orator to accommodate himself to the possibilities of a situation on one hand and the demands of truth on the other; so Aristotle here insists on two key principles. The first, the more important of these, is that the rhetorician must be fully devoted to truth and right; and the second is that he must use his art to discover all that might be persuasive to a given audience, not that he might himself use false arguments to deceive but that he might recognize deception in opponents to the truth and that he might help introduce the audience, despite its limitations, to the good:

It is plain that it is the function of one and the same art to discern the real and the apparent means of persuasion, just as it is the function of dialectic to discern the real and the apparent syllogism. What makes a man a "sophist" is not his faculty, but his moral purpose.46

He wants rhetoric, like dialectic, to be concerned only with the skill, not with "moral purpose,"47 but again he reminds us of the disparity between his fundamental assumption and Plato's, for Plato would ultimately equate moral purpose and method, or at least not exempt a man from blame because his heart was right even though his skill did not unite men with the Good. But, given his own statement of the tension between the knowledge of truth and the limited capacity of the audience, Aristotle supports the basic premise that the orator "must not make people believe what is wrong," by making
the first mode of persuasion—ethical proof—depend on the good character of the speaker. The speaker's "personal goodness" he says, "may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses."\footnote{48}

Finally, having asserted that rhetoric is "an offshoot of dialectic and also of ethical studies" and having determined that it should be used for the good, he can allow emotion (pathos) back in as a mode of persuasion, with the reminder that emotion has been very much misused. Rhetoric has then been "defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion," rational, ethical, and emotional. Probabilities—"the regular subjects of debate"—are the province of rhetoric, and the visionary possibilities of Plato as well as his specific condemnations of general practice are quietly put aside:

The duty of rhetoric is to deal with such matters as we deliberate upon without arts or systems to guide us, in the hearing of persons who cannot take in at a glance a complicated argument, or follow a long chain of reasoning. The subjects of our deliberation are such as seem to present us with alternative possibilities: about things that could not have been, and cannot now or in the future be, other than they are, nobody who takes them to be of this nature wastes his time in deliberation.\footnote{49}

While Aristotle and Plato agree on the failure of the current teachers of rhetoric, Aristotle has moved to the common abilities of men and the inherent power of ordinary rhetorical discourse to discover truth in everyday situations, in contrast to Plato, who asserts that if dialectic is to be used it must take speaker and audience all the way to true virtue as the basis for action.
Perhaps without too much oversimplification, we may state the
difference between the two men's ideas thus: for Plato rhetoric would
be valid only if it grasped, through the use of dialectic, the first
principles, the Good: thus politics, justice, the proper relationship
between the individual and the state and the entire Order of things
would be comprehended in discourse. For Aristotle, dialectic is used
to discover material in support of opposite sides of an issue in
order that, seeing all possibilities in each, we may choose the side
that is truer: and so rhetoric is used to discover what may be said
on opposite sides of an issue in order that we may choose not only
the truer but also the more persuasive. That we will be honest is
assumed, because Aristotle believed that men will most readily pursue
the truth. Man in this latter view may be said to be working toward
perfection without certainly knowing what it is or ever achieving it.

Aristotle himself admits early in his treatise that rhetoric as
he describes it can be misused, though he says so to show that this is
no argument against its use by good men. When we then come to the
point in his discussion in which a disconcerting bit of amorality, or
even expediency, shows up, to be fair we have to recall his strong
opening moral assertions. Nevertheless, it must be said that more
than one critic has been struck by the amoral tone of some passages.
G. M. A. Grube, for example, reminds us that the whole work "expresses a
highly moral view of life," but notes that unscrupulous advice "is
not lacking in Aristotle himself: certain of the more analytical chap-
ters are full of it when they state how to influence a jury to one's
own advantage." And so Friedrich Solmsen says as he discusses
Aristotle's large scale rehabilitation of rhetorical theory that when he is discussing the "goods of life" (Book I, Chapter V) he is first interested in them for their philosophical value, but then shifts his ground when interested in them for their rhetorical value. There is in this passage, he says,

a curious wavering between the "good" and the "expedient."
Which of the two does Aristotle really mean to set up as a goal towards which the political orator should direct his efforts? If Aristotle were writing as a philosopher the answer would not be in doubt: for the theorist, the ethicist, the Platonist, the "good" is the norm and end of all human action: and where would he find a comparable opportunity for reforming the less exalted outlook of the politicians? For neither can it be doubted that the politicians and the deliberative bodies of Aristotle's day were sufficiently realistic to think in terms of expediency rather than of "the good." Somehow Aristotle shirks the issue. Here he deals with the "good," there with the "expedient," while at times he actually treats the concepts as identical—a curious attitude, yet characteristic of more than one section of this work.55

Even some commentators on Aristotle can sound unscrupulous unless we remember that, like Aristotle, they assume honesty in the speaker. For example, it is easy to condemn A. Craig Baird's sharing of Aristotle's advice that

To create good will in his listeners, the speaker must know his audience so that he can present himself as a friend to what they consider good, an enemy to what they consider evil.56

While this sounds at first like an exhortation to the politically expedient, if we believe with Aristotle that truth and justice are stronger than vice and that people generally have a true sense of good and evil, then the philosopher-rhetorician is only lining up with the movement toward the good in discovering what the people will be moved by. If, however, they seem to have no certain union with the good, then the speaker's accepting their values becomes essentially
an act of expediency.\textsuperscript{57}

The moral problem that can indeed arise seems therefore to be the result of the ultimate incapacity (from Plato's point of view) of Aristotle's art of rhetoric to hold the orator to the seeking of complete truth. Duhamel typifies much of the criticism on this point when he says that

Plato constantly sought the Truth, whereas Aristotle was willing to admit the inadequacy of our knowledge of some things and to establish an art with probability as its ultimate goal. Aristotle admitted the certitude of certain basic principles in science, but probability was the very basis and foundation of the Aristotelian system of rhetoric.\textsuperscript{58}

Glen E. Mills and Hugh G. Petrie in trying to defend Aristotle claim that he is merely ambiguous on the question of whether logic is the real foundation of rhetoric or only a form of persuasion equal to pathos and ethos.\textsuperscript{59} But perhaps more accurate on the point is the criticism of W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Cleanth Brooks. Speaking first of Aristotle's making rhetoric the counterpart of dialectic they say that

the term dialectic has for Aristotle a softer meaning than for Plato—the meaning of a conversationally plausible inquiry rather than of a metaphysically compelling demonstration.

Aristotle's having made this clear distinction between his view of dialectic and Plato's "would have been enough to protect rhetoric from the full brunt of the Platonic inquisition." Yet Aristotle further insists on argumentative "proofs" and protests against the emotion-directed handbooks. And after doing this he immediately gives in to "a disposition to talk more about persuasion than about proof." Thus, according to these authors, as Aristotle proceeds to
define the art and state his moral position, his movement between logical proof and other kinds of persuasion as dominant.

would seem to be almost the dialogue of Aristotle with his own conscience, as he moves toward the empirical and anti-Platonic procedure of justifying rhetoric as it is found in fact to be.60

Despite some variety of opinion among the critics of these two voices on Greek rhetoric in its best form, we may at least conclude that Plato and Aristotle are typical of two major moral positions in their respective attitudes toward knowledge, rhetorical discourse, and human affairs: and we may further conclude that they do, when considering the practice of rhetoric, have basically different ideas of the nature of dialectic, Plato using it to ascertain the Good and Aristotle to discover all that might be said for or against an issue, though both might be said to believe that in the experience of a valid rhetoric speaker and audience are participating in the logos—in Plato's mind the ultimate experience of the Good, in Aristotle's, the approach to perfection in the probabilities and change of a moment.61

To see how susceptible a certain type of Christianity is to the Platonic transcendence we may look to Richard Weaver's account of the mystical yet practical aspiration in the Phaedrus. As he tries to show that rhetoric may use a language that is fully responsible to all facets of the human perception of truth, Weaver pushes the experience of rhetoric in the Phaedrus beyond dialectic and into inspiration:

Rhetoric moves the soul with a movement which cannot finally be justified logically. It can only be valued analogically with reference to some superior image. Therefore when the rhetorician encounters some soul "sinking beneath the double load of forgetfulness and vice" he seeks to re-animate it by holding up to its sight the order of presumptive goods. This order is necessarily a hierarchy leading up to the ultimate
good. All of the terms in a rhetorical vocabulary are like links in a chain stretching up to some master link which transmits its influence down through the linkages. It is impossible to talk about rhetoric as effective expression without having as a term giving intelligibility to the whole discourse, the Good.62

In the Bible, of course, both in content and form, the Word of God is for the Christian the "superior image," the final truth that demands the attention of rhetorical theory. In the classical rhetorician Augustine, who is converted to the Christian view of absolute Good, we have the perfect opportunity to see to what extent traditional rhetoric may be absorbed into Christian knowledge or, to put it another way, in what ways rhetoric is modified by the faith that Scripture is the revealed Word of God. To see the full complexity of Augustine's keeping certain elements of his classical heritage for the service of Christian faith, we must consult a work such as Hagendahl's Augustine and the Latin Classics, which presents in complete detail the internal evidence of classicism in Augustine's writings.63 If, however, we simply consider Augustine here in relation to the two views of knowledge, Platonic and Aristotelian, we may see clearly enough toward which view rhetoric will move when it is given the additional element of faith in revelation. Augustine as a Christian not only takes the Platonic absolutist position on Truth, but with his certainty in the power of the Word of God he can go beyond the Greek belief that the logos can manifest itself in virtuous men's speech to the faith that the revealed Word is inviolable and can be spoken to effect the salvation of the audience, even by a man of wicked life.64
As we consider the ways that Augustine, from his new perspective, modified—in a sense, reduced—the role of rhetoric, we must recall James J. Murphy's argument that Augustine's real service to rhetoric was to save it from being discarded at a time when many of his influential contemporaries considered it unnecessary or worse. Augustine saw as clearly as other men of his age that there was danger in the sophistic attitude; however, of Augustine in the De Doctrina Murphy concludes that it might be more clearly accurate to say that he saw the dangers of an opposite rhetorical heresy. The sin of the sophist is that he denies the necessity of subject matter and believes that forma alone is desirable. An opposite vice, one to which historians of rhetoric have never given a name, depends upon the belief that the man possessed of truth will ipso facto be able to communicate the truth to others. . . . Augustine apparently recognized a danger in this aspect of the cultural debate of his times, and used the De Doctrina to urge a union of both matter and form in Christian preaching.65

Keeping in mind then that Augustine did secure for rhetoric an honorable place in the new and evolving biblically-based culture, we must also say that in Augustine's scheme of knowledge and salvation the place of rhetoric is lower than that allowed it in the most ideal traditional descriptions—either Plato's or Aristotle's. Some modern rhetoricians have in fact seen Augustine's adjustment of rhetoric as very reductive. Lawrence W. Rosenfield, for example, argues that in the historical development of rhetoric "It was St. Augustine who completed the separation of thought from sense appearance begun by Plato."66 And Robert T. Oliver observes that perhaps theology must bear some responsibility for splitting the three Rhetoric, logic, and argumentation apart, as first Augustine and then Aquinas sought to prove with cosmic finality that God's truth is true, in and of itself, for anybody or nobody, under any or all conceivable contingencies.67
Even critics who give a more complex picture of Augustine's modifications than do Rosenfield and Oliver finally maintain that in dealing with the ultimate truths of Scripture, Augustine makes the experience of truth alone transcendent and thus in a sense splits truth and eloquence, for the latter is reduced simply to being used in behalf of the former. Richard McKeon, for example, points out that Augustine was ironically reacting against one kind of rhetoric and at the same time using devices borrowed from it. Yet in Augustine's mind there was no overlap of the spiritual and secular views. For Augustine the split was complete; therefore, McKeon concludes:

The wisdom and eloquence of the world are to be contrasted to eternal wisdom and eloquence; for there are not only two kinds of things, temporal and divine, but two kinds of words, the external words instituted and used by men which have no correspondence to things except by designation and no controllable influence on our thought except by way of the context of other words, and the internal words, by which a master speaking within us teaches the truth.

In this Christian scheme of things, as McKeon suggests, rhetoric will be classed with those things which are to be used rather than finally enjoyed:

Whether things be treated as signs or signs as things, only the eternal meanings and realities are important; knowledge of temporal things and of the arts is chiefly useful for the interpretation of the language and symbolism of Scripture.

That is, art is to unite us to ultimate enjoyment of God.

On Augustine's sense of the symbolic nature of Scripture, Joseph A. Mazzeo and D. W. Robertson are very helpful. Each clarifies the specific nature and the real import of Augustine's rhetorical theory in its relation to the world of the spirit, and each finally
makes the concession that—for Augustine—rhetoric is not quite central to salvation after all. Mazzeo begins by showing how Augustinian rhetoric is always responsible, as rhetoric ideally should be, to a conception of ultimate reality and is not at all dependent on any local individual situation. The De Doctrina

not only brought rhetoric back to its ancient concern for truth by re-creating a Platonic view of rhetoric in the midst of fourth-century sophist, but it also became the final statement of St. Augustine's view of the relations of rhetoric to Christianity by expressing a profound adaptation of the language of rhetoric to his metaphysics and theology. The nature and the uses of signs became strictly related to the realities to be sought (discovery) and to their formulation (statement), so that the use of the arts of language is utterly dependent on the structure of reality.

The "structure of reality" followed by rhetoric as Augustine describes it is found in the doctrine and Spirit of the Bible. This fixing of the truth is much more certain than the Aristotelian belief that the "structure of reality" is not static and is found in the actions of men. Thus Mazzeo can point out that for Augustine "eloquence is useful but not indispensable to preachers." Because Augustine always distinguishes between the truth necessary for salvation and the attractive form which it might take, he places plain meaning at the heart of persuasion. Mazzeo's comment is that

we find in all this an exact distinction between the truth of a proposition and the skill with which it is expressed, between practising the arts of rhetoric and dialectic with skill and coming to a knowledge of the truth.

However much the classicist in Augustine may have wanted to justify the style of the Bible according to pagan rhetorical standards, the saint in him kept rhetoric to its role of leading one to the Truth. Augustine says in the beginning of his De Doctrina that
his kind of figural analysis will teach one to read and understand spiritually. The reader will learn how "by following certain traces he may come to the hidden sense without any error." Mazzeo points out that perhaps the most striking fact of such a spiritualized rhetoric is that in putting one in touch with God, rhetoric itself is finally left behind:

True rhetoric culminates in silence, in which the mind is in immediate contact with reality.

We might at this point venture the generalization that this kind of Christian understanding of the power of the Word and the Holy Spirit has a recurring tendency to reduce the theoretical value of rhetoric. Augustine himself certainly puts no stress on the learning of rhetoric by studying or following any set of principles. And even though he does not minimize the beauty or the power rhetoric has always claimed, he obviously believes, above all, that the persuasiveness of the truth clearly stated makes highly developed rhetorical form of secondary importance in delivering the message of salvation.

Like Mazzeo, D. W. Robertson shows how the main objective of Augustine's use of rhetorical analysis, of the spiritual understanding of figures, is essentially a means of going beyond language and into contact with Being itself. Robertson, however, emphasizes the intellectual element in Augustine's seeing words as subject to spiritual rather than scientific investigation. There is, Robertson says, a mental satisfaction in rhetorical analysis, in seeing "the abstract pattern of philosophical significance beneath the symbolic configuration." Thus, Augustine's attitude gives a limited scope to the use
of rhetoric:

We may conclude that for St. Augustine figurative expression is not of any value in itself; it is valuable only as an adjunct to the intellectual search for truth. And the pleasure with which he is concerned is the pleasure arising from the discovery of truth, not the incidental pleasure of the "shell." 78

Robertson is, of course, speaking primarily of the method of interpretation Augustine proposes and not of persuasive speaking or preaching, but his point of Augustine's emphasis on the certain saving knowledge of Truth above all else is well taken. And M. L. Clark in his essay, "Rhetoric and Christianity," does specifically identify Augustine with the Platonic insistence on absolute knowledge as a prerequisite to truly wise persuasion. According to Clark, "the traditional morality of rhetoric," the morality of the non-Platonic, was for Augustine "not good enough for a Christian." The Bible in its absoluteness took precedence over all pagan writings as sources of truth. 79

Augustine's thus making the Bible, the written Word of God, the center of all learning has the effect of completely reordering man's understanding of language and truth. As he begins the exposition of his position in the De Doctrina he says, for example,

For no one should consider anything his own, except perhaps a lie, since all truth is from Him who said, "I am the Truth." 80

Even though it may be because he is on the defensive against those who criticized the style of the Bible, again and again he separates the Word of God from all learning which is not direct revelation. Pre-Christians, he says in the De Doctrina, were "ignorant of that
true wisdom which descends supernal from the Father of Lights." And from this point in his thesis he goes on to assert that in one's use of language the Scriptures and wisdom are one and inseparable:

For a man speaks more or less wisely to the extent that he has become more or less proficient in the Holy Scriptures. Although not everyone may be eloquent, according to Augustine, everyone can be wise, for a man can make up for his own lack of wisdom by literally including the words of Scripture in his speech. And in the passage in which he says this, Augustine refers to scriptural quotations as the "proofs" in a speech in such a way that the traditional use of inartificial proofs (testimonies, etc.) more or less becomes redefined according to the witness of the Bible. 81

Augustine's belief in this possibility for absolute truth in men's words causes him to make two discernible shifts within the tradition of rhetoric. The first is that the relationship between morality and knowledge is now grasped clearly by one who has faith in biblical doctrine. As Richard McKeon says:

With the spread of Christianity the dichotomy of eloquence and wisdom continued. Honor and dishonor, merit and sin, good and evil were determined by interpretation of revealed truths and by action of the church, not by deliberative rhetoric. 82

The orator's job is simplified. In this Christian view, rhetoric is used to analyze Scripture, to derive sound doctrine for teaching. And so in the second modification, the variety of sacred writings provides stylistic norms and examples. Augustine will even go so far as to say that in all cases the biblical writers are wisest and most eloquent and that when they seem obscure in meaning or
faulty in style, the blame lies in the reader's limited understanding. When finally this new view of stylistic ideals is turned from analysis to composition (persuasion), a third modification of the classical tradition is made. Clarity is the stated goal:

The speaker should not consider the eloquence of his teaching but the clarity of it.

All subject matter (Christian doctrine) is now important, and so the three traditional levels of style are not to be used according to the relative importance of the subject matter but are to be used to teach, to please in teaching, and to arouse men to live according to biblical truth. The low style is said to be persuasive because it has a great subject matter which is clearly presented; the moderate style is persuasive because it presents its great subject clearly and attractively; and the grand style is persuasive because it presents its great subject vehemently. Augustine literally says that

Among our orators, however, everything we say, especially when we speak to the people from the pulpit, must be referred, not to the temporal welfare of man, but to his eternal welfare and to the avoidance of eternal punishment, so that everything we say is of great importance.

Thus all three styles are used together in one speech according to the needs of the audience and the capability of the speaker, and not as usual according to the demands of a particular subject.
Style is as a result of these three shifts reduced greatly in importance and in range. As Mazzeo says,

If the subject matter is always great in the discourse of ecclesiastical orators, then the three styles appear as simple technical devices regarding the treatments of a uniformly great subject.90

Moreover, the general emphasis of the De Doctrina—emotion rather than the formal techniques of rhetoric being the main determinant of the level of style in a speech—reduces the importance of the traditional treatments of the devices of rhetoric even further. An extreme example of Augustine's thinking on elocutio is his quotation of Galatians 4.10-20 as a passage which exemplifies the grand style and which simply makes a plain statement—"without any ornaments"—that fills us with emotion.91

The fact is, Augustine does not explain in much detail the relationship between truth and rhetoric. He considers the problem involved a serious one, but he is so affected by the impact of the knowledge inherent in his faith, especially his belief that the Bible is the literal word of God, that he is satisfied to adjust rhetorical knowledge to fit the demands of his religion. As McKeon says of the De Doctrina, Augustine adapted Cicero's terms to fit his new needs:

This rhetorical language has, however, been adapted to the statement of a theology: discovery has been qualified as discovery of "what should be understood" and statement as statement of "what has been understood."92

Augustine's statements on rhetoric had an effect on the centuries following him that was, no doubt, immeasurable,93 and it would be definitely misleading not to make clear his demand for the highest virtue and truth as the ends of rhetoric. Yet we must also
consider the fact that on the basic question of the relationship between knowledge and rhetoric, morality and persuasion, he is, within the scope of the problem as Plato and Aristotle defined it, simply making the Aristotelian assumption that because rhetoric is effective in society the forces working for the good should have it at their disposal. Yet, on the other hand, he has, for the believer, satisfied Plato's insistence that the dialectician-rhetorician must seek and know truth before he can wisely persuade others to it, for in his searching of the Scriptures and in his faith in God he has the absolute truth necessary for considering the ways rhetoric can serve to make known the will of God. In fact Augustine's faith in the all-powerful revealed Word of God gives a power to language beyond even that in Plato's vision in the Phaedrus. As Jaeger says, from the point of view of Christian Latin humanism, "Paideia is . . . the gradual fulfillment of the divine providence." And Charles Norris Cochrane, in writing of the effect on philosophy of the knowledge that Providence is in every instant of history, comments that Augustine opens the way for a philosophy of history in terms of the logos of Christ; i.e., in terms of the Trinity, recognized as the creative and moving principle. But because Augustine like Aristotle takes for granted the fact that rhetoric will serve the good overall, he does not get beyond a general consideration of how it will.

Within the tradition then, Augustine is both refining rhetoric according to his new knowledge and defending it against those who mistrusted it from a different, more absolutist Christian point of view than his own.
In De Doctrina, what Augustine seems to fear more than a misguided or evil speaker persuading audiences wrongly is mere froth in rhetoric, the display that destroys both man and doctrine by taking the listener's mind off the real subject.\textsuperscript{98} But because he so fully credits the power of the Scripture, he slights, in comparison to other rhetoricians, the energy of rhetoric itself in its potential to persuade wrongly. He specifically warns against the misuse of rhetoric and especially against loving words as used in mere artistic display, and he inveighs against the pride that might accompany rhetorical success,\textsuperscript{99} but he has no hesitation in saying that eloquence may be used to move men to live in the truth of Christianity, even though it is the truth and not the form that is really necessary.

In this view, rhetoric in the low style can hardly be called rhetoric at all, except that Augustine, of course, believes that a simple clear statement of the truth will be persuasive to many. It is in the grand style, with its emphasis on emotion, that Augustine's rhetorical theory is most revealing about his understanding of the difference between eloquence and truth. Here his difference from Plato is most marked, for in the Socratic understanding of human nature, a man who knows what is good will choose it. The basic human problem, of course, is lack of knowledge of the truth. Thus in a truly scientific rhetoric, dialectic establishes the good, and this good becomes the formal basis of persuasion. Emotional conviction for both Plato and Aristotle is less valuable than dialectical is, for it has much less staying power. Conviction caused by it gives way when emotions change. Logical persuasion, on the other hand, takes a
stronger hold on an audience. Augustine always insists that a clear presentation of Truth is the basis of persuasion, but he does not assume that Truth alone will necessarily always convince. In his understanding, only some listeners are susceptible to pure truth. Others can hear truth clearly and pleasingly presented, understand it, and reject it. This belief in a depraved will, one that does not desire the good, adds an element Socrates did not include.

In this Christian view of the fallen will lies the necessity for rhetoric in the grand style. A display of emotion by the speaker is the addition to clear teaching which moves the emotions of the audience, which incites to virtue with its vehemence of feeling, and thus urges the lost soul to choose the good.

For Augustine, saving knowledge has been lovingly given. The flaw in man's relation to knowledge is in man himself:

Therefore, since that truth is to be enjoyed which lives immutably, and since God the Trinity, the Author and Founder of the universe, cares for His creatures through that truth, the mind should be cleansed so that it is able to see that light and to cling to it once it is seen.

The end of eloquence at all three levels of style is persuasion to virtue, whether by plain teaching of the receptive or by the stimulation to good of the recalcitrant. As Augustine states it, the use of rhetoric is practical:

Now when it is necessary to move and bend the listener by means of the grand style (which is necessary when he will confess that the speech is true and agreeable, but will not do what it says should be done), one must undoubtedly speak grandly.

It is within these three ideal positions, Plato's vision of a transcendent Good, Aristotle's confidence in sound method and probable
truth, and Augustine's faith in the mysterious fulfillment of the Word of God, that a classically educated Renaissance Christian like Milton found himself. Moreover, in the Reformation, with its grand insistence on the Word of God as the highest truth given to men, a Christian as he became spiritual in his values would be constantly challenged by the Platonic and Augustinian impulse to recreate rhetoric or reduce its traditional form to one consonant with his immediate experience of God's truth. Thus we must see that Milton fully comprehended the possibilities and pitfalls of rhetoric in his non-poetic writings, that he had in his own comments on the art a theory of rhetoric that was at first directly in the handbook tradition and that was then modified as he came in his own life to the ever more complete understanding of the daily personal, political, and spiritual implications of his beliefs. Christianity was probably never more concerned with rhetoric than in Milton's adult years, and no society since antiquity was more aware than Milton's educated contemporaries of the power and ideals of the art. In such vital and demanding circumstances it was inevitable that Milton would be forced to consider again the possibility of using rhetoric in the service of Truth in a free society.
Notes to Chapter I

1 The Works of John Milton, ed. Frank A. Patterson et al., 18 vols. (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1931-38), II, ii, 468. All further citations from Milton's works are to this edition and will be given in the text.

2 For a comprehensive study of Renaissance treatises on rhetoric see Wilbur S. Howell, Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500-1700 (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1956). This work summarizes individual works on rhetoric and traces the influences on their development. A work directed to the artistic and moral implications of the various schools of rhetorical thought, and one which shows their dependence on classical thought, is Brian Vickers' Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970). Perry Miller's The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939) studies the particularly Puritan ways of using traditional rhetorical materials. Milton, of course, was at least as widely read in rhetoric as he was in theology or poetry and so it is impossible to identify him with any one kind of rhetorical theory (for example, the Ramist).


6 Harris Fletcher, The Intellectual Development of John Milton, 2 vols. (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1956-61); Donald L. Clark,

7 Kennedy, p. 24.


10 For an outline of Plato's view and the view opposed to it see Donald L. Clark, Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education (Morningside Heights, N. Y.: Columbia Univ. Press, 1957), p. 40.


13 Gorgias, pp. 73, 77, 79, 84 (501, 503, 504, 508).

14 Gorgias, pp. 88-89 (512).

15 Kennedy, Persuasion, pp. 16, 78, and Edwin Black, "Plato's View of Rhetoric," OJS, 44 (1958), 363, both point out that a notion of good rhetoric in Plato's terms is implied in Gorgias (504).


17 Phaedrus, p. 154 (273E).


22 Duhamel, pp. 40-41.

23 Kennedy, *Persuasion*, p. 15; see also the same opinion in Jaeger, *Paideia*, II, 129.


26 *Greek and Roman Critics*, pp. 60-61.

27 Jaeger, II, 123.


29 Jaeger, II, 130.

30 Jaeger, II, 132-33.


32 Hunt, p. 57-58.


34 Hunt, p. 58.


36 *Basic Works*, pp. 1327-28 (1355a); Hunt discusses this passage on p. 59.

37 Hunt, pp. 60-61.

38 Hunt, pp. 61-62; Donald Bryant argues that logical proof may have emotional and ethical force and still be really logical; see "Aspects of the Rhetorical Tradition—I: The Intellectual Foundation," *QJS*, 36 (1950), 170-71.


40 Hunt, pp. 64-66, 69.


Basic Works, p. 1325 (1354a).

Cf. Kennedy, Persuasion, pp. 18-19: "Aristotle was practical enough to recognize the usefulness of rhetoric as a tool. Those speaking the truth and doing so justly have, he thought (Rhetoric 1355A21 ff.), an obligation to be persuasive. They need rhetoric since the subjects under discussion are not known scientifically and thus are not capable of absolute demonstration. Further, a willingness to argue on both sides sometimes demonstrates the true nature of a case and in any event helps the orator to recognize the arguments, fair or unfair, of his opponents. Man has a right to defend himself with speech, which is more characteristic of the human race than is the use of the body."

Basic Works, pp. 1325, 1327 (1354A-1355a).

Basic Works, pp. 1327-29 (1355a-b).

See McKeon, "Aristotle's Conception of Language," pp. 179-80 for an explanation of this point. He says, "In both dialectic and rhetoric, moreover, a further shift of argument is possible from the authority of widespread and well-grounded opinion to the distortion of opinion or the manipulation of consequences derived from opinion: this shift in the moral attitude toward the opinions and words used constitutes the difference between dialectic and sophistic and distinguishes one of the possible modes of rhetoric."

Basic Works, pp. 1328-29 (1355a).

Basic Works, pp. 1329-31 (1355b-1357a).

Basic Works, p. 1328 (1355a).


Basic Works, p. 1328 (1355b).

Aristotle is given credit for "the central conviction running through the whole tradition of literary humanism . . . that the study of good writing and good speaking must be indissolubly wedded to the study of good living," by John Herman Randall, Jr., Aristotle (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1960), p. 287.

Grube, Greek and Roman Critics, p. 99.


57 When Aristotle includes politics, virtue and vice, and the audience's general likes and dislikes (1353-56 /1366a-1367b/) as topics to be studied specifically for their persuasive value, the reader may develop some moral qualms unless he shares Aristotle's initially stated view of man's identity with truth.


60 Wimsatt and Brooks, "The Verbal Medium," pp. 121-22.


64 Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr., (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), p. 164 (IV, 27.59-29.62). In Augustine's theory, ethos is as important as it was in Aristotle's, yet the Word of God is above all other forces of rhetoric in power; see for commentary on this point M. L. Clark, Rhetoric at Rome: A Historical Survey (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963), p. 153.


69. McKeon, "Rhetoric in the Middle Ages," p. 266.

70. McKeon, p. 266.


72. Mazzeo, p. 4.

73. Mazzeo, p. 15.


75. Mazzeo, p. 17.


77. Christian Doctrine, pp. xi, xv.


81. Christian Doctrine, p. 122 (IV. 5.7-5.8).


84. Christian Doctrine, p. 38 (II. 6.8).


86. Its attractiveness is due to its attention to the construction of periods and to rhythm.
88 Christian Doctrine, p. 143 (IV. 18.35).
91 Christian Doctrine, p. 152 (IV. 20.44).
92 McKeon, "Rhetoric in the Middle Ages," p. 265.
93 Hagendahl, Latin Classics, II, 567; Murphy, "Debate about a Christian Rhetoric," pp. 409-410; Robertson, Preface, p. 53.
94 Christian Doctrine, pp. 71, 75 (II. 36.54, 40.60); Murphy, "Debate about a Christian Rhetoric," p. 408.
99 Christian Doctrine, pp. 120-21, 165-67 (IV. 4.6, 28.61-29.62).
100 Christian Doctrine, p. 137 (IV. 12.28).
101 For comment on the darkened will and its need to be led to truth see Robertson, Preface, pp. 57-58.
CHAPTER II

MILTON'S RHETORIC

To analyze Milton's varied rhetorical practice over some four decades of his adult life is hardly the work of an essay, but to gather the statements on rhetoric that Milton makes during that period is a reasonable task, one that has already in part been done, though never in strict chronological fashion.\(^1\) Seeing the statements on rhetoric, then, in the order of their composition helps us to understand the nature of Milton's particular form of the Puritan uneasiness about the very practice of the art of rhetoric,\(^2\) for, in fact, the rhetorical principles he articulates in his earlier writing are the very ones which in an extreme form govern the composition of his last works, works in which the persuasive strokes of rhetoric are much limited.\(^3\) Yet despite the general consistency in Milton's thinking which this study finds, his rhetoric—practice and theory—has been as much a concern to critics as any other example of what Don M. Wolfe calls his "uneasy wavering between Jerusalem and Athens, Calvin and Shakespeare."\(^4\) Thus a great deal of the study of Milton's thinking on rhetoric has focused on the real or apparent problem of a conflict in his values.

Sheridan D. Blau, for example, defends Milton against the charge of being one "whose public posture in his prose polemics was somehow
inconsistent both with his private opinions and his literary art."
Blau's essay simply calls attention to the uneasiness created by an
apparent conflict between "such an elegant prose style as that we find
in the polemics" and "Puritan loyalties." The resolution of this
conflict for Blau is to argue that Milton adapted the forms of non-
Puritan art to his own theology and religious experience and in doing
so became larger than either the humanistic or the evangelical in-
terests which prompted him.5

This explanation of the apparent disparity in Milton's human-
istic and Christian values as absorption of the tradition into a new
and better one is typical of critics who wish to credit Milton with
the highest accomplishments in prose. D. M. Rosenberg convincingly
demonstrates that Milton's virtuosity with all levels of style was
not an end in itself but a sophisticated satirical technique to
dismantle his enemies' defenses:

Style is a central thematic problem in his polemics.
Understanding that values are implicit in a writer's man-
er of expression, the parodist impugns what he believes
to be corruptions of style. Then, through an exaggeration
of the erudite and affected style of his religious and
political adversaries, he evokes their characteristic idiom
and tone in order to exploit it. He contends that the style
itself contains the issues.6

Interestingly enough, those critics who propose that Milton
was using his rhetorical genius to discredit his enemies by mimicking
them emphasize his own generally simple voice as speaker. Rosenberg
calls attention to his "biblical simplicity"7 in diction, Joan Webber
to his "purity and beauty of style,"8 and Herbert Zarov says that
Milton's rhetoric in his own voice is "characterized by clarity,
brevity and austerity"—the opposite qualities of the rhetoric of his enemies.9

No one, however, has been more unqualified in praise of Milton's supposed remaking of the tradition of rhetoric than Joseph A. Wittreich. His essay which searches for the view of the orator given in Milton's prose recognizes the "ambivalence" toward the "tradition represented by Cicero and Quintilian":

The references to the classical oratorical tradition in Milton's prose pull oppositely, revealing, on the one hand, a desire to identify his polemical efforts with this tradition and, on the other, a desire to transcend that tradition.

Wittreich's answer to the problem is that Milton recognizes the ideal orator projected by Cicero and Quintilian and discovers the ability in himself to actually fulfill the ideal by imitating Christ:

Throughout Milton's prose works he invokes the classical orators and theorists but only to distinguish himself from them. Milton, in other words, obtains to the ideal that Cicero and Quintilian articulated by mastering style and form, but he also supersedes Cicero and Quintilian by deriving a new standard of eloquence from the models of Christ and St. Paul. . . . Milton and Milton's Christ may cast a dubious eye on specious rhetoric but not without also embracing the "loudest Oratorie" of which Milton was the Renaissance's greatest master.10

Wittreich's basic view here of Milton, Milton's Christ, and the figure in the gospels as the fulfillment and not the negation of the ideal Roman orator does not consider any prose written after 1656. The practical reason for this omission may be simply that little is said about oratory in these works; nevertheless, as other critics have pointed out, it is the late prose in which Milton takes his dimmest view of classical rhetoric and learning.
John M. Major, in an essay entitled "Milton's View of Rhetoric," speculates on the possible reasons within the aesthetic, intellectual and religious forces in Milton's day for the low opinion of rhetoric he sees in Milton's later writing. His essay as much as any other faces the issue of Milton's disparagement of rhetoric, but offers no qualification to it:

Almost from the start of his career as an author, and continuously to his last poems, Milton seems to have viewed with mixed feelings the art of effective expression known as rhetoric. Though a master of the rules himself, in both poetry and prose, Milton nonetheless had an abiding distrust of the art which professes to teach eloquence. A distinction between true and false eloquence is drawn early, largely on moral and religious grounds. In time rhetoric itself comes under suspicion--an aspect, no doubt, of the larger, much more serious question, what value should he place finally on secular knowledge itself? Increasingly in the later works one sees humanist admiration for Greek and Roman eloquence contending with a Platonic and Puritan aversion to artifice in expression.

In his assessment Major does not make a chronological study of Milton's thinking on rhetoric but does note a pattern of increasing distrust of the art. And he is careful before considering the evidence for Milton's qualms about the morality of rhetoric, to give a fair statement of the poet's praise of the art in its best forms. He says, for example,

that the humanist Milton placed high value on the "true" formative rhetoric, which is as much a matter of thinking, of knowing, and of right feeling as it is of expression--which in fact could be and had been a way of life for brilliant and honorable men ever since the time of the Greeks.

And he points out that Milton always attacked bad style, but bad style, he says, is not what Milton is rejecting later in life. The problem according to Major is Milton's "suspicion of the art itself
and all that it claimed to do":

The attitude enters rather mildly in *Comus*, takes definite shape in the prose, and by the time of the two epics has hardened into an outright hostility. To explain it is as difficult as it is to account satisfactorily for the large ambivalence of Milton's attitude toward human learning itself.

Besides a Platonic influence on Milton he sees the distrust of rhetoric inherent in certain Christian attitudes, particularly Puritanism, and the growing scientific emphasis on a plain style as possible sources of dissatisfaction with rhetoric. Thus he concludes that despite his own sophistication with the art, Milton acquired gradually a distaste, amounting at times to an outright hostility, for rhetoric itself as false and deceptive.11

Although, as Major indicates, it is difficult to say precisely what causes the change in Milton's attitude toward rhetoric, a chronological study of the prose allows us to see the growth of his attitude and to appreciate in a particular way the final judgments on art Milton's personal values led him to make. While this study concludes that there is a basic consistency to Milton's thought on rhetoric, it tries to show that Milton's emphases on the virtue of rhetoric at different times in his career change enough to give what seem like two different views of the value of rhetoric in presenting the truth.

Opposed to the judgment that Milton has conflicting attitudes toward art is Irene Samuel's essay, "Milton on Style," which contends that Milton attacked only false rhetoric and never any honest kind. She takes Milton's statements on rhetoric quite literally and
argues from them that he always associated truth with good style and error with bad:

Milton himself never, from his Cambridge prolixities through to the end of his controversial prose, found his opponents gifted with delusively persuasive tongues. Rather their lack of style constantly gave evidence of the lack of truth in what they had to say; their lack of substance proved itself in shabbiness of style.¹²

Although there is at least one occasion when Milton indicates that his condemnation of his enemy's style may have been in part a rhetorical device of his own,¹³ Professor Samuel is very correct in insisting that all of Milton's pronouncements on rhetoric emanate from his belief in the power of the truth plainly spoken. This belief in the discernible difference between truth and error is, according to her study, derived directly from Plato, especially from the Phaedrus. Her conclusion is that Milton separates rhetoric into two kinds: the one deplored by Plato, which is the implementation of devices for moving the affections and the other suggested by Plato and developed by Milton the Puritan, which is the natural, plain and beautiful form taken by truth when it is spoken by honest men. Of Milton she thus concludes:

He therefore had no quarrel with eloquence or with the rhetoric that produces it: a true rhetoric gives its attention to substance, not to formulas for a factitious eloquence. The subtler the formula indeed, the more despicable to Milton.¹⁴

This insistence by Milton on substance, on matter before manner, has also been shown by Richard Weaver in an essay on what he calls the "primacy of concept" in Milton's prose. Weaver maintains that the central quality of Milton's style is his attention above all to
the accuracy of what he was saying:

Some writers seem to accept the risk of suspension, trans-
position, and involution out of conscious elegance; Milton
seems rather to require them out of strength of purpose.
He was not a writer of writing, but consistently a writer
of substance.15

What we should emphasize here is that this very insistence by
Milton on form as the manifestation of meaning leads finally in the
circumstances of a failed commonwealth to the reduction of meaning-
ful discourse to statements of the truth directed by the Holy Spirit
and free from rhetorical ornament. This limited rhetoric includes
both Plato's mistrust of effective speeches not based on absolute
knowledge and Augustine's belief, never pushed to extreme conclu-
sions by him, that the Word of God plainly spoken was sufficient of
itself to save men's souls. Milton, however, did not finally accept
Augustine's teaching that rhetorical devices may be applied to the
truth to make it beautiful, but in his own Puritan way finds a theory
of inspiration in the Bible which accords with Plato's vision at the
end of the Phaedrus. Thus when Milton separates true from false
rhetoric and says that truth and eloquence are one, emphasizing as
he says this that truth, not rhetoric, gives form to eloquence, we
must look for a special union of classical theory and Puritan faith
in the Word of God and the transformation it effects in the in-
dividual.

