RENAISSANCE HUMANISM
IN
MICHELANGELO'S SISTINE CHAPEL
AND
MILTON'S PARADISE LOST

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"If a man who does not admire Michael Angelo talks of his love for Milton, he is deceiving either himself or his listeners."

Oscar Wilde
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a comparative study between Michelangelo Buonarroti's ceiling frescoes in the Sistine Chapel and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The parallels discussed arise out of the Renaissance humanism shared by both of these artists and expressed in their works of art. Beginning with Michelangelo, I will establish the relation of Renaissance humanism to the Sistine Chapel ceiling decoration and define Michelangelo's specific conception of the theories associated with this movement. Subsequently, the same critical approach will be applied to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which will be revealed to be notably humanistic despite its positioning at the end of the Renaissance in a Protestant country. After exploring the individual works of Michelangelo and Milton separately, I will then consider the views shared by these two in their treatments of the myth of the Fall of humanity: both artists believe in the ultimate dignity and freedom of humankind, and portray both Adam and Eve as free and autonomous individuals; the Sistine ceiling frescoes and *Paradise Lost* likewise emphasize the regenerative rather than the damning aspect of the Fall of humanity, expressing the humanistic insistence on the value of human experience; finally, the humanistic notion that art, both literary and visual, instructs its audience while entertaining it, provides the governing artistic theory behind the works of both Michelangelo and Milton. Although the commonalities between Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling and Milton's *Paradise Lost* are extensive, I will not attempt to claim that Milton was specifically influenced by Michelangelo's frescoes. However, my study will reveal the potential for interart analogies to provide greater insight into the individual works of art and literature being analysed.
ABSTRAIT

Cette thèse est une étude comparative entre les fresques de Michel-Ange Buonarroti se retrouvant au plafond de la Chapelle Sixtine et Paradise Lost de John Milton. Les parallèles discutés relèvent de l'humanisme de la Renaissance partagé par ces deux artistes et exprimé par leur art. En commençant par Michel-Ange, j'établirai l'existence de l'humanisme de la Renaissance dans les décorations de la Chapelle Sixtine et je définirai la conception particulière de Michel-Ange sur les théories associées à ce mouvement. Par la suite, la même approche critique sera appliquée au Paradise Lost de Milton, qui se révèlera être nettement humaniste malgré sa position à la fin de la Renaissance dans un pays Protestant. Après avoir exploré séparément les travaux de Michel-Ange et de Milton, je ferai une réflexion sur les opinions partagées de ces deux artistes dans leur traitement du mythe de la Chute de l'humanité: les deux artistes croient en l'ultime dignité et en la liberté de l'humanité et montrent Adam et Eve en tant qu'individus libres et autonomes; les fresques de la Chapelle Sixtine et Paradise Lost mettent l' emphase sur l'aspect régénératrice de la Chute de l'humanité plutôt que sur l'aspect accablant de cette dernière, exprimant ainsi l'insistance humaniste sur la valeur de l'expérience humaine; finalement, la notion humaniste que l'art, autant littéraire que visuel, instruit son public tout en le divertissant. Ce sont ces éléments qui fournissent les théories artistiques dominantes dans les oeuvres de Michel-Ange et de Milton. Même s'il y a beaucoup en commun entre les fresques de la Chapelle Sixtine de Michel-Ange et Paradise Lost de Milton, je ne tenterai pas de prétendre que Milton a été particulièrement influencé par les fresques de Michel-Ange. Toutefois, je révélerai le potentiel des analogies entre les arts pour fournir de plus grands aperçus en ce qui concerne les deux œuvres (l'une d'art et l'autre de littérature) analysées dans cette étude.
INTRODUCTION

In the century and a half separating Michelangelo Buonarroti’s painting of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and John Milton’s writing of his great epic poem *Paradise Lost*, European culture experienced a period of radical change, unparalleled in history until the present century. Though that might suggest an insurmountable rift between the world of Michelangelo and that of Milton, a close examination reveals a remarkable commonality between their cultural milieux. A study combining an examination of the works of Michelangelo and Milton is made possible by the humanism evident in the thought of these two artists, and by their common belief in the humanistic ideal of the affinity between the arts. While Michelangelo was a participant in the humanistic cultural movement at its height in fifteenth and sixteenth century Italy, Milton was a proponent of much the same beliefs in seventeenth century England, near the end of the humanist era.

