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“The Book of God Before Thee Set”: Rereading Early Modern Muslim and Christian Beliefs Through *Paradise Lost*

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Abstract

Paradise Lost is a literary masterpiece that spans both cultural and religious lines. Recently, many scholars have taken an interest in similarities between the Christian epic poem and Islamic beliefs, and many Muslims report an interest in and identify with *Paradise Lost*. Curiously, however, Islam appears to lack a comparable dramatization of the expulsion of humans from the Garden of Eden. This project seeks first, to propose a possible orthodox Sunni theology in sixteenth-century Anatolia, and second, to speculate how *Paradise Lost* would have been different if it had emerged out of this cultural context, rather than seventeenth-century England. Through this speculative thought experiment, this thesis critically demonstrates where Muslim and Christian theologies are similar. Finally, reflecting on early modern Muslim and Christian approaches to religious tolerance, these similarities lend insight into the irony of early modern English othering of Muslims.

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Thesis Title: "The Book of God Before Thee Set": Rereading Early Modern Muslim and Christian Beliefs Through *Paradise Lost*

LAKE FOREST COLLEGE

Senior Thesis

“The Book of God Before Thee Set”:
Rereading Early Modern Muslim and Christian Beliefs Through *Paradise Lost*

by

Kristin A. Rawlings

April 15, 2019

The report of the investigation undertaken as a
Senior Thesis, to carry two courses of credit in
the Department of Religion

Davis Schneiderman
Krebs Provost and Dean of the Faculty

Ben Zeller, Chairperson

Carla Arnell

Anna Jones

ABSTRACT

Paradise Lost is a literary masterpiece that spans both cultural and religious lines. Recently, many scholars have taken an interest in similarities between the Christian epic poem and Islamic beliefs, and many Muslims report an interest in and identify with *Paradise Lost*. Curiously, however, Islam appears to lack a comparable dramatization of the expulsion of humans from the Garden of Eden. This project seeks first, to propose a possible orthodox Sunni theology in sixteenth-century Anatolia, and second, to speculate how *Paradise Lost* would have been different if it had emerged out of this cultural context, rather than seventeenth-century England. Through this speculative thought experiment, this thesis critically demonstrates where Muslim and Christian theologies are similar. Finally, reflecting on early modern Muslim and Christian approaches to religious tolerance, these similarities lend insight into the irony of early modern English othering of Muslims.

To Mom and Dad,
for your continued support and love.

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Confusion of Languages was a curse, whereby one could not understand another how to build their Babel: But such a multiplying of Languages, that the Apostles might communicate Gospel-secrets to various Nations, was a great Blessing, and much advanced the building of Jerusalem, and pulling down of Babylon.

—*An Olive Branch of Peace and Accommodation*
(London, 1648)

Given that the universal story of *Paradise Lost* also exists in Islamic tradition, the interpretive benefits of filling the obvious critical gap in Milton studies can be equally – if not more – informative.

—Islam Issa, *Milton in the Arab-Muslim World*
(Routledge, 2017)

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PART ONE

Introduction

John Milton's *Paradise Lost*¹ has echoed throughout Western English-speaking culture since the poem's initial publication in 1667. This much is clear from centuries of scholarship on the work and the inclusion of *Paradise Lost* in academic curricula. However, recent scholars have brought the less-studied impact of *Paradise Lost* on non-English-speaking cultures into light.² Perhaps the most comprehensive study on Milton's global influence is *Milton in Translation*, a collection of essays on how Milton has been translated into various languages and cultures around the world. Included among these is an essay on the history of translations of Milton's poems into Arabic.³ Islam Issa, the author of the essay and a reception study on an Arabic translation of *Paradise Lost* by twenty-first-century Muslim readers, is one of a few prominent scholars to conduct comparative studies on Milton's theology and Islamic theology in recent years, though Milton has been a topic of interest to Arab-Muslim⁴ scholars since as late as the end of the nineteenth century.⁵ Much of the recent scholarship on Milton and Islam has focused on apparent similarities between Milton's Satan and the Quranic Iblis, a Satan-like figure.⁶ Issa partially attributes the positive reception of

¹ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon (New York: Random House, 2007). Hereafter cited as *PL*.

² Angelica Duran and Islam Issa, "Introduction: From 'Cámbalu' to 'El Dorado,'" in *Milton in Translation*, ed. Angelica Duran, Islam Issa, and Jonathan R. Olson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 4.

³ Islam Issa, "Paradise Lost in Arabic: Images, Style, and Technique," in *Milton in Translation*, ed. Angelica Duran, Islam Issa, and Jonathan R. Olson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 397–413.

⁴ In line with other scholarship considering Milton and Islam, I will use "Arab-Muslim" in reference to studies on Milton by Arab or Muslim scholars or on Milton's reception in predominantly Arabic-speaking regions.

⁵ See Gerald MacLean, "Milton Among the Muslims," in *The Religions of the Book: Christian Perceptions 1400–1660*, ed. Matthew Dimmock and Andrew Hadfield (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 180–94.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Paradise Lost by Muslim readers to these similarities; in fact, some Arab-Muslim scholars have drawn comparisons between *Paradise Lost* and important works in the Islamic philosophical and literary traditions and subsequently argued that Milton may have been exposed to and influenced by specific works in these traditions.⁷

The place of *Paradise Lost* in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Muslim communities is especially interesting in that, as a Christian poem, it advances a theology that fundamentally contradict certain core Muslim beliefs. As I will discuss, this positive reception of *Paradise Lost* is even more striking given the historical moment in Muslim-Christian relations, which were characterized to an extent by theological differences, when it was written. In this thesis, I will compare Milton's theology in *Paradise Lost* to early modern Sunni orthodoxy. As a theologically-based poem, *Paradise Lost* offers a unique lens through which to consider similarities between Christian and Muslim beliefs. Thus, I will conduct this comparison as a thought experiment by speculating on how *Paradise Lost* would have looked if it had been written by a Muslim in Ottoman Anatolia rather than an English Christian in the early modern period. Through this thought experiment, I will show that there were, in many ways, more similarities than differences between Milton's and Muslim cosmologies and etiology. In light of these similarities, I hope to demonstrate a certain irony behind English othering of Muslims in the early modern period due to their perceived religious and cultural threat.

Given Milton's unique place among twentieth- and twenty-first-century Muslim readers and the nature of early modern Muslim-Christian relations, as evidenced by English perceptions and written representations of Muslims, using

⁷ Ibid., 180.

Paradise Lost as the basis for this thought experiment offers a remarkable opportunity to consider early modern Muslim and Christian theologies. However, before we can proceed with the theological aspect of this thought experiment, we must consider the historical context of Muslim-Christian relations during the early modern period.

Until recently,⁸ many scholars have approached Muslim-Christian relations as a combative and polarized case of “us” versus “them.” For example, according to Middle Eastern historian Robert Davis, the early modern period was a “three centuries-long Christian-Muslim jihad [literally, struggle] that began around 1500.”⁹ However, Davis’s statement here is misleading. Reducing early modern Muslim-Christian relations to a simple summary of them as a *jihad*, meaning in its formal sense¹⁰ a struggle, especially one with a commendable or spiritual goal, does not reflect the nuanced nature of these groups’ interactions.¹¹ Indeed, it is well-documented that prior to and following the mid-fifteenth century, when the Ottoman Empire expanded to the point that it became the ruling power in Asia Minor,¹² Asia Minor maintained an incredibly diverse religious population.¹³ Thus, Ottoman

⁸ Edward Said’s 1978 study, *Orientalism*, though flawed, is often seen as a turning point in this understanding of Muslim-Christian relations. See Bernadette Andrea and Linda McJannet, “Introduction: Islamic Worlds in Early Modern English Literature,” in *Early Modern England and Islamic Worlds*, ed. Bernadette Andrea and Linda McJannet (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 1–3.

⁹ Robert Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy 1500–1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 140.

¹⁰ The meaning of this word is contested among modern Muslims; however, in Western scholarship *jihad* is typically interpreted as meaning a holy war.

¹¹ David Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, 2nd ed. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 32–33.

¹² Nabil Matar, *Europe Through Arab Eyes, 1578–1727* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 3.

¹³ Palmira Brummett, ““Turks” and “Christians”: The Iconography of Possession in the Depiction of the Ottoman-Venetian-Hapsburg Frontiers, 1550–1689,” in *The Religions of the Book: Christian Perceptions 1400–1660*, ed. Matthew Dimmock and Andrew Hadfield (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 111–12.

Muslims in these territories would have been acquainted, if not in frequent interaction, with their Christian neighbors. Attesting to this diversity, Jean Bodin, a sixteenth-century French writer, remarked on the tolerance he perceives in the Ottoman Empire's governance, writing that: "The great emperour of the Turkes doth with . . . great devotion . . . honour and observe the religion by him received from his ancestours, and yet detesteth hee not the straunge religions of others; but to the contrarie permitteth every man to live according to his conscience."¹⁴

Nabil Matar, who studies early modern Muslim-Christian relations, similarly notes that Arab writers frequently interacted with Europeans by the mid-fifteenth century.¹⁵ In contrast to these increasing interreligious relations in Muslim-ruled territories, interreligious interactions were disappearing in parts of Europe during this time. For example, in 1492, an attack coordinated by Ferdinand and Isabella culminated in the defeat of Granada, the last Muslim-occupied city in Spain.¹⁶ Subsequently, Ferdinand and Isabella formally expelled all Jews from Spanish territories, while Muslims in Spain, now entirely under Christian rule, were expected to either convert to Christianity or migrate to neighboring Muslim-ruled lands, such as North Africa. According to Andrew Wheatcroft, Jews were formally expelled because they were seen as internal heretics, having an innate connection with the life and death of Christ. In contrast, Muslims were viewed as an "exterior enemy," who would either convert or leave.¹⁷ By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however,

¹⁴ Jean Bodin, *The Six Bookes of a Commonweale*, trans. Richard Knolles (London: G. Bishop, 1606), 6.537, quoted in Gerald MacLean, "Milton, Islam and the Ottomans," in *Milton and Toleration*, ed. Sharon Achinstein and Elizabeth Sauer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 287–88.

¹⁵ Matar, *Europe Through Arab Eyes*, 3.

¹⁶ Andrew Wheatcroft, *Infidels: A History of the Conflict Between Christendom and Islam* (New York: Random House, 2005), 110.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 115–18.

English travel writing and the increased global power of the Ottoman Empire had exacerbated Christian concerns about the threat Muslims posed.¹⁸

While there were increased interreligious interactions in Muslim-ruled territories, the decreased interreligious relations in Christian lands is evidenced by a lack of written sources by non-Christians within these lands as well as a lack of writings by non-Christians, especially Muslims, who had traveled to Christian territories. Many early scholars of early modern Muslim-Christian relations have hypothesized that there are so few written sources from early modern Arabs and Muslims on their interactions with Christians because Arabs and Muslims were disinterested in or otherwise lacked any curiosity toward cultures other than their own.¹⁹ Matar, in his many pioneering studies and translations of primary sources written by Muslims, argues against these earlier theories. In line with decreasing religious tolerance in parts of Europe, Matar hypothesizes in one study that there are fewer Muslim sources from the early modern period than Christian ones because the Christians' "hostility" toward Muslims deterred Muslims from traveling to and writing about Christian lands.²⁰ He further explains that that hostility was motivated by a fear of what Muslims might learn about European countries and subsequently share with others; this fear led Europeans to restrict Muslim travel into and trade with European countries.²¹ Unlike Matar's argument that Christians were hostile to Muslims, Davis would likely suggest that it was the Muslims who were being hostile toward the Christians, as he proposes that Muslims who owned Christian slaves were

¹⁸ Nabil Matar, "The Renegade in English Seventeenth-Century Imagination," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 33, no. 3 (1993), 489-90.

¹⁹ Matar, *Europe Through Arab Eyes*, 6-7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

less commercially motivated than, prominently, participants in trans-Atlantic slavery and were instead interested in using slave labor as a tool to establish power, either on behalf of individual masters or the state as a whole.²² Davis's analysis of Muslims taking Christians as slaves in the early modern period reflects a cultural dynamic that may have contributed to Christian anxiety toward Muslims, thus causing them to be hostile toward Muslims.

While I am inclined to agree with Matar's analysis that Christians were more hostile than and to Muslims during the early modern period, the reality is that neither Muslims nor Christians were the sole catalyst for this antagonistic relationship. Additionally, it would be inaccurate to say that Muslim-Christian relations during the early modern period were entirely unfriendly, which both Matar and Davis discuss. Robert Topinka, commenting on recent scholarship, observes the nuanced nature of Muslim-Christian relations during the early modern period. He writes:

Since Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979) gave primacy to the role of the Islamic Other in shaping European self-conceptions, scholarship has highlighted the ideological formation of European identity in the early modern period, an identity not formed behind cultural lines but forged in the clash between cultures . . . Yet, as recent studies . . . have shown, dichotomies between self and Other, Christian and Muslim . . . are not stable . . . In a world of expanding globalism, lines demarcating self and Other quickly became blurred.²³

Matar is listed among the scholars to whom Topinka attributes this shift in thinking. Matar's translations of early modern Arab-Muslim writings have substantially added to the material available to scholars of the early modern period, as previously the

²² Robert Davis, introduction to *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy 1500–1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), xxvi.

²³ Robert J. Topinka, "Islam, England, and Identity in the Early Modern Period: A Review of Recent Scholarship," *Mediterranean Studies* 18 (2009), 114.

majority of sources were European or Christian, therefore contributing to a Eurocentric approach to early modern history.

As part of this scholarly reappraisal of early modern Muslim-Christian relations, I focus on early modern English writings about Muslims, as my thesis demonstrates the irony of English othering of Muslims by highlighting the similarities in their theologies. Many previous scholars have analyzed the nature of English perceptions of Muslims and sought to demonstrate why Muslims were characterized in these ways. This scholarship, generally from the perspective of literary studies, has often focused on tropes found in English portrayals of Muslims²⁴ during the early modern period without comprehensively discussing from a religious perspective the nature of Muslim-Christian relations beyond these tropes. Like many English writers of his time, Milton employed many of these tropes in his own work to influence his audience's perception of his subject matter.

I explore the religious basis for tropes that negatively portray Muslims by using *Paradise Lost* to analyze early modern Christian and Muslim theologies. Focusing on the similarities between the two, I reveal a key contradiction in how English writers, like Milton, sought to other Muslims such that English anti-Muslim polemic becomes ironic. Indeed, Matthew Dimmock comments on this irony in one of his studies on myths of the Prophet Muhammad in English dramas:

[English representations of Muslims were] not really about the 'Turks' at all . . . but are rather . . . projections of Christian immorality. Making Muslims monstrous allows them to be perceived and controlled wholly

²⁴ One example of such depictions illustrate the Prophet Muhammad as a hybrid, having a human head and the lower half of either a fish, horse, or deer. See Matthew Dimmock, "'A Human Head to the Neck of a Horse': Hybridity, Monstrosity and Early Christian Conceptions of Muhammad and Islam," in *The Religions of the Book: Christian Perceptions 1400-1660*, ed. Matthew Dimmock and Andrew Hadfield (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 71.

in Christian terms and thus making monstrous is always, paradoxically, about making familiar.²⁵

In this quote, Dimmock proposes that the English made of use of existing negative perceptions of Muslims as a rhetorical tool to criticize Christians who the authors of these texts perceived to be wayward. I discuss these tropes and what they may reveal in more detail in chapter one; however, it is important to consider Dimmock's observation about the irony of making the other familiar to the self.

Interestingly, many twentieth- and twenty-first-century Arab scholars set out to make Milton familiar to Islam. One facet of this scholarship has focused on whether Milton was acquainted with Arab/Islamic sources, and if so, which sources and to what effect. Twentieth-century Arab scholars Jurji Zaydan²⁶ and Omar Farrukh,²⁷ among others, have claimed that when writing *Paradise Lost*, Milton borrowed heavily from *Risalat al-qhufran* (Epistle of Forgiveness), a prose work by Arab poet Abu al-'Ala al-Ma'rri (d. 1057).²⁸ Eid Abdallah Dahiyat, one of the earliest scholars to formally explore Milton's reception by Muslims and the validity of claims that Milton was influenced by Islamic writers, disputes the argument that Milton based his work on al-Ma'rri's at length, listing seven central properties of the setting, plot, and characters of the *Epistle of Forgiveness* and *Paradise Lost* that are dissimilar, and

²⁵ Ibid., 84.

²⁶ Jurji Zaydan, *Tarikh al-adab al-Arabiyyah (History of Arabic Literatures)*, Vol. 2 (Cairo: Al-Hilal, 1902), 226, cited in Eid Abdallah Dahiyat, *John Milton and the Arab-Islamic Culture* (Amman: Shukayr & Akasheh, 1987), 72.

²⁷ Omar Farrukh, *Hakim Al-Ma'arrah (The Sage of Al-Ma'arrah)* (Beirut: Al-Kashshaf, 1948), 127–28, cited in Dahiyat, 72.

²⁸ Eid Abdallah Dahiyat, *John Milton and the Arab-Islamic Culture* (Amman: Shukayr & Akasheh, 1987), 70–71.

further reminding the reader that Milton had little exposure to Arabic literature, making it difficult to claim such deep familiarity with this particular work.²⁹

Dahiyat similarly criticizes is Luwis 'Awad, a scholar of literature, who argues based on social and theological similarities he found between Milton's and Muslims' beliefs that "When we read *Paradise Lost*, we feel that Milton is a devout Muslim."³⁰ 'Awad goes on to discuss some of the beliefs he perceives Milton sharing with Muslims, including the gender hierarchy evidenced in Adam and Eve's relationship in *Paradise Lost*.³¹ While Gerald MacLean writes that 'Awad's attempt to establish a similarity here is in earnest,³² Dahiyat criticizes 'Awad for his superficial approach to Milton. Dahiyat concedes the similarities between certain aspects of Milton's ideologies, representative of broader Protestant Christian beliefs of the seventeenth century, and Islam, but he emphasizes that Milton's ideas were clearly traceable to Protestant and Hebrew sources, an analysis which I agree with.³³ Although Arab studies was being established in English universities during the seventeenth century (motivated by increased trade with the Ottoman Empire and a desire to "illuminate the true message of the Gospels"),³⁴ Dahiyat notes that this field of study was founded at Cambridge only after Milton had graduated.³⁵ Dahiyat notes a number of texts, which Milton was known to own, that would have offered him knowledge of Islam

²⁹ Ibid., 72–74.

³⁰ Luwis 'Awad, "Al-Adab al-Inglizi adab 'alami [English Literature is an International Literature]," *Al Hilal* (1967): 219–22, quoted in Dahiyat, 68.

³¹ Ibid.

³² MacLean, "Milton Among the Muslims," 181.

³³ Dahiyat, 68–69.

³⁴ Matthew Birchwood, "Confounding Babel: The Language of Religion in the English Revolution," in *The Religions of the Book: Christian Perceptions 1400–1660*, ed. Matthew Dimmock and Andrew Hadfield (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 143–44.

³⁵ Dahiyat, 31.

and Islamic states, despite the fact that Milton lacked a formal education in these subjects. These included John Selden's geographic study *De Diis Syris* (1617),³⁶ Jean Bodin's³⁷ early comparative theological study *Colloquium Heptaplomeres* (1593),³⁸ and Leo Africanus's history of North Africa, *De totius Africae descriptione* (ca. 1500–1550).³⁹ Dahiyat asserts that Milton likely drew upon these texts for cultural and geographic details to inform his characterization of Satan and Hell, among other things, in *Paradise Lost* using Near East imagery.⁴⁰ Building on Dahiyat's claim, Matthew Birchwood has found "27 instances of 'Sultan', 'Mahomet', and cognates of 'Turk'" in Milton's prose works, which were often used to criticize Charles I.⁴¹

Milton's pejorative use of these terms in his polemic supports Nabil Matar's hypothesis that there are fewer Muslim sources from the early modern period than Christian ones because the Christians' "hostility" toward Muslims deterred Muslims from traveling to and writing about Christian lands.⁴² Indeed, Dahiyat notes that Jean Bodin's text, *Colloquium Heptaplomeres*, for Milton would have "added more distortion to an already deformed image [of Islam] created by Christian polemic

³⁶ Selden relied heavily on Arabic sources to inform his writing of this text. See David Currell, "Meditations on Mediation: John Milton and the Muslim Jesus," *English Studies* 96, no. 1 (2015), 54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0013838X.2014.964563>.

³⁷ Until recently, the *Heptaplomeres* was almost unanimously attributed to Bodin. See Noel Malcom, "Jean Bodin and the Authorship of the *Colloquium Heptaplomeres*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 69 (2006), 95–97.

³⁸ *Colloquium Heptaplomeres* narrates a fictional conversation between seven people of different faiths, one of whom is a recent convert to Islam. There is no concrete evidence suggesting that Bodin had firsthand knowledge of or exposure to Islam. See Tommi Lindfors, "Jean Bodin (c. 1529–1596)," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed March 29, 2019. <https://www.iep.utm.edu/bodin/#H5>.