Before we begin to examine the sequential comments on rhetoric,
then, we may first consider Milton's Art of Logic for which there is
no certain date of composition. The fact that this work, which is an
amplification of Peter Ramus' logic text, does not precisely fit into
the views of rhetoric stated or practiced by Milton at any given period of his life is unfortunate. If it could be definitely assigned its proper chronological place in the Milton canon we would have a better idea of the development of Milton's commitment to simplicity.

As Perry Miller has shown, the devotion of the Puritans to the simple Word of God caused them to adopt for their teaching method Ramus' separation of the traditional first two parts of rhetoric— invention and arrangement—from the third—style. The discovery and organization of the material for sermons was left to dialectic. To rhetoric was given only the task of adding necessary figures of speech to adorn the work. For the Puritans Ramus' destruction of the Aristotelian synthesis of dialectic and rhetoric provided a convenient method to control the ever-present temptation to a misleading overindulgence in rhetoric. Miller says that for the Puritans the obvious danger was that if rhetoric were conceived solely as "affectionum domina" and were reduced to a formula, a set of devices for moving emotions which could be learned from any teachers by the unregenerate and the unscrupulous, it might become a means of serious mischief rather than of good. ... As long as Aristotle's definition was generally received, that rhetoric is "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion," the art was liable to be misused, particularly because his own lucid directions for working upon the feelings of a mob, delivered with scientific objectivity, might as easily play into the hands of demagogues and sophists as into the hands of statesmen and divines.16

While Milton was not perfectly at one with other Puritans on the rejection of the Greek ideal, he did share their faith in the sufficiency of the Bible as a source of absolute truth. In the Puritan rejection of a traditional form of rhetoric there is, in one sense, a return to Plato's most potent criticisms and a
reinforcing of them with the authority of Scripture. If this stringent Puritan ideal were carried to its extreme form the result would be a kind of discourse that was dependent only upon dialectic. As Miller suggests and Walter J. Ong explicitly says, the lack of faith in the goodness of the traditional method and purpose of rhetoric, i.e., persuasion, created a new conception of discourse itself:

In this Ramist economy where everything having to do with speech tends to be in one way or another metamorphosed in terms of structure and vision, the rhetorical approach to life—the way of Isocrates and Cicero and Quintilian and Erasmus, and of the Old and New Testaments—is sealed off into a cul-de-sac. The attitude toward speech has changed. Speech is no longer a medium in which the human mind and sensibility lives. It is resented, rather, as an accretion to thought, hereupon imagined as ranging noiseless concepts or "ideas" in a silent field of mental space. Here the perfect rhetoric would be to have no rhetoric at all.

Milton, of course, never embraced any theory which denied to the Word of God and Milton's own teaching of that the power to communicate salvation. Yet we must be aware of both the secular and the fundamentalist Christian impulses to restrict the claims of classical rhetoric as it existed in Milton's day to discover and communicate the truth. And so even though, as Albert P. Duhamel and others have shown, Milton was by no means confined to Ramus' teachings in his use of rhetoric, it is curious that he published texts on logic and grammar but not on rhetoric.

His logic text, like that of Ramus, offers rather limited scope to the art of rhetoric as it divides up the elements of composition:

Hence the general matter of the general arts is either reason or speech. They are employed either in perfecting
reason for the sake of proper thinking, as in logic, or in perfecting speech, and that either for the sake of the correct use of words, as in grammar, or in the effective use of words, as in rhetoric. (XI, 17)

In this work, logic deals with reason, not words, grammar with the precision of language, and rhetoric is more or less confined to the adorning of speech.

Of all the arts the first and most general is logic, then grammar, then last of all rhetoric, since there can be much use of reason without speech, but no use of speech without reason. We give the second place to grammar because correct speech can be unadorned; but it can hardly be adorned before it is correct. (XI, 17)

This separation of the arts does not necessarily render rhetoric an inferior art, but it does define it by its end of "making good speeches" (XI, 67) as different from grammar (using words well) or logic (reasoning well) (XI, 67). Rhetoric simply has nothing to do with dialectic (XI, 323) but has as its task the providing of various ways of stating the truth of reason (XI, 337). Because man's nature is sinful his language is not directly in tune with his powers of reasoning, and he can thus convey thoughts in a number of ways with varying degrees of prolixity and accuracy (XI, 221). Milton's acceptance of Ramus' division of the arts, giving logic a governing role in communication, is in this work his theoretical way of making a more absolute relation between truth and its form in language, although at no point in Milton's life does he obviously limit himself to the Puritan application of Ramus' teaching. In the early and middle works he gives plentiful praise to classical eloquence and in the last works dispenses with ornament almost entirely. Thus even though
he assumes the Ramist position in this work we must be wary of meas-
suring the rest of his many varied comments on rhetoric by it. Ramism
is typical only of a single element in Milton's wide ranging theory
of rhetorical art.

1625-1639

Of Milton's grammar school days nothing much in the poet's own
words remains to display his conception of the art of rhetoric; how-
ever, detailed studies of his schooling, especially those of Harris
Fletcher and D. M. Clark, reveal the thoroughly classical education he
must have had and also the Puritan attitudes of his early teachers. Clark, for example, cites as evidence of the poet's early interest in
rhetoric a textbook with over 130 similes noted in the margin. And studies of the prose find that the mature works, Areopagitica for
example, are models or purposeful modifications of classical prin-
ciples of oratory taught in the schools. We may be sure that as a
boy Milton had the benefit—as he himself tells us—of the standard
rhetorical training and all the values it hoped to impart.

From the period between his entering Cambridge and his Italian
journey (1625-1639) we have many comments which reveal his growing
understanding of the value of rhetoric itself and of the form—dis-
tasteful to him—in which it was taught at the University. These
early records in his letters, commonplace book, "Prolusions," and
Comus show him working through standard views of rhetoric to an
understanding that is very nearly Platonic in its emphasis on truth
as the prerequisite for real eloquence and very nearly Puritan in its desire to separate the arts as he understood them from the forms they had taken in the established church and school. As his understanding sharpens against the solidity of his own basic conception of truth, he moves from an apparently conventional belief that rhetoric consists in putting a kind of external loveliness onto ideas to the belief that truth alone is beautiful, though rhetoric in the service of falsehood may sometimes imitate truth's beauty. From this position he goes on to see a distinct difference between the pleasing eloquence of absolute truth and the formal ugliness of falsehood and thus regards rhetoric divorced from the service of truth as a recognizable sham and truth itself as possessed of such a power that it needs no help from consciously applied art. Irene Samuel notes in regard to this choice that when Milton at this early date came to regard "style as the inevitable concomitant of content" he chose a version of rhetoric that would dictate his lifelong attitude to the subject.23

As for the quality of Milton's own university education, William Riley Parker has shown that what the aspiring poet found at Cambridge was not the classical rhetorical training offered by the grammar school that had taught him the finest in both the classical and the Christian love of truth and reason.24 The scholastic mode of disputation at Cambridge, incongenial at best to the classical rhetorical ideals he brought with him, helped to shape his new rhetorical ideals by providing a distinct opposition to his previous
training. In evaluating the effect of the University on Milton, Professor Parker characterizes the method of discourse taught as one which insisted on form and technique without regard to personal conviction or ultimate truth:

From their freshman year Cambridge boys were trained to argue, in Latin, on any subject (the subjects were unimportant) according to traditional, well-defined techniques of ancient logic and rhetoric. They were trained to give classical illustrations, to overwhelm their opponents with reputable authorities, and to embellish their learned bickering with graceful allusions. Conviction was irrelevant; one must be prepared to debate either side of a question. Reason and common sense were also irrelevant, for, in practice, success in argument depended on one's effective use of the established techniques.25

That this method would be alien to Milton's announced pursuit of the honest but godly through learning is only too obvious. As we might expect, then, the curriculum and the values at Cambridge are the target of much of Milton's most vigorous early thinking on rhetoric.26

But his earliest extant remark directly on rhetoric is unique in having an elementary view of composition by borrowing. In his second month as a university student, he wrote a letter in Latin to his former tutor, Thomas Young, which expresses his desire to write "a free oration" done "in an Asiatic exhuberance of words" (XII, 5). The letter reveals that Milton has learned that one composes an oration, even a letter, by borrowing from learned writers. He even suggests that he believes there is kind of a pool of "arguments" on which one draws to express himself in any situation, and he supposes that both Aristotle and Ramus are equally good sources from which to derive the materials of a composition, a supposition which shows that
at age sixteen he was familiar with though not restricted to the Puritan view of rhetoric. He writes:

Albeit, in truth, to express sufficiently how much I owe you were a work far greater than my strength, even if I should ransack all those hoards of arguments which Aristotle or which that Dialectician of Paris has amassed, or even if I should exhaust all the fountains of oratory. (XII, 5)

It is impossible to know certainly whether Milton was trying to show his former tutor what he had learned in his first weeks at the University or trying to write in the style he thought would please him. In any case, this hyperbolic praise is abandoned as a rhetorical method,\textsuperscript{27} at least by the time of a letter written in his fourth year at the University in which he announces a mature and independent view of rhetoric that, with a very Platonic and Augustinian insistence, requires knowledge of the truth as a prerequisite to composition. This second letter, written to Alexander Gill, another former teacher, decries the lack of high classical standards for oratory in the training of student preachers at Cambridge. Milton complains bitterly that students must compose sermons before they are really learned. He also condemns the method they learn, the one he had wished for in his earlier letter: the piecing together of random material. The only valid composition, he maintains, is that of the fully educated man whose oratory keeps truth and religion whole because they are one in him. The students are, he says,

content also with the slightest possible touch of Theology itself, just as much as may suffice for sticking together a little sermon anyhow, and stitching it over with worn patches obtained promiscuously: a fact giving reason for the dread that by degrees there may break in among our clergy the priestly ignorance of a former age. (XII, 13)
In the last part of this quotation we may note, without discuss-
ing it at length here, that Milton is already taking a historical view of the relation between rhetoric and the state of religion in society. Though the idea is only embryonic here, it will later become a major argument in his insistence on purified rhetoric.

What is already clear in this letter is that he supposes that religious truth is defended and even advanced by men with a thorough education. In thus adopting a contemporary pedagogical form of the idea that knowledge is the basis of virtue he has also adopted the central part of the Socratic definition of the moral use of rhetoric. And in the academic exercises written soon after the letter just quoted Milton so attacks the University system that he forces himself to define, albeit somewhat loosely, the arts, knowledge and the contribution of the two to salvation. Joseph Wittreich even goes so far as to say of these works that

the prologues are not only integrated with one another; but they are also an integral part of the larger vision to which the prose works individually contribute. In these seven orations, Milton announces the master-theme sounded insistently throughout the later polemics—the triumph of truth and learning over falsehood and ignorance. Appropriately, the arena for the contest is the University, providing Milton with an opportunity to dramatize the atrophied state of education that he ridicules but seeks to reform in Of Education.

Although rhetoric is not the main topic of any of the seven prologues, it is commented on enough in four of them that we may see Milton's developing opinions as he performs within the rhetorical system required by the University and condemns as he does so the flaws inherent in that rhetorical form.
In the exordium to the "First Prolusion," he attempts to win his listeners' sympathy by playfully discussing the purpose of an exordium. The tone is light-hearted as he mocks the conventionality of the assignment, his fellow students, and rhetoric itself (XII, 119); but the standard by which he judges the subjects of his jests emerges as a most serious one: words without truth are valueless (XII, 121). This standard, which will be maintained through his later writing, is already strong enough in him to make him risk challenging and even alienating the majority of his listeners. As nearly always in his later works he separates men here into the many and the few on the basis of the degree to which they use rhetoric as a mere device. And of course it is to the few, however playfully, that he addresses himself.

By these indeed, however few, for my part, I would prefer to be approved, than by innumerable companies of the ignorant, who have no brains, no power to reason correctly, no sound judgment, men who betray themselves by a certain boasting and quite laughable froth of words, from whom, if you take away the medley begged from modern authors, immortal God! You will find them even more empty than a bean pod, and when they have exhausted their meagre supply of words and little maxims, they utter not even a grunt, being just as speechless as the little Seriphan frogs. (XII, 121)

The condemnation of insubstantial, patchwork rhetoric is only a part of his introduction here and so his positive ideas on rhetoric are not developed beyond the intrinsic general principle noted above; thus in the "Third Prolusion," his next occasion to speak on rhetoric, we should not be surprised to find that he himself still adheres to some of the commonplaces of the rhetorical tradition which he will later abandon. Even so, compared to the first oration, this third one in its very title, "Against The Scholastic Philosophy," is
seriously polemical. In his attack on the medieval schools' attitudes toward logic and rhetoric, he states clearly what he sees as the limits and the powers of the latter.\textsuperscript{32} He praises rhetoric for its effects: pleasure and pleasure's result—persuasion. He sees rhetoric following classical ideals—as manifesting itself in eloquence, which creates first pleasure and ultimately a healthy society. Rhetoric thus provides an entertaining, aesthetic experience as it does its work of persuasion.

As he elaborates on a basic Ciceronian definition of oratory—the purpose of the orator is to instruct, please and persuade\textsuperscript{33}—he cites himself as an orator without knowledge. That is, he confesses to having no hope of instructing his audience because he has not the necessary learning, but he does claim the power to please and, thus, naturally to persuade them to the point he wishes to make. Attributing this affective power to rhetoric apart from knowledge is, as Irene Samuel points out,\textsuperscript{34} not Milton's mature view of the subject. He is here espousing exactly the view that Plato was constantly fighting against: pleasure begets persuasion. Yet he apparently does not see this view as a problem, for he takes it in its most ideal Aristotelian terms and simply assumes that oratory is used well only for "the common good" (XII, 161).

In this instance his view is largely a result of what he sees as the rhetorical product of the system he is attacking. That is, here he does not have to consider the possibility that rhetoric may effectively serve evil because, as he sees it, the scholastics, whom
he is attacking for their unnecessary subtleties and "warty controversies," do not instruct or please or persuade and so are no active threat to the common good (XII, 159-161). The lack of eloquence in his enemies here precludes the necessity for his considering the moral question of rhetoric-divorced-from-truth. Yet it should be noticed that even though he equates the scholastics' lack of style with the inferiority of their learning, he himself describes rhetoric only as a pleasing addition to subject matter:

Nor does a more flowery style uplift from the earth or elevate this nerveless, languid, creeping stuff; but a diction dry and juiceless accompanies in such very close fashion the insignificance of the material that I could certainly believe without difficulty that it had been written under gloomy Saturn. (XII, 161-163)

The comparison of successful rhetoric to flowers and fruits is not done by chance in the passage quoted above. Until the "Seventh Prolusion" Milton's conception of rhetoric is stated in terms of lush vegetation, suggesting, of course, his associating it with decoration, beauty, abundance, and almost physical pleasure. By seeing in rhetoric the power to captivate a listener with sensory and emotional experience, to act upon the passions of an audience, Milton praises it for precisely the qualities that led moralists of both Platonic and Puritan leanings to fear it. Because he sees rhetoric as serving only the good, he rejoices that men can be moved to pity, to hate, to kill, and even to die by its "enticements." And so, holding this ideal, he says the schoolmen's disputations fail utterly, because they produce sleep, not incitement to anything (XII, 163-65). According to him,
these useless and really dry controversies and verbal wranglings certainly have no power to stir up the passions of the soul; they invite by their nature sluggishness only and torpidity. Likewise, they please nobody except one who is boorish and quite hairy of chest, and one who, inclined by some secret leanings to controversies and disagreements and moreover to excessive talkativeness, always shudders at and turns from a just and sound wisdom. (XII, 165)

Though he does not fear poor style as an active threat to goodness, he does go on to argue that those who have neither substance nor elegance in their discourse are dangerous in positions of academic authority. Within the schools a debased rhetorical method prevents teachers from pursuing truth because they are never shown any. And at a broader level the system fails because it adds nothing to the country's welfare (XII, 167-69). Unlike his view of the power of rhetoric, which he will modify a number of times, this judgment against the rhetorical failure of the established church-school system is one which will recur and become ever more emphatic throughout his works. Speaking here of scholastic method at Cambridge, he says:

This distressing logomachy does not eventuate in public welfare, nor in any way does it bring to a country either honor or utility, in spite of the fact that among the sciences all consider it to be the most ancient. Since indeed I have observed that a country is especially honored and adorned by these two things chiefly: either by speaking excellently or by acting bravely; and since this quarrelsome contest of discordant views does not seem able to develop eloquence nor to teach wisdom, nor to incite to brave deeds; therefore let cunning quibblers vanish with their formalities. . . . (XII, 169)

Inherent in this quotation is the application to society and Milton's place in it of a humanistic ideal view of rhetoric; that is, the ethical, even heroic qualities of eloquent wisdom are necessary,
along with brave deeds, to create and preserve a nation of free men. This heroic vision of the power and the goodness of rhetoric will receive further thought from Milton, but it will remain the basic value behind all his writings in behalf of revolution.

Neither the fourth nor the fifth prolation comments directly on rhetoric. The fourth again charges that scholastic disputation is so wrongly directed that it can only lead to confusion (XII, 175-77). The fifth philosophizes on Truth and Error and their respective manifestations and so naturally influences his ideas on the specific relation between Truth and rhetoric and Error and rhetoric. In this case he does allow Error the power to imitate Truth and, we might infer, give a correspondent pleasure:

Error indeed is so potent or poisonous that it can either substitute its own image for snow-white Truth, or it can join to itself by some unknown artifice a brilliant appearance of Truth; by which art, so it seems, it frequently deceives even great philosophers and claims for itself honors and veneration due to Truth alone. (XII, 195)

If he here allows Error more force and cunning than he had earlier, he also comes to a firmer belief in the ultimate power of Truth:

In whatever way the matter may turn out, although I may lose the cause, the cause is not lost: for Truth invincible is always more than sufficiently powerful in defending herself by her own exertions; nor to accomplish this does she need outside assistance. (XII, 203)

Although by "outside assistance" he does not here mean the addition to Truth of the "art" by which Error is able to deceive, he does suggest a dichotomy between Truth and some "unknown artifice" used by Error. He does not conclude anything particular on the nature of art itself because he does not pursue the question of its possible service to truth and to error, but he does come closer to the view of
absolute knowledge of truth that will allow him later to judge for himself the relation of art to truth.

In the "Sixth Prolusion" and its specific view of rhetoric we can see that the "unknown artifice" which Error uses to disguise itself may very well have been a potent eloquence, though Milton did not get specific enough to say or perhaps even think so. In this piece he describes truth and error as being easily distinguishable forces; and, as in the "Third Prolusion," he simply gives to truth the art of oratory for its exclusive use. Two characteristics, however, which he ascribes to rhetoric increase our awareness of his failure to say why Error may not use it if Truth does. The first of these is his view of an oration as primarily a performance, an aesthetic addition to the essential message (XIII, 211). The second and related characteristic is the lush sweetness of the pleasure he ascribes to eloquence. This is so overwhelming that we must wonder why it would have any necessary relation to truth. Given these two attributes of oratory, one might suppose that Error could easily imitate the pleasures of truthful discourse so bedecked, though Milton, having here assumed that the pleasing leads only to truth, wishes himself all the pleasures rhetoric can offer:

For would that just at this moment that honey-sweet, or, more truly, nectarian, flood of eloquence were granted to me, such as once in former times saturated and bedewed as though from heaven the Attic and Roman genius. Would that it were permitted to me to suck out from the innermost recesses all the marrow of Persuasion, and to filch from the coffers of Mercury himself, and to empty to the bottom all the coffers of elegant sayings. (XII, 213)
He so much accepts this conventional idea of the appreciation of elegance that he postulates a kind of rhetorical (like poetic) diction that would, of itself, give pleasure and thus finally persuade. To the mind of the audience, he supposes that this diction would not be artifice in a bad sense, but nature in her purest expression. His display of eloquence then could become a cleansing experience, one that would drive out from both speaker and audience all error and inelegance (the two are one, just as truth and eloquence are). And so he says to his fellow students:

It necessarily follows at once that Barbarism itself, Error, Ignorance, and all that sort, detested by the Muses, will flee as speedily as possible at the sight of you and hide themselves far away under a different sky; and then indeed what opposes the removal at once from my oration of any barbarous, inelegant, and obsolete expression; and, by your inspiration and secret instigation, my suddenly becoming fluent and polished. (XII, 215)

He goes on to say that his and his audience's common love of "Delight" (delight at truth and its beautiful expression) unites them spiritually in opposition to the bad style that ignorance naturally takes, thus again saying, without saying why, that eloquence serves only knowledge.

He accepts at this point a simple, absolute relation between truth and a decorative eloquence, evidently not having yet thought through the problem such an assumption contains. Moreover, he has not yet measured his belief that the flowers of rhetoric adorn only truth against the ideas that truth is by itself beautiful and that the greatest truth, the Bible, establishes as a standard an eloquence that is comparatively simple.
His later understanding that the good man speaking plain truth is really eloquent is a much more rigid judgment on the delights of rhetoric, and toward this judgment he moves a great way in his seventh and last prolation. In this work he articulates fully his acceptance of knowledge as the basis of morality (and thus in a profound Platonic and also Christian way, of rhetoric). Not only are the reasons for his acceptance of the ideal made clear in the prolation, but proof of his acceptance was soon given by his carrying out his decision to retire to five years of planned study in pursuit of knowledge.38

The maturity of the "Seventh Prolation" in form and meaning is widely recognized in commentary on Milton. As Kathryn McEuen says, this oration is "a marked contrast" to the first six.39 Joseph Wittreich attributes the difference between the seventh and the others to the fact that

the first six proclusions . . . portray what is and the last offers a vision of what ought to be.40

And concerning rhetoric at least, we may say that the hints and the directions suggested in the first proclusions are fulfilled in the seventh in a highly developed understanding of the function of rhetoric. Human wisdom and Christian salvation are synthesized in an effort recalling the highest aspirations of the Renaissance spirit.41 And the vision that results brings before us the created universe with man praising God by discovering in learning and wisdom the mind of the Creator in his work. That is, in knowledge and its increase man moves into oneness with God and so glorifies Him. With this possibility of knowledge before him, Milton can lovingly praise
it and can praise its forms, the arts, and thus set up for himself the
goal of achieving the education, the knowledge, demanded for the true
orator by Plato in the *Phaedrus*:

> I have learned from books and from the opinions of the most
> learned men this, that in the orator as in the poet nothing
> commonplace or mediocre can be allowed, and that he who
> wishes deservedly to be and to be considered an orator
> ought to be equipped and perfected with a certain encom­
> passing support of all the arts and of all science. Since my
> age does not permit this, I have preferred up to the present,
> while providing myself with these supports, to strive earnestly
> after that true reputation by long and severe toil, rather
> than to snatch a false reputation by a hurried and premature
> mode of expression. (XII, 247-249)

As Arthur E. Barker suggests, when Milton isolated knowledge as
the path to virtue he found a practical and spiritual solution to
the conflict between his growing ideals and the state of the Church
and society. Of the last prolusion Barker says,

> In this noble defense of learning as it supports and is
> supported by virtue, his energetic desire for the inde­
> pendent experience of knowledge . . . is perfectly joined
> with the moral idealism which reinforced his self­
estee[n].

Thus it seems Milton chose the retirement at Horton as a preparation
for becoming a writer by seeking "the fulfillment of the ideal of
knowledge set forth in his last prolusion."43

Having early in the oration embraced the Platonic faith in
knowledge as the basis of rhetoric (whether oratorical or poetic)
he then comes clearly to his ultimate understanding of the relation
between eloquence and truth. Here he eases into the idea, but es­
sentially he says that truth needs no help from eloquence, that it
has its own power, and that the ordinary language of men must prove
to be the medium for the plain speaking of truth in a healthy society.
He first says that eloquence is simply inadequate to some topics, in this case his theme on knowledge as goodness. In the Columbia University edition the passage stating this is given as follows:

In truth, my auditors, I think the power of eloquence is especially evinced in a matter which is praiseworthy to a moderate degree. (XII, 253)

The Yale edition, however, translates the Latin "in re mediocriter laudabili" in such a way that it justifies the editor's saying that eloquence is for the non-substantial, not for error certainly, but also not for real truth which has its own power to capture. The same sentence is given there as follows:

But, gentlemen, it is my opinion that the power of eloquence is most manifest when it deals with subjects which rouse no particular enthusiasm.

Irene Samuel, who quotes from the Columbia edition, likewise says that this passage shows Milton deciding that prescriptions for speaking well by utilizing devices of style are useful chiefly when the matter itself has little importance.

Thus Milton, according to the Columbia edition, concludes the thought:

Things which call for the highest laudation can scarcely be confined by any method, by any limits of language. In these the very abundance thwarts itself, and by the mass of material checks and restrains the ostentation of delivery from expanding itself. (XII, 253)

Both this Columbia version and the Yale version make the point clearly that the orator or poet, faced with the prospect of communicating absolute Truth, or saving Knowledge, is forced to discover a way to do so that neither encumbers the truth with artifice nor gives up altogether the hope of using language (XII, 253-65).
The answer, which moves Milton's rhetorical ideals a long way toward those which govern the language of the Father in Paradise Lost, is that the truth must be presented to society in a really refined but plain style. The learned and thus virtuous man must communicate his saving knowledge to the common man. As proof that this kind of language is a possibility, he argues that Plato's discourse would profitably be heard by everyone. Having thus demanded that the truth gained by the contemplative scholar be available in the speech of the average man, he argues further that ordinary language, badly in need of reform, must be purified to be a means of social healing. This necessary conclusion to the first point leads him, then, to call for wholesale changes in everyday language: the idle and unguarded word, given this new possibility in speech, is not simply uninstructive, but actually wasteful:

Whereas to babble with one another stupidly, to gratify one another with splendor and licentiousness, this is indeed the friendship of ignorance, or really the ignorance of friendship. (XII, 265)

Obviously his next step is to call for reform of the system which teaches rhetoric in such a way as to destroy the potential of speech by making it either overly artificial or barbarous. "How many," he asks, "are the despicable trifles of the grammarians and rhetoricians?" (XII, 277). If the misleading pedantry of the schools were discarded, he argues as he prepares to begin his private study, years would be gained for pursuit of real knowledge (XII, 277).

William Haller suggests what a revolutionary frame of mind this particular assailing of the impediments to learning put Milton in:
The power he is hoping to gain through knowledge is not that of the scientist but that of the orator, the preacher, the poet in public life, in a word the seer and the prophet. He is clearly one of that sort of men who feel assured that they possess a body of truth which, given the necessary devotion and effort on the part of its adherents, will by a single stroke and in a day bring in Utopia. He imagines truth to be always gloriously at war with error in the minds of men, and himself a warrior for truth.46

However much Milton had to learn about the practical implications of his theory of knowledge and its independence from an artificial kind of rhetoric, he has in this prolation arrived at a basic belief he can act on as a writer, even if his first move will be not to write but to acquire the knowledge necessary to do so. The divine image in man, he argues,

without knowledge is altogether sterile and joyless, yea, indeed, worthless. For who can contemplate and examine seriously the ideal form of things, human and divine, of which nothing can surely be known, unless he has a mind saturated and perfected by knowledge and training? (XII, 255)

Twice in the five year period which he devoted to study, his comments on rhetoric reveal the certainty with which he held the ideal expounded in the last academic exercise. In these two instances, in Comus (1637) and a letter (1638), he not only says that truth and goodness are the most powerful forces in life and in language, but also goes a step further and states that the rhetoric of an individual and of a society not only indicates their level of morality but determines the quality of their lives. The theme of Comus, the complete separation of good from evil in substance if not in location, is dramatized in the speeches of Comus and the Lady and in the Lady's analysis of their respective kinds of rhetoric.
Comus' very appealing arguments for seduction lead to the Lady's declaration that she cannot win an argument with the god of false pleasure because he cannot engage in one. She says that he would not be able to understand the purity of her words. Like a much more highly developed tempter in the epics, Comus, because he misuses language, cannot properly understand it rightly used. His rhetoric, says the Lady, is a conscious dissembling and, having none of the freeing power of goodness, it can only lead men away from the truth:

Enjoy your dear Wit, and gay Rhetorick
That hath so well ben taught her dazling fence,
Thou art not fit to hear thy self convinc't;
Yet should I try, the uncontrouled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rap't spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be mov'd to sympathize,
And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
Till all thy magick structures rear'd so high
Were shatter'd into heaps o're thy false head.
(I, i, 114)

The vehemence of the truth spoken in opposition to the "gay Rhetorick" of error destroys the artful structures of the latter rather than changes them. Moreover, a distinction has been made: the good are not deceived by Comus' rhetoric, but many others are. Yet the rejection of Comus may ultimately have led to Milton's distrust of rhetoric itself, since the Lady does not, in fact, explain or demonstrate the overpowering language with which she might—if she wished—attack falsehood. Barker, like John Major, makes a considerable point of the failure of the Lady to argue successfully against Comus' rhetoric. In her failure he sees the tendency of Milton's ideal of the good life for the good speaker "to harden into a cold self-discipline." Rhetorically we may see, as Barker sees generally, that
Milton when he most pursued his ideal of knowledge and goodness was most likely to be subject to "the restrictive ethic characteristic of Puritanism." 47

The emphasis in the poem, of course, is on the false attractiveness of Comus' insubstantial realm and the true beauty in the words of the Lady (e.g., her song). Thus, since we do not have, nor perhaps need in a masque, a detailed theory of the language that makes truth more powerful and pleasing than the rhetoric used in behalf of error, we can only say certainly that when Milton said truth alone was eloquent he was setting up an ideal that could in application place serious strictures on the use of rhetoric, for it seems to set up a direct opposition between the effects achieved by ideal knowledge in words and a kind of rhetoric effective at least on those who are, as in the Circean fable, destroyed by falsehood.

And so again in a letter to a Florentine in 1638 Milton divides people according to their language. He begins by stating the classical ideal of eloquence as a civilizing force, saying that the man of learning who preserves the highest standards of speaking and writing keeps barbarism from the citizens (XII, 31-33). The society like the individual is as pure as its language:

Nor is it to be considered of small consequence what language, pure or corrupt, a people has. . . . I, for my part, would rather believe that the fall of that city and its low and obscure condition were consequent on the general vitiation of its usage in the matter of speech. (XII, 33)

He goes on in the letter to characterize those who can use only an inferior language and thus were subject to loss of freedom
and vitality. These he separates from the healthy in soul and word.

His conclusion is that a man is known by and limited to his rhetoric:

For let the words of a country be in part unhandsome and offensive in themselves, in part debased by wear and wrongly uttered, and what do they declare but, by no light indication, that the inhabitants of that country are an indolent, idly-yawning race, with minds already long prepared for any amount of servility? On the other hand, we have never heard that any empire, any state, did not flourish moderately at least as long as liking and care for its own language lasted. (XII, 33)

1641-1642

The general principles of rhetoric which Milton had established for himself by 1638 and carried into the writing of the tracts against the bishops (1641-42) were at least four: (1) that one's use of rhetoric was a direct indication of his spiritual state, (2) that knowledge of Truth was necessary for real eloquence, (3) that this real eloquence was dependent on the attractive power of Truth and did not need the addition of the ornaments of rhetoric, and (4) that devices which some included within the province of rhetoric could be used in behalf of error to mislead certain kinds of men.

In the course of writing the antiprelatical tracts Milton adds to these four principles a set of distinctions based on his belief that a society's freedom determines and is determined by the society's use of rhetoric. In particular, he constantly attacks the hierarchy of the English church and the universities for their bad style and their prescribed forms of all kinds by which they have reduced to a
low level English sensitivity to the power of discourse itself. And given this latter thesis he implicitly blames the established system for the thwarting of his own aspirations as a writer, having himself, because of the state of things, had to put aside his poetic ambition and begin at the more elementary task of writing corrective pamphlets.\textsuperscript{48}

As Milton sees it, then, in his first five tracts, one can use in behalf of Truth in England in 1641 largely only a plain style, a style that has the Bible as its rhetorical model,\textsuperscript{49} that is the basic medium of all communication of truth, and that is, when studied for its form, the current manifestation of the development of Reformation in a society which was escaping the real but ever weakening bonds of prelacy. Developing from this plain style, in Milton's analysis of the continuing clash of Puritan and Anglican forms, is a necessarily "vehement" style, one (cf. the Lady's remarks to Comus) violent enough to demolish the position of the enemy.\textsuperscript{50} Like the plain, the vehement style is indicative of the still growing power of freedom and truth in England and points to a third but not yet realized style, an enchanting golden eloquence possible only when society is reformed in accordance with biblical truth and is constantly guided by the Holy Spirit. That such a grace-filled eloquence would include the art of poetry is shown in the digressions of the poet-turned-pamphleteer as he gives brief displays of the regenerate rhetoric that is for the reader a hint of what is to come and proof that the reformation is in fact evolving.\textsuperscript{51} Finally, all this close attention to levels of style and to the spiritual significance of
style leads him to the belief that all discourse is inspired by the Holy Spirit; that is, Milton's discourse and that of other good men is inspired to goodness and clarity, and his opponents' discourse to the confusion which reveals their wickedness.

Two conditions in this early prose keep Milton's remarks on rhetoric from being as detailed and as philosophically complete as we would like. The first of these is that every statement on rhetoric has its own rhetorical purpose. The second is that Milton makes all of his rhetorical judgments in absolute terms. Of the first condition we may simply concede that his own arguments make full use of a variety of stylistic effects, call attention to critical comment on some of these, and then try to derive from his own remarks at least what he thought his audience valued in rhetoric and, since he always regarded himself as a teacher, probably what he actually valued in the art. Of the second condition we may note that his characterizing of the spiritual and rhetorical forces in his society only in broad terms gives a general coherence to his understanding of the art. This coherence, despite some inaccuracies in his vision of himself and his enemies, lends itself to a conception of righteousness in rhetoric that is useful in defending revolution and in rigidly controlling the language of the late prose and the major poems.

Of Milton's presenting his morality and that of his opponents as unqualifiedly good and evil, respectively, we may recall two facts that allow us not to be put off from following what he is saying about the relation of rhetoric to morality and knowledge. The first is that his vilification of his enemies and his inclusion of
autobiographical details were demanded by rhetorical tradition: he was to destroy the ethos of his opponent and establish his own.  

Second, as Professor Parker reminds us, is the fact that Milton did insist on the same standards of life for himself that he demanded of his enemies. However much he may have exaggerated the vices of others for rhetorical purposes, we must, as Parker says, give him his due as a moral man:

He was always ready to have his own life judged by what he had written, or his compositions judged by his life. They were, in his opinion, two expressions and products of the same urge to virtue; and together, not the one or the other, they presented the external man. Having early adopted this as an ideal, he came in time to regard it as a moral standard by which either life or literature could be fairly criticized. A man and what he put on paper were in-separable.  

And as William Haller points out, when Bishop Hall tried to destroy Milton's character and had the resources to discover any unsavory facts in his life, he failed to come up with evidence of bad character.  

Milton's first entry into public controversy, Of Reformation, begins the second stage in his ongoing attempt to establish a working definition of a holy rhetorical mode by establishing the Scriptures as the writer knows them as the absolute Truth demanded by Plato and claimed by Augustine for the true orator. The central idea—which he holds as fact and on which he builds his rhetorical ideal in this work—is the clarity and simplicity of the Truth of Scripture and therefore necessarily of the language or style in which it is presented:
The very essence of Truth is plainness, and brightness; the darknes and crookednesse is our own. The wisdom of God created understanding, fit and proportionable to Truth the object, and end of it, as the eye to the thing visible. If our understanding have a film of ignorance over it, or be blare on other false glisternings, what is that to Truth? If we will but purge with sovran eyesalve that intellectual ray which God hath planted in us, then we would believe the Scriptures protesting their own plainnes, and perspicuity, calling on them to be instructed, not only the wise, and learned, but the simple, the poor, the babes, foretelling an extraordinary effusion of Gods Spirit upon every age, and sexe, attributing to all men, and requiring from them the ability of searching, trying, examining all things, and by the Spirit discerning that which is good. (III, i, 33)

On the basis of this clarity and accessibility of what he holds as ultimate Truth, Milton develops four main points on the relation of rhetoric to truth (which, however, are by no means given equal space since Milton is largely here attacking what he sees as his enemy's rhetorical standards): the style natural to truth is plain, based on the model of Scripture; the style of the enemies of truth is deliberately obscure in order to cloud with rhetorical accretions the plain truth of Scripture. Vehemence, his own style a model of it, is the only way to do battle with the confusing rhetoric of error; in a future reformed state Truth will be stated in its freest and most glorious form.

In this tract the least developed of these four points is his defense of vehement rhetoric. There is, of course, no lack of vituperation, as in the passage in which Milton, speaking of episcopal ministers, says that their "devotion most commonly comes to that queazy temper of luke-warmness, that gives a Vomit to God himself" (III, i, 11-12). Nevertheless, he does not defend his
vehemence in this work beyond making a statement that it is based on Scripture and that he has no ulterior motive for his attack. He calls God to witness that his laying out of the faults of respected persons of the past and his vilifying of current enemies—"whose mouths cannot open without the strong breath, and loud stench of avarice, Simony, and Sacrilege" (III, i, 73-74)—is simply the best method of getting at truth and is neither vindictive nor sensational:

... wherever I have in this Booke plainly and roundly (though worthily and truly) laid open the faults and blemishes of Fathers, Martyrs, or Christian Emperors; or have otherwise inveighed against Error and Superstition with vehement Expressions: I have done it, neither out of malice, nor list to speak evil, nor any vaine-glory: but of meere necessity, to vindicate the spotlesse Truth from an ignominious bondage. (III, i, 10)

In criticizing the non-biblical authorities claimed by the bishops, Milton, of course, distinguishes between the obscurity of the early church fathers and the clarity of the Scriptures and claims that the fathers are employed by the bishops to obscure the truth. Appropriate to his distinction between the simplicity of biblical style and the more complex (though inferior) rhetoric of the prelates' defenders and sources is his recalling a remark of Athanasius which makes a distinction between the aesthetic experience produced by eloquence and the clear doctrine of the Scriptures. A friend, says Athanasius, who read "other religious writers" besides the Bible did so only "as a lover of elegance," and Milton is certain that these unnamed "other writers" who produce "elagance" also produce cloudy imitations of the true Word (III, i, 31). He does not here develop his rhetorical theories beyond insisting on Scripture as a stylistic
norm because of its being a doctrinal source, but he does draw the conclusion that God's Word, the Truth, is saving to those who hear it. That is, he says that the first obvious task of the true ministers of God's message is to attack those who make the obscurity of "antiquity" (the early Church writings) their stronghold against the "plain field of the Scriptures." He asks of preachers

Wherefore should they not urge only the Gospel, and hold it ever in their faces like a mirror of Diamond, till it dazzle, and pierce their misty ey balls? (III, i, 35)

Later he will consider the implications of the places in Scripture which are not perfectly clear and simple. Here as he builds on the belief in them as the perfect and only source of Truth and doctrine he declares that those who rely on tradition for doctrine are in union with the devil himself. His reason for saying this is that he thinks that only the very source of evil would suggest that because some biblical passages are difficult to interpret, the knowledge necessary for salvation was not perfectly clear in the rest of the Bible (III, i, 32). Thus Milton concludes that the Fathers not only are prevented by their style from bearing truth, but also are shown by their style to be immoral and to oppose the scriptural norm. To him the contrast is clear:

He that cannot understand the sober, plain, and unaffected stile of the Scriptures, will be ten times more puzzl'd with the knotty Africanisms, the pamper'd metaphors; the intricat, and involv'd sentences of the Fathers; besides the fantastick, and declamatory flashes; the crosse-jingling periods which cannot but disturb, and come thwart a setl'd devotion worse than the din of bells, and rattles. (III, i, 34)

The effectiveness of highly complex rhetoric depends, he says, on the basic dishonesty of those who are moved by it. He assumes that only
those who have no real hope or desire for truth would rely on sources full of obvious confusion. And he further assumes that those who follow such bad sources purposely model their own style on them in order to keep others in the bondage of lies. Those who avoid the example of clarity given by the Bible maintain a deceitful style which he calls "aphorisming pedantry," discourse by which the "art of policie" hides truth and destroys men's capacity for freedom. As he analyzes this style he attempts to work through particular devices to show their origin in a reprobate mind, citing, for example, the use of slogans implying absolute principles—"no Bishop, no king"—and the use of ethical poses to hide injustice (III, i, 37, 38, 47).