Since Michelangelo and Milton did not work in the same artistic medium, there are special considerations in undertaking a comparative study of their works. A cogent investigation into interart relations must provide interpretations of the individual works of art that are valid in themselves and not contingent on the interart analogy, and must ensure that the correspondences between the works of art are founded on evidence arising directly out of an examination of the works.

Though modern interpretations of Renaissance humanism vary widely, scholarly disputations on the nature and significance of the movement are nonetheless congruent enough to enable meaningful analysis of its influence on Michelangelo’s and Milton’s art. 1 There seem to be four basic competing definitions of the nature of humanism. 2 Following

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1 The debate about the nature of the Renaissance and humanism’s role in the Renaissance significantly predates modern (twentieth century) scholarship. For a good discussion of the early debate see Wallace K. Ferguson’s *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*. Although the study of later scholarship is markedly biased toward Jacob Burckhardt’s *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860), discussion provided on earlier works is objective and valuable in understanding the development of the notion of humanism and the Renaissance.

2 This four-part division is from Donald Weinstein’s concise discussion of the debate in “In Whose Image and Likeness? Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism.”
the scholarship of Jacob Burckhardt, the first group of scholars maintains a view of humanism as "the birth of the modern consciousness via such Burckhardtian manifestations as individualism, secularism, and moral autonomy" (Weinstein 166). Opposed to this view of humanism as a fundamentally secular and anti-Christian movement are those who insist on the religious aspect of Renaissance humanism. Still other scholars offer a view of humanism as primarily a social and political movement. However, since the influential scholarship of Paul Oskar Kristeller, the interpretation of Renaissance humanism that has gained the most popularity among modern scholars is that humanism was primarily a cultural and educational movement rather than a fully developed philosophy. Nevertheless, Kristeller himself admits that the implications of humanism for the rest of Renaissance culture were monumental, and that some common beliefs inevitably arose out of the humanistic education and came to be shared among humanists (Kristeller Renaissance Thought II 25).

Literally, humanism means the study of the humanities: grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history and moral philosophy. This concentration on the humanities arose from a renewed interest in the ancient cultures of Greece and Rome, particularly in their philosophy and literature. However, "[h]umanism was not merely an interest in antiquity, but a certain way of looking at antiquity and of relating it to the present" (Spitz 140). Out of this attitude arose an educational programme set against the scholasticism of the Middle Ages. For the humanists, "education in logic and natural science, the dominant subjects in the medieval liberal-arts curriculum, seemed to breed idle debate about purely speculative issues that were totally useless for real life" (Nauert 15). The purpose of a humanistic education was to edify students in an effort to produce fully developed individuals living up to their highest human potential and preparing individuals to make wise moral choices (Dresden 87, Nauert 15). Humanists were interested only in issues that were directly applicable to their own lives; the prominent humanist Lorenzo Valla, for example, "situated human knowledge within the horizons of everyday experience, action, memory, language, judgement, and communication" (D. Kelley 38-9). While education in the Middle Ages was specifically designed to prepare one for a profession, either medicine,
law or theology, a humanistic education aimed for “the creation of a consciousness or approach to the world that would form the foundation for all learning” (Wilcox 90).