³⁹ The exact date for the writing of this text is unknown; Africanus died in 1550, and *De totius Africae descriptione* was subsequently translated into Latin in 1556 and English in 1600. *De totius Africae descriptione* was not published until the nineteenth century, but was distributed secretly in manuscripts. Dahiyat, 37–39.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 38–40.

⁴¹ Birchwood, 185–86. Original spelling and typography retained.

⁴² Matar, *Europe Through Arab Eyes*, 9–10.

traditions.”⁴³ This hostility was even expressed by some Christians who had traveled to or read travel accounts from Ottoman regions. For example, Leonard Busher, who likely faced persecution because of his own experience as a nonconformist Baptist,⁴⁴ observed in his pamphlet *Religions Peace* (1614)⁴⁵ how the English were intolerant of any religious deviance:

I read that a Bishop of Rome would have constrained a *Turkish* Emperor to the Christian faith, unto whom the emperor answered, *I beleeve that as Christ was an excellent Prophet, but he did never (so far as I understand) command that men should with the power of weapons bee constrained to beleeve his law; and verily, I also do force no man to beleeve Mahomets law.* Also I read that Jews, Christians, and Turks are tolerated in *Constantinople*, and yet are peaceable, though so contrary to the other. If this be so, how much more ought Christians not to force one another the Religion? . . . shall we be lesse mercifull then the *Turks*? or shall we learne the *Turks* to persecute Christians?⁴⁶

Since Busher distributed this text as a pamphlet, a medium which served as “sermonizing editorial[s]”⁴⁷ intended to inform the public on a topic and make a claim, this quote is revealing of early modern English perspectives. Importantly, this quote, functioning as Busher’s critique on the current state of things, shows that, from his perspective, the Christian approaches to people of other faiths were often coercive. By contrast, he perceives that the Ottomans were tolerant of both Jews and Christians living in their territories. Here, Busher claims that the Christian government needs to be more tolerant, since even the Ottomans practiced religious

⁴³ Dahiyat, 39.

⁴⁴ Steve Wright, “Leonard Busher: Life and Ideas,” *Baptist Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (2001), 178. <https://doi.org/10.1179/bqu.2001.39.4.003>.

⁴⁵ Other sources list this title as “*Religion’s Peace*.” Since the source I retrieved this text from uses “*Religions Peace*,” I will discuss the text using that title.

⁴⁶ Leonard Busher, *Religions Peace: Or, A Plea for Liberty of Conscience* (London: John Sweeting, 1646), 6, quoted in MacLean, “Milton, Islam and the Ottomans,” 288.

⁴⁷ Elisabetta Cecconi, “Comparing Seventeenth-Century News Broad-sides and Occasional News Pamphlets: Interrelatedness in News Reporting,” in *Early Modern News Discourse: Newspapers, Pamphlets, and Scientific News Discourse*, ed. Andreas H. Jucker (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2009), 148.

toleration. This suggests that Busher perceived much of his audience as being unaware of the tolerant disposition of Ottomans, and he likely hoped to challenge the English public's negative preconceptions about the Ottoman Empire in order to enrage them at the injustice occurring under their own leaders.

Taking Busher's observation here as indicating both that the Ottoman Empire was tolerant of other religious groups and that the Christian English government, in contrast, was intolerant of religious diversity, it becomes clear that Matar is correct to blame Christian hostility for a lack of travel writings from Muslims. Indeed, Busher's plea—"shall we be lesse mercifull then the *Turks*?"⁴⁸—indicates by contrast that the Christians were hostile to people of other faiths, and even people within their own faith, as Busher's status as a nonconformist Baptist indicates. Thus, it is necessary to inquire about the basis for such intolerance. As I show in my following analysis, this intolerance, and the rhetoric that reflects it, is ironic in that the objects of the rhetoric—Muslims and who were perceived to be unorthodox Christians—were in many ways more similar than different to the writers using the rhetoric. These similarities can be extended to the positive reception of *Paradise Lost* by twentieth- and twenty-first-century Muslim scholars and readers, which makes *Paradise Lost* an ideal focal point for this thought experiment.

Chapter one of this thesis looks at the socio-political context of Milton's England as well as offers a survey of earlier scholars' work on early modern English representations of Muslims. Chapter two defines the cultural comparison that will serve as the foundation of my thought experiment. For the purpose of this study, I have chosen sixteenth-century Anatolia, specifically under the reign of Sultan

⁴⁸ Busher, 6.

Suleyman II (d. 1566) as a fair analog for seventeenth-century England, although for further insight I will also refer more generally to other territories in the early modern Ottoman Empire.⁴⁹ In this chapter, I will also establish the validity of my approach to this study as a thought experiment in which I consider how *Paradise Lost* would have looked if it had been authored by a Muslim in the early modern period. To do this, I will compare Milton to Mehmed Yazicioglu, the author of the popular fifteenth-century *ilm-i hal* (religious manual), *Muhammediye* (Life of Muhammad).⁵⁰ As we shall see, Yazicioglu's biography holds some striking similarities with Milton's life, making him important to understanding not only *ilm-i hals* and Ottoman Sunnism, but also how we can model an alternative Milton on an influential early modern writer. Part one ends with chapter three, which provides a brief background on Sunni theology as it might have been during the sixteenth century, using earlier theologies and philosophers (as cited in early modern Ottoman literature) to build upon existing research on the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period.

In part two of this thesis, I will expand upon the foundation for early modern Sunni beliefs established in chapter three to find points of similarity and divergence between early modern Muslim and Christian beliefs. Each chapter analyzes a central topic in *Paradise Lost*, comparing and contrasting the Christian and Muslim theological basis for each. My approach to *Paradise Lost* proceeds thematically instead of by book for two reasons. First, conducting this comparison on a book-by-book basis has the potential to become both complicated and repetitive. For example,

⁴⁹ Under Suleyman II, the Ottoman Empire included territories in Asia Minor, Europe, and North Africa. See Metin Kunt, "State and Sultan Up to the Age of Süleyman: Frontier Principality to World Empire," in *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World*, ed. Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead (New York: Longman Group, 1995), 3.

⁵⁰ Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 33.

it is much more straightforward to analyze the roles of angels, generally, and the individual roles of Gabriel, Raphael, and Michael in Islam in one section rather than as each of these characters appears in specific books. Second, one of the most highly debated matters among Milton scholars is Milton's decision to first introduce, and subsequently dedicate, the first two books and parts of the third of *Paradise Lost* to Satan. The question of why Milton did so has not been resolved in the centuries of discourse on *Paradise Lost*, so I cannot speculate who the first character a Muslim author introduced would have been. As we shall see in chapter five, the representation of Iblis, who is associated with Satan, in the Quran complicates any assumption we might make about whether Satan would have been introduced first. Similarly, the number and order of books in an alternative *Paradise Lost*⁵¹ might differ from Milton's.

Ultimately, this thesis is a comparison of early modern Muslim and Christian theologies, explored through a text that is important to modern Muslim and Christian readers of Milton. Importantly, I attempt to define a possible Sunni orthodoxy in the early modern Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that only by studying *Paradise Lost* through an alternate context can we truly understand how deeply entrenched Milton was in his time and culture. This will also become evident in chapter one, in which I will discuss how early modern Christians, including Milton, viewed one their Muslim contemporaries. Following from the prejudice we shall see in some of these perspectives, this study shows not only the ways in which Islam and Christianity differ, but also, more critically, how they are similar.

⁵¹ For clarity, when I am referring to the alternate version of *Paradise Lost* based in Ottoman Sunni theology that I speculatively construct in this thesis, I will not italicize "Paradise Lost." I will only italicize "Paradise Lost" when discussing Milton's actual work.

Limitations of the Study

As my research progressed, it became apparent that there is a lacuna in the scholarship on the Ottoman Empire. Tijana Krstić remarked on the overgeneralization of the Islamic tradition in historical studies and the inattention given to the religion by Ottomanists.⁵² Krstić is currently undertaking a research project with several other scholars to define an Ottoman Sunni orthodoxy.⁵³ Thus, lacking any comprehensive formal studies on Sunni beliefs in the early modern period, I had to reconstruct possible Sunni orthodoxy based on historical studies on the early modern Ottoman Empire and scholarship on earlier Islamic sects and thinkers. I will discuss my approach to constructing early modern Sunni orthodoxy more fully in chapter two.

Another limitation of this project was that my access to such scholarship was restricted to studies that are available in English. In some ways, this limitation may have biased my approach toward Eurocentric perspectives, as I do not have equal representation of and exposure to non-Western sources. I am grateful to Professor Krstić, who helped me to partially alleviate this limitation by sharing with me a few personal translations of early modern Islamic texts.

I was similarly limited in that I had to rely on an English translation of the Quran. There are many problems with this, primarily that translation is often described as an interpretive field, meaning that a translator must interpret an

⁵² Ibid., 19.

⁵³ "Project Summary," *OTTOCONFESSIO: The Fashioning of a Sunni Orthodoxy and the Entangled Histories of Confession-Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th–17th Centuries*, Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies, Central European University, accessed January 2, 2019, <https://cems.ceu.edu/ottoconfession-0>.

author's intended meaning in order to accurately translate text. The consequence of this is that any translation I chose would in some way impose an anachronistic ideological or political lens on my study.⁵⁴ Cognizant of these problems, I selected Arthur Arberry's 1955 translation, *The Koran Interpreted*. Arberry's translation is preferred by scholars for its separation of text and tradition, meaning that the translation is not influenced by a particular Islamic creed and its interpretations, and overall lack of prejudice.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Khaleel Mohammed, "Assessing English Translations of the Qur'an," *Middle East Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (2005), <https://www.meforum.org/articles/2005/assessing-english-translations-of-the-qur-an>.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

1. Early Modern English Perceptions of Muslims

During the seventeenth century, England was increasingly in contact with the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁶ Though the Ottoman Empire was declining in its global influence by the seventeenth century, in the sixteenth century it had been the dominant world power and was still perceived by the English as a cultural and military threat.⁵⁷ As a result, the English developed an anxiety toward Muslims living in the Ottoman Empire, which manifested itself primarily in a fear of “turning Turk.”⁵⁸ This concern then became a trope in English literary and rhetorical writings. In this chapter, I discuss examples of these tropes as well as Milton’s engagement with them in order to illustrate English intolerance toward Muslims.

The word “Turk” had a number of meanings in early modern English usage, almost all of them pejorative and non-specific.⁵⁹ Milton and his European contemporaries used “Turk” to describe all Muslims (and Islam was often called simply “the *Turkish* Religion”).⁶⁰ By contrast, within the Ottoman Empire this term was typically reserved for members of nomadic tribes in Anatolia who had not converted to Islam.⁶¹ Instead, Muslims in the Ottoman Empire often referred to themselves as “Rumis” (Romans).⁶² During the sixteenth century, the time period I focus on when discussing the Ottoman Empire, labels such as “Arab,” “Rumi,” and “Turk” held nuanced sociocultural and class meanings.⁶³ The English people’s broad

⁵⁶ Jane Hwang Degenhardt, “Catholic Martyrdom in Dekker and Massinger’s ‘the Virgin Martir’ and the Early Modern Threat of ‘Turning Turk,’” *ELH* 73, no. 1 (2006), 84.

⁵⁷ Matar, “Renegade,” 489.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ MacLean, “Milton and the Muslims,” 182–84.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 182. Emphasis in original.

⁶¹ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 5.

⁶² Kunt, 4.

⁶³ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 3–5.

use of “Turk,” in contrast with the Ottomans’ own use of a variety of terms for different members of their population as well as the religious diversity of the Ottoman population, is indicative of the English inclination to other all people associated with the Ottoman Empire and, accordingly, all people associated with Islam.

One of the best places to look for early modern English anti-Muslim rhetoric is in literature, especially plays. As Jane Hwang Degenhardt explains, “Popular English discourses represented the Turkish threat as one of conversion or of ‘turning Turk’—a phenomenon that constituted both a genuine predicament for Christian seamen who were captured by Turks and an imaginative theme or trope on the London stage.”⁶⁴ She goes on to explain that English anxiety toward the Ottoman Empire is demonstrated in literary writings through an emphasis on Muslims’ sexual deviance and “distinct physical differences,” as well as through adapting earlier models for Christian persecution.⁶⁵

Matthew Dimmock expands on this idea in numerous studies. In *Mythologies of the Prophet Muhammad in Early Modern English Culture*, Dimmock explains that the Prophet Muhammad—perverted in the English imagination to a character known as “Mahomet”—became the figurehead of English anxiety toward Islam.⁶⁶ According to Dimmock, Mahomet was not simply used to represent Muslims; the character could be used broadly as a rhetorical tool to other any person or group under criticism, including other Christians.⁶⁷ Dimmock further argues that Mahomet was not a

⁶⁴ Degenhardt, 84.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 84–85.

⁶⁶ Matthew Dimmock, preface to *Mythologies of the Prophet Muhammad in Early Modern English Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), xii–xiii.

⁶⁷ Matthew Dimmock, *Mythologies of the Prophet Muhammad in Early Modern English Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.

critique against Islam specifically; rather that the idea of Mahomet was a critique of English society, politics, and religion.⁶⁸ I will not dispute Dimmock's claim; however, the English appropriation of a Muslim character to serve the goal of criticizing their own society is still indicative of a negative English mindset toward Islam and the Ottoman Empire. If this negative—indeed, othering—mindset did not exist prior to the emergence of the Mahomet character and similar anti-Muslim rhetoric, these tropes would have been ineffective as social critiques. It is also possible that this preexisting view of Muslims may have contributed to the development of this rhetoric. As such, I focus on English tropes of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims, and the Ottoman Empire specifically regarding what they reveal about Christian attitudes toward Muslims in the seventeenth century.⁶⁹

Milton's Treatment of Muslims in his Writing

Milton, reflective of seventeenth-century English culture, employs anti-Muslim rhetoric in both his political and literary writing, despite lacking a formal education in Arab or Islamic studies.⁷⁰ Milton's active participation in politics is evident in the numerous prose tracts he published.⁷¹ For centuries, critics have argued for or against interpretations of *Paradise Lost* as Milton's commentary on the political climate of his own time.⁷² This debate remains unsettled; however, it is

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁹ Indeed, seventeenth-century English Christians were so preoccupied with concerns about Islam and the Ottoman Empire that they extensively debated whether the consumption of coffee, the invention of which is typically associated with Arabs, should be adopted in Europe. See Tom Standage, *A History of the World in 6 Glasses* (New York: Walker & Company, 2005), 140–41.

⁷⁰ Dahiyat, 72–74.

⁷¹ Catherine Gimelli Martin, "John Milton," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern English and Religion*, ed. Andrew Hiscock and Helen Wilcox, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 376–77.

⁷² Martin Dzelzainis, "The Politics of *Paradise Lost*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*, ed. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 547–48.

important to recognize that, like any artist, Milton's approach to topic and writing would have been heavily influenced by the sensibilities of his time.

Perhaps the most notable example of Milton's participation in rhetoric that othered Muslims is in *Eikonoklastes*, when Milton compares Charles I to a Turkish tyrant. He writes:

Thus these two heads wherein the utmost of his allowance heer will give our Liberties left to consist, the one of them shall be so farr onely made good to us, as may support his own interest, and Crown, from *ruin* or *debilitation*; and so farr Turkish Vassals enjoy as much liberty under *Mahomet* and the Grand Signor: the other we neither yet have enjoyd under him, nor were ever like to doe under the Tyranny of a negative voice, which he claims above the unanimous consent and power of a whole Nation virtually in the Parliament.⁷³

In this passage, Milton asserts that under Charles I, the English have as little freedom as “Turkish Vassals . . . under *Mahomet*,”⁷⁴ suggesting that Milton, and likely many of his English contemporaries, assumed that the oppression people experienced under the Ottoman Empire was of the utmost severity. Thus, for Milton to compare Charles's “Tyranny of a negative voice”⁷⁵ to Ottoman rule was an extreme claim against Charles's ethics as a ruler. This is similar to Dimmock's claim that the use of tropes like Mahomet served the function of criticizing English society; Milton in *Eikonoklastes* is clearly taking advantage of English bigotry toward the Ottoman Empire to achieve his desired political ends.⁷⁶ While Milton references “Turks” and “Mahomet” a few times throughout *Eikonoklastes*, his strongest comparisons of Charles to the

⁷³ John Milton, *Eikonoklastes: In Answer to a Book Intitl'd Eikon Basilike: The Portrature of His Sacred Majesty in His Solitudes and Sufferings* (London: Matthew Simmons, 1649), 218. Facsimile available at Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/eikonoklastesina00milt/page/n9>. For clarity, I have partially modernized the spellings in this text.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Peter C. Herman, *Destabilizing Milton: "Paradise Lost" and the Poetics of Incertitude* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 37.

Ottomans appear near the end of the tract, indicative of his interest in using this comparison as a crux in his critique of Charles.

Beyond his political prose, Milton often references Eastern regions in *Paradise Lost*. Though these references often seem to be in passing and are not Milton's focus in the poem, numerous scholars have analyzed them in isolation and drawn meaningful conclusions on what these references can reveal about early modern English perceptions of other nations. For example, Walter S. H. Lim interprets Milton's inclusion of China and India in a geographic catalogue as revealing "complex cultural significations: anxieties relating to early modern European expansionist ambitions in Asia; associations with the dream of economic possibilities; questioning the place of 'absolutist' theological convictions in a culturally pluralistic world."⁷⁷ Lim goes on to ask if Milton's treatment of Eastern and Near Eastern⁷⁸ countries can be read after Edward Said's definition of orientalism, which necessitates an evaluation of other cultures according to the standards of one's own Western culture and consequently defining Western culture as superior and Eastern and Near Eastern cultures as

⁷⁷ Walter S. H. Lim, "John Milton, Orientalism, and the Empires of the East in *Paradise Lost*," in *The English Renaissance, Orientalism, and the Idea of Asia*, ed. Debra Johanyak and Walter S. H. Lim (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 204.

⁷⁸ In early modern English primary sources, the territories included in the Ottoman Empire are often referred to as Eastern or belonging to the East. This terminology was part of a polarizing mindset that served to "other" the Muslim population living there. (In this strand of early modern English thought, all inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire were, by association, Muslims, whether or not they identified as such.)⁷⁸ I will only use "East" or "Near East" in the context of early modern English thought and primary sources. When speaking objectively, I will opt for the more neutral terms of "Middle East and North Africa (MENA)" or specific regions within the Ottoman Empire. It is worth noting that the definitions of these terms have problems of their own, but are widely used alongside similar variants among inhabitants of many of these regions. Dimmock, "A Human Head to the Neck of a Horse," 66–88, passim; Greta Scharnweber, "What and Where Is the Middle East?" in *Teaching the Middle East: A Resource Guide for American Educators* (Middle East Policy Council), accessed October 27, 2018, <http://teachmideast.org/for-educators/digital-book/#1439390070977-57823c4b-824d>; "Arab, Middle Eastern, and Muslim? What's the Difference?!" *Teach Mideast: An Educational Initiative of the Middle East Policy Council*, accessed October 27, 2018, <http://teachmideast.org/articles/arab-middle-eastern-and-muslim-whats-the-difference/>.

inferior.⁷⁹ Though Lim's ideas are explored in relation to Milton's use of India and China in *Paradise Lost*, they can be applied to his treatment of other countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

In *Milton and Toleration*, Gerald MacLean observes that "Milton's references to Islam and the Ottomans tend to be oblique, learned, illustrative, polemical, incidental and surprisingly stereotyping."⁸⁰ Reflective of this, much scholarship on Milton and Islam focuses on Milton's use of oriental themes to negatively characterize and other Satan. For example, Jeffrey Einboden remarks on Milton's use of "sultan"—a word Einboden notes has heavy Near East connotations—to characterize Satan as the leader of the devils.⁸¹ Similarly, Milton has Satan at one point enthroned on a "dark divan."⁸² The implication of these terms would have been familiar to Milton's audience and was likely effective in casting a foreboding light on Satan's reign. Sharihan Al-Akhras and Mandy Green also published a recent article on how Milton's characterization of Satan is similar to the Quranic Iblis as presented in *The Alcoran*, the first English translation of the Quran. Despite a lack of evidence, Al-Akhras and Green encourage the reader to assume that Milton would have been familiar with the Quran—if not the 1649 English translation, then the 1550 Latin one.⁸³ Ultimately, they offer a political reading of *Paradise Lost* reflective of the negative seventeenth-century English perspectives toward Muslims and the Ottoman Empire. Al-Akhras

⁷⁹ Ibid., 206.

⁸⁰ Gerald MacLean, "Milton, Islam and the Ottomans," in *Milton and Toleration*, ed. Sharon Achinstein and Elizabeth Sauer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 290.

⁸¹ Jeffrey Einboden, "A Qur'ānic Milton: From Paradise to *al-Firdaws*," *Milton Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (2009): 185. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1094-348X.2009.00218.x>.

⁸² See Hossein Pirnajmuddin, "Milton's 'Dark Divan' in *Paradise Lost*," *The Explicator* 66, no. 2 (2008): 68–71. <https://doi.org/10.3200/EXPL.66.2.68-71>.