What he offers as the alternative to his enemies' rhetoric and the system which produces it is a truly reformed society in which civil and religious leaders create the conditions for freedom in daily life according to the simple truth found in Scripture and made clear by the Holy Spirit. As society is corrected and political and religious leadership become one in following the principles of the Scripture, discourse then will break free from the control of the "aphorismers" and "Politicasters" who prevent freedom, and a prophetic, bardic voice will be heard, the perfect expression of the spirit of a perfected nation. As a prelude to that time the speaker in the concluding paragraphs breaks into colloquy with God, prophesying and giving a sign of that time of freedom and its liberated rhetoric which are soon to come:

Then amidst the Hymns, and Halleluiahs of Saints some one perhaps may be heard offering at high strains in new and lofty Measures to sing and celebrate thy divine Mercies, and marvelous Judgements in this Land throughout all Ages. (III, i, 78)
Although we cannot say with certainty that Milton assumed that complete regeneration of society would immediately take place and that he in his maturity would be the voice of the perfect society, we may note that the final union of rhetoric and truth projected by this prayer is to be effected only by the evolution of English society to the degree of goodness that will usher in the physical return of Christ (III, i, 78). Thus Milton carries his view that success in rhetoric is determined by the spiritual quality of society to the ultimate eschatological conclusion. Yet having concluded in this tract that the state of language and society in 1641 were in need of much correction Milton pressed on with his citing of abuses at least partly with the confidence that he was creating the world in which great poetry would be produced.

The next pamphlet, Of Prelatical Episcopacy, was a sharp twenty-four page attack on what Milton saw as the source of the confusing arguments and style of the Anglican hierarchy, that is, the writings of the Fathers and the decrees of the early church councils. His thinking on rhetoric and on the larger topic of Truth and its written sources is not much added to in this work, except for two points which are begun here but become more important later. The first of these is his idea that the common man can understand the clear truth of the Bible, the second that not only does style reveal the good or evil in the spirit of a writer but that even the state of a text is evidence of an author's hold on truth and virtue. Both of these, of course, are developed from principles already laid down.
The first point is a natural conclusion to his contrasting of what he believed to be the infallible and clear teaching of the Bible with the darkness of tradition and the patristic writings. He begins the contrast of sources in his first paragraph and goes on to argue that the fragmented state of the non-scriptural texts, the denial of scriptural doctrine in them and their failure to be honored by their contemporary opponents (III, i, 90, 99) put them in marked opposition to the Bible. The result of this thinking is that at one point he suggests that the simplest reader has the ability to recognize and understand the true and good. In this case he replies to his opponent's call for the upright to speak truth in a plain and open manner by challenging his opponent to leave behind all but the Bible as authority because the most unsophisticated audience can easily distinguish, he says, between the "poison" of obscurity and the power of plain Scriptural truth:

The worthy Emperour Theophilus, even in those darke times chose rather to nourish him selfe, and his people with the sincere milke of the Gospell, then to drinke from the mixt confluence of so many corrupt, and poysonous waters, as tradition would have persuaded him to by most ancient seeming authorities. (III, i, 100)

The evaluation of the ability of the common man is not completed here; rather, his potential ability is used to make a point against Milton's opponent's view of the minister as teacher—but the very inclusion of the idea that the Bible is accessible to all hints at a democratic direction in Milton's thinking on rhetorical simplicity and plain truth. 68
The second new development in this tract is that in analyzing the style of the writings of Ignatius Milton argues that textual corruption signifies spiritual corruption. He says he supposes that the bishops think that the corruptions in Ignatius' texts are interpolations, but he himself refuses to pardon the flaws and goes on to say of them:

These, and other like places in abundance through all those short Epistles must either be adulterat, or else Ignatius was not Ignatius, nor a Martyr, but most adulterate, and corrupt himself. . . . as for his stile who knows it? so disfigured and interrupted as it is, except they think that where they meet with any thing sound, and orthodoxal, there they find Ignatius, and then they beleive him not for his own authority, but for a truths sake, which they derive from els where. (III, i, 90)

Again, a rhetorical use is being made of the point that texts that teach error, that are corrupt, or that are written in a bad style should not be consulted for truth. Yet it is important to note the point, for fifteen years later in the Christian Doctrine he will even extend this principle of criticism to the Bible itself and conclude that the imperfect way in which the Bible has been transmitted is proof that faith should fully and finally reside not in the written Word but in the direct inspiration of the individual by the Spirit of Truth which operates behind such outward forms of expression as men use (XVI, 279-281).

His next pamphlet, Animadversions, is a point-by-point refutation of Bishop Hall's work against Smectymnuus. Milton repeats a good deal of his earlier commentary on rhetoric here, but because he creates a kind of debate, quoting Hall and correcting him,
he makes many more particular rhetorical comments, often in the form
of analysis of Hall, than he did in the earlier tracts. Again as he
foresees complete reformation he anticipates the eloquence at all
levels of regenerate society. And even more than before he thinks the
Holy Spirit is establishing the Reformation by inspiring honest laymen
to plain, truthful words, by giving the orator a direct, forceful
rhetoric, and, further, by confusing the speech of the defenders of
evil. Thus he does not apologize for the bluntness of his defense of
his friends but assures his readers that they may expect a grander
work of art when freedom and peace are achieved. He projects the
coming state in a prayer:

When thou hast settl'd peace in Church, and righteous
judgement in the Kingdome, then shall all thy Saints
address the voyces of joy, and triumph to thee,
standing on the shoare of that red Sea into which our
enemies had almost driven us. And he that now for haste
snatches up a plain ungarnish't present as a thanke-
offering to thee, which could not bee deferr'd in re-
gard of thy so many late deliverances wrought for us one
upon another, may then perhaps take up a Harp and sing
thee an elaborate Song to Generations. (III, i, 148)

He condemns the established church for preventing spontaneous prayer.
Their confining of prayers to set liturgical forms, he says, prevents
the free flow of the Spirit and thus the communication of truth, even
between the congregation and God. To the bishops the impromptu
praying of ministers seemed dangerous, but to the Puritan minister
only one without spiritual resources could hesitate to pray for the
edification of all (III, i, 124, 127).

Milton, of course, does not limit inspiration to prayer, but
believes that his vehemence is directly inspired by the Spirit to
whom he is dedicated, that he might overcome in detail the essay against Smectymnuus. In this case he attributes power to the rhetoric and the reputation of his opponent, recognizing at least in this one instance a real threat to some members of his audience in the oratorical appeal of an enemy. He says that Hall's work was composed with "no common Arts, but with a wily Stratagem" (III, i, 106). And so he claims that his own violence is appropriately applied to this "notorious enemy to truth," who "is conceited to have a voluble and smart fluence of tongue" (III, i, 105). In practice this means that Milton, as William Riley Parker points out, quotes Hall some 150 times and in each instance belittles him. Thus, if in general he gives Hall credit as a writer, in particular he makes a great many of the points of rebuttal simple accusations of failure in the fundamentals of oratory. He notes an unsophisticated use of ethical proof (III, i, 111), a pedantic failure to recognize elegance in the use of a foreign word (III, i, 114), "the odde coinage" of a phrase "which no mintmaister of language would allow for sterling" (III, i, 128), the "pretty slipskin conveyance" of saying that an evil substance is not what it is by toying with its name (III, i, 129), misuse of testimony (Calvin's) (III, i, 149), and repeated uses of ambiguity (III, i, 135, 149). Applying his belief that a bad style equals a bad man, Milton urges Hall to learn "plain dealing" and to make "Logick" the ground of his life and discourse. He even pushes the principle of the morality of style to the extreme point of saying that the Holy Spirit confused the bishop's choice of words to reveal the depravity in his life (III, i, 136-37).
More generally, Milton warns that the logical analysis and straightforwardness of speech of the Puritan pamphleteers will lay low the false rhetoric of the opposition. Their rhetoric "will be so hardy as once more to unpinne your spruce fastidious oratory, to rumple her laces, her frizzles, and her bobins though she wince, and fling, never so Peevishly" (III, i, 114). The wind of Reformation, he says, is sweeping away all the voices of evil (III, i, 146). At all levels, not just within the ranks of the Christian ministry, the Spirit is working with truth and language. As he sees it, the uselessness of the arts as taught in the scholastic tradition has become clear, as has the potency of the plain speaking and honest common man, who is taking his rightful place in the renewed kingdom. The life of the tradesman gives him a better hold on truth than does that of those churchmen who "spend their youth in loitering, bezzling, and harlotting, their studies in unprofitable questions, and barbarous sophistry" (III, i, 118-119). Art has not failed, says Milton, but the supposed protectors of it have. "What should I tell you how the Universities, that men looke should be fountains of learning and knowledge, have been poysyon'd and choak'd under your governance?" (III, i, 160). The contrast Milton sees between the discourse of the university and that of the comparatively uneducated Protestant takes him a long way toward democracy at this point, for, he says, only those who can effectively communicate and understand truth can serve a free state intelligently. He even makes the university education of the clerics seem aimed directly at helping them to deceive:
And in matters of Religion, there is not anything more intolerable than a learned fool, or a learned Hypocrite, the one is ever coopt up at his empty speculations, a sot, an ideot for any use that mankind may make of him, or else sowing the World with nice and idle questions and with much toyle, and difficulty wading to his auditors up to the eye-brows in deep shallows that wet not the instep: a plaine unlearned man that lives well by that light which he has, is better, and wiser, and edifies others more towards a godly and happy life then he. The other is still using his sophisticated acts and bending all his studies how to make his insatiate avarice, and ambition seem pious, and orthodoxall by painting his lewd and deceitfull principles with a smooth, and glossy varnish in a doctrinal way to bring about his wicked purposes. (III, i, 163)

As he looks forward to the true art of rhetoric in a fulfilled Puritan future, it seems at first as though he might allow the highest eloquence to all regenerate men, since eloquence is a direct gift of God to his elect:

For if he give us to know him aright, and to practice this our knowledge in right establisht discipline, how much more will hee replenish us with all abilities in tongues and, that may conduce to his glory, and our good? (III, i, 164)

As Milton here sees the future, art does not completely give way to untutored simplicity. Rather, the divine impulse in Reformation will cause men like Milton's own father to invest in the necessary education for sons who will become prophets of freedom and truth in the new kingdom (III, i, 164) and the society of the future will free this new kind of teacher from any potentially corrupting financial or political ties whatever. Milton's faith in the ultimate oneness of oratory and goodness thus raises his hope for the final sublime realization of the ethical possibilities of art as it promotes real political freedom (III, i, 167). Of this learned and virtuous orator he says:
Would he tugge for a Barony to sit and vote in Parliament, knowing that no man can take from him the gift of wisedome, and sound doctrine which leaves him free, though not to be a member, yet a teacher, and persuader of the Parliament? and in all wise apprehensions the persuasive power in man to win others to goodnesse by instruction is greater, and more divine, then the compulsory power to restraine men from being evill by terour of the Law. (III, i, 165)

Although the particular conclusions just quoted may not be the direct cause of the classical form of the next pamphlet written by Milton, the union of Christian spirituality and humanist eloquence implicit in these conclusions strongly supports the unique emphasis in *The Reason of Church Government* on the traditionally seen virtues of rhetoric. Even though in *Animadversions* and again in this work (III, i, 241) he seems to have taken the ultimate Platonic rhetorical position in claiming inspiration by God, Milton assumes here that Truth is not always possessed of its own singular power, but can be, like falsehood, made attractive to an audience by the additions of a certain kind of art. Thus before considering his emphasis on the power of eloquence as a thing in itself and the rhetorical theory that accompanies this view, we must look at the nature of Truth as it is given here, for seeing the center of spiritual conflict not only in the war between Truth and Error, but also in the disguises each might wear caused Milton to shift to a new emphasis in his analysis of rhetoric. Late in the pamphlet he says:

For Truth, I know not how, hath this unhappinesse fatall to her, ere she can come to the triall and inspection of the Understanding, being to passe through many little wards and limits of the severall Affections and Desires, she cannot shift it, but must put on such colours and attire, as those Pathetick handmaids of the soul please to lead her
in to their Queen. And if she find so much favour with
them, they let her passe in her own likenesse: if not,
they bring her into the presence habited and colour'd
like a notorious Falshood. And contrary when Falshood
comes that way, if they like the errand she brings, they
are so artfull to counterfeit the very shape and visage
of Truth, that the Understanding not being able to dis-
cern the fucus which these enchantresses with such cunning
have laid upon the feature sometimes of Truth, sometimes
of Falshood interchangeably, sentences for the most part
one for the other at the first blush, according to the
suttle imposture of these sensual mistresses that keep
the ports and passages between her and the object.
(III, i, 249)

This condition does not mean that Truth is not the most vital prin-
ciple in society, for he later argues as usual that freed from such
accretions and restrictions Truth will do its work:

For the property of Truth is, where she is publickly
 taught, to unyoke and set free the minds and spirits
of a Nation. (III, i, 272)

Yet evidently such a state of free expression has not yet arrived
and so Milton projects in an autobiographical passage a vision of his
future role as poet-rhetorician. In this he sees himself
teaching over the whole book of sanctity and vertu
through all the instances of example with such delight
to those especially of soft and delicious temper who
will not so much as look upon Truth herselfe, unlesse
they see her elegantly drest, that whereas the paths
of honesty and good life appear now rugged and diffi-
cult, though they be indeed easy and pleasant, they
would then appeare to all men both easy and pleasant
though they were rugged and difficult indeed.
(III, i, 239)

The subjunctives make it difficult to ascertain whether Milton
believes Truth actually to be easy or hard to follow. Nevertheless,
easy or hard, art can make the pursuit look attractive. As John F.
Huntley says, in this tract is the idea that
what the poet's great and rare ability comes to is a certain skill at effectively disguising truth in passion-pleasing dress made out of language, story, and generic form. . . . I hear the distant but distinct echo of Cicero. . . . poetry is a more intense form of rhetoric, the force of poetry and rhetoric lies in ornament, and the substance ornamented is a rational argument which derives its authority from supra-verbal disciplines.  

Irene Samuel also notes the view of rhetoric in this tract and says that it "gives to eloquence an importance somewhat different from Milton's other antiprelatical tracts." She suggests that this new idea of eloquence is pervasive in the tract and concludes "the whole emphasis . . . precludes Milton's more usual emphasis on the interrelation of style and substance."  

Whether the view of truth and eloquence in this work, almost unseen elsewhere in Milton, is the result of his desire to compose a classical oration or whether, as Joseph Wittreich suggests, it is due to his writing in a style purposely chosen to appeal to a learned class in society, the difference from the direction his thinking had taken until this point is striking. William Haller argues that the piece is an attempt by Milton to identify his place as an artist (not a preacher) in relation to Reformation. Such an explanation helps us to understand the great emphasis given here to a view of oratory that demands the skills Milton the Renaissance artist demonstrates in the autobiographical sections, a view of oratory that would give the true artist a place next to the minister as a teacher of truth in a renewed future.  

Although there is some vehemence in this tract, the very fact that Milton wrote an oration rather than a debate argues his hope
that a rational and eloquent statement of basic issues will encourage the synthesis of ancient Greek and seventeenth-century Christian views of the effectiveness of rhetoric. His own relative moderation then is an example, in a time of increasing confusion, of the kind of work that will increase the spiritual growth of society by free and open sharing of learning. Thus he composes in a classical form, beginning with a reminder of the Greek ideal of the power of reasoned eloquence. Plato's advice was, he points out,

> Seeing that persuasion certainly is a more winning, and more manlike way to keepe men in obedience than feare, that to such lawes as were of principall moment, there should be us'd as an induction, some well temper'd discourse, shewing how good, how gainfull, how happy it must needs be to live according to honesty and justice, which being utter'd with those native colours and graces of speech, as true eloquence the daughter of vertue can best bestow upon her mothers praises, would so incite, and in a manner, charme the multitude into the love of that which is really good as to embrace it ever after, not out of custome and awe, which most men do, but of choice and purpose, with true and constant delight. (III, i, 181)

The proposal here, that men will recognize and accept truth when it is attractively presented, is the basis not only of this oration (he even calls his audience "auditors" /III, i, 234/) but of the hope for the future church government. Ancient practices he cites support his wish to establish a society based on the free play of reason and eloquence. In contrast, the present is governed by the harsh and unreasonable traditional forms of prelacy for which a replacement is needed that is both pleasing and effective in molding a Christian nation. Thus Milton argues for the replacement of a clergy invested with arbitrary authority with the ideal Greek leader, a man of eloquence, learning, and accomplishment, the true orator described in
his "Seventh Prolusion." He says that happiness will only come to the state when it is governed by such a well-endowed person, one as is a true knower of himselfe, and himself in whom contemplation and practice, wit, prudence, fortitude, and eloquence must be rarely met, both to comprehend the hidden causes of things, and span in his thoughts all the various effects that passion or complexion can work in a man's nature: and hereto must his hand be at defiance with gaine, and his heart in all vertues heroick. (III, i, 186)

In this statement of the knowledge ideally held by the true orator, we are back again into the inclusion of particular knowledge of human nature ("passions" and "complexions"), a knowledge that would allow the orator to play upon the emotions of his audience and thus persuade them to the Good. Knowledge of absolute truth in its own compelling form is not relied upon here, as it is in the most extreme form of evangelical trust in Scripture. This classical definition of the orator is one that Milton can readily aspire to, and so he provides "ethical proof" of his own good character and gives a profile of his education, mode of life, and ambition as a writer in the context of the present and future. And in this pamphlet he says openly that his present turn from poetry to political polemic is necessitated by the corruption of the times and the immediate challenge offered to all true members of God's kingdom by this corruption (III, i, 231-33). Addressing "the elegant and learned reader," Milton outlines his resolve to be a heroic poet in his native tongue, seeing in his poetic talent the same gift of inspiration given to the Hebrew prophets (III, i, 236-238). His practice of art is, in fact, in this analysis a greater gift than preaching since it is proved
by a manifestation of power, not merely claimed as the right of a con-
ventionally bestowed office. The pulpit may claim to guard and inter-
pret God's word, but the poet, as Milton sees him, has it in his heart
and on his lips. When all is right again, then, England will be not
merely a land of purified pulpits and good laws, but one in which the
beauties of the classical rational life will be enriched by the spir-
ituality of Christianity. Such a Utopian society would offer
varieties of public entertainments which will
civilize, adorn and make discreet our minds by the learned
and affable meeting of frequent Academies, and the procure-
ment of wise and artful full recitations sweetened with eloquent
and graceful enticements to the love and practice of
justice, temperance and fortitude, instructing and bettering
the Nation at all opportunities, that the call of wisdom and
vertu may be heard everywhere. . . Whether this may not
be not only in pulpits, but after another persuasive method,
at set and solemn Paneguries, in Theaters, porches, or what
other place, or way may win most upon the people or receiv
at once both recreation, and instruction, let them in
authority consult. (III, i, 240)

While he sees in his eulogy to true art the possibilities for
England's freedom and maturity, he says he is in the present troubled
time setting art aside to fight against "the impertinent yoke of
prelacy, under whose inquisitorious and tyrannical duncery no free
and splendid wit can flourish" (III, i, 240). Again he protests that
the present system of education breeds men dedicated, not to freedom
and eloquence but to darkness and barbarism and to the use of their
own language as a tool for distorting the truth. He knows that many
good men would write and speak publicly in the defense of Truth against
prelacy but are unable to do so because at the universities they were
unexpectedly fed with nothing else, but the scragged and thorny lectures of monkish and miserable sophistry, were sent home again with such a scholastical burre in their throats, as hath stopt and hinderd all true and generous philosophy from entring, crackt their voices for ever with metaphysical gargarisms. (III, i, 273)

Moreover, never having learned the truth or the true form of discourse, he says, many innocent and good men are unable to judge the "glistening" and falsehood of prelatical rhetoric and teaching in pulpit and pamphlet (III, i, 247, 250). His immediate solution for this problem is again the truth of the Bible presented by teachers whose virtuous learning gives them the power to shape society according to their understanding of truth. England needed to be purified so that real teachers could do God's work.  

In each of these first four tracts Milton tries to assess the current susceptibility of society to rhetoric. To determine the most effective kind of discourse for a given pamphlet and to find his own place as a rhetorician in the reforming movement, he had to decide how much society was controlled by episcopal rhetoric (to him, evil), how it could most effectively be jarred or led into an appreciation of the true plain style, and how soon it could appreciate the pure and burning eloquence of the highest spiritual expression. In writing a defense of himself in his Apology, he makes a synthesis and an elaboration of the various ideas on rhetoric he had considered in the previous four pamphlets and because he had been accused in a Modest Confutation of his Animadversions of baseness of character as that was revealed in his style he builds all his commentary on rhetoric around the idea that style really does reveal the soul of the writer.
And thus he makes careful distinctions about the value and purpose of various levels of style and his own use of these levels to express the goodness of his character. 93

The bitterness of his attack is no doubt in part the result of a challenge to his own use of style (III, i, 289), and so a great deal of his energy is directed to pointing out particular rhetorical failures in his enemy's work and even more importantly to ridiculing the scholastic stylist for his failure to enter into the flow of humanist eloquence from both classical and contemporary writers. The confuter has, he says, a "coy flurting stile" full of "frumps and curtall gibes," and he "makes sentences by the Statute, as if all above three inches long were confiscat" (III, i, 286). The opponent's attempts at original metaphors simply reveal his deficiencies as we watch him leave "the track of common adresse, to runne up, and tread the aire in metaphorical compellations, and many fond utterances better let alone" (III, i, 291). Again and again Milton uses the confuter's metaphors and diction to attack him and his party, arguing that their ignorance of the discoveries of humanism keeps them in darkness, but a darkness which is threatening because it is possessed of some political authority. He asks with disdain:

Can nothing then but Episcopacy teach men to speak good English, to pick & order a set of words judiciously? Must we learne from Canons and quaint Sermonings inter-lin'd with barbarous Latin to illumine a period, to wreath an Enthymema with maistrous dexterity? (III, i, 287)

The point of the attack on the bishop's learning is here not simply to set up a standard of education Milton himself is already
possessed of, but rather to break the bishops' hold on the minds of
those who believe the established teachers are necessarily the right
ones. Thus he is not merely establishing his own taste when he criti-
cizes them for their attachment to a medieval taste when they have real
examples of eloquence in the humanistic learning of the day:

How few among them that know how to write, or speak in a
pure stile, much lesse to distinguish the ideas, and
various kinds of stile: in Latine barbarous, and oft
not without solecisms, declaming in rugged and mis-
cellaneous gearre blown together by the fourre winds,
and in their choice preferring the gay ranknesses of
Apuleius, Arnobius, or any moderne fustionist, before
the native Latinisms of Cicero. In the Greek tongue
most of them unletter'd, or unenter'd to any sound
proficiency in those Attick maisters of morall wisdome
and eloquence. (III, i, 347)

Milton does not—as in the previous tract—tie himself to a noble
secular standard of learning but does hope to establish the fact that
he can be master of it and yet prefer the true leading of the Spirit in
matters of knowledge and style.

As suggested, the starting point of Milton's remarks on style is
the accusation that his own style reveals a bad character, for, as
Milton himself says, this charge is an invitation to see his enemy's
vice in his style (III, i, 289). So bitter is the rhetoric—one section
is grimly referred to as "the bating of a Satir" (III, i, 327)—that
Milton is forced to make his most elaborate defense of vehemence.94
Thus he presents an impressive list of precedents in the vituperative
style:

If therefore the question were in oratory, whether a vehement
vein throwing out indignation, or scorn upon an object that
merits it, were among the aptest Ideas of speech to be allow'd,
it were my work, and 'that an easie one to make it clear both by the rules of best rhetoricians, and the famousest examples of Greek and Roman Orations. But since the Religion of it is disputed, and not the art, I shall make use only of such reasons and authorities, as religion cannot except against. (III, i, 312)

Among the users of extremely harsh language he then cites are John the Baptist, Jesus, and Luther (III, i, 312-314). The ultimate proof and norm, however, is the language of God himself. The "Spirit of God who is purity it selfe" spoke in terms of censure "immodest to be utter'd in coole blood" (III, i, 315).

While the defense of the vehement style is made effective for Milton's audience by its reliance on examples from the Bible and the earlier Reformation, a point to be noted is that Milton is making the Bible and the Christian tradition the ground of his decorum. As Thomas Kranidas has shown, Milton deliberately bypasses "classical authority" for his justification of rhetorical ideals. That is, he cites his knowledge of the classical tradition by using it to show the failure of the prelates to match up even to the best purely human learning, but then he himself goes on to another level of rhetoric in which he can lead, by being inspired, those who are free from the depraved teaching and forms he ascribes to his enemies. He does attempt to correct the rhetorical abuses by which, as he sees it, the church imposed ignorance on its members and he does this precisely by giving the readers the benefit of his study of those "maisters of morall wisdome and eloquence" of ancient times (III, i, 347). Yet his next and more difficult task is to get beyond even them by intertwining his love of classical eloquence with his faith in the vitality
of truth as simply revealed in the Scriptures. In demonstrating both poles of rhetoric, the adorned and the simple, he calls attention to his own stylistic virtuosity and consciously creates several illustrative meetings of saving truth and beautiful form to shame inferior and unlovely passages in his opponent's writing. At one point, in response to a passage of what Milton calls "the language of stall epistle non sense," we are treated to a digression written to show how one who has the true art of rhetoric at his command can compose a fitting encomium to the worthy deeds of Parliament (III, i, 333-334). Yet balancing such flights are the unfailing reiterations of his belief that truth alone is eloquent and his inclination toward simplicity.

The famous statement from the Apology that whoever would write good poetry "ought him selfe to be a true Poem" (III, i, 303) really signifies the ultimate rhetorical value he wants to reach in this work. The rules of the best rhetoricians are right, but his faith that art is, at best, the direct result of virtue is becoming absolute here. Near the beginning of the piece he says

For doubtlesse that indeed according to art is most eloquent, which returnes and approaches neerest to nature from whence it came; and they expresse nature best, who in their lives least wander from her safe leading, which may be call'd re-generate reason. So that how he should be truly eloquent who is not withall a good man, I see not. (III, i, 287)

Finally he simply moves the moral question of the relationship between goodness and rhetoric into the mystical realm and applies widely the idea of inspiration, arguing that the speech of the true Christian is inspired by the Holy Spirit (III, i, 318-319). With this belief he can, at other points in the tract, keep his humanistic faith
in learning and eloquence and yet go beyond it:

For me, Readers, although I cannot say I am utterly untrain'd in those rules which best Rhetoricians have giv'n, or unacquainted with those examples which the prime authors of eloquence have written in any learned tongue, yet true eloquence I find to be none, but the serious and hearty love of truth: and that whose mind so ever is fully possest with a fervent desire to know good things, and with the dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of them into others, when such a man would speak, his words (by what I can expresse) like so many nimble and airy servitors trip about him at command, and in well order'd files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own places. (III, i, 362)

Thus, while he repeats in several places the idea that he has been "season'd betimes with the best and elegantest authors of learned tongues" (III, i, 328), he also stresses the basic point that the Holy Spirit is the real source of his rhetoric and at one point discusses a biblical standard of discourse that would permit both the heightened and the simple:

Some also were indu'd with a staid moderation, and soundnesse of argument to teach and convince the rationall and sober-minded; yet not therefore that to be thought the only expedient course of teaching, for in times of opposition when either against new heresies arising, or old corruptions to be reform'd, this coole unpassionate mildnesse of positive wisdome is not anough to damp and astonish the proud resistance of carnall, and false Doctors, then (that I may have leave to soare a while as the Poets use) then Zeale whose substance is ethereal, arming in compleat diamond ascends his fiery Chariot drawn with two blazing Meteors figur'd like beasts, but of a higher breed then any the Zodiack yeilds, resembling two of those four which Ezekiel and S. John saw, the one visag'd like a Lion to expresse power, high autority and indignation, the other of count'nance like a man to cast derision and scorne upon perverse and fraudulent seducers. . . . Thus did the true Prophets of old combat with the false; thus Christ himselfe the fountain of meeknesse found acrimony anough to be still galling and vexing the Prelaticall Pharisees. (III, i, 313-14)

The figure of the charioteer for the divinely inspired orator not only recalls, as Milton says, the Bible, but also the enraptured
speaker called for in Plato's *Phaedrus*, who is, like the Hebrew prophets, inspired. But Milton does not bother to mention Plato's ideal, for he himself is set on keeping Christ and the Bible as his example (III, i, 312-13). Thus he was driven, by the necessity of teaching ordinary people, to the justification of a plain style (III, i, 340), a style that revealed one's purity of heart. Nevertheless, he moved from that quickly to a belief in an inspired rhetoric that was available at times both for destroying the enemies of truth and for showing truth in its full glory.

By the end of the antiprelatical tracts Milton's life-long understanding of the interrelation of knowledge, morality and rhetoric was well enough established to last him, with important later emphasis on the more anti-rhetorical elements in his theory, for the rest of his writing career. What we see then in direct statements about rhetoric in the major prose works after 1642 are, for the most part, simply applications of his ideas on rhetoric as we have thus far seen them. The shifts in emphasis which occur are dictated by rhetorical necessity or by his changing opinion not of Truth or morality but of the capacity of men to accept his idea of truth.

1643-1645

During the period of nearly three years following the anti-episcopal tracts, Milton, though not yet called to official public service, on several occasions published the fruits of his studies for
the public, particularly for Parliament. He was engaged with three apparently diverse subjects: the nature of marriage and divorce, the necessity for freedom from heavy-handed censorship, and the improvement of education. The subjects themselves, however, and Milton's right to speak freely about them are all, in one way or another, involved with personal freedom and with the place of rhetoric in deciding public issues and are all informed by the same spirit of Reformation. While Milton has little to say theoretically about rhetoric itself in these works, the prefaces to the divorce tracts and all of Areopagitica show his careful consideration of the nature of Truth and the necessity for its public expression, as well as consideration of the capacity of Englishmen—Parliament, the Assembly, or his fellow Christians—to use rhetoric according to the standards of clarity and honesty he saw as necessary to a society of free men.

It can be argued that in this period all of Milton's thinking about rhetoric and about knowledge is influenced by the failure of his divorce tracts. Their failure for Milton was painful not merely because they did not effect the religious and political change intended, but more immediately because they were not treated as the serious thought of an honest, regenerate man who had studied diligently to arrive at his conclusions. They were not considered—in the inquisitive and free spirit of Reformation—as attempts to discover a particular application of the principle of Christian liberty. Instead, they were simply rejected as licentious. And the effect of being condemned out of hand forced Milton to conclude that those who had taken the place of the censorious Anglican prelates were not free
from what he called the dead weight of custom and precept and were not able, therefore, to attain to even the lowest level of true eloquence, the plain statement of Knowledge. He had tested the ability of the governors of society to respond to his clear teaching and they had failed the test. As William Haller says, the rejection caused Milton "the most acute and indignant astonishment." He then defended more vigorously than ever the necessity for the free play of truth in its most eloquent forms. Areopagitica, as a number of major studies of Milton's development show, was a natural response to rejection, occurring at a very crucial time in his thinking about the English people as audience.

It is ironic that, after all his earlier insistence on the saving, absolute clarity and simplicity of the Bible, Milton enters in the divorce tracts into the most convoluted exegesis he ever attempts. The method he chooses is, he says, not eloquence to persuade, but "deliberate reason" (III, ii, 386) in order to modify traditional teaching on divorce and teach the hitherto little used New Testament doctrine of the "plain exigence of Charity." However, to employ this "rule of charity" he has to go against his own principles of rhetoric based on the clarity of the Word of God and say that here the Old Testament teaching is a clearer, more reliable source of doctrine than Christ's direct prohibition to the Pharisees (Matthew 19:3-9) which is, he says, purposely enigmatic, a deliberate use of obscurity to chastise impertinence. Christ, he says, in answering the Pharisees forgot not so to frame his prudent ambiguities and concealments, as was to the troubling of those peremptory disputants most wholesome. When therefore we would know
what right there may be, in ill accidents, to divorce, we must repair thither where God professes to teach his servants by the prime institution, and not where we see him intending to dazzle sophisters. (IV, 150)

For the first time in his thinking on the value of Scripture, in his search for the true liberty of the Christian, Milton warns against "the fury of . . . literal expounding" (IV, 169). While his rhetorical analysis of Christ's words as ironic rather than literal seems a valid principle of exegesis within his understanding of rhetoric and Scripture, his finding proof texts for doctrine in Genesis and Deuteronomy is something of a departure from his usual pattern. Ernest Sirluch says of this new method of interpretation:

In the course of the argument Milton formulates a view of the relation between the Old and New Testaments which is virtually a reversal of the view taken in the anti-Episcopal pamphlets. Milton is, of course, in one sense simply using the prerogative of the redeemed man to decide for himself on Old Testament laws which are not clarified by the New, as for example, a Christian was free to decide how to keep the Sabbath. However, it should be repeated that Milton here has first to invalidate the gospel statement on the subject, and he does so by a rhetorical analysis of it. Modern critics have defended Milton for this interpretation of the gospel statement as purposely obscure and have seen his position in this as consistent with his belief that rhetoric is an extension of the speaker's morality and knowledge. Theodore Huguelet praises the practicality of Milton's judgment of Matthew 19:

His most original accomplishment in hermeneutics resulted when he fused the dialectical method into the Rule of Charity
and forged a sharp tool for cutting an exegetical knot.105

His contemporaries, however, not only refused to make detailed refutation of the work but completely misunderstood his intentions and his teaching as evidenced in their denunciations106—what Milton called the irrational three line refutations they pelted him with (IV, 234-35). John T. Shawcross, who lists the numerous slurs on Milton the divorce-at-pleasure advocate, says that reading them makes one easily understand Milton's anger.107

To this particular failure of what he considered plain truth, Milton made two responses: one was to begin to realize that controversy might be an inadequate means of furthering the Reformation, and the other was to renew and emphasize his appeal to his readers' belief in the power of truth and eloquence.

The first of these responses, the recognition of the practical limitations of controversy, shows up in his simply abandoning the pursuit of the divorce question, as Professor Parker's analysis of the material has shown.108 This recognition also appears, stated angrily, in his Sonnets XI and XII, in which he mocks his contemporaries for their lack of learning and then berates them for their depravity. He says in Sonnet XII,

I did but prompt the age to quit their cloggs
By the known rules of antient libertie,
When strait a barbarous noise environs me
Of Owles and Cuckoes, Asses, Apes and Doggs.
As when those Hinds that were transform'd to Froggs
Railed at Latona's twin-born progenie
Which after held the Sun and Moon in fee.
But this is got by casting Pearl to Hoggs;
That bawle for freedom in their senseless mood,
And still revolt when truth would set them free.
Licence they mean when they cry libertie;
For who loves that, must first be wise and good;
But from that mark how far they rove we see
For all this wast of wealth, and loss of blood.
(I, i, 62-63)

The very specific New Testament allusions in lines eight (Matthew 7:6) and ten (John 8:32) identify Milton with the spiritual freedom and perspective of Christ and "the age" with the law-burdened Jews to whom Christ spoke. His contemporaries' subjection to law amounts in Milton's mind to an unhearing, bestial captivity.109

The second response, renewed appeal to faith in the power of truth and eloquence (with emphasis on truth), appears first in the preface to the second edition of The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, published after Milton had seen the disastrous effects of the original edition. That he thinks the Reformation in England is only nascent is clear from the very title page on which the reader is warned that the teachings within are "seasonable to be now thought on in the Reformation intended" (III, ii, 366). And his point throughout the introduction is that Truth, knowledge gained through honest, diligent study (III, ii, 377), is forbidden by Custom (III, ii, 367-370). A truly educated citizen, he says, cannot advise the governors because of the way that the "narrow intellectuals of quotationists and common placers" hide the truth (III, ii, 375). He laments the fact that the supposedly wise and pious were the ones who rejected his efforts and not, as he might have feared, the "simple and illiterate reader" (III, ii, 378).
His work having been scorned, he fears for the safety of Truth, as he explains in giving his reason for supporting his views by citing the authority of a respected theologian in Martin Bucer. In these comments he indicates society's failure to study honestly the reasons given in an argument that "was not my opinion, but my knowledge" (IV, 19). And in a bitter aside he says that he gives Bucer to his readers to help them be openminded, "if Truth be not the best witness to itself" (IV, 19). Since they not only did not respond in reasoned discourse to his work (IV, 20, 272), but actually refused to license it and then tried to suppress it, he is forced to doubt that the Reformation can eventuate:

I referre me to wisest men, whether truth be suffer'd to be truth, or liberty to be liberty now among us, and be not again in danger of new fetters and captivity after all our hopes and labours lost: and whether learning be not . . . in the way to be trodd'n down again by ignorance. (IV, 62)

Finally, in Tetrachordon he comes face to face with the basic issue of the use of rhetoric and eloquence to share truth in a free society. His plea for reconsideration of divorce laws had evidently been refused by someone on the precise grounds that its eloquence was the covering of a lie. To defend his work then he has returned to a basic consideration of the value of oratory:

Others, which is their courtesie, confess that wit and parts may do much to make that seem true which is not (as was objected to Socrates by them who could not resist his efficacy, that he ever made the worse cause seem the better) and thus thinking themselves discharg'd of the difficulty, love not to wade furder into the fear of a convincement. There will be their excuses to decline the full examining of this serious point. So much the more I presse it and repeat it, Lords and Commons, that ye beware while time is, ere
this grand secret, and onely art of ignorance affecting tyranny, grow powerfull and rule among us. For if sound argument and reason be thus put off, either by an under-valuing silence, or the maisterly censure of a rayling word or two in the Pulpit, or by rejecting the force of truth, as the meer cunning of eloquence, and Sophistry, what can be the end of this, but that all good learning and knowledge will suddenly decay. (IV, 70)

Milton the artist and Christian had two tasks then: to convince the audience that did not give his divorce tracts a hearing that wisdom is manifest in eloquence, that truth is persuasive, and, particularly, that Parliament should rescind the licensing act of 1643. His fear that "New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ large" (I, 71) thus caused him to define truth and then to defend the use of rhetoric for its propagation in society, not only to keep Parliament from legislating against the interchange of ideas, but to call the attention of the leaders of the state to the necessity of trusting reasoned, eloquent searches for the Truth if society was not to fall back into the rut of formula and prescription. Areopagitica and perhaps to a degree Of Education were his attempts to accomplish these tasks. Before we consider these, however, there remain Milton's comments on the one full answer he got to his unacceptable teaching.

Since Milton went nearly unanswered he naturally refused to consider—at least in print—that either his method of exegesis or his conclusions on divorce had been wrong or that his own plain style and general rhetorical ideals were in error. And, as might be expected, when he was given one extended though not eloquent rebuttal, the modest disagreement of a comparatively uneducated servingman, he simply saw in his opponent a further ludicrous indication of society's lack of desire and capacity for truth (IV, 272-3).
Although even the idea of an exchange of pamphlets between Milton and the servingman may seem almost ludicrous, there are some points in the exchange which reveal problems in Milton's tract. The writer of this solitary response says that he cannot understand Milton's language nor the ideals of love and unity basic to Milton's argument for divorce. He also raises objections focused on the very practical problems faced by a divorced female in that day and the certain abuse that would follow such a privilege of separation, all problems never directly considered at all by Milton's scholarly and abstract study of the spiritual bonds of marriage.112

Milton's response in Colasterion is for the most part unrelieved abuse in which the servingman's mental capacity is blamed for the failure to understand: "what language can be low and degenerate enough," he asks, to attack such baseness as the querulous servingman shows in his very style (IV, 261)? Nor is this style to be confused with Milton's own plain language:

Nor was the stile flat and rude, and the matter grave and solid, for then ther had been pardon, but so shallow and so unwary was that also, as gave sufficiently the character of a gross and sluggish, yet a contentious and overweening pretender. (IV, 236)

Milton's response is, in part, then, a condemnation of the character of the opponent, a man shown by his rhetoric to be too degenerate to understand Milton's edifying language and ideals (IV, 266). Yet the apparently honest inability113 of the servingman to comprehend Milton's arguments suggests, despite Milton's vilification, that either Scripture or the divorce tracts might not be the plain
reasoned discourse Milton thought them. Or, if they were, then there was no very large fit audience for them. And this is, of course, Milton's conclusion and an immediate reason for Areopagitica.

The preface to Tetrachordan, as already suggested, is very indicative of Milton's anger at the charge that his learning and eloquence are suspect. In this short essay he warns, in a way particularly relevant to Areopagitica, against those who to control Reformation for their own advantage use their reputation for learning to halt real learning, and cow "weak perceivers" with the voice of Custom (IV, 69). Thus he says that if eloquence is taken as a sign of error and a "seasonable and well grounded speaking" is rejected for its failure to conform to debatable doctrines, England is lost to error (IV, 70-72).

The result of Milton's awareness of this loss is that Areopagitica must persuade its audience to believe in the unconquerable power of Truth, that is, Truth found in a context of toleration,¹¹ and of the belief that the educated citizens, perhaps the governors, can become more capable of using freedom well as their knowledge of truth increases. In studying the scope of Milton's view of good and evil in Areopagitica, Arthur Barker emphasizes Milton's Puritan view of Christian liberty:

Freedom must be permitted in those things concerning which there is no positive command or prohibition from God, and in which the balance of good and evil can be determined only by the individual conscience. It is in the knowledge of such matters that faith will progress, just as the author of The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce has arrived, in spite of centuries of misunderstanding, at the true interpretation of the divine will in that respect. Restraint at
such points is unwarranted because right decisions can be arrived at only through reason and experience.\textsuperscript{115}

If we then see \textit{Areopagitica} as an attempt to free people by giving Parliament the confidence in their ability to know truth we may take the defense of truth in the work to include a defense of rhetoric and the humanistic world view that encourages it and grows by its power. The modeling of the work on the classical oration,\textsuperscript{116} the many references to pagan writers,\textsuperscript{117} and the citing of Athenian precedent\textsuperscript{118} for instruction of the state by "men who profeest the study of wisdome and eloquence" (IV, 296) all emphasize the standard to which Milton wishes to bring his society. The opening paragraph builds on an admission that the times are far from perfect and that to improve them the leaders must be open to correction (IV, 293). To deliver the English from the "steepe disadvantage of tyranny and superstition grounded into our principles" has been and will be the work not only of God, but of a Parliament dedicated to freedom (IV, 294). Thus he begins, and on the same note concludes the oration:

This I know, that errors in a good government and in a bad are equally almost incident: for what Magistrate may not be mis-inform'd, and much the sooner, if liberty of Printing be reduc't into the power of a few. (IV, 354)

This argument that truth needs to be known is, then, what the culminating argument against licensing builds on.

The last of the four major points he develops is that licensing destroys learning and Truth (IV, 297). The famous line, "he who destroyes a good Booke, kills reason it selfe" (IV, 298), places knowledge in its broadest academic sense at the center of the country's salvation and rhetoric very near the center. Italy, the
least likely place for Reformation to occur, has lost its eminence as a place of learning, he points out, under the tyranny of licensing (IV, 329). And the English mercantile mentality, he suggests in a passage of damning metaphors, is as fatal to truth as Italian superstition is when Parliament loses its soul to a desire to treat Truth as a taxable, controlled product:

Truth and understanding are not such wares as to be monopoliz'd and traded in by tickets and statutes, and standards. We must not think to make a staple commodity of all the knowledge in the Land, to mark and licence it like our broad cloath, and our wooll packs. (IV, 327)

One's knowledge of the truth is essential to his salvation, he says, because like society the individual must continue to grow. The average Englishman, in Milton's mind, may have no capacity for truth because he is so cut off from it by his conformity to an established system of religious thought. The very fear of being wrong or of even considering truth as a hindrance Milton most vigorously attacks, and perhaps nowhere with more power than in the lines:

A man may be a heretick in the truth: and if he beleeeve things only because his Pastor sayes so, or the Assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds, becomes his heresie. (IV, 333)

When we ask what frees Milton from even a hint of fear of the power of rhetoric if misused, of fear that a bad man might send forth a powerful and misleading book, the answer returns us to the basic idea that an author's spirit is revealed in his work and that a bad book once it is publicly known as such can then be condemned.
Milton's position here transcends Aristotle's belief that truth tends naturally to be more appreciated than error or even Augustine's faith in the transforming force of the Word of God, for Milton allows truth the possibility of leavening the entire society, of eventually overcoming all error if left to work freely. His belief that style equals the man is given dimensions here as never before. The most striking of these is his idea that a good book is reason itself and thus the very image of God (IV, 298). With such a faith, he can demand that discourse, because its truth or falsity is easily recognized, be kept public, for when it is, he says, it is most beneficial or, if evil, most easily condemned (IV, 336). And with such a faith he must warn that prohibitions are impediments to the Holy Spirit who directly inspires reformers (IV, 326).

Truth, then, which in a "free and open encounter" with Falsehood has never been "put to the worse" (IV, 347), stands waiting to be freed to do its work, if only Parliament would remove the laws which hold it back. England has been a nation in search of truth and has the chance, in Milton's vision of the future, to become truly great in the possession and workings of knowledge, "a Nation of Prophets, of Sages, and of Worthies" (IV, 340-41). This overwhelming note of confidence in the English people, cast precisely at the time when Milton seems most aware of their failure to be what they might be, nevertheless rings clear:

Truth indeed came at once into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on: but when he ascended, and his Apostles after him were laid
asleep, then strait arose a wicked race of deceivers, who as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his con-
spirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris, took the
virgin Truth, hewd her lovely form into a thousand pceces,
and scatter'd them to the four winds. From that time ever
since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear,
imitating the careful search that Isis made for the
mangl'd body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb
by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet
found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall doe,
till her Masters second coming; he shall bring together
every joynet and member, and shall mold them into an im-
mortall feature of loveliness and perfection. Suffer not
these licencing prohibitions to stand at every place of
opportunity forbidding them and disturbing them that con-
tinue seeking, that continue to do our obsequies to the
torn body of our martyr'd Saint. (IV, 337-38)

As part of his recognition of the need for toleration he articulates
his most idealistic and absolute belief in the role of Knowledge in
salvation, in the function of the teacher-orator in freeing know-
ledge, and especially in the potential ability of the citizenry to
receive Knowledge. Reformation has been started but not yet com-
pleted because of society's unreadiness to free men's words to bring
in the complete fulfillment available in the Word of God. 122

At this point, then, Milton accords rhetoric both more power
and more trustworthiness as the agent of Truth than at any other time
in his career. He does this with the greatest fervor and eloquence,
and so the very praise of the power and form of truth is in itself a
kind of argument. Yet in a less intense work of the same period,
Of Education, he gives equal credit to the goodness of art, making
rhetoric the crown and final practical end of an entire curriculum. 123

The particular knowledge and arts that make up the curriculum,
however, derive their value from the student's grasp of the absolute
knowledge which is at the center of Milton's faith. The divine knowledge that Milton believes man capable of is what gives clarity and coherence to his educational ideals, and it is what further allows him to discriminate between the ignorant and the wise. As A. S. P. Woodhouse says,

Milton tacitly assumes that to minds capable of learning knowledge is irresistibly attractive and requires neither dressing up nor watering down. . . . 124

The first sentence of Of Education, after the introductory addresses to Hartlib, defines learning in relation to grace in such a way that all arts, including rhetoric, are for the faithful grounded safely in Truth.

The end then of Learning is to repair the ruines of our first Parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the neerest by possessing our souls of true vertue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith makes up the highest perfection. (IV, 277)

There is no fear of rhetoric in such a scheme. Plato, Aristotle, Phalereus, Cicero, Hermogenes and Longinus can be models and teachers for the real Christian (IV, 285-6), because he is free in his greater Knowledge. In Areopagitica the discussion of the Pauline doctrine that "to the pure all things are pure" is very explicitly applied to "not only meats and drinks, but all kinds of knowledge whether of good or evill" (IV, 308). As Irene Samuel points out, Milton's regarding good style as the result of having knowledge of the truth is a distinct feature of his ideas on rhetoric.126

If Milton needed to define a rhetoric that insured the emergence of truth when men were free to govern themselves, Of Education is a
practical step toward making men ready to use language to search for
truth. Perhaps the major change Milton's treatise would make in
the then current educational scheme is in his treatment of rhetoric,
for he would put off teaching it until the last year of study. As
we might expect from his remarks in the "Prolusions," he wants no
attempts at writing by students who have neither the personal experience
nor the learning to deal with vital truth. He berates the present
schools for

forcing the empty wits of Children to compose Theams, Verses and Orations, which are the acts of ripest judg-
ment and the final work of a head fill'd by long reading
and observing, with elegant maxims, and copious invention. These are not matters to be wrung from poor striplings, like blood out of the Nose, or the plucking of untimely fruit. (IV, 278)

He calls the current method "pure trifling at Grammar and
Sophistry" (IV, 280) and says that it produces divines and lawyers
who have neither truth nor good language with which to be effective
citizens (IV, 279). His own ideal method—for which he includes the
reading of orators and teachers from antiquity—ushers students into
the highest art of the orator, an art which he says is finer than
poetry and is the fulfillment of the educational process of creating a
whole man. His students will be able to act in wisdom, will be
able Writers and Composers in every excellent matter, when
they shall be thus fraught with an universal insight into
things. Or whether they be to speak in Parliament or Counsel,
honor and attention would be waiting on their lips. (IV,
286-287)

With such an ability a man might justifiably demand, as Milton
does in Areopagitica, "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue
freely according to conscience above all liberties" (IV, 346). Even
though Milton does not consider in detail the moral questions involved with the use of eloquence, he constantly struggles with the principles of knowledge and of the communication of truth which underlie the most idealistic demands on rhetoric, i.e., Plato's and Milton's own.\textsuperscript{128}

Here he is simply arguing for art and freedom,\textsuperscript{129} when he sees the possibility for their fruitful conjunction. Later, of course, in more threatening times after revolution and failure he will narrow his definitions. But at this time the failure of both his divorce tracts and \textit{Areopagitica}\textsuperscript{130} must have convinced him of the need of his presenting a case for openness based on reason and eloquence in the best classical and Christian terms. After these attempts he was silent for four years.

1646-1655

In \textit{The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates}, \textit{Eikonoklastes} and the three major defenses, works devoted to the justification of the minority who judged and executed Charles I, Milton adds virtually nothing to his previous statements on rhetoric. Yet despite lack of advance in Milton's rhetorical theory itself, there is a growth in his vision of his own role as orator, for at last the great and noble deed that calls for oratory has been done and with the doing of it has come, at least in part, the political freedom and the chance for virtue which, Milton believed, liberates the power of the true artist.\textsuperscript{131}

Thus we see Milton in the autobiographical sections putting on his orator's robes in an attempt to fulfill the rhetorical ideals for
oratory outlined in Areopagitica.

In contrast to this wish to make the fullest use of the power of rhetoric is his painful acceptance of the failure of the majority of Englishmen to assent to his ideas of liberty or the form of the evolving state or to accept his defenses of the values he saw at work in the revolution. Being rejected no doubt added to his desire to vindicate the use of oratory and the grand style, and so at this crucial time he not only blames the leaders of the opposition for clinging to tradition and thus holding the people back from truth, but he accuses the people themselves for their ignorance, saying that they are too mean of spirit to want the heroic deeds and good words that revolution is offering them.132

As the nation was controlled by fewer and fewer hands, then, Milton's audience was increasingly divided into the minority whom he supported and the majority whose abhorrence of both his rhetoric and his values was becoming unmistakable.133 Arthur Barker's study of the situation shows how suddenly Milton was forced after his first pamphlet on regicide to an awareness which confirmed the fears lurking behind Areopagitica:

The disintegration in the Puritan front was not altogether ignored in The Tenure; yet if there were some apostates, Milton could still persuade himself that the acts of the Independent Rump and the triumphant parliamentary Army were approved by the people. . . . But the vision /a "right pious, right honest, and right hardy nation" (III, 225)/ was dissipated by the alarming popularity of Eikon Basilike, The Portraiture of His Sacred Majesty in His Solitudes and Sufferings. The confident enthusiasm of The Tenure gave place in Eikonoklastes to diatribes against the "besotted and degenerate baseness" of "an ungrateful and perverse generation." /V, 69, 71/134
Despite his disappointment in the general audience, as long as he has in the defenses the approving ear of the powerful few, he can maintain the validity of his choice to be an orator, and an orator by his own ideal definition. Later when his eloquence and arguments prove inadequate in combatting the restoration of monarchy, when even the most powerful among the few who had seemed to share his views welcome back the king, he decides that art and truth cannot overcome, in one war, entrenched error.

In The Tenure and Eikonoklastes nearly all the rhetorical comments are criticism of "custom" and the misleading rhetorical devices it uses to control the masses. Contained in this criticism is an elaboration of his long established point that the bad style of "custom" reveals bad men and that the truth-seeking and righteous easily recognize bad style, "unmaskuline Rhetorick" (V, 5), for what it is,\(^\text{135}\) and that the arguments and rhetoric used by error ironically have an effect opposite to that intended and, thus, condemn the user and his position.

Each of these first two treatises begins with a complaint about the practical advantage given to tyranny by men's.sinfully adhering to "custom" rather than searching for the truth.\(^\text{136}\) The one sentence given the subject in The Tenure grows, because of the people's overwhelming response to the Eikon Basilike, into the tirade which begins Eikonoklastes. In this second statement he sees truth not loved by many and says she will find acceptance in England only "how she can":

And though it be an irksom labour to write with industrie and judicious pains that which neither weigh'd, nor well read, shall be judg'd without industry or the paines of well
judging, by faction and the easy literature of custom and opinion, it shall be ventur'd yet, and the truth not smother'd, but sent abroad, in the native confidence of her single self, to earn, how she can, her entertainment in the world, and to finde out her own readers; few perhaps, but those few, such of value and substantial worth, as truth and wisdom, not respecting numbers and bigg names, have been ever wont in all ages to be contented with. (V, 65)

Although in Eikonoklastes he never ceases to accuse his opponent\(^ \text{137}\) of bad rhetorical practice, he frequently blames the audience for its values which allow such rhetoric to mislead it. He says he is not surprised that Charles'\(^ \text{138}\) rhetoric pretends to be righteous:

> It is no new, or unwonted thing for bad men to claim as much part in God as his best servants; to usurp and imitate thir words, and appropriate to themselves those properties which belong onely to the good and righteous. (V, 241)\(^ \text{139}\)

But these devices of rhetoric are effective only when used by bad men because the audience lacks regard for liberty. The people of England are deceived because they know not how to use or possess the liberty which they fought for: but with the faire words and promises of an old exasperated foe, are ready to be stroak'd and tam'd again, into the wonted and well pleasing state of thir true Norman villenage, to them best agreeable. (V, 290)

In general Milton's thesis in attacking the Eikon is that a bad book reveals a bad man, and so he is particularly ready to argue that the prayer plagiarized from Sidney's Arcadia and called Charles' own reveals the falsity of both borrower and idolizing audience. The stealing of a prayer from a romance and the offering of it as an example of piety reinforces not only his belief that shoddy rhetoric indicates a false heart, but also his idea that rhetorical devices designed to deceive others ironically reveal the deceiver (V, 85-89).
Finally, after a review of so much of what Milton sees as the tedious evidence of bad intentions and lack of eloquence, Eikonoklastes concludes with a bitter assessment of the mass audience and the style that appeals to them. The kind of oratory that Eikon Basilike represents is able to do not what the author aims at,

to stirr the constancie and solid firmness of any wise Man, or to unsettle the conscience of any knowing Christian, if he could ever aim at a thing so hopeless, and above the genius of his _cleric_ elocation, but to catch the worthless approbation of an Inconstant, irrational, and Image-doting rabble; that like a credulous and hapless herd, begott'n to servility, and inchanted with these popular institutes of Tyranny, subscrib'd with a new device of the Kings Picture at his prayers, hold out both thir eares with such delight and ravishment to be stigmatiz'd and board through in witness of thir own voluntary and beloved baseness. The rest, whom perhaps ignorance without malice, or some error, less than fatal, hath for the time misled, on this side Sorcery or obduration, may find the grace and good guidance to bethink themselves, and recover. (V, 308-309)

As in the last lines above he can still hope that there are those whose minds are open to the truth, but his hope for any general results of either eloquence or plain logic is certainly more restricted than in his earlier comments on rhetoric.

Yet even as he said this he was at work on the first of his three major defenses. And it is in these, despite the temper of the majority, that his own vision of himself as orator is finally realized after the hints and starts of ten years of prose writing. In the defenses we get a coherent statement of the interdependence of good life and good words. Out of this understanding grows the classical description of the orator at work in very particular circumstances. Of less importance, but also out of this understanding of morals and rhetoric, comes Milton's excoriation of his enemies; but even though
there is much of this it represents nothing new in Milton's thinking.

Merritt Hughes encourages a search through the barbs directed at Milton's enemies for comments on rhetoric:

It is on Milton's occasional outbursts against the taste of his opponents that we have mainly to rely for his evidently strong and clear ideas about the rhetorical principles which governed his prose, and perhaps nowhere more consciously than in the regicide tracts.140

Yet it is hard to find anything in the vituperation in these works that has not been said essentially in earlier ones.141 In each of the defenses he charges his opponent with using rhetoric to lead the people from truth: Salmasius is accused, Milton giving great attention to the detail of his phrases, of "most egregious, worn-out rhetorical cosmetic" and "trifling sententious Pharisaical speeches" (VII, 225, 241),142 and More is said to have created in his characterization of the late king

some hyperborean and fabulous Charles, whom you draw
in whatever false colours may happen to hit your fancy . . .
as baits for vulgar ears. (VIII, 173)

In contrast Milton again argues that his own autobiography was "a naked and simple narrative of facts" (IX, 87).143

His noting the disparity between the rhetorics of the two sides serves in his mind to destroy his enemies' ethos and to establish his own.144 Thus he uses his great subject and his own humble prayerful attitude toward it to measure the "false heroics" of Salmasius (VII, 8-9, 15) and the use of character witnesses and "a parade and expence of fine phrases" by More to cover his evil (IX, 219). Repeatedly he rejoices in seeing in the enemy's words a double sense that condemns the speaker:145
You keep on he tells Salmiasi doing over again what you have done from the very beginning of your discourse, and what incompetent practitioners do—argue unawares against their own side of the case. (VII, 455)

Throughout, he uses the most vituperative means at his disposal for contumely and character assassination, for which he only once defends himself (IX, 107-113).

When we turn from vehemence and look at the positive remarks on rhetoric in this period we find unqualified adherence to the classical models Milton had studied from his earliest years. In a letter of 1652, for example, when he was taken up with the justification of the Commonwealth, he notes the political value of his pen, and he does so in the exact terms of his university days. Eloquence learned from his "youth upwards," he says, is the counterpart of bearing arms in behalf of freedom (XII, 57). And in the Second Defense he recalls that "devoted even from a child to humanizing studies" he consciously chose to serve not with arms but with art:

I thought, therefore, that if it were the will of God these men should perform such gallant exploits, it must be likewise his will, that when performed, there should be others to set them forth with becoming dignity and ornament; and that the truth, after being defended by arms, should be alike defended by reason—the only defence which is truly and properly human. (VIII, 11)

Even as he defines his role as official spokesman for those who overthrew the monarchy, he recalls that he is simply applying the basic principles of good rhetoric learned in the grammar school. At one point in the Defense of Himself he tells his fellow libertarians that men such as themselves "who as boys are accustomed under so many masters to sweat in the shade at eloquence" must now censure the
enemies of freedom with oratorical forms practiced in childhood on the long dead tyrants of antiquity (IX, 223). On the other hand, he repeatedly chides his opponents, Salmasius and More, with not being properly educated and with deviating from the classical ideal of rhetoric as the force which builds civilization. 149

In fact, he opens the entire formal controversy in the First Defense by insulting Salmasius' learning, saying that the king's forces are trying to use the same methods of composition that he himself does but that their bad cause and characters are not only revealed readily but even made worse by their attempts to misuse the powers of rhetoric. Salmasius, he says, is not even capable of performing a good school exercise:

What boy just out of school, or what brotherkin from any friary you like, could not have made a rhetorical exercise out of this royal fame more eloquently—yea, more Latinly—than this royal speechmaker. (VII, 23)150

And to set himself up as the opposite—the truly well educated man praised from the prologues to Areopagitica—Milton repeatedly recalls classical authors and ancient defenses of eloquence as the means to good government. 151 In the introduction to the First Defense, he distinguishes between his own credentials and those of his opponent by recalling that Salmasius was hired to do his job152 and is by nature and training unfit in oratory, 153 for oratory is an art whose end is the determination of political courses and the judging of political acts. He then continues to berate Salmasius and attempts to define his own role by recalling the hope of Aristotle's Rhetoric that the cause of truth would have rhetorical resources at least as
sophisticated as those of its opponents. He says, in support of his work,

Nature and laws would be in ill case if slavery were eloquent, and liberty mute; if tyrants should find defenders, and they that are potent to master and vanquish tyrants should find none. . . . Let me therefore enter upon this noble cause with cheerfulness grounded on the assurance that on the other side are cheating, and trickery, and ignorance and outlandishness, and on my side the light of truths and reason, and the practice and theory of the best historic age. (VII, 13)

One of the many instances in which Milton distinguishes his own humanism from Salmasius' tactics is his showing how his opponent has adjusted the classical vision of the purpose of eloquence to defend monarchy. According to Cicero\textsuperscript{154} it was eloquence which first tamed men and created civilization, but Salmasius, Milton points out, fits Cicero's praise of eloquence to his own needs and maintains that "when men were at first scattered asunder and straying about, some wise and eloquent man brought them over into civil life" to become their absolute monarch (VII, 397).

As he closes the First Defense and has for the first time in a way that satisfied him fulfilled his aspirations as a writer,\textsuperscript{155} he pauses to discuss his being the spiritual, heroic voice in the new order of freedom begun by the Commonwealth. Having fulfilled his commitment to God and man in using his talent to defend freedom and having fulfilled his introductory promise to be eloquent in behalf of worthy deeds, he now reverses his application of the opening principle and challenges others to further defend the justice of their revolution by the argument of their good lives:
One thing yet remains, haply the greatest, and that is, that we too, my countrymen, yourselves refute this adversary of yours, which to do I see no other way than by striving constantly to outdo all men's bad words by your own good deeds. (VII, 553)

And so seven years later when he republished the First Defense he says he has served mankind and pointed the way to freedom by a composition commensurate with the highest actions:

In this book I have indicated and brought to light, from the highest authors of wisdom, both divine and human, matters whereby, I trust not only the English people has been adequately defended in this cause, but numerous other human beings as well, hitherto deluded by foul ignorance of their right and by false show of religion,—multitudes of men, I say, except such as themselves prefer and deserve to be slaves--have been quite set free. (VII, 557)

In the Second Defense he is even freer than in the first in considering his role as an orator in the highest sense. Since he has been attacked he has even greater need to show his own oratorical powers, both to reveal the falsity of his opponent's methods and to demonstrate the vitality of the true rhetorical tradition, that in which he is working. Thus he begins the Second Defense by describing his patriotism (VIII, 9-11) and rises to the emotional heights expected of a powerful exordium:

I confess it is with difficulty I restrain myself from soaring to a more daring height than is suitable in an exordium, and from casting about for something of more grandeur, to which I may give utterance: for, to whatever degree I am surpassed (of which there can be little doubt) by the ancient illustrious orators, not only as an orator, but also as a linguist . . . I shall surpass no less the orators of all ages in the nobleness and instructiveness of my subject. This it is, which has imparted such expectation, such celebrity to this theme, that I now feel myself not in the forum or on the rostrum, surrounded by a single people only, whether Roman or Athenian, but, as it were, by listening Europe, attending, and passing judgment. (VIII, 13)
In this ever increasing willingness to see himself as the supreme artist in the Commonwealth he must, according to both classical requirements, defend his own character. As he does so he reminds us that his effective rhetoric is the result of his good life:

I am not such a one, who has ever disgraced fair words by foul deeds, or the language of a free man by the actions of a slave. (VIII, 119)

In contrast to those who try to use rhetoric for evil ends, Milton says of himself in a line reminiscent of the Apology (III, 362) that he "boast of no other eloquence than that persuasion which is in truth itself" (VIII, 105).

The natural conclusion to his seeing himself as the spokesman for his purified fellow citizens is to see his future words depending on their actions. Yet what in fact concludes the exhortation to virtue in the peroration is an ominous note, not merely a warning given for its rhetorical value, but a suspicion that virtue will not govern the nation. After warning them that they must be wise and good to remain free and in God's care (VIII, 249-51), he opens a door for his future departure from them:

As for myself, to whatever state things may return, I have performed, and certainly with a good will, I hope not in vain, the service which I thought would be of most use to the commonwealth. (VIII, 253)

As he says, whatever the future holds, there was a moment when his artistic powers and the deeds of good and brave men were in conjunction. His effort then was not wanting:

I have celebrated, as a testimony to them, I had almost said, a monument, which will not speedily perish, actions which were glorious, lofty, which were almost above praise; and if I have done nothing else, I have assuredly discharged my trust. (VIII, 253)
As early as 1654, then, Milton is looking to his future as a writer and weighing the goodness of his audience in the balance against his own heroic conceptions of art, based as they were, for all their identification with classical ideals, on the knowledge and virtue Milton believed he enjoyed as a Christian. Although there is surely no single reason for Milton's largely avoiding national subjects when he comes to his major poetry, it seems worth suggesting here that the failure of his countrymen to live up to his good words and the collapse of the Commonwealth helped change the emphasis in his artistic ideals. There is reason at least for speculation along these lines when in the final lines of the Second Defense—a continuation of the quotation above—he abruptly compares his rhetorical methods to those of the epic poet and then closes on a note of heroic self-evaluation designed to chasten those who held back from the heights toward which he pointed:

> It will be seen that the harvest of glory was abundant; that there were materials for the greatest operations, but that men were not to be found for the work; yet there was not wanting one, who could give good counsel; who could exhort, encourage; who could adorn and celebrate, in praises destined to endure forever, the transcendent deeds, and those who performed them. (VIII, 255)

The Defense of Himself could add to this analysis neither more hope for society nor further conviction of the propriety of Milton's personal achievement.\(^{157}\) There was nothing more he could do toward renewal of the national conscience. As the pure life he believed to be essential for freedom seemed to grow further and further from the reach of either the ruling classes or the nation as a whole, he must have felt that his previous disappointments in public causes had been
valid warnings. As he had in fact long suspected, the nature of English society precluded his achieving in a practical political way the heroic ends expected of the orator in a true republic.

1656-1674

For Milton the role of eloquent orator was, in practice, concluded with the writing of the defenses, for the works of the last years of his public service offered neither greatly noble deeds to praise, nor leisure to prepare and compose, nor even an audience which would savor the fine tones of the broad exposition of his republicanism. Rather, this period saw on the part of Puritan political leaders confusion, distrust, and a lack of the convictions and will to further the work of freedom that Milton saw his countrymen begin and worked to help them finish. And so all of Milton's comments on rhetoric and knowledge written after the Defense of Himself stress the virtue of plainness in style and of simplicity in structure and urge the use of the Scriptures—as Milton sees them, full of perspicuous teaching—as the source of absolute knowledge. Accordingly, the style of the works in this last period has generally been seen as following the ideals of clarity and brevity set down in these same works, and some effort has been made by critics to account for the change from a grand to a low style. Effort, too, has been made to show how extremely suitable to Milton's political purposes—a last effort at statement of Puritan ideals—this plain style was.
The simplest explanation for the change, if we agree that the late pamphlets are reduced to a plain rhetorical mode,\(^\text{160}\) is that the rapidly changing political scene forced Milton to compose hastily and to be brief in order to get his material quickly into the hands of those who might absorb it as they were deciding on the nation's future.\(^\text{161}\) It would then be discreet of Milton to praise an unadorned, logical presentation of facts, the method he himself is using. And if expediency is a main cause of his here defending the low style it also likely contributes to his insistence on the exclusiveness of the Bible as the source of knowledge with which to determine the future form of the English church and government.

Yet despite the obvious effects of the situation on Milton's comments on rhetoric and knowledge in this period, it helps to understand his overall development as a writer if we consider the fact that this late emphasis on the plain and clear is a perfectly natural conclusion to his earlier stated principles on the eloquence and power of truth and his scattered hints at the superfluousness of rhetoric. After synthesizing Greek and Christian ideas of truth and discourse in *Areopagitica* and the regicide works, Milton seems in the late fifties to have chosen to use the religious half of the synthesis in preference to certain beauties of style.\(^\text{162}\) Given his faith in the visibility of God's hand in the affairs of states, his lack of practical success in oratory with the majority of educated Englishmen, and his natural inclination to see the Bible as both a unique source of Truth and a model of plainness, we can see at least a strong possibility that in
the final discouraging months of the Commonwealth he reduced his practice of rhetoric to accord with an austere, completely spiritual (Biblical) ideal of language as a vehicle for truth. Thus, besides the tracts composed in haste we have The Christian Doctrine, Of True Religion, and the voices of the Father and the Son in the epics, in all of which is inherent a carefully reduced principle of rhetoric. Of course, this emphasis on seeing Milton's turn to near artlessness is distorting in its oversimplicity; but since Milton after 1656 wrote no heroic prose, it is important to consider the principles which he announces in his last efforts so that we may understand his actual judgment of the art of which he was a master.

Modern critics, as suggested early in this essay, have tried to resolve the apparent split between Milton's general praise of classical learning and his later distancing of his most basic self from humanistic values. Perhaps they have attempted resolution because our principles of judgment are so different from Milton's, which finally measured everything by his faith in the knowledge contained in the Bible. At the conclusion of his essay on the vision of the poet in Milton's prose John F. Huntley recognizes a simple principle of spirituality in Milton's art, but can only wonder about our response to it and then ask some very insightful questions:

Perhaps the poetry of Milton's final years was designed to provoke a few readers to explicate the latent relationships of their own faith more fully and persistently than the accidents of natural experience might call for. But we are left with a haunting question which twentieth-century criticism does not seem ready to cope with. What is the reader's responsibility to Milton's poem and to his own "salvation" as Milton defined the process? If
one of the "fit . . . though few" were permitted to
read only The Christian Doctrine or Paradise Lost,

If Huntley's question is not merely rhetorical, and it does not seem
to be, it suggests that we might be more open than we have to Milton's
desire, or possible desire, for a greatly restricted use of rhetoric.

The first work in this period, A Treatise of Civil Power, has
been highly praised for its clear logical method. Austin Woolrych
says that its rhetoric is "at once noble and simple,"164 and James
Egan shows at length how in this treatise "the plain style defines
the sacred spiritual identity of the regenerate Christian." Egan
argues that here Milton

forsakes the complex rhetoric of his earlier works in
favor of revealing truth to those "sensible and ingenuous
men" whose regenerate sensibility allows them to grasp
the sweeping implications of Christian liberty.165

Harry Smallenburg, in an even more particular analysis than Egan's,
demonstrates that the style in the pamphlet carefully captures the
nature of the opposing forces in the revolution and gives the reader,
by an adjustment of his spirit, an experience of the qualities of true
political freedom:

The style identifies the republic as the only form of
government that can restore "decent order, ease and
benefit" to the Commonwealth. After the years of dis­
ruption in the state, the pamphlet itself is low-keyed
and rational. Descriptions of the civil order under
each form of government dramatize by their formulation
the way that monarchy by nature perpetuates tension,
disunion and disruption, while parliamentary rule
naturally encourages and perpetuates unity and stability.

Smallenburg makes a particular point of noting the difference of this
low style from that of some earlier works:
The absence of tropes suggests a general unwillingness to associate the ideal government with the often harsh but moving, exciting, and emotionally stimulating world of, say, Areopagitica and the antiprelatical tracts.\textsuperscript{166}

In the conclusion to \textit{Civil Power} Milton states what is apparently his basic rhetorical ideal in 1659. Again focusing on the ultimate knowledge in the Bible and using its style and teachings, he assumes that if honest men have "well considered what hath bin here argu'd" (VI, 39) they will be converted to his views:

But having herin the scripture so copious and so plane, we have all that can be properly called true strength and nerve: the rest would be but pomp and incumberance. Pomp and ostentation of reading is admired of the vulgar: but doubtless in matters of religion he is learnedest who is planest. The brevity I use, not exceeding a small manual, will not therefore, I suppose, be thought the less considerable, unless with them perhaps who think that great books only can determine great matters. I rather choose the common rule, not to make much ado where less may serve. Which in controversies and those especially of religion, would make them less tedious, and by consequent read after, by many more, and with more benefit. (VI, 41)

The religious style illustrated as well as defended in this quotation is closer than any of Milton's previous writing to the ideal of the power of simple truth praised in his early tracts.\textsuperscript{167} He sets aside the attempt to effect the responses thought usually to be due the successful oration—the persuasive strokes of rhetoric—and depends on the flat statement of his position in its simplest rational form. His exordium in this "Treatise" is a brief preface to the Parliament, in which he says he has served them well before. The argument then is confined to four basic reasons why the civil powers have no right to interfere in spiritual matters. The failure, then, of even this simple presentation to be accepted or even understood\textsuperscript{168} must have suggested
to him that there was, perhaps, nothing else to build on, that language would not penetrate some minds.

The second publication in this troubled year, 1659, is his Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means To Remove Hirelings Out of the Church. In this he so asserts the utter plainness of the truth of the Bible that he finally declares that education beyond the basic languages necessary for reading the Scriptural text in the original is wasted on ministers of the gospel (VI, 96). Admittedly, he is not rejecting all learning here, but he is desperately separating the vital from the expendable in the teaching of the knowledge necessary for salvation. In insisting on knowledge of Scripture alone as he locates the practical basis for Reformation he moves another step closer to the values and the rhetorical norm which govern Paradise Regained and its apparent rigidity.

One further published movement toward this norm was his final plea to Parliament on the eve of Restoration to keep the liberties of the Commonwealth. In this, The Readie and Easie Way, he reminds the members of Parliament of the good words of his heroic defenses of their deeds (VI, 116) and warns that the character of the returning royalist forces is revealed in their writings:

Let them now but read the diabolical forerunning libells, the faces, the gestures . . . of our newly animated common enemies crept lately out of thir holes, thir hell, I might say, by the language of their infernal pamphlets. (VI, 139)

Though he admits that the straight truth of his own pamphlet may be "the last words of our expiring liberty," he hopes to have "spoken perswasion to abundance of sensible and ingenious men" (VI, 148).
This last clause permits a reader to heed Milton's claims, but the prophetic cry and quotation from Jeremiah that immediately precede this line leave no doubt that Milton felt that he was speaking to no one among the pro-monarchy majority, that he was speaking only because it was God's will that he do so: 170

. . . but men who set thir mindes on main matters and sufficiently urge them, in these most difficult times I finde not many. . . . Thus much I should perhaps have said though I were sure I should have spoken only to trees and stones; and had none to cry to, but with the Prophet, 0 earth, earth, earth! to tell the very soil it self, what her perverse inhabitants are deaf to. (VI, 148)

The failure of his audience to applaud his values, a failure which had worried Milton even in the proclusions and especially in the divorce tracts sixteen years earlier, is completely acknowledged in this last treatise in behalf of revolution. 171 His hope as he wrote the antiprelatical pamphlets, that men "were in the right way to liberty" and could move "to the deliverance of the whole life of mortal man from slavery" (VIII, 129), is given over. The Readie and Easie Way gives us, as Parker says,

a stirring, unforgettable picture, this man fighting in his own way for human freedom as the forces of history swept over him. 172

With the exception of one minor bludgeoning 173 of the poor rhetoric of a royalist sermon ("Brief Notes Upon a Late Sermon"), Milton had little else in prose to say or learn about rhetoric and its many uses. The only other major effort in prose during this period 174 is The Christian Doctrine, an even more relentless effort than the late pamphlets to reduce to a basic form the truths that men need to live by.
Within Milton's canon The Christian Doctrine is the work most dependent on stylistic simplicity and the use of a clear Ramist method of division\textsuperscript{175} to develop its subject matter, some seven thousand scriptural quotations (by Parker's count) which expound the fundamental truths of revelation. As Parker says, Milton avoids in this the attempt at stylistic devices of any kind:

As an index to Milton's mind and character, the Christian Doctrine is a remarkably revealing work. His absorbing devotion to its single purpose led him willingly to discard his own great learning. He rarely introduces an allusion of any kind. He sacrifices, too, every opportunity of producing a work with literary merit.\textsuperscript{176}

The plain rhetoric of this piece is, of course, perfectly correspondent with the Platonic and Augustinian tendency to insist on absolute knowledge as the basis of discourse and to allow that knowledge to determine its own oratorical form. That is, Milton's exposition of the doctrine derived from the word of God aims above all at clarity and order, qualities he insisted would reflect rhetorically the nature of real truth. This work, then, which abandons all attempt at eloquence beyond a plain statement of the message is directed, Milton says, not only to the highly learned but to "men of a mature and manly understanding" (XIV, 11).\textsuperscript{177} Thus, he does not expound formal theology\textsuperscript{178} and does not call upon sophisticated methods of development of his material, but instead he offers the simple form of stating his opinions and quoting the relevant passages of Scripture from which he derived them. He explains his method thus:

And whereas the greater part of those who have written most largely on these subjects have been wont to fill whole pages with explanations of their own opinions, thrusting into the margin the texts in support of their
doctrine with a summary reference to the chapter and verse, I have chosen, on the contrary, to fill my pages even to redundancy with quotations from Scripture, that so as little space as possible might be left for my own words, even when they arise from the context of revelation itself. (XIV, 11)

Truth, as he sees it in The Christian Doctrine, can be discovered. Thus we may note that the knowledge demanded of the orator by Plato can be achieved not only because of the content in the revelation in Scripture but even more importantly because of the Holy Spirit who enlightens the reader of those writings. Moreover, the Spirit is also manifested in both the content and the form of the speech of an inspired Christian orator. And so the pattern is repeated again from orator to audience: the listener then must also interact with the Holy Spirit who is in the words that come to him. When Milton spoke of inspired knowledge, his emphasis is on inspired and the vitality of the Spirit of Truth is at least as important to his understanding as his faith in the content of Scripture. And with such faith in the effect of the Word he can insist on revelation plainly presented as the best form of truth:

Judge my present undertaking according to the admonishing spirit of God, and neither adopt my sentiments, nor reject them, unless every doubt has been removed from your belief by the clear testimony of revelation. (XIV, 15)

Before he thus warns the reader to follow this "admonishing spirit of God" he establishes his own character in two basic humanistic tenets which govern the rhetorical qualities he chooses: an absolute individualism and a relentless search for truth. He says he came to the compiling of this treatise precisely because sophistical formalities and the "quibbles of grammarians" had hidden the truth,
and he finally had to have recourse only to his own findings, "seeing
that I could have no wish to practice any imposition on myself in
such a matter" (XIV, 7). Furthermore, he found that "the offers of God
were all directed, not to an indolent credulity, but to constant dili-
gence, and to an unwearied search after truth" (XIV, 9). Thus, when he
offers the treatise as "my best and richest possession," we must at
least consider that he finds its utterly simple style the most conform-
able to truth of all rhetorical types for straight religious teaching.