⁸³ Sharihan Al-Akhras and Mandy Green, "Satanic whispers: Milton's Iblis and the 'Great Sultan'," *The Seventeenth Century* 32, no. 1 (2017), 32–33.

and Green propose that Milton would have used *The Alcoran* to inform his characterization of Satan in order to “undermine . . . the authority of the Quran” and reassure his readers through Satan’s ultimate fall that the threat of Islam and the Ottoman Empire diminished in the shadow of Christianity.⁸⁴

While Al-Akhras and Green present some interesting observations about Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Islamic narratives, their argument is fundamentally flawed in that they argue Milton intentionally drew on the Quran (which most scholars agree Milton likely did not read) in order to alleviate English anxieties about the threat of Islam. It is more likely, based on Gerald MacLean’s comprehensive analysis of Milton’s use of terminology referencing Islam across all his works, that Milton’s Satan reminds us of Islamic influence because Milton used Near East imagery in order to cast a negative light on Satan’s character by associating him with the source of English fears about tyranny and religious contamination.⁸⁵

In contrast to these analyses of Milton’s use of Near East imagery to deprecate historical and fictional characters, Dahiyat explains how Milton used Near East imagery to romanticize or otherwise elevate his descriptions of certain scenes. Though these descriptions are not overtly negative characterizations like the ones we have discussed so far, they do imply a sense of exoticism, similar to Lim’s proposal to analyze Milton’s mention of Eastern and Near Eastern territories in the context of Said’s definition of orientalism. For example, Dahiyat cites Satan’s flight to Paradise, when he passes Arabia.⁸⁶ According to Dahiyat, in biblical legend Arabia was divided

⁸⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁸⁵ MacLean, “Milton Among the Muslims,” 190.

⁸⁶ *PL* 4.146–65, quoted in Dahiyat, 45.

into three portions. One of these, Arabia Felix, or free Arabia, was believed to be the location of the earthly paradise, the location of which was lost to humans after the Fall.⁸⁷ Accordingly, Milton draws on this legend as well as European travel writing and Diodorus Siculus's *Bibliotheca Historia* (ca. 36–30 BCE).⁸⁸ As Satan approaches Arabia, the “purer air / . . . to the heart inspires / Vernal delight and joy,”⁸⁹ and “Sabeian Odors”⁹⁰ of “Native perfume”⁹¹ blow “from the spicy shore / Of Araby the Blest.”⁹² Dahiyat succinctly describes how the “sheer charm” of Milton’s “exotic evocations” succeed in capturing the imagination of the reader to evoke in the reader’s mind a sense of the incomprehensible distance from their place (presumably in England) to the “wild romantic beauty” that Milton describes of both Arabia and the Garden of Eden.⁹³ The effect of Milton’s use of this imagery would have no effect on his early modern readers if not for a pre-existing orientalist, exoticizing mindset toward these lands. Milton, aware of these preconceptions (and perhaps sharing them), intentionally used this imagery to achieve the desired effect.

In light of the negative and orientalist early modern English depictions of Islam and the Ottoman Empire, as well as Milton’s participation in such rhetoric, as discussed above, it is important to consider the implications of the existence of these tropes on Muslim-Christian relations in the early modern period. Both Christians and Muslims harbored anxiety toward each other. As Degenhardt explained, Christians were concerned about being corrupted through contact with Muslims, which

⁸⁷ Dahiyat, 44.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁸⁹ *PL* 4.153–55.

⁹⁰ *PL* 4.162.

⁹¹ *PL* 4.158.

⁹² *PL* 4.162–63.

⁹³ Dahiyat, 46–47.

Dimmock extended to a deep-seated fear that corruption already existed within Christianity itself. These concerns may have informed Christians' approach to Muslims during the early modern period, leading them to be hostile, as Matar suggested, toward Muslims. Since conflicts between early modern Muslims and Christians often extended beyond the sociopolitical threat of a specific nation to include religious concerns, it is important to examine the beliefs of these two groups, and Milton's unique place in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Christian and Muslim readership makes *Paradise Lost* ideal to explore Muslim and Christian cosmology and etiology.

2. Historical Background and Cultural Comparisons

Since I am using a counterfactual thought experiment asking how *Paradise Lost* would be different if it was written by a Muslim instead of a Christian in the early modern period to explore the similarities and differences between Muslim and Christian theologies, it was necessary to choose a region and time period under Islamic rule that was comparable to Milton's England. Metin Kunt has observed that the nature of the Ottoman Empire makes it difficult to compare to any other nation states.⁹⁴ Despite this, I felt that a similar socio-political context was important to find since that would have the potential to produce an author like Milton. Given English rhetoric toward Ottoman Turks as well as my goal to demonstrate the irony of that rhetoric in light of the theological similarities between Islam and Christianity, it seemed appropriate to focus on the Ottoman Empire. Ultimately, I decided that sixteenth-century Anatolia, specifically under the reign of Sultan Suleyman II, was most comparable to seventeenth-century England. There are a few factors I took into consideration when deciding which Ottoman region and time period to focus on as a fair analog for seventeenth-century England. First, however, I will offer a brief historical review of sixteenth-century Anatolia, focusing on how its socio-political context informed the Islamic state's treatment of Ottoman inhabitants of other religions.

The Ottoman Empire

⁹⁴ Kunt, 4.

The Ottoman Empire began in fourteenth-century Anatolia as a small state⁹⁵ under the leadership of Osman Bey.⁹⁶ By 1450, the Ottoman Empire was the ruling power in Asia Minor and the Balkans.⁹⁷ This status would only expand under the following sultans, finally reaching its peak under Suleyman II.⁹⁸ A few crucial factors contributed to the swift growth of the Ottoman Empire leading into 1450. Early on, Ottomans took a two-stage approach to conquering territories. They would first establish a suzerainty, allowing local vassals to retain their independence, which also allowed people living in these territories to maintain their cultural and religious practices. Second, the vassals were eventually replaced by beys (governors) loyal to the Ottoman sultan and the timar system was established. The timar system was a population survey which would be used to implement taxes. Importantly, this system gave the ruling powers the oversight to subject non-Muslims to higher taxes,⁹⁹ which were not only monetary but also included the collection of young Christian boys to be trained as slaves in the government and rulers' households.¹⁰⁰ With the establishment of the timar system, the territories were formally incorporated into the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰¹ This process, particularly the establishment of suzerainties, in tandem with Islam's bans on forced conversion¹⁰² and fighting with other "people of the

⁹⁵ Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 3–4.

⁹⁶ Kunt, 4.

⁹⁷ Imber, *Ottoman Empire*, 25.

⁹⁸ See Kunt, 4–6, for a brief discussion of the biases of early scholarship on this subject.

⁹⁹ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 47.

¹⁰⁰ Norman Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 49–50.

¹⁰¹ Itzkowitz, 14–15.

¹⁰² "No compulsion is there in religion." *The Koran Interpreted*, trans. Arthur J. Arberry (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2:256. Hereafter cited as Quran.

book”¹⁰³ made the Ottomans more tolerant of religious diversity than contemporary English Christians.¹⁰⁴

In spite of the Ottoman government’s religious tolerance, the early modern period was one of mass conversion to Islam.¹⁰⁵ This conversion was partially motivated by the economic oppression of non-Muslims through the timar system. Additionally, astrological projections,¹⁰⁶ becoming more prominent after the Ottomans conquered Constantinople in 1453,¹⁰⁷ held that the apocalypse would commence around 1552–53 CE.¹⁰⁸ During the preceding years, there were Venetian prophecies warning of the defeat of Christendom by the Ottomans, and vice versa the defeat of the Ottoman Empire by Christians.¹⁰⁹ The role of the current earthly ruler within the apocalyptic framework was a primary concern for Muslims, Christians, and those of other religions living in this political climate, which raised expectations of the apocalypse among the general populace during the early modern period.¹¹⁰ These expectations motivated many people to seek pre-emptory salvation through conversion to what they deemed was the correct religion.¹¹¹ For the people who believed these projections, millenarian expectations coalesced under the reign of Suleyman II, who actively defined his rule through such apocalyptic rhetoric.

¹⁰³ Followers of other Abrahamic religions, including Judaism and Christianity. Dimmock, “A Human Head,” 66.

¹⁰⁴ Itzkowitz, 16–17.

¹⁰⁵ See Krstić, *Contested Conversions*.

¹⁰⁶ Since the ruling powers actively defined their roles through this apocalyptic rhetoric, it is difficult to ascertain to what extent these astrological projections reflected the beliefs of the laity. See Robert Finlay, “Prophecy and Politics in Istanbul: Charles V, Sultan Süleyman, and the Habsburg Embassy of 1533–34,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 2, no. 1 (1998),

¹⁰⁷ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 11.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁰⁹ Finlay, 2–3.

¹¹⁰ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 76.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

In 1520, Suleyman,¹¹² who in the West came to be known as Suleyman the Magnificent and among his Ottoman subjects as *Kanuni* (Lawgiver),¹¹³ ascended the throne of his father, Selim I, and then had the longest reign of any Ottoman ruler, which ended with his death in 1566.¹¹⁴ His reign was a period of unmatched military achievement,¹¹⁵ by the end of which the Ottomans not only saw their sultan as having authority over Ottoman lands, “but also bestowed on him a claim to universal sovereignty.”¹¹⁶ For many Muslims, the prosperity achieved under Suleyman’s reign, in tandem with Suleyman’s commitment to Shariah law¹¹⁷ and the privileged status the *ulema* (religious elite) held in Suleyman’s polity,¹¹⁸ validated that his rule was in accordance with Islamic law and thus divinely sanctioned.¹¹⁹

Just as Suleyman’s military success led his subjects to perceive him as a divinely sanctioned leader and thus as entitled to pursue global supremacy, by the seventeenth century, English rulers were also given the divine right to rule. This divine right similarly encouraged them to conquer other nations and expand their control. Here we can recall Leonard Busher’s commentary on the intolerance of the English toward different forms of religious belief: “shall we be lesse mercifull then the

¹¹² Ibid., 25–53.

¹¹³ Kunt, 28.

¹¹⁴ Christine Woodhead, introduction to Part II: Ideal Sultan, Ideal State, in *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World*, ed. Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead (New York: Longman Group, 1995), 118–19.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 118.

¹¹⁶ Colin Imber, “Ideals and Legitimation in Early Ottoman History,” in *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World*, ed. Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead (New York: Longman Group, 1995), 138.

¹¹⁷ By unifying temporal and religious law, Suleyman was able to sacralize his rule, contributing to his perceived role in the expected apocalypse. See Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 106–7.

¹¹⁸ Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 133.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Turks? or shall we learne the Turks to persecute Christians?"¹²⁰ Of course, considering the timar system's impact on non-Muslim citizens, the Ottoman Empire was less tolerant than Busher's and similar critiques by his contemporaries might lead us to believe; however, we can still see that the Ottoman Empire practiced a higher degree of tolerance than the government in Milton's England, which was likely due to both practical reasons, as outlined above, and the Quran's ban on persecuting other people of the book (adherents of any of the three Abrahamic faiths).¹²¹

Milton's England and Sixteenth-Century Anatolia

Taking what I have discussed about sixteenth-century Anatolia and seventeenth-century England, I will now outline a few important points of comparison between these two regions and time periods that make sixteenth-century Anatolia a good focal point for this thought experiment. Based on the similarities, we see that the culture of Ottoman Anatolia, prior to its decline in the seventeenth century, had the potential to produce an author like Milton. In fact, in the next section I show that early modern Anatolia not only had the potential to produce gifted and theologically-interested writers; it did in fact produce a number of influential writers, at least one of whom's life is comparable in many ways to Milton's own. Thus, pre-seventeenth-century Anatolia serves as an appropriate place to consider how *Paradise Lost* might be different if it had been written by a Muslim instead of a Christian in the early modern period.

¹²⁰ Busher, 6, quoted in MacLean, "Milton, Islam and the Ottomans," 288.

¹²¹ Dimmock, "A Human Head to the Neck of a Horse," 66.

Islamic belief and practice in the early modern period were highly regional—where majority Muslim populations existed, different countries in the Middle East and North Africa typically had majority populations of either Sunnis or Shi'ites.¹²² For this reason alone, it is important to distinguish which region I will focus on, as that will impact which theology I define in the next chapter. Given my interest in demonstrating the irony of English perceptions of Muslims (often focusing on those residing in the Ottoman Empire), I have chosen to focus on a territory in the Ottoman Empire whose residents were frequently in contact with Europeans. Among Ottoman territories fitting this category, Anatolia was an ideal focal point for this study for the political reasons I will discuss below. Specifically, Anatolia can be considered comparable to Milton's England due to its geopolitical significance and the succession of a ruler who was less competent than the previous ruler, resulting in political uncertainty.

The first important comparison I took into account was geopolitical significance. England in the seventeenth century was reaching the peak (up to that point) of its cultural and world presence. The Ottoman Empire, though it would last until the twentieth century,¹²³ was beginning to decline during the seventeenth century,¹²⁴ making this period less viable for this study. Instead, the sixteenth century, particularly under the reign of Suleyman II (Suleyman the Magnificent), is often regarded as the golden age of the Ottoman Empire.¹²⁵ Sixteenth-century Ottomans enjoyed the global status of Milton's contemporaries and also embraced

¹²² Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God: A History of Fundamentalism* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2000), 32.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹²⁴ Itzkowitz, 37.

¹²⁵ Woodhead, 118.

Western innovations in weapons and navigation techniques.¹²⁶ Thus, the Ottoman Empire was more similar to Milton's England in terms of political power in the sixteenth century than the seventeenth century.

Second, I considered changes in leadership during Milton's time and sixteenth-century Anatolia. As I previously discussed, the Ottoman Empire was at the peak of its geopolitical significance under the reign of Suleyman II. Suleyman was a vastly successful and beloved sultan,¹²⁷ which is demonstrated in a poem by Baki, which laments, "Will not the King awake from sleep? . . . / . . . / Praise be to God, for He in either World has blessed thee / And writ before your honored name both Martyr and Ghazi."¹²⁸ It is significant here that Baki calls Suleyman a Ghazi because *ghaza* ideology embodied a commitment to conquest which held that those on frontier marches were fighting "for the glory of Islam"¹²⁹ Suleyman's popularity marks one significant departure from how this period is comparable to seventeenth-century England in that Charles I (r. 1600–49) was an unpopular ruler. Indeed, as is evident from his *Eikonoklastes*, Milton rejected the tyrannical reign of Charles I,¹³⁰ who was executed in 1649. Charles's reign was replaced by Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth of England.¹³¹ After eleven years under the Commonwealth, Charles I's son, Charles II, reinstated the monarchy in 1660.¹³²

¹²⁶ Armstrong, *Battle*, 40.

¹²⁷ Itzkowitz, 35.

¹²⁸ Baki, "Elegy on Sultan Suleymán," in *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, vol. 3, by E. J. W. Gibb (London: Luzac & Co., 1904), 154–55, quoted in Itzkowitz, 36.

¹²⁹ Kunt, 12.

¹³⁰ Maurice Ashley, *England in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1978), 127.

¹³¹ G. E. Aylmer, *A Short History of Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Blandford Press, 1963), 146–49.

¹³² *Ibid*, 161.

Although Milton, unlike many of his contemporaries, supported Cromwell's Commonwealth¹³³ and was disillusioned when the public readily accepted Charles II's reinstatement of the monarchy,¹³⁴ neither Cromwell nor Charles II were adequate leaders. Similarly, Suleyman's son, Selim II, who succeeded the throne upon his father's death during a military excursion in 1566,¹³⁵ was disinterested in government and military affairs.¹³⁶ It is possible that Selim's attitude contributed to the start of the Ottoman Empire's decline. Thus, we can note the similarity between the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire and seventeenth-century England that both states experienced the death of a highly successful centralized ruler who was succeeded by a less competent ruler.

These political factors, especially leading into the reign of Suleyman, were critical in the development of Sunni orthodoxy in early modern Anatolia. Indeed, Anatolia's geopolitical significance put it in competition with a number of other nations, particularly the Safavids in Iran. According to Krstić, the Ottoman Empire began to define orthodox Sunni theology and practice as part of a Sunni/Shi'i polarization that resulted from this competition with the Safavids. The general consensus among Ottomanists, including Krstić, is that Sunni orthodoxy during the sixteenth century was defined from the top down.¹³⁷ Similarly, Christian orthodoxy—or rather the sects of Christianity that received preferential treatment by the government—was dictated by the current king of England. For example, between the

¹³³ Martin, 375.

¹³⁴ Erika D. Smith, "'Wisdom, Which Alone Is Truly Fair': Education and Government in Milton's Prose Tracts and *Paradise Lost*," Honors Program Thesis (Baylor University, 2012), 5.

¹³⁵ Itzkowitz, 36.

¹³⁶ Imber, 53–54.

¹³⁷ Derin Terzioğlu, "How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion," *Turcica* 44 (2013): 305. <https://doi.org/0.2143/TURC.44.0.2988854>.

rules of King James I, King Charles I, and Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth of England, the tolerance of Puritans fluctuated. Under James and Charles, Roman Catholicism were strongly preferred,¹³⁸ while Cromwell was intolerant of Roman Catholics practicing their faith.¹³⁹ Thus, the political climate and governance of both England and the Ottoman Empire was central to the definition of correct religion.

John Milton and Mehmed Yazicioglu

To ask the question of how *Paradise Lost* might have been different if it was written by a Muslim instead of a Christian, it was also important to find a culture that, like seventeenth-century England, had a deep interest in storytelling.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, in the sixteenth century, Turkish Anatolian literary culture was at its peak.¹⁴¹ As I have just shown, sixteenth-century Anatolia under the reign of Sultan Suleyman II is an appropriate region and time to focus on as comparable to seventeenth-century England. We can make a similar relation to the literary culture of both of these regions; there were many theologically-interested authors writing histories, religious treatises, and dramatized accounts of historical and scriptural events in the early modern Ottoman Empire. Despite much illiteracy at the lay level, these narratives were voraciously consumed by the public through oral storytelling.¹⁴² In the next chapter, I discuss the development of the *ilm-i hal* (religious manual) genre. These

¹³⁸ Ashley, 65.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁴⁰ For a sense of the scope of Ottoman literary interests during the sixteenth century, see Günay Kut, "Turkish Literature in Anatolia," in *History of the Ottoman State, Society, and Civilisation*, vol. 2, ed. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu (Istanbul: Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 2002), 52–63.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁴² Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 35–38.

texts were designed to instruct recent converts to Islam or less-educated Muslims on correct belief and practice.¹⁴³ Only recently has this genre come to the attention of early modern Ottomanists; the most-studied authors in this genre wrote during the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries and include Kutbeddin Mehmed Izniki (d. 1418);¹⁴⁴ Mehmed Yazicioglu (d. 1451);¹⁴⁵ the Yazicizade brothers, Mehmed (d. 1451) and Ahmed (d. ca. 1465);¹⁴⁶ Kadizade Mehmed Ilmi of Sofia and Mostar (d. 1631–2);¹⁴⁷ Ahmed Rumi of Akhisar (d. ca. 1630–35);¹⁴⁸ Nushi el-Nasihi, who published one important *ilm-i hal* in 1633;¹⁴⁹ and an anonymous student of Ustuvani Mehmed Efendi (d. 1661).¹⁵⁰ Two popular sixteenth-century *ilm-i hal* authors were Imam Birgivi Mehmed Efendi (d. 1573),¹⁵¹ whose work I use primarily for theological analysis in part two of this thesis, and Mevla Furati (d. ca. 1580).¹⁵²

In this section, I am not making a historical claim. Rather as part of my thought experiment, I focus on comparisons between the lives of Milton and fifteenth-century *ilm-i hal* author Mehmed Yaziciogolu to postulate what type of author may have written the speculative alternate Paradise Lost I propose in this thesis. Though Yazicioglu predates the time period that I am focusing on for historical comparison,

¹⁴³ Derin Terzioğlu, “Where ‘*İlm-i Hâl* Meets Catechism: Islamic Manuals of Religious Instruction in the Ottoman Empire in the Age of Confessionalization,” *Past & Present* 220, no. 1 (2013), 79–82. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtt001>.

¹⁴⁴ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 26.

¹⁴⁵ Mürüvet Harman, “Yazıcıoğlu Mehmed’in Muhammediye’sinde Yer Alan Cennet ve Cehennem Tasvirleri [Descriptions of Paradise and Hell in *Muhammediye* of Yazicioglu Mehmed],” *Mukaddime* 5, no. 1 (2014): 91. Translated from Turkish to English with Google Translate.

¹⁴⁶ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 32.

¹⁴⁷ Terzioğlu, “Where ‘*İlm-i Hâl* Meets Catechism,” 87.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁵⁰ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 29.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Tijana Krstić, “From *Shahāda* to ‘*Aqīda*: Conversion to Islam, Catechization, and Sunnitization in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Rumeli,” in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, ed. A. C. S. Peacock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 302.

his is one of the more complete biographies of a pre-seventeenth-century *ilm-i hal* author we have. More importantly, however, as one of the earliest known *ilmi-i hals*, Yazicioglu's *Muhammediye* would have been highly influential on the development of the genre and remained widely popular even after Yazicioglu's lifetime.¹⁵³ Here, I am focusing on similarities in Yazicioglu's and Milton's education and creative decisions in the writing of their respective works.