Not only does he remind us throughout the work of his belief
in the clarity of the Bible, but at one point he says that it is the
only place at which men may meet to agree on doctrine. In this in-
stance, trying to cut through the complex teachings on the nature of
the Son of God he concludes:

Let us then discard reason in sacred matters, and follow
the doctrine of Holy Scriptures exclusively. (XIV, 197)

Not only figurative language but logically developed doctrine is
measured by what Milton sees as an absolute expression of the truth.181
The last years of the Commonwealth drove him to conclude on the basis
of his rhetorical theory that the only possible ground for a dis-
covery of necessary truth was the Word of God. Regenerate com-
munication between Christians with definite religious and political
differences would not be found either in the persuasion of rhetoric
or in the demonstration of logic, but had, finally, to be attained by
following the Holy Spirit as it led men to the truth in the words of
Scripture. In no other way would men effectively continue the free-
dom of the Reformation. Just as his political and religious ideals
had increasingly demanded absolute revolution, so in this piece, his rhetorical theory finally is purged of all need for the enchantments of "art." Language is "purified" to the spiritual force of the bare truth. Nothing else is offered as a medium between speaker and audience or between men and truth.

We find, then, that after his efforts in the major political Defenses, Milton makes simplicity and directness prevail. In these later works, written while the Commonwealth crumbled and Milton drew nearer to the freedom he needed to compose the poetry that would justify all his earlier hopes, the necessity of rhetorical simplicity asserted itself. The virtue of plainness culminated in the Christian Doctrine and ultimately in Paradise Regained, which reveals a norm for speech of regenerate man as he confronts the forces of evil. The Christian Doctrine judges that the language found in the Scripture is "plain and perspicuous in all things necessary to salvation, and adapted to the instruction even of the most unlearned, through the medium of diligent and constant reading" (XVI, 258).

That this doctrine of plainness is actually his final position is attested to, not only by the introduction to The Christian Doctrine, which is probably written late,\(^2\) but also by Of True Religion, an attack on Roman Catholicism made in 1673. In this last treatise, he chooses a style that is brief and direct, "plainer to Common apprehension" (VI, 165), and he repeats several times his belief in the "general Protestant Maxim" that Scripture is "plain and perspicuous abundantly to explain its own meaning in the properest words" (VI, 169).
And on the basis of this faith in truth and its plain presentation, he posits in this work, a year before his death, a doctrine recalling the faith of Areopagitica, a doctrine of religious toleration and freedom of discussion for all Protestant believers. In this last statement we are reminded again of the consistency of his basic values:

How shall we prove all things, which includes all opinions at least founded on Scripture, unless we not only tolerate them, but patiently hear them, and seriously read them? If he who thinks himself in the truth professes to have learnt it, not by implicit faith, but by attentive study of the Scriptures & full persuasion of heart, with what equity can he refuse to hear or read him, who demonstrates to have gained his knowledge by the same way? Is it a fair course to assert truth by arrogating to himself the only freedom of speech, and stopping the mouths of others equally gifted? (VI, 177)

To permit such toleration as this Milton depended on his faith that the rhetorical simplicity of the scriptural presentation of the truths necessary to salvation was not a kind of language peculiar to one collection of writings but an ideal which men must strive for, as Milton himself does in the style of this pamphlet.

Perhaps Milton would agree that to some extent his own constricting of the range of rhetorical devices in his later prose works and his qualification of the value of rhetorical virtuosity by the relative facility in the art he assigns to God and Satan in Paradise Lost and to Jesus and Satan in Paradise Regained was caused by the failure of the English to pursue the Reformation by his heroic standards. As he says in his History of England,

Worthy deeds are not often destitute of worthy relaters: as by a certain Fate great Acts and great Eloquence have most commonly gone hand in hand, equaling and honouring each other in the same Ages. (X, 31)
From this judgment it is only a step to his attendant belief that
when true learning and good deeds disappear from a nation,

then Eloquence, as it were consorted in the same
destiny, with the decrease and fall of vertue cor-
rupts also and fades. (X, 33)

And so perhaps the failure of the revolution turned him to the nar-
rative of redemption as the only fit subject for his art. In any
case, his use of the possibilities inherent in rhetoric narrowed
as his hope for reformation on his terms grew increasingly dim, and
the disciplined voices of final poetic heroes represent a last example
of a rhetoric that is clear and simple, one that in the darkness
of the world might "begin to save mankind" (II, ii, 481).
Notes to Chapter II


3. The last political tracts, The Christian Doctrine, Of True Religion, and even the divine voices in the epics are generally less dependent on rhetorical effects than most of the earlier works (excluding the first three divorce tracts).


11. Major, "Milton's View," pp. 685, 691-93, 696, 706-10. See also J. B. Broadbent who says, after close rhetorical analysis of the major poems, that it is his feeling "that as a poet he [Milton] came..."
to trust less and less in art and even that he always had a sense that

12"Milton on Style," p. 54.
13Second Defense (VIII, 131).
14Samuel, pp. 50, 56.
16Seventeenth Century, pp. 307, 315-17.
17Miller, p. 326.
20Fletcher, Intellectual Development I, 226-28; Clark, St. Paul's School, pp. 4-15.
21Clark, pp. 176-77.
22See Wilbur E. Gilman, Milton's Rhetoric: Studies in His Defense of Liberty, Univ. of Missouri Studies, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Columbia, Mo.: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1939); Wittreich, "Crown," argues throughout that Milton modifies the standard forms to suit his own needs: YP has numerous comments in introductions and notes, especially II, 164-78.
25Parker, I, 51.
26Parker has pointed out that Milton's academic exercises, probably done as a master's candidate, reveal both the character of university training and the mode of his public statement in later years: .... all his exercises reflect the narrowness of the curriculum, the zeal of contradiction and intense self-centeredness of the university community. He learned to argue as one in complete possession of the truth, combating the forces of ignorance and
error—whatever the subject, or his side of it. He learned to anticipate rebuttal and to ridicule the position of his opponents" (I, 109). See also Fletcher, Intellectual Development, I, 216-18.

27 Samuel ("On Style," p. 41) says this is merely a schoolboy imitation of convention.

28 Parker (I, 53) says these are Milton's last works at the master's level. See YP, I, 216, 234, 265, 287 for different dating.

29 Wittreich ("Crown," p. 33) argues that the structure is anti-conventional, rebellious; McEuen (YP, I, 216-17) says not to take the comments too seriously.

30 1, 3, 6, 7.

31 Wittreich (p. 39) says Milton is purposely insulting his audience.

32 See McEuen (YP, I, 240): "This diatribe against scholastic philosophy in general . . . might better have been aimed at the evils of scholastic philosophy, in view of the fact that here and elsewhere Milton cogently employed the techniques of the very system which he decried."


34 "On Style," p. 44.

35 McEuen (YP, I, 242) discusses the relative injustice of Milton's condemnation.

36 The most complete attack on the education of clergymen comes in the Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means (1659), discussed in the last section of this chapter.

37 For discussions of this as the standard humanist position see Major, pp. 689-90; YP, I, 246.


39 YP, I, 287.

40 "Crown," p. 34.

41 Barker, p. 7; YP, I, 287.
Barker, p. 7; see "Seventh Prolusion" (XII, 261).

Barker, p. 9; see "Seventh Prolusion" (XII, 285).

YP, I, 290.

"On Style," p. 41.

Haller, Rise, p. 304.


Haller, Rise, p. 355.

Samuel ("On Style," p. 41) notes that vehemence is the style which receives most of Milton's direct commentary.

See Haller (Rise, p. 353): "The ideal England with which in the name of presbyterianism he opposed prelatism really revolved about his conception of the poet-prophet and was based upon the divine right of the poet-prophet to speak freely whatever he took to be the truth. See also Webber (Eloquent "I," p. 192); she says that by projecting a future for art "Milton is enabled to go a step beyond the Puritan repudiation of artfulness as incompatible with soul saving." Milton can have the plain style for the present and hope for an ideal beyond the plain.

Haller (Rise, p. 344) warns that we must always keep in mind Milton's "Utopian idealism" when considering his plans in the tracts. See also Barker, Puritan Dilemma, pp. 15-16; Webber, p. 205.

Rosenberg ("Style and Meaning," p. 46) says that "the very stylistic technique /of Milton's lengthy periods/ makes it possible for Milton to develop ideas about personal liberty."

Via, "M's Antiprelatical Tracts," pp. 112-13, 119; Webber, pp. 184-85; Wittreich, pp. 21-22. Haller adds the point that autobiography was central to spiritual testimony in the Puritan tradition (Rise, p. 115).

Parker, I, 373; see also Rosenberg ("Parody of Style," pp. 113-118) for a consideration of Milton's accusations on his own terms.

Rise, p. 359.

Kranidas ("'Decorum,'" p. 178) studies Milton's association of Anglican rhetoric with other, non-verbal expressions of value, particularly liturgical clothing. YP, I, 526, lists seventeenth-century sources for objections to ceremonies. Rosenberg ("Parody of Style") argues that the rhetorical richness of the tract is satirical and that Milton's own voice is a plain one.

In YP, I (113-14, 537), disgust is registered at this passage, yet Kranidas has written an essay defending this passage as a conventional application of text in the period ("Milton and the Rhetoric of Zeal," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 6 /1964-65/, 423-32.)


Tetrachordon, IV, 142; Christian Doctrine, XVI, 273-79.

Rosenberg ("Style and Meaning," pp. 46-47) notes the failure of Milton's own style to match his ideal: "The stumbling-block for Milton is that if the Bible justifies a plain style, he must then justify his own ornate and profuse language." See also YP, I, 108-109.

Webber (Eloquent "I," p. 190) thinks that Milton is not sure in this work that he is the new voice.

66 Don M. Wolfe (YP, I, 118) says that Ussher's prominence as a scholar forced Milton to meet him on his own ground.

67 For comment on consequences of Milton's attitude toward interpretation of the Bible see Barker, Puritan Dilemma, p. 59; Haller, Liberty and Reformation, pp. 44-56; YP, I, 111, 119, 123, 127.

68 William Haller (Rise, p. 350) argues that Milton's belief in the common man is a compensation for his being cut off from the pulpit.

69 Don M. Wolfe (YP, I, 119-20) shows that Milton was not completely honest in his use of Ignatius' letters.

70 He sees the word battles as evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit, blames the established institutions for the poor state of religion and learning, argues that his plain style is an indication of the growth of Reformation.

71 Michael Lieb ("Milton's Of Reformation," p. 69) says that Milton associated the form of his pamphlet with the dialogues of Plato; see Apology (III, 1, 293).

72 Don M. Wolfe (YP, I, 123) says Milton dealt only with the weakest part of Hall's pamphlet.

73 Wolfe (YP, I, 124, 127) criticizes harshly both the religion and the aesthetic of the brutal style.

74 Haller (Rise, p. 357) maintains that this prayer is "Milton's way of indicating that his anti-prelatical pamphlets were less an interruption to his great poem than an impromptu anticipation."

75 Wolfe (YP, I, 127) says Milton had a remarkably correct understanding of the religious issues of the moment.


77 Wolfe (YP, I, 123) characterizes this attacking as "unrestrained bitterness unequaled as yet among the serious Puritan sallies against the prelates."

78 It is interesting for comparison to Paradise Regained (below, Chapter III) that in admitting that his enemy has rhetorical power, Milton compares the language of episcopal defenses to Satan's
rhetoric: "The substance of the tempters words to our Saviour were holy, but his drift nothing lesse" (III, i, 128). See YP, I, 686, n. 42.

79 Parker, I, 206.

80 Wolfe (YP, I, 126) says that Milton grossly misjudged the average layman in thinking him as diligent as he himself was in searching the Scripture.

81 The democracy inherent in this passage is discussed by Wolfe (YP, I, 127).

82 Rosenberg ("Meaning and Style," p. 53) says that the form contains characteristics of both the Puritan sermon and the classical oration.

83 Huntley, "Images of Poet," p. 106.

84 "Images of Poet," p. 106.


86 Huntley (p. 96) argues that the tract is much more rhetorical than logical in its substitution of words for evidence.


88 Liberty and Reformation, p. 59; Rise, p. 354.

89 YP, I, 201, 203.

90 Haller, Rise, p. 344.

91 Huntley ("Images of Poet," pp. 112-113) says that Milton gave up this hope by 1660; see also YP, I, 200, 205.

92 YP, I, 193, 201.

93 Wolfe (YP, I, 206) says that the most "vital ideas" are in the autobiographical parts.

94 He had been accused of being too vicious (III, i, 310).

95 Kranidas, "'Decorum,'" pp. 184-85.

96 Plato, Phaedrus, p. 154 (273E).

97 Second Defense (VIII, 131, 133).
98 Parker, I, 244-45; YP, II, 137-44.

99 Haller, Liberty and Reformation, p. 179.

100 The main sources of this idea as developed in this essay are Barker, Puritan Dilemma, pp. 74-80, 355-56; Haller, Liberty and Reformation, pp. 179-80; Parker, I, 274; YP, II, 143.

101 Barker (pp. 81-82, 98) discusses the logical method in the divorce tracts; see also Ernest Sirluck (YP, II, 164-65) on reason in these tracts and Arnold Williams (YP, II, 815) on Milton's use of direct language as a translator.

102 Barker, pp. 74-97.

103 YP, II, 146-54.


106 For discussions of the irrelevant reactions to the tracts see Parker, I, 244 and YP, II, 137-44.


108 Parker, I, 285-86.

109 Barker, Puritan Dilemma, p. 78.

110 The irony, as he points out (p. 62), is that Bucer and others who agreed with him were frequently republished even in Catholic countries.

111 In this period when he makes his greatest plea for the use of reasoned eloquence as a means to improve society according to the Truth, he sees Truth as evolving, at the general level, rather than as appearing in one instant in its fulness.

112 Parker, I, 276-77.

113 Parker, I, 276-77.

114 Barker, Puritan Dilemma, p. 84.
115 Barker, p. 96.


117 Barker, p. 81.

118 See Joseph A. Wittreich, "Milton's Areopagitica: Its Isocratic and Ironic Contexts" (Milton Studies, 4 /1972/), for an argument that Milton is ironically condemning Parliament by the Greek comparison.

119 Barker (Puritan Dilemma, p. 84) comments that in the passage quoted truth means "precepts" and so "It is in sincerity of endeavor that salvation lies rather than in submission to precepts."

120 Barker, pp. 81-82.

121 Barker, pp. 74-76; Parker (I, 265-66) says that on this point Milton broke with the Presbyterians.

122 Barker, p. 87; Haller, Liberty and Reformation, pp. 182-83.

123 Sirluck (YP, II, 194) says that in Milton's curriculum education "culminates in rhetoric."


125 Barker, pp. 118-20.


127 Second Defense (VIII, 131, 133).

128 Sirluck (YP, II, 202) says that the composition called for as the end of studies in Of Education is "composition conceived in the most ambitious terms."

129 Sirluck (YP, II, 171-78) discusses the studied effects of Milton's rhetoric in Areopagitica.


131 Each of the major defenses includes a definition of Milton's role as orator in response to the great deed of liberation, e.g., VIII, 11.
See, for example, First Defense: "I hope that for those who prefer the pursuit of truth before the interest of faction I have produced out of the law of God, the laws of nations, and the municipal laws of my own country, such abundance of proofs as shall leave it beyond question that a king of England may be brought to trial and put to death. With the rest, whose minds fanaticism possesses wholly, or whose wit has been so blunted by premature admiration of royal splendor that they can see nothing glorious or magnificent in true magnanimity and liberty—with these whether we strive either by reason and arguments or by examples, we strive in vain." (VII, 483)

At the beginning of The Defense of Himself he complains of being subject to all sorts of verbal abuse.

For Milton's attitude toward the people see Barker, 156; Parker, I, 362; YP, IV, 113-17, 264.


For example in The Second Defense Milton says that custom is slavery and that it is opposed by "Innocence of life and sanctity of manners" (VIII, 9).


Sandler (p. 169) warns against Milton's evaluations of Eikon's style. For Milton's own logical thought and style see YP, III, 107-31, 146.

Sandler (p. 172) says that "the pathos and sacrificial overtones of the Eikon Basilike which so exasperated Milton were to most Englishmen, whether episcopal or presbyterian, the mark of authenticity upon Charles' witness."

YP, III, 139.

Don M. Wolfe (YP, IV, 114-15) expresses surprise at the low quality and pervasiveness of Milton's use of derogatory epithets which make up much of the rhetorical commentary.

See also VII, 341-43; IX, 269.


See First Defense (VII, 123, 125, 277, 503); Parker (I, 422) notes that More was perfect proof to Milton that a base book was the product of a bad man (see, for example, IX, 161).

See, for example, The First Defense, in which he calls Salmasius' work "the brain sick envious rage of this mad sophist" and then wonders if he hasn't given him too much credit (VII, 551). Don M. Wolfe disapproves greatly of Milton's vituperation (YP, IV, 109, 258-59).


As in his early comments, so in the defenses Milton accuses his opponents of using a rhetoric patched together rather than having the eloquence of true knowledge (VII, 25, 67, 187, 317, 319; VIII, 81, IX, 287).

See also VII, 37.

See also VII, 183, 397; VIII, 15, 161.

This is one of Milton's most frequent insults: see, for example, VII, 531, in which he asks also why the English bishops didn't do what Salmasius was hired to do.

See also VII, 9, 11, 13, 69.

Cicero, De Oratore, I, 25 (I, viii, 32-34).

See VII, 551, 551-59, especially p. 559 which was written seven years after the original publication.

See Hoffman ("Rhetorical Structure") for a discussion of the classical form of the work.

Parker, I, 459; in YP (IV, 282-83) the Defense of Himself is given little praise in comparison to the other defenses.
It is a commonplace of Milton criticism that he is wrong about the clarity of the Bible's teachings; see note 87 above.


YP, VII, 211.


Arnold Stein says of Milton in this period, "Milton's return to the individual is not escape but return to the imaginative source of being, a kind of pruning of what did not grow right, as he had hoped and thought it would. The later Milton is less interested in speckled time running back to the age of gold than in the individual returning to the root." Heroic Knowledge (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1957), p. 212.


YP, VII, 48.


Egan (p. 193) says, "In the Milton canon Civil Power stands alone for its paucity of simile and metaphor." He is not including The Christian Doctrine in this comparison.

YP, VII, 193. The first of these argues that Milton is not rejecting learning and the second agrees but says that Milton in the late work put less value on liberal education than he did in the forties.

171 Barker (Puritan Dilemma, p. 100) notes the shift in Milton's idea of liberty from freedom to reorganize the state to freedom to follow the individual conscience.

172 Parker, I, 557.

173 Parker, I, 551-52.

174 Kelley, This Great Argument, pp. 8-24; YP, VI, 109.


176 Parker, I, 496-97; in YP (VI, 104-106) The Christian Doctrine is given credit for some liveliness of style.


178 In YP (VI, 106-108) it is said that Milton used a good deal of theology in addition to Scripture in putting together The Christian Doctrine.

179 See The Christian Doctrine (XVI, 273-79); see also YP (VI, 43-44) for a summary of Milton's doctrine of inspiration of the Scripture and the reader.

180 Parker, I, 498.

181 Arthur Sewell says of the later Milton, "Out of the depths of his distrust of the vanity of earthly things--of reason itself--Milton turned to obedience and was content to obey where he did not fully understand" (A Study of Milton's Christian Doctrine [New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1939], p. 211).

182 Parker, I, 496.
One point is clear about Milton's thinking on rhetoric, and that is that a speaker's values and his health of soul and mind are unmistakably revealed in the form of his speech. If Milton is in any way correct in thinking this, we should be able to apply his belief to his own poetry and find that the better we understand the basic values which the poem teaches, the more we will appreciate the effects and meaning of the rhetoric. And also having once established a relation between the value and rhetorical form, we should be able through a close study of the rhetoric to come to a much deeper comprehension of the values in the work. Paradise Regained, having a simple plot and two main figures who represent the opposite ends in the scale of Milton's religious values, lends itself well to a rhetorical study which applies Milton's own principles. And, in fact, a reading of the poem is greatly enriched when conducted in the light of the claims Milton made for language and what he understood as Christian doctrine.

To make such a study, however, it is necessary first to establish clearly the beginning point, i.e., the central values in the poem, and then to proceed to a rhetorical study of the speeches of the two central figures, who between them speak two-thirds of the poem's lines.
The variety of critical approaches to *Paradise Regained* and the varying degrees of success they find in the poetry suggest the real difficulty of finding the values which the poem offers. Therefore the method here will be to begin with the principle that the poem itself is the most certain statement of its own values. With this assumption we will then examine the criticism of the poem to see how little or how much it accepts this assumption and what effect acceptance has on individual evaluation of the poem. For, in fact, the whole body of criticism either directly or indirectly shows the necessity, which is cautiously being offered here as necessity, of seeing the poem as a seventeenth-century product that makes a distinct claim, first in its world and then in succeeding worlds, for an attitude that is best denominated "Christian faith."

To begin searching for the heart of Milton's values generally and his specific understanding of the importance of learning in relation to salvation, we may recall that Milton was finally more a fidelist than is often supposed. For although in Milton's writing we do not generally feel a tension between faith and reason, between divine and human knowledge, we can easily be more impressed with the scope of his learning than with the depth of his faith, as is shown by our being surprised, almost unbelieving, when the hero who is to regain paradise reduces the world of classical learning to an irrelevancy. Yet at the simplest level, the rejection of Athens seems to say that Greek culture is not helpful to the bringing in of the Kingdom the Son came to establish. And furthermore, as Elizabeth Pope points out, Milton is original in adding to the gospel narrative
the offer and rejection of Athens, a fact which makes the unsuccessful temptation of classicism all the more emphatic.³

The poem's own position on the rejection of classicism is certainly simple and clearly enough stated and can of itself be a viable reason for the Son's attitude; i.e., the poem says that the two ways of understanding life, Greek and Hebrew, are really not the same at their most central point. Arnold Stein, for example, in his own terms points out that for Hebrew faith, the experience of Abraham, there is "no real precedent in Greek philosophy."⁴ Nor does it help to suggest a separation of the forms from the substance of Greek culture by Jesus or Milton, for neither could accept the products and not the values of the Greeks. For the purpose of the classical curriculum reminds us that the study of rhetoric was the taking on of an entire culture, a unique way of apprehending life. In discussing the subject, Brian Vickers, for example, says it succinctly: "rhetoric was education was culture,"⁵ and he suggests further how difficult it is for us to grasp the fact that the teaching of a way of using language involved the inculcation of an entire value system. Thus, if the disparity between the two ways of approaching life is a fact, it is likely that an individual as serious in pursuit of the truth as was Milton would come to the point of rejecting one, despite the fact that much of the best of his world was trying to use them together.

Even though the modern reader can be bothered by what seems like Milton's preference for one of the two worlds, a distinction between them, such as Jacob Burckhardt's, shows us clearly the
ultimate split that Milton faced in his day. For example, Burckhardt is really speaking about the Greek and Hebrew difference when he says that in the Renaissance

Ancient literature, now worshipped as something incomparable, is full of the victory of philosophy over religious tradition . . . a marked contrast to the Christian faith in a Divine government of the world. ⁶

And he goes on to suggest also clearly why we cannot appreciate a decision against the Greek, since we are the heirs of a decision for some form of it even though we have not found the decision entirely satisfying. He says that in his own day (1860) man could be aware, in his loftiest moments in the search for truth, of the value of the Greek quest, but finally be unable to achieve it. Thus he speaks of the choice for worldliness of the Renaissance:

This worldliness was not frivolous, but earnest, and was ennobled by art and poetry. It is the lofty necessity of the modern spirit that this attitude, once gained, can never again be lost, that an irresistible impulse forces us to the investigation of men and things, and that we must hold this enquiry to be our proper end and work. How soon and by what paths this search will lead us back to God, and in what ways the religious temper of the individual will be affected by it, are questions which cannot be met by any general answer.⁷

Milton, on the other hand, was in this very period of great decisions and change able to stay strictly focused on a "path" that aimed first toward God. And it is in this context described by Burckhardt that Paradise Regained represents the rejection of the Greek way as a part of a larger "worldliness," which it also rejects. And if Burckhardt is even partly correct about the context created for the modern world by the past general choice for the "worldliness," it is easy to see why modern critics do not generally appreciate
Milton's position, since culturally we seem to have had the choice opposed to his over and done with long ago. Thus, Milton's insistence that the choice is fundamental to everything and that it must be made absolutely, becomes difficult for us even to hear.

As the previous chapter has shown concerning Milton's tightening views on the function and scope of rhetoric, Milton himself did not come to his final position on the value of the arts easily. From an early unquestioning acceptance of the saving role of arts in the service of God's truth, he moves to a later insistence on a more unadorned (Puritan) method of the verbal presentation of salvation. A good illustration of this move is the comparison of two passages, one early and one late, on the relation between delight in language and acceptance of the truth which the language literally expresses.

His early view is well represented in the beginning of Book II of The Reason of Church-government (1641), in which he discusses the difficulty of delivering truth to the mass of men. In this he says it is a bitter task, as, for example, Jeremiah records it, to tell men the plain, saving facts of God's revelation which oppose both their fallen appetites and the false teachings they have learned (III, 229-32). He then considers his God-given writing talent and his education and expresses a fear of being condemned as one who did not use his particular gifts to "adorn" or "beautify" the cause of God.

He then passes on to the well known autobiographical section in which he considers the subjects and forms of his yet unwritten poetry, poetry to be written in Britain's future peace, the time of
his own maturity. The important point of this passage is his consideration of the question of whether or not the truth needs "adorning" or "beautifying," for while he believes in the saving power of sound doctrine he also values the power of art to break down men's resistance to truth. And he also wants to bring his best abilities into the service and praise of God's Kingdom; thus, he sets as his highest goal, the writing "to God's glory by the honour and instruction of my country" (III, 236).

Having espoused literature as a successful way, in times of peace, of introducing men to saving truth, he naturally comes to a consideration of the relative values of Greek and Hebrew literature. Here, however, he merely holds them in suspension and does not drive to any complete or necessary distinctions between them. In fact, though he says that Hebrew lyric poetry is superior to Greek, he does not, like Jesus in Paradise Regained, make the Greek utterly inferior, but is rather inclined to find in the Scriptures the equivalents of Greek forms (as if the latter were the standards). For example, he sees the book of Revelation as "the majestic image of a high and stately Tragedy" (III, 238). But his doing this only emphasizes for us the difference between the two kinds of writing. However much he was in the mainstream of his culture in thinking the two compatible and viewing the Bible as possessed of classical literary forms, he points here to the necessity for the final Puritan separation of the two, though at this time he is certain that art is useful and perhaps necessary to the bringing in of the fullness of
the Kingdom. Art, he says, will illuminate truth for those dark in mind and weak in virtue by teaching over the whole book of sanctity and vertu through all the instances of example with such delight to those especially of soft and delicious temper who will not so much as look upon Truth herself, unless they see her elegantly drest, that whereas the paths of honesty and good life appear now rugged and difficult, though they be indeed easy and pleasant, they would then appeare to all men both easy and pleasant though they were rugged and difficult indeed. (III, 239)

The aesthetic problem for the Christian in these lines written in 1641 is that it is not fully clear whether the "paths" of truth are really easy or really difficult or whether they merely appear difficult to those who have not followed them (note the subjunctive "be" and "were"). Nor is it certain that being seen "elegantly drest" these ways will in fact be perceived substantially as delightful in themselves by minds which find them "rugged" in their unadorned state. At this date Milton merely assumes that elegance will make the truth attractive and will vitally engage the hearer in it. The possibility of elegance becoming an end in itself is simply passed over.

Paradise Regained, however, takes up the problem directly and in nearly the same figurative language (the path metaphor). In this late poem the position that the truth is hard, but the speaking about it may create delight is given as Satanic. The devil, at the end of Book I, tries to trap Christ by saying that men, or fallen spirits, could hear or read the truth without living by it.

Satan of course is not saying that the adorning by itself apart from truth is what is delightful, but he does say that one can be in the position of contemplating the statement without believing it to
the extent of following its directions. Thus Milton's early idea that eloquence itself pleases with its own beauty apart from truth is similar to Satan's in that in both there is delight not vitally connected to a person's accepting the truth. So we may at least say that in the later work Milton recognizes—by ascribing the position to Satan—that there is a possible danger in languishing in the pleasurable contemplation of truth or the form of its presentation without engaging in it fully.

At least in *Paradise Regained* the two views of the nature of truth itself are clearly divided by what the characters say and by what they do. To Satan truth is difficult and damning, to the Son plain and saving. And Satan's relation to it will not be ameliorated, nor the Son's strengthened by the addition of any aesthetic pleasure to its communication. Moreover, it should be noted that the very statement by Satan that he and others can rejoice in the hearing of the truth without really accepting it is actually a trick by which he hopes to get the Son's permission to continue talking with him, to penetrate his truth and to find an exception to it, not to be moved by it.

If we may take the rejections of power, politics, and learning in favor of trust in God as indicative of the ground value of the poem, we may say that the poem does contain large and unswerving statements against the embellishment or the implementation of truth by art or politics. We may further say that the poem puts its understanding of value into practice in the different rhetorics of Jesus and Satan, one essentially honest and the other essentially
dishonest. That is, the form of *Paradise Regained*, relatively bare of ornament and rigidly structured as a debate, embodies the vision that is at the center of the poem and of Milton's whole understanding of God, creation, and man, whether that vision appears harsh or redemptive to an individual reader.

If we look at the criticism of the poem we find that much of the very good recent criticism has been directed towards the poem's form, starting with convention and theory, both ancient and Renaissance. Yet even this close contact as a beginning does not necessarily engage us in the question of basic value. And criticism which begins with only the voices of the two main speakers is even freer than criticism which analyzes formal theory to bypass the issue of the poem's reason for its plain style.

The suggestion that Milton may be read for something other than the primary values he intended is not really new (cf. the idea that Satan is really the hero of *Paradise Lost*). Early in this century, for example, James Holly Hanford surveyed the criticism of Milton's epics from the poet's day to his own and concluded that it was not dealing with what the poetry was really about. The Puritans, he says, generally did not bother commenting on the poem and the admiring critics of the eighteenth century liked it primarily for its aesthetic qualities. The nineteenth century went even further, he finds, and regarded Milton's theology and "general attitude and outlook" as "obsolete." And in showing in detail how far readers could get from an author's intention he says that Milton "would never have believed" that we could fully understand his work unless his theme was for us
"in some sense true." Thus Hanford warns with many precedents of misconception that we should be careful to take Milton first on his own ground; yet even he does not advocate Milton's faith, but rather his Renaissance humanism, as the historical starting point for our understanding; and it is precisely the critic most seriously concerned with Milton's humanism who is most troubled by the rejection of learning in Paradise Regained. We may then follow Hanford's direction and go on to try to stand on Milton's basic level, faith, to see how the landscape of the poem looks from that perspective. For if we stand absolutely there we see the careful balance of all the parts, the certainty in the form of the poem of the values it asserts.

Readers generally have not accepted without qualification the devaluation of Athens in the poem, but those who find it most offensive are often likeliest to find the poetry and the characterization inferior to Milton's other work. David Daiches, for example, says that the description of Athens by Satan is honest and attractive:

There is no hint of irony through exaggeration or lack of decorum... but a vivid and clearly apprehended picture of a great civilization at work. But then as to the rejection he concludes that "there is some degree of hardening and narrowing in Milton's later thought." In this response Daiches is fairly typical of a variety of negative comment on the value system at work in the poem. The values are discussed, but not too frequently found to be positive forces.

W. W. Robson even goes so far as to say that Milton himself did not believe in the impulses of the protagonist of the poem and he naturally concludes that the result of Milton's unbelief is a bad
poem, that Milton by his wrong choices made Satan "a polished orator" and Jesus a "rude" speaker and so made it impossible for us to enjoy or sympathize with the values of the latter. He finds Milton's characterization of Jesus and his values reprehensible even to Milton's own better nature and says that here is "a striking example of that type of divided poetic personality in which the predilection d'artiste for certain themes is accompanied by a moral antagonism towards them." "Who can feel," he says, "that the actual Satan of the poem is 'evil'?"

He recognizes clearly the polarities of the two views but cannot believe that Milton honestly chose the Hebrew way. "Milton gives all the imaginative and emotional appeal—the characteristic appeal of poetry—to the temptations; Christ rejects them as the spokesman of pure reason. . . . Imaginative temptations should be met imaginatively."13

Yet may it not be suggested that Milton's characterization of Jesus and the poetics of Paradise Regained do set aside "the characteristic appeal of poetry" precisely as an important part of a whole range of distinctions being made in the poem about what is helpful to the Kingdom of Heaven?

Some critics attempt to explain the failure of interest in the poem, not by discussing its subject, but by saying we do not understand and thus do not respond to the conventions or the type of poem at hand, but that we expect drama or characterization where there is none. Howard Schultz observes in passing that the hero "is dramatically too sublimely patient as he waits on God's good time. Plainly, we must allow the dialectic a larger role in the action."14
And G. A. Wilkes says that in the "sacred epic" we should not look for characterization in set speeches that were part of a convention; what we have in Jesus' delivery is "the oration given from a moral standpoint." Even William Riley Parker, who does not disparage the poem, partly accounts for its rhetorical austerity by seeing it as a play that was turned into a poem rather than as an epic in the form dictated by its doctrine.

A more extreme example of the criticism which accepts the general flow of the poem's values but explains them in terms of some convention of form is Jackson I. Cope's essay, "Paradise Regained: Inner Ritual." In this study the poem is explained as a compound of an ironic use of a literary convention (the "heroic" qualities in Satan) and a religious ritual. The hopelessly striving Satan is, Cope says, a satire on the unrealistic, overweening heroes of Dryden's plays.

The point is well taken and does remind us of Milton's constant effort to define the true and false heroic, but observing Satan primarily as part of a literary struggle with Dryden over proper characterization can distract us from Milton's belief in a literal Adversary and the daily confrontation with the voice of ambiguity and despair and so somewhat lead us away from the poem's first intent.

So also Cope's comparison of Paradise Regained to the Mass as ritual contains helpful insights into the reader-poet relationship; but finally in saying that we can ritually touch again the dramatic experience of salvation by Christ, it removes us from the immediate personal consideration of the poem's thesis. In fact, if we recall
Milton's own rejection of the Roman Catholic conception of sacrament, it seems almost ironic that his most insistent work on the saving power of belief in God's word and trust in his promises would be experienced as the ritual of "the Maggio or the Mass." If Milton intends the poem's actions and distinctions of value to be exemplary we may miss his intention and his values and the reason for the lack of certain imaginative (poetic) delights, if we see the poem as sacrament rather than the presentation of a compelling example for the individual seeking salvation.

Studying the poem first in the light of its conventions or its literary traditions and genre helps our understanding of Milton's certainty of theory and his attention to decorum, but more than once the strict attention by a critic to the theoretical reasons for Milton's choices has led either to deemphasizing the spiritual reasons or to being dissatisfied with the poetic results of Milton's application of the theory. Northrop Frye, whose work will be further discussed later, considers the possibility:

It is quite possible for a poem to be, as Paradise Regained may be, a magnificent success in its structure and yet often tired and perfunctory in its execution.

A good example of a perceptive study of the conventions of Paradise Regained which concludes with a low opinion of the merits of the poetry is an application of the theory of the brief epic by Donald L. Guss, who carefully shows that Milton well fulfilled the requirements of the form as defined by Tasso and others deriving their definitions from patristic arguments for the grandeur of the
plain style of the Bible as superior to the sublime of the classical epic. Guss gives credit to the validity of Milton's values by saying that "his epic celebrates extraordinary but human virtue" and he classifies the theology as "orthodox Protestant." However, in applying theories of Biblical rhetoric to the poem and finding them fulfilled there, he concludes that Milton is aiming at epic effects and is not, as a Puritan might, assuming a style that is "merely didactic." But then he finds the poetry unsatisfying. For example, he quotes the line "thus answer'd th' Arch Fiend, now undisguised" and asks whether

the final phrase "now undisguised" is simply informative or an explosive understatement in which the full force of the sudden transformation is briefly conveyed.

In a way Guss is asking whether the phrase is a brilliant fact or brilliant rhetoric. Of course, he wants it to be both, but it has to be the latter to make Milton's use of the form of brief epic poetically successful; thus, Guss's honest response is only that "the second alternative seems more probable." And the value of the fact diminishes as its form fails to be an exciting poetic experience.

Guss's conclusion is then that readers have found the "chaste, weighty, and very grand style" to be "plain, sullen and unadorned." Considering definitions of the form of brief epic helps us see that Milton made proper theoretical choices, but we are not therefore more inclined, according to Guss, to find the poem more exciting or its values more attractive:

Milton presents the pill ungilded. His matter is truth; his hero is cold, his plot uneventful, and his style sparse.
The most thorough study of the poem's background, Barbara Lewalski's encyclopedic *Milton's Brief Epic, The Genre, Meaning and Art of Paradise Regained*, is much easier to praise than to summarize. Besides amassing countless previous parallels to the form of *Paradise Regained*, she shows by pages of quotations the large company Milton was a part of in separating human learning and divine knowledge; however, even she does not flatly accept the poem's position on learning, but finally makes the distinction between "scientia" and "sapientia" and says Jesus rejects human learning only at the level at which Satan offers it, i.e., as wisdom, which alone is from God:

Christ's vehement rejection of knowledge offered in place of wisdom is firmly grounded in the tradition which identifies God as the substance and source of wisdom; the question of the role of knowledge in its own sphere, the natural order, is never at issue in this passage.\(^{22}\)

Yet to qualify this conclusion we might suggest that the primary point of the poem is that God's son has entered the "natural order," men's lives, and established within that order, as he himself says, all that is necessary for men to know.\(^{23}\) As Irene Samuel has said, what amazes Satan in the final confrontation is that Jesus stands on the pinnacle, not as divine Lord of the universe, but as second Adam, as human being.\(^{24}\)

To see how much our understanding of Milton's values is necessary, we may refer to relatively recent criticism of the poem which has emphasized the value question in the poem. Following that, we shall consider the criticism that has applied to the poem's values in understanding its form.
Two essays by Irene Samuel exemplify a movement in criticism of the poem toward the issue of basic value. Repeatedly in the past critics have come to the rejection of Athens and weighed the possibilities seriously and then qualified the extent or meaning of the rejection. And so in an early essay (1949) Irene Samuel says of the rejection that

Milton intended the entire action as generally applicable and the decisions made by Jesus as those every man should make.  

Yet much of her essay is devoted to making exceptions to the taking on of what she has stated as Milton's doctrine.

In an article published in 1973, however, she dismisses the qualifications which she made earlier and says absolutely that the hero of the poem is supposed to be an example to anyone who would wish to accept his way to truth. Thus she says:

What Milton does is elaborate the temptations into arguments and the rejections into counter-arguments, so that every man may see in the exemplary answers a complete program for regaining Eden.

In her analysis of Christ's use of reason in refuting Satan, she argues that the purpose of the poem is not only to establish the hero's identity but to demonstrate the way to enter salvation; in her words, the poem does not answer the question, "Who am I?" but rather, "How am I to live?" And to bolster her position she argues from the basic point of what the poet chooses to include:

Surely a poet's intention is to be known by what he chooses to elaborate and deliberately invents, not by his glancing allusions to what everyone already knows and comes prepared to supply.
Thus she forces us to the most basic question of what the poem is after all about and concludes with the simple, but perhaps easily overlooked point.

If Paradise Regained consists so largely of such incessant talk it must be that what is said in detail seemed to the poet, who gave these things to his agents to say, of importance immense enough to warrant his naming his poem the regaining of Paradise.26

Finally she reminds us that readers have not liked to see the poem as a proper example for all men, but she insists that that is precisely what Milton meant it to be:

There are, of course, counsels of perfection that the protagonist of Paradise Regained speaks; and that no doubt is another main reason why even careful Miltonists prefer to read the poem as biographic-particular rather than ethical-universal: it is so much easier to take the arguments as appropriate exclusively to the one extraordinary speaker than to accept their applicability to every man. But Milton has placed that view too, that hard truths hold only for the exceptional person; he assigns it to Satan.

Though she does not insist on the ways her conclusions are to be applied particularly, she does suggest that the poem's being first of all about "the choice of a life-style"27 is a main reason for our difficulty with it.

In the same 1973 volume which contains Irene Samuel's essay, Arthur E. Barker comments that the numerous recent attempts to see Paradise Regained as "representative of heroically spiritual virtues" have forced us to try to answer the question of what we think are the character and implications of such virtues for Milton (and, so far as they may be relevant, for ourselves.)

Barker explains the rejection of Athens as not absolute, but conditional to the offer and use of it, but does at the same time say that
"the poem seems also to be challenging us to recognize what men have
to do to be saved." And his analysis of the symmetrical structure
of the poem as following Christ's development and not Satan's in-
cludes a striking insight into the Christian experience of which the
poem is a part. He says it is a mistake to follow—as we have--
the pattern provided by the Satanic temptations, as if
that were the structural pattern of the poem, as if the
Satanic controlled the poem, the situation, the shape of
the process, as we are only too prone to think it con-
trols the human situation, the shape of the process of
history, and indeed the world. But that is the basic Sa-
tanic delusion and illusion: once accepted, it leads into
the perturbation, the distrust, the failure of faith,
the despairing leaps this way or that, to which Christ
cannot be induced—and to which he and the poem are per-
haps going on to try and teach men, yet further than in
the past, how not to be induced.28

Thus Barker seriously directs us to consider Christ's position anew
and to see how the "life-style," as Irene Samuel calls it, of the hero
directly opposes the confusion and fear which are Satan's.

William Riley Parker points up indirectly our need to be re-
mined of Milton's view of his poem when he says in the concluding
pages of his biography that Milton "developed not one theory or prin-
ciple which our modern world can accept without serious reservations."29
Perhaps this difference which Parker is referring to is what causes
us to read easily through the final resolution of Paradise Lost, "that
to obey is best," but to hesitate at an application of the principle
in Paradise Regained. Political man will not be inclined to accept
unequivocally the exhortation to "turn the other cheek," for political
states, in Hobbes' definition, are designed precisely to prevent the
necessity of "turning the other cheek." And Francis Bacon's reasonable
and humanitarian descriptions of political reality, which might evoke approval in our society, are noted by Arnold Stein as being at complete odds with Milton's understanding in Paradise Regained. Thus Stein asks in discussing the poem:

How is piety to make operative in this world its other-worldly idea? How is the self to unite duty to God and neighbor? Bacon's narrowing of the question, in his essay "Of Great Place," would have been acknowledged by Milton as a partial truth, but fatally dangerous as the whole truth. Bacon wrote: "But power to do good is the true and lawful end of aspiring. For good thoughts (though God accept them) yet towards men are little better than good dreams, except they be put in act; and that cannot be without power and place, as the vantage and commanding ground."

In the choice between a political wisdom based on what men do and a moral-poetic wisdom based on what men ought to do, Milton is fully committed to the latter, which he proclaims the real source of human power.

In Paradise Regained the powers that Satan offers—military, political, or aesthetic—may seem advantages by some standards, but in Book I of the poem we know from Scripture and from the Father's remarks on action that the hero will not give in to them, and so our interest in the action may finally be in seeing the validity of Jesus' faith, his passive way, at work. If this is so, Jesus is, then, a pattern and not an exception, and the debate clearly distinguishes the details of obedience and trust in specific examples. So we see here Milton's understanding of the forces of which the world is made and of the forces which faith can draw on. Thus we have the absoluteness of Milton's preference for revelation over Greek philosophy, for the poet's faith is not in himself, but in the God who rewards the obedience of the tempted Son (and honors the reasons he gives for his obedience) with his protection.
As is indicated somewhat by Samuel and Barker, the studies which have emphasized the need to approach the poem first at the level of its own values have often been the most helpful in suggesting not only a viable response to the value but an appreciation of the form as well.

John M. Steadman is one such critic who comments at length in several articles on the relation of the poem's theme to its form. In an essay published in 1962, "Paradise Regained: Moral Dialectic and the Pattern of Rejection," he suggests the correctness of seeing Christ's choices as choices for all men by saying that "Milton's literary method is essentially literal rather than mythical and allegorical. Instead of personifying Virtue and Vice as beautiful women (as in Hercules), he presents these concepts largely through the medium of argument." And in a later study (1967) Steadman further clarifies this idea by saying that Paradise Regained "is less an imitation of an action' than a mimesis of thought . . . God's 'living Truth' incarnate in the Messiah, refutes the archliar's fallacies." Steadman's thesis is that Milton's epics are a radical departure from the traditional heroic scheme, and thus he directs us to the redemptive process at its center to begin to understand the form of Paradise Regained: "Like the individual believer, putting off the moral pattern of the 'Old Adam,' a regenerated epic tradition should reject the old heroic formula of a fallen humanity and conform itself instead to the divine exemplar in Christ himself." He accepts without qualification then the full application of this new moral pattern in what it rejects and says, "The virtue of the Gentiles" when confronted by real Truth "must necessarily appear tarnished, if not
altogether bestial."\(^{32}\)

When Steadman in another essay turns to a fuller analysis of the form, he focuses on the manifestations of the poem's morality in the rhetoric of the two main figures:

In both epics, as in Comus, the tempter and the tempted embody opposing conceptions of the rhetorician, comparable to the moral antithesis between sophist and logician.\(^{33}\)

What he finds is that Milton's allowing his religious beliefs to determine his rhetorical choices has limited the poetry:

The confrontation of these contrasting rhetorical modes . . . tends to reduce the dialogue to a clear-cut debate between truth and falsehood.\(^{34}\)

Thus Steadman tries to account for the general lack of appreciation of the poem by explaining the values in Christian terms and the rhetorical form in classical terms; i.e., he fits what Milton creates into recognizable traditional patterns and so suggests that Milton made the choices dictated by his well attuned sense of decorum, but that the result has limited efficacy. The emphasis on "thought" rather than "action" finally determines the style of the poem, and the reader who wants to appreciate the poem's achievement must, he suggests, see the poem for what it intends to be—a debate on specific questions of value. He says, in defense of the style:

In the speeches of both epics, the critic must not merely distinguish between real and assumed ethos and between character and thought. He must also consider their bearing on levels of discourse. In employing a plainer style for Paradise Regained, Milton was following Aristotle's principles as well as the rhetorical tenets expressed in his own prose. Truth (he believed) does not require adornment; it argues most effectively of itself. Presented with clarity and perspicuity, it offers per se the soundest proofs and the most effective arguments. Since this epic demonstrates
the hero's moral character and intellectual powers primarily through argument, and since the poem consists largely of dialogue and the expression of Ethos and Dianoia, it naturally demands a style suitable for revealing character and thought—a style lucid, plain, perspicuous, "unaffected," and unadorned. Such a style was completely in character, and since it was consistent with the simplicity of Christ's discourse in the Gospels, it seemed "like the reality." Moreover, because it was best adapted to teaching, this style furthered Christ's "ministry of redemption." Since it was "low" (the stylum humilis), it befitted his Humiliation.

Louis Martz takes up the issue of the relation between stylistic level and spiritual values in a very different way from Steadman. Like Steadman, he holds the absolute judgments of value that Christ makes, and he also sees the value in Christian-spiritual terms and the form in classical, but he regards the form as being dictated by the poem's being an internal prayer. In his essay, "Paradise Regained: The Meditative Combat," he says that Milton uses the middle voice as proper to a meditation on the gospel. He maintains that the genre (georgic), the sphere (the narrator's mind), and the style (the normal language of any educated man) have not been properly identified, and he says that the interest in the poem is in watching a "meditative mind as it defines the nature of the Son of God." Thus, he finds the stylistic manifestation of the poem's conflict—i.e., the human conflict in the author's own being as it is revealed in meditation—is Satan's moving toward a "high" style as the definition is worked out:

It is a meditative combat created by Milton's brilliant manipulation of styles, a contest in which the flights of poetic splendor are consistently drawn back by the prevailing net of a frugal georgic style to the ground of renunciation and temperance.
He too insists that the poem is without dramatic interest but that it offers not just a debate, but within the mind of the speaker a "contest of styles":

The ground of this great warfare is laid down, stylistically, in Book I; what we feel here, I think, is the presence of a mind engaged in an immense effort at self-control, a mind held in leash, poised, tense, alert, watching any tendency toward elaboration, luxury, self-indulgence: alert to control any temptation that might lead the meditation away from the ground that he strikes ethically, theologically and stylistically at the end of Book I, in answer to Satan's opening maneuvers. 37

By attributing this spare form to the requirements of meditative prayer, Martz avoids, unintentionally, the judgments on a certain kind of art which are inherent in the poem's form; however, his thesis that the poem takes place fully in the mind of a particular poet at prayer suggests strongly that the control of imagination in the work does, in fact, indicate a great reserve in Milton's later view of poetry and rhetoric.

In the case of the particular judgments in the poem he has no hesitation and says Christ's rejection of the Greek world is appropriate and is perfectly supported by the style of the poem. Thus, he concludes:

For what has the poem been saying if it has not said that the elaborations of classical literature are unnecessary, dangerous, and unreliable? Milton has constantly affirmed this in the ground-style of his poem, where "swelling Epithets" are removed, and a basic idiom is achieved approaching the "majestic unaffected stile" that Milton here praises in the Hebrew prophets. 38

Martz and Steadman, from different angles, bring us into very close contact with both the poem's insistence on its own perspective
and the formal response to that insistence, but two other studies should be cited to show what efforts must be made to appreciate the poem's view of things and what difficulty is involved in accepting the view once it is appreciated.

The first of these, an essay by Balachandra Rajan entitled "Jerusalem and Athens: The Temptation of Learning in Paradise Regained," attempts with a careful general reading of the poem to get us as close as possible to the seventeenth-century faith which will allow the poet and poem to teach us how to be saved. Rajan warns that "the context of the genre and of interpretive tradition are not quite sufficient for the reading of Paradise Regained." And he suggests that the emphasis on "switching on lights" with historical scholarship, while very necessary, can be misleading. The temptation

is perhaps to switch on too many of them and so to minimize the poem's powers of self-illumination even in the darkness of today.

His purpose then is to suppose in analyzing the poem that "the position which Christ articulates has itself a main root in Milton's being." To support this position he reminds us that Milton evidently invented the temptation of Athens, and then he explains why he invented it:

The inner kingdom must be constituted with almost vehement purity if the world of creative action (as distinct from mere turbulence) is to come into being around it. The perfect man can only become himself through an unqualified fidelity to the commitments which create him.
From this point about perfection as an end he continues to demonstrate that we must recognize the poem's demand for unequivocal commitment in order "to pass imaginatively through the seventeenth century response." And although he does not specifically say so, it would be hard to disagree that Milton expected perfection—or the attempt at it—for himself and anyone else who would choose Christ as example or Savior. In any case, Rajan does say that once we can see the validity (even imaginatively) of Christ's or Milton's position we have no trouble recognizing all of Satan's offers for exactly what they are. Satan, he says, as a citizen of the world . . . can only offer that wisdom which the world has accumulated in its history. He cannot know that there is a higher wisdom; but the reader should know it and Christ should not only know it but should remind us through the shaping of his answer that he is destined to incarnate that wisdom.  

To be properly involved in the poem then, Rajan is saying, we have to be separated from the Satanic and we can be by identifying with the redemptive. In his words:

Most important of all, the reader should be aware that Christ is the second Adam, that wise and valiant man who is destined to rescue mankind from slavery. Of course, realizing this fact has always been a serious problem, and so Rajan is really asking a great deal in demanding that the reader fully accept Christ's unequivocal position; yet he repeatedly says we must see the division in the two worlds to appreciate Christ's establishing of his kingdom, for in this new foundation "Limited interventions are no substitute for radical transformation." Yet one problem from Milton's point of view, arises out of Rajan's insightful
directing of the reader to an imaginative recreation of the seventeenth-century response, for Rajan finally says that we only have to appreciate the poem's position aesthetically and not actually. Yet our doing so would have to be the failure of the poem in Milton's eyes. In his spiritual understanding the poem is only validated when its view is really accepted by the reader. Thus Rajan's conclusion would hardly be heartening to Milton:

When Christ's words are interpreted according to the logic of combat and according to the destiny he is to take on and increasingly knows, they cease to be intrusions of the poet into the poem and become aesthetic facts rather than aesthetic disturbances. Not all problems of imaginative acceptance disappear, since the basic commitment set forth with typical severity, is well beyond our powers of adherence. . . . But a properly constituted dramatic whole calls for contemplation of its forces rather than endorsement of its doctrine.  

In effect Rajan's drawing us close to the position of faith in the validity of Christ's way in the poem and then saying that "contemplation" only and not "endorsement" is required is similar to Satan's saying that he can rejoice in hearing Christ's speaking the truth without himself being able to follow it. And so we might from this suggest that Milton was aware of this possible aesthetic-but-not-actual response to the poem and tried to control it first by limiting the poetry itself and then by introducing into the scriptural account of the events harsh judgments against the response to art apart from what he knew as truth. Surely in Milton's view successful poetry had to introduce the reader to the chamber of truth, not leave him in an anteroom endlessly contemplating entrance. We might ask then whether to enter fully into this poem we need to believe in the same truth
Milton does. However difficult it might seem to believe in the same truth Milton does, perhaps nothing less than sharing his faith will afford the reader full satisfaction in this very doctrinal poem.

The problem that Rajan has in finally identifying with the hero's requirements is similar to what Northrop Frye sees as a real difficulty in our response to the poem. Frye, perhaps more than anyone else, assumes that understanding the poem's conception of salvation is the proper starting point; yet he says we find ourselves in the odd position of recognizing what the poem asks but of not being able to convert to its ideas. We are impressed with the vitality of Satan, he says, but must know "the real source of life and freedom and energy is the frigid figure at the center, i.e., Jesus." Frye attributes Jesus' coldness to his task of separating the good from the evil elements in this world; nevertheless, he thinks the demand on us is too great, however much we see the correctness of Jesus' distinctions:

Hence dramatically Christ becomes an increasingly unsympathetic figure, a pusillanimous quietist in the temptation of Parthia, an inhuman snob in the temptation of Rome, a peevish obscurantist in the temptation of Athens. . . . The point at which the reader loses sympathy with Jesus in Paradise Regained is the point at which he himself would have collapsed under the temptation. All of us are, like Christ, in the world and, unlike him, partly of it, and whatever in us is of the world is bound to condemn Christ's rejection of the world at some point or other.⁴²

According to these last sentences, some would remain in sympathy with the hero longer than others, but the implication is not only that all will fall short, but also that a reader at one with the thinking of the Son in the poem—a perfect reader—could go all the way with him.
The last of these implications is worth emphasizing, at least for a moment, to see a direction that the poem might take us or to consider the demands it does actually make in order to be appreciated. In an essay written sixteen years later than the one just discussed, Frye treats the values in the poem even more sympathetically. In the later study Frye sees no problem in Jesus' statement that the poetry in the Bible is superior to the poetry of Greece, and so he says:

Classical culture is not simply a human development unfortunately: man without revelation cannot avoid accepting some demonic version, which means parody, of that revelation. Hence such forms as the Homeric epic and the Sophoclean tragedy are genuine models of style, decorum, and 'ancient liberty'; at the same time they are also connected with something ultimately demonic, a pseudo-revelation from fallen angels. The use of Classical genres by a Christian poet should show in what respects they are humanly analogous to the forms of Christian revelation, and in what respects they are demonic parodies of them.

Frye here understands Christ's rejection of Athens, finding in that rejection the possibility of Milton's safe use of it, but he draws out in careful detail the foundations of Christ's actions and the pattern which his followers must conform to on the basis of that foundation:

Christianity has a completely opposed /to the classical/ notion of what a hero is: a Christian hero is one who imitates or approximates the heroism of Christ, which consisted in suffering, endurance, and compassion.

Frye goes at least as far as Arthur Barker (quoted above) in his later idea that the poem is working out the realization of Providence's control, and he suggests that the poem is about the specific problems inherent in our trying to perceive that control:
In human life too it is still true that nothing really happens except the accomplishing of God's will, or what we call providence. But there—or here—the will of God is much harder to see, because it is concealed by human passion and demonic instigation.

He places the poem's way of working with the problem at the heart of the Judeo-Christian experience of God as primarily aural rather than visual, i.e., God presents himself in words, rather than in images which become idols (cf. fear of images in both the Old Testament and the English Reformation). Thus the content and the form of the poem make precise distinctions between the words of truth and the language of "demonic instigation":

In this world the essential conflict between good and evil takes the aural form of a conflict between the Word and the oracle, true and false rhetoric. Yet the ultimate object of all false rhetoric is a visual image commanding obedience to something other than God. Thus in Paradise Regained Jesus enters a desert, with no visual features to distract him, to engage in a mortal combat with the false word, the accuser.44

The poem thus seen in the light of its own values represents a clear example of the contention of perfect Truth and unalloyed falsehood, and so we must ask: Does its form, bare of ornament and rigidly structured as a debate, manifest the faith that is at its center and does this form help us to know more fully what Truth and falsehood actually mean to Milton? And even further, does this form correctly establish Milton's understanding of God, creation, and man, however stringent or redemptive that understanding may be to the individual reader?

Frye is again helpful here, for in the earlier essay quoted above he says that Milton's presentation of the conflict between the
Tempter and Jesus is a totally unique rhetorical achievement. He does not take the time himself to make a full rhetorical analysis, but he does locate the conflict of the forces of good and evil in the languages of Jesus and Satan:

In structure . . . Paradise Regained is not only a success, but a technical experiment that is practically sui generis. None of the ordinary literary categories apply to it; its poetic predecessors are nothing like it, and it has left no descendants. If it is a "brief epic," it has little resemblance to the epyllion: its closest affinities are with the debate and with the dialectical colloquy of Plato and Boethius, to which most of the Book of Job also belongs. But these forms usually either incorporate one argument into another dialectically or build up two different cases rhetorically: Milton's feat of constructing a double argument on the same words, each highly plausible and yet as different as light from darkness, is, so far as I know, unique in English literature.45

The way that the two different rhetorical cases are built up in the poem reveals exactly what Milton believed to be the potential of language to contain absolute truth and, conversely, what he understood about the way the spirit of evil permeated language or used it to create or maintain despair. That is, the focus of the action is on the Word of God literally, as it is spoken in the poem when the Father says, "Thou art my beloved Son. In thee I am well pleased." This statement by the Father in the context of the baptism and the giving of the Holy Spirit is repeated four times in the first six hundred lines of the poem, almost as if Milton does not think he can stress it enough. The focus is also on the word of God in the use of the Scriptures by the characters, especially the word given in Genesis after the sin as that word is both a promise to mankind and a curse to Satan, for everyone concerned must know the validity and precise
meaning of God's word in this original act. Lastly, of course, the word of God is in the Son, and in Milton's thinking, in anyone who speaks the truth learned from the same Spirit that inspires the Son.

The Father's commentary, like the repetitions of the baptism story, might seem redundant unless it is needed by Milton to make this special point about the validity of God's own word, which is exactly what it does do. Thus the Father says that the action in the desert will "verifie" his promise to Mary (a reflection of the promise in Eden):

Gabriel this day by proof thou shalt behold . . . how I begin
To verifie that solemn message late,
On which I sent thee to the Virgin pure
In Galilee, that she should bear a Son
Great in Renown, and call'd the Son of God.
(I, 130-36)

And he further says that the manner he chose to so prepare his son was a response to Satan's bad words, his boasting of his own power to subvert the word (I, 144-46). In The Advancement of Learning Francis Bacon makes exactly the same point made by Paradise Regained, i.e., that the word of God whenever it occurs is absolute. To the disobedient this means that it cannot be denied, changed, or twisted to other meanings: however, to the obedient this word is to be trusted without fear. Thus Bacon sees man's fall as simply his not believing what God said: if you eat you will die. Bacon says specifically:

As for the knowledge which induced the fall, it was, as was touched before, not the natural knowledge of creatures but the moral knowledge of good and evil; wherein the supposition was that God's commandments or prohibitions were not the originals of good and evil, but that they had other beginnings, which man aspired to know, to the end to make a total defection from God, and to depend wholly upon himself.46
Finally this speech by the Father must be intended by Milton to lend authority (in the poem) to the "rudiments" of the warfare of Redemption, i.e., as they are delineated by what the Son rejects (including rhetoric, one of several additions to the gospel account), by the characterizations, and by the overall action.

The natures of truth and falsehood then not only are the absolute subject of the poem, but are discriminated as they are captured in their respective rhetorical forms by the languages used by Jesus and Satan, languages which seem very similar in their uses of art but are, in fact, utterly opposite in intention and effect. In the Son's speeches it is revealed that his truth is 1) dependent on God's word, 2) unambiguous (except to Satan) in its expression, 3) sparing in its use of figures of speech, 4) clarifying and precise in its use of figures and in its use of reason; i.e., it is logical, 5) usually unemotional, 6) utterly confident in its sources (God's word) and in its method, 7) rewarded with greater knowledge for its confrontation with falsehood. And likewise in Satan's speeches it is revealed that his lying nature is 1) always uncertain, though it has access to the same facts as truth (prophecy and divine testimony), 2) deliberately misleading, 3) frequently ambiguous, 4) inclined to use irony and to be the victim of it, 5) fearful, angry and generally subject to emotion, 6) at times rhetorically ambitious, and 7) convicted by the truth of the propositions, commands and promises it wishes to subvert.
The Son's position on the truth of God's word and the ways of not implementing it are made clear first in his autobiographical soliloquy and then in the rejection of various offers from Satan. In his first soliloquy he is shown trying to decide how to begin to save mankind (I, 185-87). That he is the Son has been announced to all at the baptism. His coming to know who he was had been accomplished earlier and the words from the cloud were the affirmation he needed to start his active ministry. And although it has not always been read as such, the passage on his choice of method refers to his thinking as a child. He says first that when he went to the temple at twelve years

victorious deeds
Flam'd in my heart, heroic acts, one while
To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke,
Then to subdue and quell o're all the earth
Brute violence and proud Tyrannick pow'r,
Till truth were freed, and equity restor'd:
Yet held it more humane, more heavenly first
By winning words to conquer willing hearts,
And make persuasion do the work of fear;
At least to try and teach the erring Soul
Not wilfully mis-doing, but unaware
Misled; the stubborn only to subdue.
(I, 215-26)

This passage, which well describes the John Milton of the antiprelatical tracts and the Defences, does not declare a growth in Jesus from reliance on military power to a reliance on eloquence to gain a kingdom, but says simply that one should first win "willing hearts" to truth by good words and then "subdue" by force those who are not persuaded. The Jesus of the poem, the adult Jesus in the gospels, is not at all given to the use of persuasion to arouse anyone to decision or action, much less to physical force when rhetoric fails. 48
The method Jesus has acquired by the time of the poem is unique and, as said above, derived from the Law and the Prophets. When his mother perceived his aspirations, he tells us, she told him his true parentage and demanded actions of him never before done (I, 228-33). In his reading the prophecies about the Messiah, he discovered not that he was to be a second David in worldly power and glory, but that he had to be rejected, tortured, and murdered to achieve his kingdom. All this he knows before the temptations begin, and so he must be faithful to the word of God which specifically spelled out his future action as Savior and implied his present position of waiting in patience. Thus, at the end of Book II when Satan offers him the wealth necessary for power he says that the only true leading of people is by "doctrine," not by political or military strength:

But to guide Nations in the way of truth
By saving Doctrine, and from error lead
To know, and knowing worship God aright,
Is yet more Kingly. (II, 473-76)

The emphasis on the teaching of sound doctrine is carried even further in the conclusion of the third book, when Jesus identifies political servitude with failure to remain faithful to God's teachings:

let them serve
Thir enemies, who serve Idols with God. . . .
To his due time and providence I leave them.
(III, 431-32, 440)

It is in the last book that the process of discriminating what may be effective, or even permitted, in bringing in the Kingdom is completed. In offering Greece, Satan states the Aristotelian, humanist position that the good man, the patriot, must learn all modes of effective discourse to deal with all varieties of men.
And with the Gentiles much thou must converse,
Ruling them by persuasian as thou means't,
Without thir learning how wilt thou with them,
Or they with thee hold conversation meet?
How wilt thou reason with them, how refute
Thir Idolisms, Traditions, Paradoxes?
Error by his own arms is best evinc't.
(IV, 229-35)

Satan, it seems, would have Jesus win men to the new Kingdom by argument or delight, but Jesus responds that both the substance and the source of public good are given in the Bible and that the style of presentation of the truth is also exemplified there in the method of the prophets. The Athenian orators are neither as effective nor as patriotic as the ancient Jewish teachers. They are, he says,

to our Prophets far beneath
As men divinely taught, and better teaching
The solid rules of Civil Government
In thir majestic unaffected stile
Than all the Oratory of Greece and Rome.
In them is plainest taught, and easiest learnt,
What makes a Nation happy, and keeps it so. . . .
(IV, 356-62)

Just as Milton late in life argued that English preachers needed no education beyond the language training necessary for reading the original languages of scriptural texts, so Jesus reduces his necessities to trust in the Father's word:

he who receives
Light from above, from the fountain of light,
No other doctrine needs, though granted true.
(IV, 288-90)

If the Son represents the fulness of trust in God's Word as that is a specific announcement of his will in human terms, Satan represents the complete inability of falsehood to do anything but desperately employ all the artistic wiles it can to deny that Word. Thus Satan's
role in its variety is as essential as the Son's example to the poem's distinctions between faith and despair.\(^{50}\)

The actual confrontation between Jesus and Satan in the poem quickly becomes a debate, first because Satan is anxious to decipher for himself the meaning of "Son of God" and of the curse in the garden, and then because Jesus insists on the Word of God as source of meaning and on logical discourse as a means of discussing that meaning. Since the contest becomes verbal, even oratorical in its outlines, the frequent brief stage directions given of the aspects and the manners of the contestants constitute a kind of inartificial proof which indicates the success or failure of particular points made and also, when seen together, chart the progress of the action.

The descriptions of the Son's manner are simple and indicate the certainty of his position and method. Several times it is merely said that he responds "thus," and his other responses are given briefly: "sternly," "with unalter'd brow," "temperately," "patiently," "calmly," "fervently" (when his Father is accused of desiring glory), "unmoved," "with disdain" (when asked to worship Satan), "sagely" (after Athens), and "in brief." And when he gives the answer that casts Satan from the pinnacle, it is simply said that he "stood."

On the other hand the descriptions of Satan, his grimaces, his speechlessness, his anger, reveal his worsening plight, so much so that by the last book the "rhetorical proofs" become actual ones until he finally falls in "amazement" in response to the Son's refutation.
At first he can play the part, as in the conclusion of Book I:

but the subtle Fiend,
Though inly stung with anger and disdain,
Dissembl'd, and this Answer smooth return'd.
(I, 465-67)

But his emotions begin to tell on him in Book II (301, 392) and when he is convincingly rejected at the end of the book he loses control. At this point, exactly halfway through the poem, Satan's failure is visibly revealed to his further discredit, though he does struggle back into his mask eventually. Thus Book III begins:

So snake the Son of God, and Satan stood
A while as mute confounded what to say,
What to reply, confuted and convinc't
Of his weak arguing, and fallacious drift;
At length collecting all his Serpent wiles,
With soothing words renew'd, him thus accosts.
(III, 1-6; II, 11, 442)

Further on in the book he is once reduced to "murmuring" (III, 108) and again to silence:

So spake the Son of God; and here again
Satan had not to answer, but stood struck
With guilt of his own sin, for he himself
Insatiable of glory had lost all,
Yet of another Plea bethought him soon.
(III, 145-49)

Book IV begins with Satan again standing "in shameful silence," (22) and from there the "proofs" given by his gestures and looks become increasingly absolute. Jesus' order, "Get thee behind me," creates fear in Satan's speech (IV, 195), and the fear results in the only device Satan can think of, the attempt to frighten. His hellish plan to create misleading emotion by rhetoric gives way to undisguised threats delivered "with stern brow" (IV, 367), and on the final morning of temptation when he appears pondering murder, his pose, a "careless
mood" (IV, 450), is stripped off immediately, revealing him as a "Fiend now swoln with rage" (IV, 499). Thus, subtle orator that he is, he tries to use his own real emotions to create others in Christ; however, the distortion in his appearance and his situation do not move his intended victim, but do cause Satan himself to act, to take the Son to his dangerous stand on the temple. There as he taunts him he himself falls, beginning to fulfill the curse he hoped to avoid and certifying the promise on which man must depend.

In Satan's characterization as one who does not accept the validity of God's word we have in part the reason for the strictness of Jesus' commitment to his source and way. Satan's indulgence in rhetorical tricks and offers of worldly ideals and power dramatizes the result of his cutting himself off from belief in the truth of God's words. Because he would not believe, he can never again attain even the most simple understanding of the meaning of words. Only through pain can he know the truths of a divine statement.

In Luke IV and in Paradise Lost Satan's first word is "if," and so he is immediately revealed in Paradise Regained as a lost intelligence consulting with his demonic peers about the inscrutability of the prophecy in Eden, the sign of the dove at the baptism—"whate'er it meant," and especially about the meaning of the title, "Son of God" (I, 55-69). So not only are Satan's words (oracles), as Jesus observes, "dark/Ambiguous, and with double sense deluding" (I, 434-35), but his capacity to understand truth is limited to taking confusing hints, as he does in reading in the stars that
Christ's Kingdom is imminent but being unable to tell whether it is "real or allegoric." Because he wants to take God's words on his own terms, i.e., not at all, he cannot grasp them; and so just before he takes the Son to the top of the temple, he is driven by his double-mindedness to the admission that he cannot understand the meaning of the phrase, Son of God. He says he heard the heavenly voice at the baptism and wanted to see for himself

In what degree or meaning thou art call'd
The Son of God, which bears no single sence;
The Son of God I also am, or was,
And if I was, I am; relation stands;
All men are Sons of God; yet thee I thought
In some respect far higher so declar'd.
(IV, 516-21)

According to the poem, this denial that God's words can be understood—they bear "no single sence"—is exactly what the Son has come to drive out of men's minds. And so the poem must create a nearly perfect, a totally unambiguous, form of speech to counteract the lack of trust caused by the belief that language is imperfect and thus always somewhat various in its meanings. Jesus knows from the moment of the baptism that the words from heaven are truth. It is demonic uncertainty which is confused by them, and it is this same uncertainty that is identified in a kind of rhetoric that the poem must identify as damning.

William Haller in the Rise of Puritanism reminds us of the seriousness of "the central experience of Puritan morality, namely temptation" and also of the "countless" times the desert temptation was explicated by Puritan preachers as "the image of the war he
waged upon Satan in the human breast." And Haller further points out that Satan is depicted in Puritan sermons on the temptation of Christ as "'a cunning rhetorician' who 'enlargeth the fancy to apprehend things bigger than they are.'"54

And so we might recall likewise that in both Milton's epics the tempter is called a rhetorician and is characterized as one. *Paradise Regained* reminds us that the first sin was the result, in part, of Satan's use of words, the "persasive Rhetoric/That sleek't his tongue" when tempting Eve (IV, 4-5). And, in fact, in *Paradise Lost* when Eve first refuses the forbidden fruit, Satan is full of the words and postures of demagoguery and is so described as he stands to speak:

As when of old som Orator renound
In Athens or free Rome, where Eloquence
Flourished, since mute, to some great cause addrest,
Stood in himself collected, while each part,
Motion, each act won audience ere the tongue. . . .
(IX, 670-74)

Satan is still the fallen rhetorician in *Paradise Regained*; but before discussing the details of the contest between his rhetoric and that of the Word of God as it is spoken by Jesus, we should see the value system Satan represents in this poem, since his rhetoric is a reflection of it just as surely as Jesus' language is of his own.

In *Paradise Regained* Satan is given no heroic soliloquies and we know he is at the business of temptation when with Jesus; so we must look briefly at his other audience in the poem, the council of devils, and at his actions apart from the Son. And what we find is no badly aspiring archangel, the highest prince on heaven's created thrones, but a restless, doggedly vigilant figure of anxiety who
ceaselessly roams the world seeking a chance to draw glory to himself, afraid lest another devil precede him in some chance for evil and further afraid of the prophecy of his doom. Thus, when he sees the appointed one being testified to he rushes into a kind of mock parliament with his evil companions and in the conference that follows establishes the rhetorical pattern of his graceless intelligence, a pattern of indefiniteness, of figures and questions that reflect uncertainty and are designed to beget uneasiness out of confusion. Thus his forces of rhetoric are not used as rhetoric is supposed to be, to resolve cases of possibility or probability, but to create them and then to generate decisions or actions based on them rather than on the certain power and truth of God's actualizing commands.

Thus in the first meeting of devils on the problem of the Son's appearance on earth (I, 44-105), no one but Satan even speaks. The rest of hell's powers have been dramatically reduced from the postures they held in Paradise Lost, and Satan's oratorical power over them is accordingly hollow. With an audience that is characterized as little more than a clamor after him, Satan's seeking of admiration is shown to be an endless trying to keep up, to maintain control and display his own importance in so doing. In striving and ultimately in failing he is contrasted to the Son who, it will be seen, can calmly do apparently nothing active and be the true center of the universe.

When Satan does address the fallen spirits, even the fear and uncertainty which are the cause and the intended effect of his speech cannot be a clear subject or provide a constant focus, because he has the continuing need to aggrandize himself. And so he climaxes passages
which are seemingly concerned with the Edenic curse with praise of himself, thus adding to the rhetoric the burden of calling attention to his merit:

O ancient powers of Air and this wide world,
For much more willingly I mention Air,
This our old Conquest, then remember Hell
Our hated habitation; well ye know
How many Ages, as the years of men,
This Universe we have possesst, and rul'd
In manner at our will th' affairs of Earth,
Since Adam and his facil consort Eve
Lost Paradise deceiv'd by me, though since
With dread attending when that fatal wound
Shall be inflicted by the Seed of Eve
Upon my head. (I, 44-55)

In this introduction, the reassuring titles\textsuperscript{55} by which he addresses the devils in the first line are called into question by the agitation created by the figure of speech in the third line, a kind of paralepsis (occupatio)\textsuperscript{56} which unseats the devils by reminding them of their true home and thus forces them to look to Satan, a motion which he reinforces by the "me" in the ninth line of the quote. The rise to "me," however, is followed by an awkward caesura and an oddly placed modifier which begin the descent back into a revelation of the complex of doubt and terror that the "me" is habituated to. Following this, Satan develops a warning (paraenesis) to frighten the audience and then dwells on the obscurity of the prophecy in Eden and the recent testimonies at the baptism for forty lines, all of which further add to the confusion of the listeners and force them to rely on Satan's teaching as he then rises again to a climactic "I":

Ye see our danger on the utmost edge
Of hazard, which admits no long debate. . . .
I, when no other durst, sole undertook
The dismal expedition to find out
And ruine Adam, and the exploit perform'd
Successfully. . . . (I, 94-95, 100-103)

The concluding self-praise contains a lie--"I, when no other
durst"--that without Satan's intending it alludes to the rhetorical
tricks in Paradise Lost by which he and Beelzebub controlled the great
debate in Pandemonium; and the lie makes us notice that compared to
the oratory there this brief flourish is pale and uninspired. In the
settled demonic world of Paradise Regained, controlled as it is by
Satan's mind, there is no need for the kind of oratory that preceded
the quest in the early hours in hell.

The second council of devils is opened with a speech by Satan
that follows the pattern of the first. He begins with titles, agitates
with the suggestion of their loss, and climbs in the middle and in
the end of a delivery of only twenty-six lines to praise of himself.
In this speech figures which create brevity--asynedeton, zeugma and
ellipsis--pass Satan's unease on to his cohorts. Thus he says:

such an Enemy
Is ris'n to invade us, who no less
Threat'ns than our expulsion down to Hell;
I, as I undertook, and with the vote
Consenting in full frequence was impowr'd,
Have found him, view'd him, tasted him, but find
Far other labor to be undergone
Then when I dealt with Adam first of Men,
Though Adam by his Wives allurement fell,
However to this Man inferior far,
If he be Man by Mothers side at least. . . .
(I, 126-136)

In the six lines of this quotation figures of repetition, especial-
ly polyptoton dominate: found, find, Men, Man, Man, Adam, Adam (and
the etymology, first of men), and the antistrophe on him. These carefully placed repetitions have for their task the revelation of the speaker's uncertainty about the nature of the Son and the creation of doubt in the audience. Rather than define or clarify by repeating the words which should tell who the enemy of Satan is, they confuse and make fearful.

In this manner Satan's rhetorical strategies and manifestations are established as depending on innuendo and all manner of the indefinite. And they will remain basically the same throughout the poem, with shifts in formula, e.g., the prolific use of varieties of rhetorical questions, as he tries to persuade the Son to agreement with demonic faithlessness and all that it entails. And beyond the poem Milton may be suggesting that rhetoric as used by Satan is the reflection of a condemned and despairing mind in its full insecurity, especially as it aims at extending despair by leading a hearer into the marshes of indefiniteness where no firm fact or certain truth can support him.

One major additional point to be made about satanic rhetoric, one of Milton's most convincing accomplishments with the rhetorical characterization of falsehood and evil, is exemplified by the conclusion to Satan's second round with his fellows. In this speech Satan makes a statement that contains an intended and very revealing irony that is typical of many in the poem. This one is especially pointed because it joins the words "deceive" and "persuade" in a way that shows what happens to a speaker who employs them interchangeably:
Therefore I am return'd, lest confidence
Of my success with Eve in Paradise
Deceive ye to persuasion over-sure
Of like succeeding here: I summon all
Rather to be in readiness, with hand
Or counsel to assist; lest I who erst
Thought none my equal, now be over-match'd.

(TT, 140-46)

What could be more fitting than that he should fear their being deceived--i.e., persuaded to a false hope--by his deception of Eve? There is a further irony in that Satan himself is self-deceived by his "success" and his accidentally calling attention to it makes us aware that he will suffer for his presumption. Deceit itself in this passage becomes many times involved; and Satan can utter in his final "I" the most obvious of boastful lies, because he refuses to accept as absolute the curse for his tricking of Eve. Moreover, he thinks that there is a way to equivocate with God's word, because he supposes all words, like his own, are subject to equivocation.

So also when Belial reduces persuasion to the suggestion of a voluptuous kiss ("enchanting tongues/Perswasive" (II, 158-59)), Satan's correction of him is hugely ironic. He refutes Belial's advice by the book, using allegorical figures and classical examples, and arguing that Belial assumes all can be tempted by what tempts him, only to conclude his formality with the claim that the Son must be tempted with "manlier objects," i.e., with that which tempts Satan. Thus he says they must approach him,

with such as have more shew
Of worth, of honour, glory, and popular praise;
Rocks whereon the greatest men have oftest wreck'd.

(II, 225-28)
The metaphor of disaster carefully, and yet on Satan's part un-wittingly, depicts the worthlessness of Satan's own ambition, yet it cannot awaken him to the irony of his plight: offering glory to someone in order to destroy him, so that he himself may gain that destructive glory.

So as we look to the actual rhetoric in the desert and on the mountain and temple we may note that Satan's most significant tactic will be the suggestion and assertion of uncertainty, and that the ironies that arise to reveal the truth of his tactic will be most defeating to him at those times when he is set on employing irony for his own ends.

The main purpose of Book I is to establish the certainty of God's word fulfilling itself with his power and the further certainty that this word will be carried into the hearts of men clearly by God's own spirit. Thus, man need not doubt nor despair but should rely on God's word to teach him truth and to become true in him and so put him beyond the reach of evil and its ability to create confusion and distrust.

The certainty of this doctrine of the Word's power is emphasized at all levels of character, action and thought in the poem. Christ speaks the words and lives by them, while Satan offers a complex of literal objections to and indirect qualifications of the doctrine. In the first temptation the Bible is quoted to state the main theme: man lives by the word from the mouth of God; and the point continues to the final scene on the temple in which the absolute truth of the Word is shown by Satan's attempt, in imitation of Jesus
perhaps, to use the Word to his own purposes. When he quotes from
the Ninety-first Psalm to force Jesus to act presumptuously—"lest
thou dash thy foot against a stone," he has chosen a passage that
is unfortunate for him if his audience should recall the next two
lines, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion
and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." Even he, the old dragon,
in his duplicity cannot pervert the word, but cites the passage that
prophesies the moment of his defeat.