Having received a privileged education, Milton was capable in many of the classical languages. One of the reasons he chose to write *Paradise Lost* in English (the alternative being Latin), was "to instruct his countrymen," for many of whom a Latin poem would have been inaccessible.¹⁵⁴ Yazicioglu similarly received an education from his father in classical Islamic sources in Arabic and Persian,¹⁵⁵ but chose to write his widely popular *ilm-i hal*, *Muhammediye*, in Turkish to make it accessible to recent converts and less educated Muslims, who largely only knew Turkish. For many Muslims, *Muhammediye*—which outlines the creation story, the life of Muhammad, and the last judgment and the afterlife¹⁵⁶—was their only source of knowledge about Islamic beliefs and practice,¹⁵⁷ since translating the Quran out of its original Arabic is discouraged to this day.¹⁵⁸

In addition to his private theological studies, Milton spent part of his education intending to pursue a life in the ministry. After receiving his degree at Cambridge,

¹⁵³ In fact, *Muhammediye* remains available to this day in modern Turkish translations.

¹⁵⁴ Lawrence A. Sasek, "Milton's Patriotic Epic," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1956): 4. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3816171>.

¹⁵⁵ Harman, 91.

¹⁵⁶ Âmil Çelebioğlu, "Summary," in *Muhammediye* by Yazicioglu Mehmed, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Milli Egitim Bakanligi, 1996), 7.

¹⁵⁷ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 33.

¹⁵⁸ Arthur J. Arberry, introduction to *The Koran Interpreted* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), ix.

Milton decided instead to become a poet.¹⁵⁹ Yazicioglu was a poet as well.¹⁶⁰ Both Milton and Yazicioglu wrote poems in their natural languages (English and Turkish, respectively) and the classical languages they had learned (Latin for Milton, and Arabic and Persian for Yazicioglu).¹⁶¹ Yazicioglu also received theological training—like Milton’s studies toward the ministry—as a disciple of Hacı Bayram-i Veli, “the spiritual ruler of sixteenth century Anatolia.”¹⁶²

Little is known about the life of Yazicioglu.¹⁶³ Though few, these comparisons offer an important perspective on the type of person who might have written an alternative *Paradise Lost* in sixteenth-century Anatolia. With the grounds laid for the speculative question I pose in this thesis in exploring early modern Muslim and Christian beliefs, let us now turn to the problem of defining Ottoman Sunni beliefs, and how I propose to address that problem.

¹⁵⁹ Martin, 377.

¹⁶⁰ Harman, 91.

¹⁶¹ Çelebioğlu, 6.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

3. Sources Toward Defining Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Sunnism

At the start of the sixteenth century, Islamic dynasties like the Ottoman Empire were the “greatest global power[s].”¹⁶⁴ The Ottoman Empire’s most prominent imperial rivals were the Safavids in Iran and the Habsburgs.¹⁶⁵ The rulers of all three of these sovereignties—Suleyman, Shah Ismail (d. 1524), and Charles V (d. 1558), respectively—participated in prominent sixteenth-century apocalyptic discourse.¹⁶⁶ Many Christians believed that, as Holy Roman Emperor in the years preceding the expected apocalypse, Charles V embodied many apocalyptic prophecies;¹⁶⁷ Shah Ismail declared himself the long-awaited Hidden Imam,¹⁶⁸ a myth founded in the radically anti-temporal Twelver Shi’ite tradition;¹⁶⁹ and Suleyman believed he would be the last ruler before the Final Judgment, “destined to unite the political and spiritual prerogatives.”¹⁷⁰ Both Suleyman and Shah Ismail aspired to fulfill the role of *mahdi* (Messiah).¹⁷¹ Each of these rulers utilized apocalyptic rhetoric in their rule; consequently, all the discourse surrounding these expectations made the sixteenth century a period of conversion and revivalism, which necessitated the definition of religious orthodoxy in each of these groups.¹⁷²

In response to the need to both define religious orthodoxy and make it accessible to a wide lay audience of recent or potential converts, more learned Muslims began to write and disseminate religious manuals. *Ilm-i hals* like Yazicioglu’s

¹⁶⁴ Armstrong, *Battle*, 32.

¹⁶⁵ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 12.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁶⁹ Armstrong, *Battle*, 50–51.

¹⁷⁰ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 81.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 12; 81.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 14.

aforementioned *Muhammediye* constitute a genre of literature comprised of religious instruction manuals, which provided basic information on correct belief, practice, or both.¹⁷³ The earliest known *ilm-i hals* were produced in the Ottoman Empire Lands of Rum (Anatolia and present-day Balkans), and were written in Turkish so that they would be accessible to potential and recent converts to Islam as well as a wider lay audience, most of whom were not educated in the classical languages of the Islamic tradition.¹⁷⁴ For many of the laity, *ilm-i hals* were the sole source of information on Islamic faith and practice, since the Quran and other sources were not available in translations.¹⁷⁵ Thus, the *ilm-i hals* serve as an important resource in approximating Islamic orthodoxy in the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire.

While there is much diversity in Islamic thought and sectarian differences in the Ottoman Empire were highly regional,¹⁷⁶ there are a few foundational principles that are accepted by all Muslims. The five pillars of Islamic orthopraxy are *shahada* (profession of the faith), *salah* (prayer), *sawm* (fasting), *zakat* (charity), and *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). There are also a few core tenets of Islamic belief—the articles of the faith—which are often drawn from the Gabriel *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad). However, the numbering of these articles is less straightforward than the five pillars. There are five universally accepted articles, which include belief in one God; God’s angels; God’s books, which include the Torah, Psalms, the Gospels, and the Quran; prophets; and the Final Judgment.¹⁷⁷ Interestingly, possibly the first *ilm-i*

¹⁷³ Terzioğlu, 79–82. The earliest *ilm-i hals* were written in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁷⁵ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 28–29.

¹⁷⁶ Armstrong, *Battle*, 32.

¹⁷⁷ M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, “Qur’an and Hadith,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 25.

hal (religious manual), *Mukadimme* (The Introduction), by Kutbeddin Mehmed Izniki (d. 1418),¹⁷⁸ includes a sixth article: “that all things good and lawful are because of God.”¹⁷⁹ This sixth article can be found in Sahih Muslim’s account of the Gabriel *hadith*,¹⁸⁰ but not, to take a prominent rival example,¹⁸¹ in Sahih Muhammad al-Bukhari’s.¹⁸² In Muslim’s account, the Prophet Muhammad responds to Gabriel’s question of what faith is by listing the five universally accepted articles, and then adds that faith includes “believ[ing] that no good or evil cometh but by His Providence.”¹⁸³ The early modern Ottoman preference for Muslim’s account over alternate *hadith* is evident in a slightly earlier text than Izniki’s, the *Sa’atname*. Believed to be authored in fourteenth-century Anatolia¹⁸⁴ by Sufi *seyh* (spiritual leader) Hibetullah b. Ibrahim, the *Sa’atname* is a dramatic telling of the Final Judgment.¹⁸⁵ Importantly, Ibrahim repeatedly cites “the Qur’an and the collections of the ‘sound *hadith*’ (*sahihayn*) of Muslim (AH 202–261 / 817–875) and Buhari (AH 194–265 / 810–870)” as eschatological sources for his *Sa’atname*.¹⁸⁶ Based on the credibility given to Muslim’s

¹⁷⁸ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 26.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁸⁰ Muslim, “Hadith of Gabriel,” *Wikipedia*, last edited March 20, 2019.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadith_of_Gabriel. Translations of the Gabriel *hadith* vary. I am opting to use this open-access, crowd-sourced translation.

¹⁸¹ Muslim’s and al-Bukhari’s *hadith* collections emerged at approximately the same time, and, while al-Bukhari’s is preferred by most students of Islam, not all *hadith* scholars agree that al-Bukhari’s is superior (if they think that either one is more reliable than the other). Muḥammad Zubayr Şiddīqī, *Ḥadīth Literature: Its Origin, Development & Special Features* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 58.

¹⁸² Al-Bukhari, “Hadith of Gabriel,” *Wikipedia*, last edited March 20, 2019.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadith_of_Gabriel.

¹⁸³ Muslim.

¹⁸⁴ The exact dates of the original text and its author are unknown. Vasfi Mahir Kocaturk analyzed the text’s linguistic qualities and cautiously dates it to the fourteenth century. Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 183 n. 46.

¹⁸⁵ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 35–36.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

hadith by Ibrahim¹⁸⁷ and the inclusion of the sixth article of faith in Izniki's *Mukadimme*, this study accepts the sixth article "that no good or evil cometh but by [God's] Providence" as relevant to the Ottoman Sunni context.¹⁸⁸

However, the inclusion or omission of this article also brings us to the center of a longstanding polarizing debate within Islamic theology: whether humans have free will or are entirely subject to God's control.¹⁸⁹ This divisive issue, which I discuss more fully in chapter four, has caused many splits in the *ummah* (Islamic religious community), resulting in the development of numerous opposing sects.¹⁹⁰ Lacking any comprehensive formal studies on orthodox Sunni beliefs in the Ottoman Empire between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries,¹⁹¹ I rely chiefly on the doctrines of Ash'arism and Hanbalism, which would later become known by scholars of classical Islam as traditionism, to inform a possible orthodox Ottoman Sunnism. I discuss Ash'arist and traditionist views on *qadar* (predestination) in further detail in chapter four, but in keeping with Izniki's inclusion of the sixth article of faith in his *ilm-i hal*, as well as a more timeless understanding of predestination as a central orthodox Sunni belief,¹⁹² both Ash'arism and traditionism reject the notion of free will.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁷ There is a possible typographical error in this quote; given the dates Krstić provides for Buhari, she may be referring to Bukhari. However, even if this is the case, it is still significant that Muslim's *hadith* are recognized as authoritative by several fifteenth- and sixteenth-century *ilm-i hal* authors.

¹⁸⁸ Muslim.

¹⁸⁹ Mustafa Shah, "Trajectories in the Development of Islamic Theological Thought: The Synthesis of Kalām," *Religion Compass* 1, no. 4 (2007): 432–35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2007.00026.x>.

¹⁹⁰ Ziauddin Ahmed, "A Survey of the Development of Theology in Islam," *Islamic Studies* 11, no. 2 (1972): 93.

¹⁹¹ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 19.

¹⁹² Shah, 435.

¹⁹³ Khalid Blankinship, "The Early Creed," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 52–53.

Ash'arism and traditionism share a number of similarities. Both emerged during the ninth and tenth centuries as a rejection of Mu'tazilism—the Islamic-state-mandated theology from 827–51 upholding the Qadarite belief that humans had free will—which was spurned by contemporary Sunni scholars.¹⁹⁴ Traditionism was promoted most heavily by Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855), who notably rejected the use of rational argument to interpret the Quran, and chose instead to take verses, especially those describing God, literally.¹⁹⁵ Thus, while Mu'tazilites and some early traditionists sought to qualify the seeming discrepancy between God's omnibenevolence and the existence of evil by arguing that man had free will (consequently contradicting God's omnipotence, which is where Ash'arites and formal traditionists took issue with this teaching),¹⁹⁶ formal traditionism upheld predestination and an anthropomorphic view of God, while rejecting *irja'* (the theory that faith is demonstrated by beliefs alone, and does not include actions) and Shi'ite beliefs.¹⁹⁷

The slightly later doctrine of Ash'arism, associated with Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari (d. 936), developed Hanbal's traditionist teachings. Al-Ash'ari was a student of Mu'tazilism who adopted Hanbalite theology around 913. He expanded on traditionist teachings regarding God's omnipotence and characteristics, as well as the qualities of heaven and hell, the necessity of both belief and action in faith, who is considered a believer, and the punishment and rewarding of believers.¹⁹⁸ Scholarly consensus indicates that both of these traditions, but especially Ash'arism, were

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 47–53.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 52.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 52–53.

¹⁹⁷ Ahmed, 105–6.

¹⁹⁸ Blankinship, 52–53.

highly influential in the development of orthodox Sunni belief. Indeed, Derin Terzioğlu, an early modern Ottomanist, notes the positive reception of Ash'arist teachings by Ottoman theological scholars during the Sunnitization process.¹⁹⁹ Francis Robinson has further demonstrated that the primary texts included in *madrasas* (schools) in the Ottoman Empire during the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries had all been written by the fourteenth century, making these doctrines and the writings of some later medieval scholars extremely relevant to our understanding of orthodox Sunnism in the early modern period.²⁰⁰

In addition to these creeds, Sufism²⁰¹ was also highly influential in the development of Ottoman Sunni orthodoxy, especially in Anatolia. The rise of the Ottoman Empire in Asia Minor coincided with the collapse of the Christian Orthodox Church in these regions during the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries.²⁰² As discussed in chapter two, there was a multiplicity of factors contributing to the increase of the Muslim population in Anatolia leading into the early modern period. Most important in this discussion, however, were the proselytizing efforts of Sufi orders in the late medieval period.²⁰³ In fact, it seems that Sufism was the driving force behind a large portion of conversion to Islam leading into and during the early modern period in Anatolia. For example, some of the most

¹⁹⁹ Terzioğlu, "How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization," 311.

²⁰⁰ Francis Robinson, "Ottomans–Safavids–Moghuls: Shared Knowledge and Connective Systems," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, no. 2 (1997): 152. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/8.2.151>.

²⁰¹ It is important to note that at this time, Sufism was not an established mystical sect as it is known today. In the medieval and early modern period, to be a Sufi was simply to be a deep-thinking, pious Muslim.

²⁰² Speros Vryonis, Jr., "Religious Change and Continuity in the Balkans and Anatolia from the Fourteenth Through the Sixteenth Century," in *Islam and Cultural Change in the Middle Ages*, ed. Speros Vryonis, Jr. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975), 134.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 136.

popular and widely disseminated *ilm-i hals* were written by Sufi scholars, who chiefly cited earlier Sufi thinkers.²⁰⁴ In keeping with this evidence, I inform my study using the teachings of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi. I also refer to some of the works of Avicenna (also known as Ibn Sina), since he is known to have been highly influential on al-Ghazali.²⁰⁵

I use the teachings from each of these traditions and thinkers to develop the concepts discussed in select *ilm-i hals* from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Of these, I rely primarily on Imam Birgivi's *Vasiyyetname* (The Last Will and Testament),²⁰⁶ which is dated to 1562,²⁰⁷ since its writing is the closest to the period selected for this study. I refer to the Quran as well, but less frequently than other sources listed because the writings of al-Ghazali, Ibn Arabi, and Avicenna give insight into the specific interpretation of the Quran that would have been relevant to Ottoman Sunni Muslims, the majority of whom had not actually read the Quran and had no familiarity with its contents beyond those expressed in the *ilm-i hals* due to the language barrier.

The first part of the *Vasiyyetname* teaches correct beliefs about God, angels, prophets, scriptures, final judgment, and predestination, reflecting the six articles of the faith.²⁰⁸ These mandates are written in a way that bears semblance to the

²⁰⁴ For example, Birgivi Mehmed Efendi (d. 1573) wrote two manuscripts consistent with many of al-Ghazali's teachings. Similarly, Yazicizade Mehmed (d. 1451) and Yazicizade Ahmed (d. ca. 1465) most frequently cite al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi in their *ilm-i hals*. Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 31–32, 40.

²⁰⁵ Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 6.

²⁰⁶ Imam Birgivi, *The Path of Muhammad (s.a.w.s): A Book on Islamic Morals & Ethics*, interpreted by Shaykh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2005), 1.

²⁰⁷ Tijana Krstić, email correspondence, December 20, 2018.

²⁰⁸ Eda Cuclu's translation of Imam Birgivi's *Vasiyyetname* (1562) was shared with me by Tijana Krstić via email. Hereafter referred to as Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

question-and-answer format by which Islam was likely taught.²⁰⁹ In fact, a later *ilm-i hal* author, Nushi el-Nasihi,²¹⁰ made the radical suggestion that all Muslims past seven years of age should be orally tested on their knowledge of their *ilm-i hals* by representatives of the state. Punishment for not knowing the *ilm-i hals* could be as severe as excommunication.²¹¹ Following this format, numerous sections in the text begin with the phrase “I testify that,”²¹² which was intended to prepare Muslims to, after dying, satisfactorily testify to their faith to the angels Munker and Nekir, who decided whether a soul would go to heaven or hell.²¹³ The second part of *Vasiyyetname* delineates correct practice, at one point referencing the five pillars of Islam.²¹⁴ Interestingly, here Birgivi’s teaching condemns as blasphemous the Ash‘arite belief that faith “increase[es] or decrease[es] according to the righteousness of [acts].”²¹⁵ However, Birgivi also acknowledges that some *imams* (teachers) may have spread beliefs based on a misinterpretation of the Quran and *hadith*, and so less learned believers may not practice their faith correctly if they follow one of these *imams*. Birgivi writes:

All of them [these scholars/schools] are the same in terms of belief and the people of tradition and community. It is in terms of practice that they disagree on some matters according to their understandings. And these disagreements came into being with the permission of God Almighty, and they do no harm. A person is permitted to follow any of them. He goes to Heaven in the last judgment even if the imam he followed made a mistake.²¹⁶

²⁰⁹ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 30.

²¹⁰ Terzioğlu, “*‘Ilm-i Hāl*,” 88–89.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

²¹² Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

²¹³ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 30.

²¹⁴ Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

²¹⁵ Blankinship, 52–53.

²¹⁶ Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

Thus, while Birgivi outlines correct practice in accordance with the teachings of Abu Hanifa (d. 767), he does not condemn other teachers or their followers for alternate practices.²¹⁷ The two-part format explaining both beliefs and practice outlined here was characteristic of all inclusive (as opposed to subject-specific) *ilm-i hals* created after the fifteenth century.²¹⁸

I use the contents of Birgivi's *Vasiyyetname* and expand upon them using the classical Islamic theologies and philosophers discussed above as the foundation for the theological concepts to be discussed in my following analysis of *Paradise Lost*.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Terzioğlu, "*İlm-i Hâl*," 89.

PART TWO

4. “Of Man’s First Disobedience”: The Argument

Milton’s great epic sets out to “justify the ways of God to men,”²¹⁹ a task formulated around on Milton’s belief that God has given man free will. There are a few key passages throughout the poem that articulate this claim,²²⁰ but it is perhaps most succinctly stated in book three, when God says “I made [Adam] just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.”²²¹ Free will is one apologetic solution to the problem of evil, which asks how evil can exist if God is all good, all powerful, and all knowing.²²² It is evident from the given lines and other passages in *Paradise Lost* that, at least to some extent,²²³ Milton accepts this theory.²²⁴

Neither the problem of evil nor the free will solution are limited to the Christian tradition.²²⁵ The earliest known theological debates in Islam centered on this issue, and the question of *qadar* (predestination) was the source of many rifts in the *ummah* which have lasted to this day.²²⁶ The Sunni majority, both today and during the early modern period, reject the notion of free will as contradictory to God’s omnipotence. This teaching is present in formative sects of Islamic thought such as traditionism, Ash’arism, and others, and is further confirmed in Birgivi’s *Vasiyyetname*: “Nothing exists without [God’s] will . . . All that is in this universe exists

²¹⁹ *PL* 1.26

²²⁰ *PL* 3.95–99; 3.124; 3.125–28; 5.130–46; 5.425–41; 8.640–41; 9.35; 10.9.

²²¹ *PL* 3.98–99.

²²² Alvin Plantinga, “God, Evil, and the Metaphysics of Freedom,” in *The Problem of Evil*, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 84.

²²³ Milton likely had doubts on this solution to the problem of evil, which is evidenced in the debate among the angels in book two. Robert Kane, “Introduction: The Contours of Contemporary Free-Will Debates (Part 2),” in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert Kane (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 33.

²²⁴ Martin, 383–84.

²²⁵ Eleonore Stump, “The Problem of Evil,” *Faith and Philosophy* 2, no. 4 (1985): 392.

<https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil19852443>.

²²⁶ Ahmed, 93.

by His will whether it is good or evil . . . Not a fly can move its wings without His will. Whatever we do, we do by His will.”²²⁷ Earlier opposing Islamic philosophies, as Milton does, accept free will as a solution to the problem of evil. Here, Birgivi’s rejection of free will as a justification for evil is explicit.

This difference in theology, though founded in the same question, would drastically reframe an alternative *Paradise Lost*, since in many ways Milton wrote his free will argument in order to denounce Calvinist teachings favoring predestination.²²⁸ Milton was writing at a time when it was normal to question or challenge prescribed teachings—a practice he embraced more ardently than many of his contemporaries.²²⁹ Indeed, for Milton, blind faith or undiscerning acceptance of official theological teachings was dangerous, for “God has revealed the way of eternal salvation only to the individual faith of each man, and demands of us that any man who wishes to be saved should work out his belief for himself.”²³⁰ Sixteenth-century Anatolia had a far different religious culture. Krstić has termed the early modern period in the Ottoman Empire as an “age of confessionalization and empire building,”²³¹ a definition supported in Derin Terzioğlu’s analysis of the *ilm-i hal* genre.²³² This term characterizes the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, and especially the years surrounding the reign of Suleyman, in the Ottoman Empire as a period of mass conversion to Islam.