And so the poem develops; from the piercing of Satan's first
disguise, to the last scriptural quotation by Christ, the power of
the biblical promises (and curses) is shown to be the foundation of
faith. Satan is made to recognize more and more fully the truth of
that which he wishes to deny.

However, Satan comes to Christ expecting a struggle of some
type and therefore is cautious in his probing with rhetorical devices
and chameleon-like in his assertions lest he be instantly overthrown.
In being careful he limits himself to only a few kinds of verbal ploys
which are repeatedly used and are well illustrated in the first
temptation: the question (used forty-two times in the poem), usually
rhetorical, to suggest some fearful consequence or wrong course of
action; the highly structured figure of speech, dependent on repeated
words and parallel sentence structure, to conceal a logical fallacy or
an outright lie; the misuse of the places of demonstrative oratory
(to flatter) and deliberative oratory (to create pity for or trust in
himself) to lead to bad moral choice; the occasional incidental figure,
such as an interjection, to distract from the main point and create emotion by frightening or flattering.

And Christ, on the other hand, certain in his Truth, can be even more simple rhetorically than the cautious Satan. His use of rhetoric is the perfect refutation of Satan artistically, in that he uses the same kinds of figures, the questions, and the places of invention, even Satan's own key words, to resolve ambiguities and focus on the single truths which Satan's lies would deny. Brevity is the aim of much of his rhetoric, precisely because he always wishes to direct the listener to the simple ground of his faith, the truth in God's word. Even when he uses a figure that might generate confusion, such as paradox, he does so not to confuse but to illuminate some irony in Satan's very nature, or to isolate some fallacy offered by evil.

When the two opponents meet, Jesus is caught in the open, alone with his knowledge that God has called him his Son, and Satan is in disguise and searching for a way to destroy; thus, the devil begins by trying to share his doubting mentality in a discouraging rhetorical question (hypophora) which denies that the Holy Spirit led Jesus to the desert for a good reason:

Sir, what ill chance hath brought thee to this place
So far from path or road of men, who pass
In Troop or Caravan, for single none
Durst ever, who return'd, and dropt not here
His Carcass, pin'd with hunger and with drought?
(I, 321-25)

But Satan will not rely on a mere suggestion that God is not leading the Son; and to prevent any possible answer different from the one implied by the unsettling question, he goes on to an explanation for
the fear (prosodiasaphesis), insisting on the certain destruction that awaits the individual lost in the wasteland.

He then turns to a very smooth delivery in explaining his inquiry:

> I ask the rather, and the more admire, 
> For that to me thou seem'st the man, whom late 
> Our new baptizing Prophet at the Ford 
> Of Jordan honour'd so, and call'd thee Son 
> Of God. (I, 326-30)

The polysyndeton and orderly construction contain the flattery well, but even more importantly they disguise the large lie that it was not God but the Baptist who called Jesus "Son of God."

Following this trick Satan just as quickly resorts to a very halting period to conclude his fiction of being the old man:

> I saw and heard, for we sometimes 
> Who dwell this wild, constrained by want, come forth 
> To Town or Village nigh (nighest is far) 
> Where ought we hear, and curious are to hear, 
> What happ'ns new; Fame also finds us out. 
> (IV, 330-34)

Ellipsis, interjection, a parenthesis completing a polyptoton and containing an oxymoron, and an abrupt personification of fame suggest both distrust and vanity; i.e., they try to confuse.

Christ's answer to these suggestions is a perfect embodiment of the clarity and simplicity of his position, his mind and his rhetorical capacity:

> Who brought me hither 
> Will bring me hence, no other Guide I seek. 
> (I, 335-36)

This controlled isocolon, reinforced by careful alliteration and almost monosyllabic, captures the balance in the Son's position,
however precarious that might appear here in the wasteland. And while the lines may seem harsh or even riddling, they might also be read as a simple statement of faith, the Son's reason for not accepting the fears and the implied offers of assistance in the flattery by the devil.

Satan's answer to this brevity is designed both to generate fear and to set Jesus up to perform a hasty miracle. He seems to be conceding that Jesus' "Guide" will bring him home, but the concession has a strategic qualification: "By Miracle he may" (I, 337). Satan's suggestion of miracle and his explanation for its necessity (prosodiasaphesis) in a few lines lead to his doubt in the Father's Word. Against the heavenly "Thou art my beloved Son," he proposes his great uncertainty, his if:

if thou be the Son of God, Command
That out of these hard stones be made thee bread.
(I, 342-43)

Jesus' series of questions and examples and a striking interjection in response isolate Satan's duplicity:

Thinks't thou such force in Bread? is it not written
(For I discern thee other then thou seem'st)
Man lives not by Bread only, but each Word
Proceeding from the mouth of God; who fed
Our Fathers here with Manna . . .
Why dost thou then suggest to me distrust,
Knowing who I am, as I know who thou art?
(I, 347-56)

Not only do the questions clarify the spiritual basis for the discussion they are having, but the isocolon and the polyptoton ("Knowing . . . know") in the final line here identify Satan and establish the real relationship between the two speakers. There is, however, an irony for Satan, since he is not really sure who Jesus is, though in one
limited sense he does "know" who he is. In any case the brevity is
typical of the development of the action to follow as Jesus quickly
asserts that the word is fulfilling and so casts out Satan's dis-
guisises and doubts.

Satan, then, "undisguised" (I, 357) drops his role of the help-
ful old man as shamelessly as if he had not just told a series of
lies to establish it and takes up what is presumably open debate.
The confrontation from this point on is oratorical as often as Satan
can make it be. His method is apparently conventional, but is actually
dependent on abuses of rhetoric and use of fallacies rather than on
the proper use of the different types of oratory (demonstrative,
deliberative, and judicial). And so he begins with a particular kind
of concession (deprecatio) aimed at creating pathos more than anything.
It is definitely not intended to answer Christ's real objection ("Why
suggest distrust?"):"

'Tis true, I am that Spirit unfortunate,
Who leagu'd with millions more in rash revolt
Kept not my happy Station, but was driven
With them from bliss to the bottomless deep.
(I, 358-61)

But even pathos cannot be a single end for satanic rhetoric and the
double-mindedness it represents, for here a revealing ambiguity is
registered by Satan in that the words "leagu'd with millions more"
first seem to mitigate the blame due him for his sin, but then just
as quickly begin to reflect his pride that millions chose him, even
to the fall. Thus, the pass at gaining pity is foiled by the uncon-
trollable pride of the speaker.
Similarly the hatred of God that creeps in unawares further prevents the establishment of pity. The insinuation in a phrase such as "rigour unconniving" (I, 363) (tapinosis), or the refusal to acknowledge the Father by using a pronoun for him without first naming him (I, 367) does not condemn God for punishing disobedience, but does characterize for Jesus and the audience the bleakness of Satan's non-recognition of the Father's justice.

Having made his self-seeking concession, Satan then attempts to establish ethos by several uses of paradiaastole; i.e., he uses the "place" of good deeds from demonstrative oratorical patterns, but since he has none he must call his bad ones by a good name. For example, he calls his torture of Job an assignment "to illustrate his high worth" (I, 370). With other like examples he leads up to the large lie—or at least ambiguity—"For what he \( \overline{\text{God}} I \) bids I do" (I, 377).

In this presentation in which he falsifies facts Satan employs what appears to be straightforward exposition, a language without figures of words or noticeably changed arrangements of the order or words. But immediately following this series to establish ethos he tries to set up a crucial lie, saying that he can know and have some communication of the good as it is here defined in relation to God. And he tries to hide this lie, as he does several other lies, in a complex rhetorical figure that substitutes repetition of word and completeness of structure for logical sense:

\[
\text{though I have lost}
\]
\[
\text{Much lustre of my native brightness, lost}
\]
To be belov'd of God, I have not lost
To love, at least contemplate and admire
What I see excellent in good, or fair,
Or vertuous, I should so have lost all sense.
(I, 377-82)

In this the false enthymeme is so carefully buried that the construction which hides it is too complex to properly apply a single term to (a combination of anaphora, ploce, antimetabole, and ellipsis). The first two uses of lost (anaphora) are concessions contrived to capture the listener's emotions, but the third lost and its complex relation with the equivocation in his use of love and belov'd sets up the false conclusion that one must lose all "sense" if he is cut off from good. The fallacious argument from the equivocation with the word sense is hidden in the remainder of the rhetorical period, as assent to the whole statement is demanded by the rhetorically conclusive fourth lost and its satisfaction with rhythm and repetition but not with logic.

The conclusion of the argument from "sense" is this: if I can feel and think I must not be cut off completely from good. However, when we isolate the fallacy in this we remember that true nature of damnation, and the lost's with which Satan intended to deceive begin to be an ironic echo of his horrible condition. To state the pattern in rhetorical terms, we might say that when Satan most wants to deceive he is most given to using figures of speech, especially repetition, and that those very figures reveal what he wants to hide. Furthermore, Satan has no awareness in the process of his speech that he is defeating his own cause and so he can continue to build on his supposed successes. In this particular case after his equivocation he compliments Christ with a rhetorical question designed to prevent
any questions about his logic:

What can be then less in me then desire
To see thee and approach thee? (I, 383-84)°

Then in the second half of this speech Satan speaks to supposed
criticisms of his intentions (sermocinatio):

Men generally think me much a foe
To all mankind: why should I? they to me
Never did wrong or violence. (I, 387-89)

This true statement, that man did not earn Satan's ill will, might pass
without ironic implications; but as it is drawn out further and made
to serve a variety of ends, it recoils and begins to remind us of the
blame Satan deserves for his unmotivated malice:

by them
I lost not what I lost, rather by them
I gain'd what I have gain'd. (I, 389-91)

Illogic is framed in this neat use of antanagoge, but the pattern of
repetition, parallel construction and carefully placed rhetorical
question is so extended that rather than identify the devil as one
with mankind and establish his worth and wisdom, it fixes the blame on
him that he deserves (I, 387-405).

Satan, however, presumes on his careful rhetorical constructions
and concludes with fourteen lines of rather direct expression which
attempt by stating obvious truths and making a concession of past evil
to tell a large lie. There are two ambiguous interjections (392, 404),
a barely noticed place (393-94), and a figure of accumulation (con-
geries) to emphasize Satan's role as a deliverer of messages to man
(393-95), but here he is basically playing down eloquence or displays
to arouse emotion; rather he is using an orderly, rational build-up to

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reach an apparently full sympathy with Jesus' position and, in fact, the needs of all men. So he concludes with a striking *concessio* which is a kind of *sermocinatio*:

> Envy they say excites me, thus to gain   
> Companions of my misery and wo.   
> At first it may be; but long-since with wo   
> Nearer acquainted, now I feel by proof,   
> That fellowship in pain divides not smart,   
> Nor lightens aught each man's peculiar load,   
> Small consolation then, were Man adjoyn'd:   
> This wounds me most (what can it less) that Man,   
> Man fall'n shall be restored, I never more.   
> (I, 397-405)

The last two lines, the point at which Satan tries to include all the ends he hopes for by his apparent free speaking, are noticeably different in construction from the previous seven. With the parenthetical and balancing rhetorical question, the pointed repetition of "Man, Man fall'n," and the metaphorical use of "wounds" Satan brings much rhetorical force to this attempt to elicit pity for his plight: "I never more." Ironically, however, the wound he is about to receive is literal and ultimately to be fatal; and so again he calls attention by his rhetoric to the curse he is under, and all his attempts to establish his integrity in his dealings with man and his need for pity in his suffering fall short.

The Savior is utterly unaffected by all this and strikes at Satan's real and his feigned grief alike in response. He denounces Satan in a point-by-point refutation of his entire argument and by a clear statement of the contrast between the language of the spirit of evil and the Holy Spirit. And he further says that his own coming signals the replacement of Satan's deceitful influence on men and his lying way by the indwelling Spirit of Truth:
Deservedly thou griev'st, compos'd of lyes
From the beginning, and in lies wilt end. . . .
No more shalt thou by oracling abuse
The Gentiles; henceforth Oracles are ceast. . . .
God hath now sent his living Oracle
Into the World, to teach his final will,
And sends his Spirit of Truth henceforth to dwell
In pious Hearts, an inward Oracle
To all truth requisite for men to know.
(I, 407-8, 455-56, 460-64)

The nature of the entire conflict and of Christ's victory and Satan's defeat is here said to be located in the knowledge of truth and the language that will contain it. Here the teaching of God's will by divine answers given in men's hearts, not by eloquence or power, is the end, the fulfillment of the Promise, the Word Satan disbelieves and yet dreads, the Word which gives truth and frees men from demonic insecurity.

And to prove the fulfillment of these promises, the gift of man's freedom within the Word and within language itself, Jesus carefully refutes Satan by the very rhetorical devices he used to try to confuse and delude. Thus, Jesus uses the rhetorical question, one of Satan's basic measures, but unlike Satan's questions which lead into gray areas, the six which Jesus uses all emphasize the single answers to the problems at hand. His clarifying questions, in fact, resolve the particular ambiguities created by Satan and reproach him for his evil (epiplexis). For example, as to Satan's saying he helped prove Job's worth, Jesus asks:

What but thy malice mov'd thee to misdeem
Of righteous Job? (I, 424-25)
Or, on Satan's saying he was an oracle to the Gentiles:

But what have been thy answers, what but dark
Ambiguous and with double sense deluding?
(I, 434-35)

And so with the Son's use of figures of repetition, they also
are used to separate the truth completely from the lie. He takes
Satan's paradia stole that he "came" among the Sons of God and, by
repetition (polyptoton), defines the true nature of that "coming."

You grieve deservedly says Jesus, you

Who boast'st release from Hell, and leave to come
Into the Heav'n of Heavens; thou com'st indeed,
As a poor miserable captive thrall,
Comes to the place where he before had sat
Among the Prime in Splendor. (I, 409-13)

And so by a polyptoton he defines the true situation behind Satan's
lying suggestion that he is permitted in heaven: "the happy place/
Imparts to thee no happiness" (I, 416-417). And even more importantly
he transmutes and fixes true supernatural revelation by turning
Satan's "oracling" and "Oracles" (455-56) into the "living Oracle"
(460), and "inward Oracle" (462), thus converting pagan words to
Christian truth. There are minor variations on the pattern but this
use of the figures of repetition in all their various forms is typical
of what happens throughout.

The greater part of the Son's figures, when he does use them,
are those which compress and intensify, different forms of zeugma,
ellipsis and asyndeton, such as the devastating brachylogia which com­­pletes the comparison of Satan to a "poor miserable captive thrall"
(411) who appears before his former peers
now depos'd,
Ejected, empty'd, gaz'd, unpity'd, shun'd,
A spectacle of ruin or of scorn. (I, 413-15)

As noted above, the Son responds to Satan by appealing to the same places of invention that Satan tried to use to his own praise—origins, worthy deeds, and good intentions—but, of course, the Son uses them to disparage Satan in the process of refuting him—"composed of lies/From the beginning," etc. In doing so he employs one of Milton's favorite devices, appealing to the same conventional places and turning an opponent's remarks back on him, but more importantly his revealing Satan's deluding use of rhetoric condemns Satan's paradoxical nature as it shows up in language. Thus, when Satan implies that he can pass freely into heaven, Jesus corrects him with an apparent oxymoron, saying that because "the happy place" gives no joy to Satan, he is "never more in Hell than when in Heaven" (I, 420). Yet here the paradoxical figure does not create an ambiguity but delineates the true meaning of Satan's experience in heaven and emphasizes the eternal incompatibility of good and evil spirits. And further, Jesus not only shows the difference in form between his language of truth and Satan's falsehood, but states the difference specifically. Just as he, the Son, lives on the word from the mouth of God, not just on bread, Satan, he says, lives on the lie: "lying is thy sustenance, thy food" (I, 429). And so he characterizes both Satan's general method and the previous speech:

that hath been thy craft,
By mixing somewhat true to vent more lies.
(I, 432-33)
Finally, he says, Satan does not give simple, straightforward answers to anyone:

But what have been thy answers, what but dark
Ambiguous and with double sense deluding?
(I, 433-34)

Thus chastised, Satan exits with a speech of only twenty-five lines in which he adds little, rhetorically, to his previously used methods, but merely tries to cover his emotions and gain permission to return (I, 468-93). All his responses to what the Son actually said are indirect. He first questions the rightness of Jesus' harsh style and goes on quickly to argue from necessity (anangeon) that "not will/But misery" forced his evil deeds (I, 469-70). And to rhetorically "prove" his point he asks a rhetorical question which avoids the whole issue of his own guilt:

where

Easily canst thou find one miserable,
And not inforc'd oft-times to part from truth?
(I, 470-72)

Even more central to the whole poem's meaning is his attempt to assert, or rather insinuate, that truth simply cannot be lived by in this world, and that with God's permission even the most intimate contacts with the Deity on earth are mixed with evil. He does not, however, directly commit himself to the defense of this position, but tries to sneak it in by a fallacious use of question (I, 481-82), and by flattery hidden in apparently logical development (I, 478-83).

The Son, in his already established rhetorical pattern, rejects the entire pose in a sentence by showing its uselessness:
do as thou find'st
Permission from above; thou canst not more.
(1, 495-96)

Thus the final contrast between the forms of Satan's falsehood and the balanced and illuminating brevity of the Son's truth end the first book and the first day of temptation with the rhetorical "rudiments" clearly distinguished.

In Book II, as in Book I, the Son first appears alone and has a soliloquy which contrasts in one major way with his talking to Satan. As has been shown above, the Son's certainty is strongly contrasted with Satan's lack of it; however, in the soliloquies Milton allows the Redeemer to voice his lack of sure knowledge of the particulars of what he is to do or what is happening to him (though the reader has been told by the Father). This fact seems important since it is at these points where two kinds of uncertainty are discriminated that the reader is told about the difference between satanic despair and the patience of faith in God's promises, when complete information or a large enough perspective is not available to the individual. Thus, the Son is shown not to have either inspired information or rhetorical ability beyond the rest of men; but, like others, he must in his incompleteness at this point await God's pleasure. Content in his means, he ends each soliloquy in a resolution to abide by the knowledge given in Scripture and by the testimony at his baptism (I, 290-93; II, 253-59).

Satan's first attempt in Book II to trick Jesus out of his trusting Providence is not really rhetorical, but it does affect the
demonic rhetoric and is an interesting counterpart to it. That is, Satan believes his about-to-be-presented banquet to be tempting enough of itself, and so he begins with a simple speech. However, the very qualities and purposes of the banquet, its demonic makers, its appeal to the senses and to weakness, and its intended deception, are one with Satan's rhetoric. In fact, in giving Satan this ploy Milton may have been thinking of Socrates' comparing sophistic rhetoric to the non-art of cookery, for Socrates says that rhetoric is no more related to justice (truth) than cookery is to health; but both according to him give pleasure to certain tastes without satisfying real needs, and so neither is a true art, but like other cosmetic satisfactions merely a form of flattery.

 Appropriately, then, Satan the constant flatterer appears to Christ in Book II with, in his own words, "granted leave officious" (II, 302). This ambiguous phrase implies two lies, that he gained the Son's permission on the previous day to return and that he does things only by the rules. The rest of this short speech is designed to make the Son susceptible to the banquet by confusing him. Thus, Satan makes a clear statement of wonder at Christ's condition in order to cast doubt on God's providence:

> With granted leave officious I return,  
> But much more wonder that the Son of God  
> In this wild solitude so long should bide  
> Of all things destitute, and well I know,  
> Not without hunger. (II, 302-306)

He then implements his doubt by several examples of biblical predecessors of Jesus who were cared for miraculously in their desert
journeys, but his real word play is saved for the last two lines in which he hopes to put Jesus off guard by a verbal shock and an incomplete syllogism before having the banquet materialize and whet his appetite. He does the first of these by a striking place emphasizing the length of Jesus' fast and then by the concluding pun that is as obvious as it is blasphemous:

Of thee these forty days none hath regard,
Forty and more deserted here indeed. (II, 315-16)

The shock value of the accusation is added to by the imbalance caused by the elliptical quality of the last line, but the main point of attack is the attempt to disturb the Son's tranquility by an enthymeme with the conclusion missing: Those whom God favors are fed miraculously. You are not being fed. The disquieting conclusion is planted, not stated.

The Son, however, is not moved at all and will not play Satan's game. Instead, in a half line he forces Satan to his implied conclusion: "what conclud' st thou hence?" And he then makes a one line proposition of his own that does logically expound, or at least imply, the true meaning of his desert experience. "They / his predecessors/ all had need, I as thou seest have none" (II, 317-18).

This simple reply isolates the fallacy, exposes the duplicity, and prevents the valid offer of any concern or counsel on Satan's part. And so Satan is reduced to asking if Jesus will eat if given food, and he is answered even more sharply than before: "Thereafter as I like/The giver" (II, 321-22).
Having failed to get Jesus off balance, Satan is plainly stuck and resorts, as he does a number of times later, to a complex display of rhetoric. That is, to gather his forces and to stir his opponent he adopts a common rhetorical device, the asking of a series of questions that require diverse answers (pysma). By this tactic he gives himself time to chart a new direction and to confuse in the meantime the person who has just won a major point. So he says:

Why should that
Cause thy refusal, said the subtle Fiend,
Hast thou not right to all Created things,
Owe not all Creatures by just right to thee
Duty and Service, nor to stay till bid,
But tender all their power? Nor mention I
Meats by the Law unclean . . .
Nor proffer'd by an Enemy, though who
Would scruple that, with want opprest?
(II, 322-31)

While the obvious ends of this speech, mentioned just above, are clear, the minor effects are typical and as complex as elsewhere: the figures of repetition ("Created . . . Creatures," "Nor mention . . . Nor proffer'd") and the parallel incrementum camouflage two gross lies and ironically recall Satanic ambition. The lies are that the banquet is offered by nature and that it contains nothing unclean. The polyptoton turns Jesus' right to "created things" into a right to be honored by all "Creatures," the same "right" that Eve abused and Satan longs for.

That this whirl of questions recovers Satan's sense of his own control is attested to by the two lines which follow it. In these, Satan's confidence in his rhetorical maneuvers is shown by the solicitous pose in his use of a correctio after the word "asham'd":
behold
Nature asham'd, or better to express,
Troubl'd that thou should'st hunger.
(II, 331-33)

Using this figure to show concern and to cause emotion, Satan reveals the feast.

Trusting in the attractive power of his banquet Satan then relies on his usual rhetorical pattern, the creation of uncertainty by questions, in order to engage Christ in the feast. He waves it in with the invitation "only deign to sit and eat" (II, 336), and this phrase is immediately repeated, after the description of the banquet by the narrator, in the form "What doubts the Son of God to sit and eat?" (II, 368). And again after eight lines of reassurance and flattery (the banquet is "homage") Satan urges with the rhetorical question again in only a slightly different form: "What doubt'st thou Son of God? sit down and eat." (II, 377).

The shift in inflection is just enough, however, to reveal Satan's urgency if not to trap the Son, and so it has the opposite effect its speaker intends. And in so betraying Satan it fits with the irony in his calling hunger "life's enemy" as he coaxes Christ to eat (II, 372). Speaking of the fruits he says:

Thir taste no knowledge works, at least of evil,
But life preserves, destroy's life's enemy,
Hunger. (II, 371-73)

Here he uses antimetabole ("life preserves . . . life's enemy") and personification ("Hunger") to carefully state his lie. But the very care he takes with his rhetoric undoes him, for the phrase "life's enemy" may, when considered, remind the listener that this is the
father of death himself who is speaking. Thus he is again ironically identified and isolated by his own attempt to deceive. The flurry of rhetorical questions with which he began comes to nothing more than this self-betrayal by his own art.

Jesus, on the other hand, takes the same pattern, a series of questions, and uses it to resolve the ambiguities created by Satan and to censure him (epiplexis). Each of Jesus' pointed questions clarifies one of the tangled points with which Satan tried to trap him. For example, he asks, using Satan's own statement, "Said'st thou not that to all things I had right?" (II, 378). And so his questions imply specific answers, not confusing possibilities:

And who withholds my power that right to use?  
Shall I receive by gifts what of my own,  
When and where likes me best, I can command?  
(III, 379-81)

And after demonstrating the proper use of figures of speech and refuting Satan's fallacies, Jesus then states his own side of the argument in clear and unfettered exposition:

I can at will, doubt not, as soon as thou,  
Command a Table in this Wilderness,  
And call swift flights of Angels ministrant  
Array'd in Glory on my cup to attend.  
(II, 383-86)

He concludes the rebuttal with one hard, defining figure of repetition (antimetabole), reinforced by alliteration, to separate absolutely the true from the false:

Thy Pompous Delicacies I contemn,  
And count thy specious gifts no gifts, but guiles  
(II, 390-91)
Having completely failed in the banquet temptation, Satan makes a turn in his method that will govern his action until the end of the offer of Rome. He begins slowly to work in elements of deliberative (political) oratory. At first the change is not too apparent, for in the first thirty-seven lines he speaks after Jesus rejects his offer of food he uses seven questions which twist facts and uncertainties into invitations to doubt. But at the same time the little figures of repetition begin to become political maxims and exhortations to an ideal of power and a course of action to regain the lost kingdom. The following quotation is typical:

> all thy heart is set on high designs,  
> High actions; but wherewith to be achieved?  
> Great acts require great means of enterprise.  
> (II, 410-412)

The uses of diaphora ("high . . . High," "Great . . . great") attempt to capture and direct the aspirations of the Savior while the rhetorical question knifed in between these political catch-phrases is aimed, as always, at creating doubt about the present course.

This political bent to the language is new, and the rest of the speech is concerned mostly with the same kind of slogans and questions, all bearing the stamp of demagoguery and the politics of power; but the ironic undercutting of Satan's purposes by his own rhetoric continues even more strongly than before. There are two climactic points in this speech and each has an effect opposite to that which Satan intends. In the first instance, Satan taunts Jesus with refusing the feast and says that since he will not eat it, it will go to those who have deserved the "far fet spoil" (II, 401). The irony here lies not
only in Satan's vicious banquet being characterized as the excessive
thing it is, but in his whole method being shown in this phrase, for
in Milton's time far-fet (far-fetched) not only was applied to "argu-
ments, notions, similes . . . Studiously sought out; not easily or
naturally introduced," (OED) but was used by Puttenham as a rhetorical
term for those times "when we had rather fetch a word a great way off
than to use one nearer hand to express the matter as well and plainer."
(OED) Moreover, there was a substantive back formation from it which
meant "a deeply-laid or cunning stratagem." (OED) Thus Satan's phrase
reveals his duplicity with the truth.

And when he brings his questions to a climax in the end of this
speech the same kind of irony occurs. In this instance he offers him-
self as Jesus' source of power through wealth with the Tamburlainian
lines

Riches are mine, Fortune is in my hand;
Those whom I favour thrive in wealth amain,
While Virtue, Valour, Wisdom sit in want.
(II, 429-31)

Not only does the passage crash down around Satan's purposes with its
condemnation of his way, a way that destroys virtue, valor and wisdom,
but it isolates by its sounds the "heroic" that Christ is to go beyond
in his life and Milton in his verse.

Satan's speech using snatches from the worst kind of political
oratory begins, as already suggested, a direction toward formal ora-
tory. Christ's response, on the other hand, sets the use of it right.
His reply to Satan is perfectly formal, a miniature oration. It be-
gins with a thesis counter to Satan's, gives examples from sacred and
secular history, emphasizes the point of the examples with rhetorical question, anticipates the several objections his opponent might make, defines by the process of division the true nature of monarchy, adds a slight flourish by referring to the principle of magnanimity in the rejection of great things, and concludes with a pointed summary of his argument and reiteration of his first sentence (II, 433-86). The result of all this is that Satan is "confounded what to say . . . confuted and convinc't" of the fallacies he had developed (III, 2-3).

While the secure conclusion of this little oration makes it typical of that eloquence which Milton found in truth alone, the control of the figures here is remarkable. The repetition (sometimes with modification) and the opposition of words (peristasis) create a perfect balance within the units of the individual lines, and this balance accurately reflects the discriminating power in the speaker's vital truth. In the following quotation these carefully placed words have been underlined to show how strictly their balance divides the worldly kingdom from the Messianic. Thus Jesus replies to Satan's conclusion on virtue, valor and wisdom:

Yet Wealth without these three is impotent,
To gain dominion or to keep it gain'd.  
Witness those antient Empires of the Earth,
In hight of all thir flowing wealth dissolv'd:
But men endu'd with these /virtues/ have oft attain'd
In lowest poverty to highest deeds: (433-38)

A Crown
Golden in shew, is but a wreath of thorns (457-58)
Yet he who reigns within himself, and rules
Passions, Desires, and Fears, is more a King;
Which every wise and vertuous man attains:
And who attains not, ill aspires to rule
Cities of men, or head-strong Multitudes. (466-70)
So the parallels build to the final lines which sever ultimately the valid pursuit of the Kingdom from the invalid:

Riches are needless then, both for themselves,  
And for thy reason why they should be sought,  
To gain a Scepter, oft test better miss't.  
(II, 484-86)

Thus, the repetitions and antitheses are rhetorical devices which silently reveal the apparent similarity between the demonic and divine workings in the world and at the same time show how utterly different they really are.

Yet the compactness and accuracy of Christ's rhetoric is so great that in addition to distinguishing good from evil as he does throughout by his rhetorical figures, he can, in a kind of climax to the speech, capture in words the unifying power of his mission and singleness of mind (again the underlining is to emphasize):

But to guide Nations in the way of truth  
By saving Doctrine, and from error lead  
To know, and knowing worship God aright,  
Is yet more Kingly.  (II, 473-76)

In this simple incrementum, "To know and knowing worship" he holds the fulfillment of faith and trust, the true center of his Kingdom.

Finally in this speech there is one point of contrast rhetorically with Satan's speech that has not earlier been used. As noted above Satan's phrases sometimes carry meanings not literally intended, and the meanings (e.g., far fet) illuminate his lies and argue against his point. In the Son's exposition of the office of a king, there is a series of strong allusions to the scene of the crucifixion: "a wreath of thorns" (459), "on his shoulders each mans burden lies" (462), "head-strong multitudes" (470).
When we recall that the inscription on the cross will be "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," the true nature of kingship, the point he is making, is powerfully furthered and reinforced by these suggestions of his suffering, an effect which is in one sense the opposite of what happens when second levels of meaning surface in Satan's use of language. Of course, from Milton's perspective, in both cases the truth, damning or saving, depending on the speaker's nature and intent, is revealed to the listener.

The Son's rebuttal at the end of Book II of Satan's praise of wealth defines the true ruler and in doing so suggests to Satan the two temptations in Book III, magnanimity (and its force, glory) and kingship. Satan's grasping at these is typical of his method; that is, since he has no hold on any sure word or meaning, he must extemporize, must out of his darkness and uncertainty spin temptations to whatever points in Jesus' speech he can reach, hoping to construct on them a tangle in which to trap him.

Jesus' using the word "magnanimity" in saying the greatest act is to give up a kingdom suggests, of course, Aristotle's *Ethics* and the ethical-political theory which held generally that honor was the greatest reward a society could give to its heroes for deeds which were really beyond payment. Satan obviously feels this fits with his plan to trap Jesus with glory and, thus, the first third of Book III becomes a debate on the key Renaissance values of honor and glory. The rhetorical methods of the combatants seen in Books I and II become the means of separating true from false glory and of defining each. The mere fact that the word "glory" occurs twenty-six
times in 118 lines, and derivatives and synonyms almost as often, suggests that the same closely worked rhetoric as before will be the main style of the debate.

Satan begins Book III with a combination of flattery and fallacy in his typical style, repetitions and parallel sentences. He starts off with five lines of obvious repetition, *plece* and *anadiplosis*, which seem to be slow and methodical in order to give him time to establish his direction after being stunned ("as mute confounded what to say"

\[ \text{III, 27} \] ) by Jesus' refutation:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{I see thou know'st what is of use to know,} \\
\text{What best to say canst say, to do canst do;} \\
\text{Thy actions to thy words accord, thy words} \\
\text{To thy large heart give utterance due, thy heart} \\
\text{Contains of good, wise, just, the perfect shape.} \\
\text{(III, 7-11)}
\end{align*}
\]

These lines are both a concession and a compliment but quickly turn to evil use, the counsel to ambition. However, the real warning as to what Satan is doing in trying to lead Christ into pride and a characteristic abuse of rhetoric is his misuse of the places of invention from demonstrative oratory. For he pretends to be using deliberative oratory, giving advice and helping his audience to make a decision, but what everyone who was familiar with the forms of oratory would recognize is that he is using the places of praise: ability, nature, political and military deeds, and generosity to the public weal. Thus, he is flattering first in that the subject of this praise is his audience and further in that Jesus has done nothing yet, so Satan is only praising him for imagined future acts, that is, for an illusion:
Should Kings and Nations from thy mouth consult,  
Thy Counsel would be as the Oracle  
Urim and Thummim, those oraculous gems  
on Aaron's breast: or tongue of Seers old  
Infallible; or wert thou sought to deeds  
That might require th' array of war, thy skill  
Of conduct would be such, that all the world  
Could not sustain thy Prowess, or subsist  
In battle, though against thy few in arms.  
(III, 12-20)

Following this flattery Satan employs a swirl of questions  
which require different answers (pysma) and build by their implications,  
not by real answers since they want none, to the captivating essence  
of honor, the glory that only lofty spirits can desire:

These God-like Vertues wherefore dost thow hide?  
Affecting private life, or more obscure  
In savage Wilderness, wherefore deprive  
All Earth her wonder at thy acts, thy self  
The fame and glory, glory the reward  
That sole excites to high attempts the flame  
Of most erected Spirits? (III, 21-27)

Here the build-up of the questions pivoting on the epizeuxis "glory,  
glory" matches the final image of "flames" reaching for "fame." And  
so the list of classical examples which immediately follows works  
upwards to a climax with Caesar "inflam'd with glory" (III, 40-41).  
If we do not see the ironic hellishness and Satanic ambition  
in both the images of fire and the aspiring rhetorical pattern, we  
are quickly reminded by the Son's response, which is a perfect mirror  
comment on Satan's speech. He even uses the flame imagery to show  
it for what it is as he reverses the effect of Satan's rhetoric by  
turning the figures it relied on into their proper end of revealing  
truth. Thus he begins, as Satan did, by using a distinctive  
anadiplosis, but his is to say forcefully that he is unmoved, that
no persuasion has occurred:

Thou neither dost perswade me to seek wealth
For Empires sake, nor Empire to affect
For glories sake by all thy argument.
For what is glory but the blaze of fame,
The peoples praise, if always praise unmixt?
And what the people but a herd confus'd,
A miscellaneous rabble, who extol
Things vulgar, & well weigh'd, scarce worth the praise.
They praise and they admire they know not what;
And know not whom, but as one leads the other;
And what delight to be by such extoll'd,
To live upon thir tongues and be thir talk,
Of whom to be disprais'd were no small praise?
His lot who dares be singularly good. (III, 44-57)

After the first three lines, then, he uses, as Satan did, a series
of rhetorical questions, though his are directed downward to the
single truth that goodness is not popularly praised. Thus, he reduces
Satan's spiraling figures to their true worthless foundation. And
the figures of repetition and contrast here make the internal struc-
ture of the descent clear and absolute. Each single question, in
fact, contains again in miniature the pattern of reduction. For
example, the last question moves from one's being "extoll'd," to being
at the mercy of "tongues" (a rank mindlessness created by the synech-
doche), to being common "talk" itself. The concluding paradox
(polyptoton), the dispraise of the mob is praise, is then the en-
lightening model of the true relation between goodness and honor.66

Having thus established the proper use of the figures of speech
misused by Satan, Jesus uses his own method of development, an utterly
plain expository statement, to define true glory:

This is true glory and renown, when God
Looking on the Earth, with approbation marks
The just man, and divulges him through Heaven
To all his Angels, who with true applause
Recount his praises. (III, 60-64)

In this speech thus far the Son has corrected satanic lies and
the rhetoric which contains them, and he has gone on to demonstrate
purity of speech in his own definition of glory. He has finally to
separate earthly from heavenly glory by showing the real relation
between true glory and true goodness as he first showed that false
 glory, "the people's praise," is not related to the good. Thus as he
further distinguishes the demonic view of glory he uses, as in the
following quotation, polyptoton and balanced construction. Earth,
he says, is where

    glory is false glory, attributed
To things not glorious, men not worthy of fame.
They err who count it glorious to subdue
By Conquest far and wide. (III, 69-72)

As glory becomes a kind of refrain, Jesus concludes his teaching
by arguing that goodness—"deeds of peace," "patience," and "wisdom"—
has brought as much lasting fame to men like Job and Socrates as
"ambition" and "violence" to others. He then ties up his three-part
refutation and definition with figures that complete his distinctions:

    Shall I seek glory then, as vain men seek
Oft not deserv'd? I seek not mine, but his
Who sent me, and thereby witness whence I am.
(III, 105-107)

The peristasis "I seek . . . vain men seek" first separates the true
from the false, and the "I seek" then turns into the identifying
anaphora "I seek not mine, but his," which concludes with the true
relationship between Father and Son, especially in the suggestion
of deity in the last two words: "and thereby witness whence I am."
Not only has Jesus resolved the ambiguities in the demonic suggestions, but he has also helped make Satan aware against his will of his own damning flaw, pride, ironically the very failing by which, according to the original demonic plan, the Son was to be trapped. The pain Satan feels at this illumination of his own flaw is revealed in one last attempt on his part at confusing the relationship between honor and merit (or goodness). And this attempt gives Christ the occasion for finally relating the whole issue to the nature of God, the source of all goodness.

Satan's "murmuring" response (III, 108) is the most extended example of his use of figures of repetition and parallel construction to cover a lie by rhetorically creating the impression of proof. The falsehood here is that in imitating God the Son should imitate him absolutely and demand the honor God deserves (cf. Eve and "be like gods"). Into this fallacy Satan weaves a point from one of the standard places of invention, "parentage," thus adding the force of compliment to his deceit. In this passage the underlining is to call attention to Satan's pattern of repetition:

Think not so slight of glory; therein least
Resembling thy great Father: he seeks glory
And for his glory all things made, all things
Orders and governs, nor content in Heaven
By all his Angels glorifi'd, requires
Glory from men, from all men good or bad,
Wise or unwise, no difference, no exemption;
Above all Sacrifice, no hallow'd gift
Glory he requires, and glory he receives
Promiscuous from all Nations, Jew, or Greek,
Or Barbarous, nor exception hath declar'd;
From us his foes pronounc't glory he exacts.
(III, 109-120)
Jesus, however, does not fall prey to the complex effects of this flurry of simple figures. Instead he shows how the Father truly deserves glory for his goodness, and he reminds Satan of the absolute power of God's word and its relation to both glory and goodness:

since his word all things produc'd,
Though chiefly not for glory as prime end,
But to shew forth his goodness, and impart
His good communicable to every soul
Freely: of whom what could he less expect
Than glory and benediction, that is thanks.
(III, 122-27)

Both the belief by the good man in the words of God and the rejection of their truth by Satan are kept in their proper relation by this comment. Even the word "benediction," literally "saying well," applied to the Father makes Satan's speech a sample of his ingratitude.

The Son goes on to say that man should not seek "glory" since he is nothing and when he does he "despoils" himself of "all true good" (134, 139). Thus he continues sorting out the meanings of "glory" and "good" by using them in repetitive figures. Then having shown the sin involved in a wrong understanding of the two he pulls them back together in a redemptive figure which balances in its form the lovely state of man in his proper relation to God's glory and goodness ("bounty"):

Yet so much bounty is in God, such grace,
That who advance his glory not their own,
Then he himself to glory will advance.
(III, 142-44)

This perfect use of **antimetabole** ("advance his glory . . . to glory will advance") shows finally the proper reciprocation between glory and the good, between God and man; and it is formal rhetoric
not only teaching truth but praising (glorifying) God for his gifts to man. Even Satan cannot avoid recognizing the power of this conclusion and so he stands

struck

With guilt of his own sin, for he himself
Insatiable of glory had lost all. (III, 146-48)

Thus defeated Satan has to change his subject completely and, as much as he can, his tactics. His next attempt is specifically called a "Plea" (III, 149): it is, in fact, a piece of hortatory rhetoric, i.e., a plea in the political sense, one which urges a course of action. The subject of the plea is new and taken, like glory, from Jesus' own speech on monarchy. However, familiar Satanic patterns of rhetoric soon emerge as the Adversary works his material around the key words, "raign," "zeal," and "duty."