²²⁷ Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

²²⁸ Martin, 380.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 375, 379.

²³⁰ John Milton, letter to Alexander Gil, quoted in *ibid.*, 379.

²³¹ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 15.

²³² Terzioğlu, “*İlm-i Hâl*,” 79–86, *passim*.

With such rampant conversions from the mid-fourteenth century on, there was a need to establish an orthodox Islam to be converted to, as well as a means for teaching it.²³³ This process, beginning in the early sixteenth century, is referred to by scholars as Sunnitization.²³⁴ Krstić notes that prior to the fifteenth century, there were no resources to educate a large Turkish-speaking public on the specifics of Islamic faith, so conversion to Islam in the Ottoman Empire merely required *shahada* (profession of faith attesting that “There is no god but God; Muhammad is his Messenger”).²³⁵ The creation and distribution of *ilm-i hals* changed this so that knowledge of the core tenets of the faith, as well as correct practice, became paramount.²³⁶

Thus, while Milton was writing out of a religious context²³⁷ wherein orthodoxy for various sects was established enough that it could be challenged, which Milton did and urged others to do, formal Sunni Islamic orthodoxy was only just developing and being transmitted in sixteenth-century Anatolia. However, there are echoes of Milton’s assertion “that any man who wishes to be saved should work out his belief for himself”²³⁸ in *Vasiyyetname*, which is practical in its acknowledgment of not only the variety but also the possible validity of interpretations of the Quran and *hadith*. However, unlike Milton, Birgivi believes that only “wise ones” are capable of deriving the secret meanings of some of these sources, while “God ordered those who are not of that rank [those who are incapable of understanding what is concealed] to follow

²³³ Krstić, “From *Shahāda* to ‘*Aqīda*,” 297.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 296.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 298.

²³⁶ Terzioğlu, “How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization,” 308.

²³⁷ Milton was writing in the shadow of the English Reformation, which meant that the sect in charge and the orthodoxy associated with it changed with each government.

²³⁸ Milton, letter, quoted in Martin, 379.

one among the learned.”²³⁹ In fact, due to the concerns about innovation²⁴⁰ arising from debates over the details of foundational principles such as *qadar*,²⁴¹ a sixteenth-century Muslim author would not even dare to attempt to justify the ways of God to man, as Milton does.²⁴² This is clear again in the *Vasiyyetname*, when Birgivi writes:

[God] cannot be questioned for what He willed . . . There is reason and wisdom in what He wills. Mankind cannot understand it. There is always reason and wisdom in His [actions] . . . It is not necessary for us to know them. What is an obligation for us is to believe it.²⁴³

Therefore, an alternative *Paradise Lost* emerging out of this culture would likely have had a primarily didactic purpose, with a secondary purpose of entertainment, like the aforementioned *Sa’atname*.

However it is interesting because some of Milton’s lines which were devised to show God giving free will to various characters could be read similarly to how Muslims have explained humans’ roles in acquiring actions predestined by God. Birgivi merely states that God is the creator of the actions of all creatures. Birgivi explains this idea further by giving specific examples of how God creates actions—one such example proposes that without God creating a feeling of satisfaction after eating, “you would not feel full even if you ate a houseful of food.”²⁴⁴ However, nothing Birgivi says in this section elaborates on the details of how this occurs. Similar to Birgivi’s assertion that man cannot question God’s ways, Birgivi expects his reader to

²³⁹ Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

²⁴⁰ Innovation was as large a concern for early modern Sunni Muslims as heresy was for Christians in the West. Armstrong, *Battle*, 35.

²⁴¹ Ahmed, 93.

²⁴² However, Muslims would likely find Milton’s stated intention to uphold God’s justice worthy, as is demonstrated by Ahmed Al-Shinwani’s discussion of *Paradise Lost* in the sixth volume of his series, *Books That Changed Human Thinking*. See Issa, *Milton in the Arab-Muslim World*, 36–37.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

accept the result of God's action as truth. The simplicity of Birgivi's argument is justifiable, given his lay audience. However, the end of the section on the creation of actions includes one telling line: "And there is no one other than Him who creates an effect. All things are His creation."²⁴⁵

The cosmological theory of causes and effects (using that specific terminology) can be traced to Avicenna, who was heavily influenced by Aristotle. Avicenna's ideas on causes and effect likely had their roots in Ash'arite occasionalist theology. Occasionalism holds that "Every nonmaterial being—such as an odor, an impression, or an idea—is . . . an accident of a material being."²⁴⁶ According to Ash'arism, all material things are made up of atoms (though not atoms as a post-Dalton reader would understand them). Atoms have no qualities in themselves. Instead, any qualities that an atom possesses moment to moment are the product of accidents that God wills to happen to that atom.²⁴⁷ (The word accident here implies not a mistake on God's part, for "[God] is free from . . . mistake,"²⁴⁸ but rather that the atom has no intention or autonomy causing it to acquire a quality.) Using similar logic, Avicenna argued that everything in the universe is part of a finite chain of cause and effect, which when traced to a singular cause proves God's existence²⁴⁹ because God is uncreated and eternal,²⁵⁰ meaning that He exists outside of the finite chain of cause and effect and therefore must have willed the first cause. Avicenna's teachings are relevant to this discussion of early modern Sunni beliefs because they were later

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Griffel, 125.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 125–26.

²⁴⁸ Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

²⁴⁹ Griffel, 144–45.

²⁵⁰ Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

accepted (and simplified) by al-Ghazali,²⁵¹ who is regularly cited by *ilm-i hal* authors.²⁵² In his writing, al-Ghazali reduces Avicenna's terms "efficient effect" and "efficient cause" to "that what is made" and "the maker."²⁵³ We can take al-Ghazali's language one step further to instead say "that which is created" and "the creator," which brings us to Birgivi's explanation that God is the creator of all things and actions.

Milton tries to maintain God's omnipotence by narrating God allowing a character to perform a certain action. For example, Milton writes that it was only by God's permission that Satan was allowed to free himself from the chains on the burning lake.

So stretched out huge in length the Arch-Fiend lay
Chained on the burning lake, nor ever thence
Had ris'n or heaved his head, but that the will
And high permission of all-ruling Heaven
Left him at large to his own dark designs,
That with reiterated crimes he might
Heap on himself damnation . . .²⁵⁴

It was by "the will and high permission of all-ruling Heaven" that Satan was "left . . . to his own dark designs."²⁵⁵ Remove "and high permission," and you have here not a Qadarite or Miltonic argument for free will; you have instead an orthodox Sunni doctrine maintaining God's omnipotence. Even retaining "and high permission" in this section, these lines resemble Birgivi's brief attention to the Devil. Though Birgivi focuses on warning the reader against the Devil's temptations, he does justify the Devil's existence in a way that resembles an answer to the problem of evil. Having

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 145.

²⁵² Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 31–32, 40

²⁵³ Al-Ghazālī, MS London, Or. 3126, fol. 124a.7–12, quoted in Griffel, 145.

²⁵⁴ *PL* 1.209–15.

²⁵⁵ *PL* 1.211–13.

already established that humans cannot question God’s will, Birgivi simply writes “[God] gave [the Devil] time until the Judgment Day.”²⁵⁶ It is significant that Birgivi did not specify that “God willed the Devil’s existence until Judgment Day,” but rather that God “gave the Devil time.” This calls into question God’s power over angels and *jinn*, something that Milton’s angels debate in book two:

Others apart sat on a hill retired,
In thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high
Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end, in wand’ring mazes lost.²⁵⁷

It is tempting to consider that God has given the Devil free will to do his evil work, as Milton’s God gave to Satan and to man. However, the thing that is emphasized repeatedly in *Vasiyyetname* is God’s total omnipotence, including His will for the existence of sin and unbelief. Furthermore, the Quran explicitly states that the Devil only has the power that God permits him to have, which is the power to influence or tempt humans.²⁵⁸

Yet when we replace Milton’s free will with the Sunni belief that God wills all actions, down to “a fly . . . mov[ing] its wings,”²⁵⁹ the reason behind the Fall becomes even more critical. The reason for the Fall in *Paradise Lost* remains a mystery to modern Milton scholars, especially in light of the paradox that the first man and woman were perfect and therefore should have been incapable of falling—the fact that they did fall undermines their perfection. We shall see ways in which we might accommodate Adam and Eve’s fall with their perfection in chapter seven. Millicent

²⁵⁶ Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

²⁵⁷ *PL* 2.557–61; see Kane, 33.

²⁵⁸ Quran 14:22; 58:10.

²⁵⁹ Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

Bell has argued that because Milton was a biblical literalist, he was less concerned with explaining why the first humans fell. Instead, Milton focuses on the effect of that first sin, rather than the cause.²⁶⁰ Bell's reading of Milton as discussed here reveals an incongruity between Milton's *Paradise Lost* and an alternate *Paradise Lost* that accepts Avicenna's theory of cause and effect, which holds tracing the chain of cause and effect back to the first cause as integral to proving God's existence.²⁶¹ It is possible that a Muslim author would, like Milton, focus on the effect of the first sin and justify that choice by reiterating that God's will has a reason that humans cannot question. This is especially likely if our expectation for an alternative *Paradise Lost* is that it would fit into the *ilm-i hal* genre, which, as Bell has argued of Milton, seems to focus more on the results of human action (or the actions that are required of humans) than how either of those things occur or God's specific role therein.

Milton employs Augustine's *Felix culpa*—also known as the fortunate fall, which asserts that good may still come out of the evil incurred by Adam and Eve's expulsion from Paradise in the form of redemption during the Final Judgment—alongside free will to completely absolve God of any culpability for the Fall:²⁶²

... they themselves ordained their fall.
The first sort by their own suggestion fell,
Self-tempted, self-depraved: man falls, deceived
By the other first: man therefore shall find grace,
The other none: in mercy and justice both,
Through Heav'n and Earth, so shall my glory excel;
But mercy first and last shall brightest shine.²⁶³

²⁶⁰ Millicent Bell, "The Fallacy of the Fall in *Paradise Lost*," *PMLA* 68, no. 4 (1953): 863–65. <https://doi.org/10.2307/459803>.

²⁶¹ Griffel, 144–45.

²⁶² Mahe Nau Munir Awan, "When Muslims Read Milton: An Investigation of the Problems Encountered by Teachers and Students in a Sample of British and Pakistani Universities" (PhD diss., University of Surrey, 2012), 73–74.

²⁶³ *PL* 3.128–34.

This passage, from book three, offers one of the first glimpses in *Paradise Lost* of the redemptive hope embodied in *Felix culpa*. Although Islamic eschatology incorporates a Last Hour very similar to the Christian Last Judgment,²⁶⁴ to my knowledge there is no formal concept in Islam that is comparable to *Felix culpa*. Ibn Arabi has proposed that when God created the world, the good and the corrupt became mixed together, such that it was not clear what is good and what is corrupt. According to him, “the goal [of the world] is deliverance (*takhlîs*) from this mixture . . . so that [good and corrupt] may be isolated in its own world.” These two worlds become Heaven and Hell.²⁶⁵ However the problem still remains of how to absolve God of any blame for the Fall: if God has predetermined and wills all human actions, how can humans be held accountable for their actions and accordingly be punished or rewarded at the time of the Last Hour?

Al-Ghazali has elaborated on how to reconcile the problem of predestination with humans maintaining responsibility for their actions. Al-Ghazali’s argument is founded in his belief that humans must have some agency; without agency, there would be no purpose for adhering to religious law or practice. Following from Avicenna’s causal logic, al-Ghazali maintains that, as the source of the first cause, God is the source, or, more appropriately, the creator, of all human actions. According to al-Ghazali, God’s omniscience includes knowledge of all possible futures. Of these possible futures, God knows which future is “necessary,”²⁶⁶ and thus predetermines that the necessary future is the future which will occur. Similarly, God knows all

²⁶⁴ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 76–77.

²⁶⁵ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *The Meccan Revelations*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. William C. Chittick and James W. Morris (New York: Pir Press, 2002), 37–38.

²⁶⁶ Griffel, 217.

possible actions a human might perform within the timelines of possible futures, and God also knows which action will be most appealing to a human, which is the action that the human will ultimately choose. Through revelations, God provides humans with the knowledge to inform their decision of which action to perform. This knowledge conflicts with or conforms to the human's desire to perform a particular action. Humans can use reason to mediate between their knowledge and desires when choosing how to act. This choice—which a person has no option but to make—operating within a predetermined timeline, is how humans are held responsible for their actions. In an alternate timeline, which is not necessary in God's foreknowledge, a human may have chosen differently. But because a different choice made in a different timeline does not contribute to the necessary timeline, it can never occur. Thus, humans become responsible for their actions because they “acquire” the actions that God has predetermined for them.²⁶⁷

While on the surface Milton's and Muslims' approaches to the problem of evil seem opposite, they actually share one critical similarity: both aspire to absolve God of any culpability in the existence of evil and suffering by defining a God who does what is right and reasonable. Gary Hamilton has analyzed Milton's depiction of God in *Paradise Lost* in the context of the Arminian-Calvinist debates that were occurring during that time.²⁶⁸ He cites earlier scholars who identified the theology in book three of *Paradise Lost* as Arminian²⁶⁹ and goes on to explain that the major point of divisiveness between Arminian and Calvinist theologies was the question of free will

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 217–19.

²⁶⁸ Gary D. Hamilton, “Milton's Defensive God: A Reappraisal,” *Studies in Philology* 69, no. 1 (1972), 87–100, passim.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 87.

or predestination.²⁷⁰ Calvinists held that God had predetermined everything—that a person was either saved or damned and there was nothing they could do in this life to change that fate. When the Arminians objected that God was, according to that understanding, the cause of evil, the Calvinists (like Birgivi) responded by saying that God’s doing cannot be questioned. However, the Arminians felt that a God who makes arbitrary decisions cannot be all good, and so preferred the free will argument. Benjamin Whichcote summarized the Arminian opposition to Calvinism, writing that, “God does not, because of his Omnipotency, deal Arbitrarily with us; but according to Right, and Reason.”²⁷¹ Similarly, al-Ghazali’s explanation of how God selects the “necessary” timeline assumes that God chooses rightly based on His reason and analysis of alternate futures.

By accepting al-Ghazali’s philosophy as presented in this chapter, Milton’s statement that “they themselves ordained their fall” and the eschatological belief that humans will have a chance for redemption in the Last Hour remains true for both Christians who accept the free will and *Felix culpa* aspect of Milton’s theology as well as for Anatolian Sunni Muslims. Additionally, though Sunnism maintains God’s omnipotence through predestination while Milton seeks to absolve God of responsibility for man’s fall and the existence of evil by claiming that God gave man free will, both Milton and Ottoman Muslims attempt to define a God that is all good. This is made explicit in the *Vasiyyetname* when Birgivi writes:

If you asked, “Why He did not will all people to be believer, but willed some [to] be unbeliever,” the answer is that He cannot be questioned for what He willed . . . There is reason and wisdom in what He wills.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 89–90.

²⁷¹ Benjamin Whichcote, *Moral and Religious Aphorisms* (London, 1930), 48, quoted in *ibid.*, 91.

Mankind cannot understand it. There is always reason and wisdom in His creation of [everything]. It is not necessary for us to know them. What is an obligation is for us to believe it.²⁷²

Thus, both early modern Christians and Muslims defined their theologies in a way that characterizes God's decisions as being made "according to Right, and Reason."²⁷³

²⁷² Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

²⁷³ Whichcote, 48, quoted in Hamilton, 91.

5. "Celestial Spirits": God, Angels, and *Jinn*

Although Sunni Muslims and Milton take different approaches to absolving God of responsibility when it comes to the problem of evil and especially the cause of Adam and Eve's fall from Paradise, they both maintain a moral and reasonable God. In fact, it might be said that maintaining these aspects of God's character, as well as His omniscience and omnipotence, is the primary goal of the predestination theology outlined in the previous chapter. Ziauddin Ahmed succinctly summarizes the logic of Sunni predestination within the school of thought called traditionism:

[P]redetermination by God and His knowledge are rather identical, that is, predetermination of things by God means that they are known to Him eternally. In other words, man will go to what is destined eternally for him in the knowledge of God by his own choice and will. To speak clearly, God creates actions in which man has no effective power to share with Him. Man rather acquires them on his own accord.²⁷⁴

Here, Ahmed delineates the perspective of the majority of Sunni Muslims that, although all human actions are predestined, humans acquire these predestined actions by their own choice. From this perspective, humans maintain responsibility for their actions, thus absolving God of any blame for humans' fates. With God's ways justified in this manner, so to speak, what of God's physical attributes? There is a long-standing debate among Christian and Muslim theologians asking how humans are meant to understand God, and a central facet of this debate is the imaging of God, or the manner in which a physical image of God is conceived. I will focus specifically on the imaging of God in this chapter due to the complications of characterizing a non-human character who is supposed to be beyond human comprehension. Indeed, Milton often used physical description to characterize God's majesty and power,

²⁷⁴ Ahmed, 108.

which has the potential to be associated with textual idolatry.²⁷⁵ This concern is reminiscent of the Iconoclastic Controversy during the Byzantine period, when many Christians were concerned with the place of figurative art in worship.²⁷⁶ At this point we might also recall the ban on figurative representations of God in Islamic art; Muslim artists as late as the Byzantine period tried to capture the essence of God's attributes "in a sophisticated system of geometric, vegetal and calligraphic systems."²⁷⁷ Reflective of this non-figurative representation, God is included as a character in many classical Islamic narratives,²⁷⁸ though typically on far less descriptive terms than other characters in these narratives or than those Milton attempts of God in *Paradise Lost*.

Defending Milton's portrayal of God in *Paradise Lost* from critics who find God's character dull or offensive, Michael Lieb has analyzed Milton's notion of God in both *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Paradise Lost* in the context of the anthropopathic tradition, which seeks primarily to determine whether God has emotions comparable to human emotions.²⁷⁹ The prevailing belief on this subject during Milton's time was that God merely adopts human emotions in the Scriptures in order to accommodate Himself to a limited human understanding. Calvin writes that God "clothes himself with our affections . . . [to] pierce our hearts."²⁸⁰

²⁷⁵ Victoria Silver, "The Problem of God," in *The Cambridge Companion to Paradise Lost*, ed. Louis Schwartz (New York: Cambridge University Press), 47–48.

²⁷⁶ Charles Barber, "From Transformation to Desire: Art and Worship after Byzantine Iconoclasm," *Art Bulletin* 75, no. 1 (1993), 7.

²⁷⁷ Rabah Saoud, *Introduction to Muslim Art* (London: FSTC, 2004), 4.

²⁷⁸ For example, see Ḥusayn Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Al-Ḥasan Ad-Diyārbakrī, *Ta'rīkh al-khamīs fi anfus nafīs*, 2 vols. (Cairo: n.p., 1283 AH/1866 CE), 1:51, quoted in Peter J. Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblīs in Sufi Psychology* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 37.

²⁷⁹ Michael Lieb, "Reading God: Milton and the Anthropopathic Tradition," *Milton Studies* 25 (1985), 213.

²⁸⁰ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. John T. McNeill and trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), quoted in *ibid.*, 220.

Whereas Calvin views this mode of understanding God as acceptable and reasonable given the limitations of human nature,²⁸¹ Milton rejects the Calvinist view of creating God in “*imago hominis*, rather than man [in] *imago Dei*.”²⁸² While Milton does discuss God’s emotional and physical attributes in the Scriptures as accommodated to human understanding, he asserts that God intended for Himself to be depicted in the scriptures as He is,²⁸³ and that “the holy scriptures contain nothing unfitting to God or unworthy of him.”²⁸⁴ Essentially, Milton reverses Calvin’s logic. Where Calvin saw a humanistic reading of God as necessary, but nevertheless demeaning to God’s true being, Milton says that because humans were made in God’s image, they can aspire to be like God.²⁸⁵ Expanding on this, Milton asserts that in the Scriptures, God shares humans’ attributes, but where humans’ emotions are imperfect, God’s are perfect.²⁸⁶

Lieb goes on to analyze God in *Paradise Lost* in light of this analysis, noting that the majority of Milton scholars do not see God in *Paradise Lost* according to what appears to be Milton’s own understanding of how humans are to understand God. Rather, scholars like Roland Frye argue that Milton’s God is “pure intellect, pure reason, unmixed with passion.”²⁸⁷ Lieb responds to this by arguing that Milton’s descriptions of God are such that they “totally remove the deity from any possibility of conceptualization.”²⁸⁸ Indeed, in book three, Milton describes God as “invisible”

²⁸¹ Lieb, 213.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 225.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 224.

²⁸⁴ *Aeopagitica* VI, 134, quoted in *ibid.*, 224–25. It’s unclear which edition Lieb consulted.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 228.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 226.

²⁸⁷ Roland M. Frye, “The Father,” in *A Milton Encyclopedia*, 9 vols., ed. William B. Hunter, Jr. (Lewisburg: Brucknell University Press, 1978–83), vol. 3, 98, quoted in *ibid.*, 230.

²⁸⁸ Lieb, 233.

and “[t]hroned inaccessible.”²⁸⁹ According to Lieb, the emotions that seem to be lacking from God Himself Milton transfers onto the Son as God’s far more accessible proxy.²⁹⁰ In this way, Milton is able to maintain God’s emotion without presenting Him in a way that constitutes textual iconography or risks anthropomorphizing God within the poem.

It is important to remember that because Islamic tradition treats Jesus merely as a prophet, a Sunni writer would not have had this alternative mode through which to present God. However, reviewing some Sufi narratives of Iblis’s expulsion from Heaven and his temptation of Adam and Eve, which will be examined more fully in the subsequent chapters, God in these narratives appears to take on a responsive role. God does not actively speak in these tellings; rather, he speaks in response to a question from some other character (often Iblis).²⁹¹ An early modern Sunni writer might do something similar—the depiction of God as responsive does not undermine His omnipotence or agency; however, it does allow God to be a character and to serve a narrative function without imposing human characteristics or emotions onto God or speculating on His unknowable nature.

With Lieb’s defense of Milton’s oft-criticized God—who Lieb asserts is not boring, as many critics have complained, but meticulously unanthropomorphic—in mind, we can now turn to the Sunni understanding of God in the classical and early modern period. Birgivi offers a fairly comprehensive explanation on the attributes of God in the *Vasiyyetname*. Above all, Birgivi emphasizes that while humans understand

²⁸⁹ *PL* 3.375; 377, quoted in *ibid*.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 235. Milton is identified as an Arian in prominent Milton scholarship.

²⁹¹ See examples in Peter J. Awn, *Satan’s Tragedy and Redemption: Iblis in Sufi Psychology* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 37–40.

God's workings in a way that is familiar to human perceptions, God is not like humans. For example, Birgivi writes that "[God] does not have a form, shape or color," "He is all-hearing" and "all-seeing . . . However, He does not hear and see through ears and eyes like us. He does not have eyes and ears," and finally that "He is not like us."²⁹² This repeated assertion that God is not like us, but humans can only understand Him using terminology familiar to us, is reminiscent of Calvin's teachings on *anthropatheia*. This is also clear when we consider the Ash'arite assertion that God's attributes as described in the Quran are "actual" but should be understood "without specifying how," an idea Khalid Blankinship describes as "amodal" understanding.²⁹³

However, there is also some crossover between Milton's and Muslims' understanding of God, particularly regarding Milton's emphasis on the idea that humans were made in God's image. For example, Ibn Arabi sees everything in the universe as a representation of God:

Whatever the situation of anything in the cosmos, it is the form of the Real because of what He has given to it, for it is not correct for anything in the cosmos to have a *wujūd* [anything belonging only to God²⁹⁴] that is not the form of the Real.²⁹⁵

Although Ibn Arabi does not explicitly state here that humans can aspire to be God-like, as Milton does, there are echoes of Milton's thought in Ibn Arabi's assertion that humans (in fact, all things) are representations of the divine. Furthermore, Henry Corbin, a scholar of Islamic studies and Ibn Arabi, cites a *hadith* in which God explains

²⁹² Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

²⁹³ Blankinship, 53.

²⁹⁴ William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabī's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 12.

²⁹⁵ Ibn al-'Arabi, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya* (Cairo: al-Hay'at al-Miṣriyyat al-Āmma li'l Kitāb, 1972-), 409.31, quoted in Chittick, 27.

that He “created creatures in order to be known by them.”²⁹⁶ For Ibn Arabi, God has so many names (there are ninety-nine known names) so that humans may know Him. These names are accommodated to the limits of human understanding—using terms and experiences familiar to humans. Corbin explains, “We know [God’s names, and thus God’s nature] only by our knowledge of ourselves (that is the basic maxim). God describes himself to us through ourselves.”²⁹⁷ Thus, with an understanding of Milton’s unconventional and Calvin’s prevailing views on the anthropopathic tradition, we can view early modern Ottoman Sunnism as a hybrid of both of these. Therefore, we have another point of similarity between early modern Muslim and Christian beliefs. Indeed, Corbin explains how the Arabic word for God, *Al-Lah*, can be etymologically traced to mean “sadness” and “to feel compassion.”²⁹⁸ We shall see in the next section how God’s compassion is mediated in both Christian and Muslim thought.

Angels and *Jinn*

A central component of early modern Muslim and Christian beliefs are angels. Milton’s angels play an active role in *Paradise Lost*; as I discuss in chapter seven, Raphael’s and Michael’s conversations with Adam and Eve are instrumental in Milton’s making the Fall credible. However, it will also become clear in chapter seven that in Muslim accounts of the Fall, Adam and Eve did not receive any warnings comparable to these. Thus, it is necessary to consider the nature and role of angels in Islam, as well as to ask why, given angels’ central role in Islamic cosmology, angels

²⁹⁶ Hadith quoted in Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Šūfism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 114.

²⁹⁷ Corbin, 114–115.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 112–13.

are not included in prominent Muslim dramatizations of the Fall. To begin, I consider Milton's angelology. Then, I discuss the role of angels in Islamic cosmology and consider the intercessional role angels might have in an alternate *Paradise Lost*.

As Joad Raymond has observed, "Milton's angels are . . . strikingly human," and often "troubling[ly]" so.²⁹⁹ Indeed, Milton's presentation of the angels eating and engaging in sexual relations is contrary to predominant early modern Christian angelology theories.³⁰⁰ Against the popular opinion of his contemporaries, Milton asserts in *Paradise Lost* that the angels do not simply seem to appear human to Adam and Eve, but that the angels were able to transform at will from corporeal to incorporeal substance.³⁰¹ Robert West has argued that in *Paradise Lost* Milton effectively uses the language of angelology without presenting a concrete position on the nature of angels.³⁰² Milton's ambiguous treatment of angels in *Paradise Lost*, contrasted with his somewhat unorthodox definition of angels in *De Doctrina Christiana*, may have been Milton's effort to avoid alienating readers who subscribed to other, less controversial definitions of angels.³⁰³ While Milton was not afraid of controversy on other matters, West asserts that Milton "simply does not care exactly how angels control the fancy, or what the orders are, or what precisely the substance — [only that] it is conceded to be inferior to God's, [and] superior to ours, hence immortal, invisible, and swift."³⁰⁴

²⁹⁹ Joad Raymond, *Milton's Angels: The Early-Modern Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 207.

³⁰⁰ Robert H. West, *Milton and the Angels* (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 1955), 124.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 138–39.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 136.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 131.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 142.

Indeed, these characteristics were a point of unity among the numerous varying Christian doctrines of angelology, which, in the mid-seventeenth century, preceding and shortly following³⁰⁵ Milton's publication of *Paradise Lost*, were rampant. The prolific writings on this topic are indicative of a widespread and concrete belief in angels.³⁰⁶ Similarly, the six articles of the faith laid out in Muslim's account of the Gabriel *hadith* requires belief in God's angels.³⁰⁷ However, the Quran refers to beings who are often interpreted as angels by many names and in many contexts. Unambiguous references to angels use the term *mala'ika*, though many other terms are interpreted as referring to angels as well.³⁰⁸ In the Quran, angels are described as fulfilling the roles of messengers³⁰⁹ or carrying the throne of God and praising Him.³¹⁰ Birgivi offers insight into the sixteenth-century Sunni understanding of angels. He writes in *Vasiyyetname* that angels have no gender; exist in a hierarchy, meaning some angels have a higher status than others; are assigned specific roles through which "They act on [God's] behalf"; and do not eat and drink.³¹¹ This final point can be related most directly to the preceding discussion of Milton's angels in that it agrees with the predominant early modern Christian angelologies that angels do not eat. Furthermore, the fact that angels do not eat or drink and are genderless, as Birgivi describes, suggests an incorporeality to them or, at the very least, a

³⁰⁵ By the end of the seventeenth century, belief in and literary or theological treatises on angels were drastically decreasing due to an increase in scientific discovery. See *ibid.*, 21.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁰⁷ Muslim.

³⁰⁸ Alford T. Welch, "Allah and Other Supernatural Beings: The Emergence of the Qur'anic Doctrine of Tawhid," in *Studies in Qur'an and Tafsir*, ed. Alford T. Welch (Chico: American Academy of Religion, 1979), 745.

³⁰⁹ Quran, 35.2.

³¹⁰ Quran 39.75.

³¹¹ Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

corporality that is remarkably different from that of humans. Indeed, Alford Welch has observed that in Meccan accounts in the Quran, angels appear as messengers in human form, while later, in the post-Badr accounts, angels are invisible.³¹² In keeping with Milton's use of accommodating language and interpretations of descriptions of God in the Quran as similarly using accommodating language, a Sunni Muslim author of *Paradise Lost* might opt to have angels appear in human form, if only for narrative convenience.

While the above points depart from Milton's own presentation of angels in *Paradise Lost*, sixteenth-century Sunni angelology as explained by Birgivi is in keeping with other forms of early modern Christian angelology. Milton's angelology, though unconventional in many ways, did incorporate more orthodox theories on the nature of angels.³¹³ For example, Milton used common terminology in order to present a semblance of a hierarchy of angels,³¹⁴ which is similarly suggested by Birgivi.³¹⁵ Additionally, Milton's angels visit Adam and Eve because God sent them. Marc Cyr, expanding on the works of other Milton scholars, points out that Milton characterizes Raphael (and presumably the other angels) "as being directly inspired and directed by God Himself (V 224-245)," which endows him with a narrative authority that exceeds Milton's own voice as narrator of the epic.³¹⁶ The role of Milton's angels, then, representing God and carrying out His will in this way, is easily connected to Birgivi's point that angels "act on [God's] behalf."³¹⁷ Birgivi gives

³¹² Welch, 748.

³¹³ West, 124.

³¹⁴ Ibid. 134.

³¹⁵ Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

³¹⁶ Marc D. Cyr, "The Archangel Raphael: Narrative Authority in Milton's War in Heaven," *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 3 (1987), 309–10.

³¹⁷ Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

examples of some of the roles that angels fulfill. For example, some angels, he writes, are eternally in the various poses of Muslim prayer: standing, bowing, or prostrating.³¹⁸ Interestingly, Birgivi explains the duties of three specific angels: Gabriel, Azrael, and Raphael. Birgivi's description of Raphael causes a problem with translating Milton's poem directly into the Ottoman Sunni context. According to Birgivi, Raphael "is charged with the duty of blowing the trumpet."³¹⁹ As described by al-Ghazali, the blowing of the trumpet signifies the start of the Last Days.³²⁰ Birgivi's description of Raphael as having the trumpet in his mouth while he awaits God's command to blow it seems to imply that Raphael is permanently in this waiting position. Thus, in an alternate *Paradise Lost*, Raphael could not visit Adam and Eve. If a Muslim author decided to utilize conversations with angels, as Milton did, they might turn to pre-existing angels whose roles might make them suitable to meet with Adam and Eve, or alternately they might create an angelic character to fit this role, as Milton created Abdiel to guard the gates of Eden.³²¹

To do either of these things would not put an author beyond the pale of Islam. In defense of Milton having Raphael share a meal with Adam and Eve, Jack Goldman draws a number of convincing parallels between the scene in book five of *Paradise Lost* with a specific Midrash in the Talmud narrating Adam and Eve sharing a meal with angels (it is important here to remember that Milton's use of Rabbinic texts in

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Al-Ghazālī, *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife, Book XL of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, trans. T. J. Winter (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1989), 173–77.

³²¹ West, 124.

Paradise Lost has been well-studied³²²), as well as Abraham and Sarah's hospitality toward three angels in Genesis.³²³ A Muslim author might similarly model an angelic visit to Adam and Eve based on narratives of Gabriel visiting the Prophet Muhammad to share the revelations with him, as angels often deliver messages to prophets in the Islamic mythos. This is particularly viable given that Adam is viewed as the first prophet in Islam. However, in the existing accounts of the Fall that I discuss in chapters six and seven, there is no mention of any conversations between Adam and Eve and angels.

Even if angels do not warn Adam and Eve of Satan's coming, it is highly likely that angels would play a substantial (if passing) role in an alternate *Paradise Lost*. As we shall see in the next two chapters, angels are included in Muslim accounts of Satan/Iblis's expulsion from Heaven. In the Quran, angels assume many roles; importantly, at one point they implore God to grant humans forgiveness:

Those who bear the Throne [angels], and those round about it
proclaim the praise of their Lord, and believe in Him,
and they ask forgiveness for those who believe:
'Our Lord, Thou embracest every thing in mercy
and knowledge; therefore forgive those who have
repented, and follow Thy way, and guard them against
the chastisement of Hell.³²⁴

In an alternate *Paradise Lost*, angels might thus assume the role that the Son plays in book three of *Paradise Lost*, asking God to

Behold me then: me for him, life for life
I offer: on me let thine anger fall;

³²² Rachel Trubowitz, "'The People of Asia and With Them the Jews': Israel, Asia, and England in Milton's Writings," in *Milton and the Jews*, ed. Douglas A. Brooks (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008),

151.

³²³ Jack Goldman, "Perspectives of Raphael's Meal in *Paradise Lost*, Book V," *Milton Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (1977), 34.

³²⁴ Quran 40.7.

Account me Man; I for his sake will leave
Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee
Freely put off, and for him lastly die
Well pleased; on me let Death wreak all his rage.³²⁵

It is through the Son offering himself up in this moment that God decides to give humans the chance for redemption during the Final Judgment.³²⁶ God's language in response to the Son's offer recalls the language used by the angels in the Quran. He says,

[Adam's] crime makes guilty all his sons; thy merit,
Imputed, shall absolve them who renounce
Their own both righteous and unrighteous deeds,
. . . and from thee
Receive new life . . .³²⁷

The important comparison between these lines from Milton's God and the angels' request in the Quran is that both emphasize repentance as a requirement for God's mercy. Thus, angels in an alternate *Paradise Lost* might assume the critical role the Son plays in Milton's *Paradise Lost* in ensuring *Felix culpa*.

There is an interesting tension here in that angels were made specifically to worship God; yet in the Quran, they assume the role of intercessor on humankind's behalf. However, if we assume that in an alternate *Paradise Lost* angels would take on a similar role as the Son in Milton's *Paradise Lost*—asking God to forgive humans for their sins—we have to turn to the narrative subject of Milton's poem: Adam and Eve's sin. In particular, on the subject of angels, we must consider Satan. Milton, in keeping with Christian tradition, defines Satan as a fallen angel. However, the case is more complicated than this in Islam. As I discuss in the next chapter, the Quran is not

³²⁵ *PL* 3.236–41.

³²⁶ *PL* 3.294–302.

³²⁷ *PL* 3.290–94.

explicit whether Iblis is an angel or a *jinn*; however, most Quran interpreters (including Birgivi) define Iblis as a *jinn*. Peter Awn, in his study of classical Sufi narratives on Iblis, explains that angels are incapable of sin, which is why many theologians think it is impossible for Iblis to be an angel.³²⁸ Indeed, Birgivi explains that angels “do not rebel against God Almighty,” and additionally distinguishes Iblis as one of the *jinn*.³²⁹ Continuing to use Birgivi as the authoritative foundation for sixteenth-century Ottoman beliefs, we must treat Iblis in this project as a *jinn*, rather than as a fallen angel.

As with angels, the exact nature of the *jinn* is contested. Some interpreters believe that *jinn* are a subspecies of angels, while others view them as a wholly separate celestial being. Still others say that Iblis was an angel, and upon sinning he created the race of *jinn*. As West asserts Milton did, we can avoid this complicated discourse on the exact nature of *jinn*. Instead, we can focus on the generally agreed upon fact that *jinn* are made of fire.³³⁰ Indeed, in Sura 7, Iblis states that he is made of fire³³¹—causing many interpreters of the Quran to claim that Iblis was not an angel, but a *jinn*. In fact, Sura 18 identifies Iblis as a *jinn*:

And when We said to the angels, ‘Bow yourselves to Adam’; so they bowed themselves, save Iblis; he was one of the *jinn*, and committed ungodliness against his Lord’s command.³³²

³²⁸ Awn, 27.

³²⁹ Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

³³⁰ Welch, 741–45.

³³¹ Quran 7:11–12.

³³² Quran 18:49.

Birgivi's account reflects this passage from the Quran. He writes: "All [of the angels] prostrated before him [Adam], except for the Devil."³³³ While many classical scholars define Iblis as an angel,³³⁴ in the Ottoman Sunni case (reflected by Birgivi's *Vasiyyetname*), this is not possible since Birgivi explicitly states that angels "do not rebel against God Almighty."³³⁵

While Milton's treatment of Satan differs from the Ottoman Sunni treatment of Iblis as a *jinn*, Milton's Satan, as a fallen angel, probably adhered prior to his fall to the same nature of the unfallen angels. Henry More, one of Milton's contemporaries, explains that the most popular conceptions of angels in the early modern period "affirm[ed] them to be *fiery* or *airy* Bodies; some pure spirits; some Spirits in airy or fiery bodies."³³⁶ More's description is in keeping with West's analysis of the transitive corporeality of Milton's angels.³³⁷ Thus, with this understanding of the *jinn*, we can now contemplate what role Iblis would have in a version of *Paradise Lost* based in Sunni theology.

³³³ Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu. "Of the angels" bracketed in original.

³³⁴ Welch, 756 n. 28.

³³⁵ Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

³³⁶ Henry More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (London, 1660), I, iii, 6, quoted in West, 137.

³³⁷ West, 137.

6. “Majestic, Though in Ruin”: Satan

Neil Forsyth, a Milton scholar specializing in Satan, has remarked that “Satan’s appearances in the Bible are decidedly few and inconsistent . . . One could not reconstruct Milton’s magnificent creation from such sparse hints.”³³⁸ He goes on to write that Milton was in part able to construct such a detailed character thanks to the explications of Satan written by earlier poets and theologians. Similarly, interpretations of the Iblis narrative as written in the Sufi tradition expand on the Quranic account,³³⁹ just as Milton expanded on the Biblical account of the fall of Satan and, subsequently, of Adam and Eve. Milton’s Satan is the foundation for many comparative studies on Milton and Islam. Much of this scholarship, discussed in chapter one of this thesis, explores how Milton others of Satan’s character in *Paradise Lost* by using language and imagery that is suggestive of the Near East. However, when we compare Milton’s Satan to Iblis in the Quran and predominant Sufi narratives, we again find that Milton’s views as expressed in *Paradise Lost* had many parallels with early modern Sunni beliefs. Based on these similarities, we can see how Milton’s employment of anti-Islamic rhetoric in *Paradise Lost* was a product of perceived differences (based on popular stereotypes in early modern England) between Christianity and Islam, rather than actual differences.

In *Milton in the Arab-Muslim World*, Islam Issa provides an in-depth analysis of how Mohamed Enani’s translation of Satan’s character into Arabic adapts or expands on Milton’s original. In doing so, Issa draws compelling parallels between Milton’s

³³⁸ Neil Forsyth, “Satan,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Paradise Lost*, ed. Louis Schwartz (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 17.

³³⁹ References to Iblis in the Quran are rare and often only in connection to the Fall narrative, with more frequent references to Ash-Shaytan (who is often interpreted as Iblis) and his role in attempting to upset humans’ faith. See Awn, 19.

Satan (and other imagery in *Paradise Lost*) and the Quran.³⁴⁰ In the Quranic account, God orders the angels to bow before Adam. Iblis refuses, and thus is cast out of Heaven. Commentators on the Quran have been unsure of how to interpret God's command here; some interpret the command to bow to Adam as a command to worship Adam, while others say that the command was to bow to Adam in greeting. Issa criticizes Forsyth for citing the former of these interpretations. Issa says that interpreting God's command for the angels to bow before Adam in an act of worship is antithetical to the monotheistic foundation for Islam.³⁴¹ He quotes Mansur Abdel-Hakim, who writes that the angels were expected to fulfill God's command as a demonstration of their obedience to God, as well as "to honour and greet Adam."³⁴² Birgivi does not give enough information on Iblis's fall to specify whether in the early modern Ottoman Sunni understanding God's command was for the angels to greet Adam or to worship him.³⁴³ In line with the interpretation of God's command as a prerogative to worship Adam, there is a long tradition among Sufi philosophers which represents Iblis as a "tragic martyr."³⁴⁴

Not all Sufi writers characterize Iblis as a martyr, and those that do characterize Iblis in this way do not treat the narrative in the same way.³⁴⁵ Some narratives present a radically heroic Iblis, while others offer a moderate perspective

³⁴⁰ Issa, *Milton in the Arab-Muslim World*, 95–118, passim.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

³⁴² Mansur Abdel-Hakim, *Al-Shayṭān: Iblīs Wa-Ṣirā'uh Ma' Al-Insān [The Devil: Iblīs and His Conflict with the Human]* (Damascus: Dār Al-Kitāb Al-'Arabi, 2008), 71, quoted in *ibid.*

³⁴³ In Ibn Arabi's thought, there seems to be little distinction between bowing in sanctification of Adam and worshipping God himself, as Adam was intended to be a reflection of "the totality of the Divine." See Gisela Webb, "Hierarchy, Angels, and the Human Condition in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī," *The Muslim World* 81, nos. 3–4 (1991), 249–50.