As it turns out, there are a number of ways that "the kingdom" can become a trap, and so Satan's first device is a mere repeated invitation to "raign," no different in basic form from the request that the Son "sit and eat" at the banquet:

If Kingdom move thee not, let move thee Zeal,
And Duty; Zeal and Duty are not slow:
But on Occasions forelock watchful wait.
They themselves rather are occasion best,
Zeal of thy Fathers house, Duty to free
Thy country from her Heathen servitude;
So shalt thou best fullfil, best verifie
The Prophets old, who sung thy endless raign,
The happier raign the sooner it begins,
Raign then; what canst thou better do the while?
(III, 171-180)

"Zeal and duty" are carefully emphasized by their repetition in the anadiplosis in the first two lines and then by being further defined in their repetition in the fifth line. And likewise "occasion"
and its fearful necessity are enforced by a repetition that is not only a correctio, but a place as well in the third and fourth lines. Finally these repetitions lead to the place, polyptoton and rhetorical question that call for Christ's "raign" in the last three lines.

Such figures are neat enough devices on their own, but they are constructed to convey together an even greater fallacy than has yet been mentioned, one which Milton's own life had seen tested and proved wrong for twenty years. That is, Satan assumes here the lie that political power is necessary to bringing in the Kingdom of God and the further lie that God's word in prophecy had to be studied and acted out, implemented, in order to be "verified." This notion, of course, runs counter to the faith on which the poem is built, the faith that God's word is absolute and will, as at the Creation, fulfill itself. The second lie is an obvious enough emanation of Satan's own basic problem, his failure to believe God's word; and even though the Son refutes him, he will not concede the point, but repeats it to his own further destruction far beyond the limits of reason.

One last rhetorical note on the speech is that there is a twist here not fully developed earlier, and that is the use of repetition to amplify, to make sounds without logical thought in the cheapest fashion of demagoguery. Here the echoing in the words duty, duty, duty, zeal, zeal, raign, raign, raign carry their suggestion merely by the emphasis in repetition. Later, on the mountain top, this method of stimulating descends to the nearly meaningless sounds of pomp and pride in such phrases as
Ecbatana her structure vast there shews,
And Hecatompylos her hundred gates,
There Susa by Choaspes, amber stream,
That drink of none but Kings, of later fame
Built by Emathian, or by Parthian hands,
The great Seleucia, Nisibis, and there
Artaxata, Teredon, Tesiphon,
Turning with easie eye thow mays't behold.

(III, 286-293)

The Son's answers to Satan's temptations with zeal and duty continue the pattern of reducing questions to truth, resolving ambiguities by proper use of figures of speech and using simple schemes to distinguish the real from the imitation. When Satan concludes his invitation to "raign" and thus fulfill prophecy in proper time, he again turns even the images around: the "powerful hands" (III, 155) of Rome cited by Satan do not frighten the Son, because he remembers the Father, "in whose hand all times and seasons roul" (III, 187). And to oppose Satan's pattern of zeal, duty and occasion he states the true relation of man and power with the chiasmus and the terse isocolon and anaphora:

who best
Can suffer, best can do; best reign, who first
Well hath obey'd. (III, 194-96)

Finally he isolates Satan by a series of rhetorical questions which all have only one answer, Satan's true purpose. The last of these questions is a peristasis which balances the Savior and the Tempter on opposite sides of the verb and is in form the pattern of the action of this poem, the separation of good from evil, the expulsion of Satan by Christ, the final conquering of the dragon:

Know'st thow not that my rising is thy fall,
And my promotion will be thy destruction?
(III, 201-202)
The balance in this question implies a great deal by itself. Not only is Satan given the answer he wishes to deny, but he is given it in a form which reflects the casting out that he knows and will know again.

Satan's reply to this is a misuse of rhetoric and even truth to cover a lie:

What worse?
For where no hope is left, is left no fear;
If there be worse, the expectation more
Of worse torments me then the feeling can.
I would be at the worst; worst is my Port,
My harbour and my ultimate repose,
The end I would attain, my final good.
(III, 205-211)

Yet nothing is added here that we have not already seen, and all the devices are only intensifications of the earlier attempts to confuse. The misleading rhetorical question, implying in its brevity resignation to Christ's way; the epizeuxis ("is left, is left" and "worst, worst") to convey in perfect balance a lie; the polyptoton on "worse" and "worst" leading up to the final paradox of worst-equals-good, which is rhetoric at its most enigmatic.

In this effort Satan is so aware that he is leading to no conclusion that he interrupts himself by taking the Son on to the mountain top where the amplification already mentioned goes on, first literally in Satan's speech (III, 267-309), then in the vision narrated by the poet (310-344). Yet as Satan depends on amplification, his inability to control his rhetorical effects actually increases. In the middle of a speech concerned mostly with effects and hardly at all with truth or real demonstration, he reveals his bad relation to words more than ever by an unintended pun which explodes without
his even hearing it. He points to the sights: "There Babylon the wonder of all tongues" (III, 280) and in one line captures the complexity of the demonic intention. Of course, he means to say how admired Babylon is, but the reader may remember that Babylon for aspiring to thwart God's power lost the ability to communicate; they so put "wonder," i.e., doubt, into language that "tongues" could create only wonder and not certainty. And ironically for Satan, both the aspiring to a tower of Babel and the failure to find straight, honest meaning in words are his exact problems.

Then having used the methods of amplification to try to impress Jesus with politics and the Savior's own presumed political necessity, Satan assumes that he himself can operate as a generous political advisor and recommends Parthia and himself as he leads up to the entrapping lie that the Kingdom will not come until the children of Israel are restored to the place they had when David was on his throne. He says that there is no fulness of the kingdom until there is political rule by the righteous, a familiar enough cry in Milton's own time.

When he moves to this political reasoning, he develops it in the form of an oratorical composition: first an exordium (a lie here) to establish ethos. This includes an assertion that a clear narration is coming:

That thou may'st know I seek not to engage
Thy Vertue, and not every way secure
On no slight grounds thy safety; hear, and mark
To what end I have brought thee hither and shewn
All this fair sight. (III, 347-51)
He then gives the thesis, although, as stated above, it is based on the belief that God's word is not absolute (Satan's only hope and the source of his sin is his belief that it is not):

thy Kingdom though foretold
By Prophet or by Angel, unless thou
Endeavour, as thy Father David did,
Thow never shalt obtain; prediction still
In all things, and all men, supposes means,
Without means us'd, what it predicts revokes.
(III, 351-56)

Notably, to encourage belief (ethos) he does not use a figure in the first clause quoted here, but then when stating the full lie in the second one he resorts again to antithema as a rhetorical cover, a pretense at demonstration by the balance of form. We might even divide the two clauses here quoted into the narration and definition respectively, if we wish to distinguish thus far.

Following this proposition that "means" must be used, Satan anticipates the possible argument that the Father can deliver (as he did so often in the Old Testament) the enemies of Israel into the hands of his chosen. Even if given the kingdom, the Son, he says, would never survive as king without military might (III, 357-362). And thus he comes to his "therefore" from which he offers Parthia as a means and himself as Parthia's giver. However, instead of reasoning to the offer as a logical conclusion, Satan abruptly inserts a question which poses a dilemma. He offers Jesus the two unsatisfactory alternatives of having Parthia "by conquest or by league" (III, 370). "Chuse which thou wilt" (III, 370), he says. This method of posing dilemmas, brutally obvious as it is, is his for the remainder of the debate; for, in fact, he has exhausted his rhetorical means. The
remainder of this particular speech, for example, is nothing more
than a hollow peroration, full of talk about Jesus' freeing the
Israelites and thus placing himself on David's throne "in full glory"
(III, 371-85).

In answer to this the Son, like Milton the pamphleteer, sets
up his opponent's points one by one and demonstrates the difference
between their principles and the principles of his faith. Again
Jesus' logical method operates by the rhetorical figures of repetition
and antithesis. For example, he begins with polyptoton and contentio
(underlined):

Much ostentation vain of fleshly arm,
And fragil arms, much instrument of war
Long in preparing, soon to nothing brought,
Before mine eyes thou hast set . . .
Plausible to the world, to me worth naught.
(III, 387-94)

In these figures used by Christ the end is not exhortation, as in
Satan's political posing, but delineation. Thus, Jesus following
this beginning merely repeats Satan's ambiguity, his play on the word
"prediction" to create doubt, to reveal the fallacy of it. The figure
used by Satan is reversed in its effect by Christ:

Means I must use thou say'st, prediction else
Will unpredict and fail me of the Throne.
(394-95)

Having so reduced Satan, Jesus then makes a direct attack with his
own plain statement:

My time I told thee, (and that time for thee
Were better farthest off) is not yet come;
When that comes think not thou to find me slack
On my part aught endeavoring, or to need
Thy politic maxims. (396-408)
And finally he turns his opponent's entire amplification on arms to a new end, which seems at first witty, even paradoxical but is actually a logical clarification of Satan's military suggestions. Jesus says he does not need

that cumbersome
Luggage of war there shewn me, argument
Of human weakness rather than of strength.
(400-402)

For Satan's second point, that the children of Israel must be restored, he first attacks Satan's "politic maxims" for what they are by turning his own words, e.g., "zeal," back on him and showing how Satan's previous actions with David took the lives of 70,000 Israelites in three days and thus reveals his true nature in the present case

such was thy zeal
To Israel then, the same that now to me. . . .
(III, 412-13)

Here the Son's use of irony characterizes evil intentions simply by calling them by the name they have tried to assume. In fact, his focusing on the very word is what illuminates the ambiguity in it.

For the rest of the speech then the Son defines the true relation between political captivity and disobedience to God, and all of his words indirectly comment on the specific cause of Satan's damnation. In working out the meaning of servitude the Son uses familiar figures of repetition, now not to discriminate but to show the relation between sin and punishment (the underlining is to call attention to the figures):

As for those captive Tribes, themselves were they
Who brought their own captivity. . . .
Nor in the land of their captivity
Humbled themselves, or penitent besought
The God of their fore-fathers; but so dy'd
Impenitent. (414-415, 420-23)

After this pointed statement he concludes with a perfectly enclosing polyptoton which is as rigid as their political-spiritual failure is:

let them serve
Thir enemies, who serve Idols with God.
(431-32)

With this understanding the Son is, as he says in the last lines of his speech, free to leave the Israelites to the Father's "due time and providence" and be at peace, unlike the ever-anxious spirit which is tempting him.

In the beginning of Book IV it is said that Satan has failed in his persuasive Rhetoric
That sleek't his tongue, and won so much on Eve,
(IV, 4-5)

and that he is worse than foolish in continuing his assault; thus, we are not surprised when he has no new rhetorical ploys in the temptation with Rome. And, further, when that temptation is rejected we are satisfied to see him really begin to lose control rhetorically and burst out in language that reveals him directly not, as earlier, incidentally, for what he is. When he is in control, his rhetoric in offering Rome is used to strike emotion in the hearer, but when he is frustrated, his emotion takes hold and rhetoric expresses his own almost uncontrolled feeling. At such a point rhetoric has, if any effect, an opposite one from what the speaker would wish.
Satan's first speech, then, in Book IV is pure amplification, the description of a place for thirty-six lines (44-79). This kind of development is, as Thomas Wilson says, the best figure of rhetoric to "forwarde an Oracion" on any subject:67

he that can prayse or dispraise any thinge plentifullye, is able most copiously to ex-aggerate anye matter.

Satan uses his list of details to try to trap Jesus in a dilemma similar to his asking previously which of two bad courses he would choose; i.e., he falsely interprets Jesus' rejection of Parthia as a choice for Rome. Or, to put it another way, he acts as if he had earlier posed a dilemma—will you save Israel by using Rome or Parthia—and Jesus had chosen Rome (IV, 84-85). Thus he has nothing new here but the subject, an empire rather than an army, and so his conclusion is worked to with the aid of a not brilliant pun, a few mild metaphors, personifications, and figures of repetition. Likewise everything in the conclusion has been seen before, both idea and form: freeing a captive people, gaining power to hold David's throne, even the use of repetition in the final anaphora, "aim" high (cf. "sit and eat"):

\[
\text{to me the power} \\
\text{Is given, and by that right I give it thee.} \\
\text{Aim therefore at no less then all the world,} \\
\text{Aim at the highest, without the highest attain'd} \\
\text{Will be for thee no sitting, or not long} \\
\text{On David's throne, be prophec'i'd what will.} \\
(IV, 103-108)
\]

In this passage the rhetoric gives a too loud hint of Satan's own sin and so mildly suggests that he is losing control of his method in this tense, controlled struggle. More even than before, the irony
which reveals him destroys his attempt to mislead. And so when Jesus utterly rejects his offer, Satan without any apparent hope or reason suffers an outburst that completely gives him away. He first gives two false reasons for Jesus' not accepting his offer (IV, 155-58), but then goes into what is the most remarkable use of figures of repetition in the poem and significantly they are given to the repetition of the "I":

On the other side know also thou, that I
On what I offer set as high esteem,
Nor what I part with mean to give for naught:
All these which in a moment thou behold'ost,
The Kingdoms of the world to thee I give:
For giv'n to me, I give to whom I please,
No trifle: yet with this reserve, not else,
On this condition, if thou wilt fall down
And worship me as thy superior Lord,
Easily done, and hold them all of me;
For what can less so great a gift deserve?
(159-169)

In ten lines six uses of "I" and three of "me" are created out of the rush of pride of which Satan is victim, not master. And besides this reckless repetition there is the tangle of "thou's" and "give's" with which Satan desperately tries to order the Son and himself into a giver-receiver relationship. The order created by figures cannot even suggest a cover for the falsehood here, for the welling vanity and pain of rejection tell all in their self-assertion. We are, in fact, so aware of their dominance that we barely hear the ironic forecast of "if thou wilt fall down," or the mockery that falls on the speaker in the last question: "For what can less so great a gift deserve?"
(IV, 169).
Once again the Son's refutations of Satan's two speeches are not only a point-by-point clarification, but also a righting at each point of one of Satan's misuses of rhetoric. And again Jesus turns the device into a means to the truth and uses Satan's very words to do it. He first takes Satan's amplification by description of Rome and ironically instructs him in its further use, amplifying the "sumptuous gluttonies, and gorgeous feasts" in such a way that he reveals both the excess of the Roman way and of Satan's rhetoric (IV, 113-21).

Following this mocking trope Jesus ends each of seven succeeding elements of correction with a rhetorical question (Satan's favorite device) to drive home the evil nature of his adversary. For example,

I shall, thou say'st, expel
A brutish monster: what if I withal
Expel a Devil who first made him such?
(IV, 127-29)

Or, again, Jesus turns Satan's maxim of demagoguery into the balanced rhetorical figures which truly describe the relation between political and spiritual freedom (the underlining is to show the control in the contentio):

What wise and valiant man would seek to free
These thus degenerate, by themselves enslav'd,
Or could of inward slaves make outward free?
(IV, 143-45)

The last four of Jesus' questions in the series involve a major point in Milton's Christianity, especially as he understood it in his later life, that is, his belief in the clarity of the Scriptures on the knowledge essential for salvation. We can easily see how that belief in clarity and certain knowledge is central to the
definition of the positions of the Son and the Tempter here. In the

**Christian Doctrine** Milton says:

The Scriptures, therefore, partly by reason of their own
simplicity, and partly through the divine illumination,
are plain and perspicuous in all things necessary to sal-
vation, and adapted to the instruction even of the most
unlearned, through the medium of diligent and constant
reading. (XVI, 259)

Such a belief is, of course, necessary for Milton's confidence in
truth, his final humanism; and so in response to Satan's request for
worship, Jesus says, with the knowledge that the words have real
meaning:

*It is written*

The first of all Commandments, Thou shalt worship
The Lord thy God, and only him shalt serve;
And dar'st thou to the Son of God propound
To worship thee accurst? (IV, 175-79)

All of the forces in the major theme of the poem rise to this:
Satan's refusal to believe this first and clearest word of God, given
in heaven and again on earth, is fully seen as the failure of his will,
not as the fault of the words for not being clear. And on the other
side, the Son's (and Milton's) assertion that truth is perspicuous
stands justified. All the forces demonic and redemptive are focused
on this single greatest truth and its solitary and piercing meaning.
Its clarity is the beginning of all active revelation. To the satanic
response it is damning and to obedience and trust life-giving. Satan's
failure with words and the Son's success with them both stem from this
first stated truth, which in its demands and its gifts is both the
measure of all words and the primary word from which all other truth
grows.
And to prove the power of the Word, Jesus distributes the *given's* and personal pronouns of Satan's outrage ("I give;/For given to me, I give to whom I please") into rhetorical forms which hold the true relation between creature and Creator, subject and King:

The Kingdoms of the world to thee were giv'n,
Permitted rather, and by thee usurp't,
Other donation none thou can'st produce:
If given, by whom but by the King of Kings,
God over all supreme? if giv'n to thee,
By thee how fairly is the Giver now
Repaid? (IV, 182-188)

Unlike Satan's vehement use of *antimetabole* which tries to equate all givers, here Satan and God, Jesus' *correctio* ("given/Permitted . . . usurp't"), and his *anaphora* and *polyptoton* ("If given . . . if giv'n . . . the Giver") set up the true relation between creature and Creator, the relation fixed by the First Commandment. And so the Son adds another rhetorical question which holds up Satan's blasphemous assertion to view and he then condemns him in a perfectly clear statement:

Get thee behind me: plain thou now appear'st
That Evil one, Satan for ever damned. (IV, 193-94)

Thus isolated in his evil, Satan makes his last attempt at subtlety. Remembering the Son's statement that the man who rules himself is truly a king (II, 466-68), he tries to trap him on a new point, but with the same devices as used before with military or political power. He again deliberately misinterprets Jesus' rejection as a choice for something else, acting as if he himself had set up a dilemma:

"which do you want, rule by excessive power or by excessive learning?"

And just as he says Jesus is "addicted" to learning, implying an excess
(tapinosis), so he further twists the misinterpretation of Jesus' rejection into a complex lie. Again the lie is stated in seemingly orderly terms; but, in fact, the key words are used in two senses so that the repetition of "extend" and "knowledge" (polyptoton) becomes a fallacy typical of Satan's own ambition:

Be famous then
By wisdom; as thy Empire must extend,
So let extend thy mind o're all the world,
In knowledge, all things in it comprehend,
All knowledge is not couch't in Moses Law,
The Pentateuch or what the Prophets wrote,
The Gentiles also know, and write, and teach
To admiration, led by Nature's light.
(IV, 221-28)

The words "extend" and "knowledge" then are the tokens by which he hopes to carry his imputation of Jesus' choice into excess.

And as he took this point from Jesus' speech in Book II, so he also takes a thought from the Son's first soliloquy in the desert and tries to turn it into a disconcerting rhetorical question:

And with the Gentiles much thou must converse,
Ruling them by persuasion as thou mean'st,
Without their learning how wilt thou with them,
Or they with thee hold conversation meet?
(IV, 229-232)

Besides such familiar rhetoric there is, however, in this temptation one new and fitting rhetorical element. Here, presenting Athens, Satan resorts to eloquence of the sweetest and most melodious kind:

behold
Where on the Aegean shore a City stands
Built nobly, pure the air, and light the soil,
Athens the eye of Greece, Mother of Arts
And Eloquence, native to famous wits
Or hospitable, in her sweet recess,
City or Suburban, studious walks and shades;
See there the Olive Grove of Academe,
Plato's retirement, where the Attic Bird
Trills her thick-warbled notes the summer long,
There flow're hill Hymettus with the sound
Of Bees industrious murmur oft invites
To Studious musing; there Ilissus, rouls
His whispering stream. (IV, 237-250)

The flowing amplification, the lists of details, the inversions, the
beckoning personifications, the sounds and rhythms all achieve an
almost hypnotic effect, as Satan tries to lead the Son into an in-
tellectual lotus land where he can muse away his chance to be the
Redeemer. Thus he says of the Athenian offerings:

These here revolve, or, as thou lik'st, at home,
Till time mature thee to a Kingdom's wight.
(IV, 281-82)

Even in the midst of this eulogy of the arts there is the suggestion
of magic forces at work which ironically warn of Satan in such
phrases as "the secret power/Of harmony in tones" (IV, 254-55) and
"Aeolian charms" (IV, 257), though Satan himself is presenting the
vision in the best light he can. He uses, in fact, only the tradi-
tional descriptions of the arts of discourse. From Aristotle's
Rhetoric onward, the teachers of the art defended it on the grounds
that in the struggle for truth "Error by his own arms is best evinc't"
(IV, 235), and so also Satan's statement that from Socrates' mouth

Mellifluous streams that water'd all the schools
(IV, 276-77)
is an oft-repeated image for the power of eloquence.68 Thus, just as
Satan used oratorical amplification for political ends with Rome,
here with Athens he employs amplification that is aimed at delighting
with eloquence itself.
The Son's rejection of Athens, which starts with a potent reversal of Satan's praise of Socrates as a source of learning, is a complete, detail by detail, refutation of Satan's offer of Gentile knowledge:

The first and wisest of them all profess'd
To know this only, that he nothing knew.
(IV, 293-94)

Since the rest of the speech is argumentation following the pattern of Satan's and contains largely the kinds of figures we have been seeing throughout, it is necessary to talk only about the addition to the Son's rhetorical methods at this point in the poem, i.e., the use of simile and obvious metaphor.

In Book IV the Son twice uses noticeable similes in his otherwise mostly literal language, and both of these are more for effect than simple ornament. The first use is a pair of similes at the end of the rejection of Rome in which he asserts something about the nature and ends of his kingdom to Satan without really revealing anything to him. In fact, the point of the similes seems precisely to show Satan how much he is in the dark about the great fulfillment of the Edenic promise-curse. His own kingdom, Jesus says,

shall be like a tree
Spreading and over-shadowing all the Earth,
Or as a stone that shall to pieces dash
All Monarchies besides throughout the world,
And of my Kingdom there shall be no end:
Means there shall be to this, but what the means,
Is not for thee to know, nor me to tell.
(IV, 147-153)

The mystery of these similes borrowed from Scripture is reinforced by the rigid epanalepsis and isocolon of the last two lines; thus the lines are totally an enigma to Satan.
The second set of these comparisons occurs in the Athens rejection and in each use of them one element of Athenian culture is rejected; i.e., the figure is used to characterize what is to Jesus a false knowledge or art. In the last case the comparison is even used to degrade what, in fact, it is—a poetic device. Thus Jesus says that he who seeks wisdom in philosophy

finds her not, or by delusion
Far worse, her false resemblance only meets,
An empty cloud. (IV, 319-21)

And likewise he says that reading much without judgment is

collecting toys,
And trifles for choice matters, worth a spunge:
As Children gathering pibles on the shore.
(IV, 328-30)

Finally in a single simile he reduces Greek poetry to the level of cosmetics. He condemns it to the level of prostitution as he speaks of Greek poets and

their swelling Epithets thick laid
As varnish on a Harlots cheek. (IV, 342-43)

In the almost scurrilous suggestion in "swelling" it is as if he himself uses a kind of "thick laying" to destroy the artifice with itself, for we must contrast with this his clear closing lines on the simplicity of the teaching of the Hebrew Prophets, of whom he says:

In them is plainest taught, and easiest learnt,
What makes a Nation happy, and keeps it so,
What ruins Kingdoms, and lays Cities flat;
These only with our Law best form a King.
(IV, 361-64)

Just as in the "Harlot" similes, there is in Jesus' language here a perfect meeting of form and content—plainness plainly stated, which reminds us of his insistence on the accessibility of the commandment
of God to the willing heart.

Satan's response to this final rejection really marks the conclusion of the debate. He was beaten in the Parthia temptation and he only emphasized the fact with Rome and Athens. And now the admission of defeat is made. He tries to use even his giving up the fight to scare the Son, but the attempt only ironically reveals his own incapacity for truth and bad method for seeking it.

His first statement in this speech is a summary of all that the Savior has not been tempted by, that is, a catalogue of Satan's failures which ends in the rhetorical question:

What dost thou in this World? (IV, 372)

Satan implies Jesus' failure in the tone of the question; and he tries to preclude any different literal answer by continuing immediately with the statement that he will therefore return the Son to the wilderness where he belongs, since he has no dealings with the things of this world. However, the unlooked-for irony of his question has already taken hold, for what he tries to use as a rhetorical device, the question as to Jesus' mission and manner in the world, is really the literal question he hoped from the beginning to find an answer to without asking. The "well couch't fraud, well woven snares" (I, 95) he chose to use have failed, and he is reduced to the frustrated utterance of the question he most hoped to conceal; and only he does not know the true answer that opposes the false one he implies in his question.
Other readers of the scriptural prophecy and hearers of the proclamation from heaven (including Jesus) might know what to expect ultimately in the Redeemer's answer to the pronouncement in Genesis. At least the poem has reemphasized the means Jesus will use, which have not generally been as clearly and absolutely seen as have the ends hoped for. Furthermore, the reader, because of his access to the Father's statement of the meaning of the desert trial, has been learning from the beginning the answer to the question, "What dost thou in this World?" The concession may be indirect, but it has been wrung from Satan, however much he would not want to admit it.

There are otherwise in this speech of Satan's the often seen uses of rhetorical arguments to put the Son at cross-purposes with himself, for example, the polyptoton:

Now at full age, fulness of time, thy season,
When Prophesies of thee are best fulfilled.
(IV, 380-81)

But Satan is only too aware that the time for these is long past and in his anger and haste he reaches within his own knowledge and reveals himself even more than before, as he begins to talk about his own ambiguous source of information, the stars: and in his failure to comprehend what they mean by saying that the Messiah will suffer, be rejected and die, he is reduced to the further admission of his own incapacity to discern truth at all. Thus he admits that

A Kingdom they /stars/ portend thee, but what Kingdom
Real or allegoric, I discern not. (IV, 389-90)

Thus exposed, he goes on to a demonstration of the illogic and absurdity to which his confusion leads. Thus, speaking of the Kingdom
he makes the ridiculous play on the word "eternal" as meaning having neither beginning nor ending and therefore not existing (391-92). His source for this conclusion is the fact that

   no date prefixt
   Directs me in the Starry Rubric set.
   (IV, 392-93)

Ambiguity as the manifestation of an evil soul is nowhere more perfectly developed than in this conscious attempt to riddle the truth away. And the further irony exists here in that Satan's whole rhetorical purpose in these lines is to frighten the one whom he cannot best in argument precisely because he himself is so afraid. Earlier the attempt at creating fear was subtly couched in the unsettling use of figures, but here the almost comic illogic of "eternal equals not ever" is too apparent. Thus, Satan's pride and seriousness of purpose are finally characterized by language that has something of the jest about it, though, of course, the speaker realizes only his pain, not his near-comic posture.

Satan's last attempt then in the temple temptation and in the stormy night preceding it is to frighten the Son (IV, 444-46). The fear he himself feels and wishes to generate in Jesus causes him to adopt first a sneering ironic mode that builds swiftly to the defeat on the pinnacle. The morning after the storm he appears suddenly—a trick to frighten children—and then "in a careless mood" (IV, 450) greets Jesus with the heaviest irony he can muster:

   Fair morning yet betides thee Son of God,
   After a dismal night; (IV, 451-52)
And in the succeeding two lines he simply throws out a lie so undisguised it calls attention to itself:

I heard the rack
As Earth and Skie would mingle; but my self
Was distant. (IV, 452-54)

His intended ruse is, of course, to reduce the Son to dependence on the same vague "signs" and readings in nature that he uses. He begins slipping the idea in with the polyptoton on "turbulent." Of storms, he says that

wasteful and turbulent,
Like turbulences in the affairs of men,
Over whose heads they rore, and seem to point,
They oft fore-signifie and threaten ill.
(IV, 461-64)

But the Son is finished with him and evidently walks on as Satan races through his previous arguments to conclude that the storm is a "sure fore-going sign" (IV, 467-83) that evils await Jesus unless he takes Satan's advice and help. The irony of a Satan-created sign that would have the Savior choose a path other than the one he discovered laid down for him in the Scriptures (I, 259-67) is too blatant at this point to bear much commentary, but its use does measure the failure of Satan's methods.

And so Jesus' response is a clear statement of that failure:

what they can do as signs
Betok'ning, or ill boding, I contemn
As false portents, not sent from God, but thee;
Who knowing I shall reign past thy preventing,
Obtrud'st thy offer'd aid, that I accepting
At least might seem to hold all power of thee,
Ambitious spirit, and wouldst be thought my God,
And storm'st refus'd. (IV, 489-96)
Even the concluding pun is an insight into Satan's role, not an ambiguity.

Satan's response is real rage, a reduction to complete emotional disorder. And in this state his rhetoric is an index of his nature and the particular problems of his own damnation (his failure to be a true Son of God), of the cause of it (pride and unwillingness and thus inability to see the truth), and of his quest in this poem (to know and subvert the full sense in which Jesus is Son of God). The fact that he does not know who Jesus is is an irony compounded in every line of the speech in which he unknowingly lists the very reasons why he should recognize immediately that this is the Promised of God. His refusal to be informed of the truth is a powerful reminder to the reader that Satan refused in heaven to recognize the Son and that, because he did not then, he cannot now. Thus he begins the raging that will culminate in the violent attempt on the pinnacle:

Then hear, O Son of David, Virgin-born,
For Son of God to me is yet in doubt,
Of the Messiah I have heard foretold
By all the Prophets; of the birth at length
Announs't by Gabriel with the first I knew,
And of the Angelic Song in Bethlehem field,
On thy birth-night, that sung the Savior born.
From that time seldom have I ceas'd to eye
Thy infancy, thy childhood, and thy youth,
Thy manhood last, though yet in private bred;
Till at the Ford of Jordan whither all
Flock'd to the Baptist, I among the rest,
Though not to be Baptiz'd, by voice from Heaven
Heard thee pronounc'd the Son of God belov'd.
Thenceforth I thought thee worth my nearer view
And narrower Scrutiny, that I might learn
In what degree or meaning thou art call'd
The Son of God, which bears no single sence.
(IV, 500-517)
In this list Satan is just accurate enough to give a compendium of the knowledge necessary for a turn to faith (e.g., fulfillment of prophecy). Yet ironically the list has no convincing force for him because of his refusal to acknowledge the qualities necessary for a true Son of God. Thus, he concludes that the title "bears no single sense," because of his confused relation with the word of God. And this confusion is perfectly captured again, as earlier, in the rhetorical form and the fallacy of the lines which immediately follow those just quoted. He says he followed Jesus to find out the meaning of the title,

The Son of God, which bears no single sense;
The Son of God I also am, or was,
And if I was, I am: relation stands;
All men are Sons of God; yet thee I thought
In some respect far higher so declar'd.
(IV, 517-21)

The first two lines here would be an anaphora, but they are broken by the sense, the first being an object and the second beginning a new clause. And so the fragmented figure reflects the broken understanding. The false argument, of course, is simply the trying to argue to a conclusion from definition of words, and the repetition by which it is carried is as much the insistence of anger as the attempt to cover illogic with rhetoric.

Given all this information and all the wiles he has employed and those he has confessed to, Satan is both comic and terrible in saying that the best he can come to is an uncertainty, a guess:

by all best conjectures I collect
Thou art to be my fatal enemy. (IV, 524-25)
And worse, he shows the further irony of his misunderstanding by applying his own title to the Son (just as he had tried above to reclaim the name of "Son of God") when he goes on to say,

Good reason then, if I before-hand seek
To understand my Adversary. (IV, 526-27)

Yet he must test his conjecture further. And so the final trick is not a rhetorical one, but the threat of the fall from the temple, a threat given, as Satan says,

to know what more thou art then man,
Worth naming Son of God by voice from Heav'n.
(IV, 538-39)

In Satan's final nine lines and the physical situation he creates, all the forces operative in his being and thus in his rhetoric come to their highest pitch. First, the plight he tries to put Jesus in is simply a violent counterpart to the verbal dilemmas he tried to trap him in earlier in the poem: that is, placed where he is, the Son must either grab for a helping hand from Satan or fall; and if he falls, Satan would turn that fall into a case of presumption in Jesus' power as the Son of God. Thus Satan hopes that either Jesus will die, sin, or at least reveal to him what he has been seeking to know from the beginning of the poem.

However, the lines are best understood in the full context of Satan's railing and mockery, for his use of irony only reveals the real truth in ways he does not at first understand. He says as he places Jesus on the pinnacle:

There stand, if thou wilt stand; to stand upright
Will ask thee skill; I to thy Fathers house
Have brought thee, and highest plac't, highest is best,
Now show thy Progeny; if not to stand,
Cast thyself down; safely if Son of God:
For it is written, He will give command
Concerning thee to his Angels, in thir hands
They shall up lift thee, lest at any time
Thou chance to dash thy foot against a stone.
(IV, 551-59)

The puns on "stand" in the polyptoton of the first line carry
more complexly than before Satan's attempts to create doubts about the
certainty of God's truth. The first "stand" is an ironic challenge
to Jesus to stay in place. The second adds to its literal meaning a
sneer at Jesus' refusal to join with Satan, and the third includes the
righteousness given as a reward to obedience, which Satan is implying
is impossible in the rest of the clause.

The intentional ambiguities show Satan's general nature, but
ironies unseen by him in the second and third lines take his puns a
level further than he intends and remind us that he has unawares
fulfilled the Father's will as that was announced in Book I. Moreover,
the ironies again show his deadly ambition in the place "high . . .
highest," which also indirectly reminds us that Satan himself has
helped Jesus assume his role as Messiah.

The whole failure of Satan's knowledge is once more stated in
his attempt to create doubt about Jesus' status as Son ("Cast thyself
down; safely if Son of God")). Again this is very ironic, for Satan,
still needing proof, gets it fatally after the last four lines. The
truth he has been looking for is just that which destroys him and ful-
fills God's promise of a Redeemer. As he falls, Satan must remember
in the momentary relation of himself to a towering Christ that instant
on the brink of heaven when all was lost and the Son was Lord, as
declared by his Father's word. That relation, now repeated within the
bounds of human nature, is an emblem of the force of God's word, an emblem carried into detail by the rhetoric of the poem.

So also the completion of Satan's quotation from the Ninety-first Psalm recalls the archetype of the battle in heaven, the situation on the temple, and the final destruction of the snake, the old dragon, as Genesis becomes eternally resolved in Revelation:

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under thy feet.

Satan is cast out and angels do bear Christ away as even Satan's use of Scripture serves the truth. In contrast to the old saying that the devil can quote Scripture to his own purpose, this poem asserts an absolute faith in the truth of God's words. The Son's own last words,

also it is written, Tempt not the Lord thy God (IV, 560-61)

are the fulfillment of his belief in the commandment of God, for they drive Satan from his stand, confirm the Son in what might appear to be an unstable spiritual and physical position, and emphasize once more the central lesson of the poem, that the word of God is absolute and to be resided in, not to be used as occasions for doubt or uncertainty.

If there is an ambiguity in the Son's final use of the Scripture, it is troublesome only for Satan, who still might not fully accept the nature of his conqueror, or admit whom he is in arms against.
The line's first meaning is that the Son should not tempt the Father either by presuming or doubting. A second meaning may be that Satan has gone too far and should not tempt God. The last meaning, that the Son is of the godhead and should not be tempted by Satan, thus ending the temptation permanently in a command, also presents problems only for Satan, not for Milton or others who are concerned with the delicate doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation; for even in Milton's non-trinitarian views the Son is the offspring of the Father, his Word from the beginning, and to be worshipped by men and angels.

In any case, Jesus emphatically has the final word and by his use of words throughout has shown not only the reliability of God's words but the possibility for human language to contain truth absolutely. As Northrop Frye says of him at the conclusion of the poem,

Christ has not only overcome temptation, but, as the Word of God, he has solved the verbal riddle of human life, putting all the words which are properly attributes of God /kingdom, power and glory/ into their rightful context.92

And thus Milton, trained in the finest humanistic rhetorical tradition, has shown in detail the basis for his faith that language can contain the highest Truth. Even more than Plato or Augustine he has evaluated the basic issues governing the attempt to introduce Truth into the political life of a community. And in Paradise Regained he shows that he has found through the trial of his public prose and the drama of his poetry a sure way to measure the virtue in another's rhetoric and to be faithful to Truth in his own.
Notes to Chapter III

1"If the spirit of the word is central to Milton's belief, he applies it as well to the words of men. Accordingly, the language which is selfconsciously mannered, ambiguous, or obscure betrays an inner spirit which is dishonest." D. M. Rosenberg, "Parody of Style in Milton's Polemics," in Milton Studies 2, ed. James D. Simmonds (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1970), 118.

2Christian Doctrine, CE, XIV, 197.


4Heroic Knowledge (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1957), p. 20.


7Burckhardt, p. 474.

8In Paradise Regained Jesus simply says Greek tragedy is in error in calling Providence by names fate and fortune (IV, 314-18).


10John Milton, Poet and Humanist (Cleveland: The Press of Western Reserve Univ., 1966), pp. 176-77. The essay from which these remarks are taken, "Milton and the Return to Humanism," was originally published in Studies in Philology, 16, 1919.


12Daiches, p. 229.


16 Parker, II, 1142.


18 Cope, p. 52.


21 Guss, pp. 241-42.


23 Paradise Regained, I, 460-64.


29 Parker, I, 641.

30 Stein, p. 74.

31 University of Toronto Quarterly, 31 (1962), 419.


ELH, 27 (1960), 223, 232, 236.

Martz, p. 233.

Martz, p. 246.


Rajan, pp. 65, 67.

Rajan, pp. 66, 71.


Consider, for example, John 18, Jesus' own trial at which he is nearly silent.

Lewalski, Milton's Brief Epic, pp. 282-85.

See Miller, New England Mind, p. 325; Steadman, "Ethos and Dianoia," pp. 210-211.

Lewalski, Milton's Brief Epic, p. 219.

53 Stein, pp. 59-60, discusses this "spiritual death," death of understanding, as it occurs in The Christian Doctrine.


56 In this chapter the names of figures of speech have been taken from Richard A. Lanham, A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1969) and Lee A. Sonnino, A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968).


58 In the 298 lines of the first soliloquy, which is mostly brief autobiography, there are only twenty-two figures of speech and they are all subdued and simple, nine being mere repetitions of a single word or two and most of the rest slight ellipses or barely noticed zeugmas. Calling these simple, however, does not mean that they are ineffective or careless. On the contrary, as in the speeches already discussed, the brevity and directness and the carefully parallel sentence construction define and certify the truths which the Son is the center of. For example, in Mary's line quoted by Jesus, "By matchless Deeds express thy matchless Sire," (II, 233) the repetition and structure unite the natures of the Father and the Son; or, if we may put it another way, they attest rhetorically to the manifestation of God in the Incarnation. The second soliloquy is rhetorically no different from the first. The one pun it contains "hungering more to do my Fathers will," (II, 259) is used to show the good effect of Jesus' physical state on his spiritual in a subtle way.


60 Lewalski, Milton's Brief Epic, p. 216.

61 CE, II, 362; VIII, 105.
Milton makes this division for the political state of England also in the Second Defense (VIII, 241-49).

Curtis B. Watson, Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honor (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1960). The first part of this work gives a good summary of the honor systems following Aristotle and his contemporaries.

Basically Satan is using the same temptation here he did with Eve (cf. Paradise Lost IX, 539-48). Christ simply answers the rhetorical question, while Eve is lost in its suggestion of her greatness.

Anaphora, in the repeated question form; anadiplosis; plote; especially with the complex use of "praise," giving as it does the effect of epanalepsis in opening and closing the speech.

Cf. Second Defense (VIII, 79) where Milton says something very similar about the dispraise from the praise of the unworthy.


For different opinions on this see Lewalski, Milton's Brief Epic, p. 316; Samuel, The Regaining of Paradise, p. 117; Stein, pp. 128-29.

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