³⁴⁴ Awn, 13.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 12–16.

on Iblis's sympathetic disobedience and suggest that there is hope for Iblis's redemption, and still others focus only on Iblis's disobedience. Indeed, Awn notes that there is never a unified consensus on Iblis's nature during any given time, though there is often a dominant interpretation.³⁴⁶ In what follows, I first present a radical Iblis narrative. I then contrast this vision of Iblis against a more moderate portrayal of Iblis, which is in keeping with Milton's Satan.

One radical interpretation of Iblis comes from Ahmad al-Ghazali,³⁴⁷ who presents Iblis as "the tragic martyr of love whose single-minded dedication will eventually result in his rehabilitation."³⁴⁸ Ahmad's Iblis narrative is different from that of most Sufi mystics in that he sees hope for Iblis, whereas other writers, such as Rumi (d. 1273), do not offer Iblis the chance for redemption.³⁴⁹ Rumi's narrative is more appropriate to what we might expect from an alternate *Paradise Lost* written in sixteenth-century Anatolia. As we see in *Paradise Lost*, Satan, in spite of his powerful rhetoric, acts as an antagonist in the narrative. It is more likely that an alternate *Paradise Lost* would follow a more traditional model of Satan—one who fell out of pride—simply to be in keeping with the didactic nature of Ottoman literature of the time. For example, Birgivi writes in the *Vasiyyetname* that "It is necessary for every believer to regard him [the Devil] as an enemy."³⁵⁰ Satan's rhetoric in *Paradise Lost* is such that his role as malicious antagonist is not explicitly clear to readers.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 9.

³⁴⁷ Thus far, we have discussed the philosophical writings of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali who, as previously stated, is frequently cited in the sixteenth-century *ilm-i hals* and remains to this day among the most influential thinkers in the Islamic tradition. Less known, but still important, is his younger brother, Ahmad al-Ghazali (d. 1126), who I refer to as Ahmad for clarity. Unless otherwise indicated, my use of "al-Ghazali" in all other sections will be in reference to Abu Hamid al-Ghazali.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 13.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 15.

³⁵⁰ Imam Birgivi, *Vasiyyetname* (1562), trans. Eda Cuclu.

Similar to how Milton was criticized for his dangerous presentation of Satan as a sympathetic character, such a presentation might be problematic for an audience of recent converts, who are primarily learning about their new religion through *ilm-i hals*, dramas like the *Sa'atname*, and orally-performed hagiographies, which often mythologized scriptural narrative as well as historical and contemporary events.³⁵¹ Iblis in an alternate *Paradise Lost* would still be a persuasive speaker since, as I discuss in chapter seven, Iblis's speech is a critical component of Adam and Eve's fall. However, he would likely not be presented in a way that could confuse the reader of his status as an antagonist, as Milton's and Ahmad's versions of Satan and Iblis, respectively, might.

While it is interesting to consider a version of *Paradise Lost* that depicts a radical Iblis after Ahmad's, given the climate of conversion in sixteenth-century Anatolia it is more likely that a Sunni author would have presented a more moderate and less heroic Iblis. Since texts in sixteenth-century Anatolia were typically didactic in nature, it is important that there is no chance for the audience to be confused about Iblis's role as an antagonist in the narrative. This is in stark contrast to Milton's Satan, who is often interpreted, especially in political readings, as the hero of *Paradise Lost*.³⁵² Despite the complications readers face with Milton's Satan, it is clear that Milton's Satan and the Quranic Iblis are fundamentally similar. Here, I use a sixteenth-century text written in Arabic by Husayn Ibn Muhammad Ibn Al-Hasan Ad-Diyarbakri to explore the similarities between Milton's Satan and Iblis in the Sufi tradition.

³⁵¹ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 35–38.

³⁵² Arthur Barker has asserted that early interpretations of Satan as the hero of *Paradise Lost* may have been the result of the structure and division of narrative in the poem's original form of ten books instead of twelve. See Arthur Barker, "Structural Pattern in *Paradise Lost*," *Philological Quarterly* 28 (1949): 23, cited in John K. Hale, "*Paradise Lost*: A Poem in Twelve Books, Or Ten?" *Philological Quarterly* 74, no. 2 (1995): 132.

That Satan was disobedient to God is not up for dispute. However, the source of Satan's disobedience is. Milton's Satan speaks to the cause of his downfall as he enters the Garden of Eden, lamenting:

O Sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams
That bring to my remembrance from what state
I fell, how glorious above thy sphere;
Till pride and worse ambition threw me down
Warring in Heav'n against Heav'n's matchless King.³⁵³

In these lines, Satan cites his pride and ambition as the source of his disobedience—it is likely that his pride that prevents him from repenting and leads him to deny that he is God's creation.³⁵⁴ Satan's ambition here is important, but in the context of this discussion, his pride is more important. By frequently characterizing Satan as proud, Milton is reverting to a long tradition in Christian thinking, demonstrated by Augustine's characterization of the Devil as proud: "the bad angel loved himself more than God, refused to be subject to God, swelled with pride, came short of supreme being, and fell."³⁵⁵

The Quran similarly emphasizes pride as a source of Iblis's disobedience. Whereas in *Paradise Lost* Satan falls because he is jealous of and refuses to venerate the Son,³⁵⁶ in the Quran, Iblis falls because he disobeys God's command to prostrate himself before Adam. Sura 7 narrates the conversation between God and Iblis after Iblis refused to bow to Adam:

Said He [God], 'What prevented thee to
bow thyself, when I commanded thee?'
Said he [Iblis], 'I am better than he; Thou

³⁵³ PL 4.37–41.

³⁵⁴ PL 5.757–62.

³⁵⁵ Augustine, quoted in Roland Mushat Frye, *God, Man, and Satan: Patterns of Christian Thought and Life in Paradise Lost, Pilgrim's Progress, and the Great Theologians* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1972), 23.

³⁵⁶ PL 5.560–72.

createdst me of fire, and him Thou
createdst of clay.'
Said He, 'Get thee down out of it;
it is not for thee to wax proud here . . .'³⁵⁷

Here, Iblis refuses to bow to Adam because he perceives himself to be superior to Adam. Ad-Diyarbakri expands upon this account, emphasizing Iblis's long history of dedicated worship to God. The passage that tells of Iblis's disobedience begins with him earnestly asking, "My God, does there remain a place [in the heavens or on the earth] in which I have not bowed [to You]?"³⁵⁸ At this point, God directs Iblis to Adam and commands Iblis and the other angels to bow to Adam. Iblis refuses, saying, "Do not order me to bow before him! You have given him preference over me."³⁵⁹ Ad-Diyarbakri also observes Iblis's pride as depicted in the Qur'an—which tells that it was Iblis's perceived superiority (he being made of fire) over Adam (who was made out of clay) that caused Iblis to not bow to Adam. Ad-Diyarbakri then expands further on the narrative, explicating that after the other angels saw that Iblis had not bowed to Adam, they turned and bowed to God instead, which Iblis also did not do.³⁶⁰ In this way, Iblis's prideful disobedience came from jealousy (or perhaps remorse) that God preferred Adam to him, as well as a combination of disobedience to God's order to bow to Adam and refusal to prostrate in worship before God.

Ad-Diyarbakri's telling of Iblis's expulsion from Heaven is more in line with what Milton wrote of Satan, but in Milton's account we replace Adam with the Son. In book five, Abdiel criticizes Satan for his rebellion, discussing Satan's disobedience in a way that echoes Ad-Diyarbakri's explanation of why Iblis was disobedient:

³⁵⁷ Quran 7:11-12.

³⁵⁸ Ad-Diyārbakrī, 1:51, quoted in *ibid.*, 37.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Canst thou with impious obloquy condemn
The just decree of God, pronounced and sworn,
That to his only Son by right endued
With regal scepter, every soul in Heav'n
Shall bend the knee . . . ?

. . .
Shalt thou give law to God? shalt thou dispute
With him . . . who made
Thee what thou art . . .

. . .
That equal over equals monarch reign:
Thyself, though great and glorious dost thou count,
Or all angelic nature joined in one,
Equal to him begotten Son[?] . . .³⁶¹

Here, Abdiel challenges Satan's belief that he is not inferior to the Son, much like Iblis in the Quran claims, "I am better than he."³⁶² Milton's language in book three further echoes Ad-Diyarbakri's account of Iblis's disobedience when, after God appoints the Son "universal King,"³⁶³ the angels bow "towards either throne."³⁶⁴

In addition to being prideful, Iblis in an alternate *Paradise Lost* would also be a persuasive rhetorician. However, as is demonstrated by numerous dramatizations of Iblis's fall in the classical Sufi tradition, Iblis is a very different kind of rhetorician than Milton's Satan. In both *Paradise Lost* and Islam, the Devil only has the power to mislead humans. He is unable to coerce humans into committing any action against their will, and so in both *Paradise Lost* and Islam, the Devil must rely on speech to corrupt humans. This is explicit in Sura 14 of the Quran, when the Devil³⁶⁵ says,

'God surely promised you a true promise;
and I promised you, then I failed you,
for I had no authority over you, but
that I called you, and you answered me.

³⁶¹ *PL* 5.813–18, 823–25, 833–35.

³⁶² Quran 7:11.

³⁶³ *PL* 3.315–22.

³⁶⁴ *PL* 3.350.

³⁶⁵ In this section of the Quran, it is Ash-Shaytan speaking, who is frequently interpreted as Iblis.

So do not blame me, but blame yourselves.³⁶⁶

Here, the Devil acknowledges that he has no power over humans, other than to “call” to them. Regarding Satan’s authority in *Paradise Lost*, Diana Treviño Benet has argued convincingly that Milton uses the dream episode in book five, where Satan appears as a toad at Eve’s ear, “to establish Eve’s innocence definitively in order to establish Satan’s limitations.”³⁶⁷ She explains that Satan, as a toad, merely “hopes”³⁶⁸ to “inspire venom into [Eve’s] mind,”³⁶⁹ but is “uncertain” about his ability to do so.³⁷⁰ In this way, Benet asserts that Milton is able to maintain both Eve’s innocence and God’s omnipotence by preventing Satan from fulfilling his desired motives.³⁷¹ This whole scene is reminiscent of an Arabic story cited by al-Akhras and Green, where Satan appears as a toad “resting on [a man’s] left side between his shoulder and ear.”³⁷² From this position, Satan is able to insert “a long thin trunk . . . [through the man’s] left side into his heart [and] whisper . . . into it.”³⁷³ However, it is evident in *Paradise Lost* and classical Sufi warnings against Iblis’s temptations that regardless of what manner the Devil is speaking to a person, Iblis and Milton’s Satan utilize speech to their advantage in different ways.

In book one of *Paradise Lost*, Beelzebub attests to the power of Satan’s speech, saying,

If once [the fallen angels] hear that [Satan’s] voice . . .

³⁶⁶ Quran 14:25.

³⁶⁷ Diana Treviño Benet, “Milton’s Toad, or Satan’s Dream,” *Milton Studies* 45 (2006): 39.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁶⁹ Dan Collins, “The Buoyant Mind in Milton’s Eden,” *Milton Studies* 5 (1973), 236, quoted in *ibid.*

³⁷⁰ Benet, 47.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁷² [Hadith], trans. Sharihan al-Akhras and Mandy Green, quoted in Al-Akhras, 38, http://library.islamweb.net/hadith/display_hbook.php?bk_no=4024&pid=666121.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

...
... they will soon resume
New courage and revive, though now they lie
Groveling and prostrate on yon lake of fire.³⁷⁴

Indeed, Satan's ability to identify and appeal to his audience's individual sensibilities is formidable. In book nine, Adam warns Eve against Satan's trickery, explaining that "The enemy, though bold, will hardly dare; / . . . first on me th' assault shall light. / . . . / Subtle he needs must be, who could seduce / Angels . . ." ³⁷⁵ Satan's rhetorical approach in *Paradise Lost* seems to rely on persuasion and manipulation. For example, in seeking to gain entrance into Paradise, Satan comes to Uriel in the form of a cherubim,³⁷⁶ asking in which "shining orb" man resides.³⁷⁷ Satan tells Uriel that he wishes to behold God's newest, favorite creation so that he may rejoice in worshipping God.³⁷⁸ Satan further cements his deception by saying that God's decision to cast him (Satan) out was just.³⁷⁹

Uriel's response to Satan summarizes the good intentions behind Iblis's request in Ad-Diyarbakri's account to worship God, which only became problematic when God ordered him to bow to Adam, as well as the false good intentions behind Satan's:

"Fair angel, thy desire, which tends to know
The works of God, thereby to glorify
The great Work-Master, leads to no excess
That reaches blame, but rather merits praise
The more it seems excess, that led thee hither
From thy empyreal mansion thus alone,
To witness with thine eyes what some perhaps,
Contented with report, hear only in Heav'n:

³⁷⁴ PL 1.274, 278–80.

³⁷⁵ PL 9.304–8.

³⁷⁶ PL 3.666.

³⁷⁷ PL 3.668–70.

³⁷⁸ PL 3.671–76.

³⁷⁹ PL 3.677–80.

For wonderful indeed are all his works . . .”³⁸⁰

Satan’s request to Uriel here recalls Iblis’s request to God in Ad-Diyarbakri’s, when he asks if there’s any place in the universe where he has not yet witnessed God’s great works and bowed to Him.³⁸¹ It is clear from this passage that Satan, in the guise of a cherubim, appeals both to Uriel’s own faithfulness, as well as Uriel’s assumption that all angels are equally faithful. Satan further impresses Uriel by exceeding the piety of other angels, who are “contented with report,” while Satan wishes to see for himself the “wonderful” works of God.³⁸²

³⁸⁰ *PL* 3.694–702.

³⁸¹ Ad-Diyārbakrī, 1:51, quoted in Awn, 37.

³⁸² *PL* 3.701–2.

7. “Who Might Have Lived, and Joyed Immortal Bliss”: Adam and Eve

As I just described, in *Paradise Lost*, Satan is able to gain entrance to Paradise by tricking Uriel. However, the Islamic narrative is quite different. In Abu Ishaq Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim An-Nisaburi Ath-Tha‘labi’s undated work of didactic literature which tells the story of Iblis’s temptation of man, which Awn says reflects the general character of similar narratives from the classical Sufi tradition, Iblis knows that he will be unable to get past Ridwan, the angel who guards the entrance to Paradise.³⁸³ Instead, Iblis must persuade two animals to help him sneak into Paradise. First, Iblis approaches a peacock named Tawus and appeals to his vanity, saying,

I have never beheld one of God’s creatures more beautiful than you! . . .
And I have shed tears in this state of grief because your beauty will pass
away as well as the perfection of your nature . . . Truly you will pass
away and die. All creatures will die except those who eat from the tree
of immortality.³⁸⁴

Iblis next says something similar to the serpent, who rushes to sneak him into Paradise by carrying him in the form of wind between her teeth.³⁸⁵ Iblis’s appeal to Tawus’s and the serpent’s vanity and ambition (in this case for immortality) is similar to Milton’s Satan, who appeals to Eve’s vanity and ambition to be equal, if not superior, to Adam in knowledge.³⁸⁶ However, in Ath-Tha‘labi’s account, Iblis leads Adam and Eve to sin through a different rhetorical approach:

After a time Iblīs came back to them for his words had made an impression on them both. He said, ‘O Adam, shall I point you to the tree of immortality and of power that does not dwindle away?’ He (Adam) said, ‘Yes!’ He (Iblīs) said, ‘Eat from this tree, the tree of wheat.’ He (Adam) replied, ‘But my Lord forbade it to me.’ Iblīs retorted, ‘Your

³⁸³ Abū Ishāq Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ibrāhīm An-Nīsābūrī Ath-Tha‘labī, *Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā’ al-musammā ‘arā’is al-majālīs* (n.p.: Dār iḥyā’ al-kutub al-‘arabīya, n.d.), 26–27, quoted in Awn, 42.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 43. Here, I am paraphrasing Ath-Tha‘labi.

³⁸⁶ *PL* 9.773–9.

Lord has forbidden you this tree only to prevent your both becoming angels or immortal ones.’

He (Adam) refused to give in to him. So he (Iblīs) swore to them both by God that he was offering sound advice. This fooled them for they could not imagine that anyone would falsely take an oath using God’s name. Eve rushed to eat of the tree. She kept telling Adam how wonderful it was until he ate of it.³⁸⁷

As with Tawus and the snake, Iblis convinces Adam and Eve to eat the fruit by appealing to their mortality. However, when faced with mortality or disobeying God, Adam’s refusal of Iblis’s first suggestion that they eat of the tree indicates that he was sufficient to stand and would choose not to fall if not for Iblis’s greater cunning. Upon hearing Iblis attest to his truthfulness by taking an oath using God’s name, Adam and Eve naively believe him and choose to disobey God’s command. Thus, it is their innocence that leads them to sin. With this understanding of Ath-Tha’labī’s narrative in mind, we must now ask how Milton’s Satan managed to tempt Adam and Eve—“sufficient” as they were “to have stood.”³⁸⁸

In contrast to Ath-Tha’labī’s emphasizing Adam and Eve’s naivety and mortality as a primary cause of their fall, in *Paradise Lost* Satan tricks Eve by appealing to her vanity and ambition. Satan’s rhetoric in his temptation of Eve in book nine is cunningly crafted. Early on in his speech, Satan, in the form of the snake, contradicts any fears Eve may have about being punished for eating of the tree and undermines her rationale for those fears, suggesting that it is ridiculous that “that . . . which to the beast / Is open” should “be shut to man.”³⁸⁹ After making the case that Eve’s fears of punishment are groundless, Satan begins his appeal to her ambition. He

³⁸⁷ Ath-Tha’labī, 26–27, quoted in Awn, 43.

³⁸⁸ *PL* 3.99.

³⁸⁹ *PL* 9.691–92.

argues that God, rather than punishing Eve, will praise her for her courage.³⁹⁰ Satan swiftly shifts from this claim to the assertion that God only forbade Adam and Eve to eat of the tree because He wanted to “keep” “His worshipers” “low and ignorant”³⁹¹ and prevent Adam and Eve from “be[ing] as gods.”³⁹² This is reminiscent of Iblis’s assertion in Ath-Tha’labi’s account that “Your Lord has forbidden you this tree only to prevent your both becoming angels or immortal ones.”³⁹³ After making several more arguments, Satan ends his speech. “[I]n [Eve’s] the sound / Yet rung of his persuasive words, impregn’d / With reason, to her seeming, and with truth.”³⁹⁴ Again, we can relate this to Ath-Tha’labi’s account, for Iblis’s words were such that he convinced Adam and Eve that he spoke truthfully.

While Ath-Tha’labi’s account differs from Milton’s in that Ath-Tha’labi keeps with the Quranic tradition which holds that Adam and Eve were together when Iblis deceived them, it is similar to Milton’s narrative in that Eve is the first to accept Iblis’s temptation, and it is only through her convincing him that Adam agrees to partake of the fruit. However, like Milton, Ath-Tha’labi was drawing on a much older scriptural tradition based in the Quran, which differs from Ath-Tha’labi’s and Milton’s seeming implication of Eve in the Fall. Most importantly, the Quran, unlike the Bible, does not place responsibility for the Fall solely on Eve:

And We said, ‘Adam, dwell thou, and thy wife,
in the Garden, and eat thereof easily
where you desire; but draw not nigh this tree
lest you be evildoers.’
Then Satan caused *them* to slip therefrom
and brought *them* out of that were in;

³⁹⁰ PL 9.692–94.

³⁹¹ PL 9.704–5.

³⁹² PL 9.708.

³⁹³ Ath-Tha’labī, 26–27, quoted in Awn, 43.

³⁹⁴ PL 9.736–38.

and We said, 'Get *you all* down, each
of you an enemy of each; and in
the earth a sojourn shall be yours, and
enjoyment for a time.'³⁹⁵

In contrast with the Quran's treatment of Adam's and Eve's equal responsibility for the Fall, Milton, following Biblical tradition, seems to position the blame for the Fall on Eve. Despite being warned of Satan's coming by Raphael, Adam agrees to Eve's request in book nine that they separate to complete their days' work.³⁹⁶ Shortly after Eve's departure, Satan approaches her and convinces her to eat the fruit.³⁹⁷ Adam later laments Eve's folly³⁹⁸ and resigns himself to committing the same sin so that he could stay with her.³⁹⁹

Despite both Ath-Tha'labi and Milton making Eve the first to fall, in both narratives whether that means Eve is actually to blame is much more complicated than it seems on the surface. Milton scholarship on Eve's exclusive role in the Fall often centers on either asserting that she was destined to fall or maintaining that she remained sinless until the moment of the Fall.⁴⁰⁰ Other scholarship has looked at Eve's role in the Fall in the context of her relationship with Adam, often blaming Adam, as the "head" in the relationship, for the joint Fall because he failed in his duty to guide and protect Eve.⁴⁰¹ Mahe Nau Munir Awan, in her study of educational approaches to teaching *Paradise Lost* to Muslim students, frames her analysis of the problems Muslim students encounter regarding Eve when reading *Paradise Lost* through the

³⁹⁵ *Quran* 2:33-34. My emphasis.

³⁹⁶ *PL* 9.376-92.

³⁹⁷ *PL* 9.412-781.

³⁹⁸ *PL* 9.896-916.

³⁹⁹ *PL* 9.952-959.

⁴⁰⁰ Benet, 38.

⁴⁰¹ Stella P. Revard, "Eve and the Doctrine of Responsibility in *Paradise Lost*," *PMLA* 88, no. 1 (1973), 69.

interpretation that Milton, like the Bible, blames Eve.⁴⁰² However, Stella Revard offers an interesting perspective opposing this interpretation, suggesting that Milton's God held both Adam and Eve equally to blame—they were each, in the Father and the Son's judgment, to be held responsible for their autonomous actions. Revard explains this by pointing to Adam and Eve's conversation with the Son after they sinned. When asked about what led them to eat the fruit, Eve admits, "The Serpent me beguiled and I did eat."⁴⁰³ Since the Son does not correct her, Revard asserts that Eve's explanation is satisfactory to him and therefore true. In contrast, Adam blames Eve for his actions, stating, "She gave me of the Tree, and I did eat."⁴⁰⁴ The Son scolds Adam for his statement and its implication that Adam had "resign[ed] his 'Manhood'" to Eve's control; Revard accordingly asserts that the Son did not hold solely Eve to blame, hence Adam should take responsibility for his own decision to eat the fruit.⁴⁰⁵ If we accept this interpretation of the Fall in *Paradise Lost*, then it becomes apparent that Milton's narrative is not so different from the Quranic account, as neither man nor woman are solely responsible for the Fall.

We can further make the case for similarities between Milton's and Ath-Tha'labi's treatment of Eve in their respective narratives by considering the question of Eve's innocence leading into the Fall. Thomas Blackburn notably discusses the way in which two approaches to Adam and Eve's innocence undermine Milton's argument. The first approach, which asserts that if Adam and Eve were truly innocent, they would be incapable of sin, is problematic according to Blackburn because it denies

⁴⁰² Awan, 92.

⁴⁰³ *PL* 10.162, quoted in Revard, 70.

⁴⁰⁴ *PL* 10.143, quoted in *ibid.*, 71.

⁴⁰⁵ Revard, 70–71.

them free will. The alternate approach is that Adam and Eve were made imperfect; however, Blackburn rejects this reasoning, arguing that this theory both implicates God (if God created Adam and Eve imperfect, then He becomes responsible for their fall) as well as undermines the Son's offer to redeem man. Blackburn writes that "The literary consequences [of these approaches] would be no less drastic: a flawed innocence would destroy the premise of the drama in the Fall, and an incorruptible innocence would preclude any credible epic plot."⁴⁰⁶ In short, Adam and Eve must have been created perfect, and through free will, they must have had the ability to sin regardless of this created status. After explaining the problems of these approaches, Blackburn convincingly offers his solution to this debate: Adam and Eve were created perfect, they were sinless until the Fall, but the fact that they were warned about Satan gave them the knowledge to be able to resist his temptation and remain sinless makes them culpable. It is through Raphael's and Michael's warnings and Adam and Eve's failure to successfully heed it that makes them responsible for their fate.⁴⁰⁷ According to Blackburn, prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve had conceptual—but not actual—knowledge of evil. It is only after eating of the tree that they actually experience (and thus acquire actual knowledge of) evil.⁴⁰⁸ Critically, Blackburn, based on an analysis of *Paradise Lost*, *Areopagitica*, and *De Doctrina Christiana*, makes a distinction between the name of the tree—the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—and the meaning of the sin of eating of the tree. Adam and Eve were not expelled from

⁴⁰⁶ Thomas H. Blackburn, "'Uncloister'd Virtue': Adam and Eve in Milton's Paradise," *Milton Studies* 3 (1971), 120.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 134–35.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 126.

the Garden of Eden because they gained knowledge of or experienced evil, but because they were disobedient to God.⁴⁰⁹

Ath-Tha'labi's account, though it focuses on Adam's nobility and dedication to God, similarly emphasizes Adam and Eve's innocent disposition. Despite Iblis persuasively convincing Adam and Eve that they would die without eating of the tree, Adam, upon realizing which tree Iblis was suggesting they eat of, steadfastly protests, saying "But my Lord forbade it to me."⁴¹⁰ Despite Adam's proclamation of fidelity, he and Eve are still deceived by Iblis, "for they could not imagine that anyone would falsely take an oath using God's name."⁴¹¹ This characterizes Adam and Eve as naïve, a trait associated with innocence. As with the Quranic narrative, it is important to note here that Ath-Tha'labi temporarily shifts from speaking of Adam or Eve independently, and now characterizes them collectively: "This fooled *them*" and "*they* could not imagine."⁴¹² Thus, while Eve is the first to fall, and Adam appears to fall only by following Eve's example, both were totally innocent and capable of choosing rightly—the fact that they acted wrongly is their fault, and theirs alone. Additionally, we can connect Ath-Tha'labi's account to Blackburn's argument in that the symbolism of the tree as giving immortality is inconsequential. Ath-Tha'labi emphasizes their disobedience to God over all else. In contrast to Christian post-Augustinian theology, which emphasizes the act of the sin in order to explain the salvific drama of Christ's crucifixion, Muslims do not need to justify this event. Hence, Ath-Tha'labi focuses on the disobedience the sin entailed to remind his audience of their fault against God.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 124–25.

⁴¹⁰ Ath-Tha'labi, 26–27, quoted in Awn, 43.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Ibid. My emphasis.

Indeed, at this point I will repeat a portion of Sura 14 of the Quran, in which Iblis reminds humans that “I had no authority over you, but / that I called you, and you answered me. / So do not blame me, but blame yourselves.”⁴¹³

Once again, this quote takes us back to Milton’s argument: “to justify the ways of God to man.”⁴¹⁴ As I discussed in chapter four, early modern Muslims and Christians alike defined their theologies in defense of God: both wanted to make it explicit that God was not responsible for the existence of evil and human suffering. As I have shown in this chapter, the Quranic account and literary interpretations of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden maintain Adam and Eve’s innocence up until the point of their sin and assign equal responsibility to each of them for their actions in the Fall. By definitively placing the blame on Adam and Eve, it can be said that Milton and Ath-Tha’labi succeed in this goal.

⁴¹³ Quran 14:25.

⁴¹⁴ *PL* 1.26

Conclusion

At the end of an essay on Milton in the context of early modern English international relations with Ottomans, Gerald MacLean provocatively asks if we can so easily dismiss Luwis 'Awad's claim that "When we read *Paradise Lost*, we feel that Milton is a devout Muslim."⁴¹⁵ As I discussed in my introduction, I agree with Dahiyat's analysis that 'Awad is misguided⁴¹⁶ to make this assertion, as Milton's writings and ideologies derive heavily from Judeo-Christian sources.⁴¹⁷ However, it is not unreasonable for a Muslim reader to identify with some of the ideas Milton presents in *Paradise Lost* and to look for similarities within their own beliefs. Islam Issa's reception study on an Arabic translation of *Paradise Lost* among twenty-first-century Muslim readers shows that Milton's poem has much to offer to non-Christian readers despite some fundamental theological differences between Christianity and other interested groups.⁴¹⁸ Thus, it might be more appropriate to ask not whether Milton was secretly a Muslim, but what early modern Muslims and Christians shared in common that makes *Paradise Lost* so universal.⁴¹⁹

Indeed, as my comparisons of selections from the narratives of Ad-Diyarbakri and Ath-Tha'labi to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, as well as my reconstruction and subsequent exploration of early modern Sunni cosmology and etiology have demonstrated, Muslim and Christian creation narratives and literary interpretations

⁴¹⁵ 'Awad, 219–22, quoted in Dahiyat, 68, cited in MacLean, "Milton, Islam and the Ottomans," 298.

⁴¹⁶ Issa asserts that 'Awad was intentionally being ironic when making this claim; however, many scholars frequently interpret this quote as a literal representation of 'Awad's analysis of *Paradise Lost*. See Issa, *Milton in the Arab-Muslim World*, 3–4.

⁴¹⁷ Dahiyat, 68–69.

⁴¹⁸ Issa, *Milton in the Arab-Muslim World*, 5.

⁴¹⁹ While it is still important to remember that Milton's reception is often controversial among many Muslims, the same can be said for his reception among many Christians. I say universal here because Milton finds positive reception among readers from many different cultures and religious backgrounds.

of them are in many ways more similar than they are different. For example, Muslims and Christians share a similar interpretation of God's decision-making rationale and accordingly developed complex theories of human free will that they felt aligned with their interpretation of God. Additionally, Muslims and Christians maintain a characterization of God that makes Him unlike humans but still allows for humanistic depictions of Him in the Scriptures and literature. I also discussed how Muslim and Christian theodicies are constructed in order to maintain God's blamelessness in the problem of evil. Fall narratives in each tradition are especially preoccupied with reminding readers that humans alone are responsible for their fate.

While this study focused on early modern Muslim and Christian cosmology and etiology and did not discuss the full scope of Muslim and Christian beliefs, the similarities I discussed in this thesis offer a different lens through which we can reflect on early modern Muslim and Christian relations. Dimmock has convincingly argued that representations of Muslims in early modern English literature served as a rhetorical tool by which Christians criticized other Christians,⁴²⁰ in line with Milton's critique of Charles I in *Eikonoklastes*.⁴²¹

While Dimmock's analysis offers interesting insight into Christian relations within England, the role of Muslims in Christian rhetoric is also indicative of antagonistic relations between Muslims and Christians. Indeed, early modern English Christians expressed anxiety toward Muslims, particularly those living in the Ottoman Empire. These fears took shape in English writing, slandering Muslims as a religious other who could easily contaminate the most upstanding Christians, sexual

⁴²⁰ Dimmock, *Mythologies*, 1.

⁴²¹ Milton, *Eikonoklastes*, 218.

deviants,⁴²² and deformed and inhuman hybrids.⁴²³ Put simply, Muslims in the English Christian imagination were a social and spiritual threat. Thus, when we consider Dimmock's claim that in early modern English depictions of Muslims, "making monstrous is always, paradoxically, about making familiar,"⁴²⁴ in light of the theological similarities between early modern Muslim and Christian beliefs I have demonstrated, Dimmock's claim takes on a new meaning. Indeed, the extremity of English Christian othering of Muslims becomes ironic when we take these similarities into account, as Christians were most likely ignorant of the beliefs they shared with Muslims when they engaged in this anti-Muslim rhetoric.

Anthony Pagden succinctly writes that "the bitterest of all human conflicts spring from what [Freud] called the 'narcissism of small differences': we hate and fear those whom we most resemble, far more than those from whom we are alien and remote."⁴²⁵ Though Pagden's broader claims in his study are divisive,⁴²⁶ his use of Freud's theory of the narcissism of small differences is revealing about the nature of early modern Muslim-Christian relations. In fact, I would argue, broadly,⁴²⁷ that Muslims' increased interactions with people of other faiths from the mid-fifteenth century on⁴²⁸ made them more cognizant of alternate belief systems and therefore

⁴²² Degenhardt, 84.

⁴²³ Dimmock, "A Human Head To the Neck of a Horse," 67-71.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 84.

⁴²⁵ Anthony Pagden, preface to *Worlds at War: The 2,500-Year Struggle Between East and West* (New York: Random House, 2008), xiv-xv, quoted in Andrea, 1.

⁴²⁶ Andrea, 1.

⁴²⁷ Recent studies [see, for example, Bernadette Andrea and Linda McJannet, eds., *Early Modern England and Islamic Worlds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)] are increasingly demonstrating that there was far more crossover in Muslim-Christian relations than claims about a polarized relationship between "East" and "West" suggest. In making this claim, I am not disregarding nuanced interactions between Muslims and Christians in the early modern period; rather, I am commenting on what I perceive to be a general trend in religious tolerance between these groups in the early modern period.

⁴²⁸ Matar, *Europe Through Arab Eyes*, 3.

more tolerant of them. In contrast, Christians' decreased interactions with non-Christians after the mid-fifteenth century—with, for example, the conquering of Constantinople by Muslims⁴²⁹ and the expulsion of Muslims from Spain after the defeat of Granada⁴³⁰—made them ignorant of other belief systems, and accordingly increasingly anxious of any beliefs that deviated from their own and thus intolerant of other groups, especially Muslims and non-conforming Christians.

With these early modern perspectives in mind, we can consider contemporary Muslim-Christian relations—specifically focusing on the divisive reception of *Paradise Lost* by twentieth- and twenty-first-century readers. Especially recently, the study of Milton outside the context of his traditional Western realm has become increasingly important. This is evident in two major contemporary events. First, in 2002, Mohamed Enani⁴³¹ completed his translation of *Paradise Lost* into Arabic.⁴³² In 2010, the full translation was revised, extended to include some of Milton's other poems, and published in a single volume.⁴³³ According to Matar the sparse attention given to the translation, both by Muslims and Milton scholars, is likely due to the fact that the 2010 edition was released as the Arab Spring and Tunisian Revolutions were beginning.⁴³⁴ Although, in Matar's words, "unnoticed," the publication of this translation is significant because Enani's modifications to Milton's theology in the

⁴²⁹ Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 80.

⁴³⁰ Wheatcroft, 118.

⁴³¹ Spelled "Muhammad 'Anānī" in Matar's article. I have opted for "Mohamed Enani" since that appears to be the author's preferred spelling (based on online presence and publications).

⁴³² See Nabil Matar, "Paradise Lost as an Islamic Epic: Muhammad 'Anānī's Translation (2002/2010)," *English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature* 96, no. 1 (2015): 6–7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0013838X.2014.964556>. Enani had successively published translations of sections of *Paradise Lost* since 1982.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 6; NPR Staff, "The Arab Spring: A Year of Revolution," *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio, December 17, 2011, <https://www.npr.org/2011/12/17/143897126/the-arab-spring-a-year-of-revolution>.

translation are such that Matar claims it can be considered the first modern Arabic epic, meaning that he considers Enani's changes to the poem substantial enough that it is not merely a translation of *Paradise Lost*, but a new work in Arabic that stands apart from Milton's original text.⁴³⁵ Indeed, Enani himself said, "I wish for the text to be read by the children of this era, and that they understand it."⁴³⁶ Enani's translation, which has been republished twice since its initial release in 2002,⁴³⁷ would later become the focus of a Milton reception study among Arab-Muslim readers by Islam Issa.

This brings us to our second important event. In February 2017, Dr. Mona Prince, a professor of English literature at Suez University in Egypt, was suspended for teaching *Paradise Lost* in one of her classes, which the university administration associated with "glorifying Satan" and "spreading 'destructive ideas' to students."⁴³⁸ According to an open letter to the president of Suez University and the Minister of Higher Education in Egypt published by the Middle East Studies Association of North America and its Committee on Academic Freedom, Prince had been accused of, among other things, "bringing 'controversial' issues into the classroom."⁴³⁹ Prince was not

⁴³⁵ Matar, "*Paradise Lost*," 19.

⁴³⁶ Mohamed Enani, introduction to *al-Firdaws al-Mafqud* [*Paradise Lost*], by John Milton, vol. 3 (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Misrtyya al-'Amma It-l-Kitab [General Egyptian Book Organization], 2001), 12, quoted in Islam Issa, "Transforming Milton's *Paradise Lost* into Arabic," *SEL Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 55, no. 1 (2015): 198.

⁴³⁷ Issa, "*Paradise Lost* in Arabic," 398.

⁴³⁸ Raf Sanchez, "Egyptian Academic Accused of 'Glorifying Satan' After Teaching Milton's *Paradise Lost*," *The Telegraph*, August 22, 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/08/22/egyptian-academic-accused-glorifying-satan-teaching-miltons/>.

⁴³⁹ Committee on Academic Freedom, "Suspension of Professor Mona Prince," *Middle East Studies Association*, June 23, 2017, <https://mesana.org/advocacy/committee-on-academic-freedom/2017/06/23/suspension-of-professor-mona-prince>.

allowed to resume teaching at Suez University, but she did not disappear.⁴⁴⁰ In fact, she was a presidential candidate in Egypt's 2018 election. Her campaign, though ultimately unsuccessful, focused on education as a way to correct to Egypt's problems.⁴⁴¹

With such adverse responses to *Paradise Lost* by some Muslims, how can we account for the remarkable positive reception of it by others? Shortly after Prince's suspension from Suez University, Issa explained that while researching his reception study on Enani's translation of *Paradise Lost*, he learned from students in Cairo that they felt "they understood their own value systems better after encountering Milton's Satan."⁴⁴² This is likely due to the fact that belief in Iblis (Satan) as a real entity remains strong for many twenty-first-century Muslims,⁴⁴³ and Iblis as a fear-inspiring character accordingly features very prominently in Muslim popular culture, especially that directed toward children.⁴⁴⁴ Thus, Milton's Satan resonates with Arab-Muslim readers' image of Iblis; additionally, recent scholarship on Milton's Satan and the Quranic Iblis demonstrates how closely the two may be compared, both historically⁴⁴⁵ and in a modern theological context.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁰ Ashraf Abdelhamid, "Fired Egyptian Professor Faces New Backlash Over Israeli Ambassador Photo," *Al Arabiya English*, December 4, 2018, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/variety/2018/12/04/Fired-Egyptian-professor-faces-new-backlash-over-Israeli-ambassador-photo.html>.

⁴⁴¹ Ruth Michaelson, "The Dancing, Beer-Drinking Woman Who Would Be Egypt's Next President," *The Guardian*, October 3, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/oct/03/the-dancing-beer-drinking-woman-who-would-be-egypt-next-president-mona-prince>.

⁴⁴² Islam Issa, "Why Arab Muslims Love Paradise Lost – And Their Leaders Hate It," *The Guardian*, September 1, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/01/arab-muslims-love-paradise-lost-leaders-hate-revolutionary>.

⁴⁴³ Islam Issa, *Milton in the Arab-Muslim World* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 86.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁴⁴⁵ See, for example, MacLean, "Milton, Islam and the Ottomans," 293–98; Al-Akhras, 32–33.

⁴⁴⁶ See Issa, *Milton in the Arab-Muslim World*.

The positive reception of *Paradise Lost* by Muslim readers might also have to do with the nature of Enani's translation. Although Enani does not try to demonstrate, as earlier scholars did, that Milton relied on Islamic works or thinkers, he was interested in showing similarities between Milton's thinking and that of Muslim philosophers.⁴⁴⁷ Matar's aforementioned article on the 2010 edition of Enani's translation of *Paradise Lost* is especially important to this study because Matar looks at the ways Enani changed Milton's theology to accommodate a Muslim readership.⁴⁴⁸ For example, Matar notes how Enani replaced references to Jesus with "the Word" or "the Word of God."⁴⁴⁹ Enani's footnotes throughout the translation clarify changes like these—often with reference to Biblical or Quranic passages—accommodate Milton's theology and narrative to Muslim readers by drawing on resources that would have been familiar to them. The ready availability of such sources, allowing Enani to draw close comparisons between Milton's ideas and Muslim theology, lead Matar to the conclusion that "many aspects of Milton's theological and imaginative worlds are [close] to the Arab culture of the Qur'ān,"⁴⁵⁰ a claim which aligns closely in many ways to my goal in this study—to find similarities between Milton's *Paradise Lost* and early modern Muslim cosmology and etiology in relation to the fall of Adam and Eve.

I began this thesis reflecting on the place of Milton's *Paradise Lost* in Western literary culture and Christian tradition. As recent scholarship has shown, the influence of *Paradise Lost* has extended into cultures and languages around the globe, which led me to ask why a comparable text does not exist in Islam, and how an

⁴⁴⁷ Matar, "Paradise Lost," 16.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 13–17.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

alternate Paradise Lost based in Sunni theology might look. As the final two chapters of my thesis on Satan and Adam and Eve made clear, many versions of such a text do in fact exist; they are simply less well-known than Milton's epic. Examples of such dramatizations of the Fall narrative include the works of Ad-Diyarbakri and Ath-Tha'labi. Just as Nabil Matar's translations of Arab-Muslim travel writing have immensely benefited the field of early modern studies, dedicating resources to the translation of less-known Sufi narratives such as these would enrich both literary and religious studies.

Ash'arism a tenth-century Islamic sect expanding on traditionalist beliefs

ghazi (Ar.) warrior for the faith

hadith (Ar.) sayings of the Prophet Muhammad

hajj (Ar.) pilgrimage

ilm-i hal (Ar.) literally, do you know?

ilm-i hal (Tk.) literally, catechism; a genre of writing popular in the Ottoman Empire between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries comprising of religious instruction manuals

irja' (Ar.) theory that faith is demonstrated by beliefs alone, and does not include actions

jihad (Ar.) a struggle, especially one with praiseworthy intentions

madrasa (Ar.) school

Mahdi (Ar.) Messiah

mala'ika (Ar.) angels

Mu'tazilism the controversial Islamic-state-mandated theology from 827–851 CE asserting, among other things, that humans had free will

qadar (Ar.) predestination

salah (Ar.) prayer

sawm (Ar.) fasting

seyh (Tk.) spiritual leader

shahada (Ar.) profession of the faith

takhlîs (Ar.) deliverance

ulema (Ar.) religious elite

ummah (Ar.) the Islamic religious community

wujud (Ar.) anything belonging only to God

zakat (Ar.) charity

⁴⁵¹ Sources consulted were cited upon first definition of terms within the text of the thesis.

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