Although humanism lacked a formal governing ideology, its influence was felt throughout Renaissance culture and resulted in some very strong and pervasive common beliefs. The most important and dominant of these shared views was the confidence in the ultimate dignity of humanity and human experience: humanists placed a great “emphasis on man, on his dignity and privileged place in the universe” (Kristeller Renaissance Thought and Its Sources 30). Humanity was thought fundamentally distinguished from the other animals by its reflection of the divine visage and by its faculty of reason. The ability of each human individual to control his or her own fate was also indicative of the dignity bestowed on humanity at its creation (Elton 272). In the humanist view, each person was endowed with the faculty of reason, giving her or him the ability to make decisions about their spiritual life, rather than deferring these questions to members of the clergy who were given spiritual authority over the laity in the Middle Ages. Faith had become, for the humanists, an issue for everyone rather than just for the clergy; therefore, every individual had to choose and participate in religious faith, thereby determining one's own spiritual destiny (Dresden 118). This ability either to embrace or to repudiate faith constitutes the humanist definition of free will: “[b]y freedom of the will we understand in this connection the power of the human will whereby man can apply to or turn away from that which leads unto eternal salvation” (Erasmus 20). These two characteristics of Renaissance humanism, human dignity and freedom of the will, form the foundation upon which a study of humanism as a way of thinking is based (D. Kelley 46).

This conception of human dignity and free will suggests an inextricable link between religion and humanism not always recognized by modern scholars. Traditionally a distinction has been made between a supposedly secular Italian humanism and Northern humanism, which is commonly termed “Christian humanism”, led by Erasmus. However, that division ignores many of the qualities of humanism and overlooks the dominant position maintained by religion throughout the Renaissance. In The Renaissance and English Humanism, Douglas Bush argues that Renaissance humanism, both in Italy and in
the Northern countries, was fundamentally a Christian phenomenon that placed a greater emphasis on the classical celebration of earthly pleasure than previously seen in the sceptical medieval approach to antiquity: “[h]umanism in the Renaissance normally means Christian faith in alliance with God-given reason, which is the most human faculty in man. Humanism is that way of life and thought which keeps man in union with God and above the biological level” (Bush 54). Italian humanists, like Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, began the task of reconciling ancient philosophy with Christian thought, later to become a central concern of Northern humanists like Erasmus. Italian and Northern humanism seem divergent primarily because of the religious milieux in which these movements occurred. Humanism flourished in Italy while the papacy was at its height of power. In fact, many of the most influential humanists at the time were members of the papal court, so that there was a strong link between the humanistic movement and the powerful pre-Reformation Catholic church. However, many of the ideas introduced by the humanists were eventually appropriated and extended by the radical reformers of the North and used in an effort to challenge the authority of the papacy: the reform movement was a culmination of and a divergence from Renaissance humanism; a necessary precondition of the Reformation (D. Kelly 70, Matheson 42). As a result of the religious turmoil brought about by the Reformation, the authority of both Catholicism and Protestantism remained tenuous. Any challenges to religious beliefs were seen as heresy, whereas the slightest endorsements were seized upon as support for either religious faction. Therefore, the Northern humanists who continued the efforts of earlier humanists to reconcile classical philosophy with current Christian notions, were labelled Christian humanists and seen as champions of Christianity although their programme was virtually identical to that of their southern humanistic predecessors.

Humanism’s drastic impact on religion and Renaissance conceptions of humanity was equalled by its effect on Renaissance arts, both literary and visual. In the humanist's

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3 Ficino was a Catholic priest who felt that Christianity and Platonism were in complete harmony and that “it is the task of Platonic reason to confirm and support Christian faith and authority” (Kristeller Eight 49). Pico della Mirandola similarly combined Christianity and Platonism, using Platonic ideas to interpret the Bible, Genesis in particular (Kristeller Eight 66-7).
view, art became endowed with the dual purpose both to entertain its audience and to provide valuable moral instruction. This twofold nature was expected of ancient as well as contemporary literature and art. The humanists also elevated artists to a status far exceeding that which they had previously enjoyed. Traditionally poets had been respected, while visual artists had been seen as mere artisans and mechanical workers. However, the humanists introduced the idea that the production of a work of art was a reflection of God's work as the creator of the world; therefore, the artist, whether verbal or visual, emulated divine creation (D. Kelley 119). By the end of the sixteenth century, the visual arts had joined with literature and music and become integral to the humanist programme (Blunt 53n). The ancient conviction that philosophy, theology and the arts formed an “unbreakable unity” came to dominate humanist attitudes from this time forward (Dresden 44). Humanism likewise affected the aesthetic ideals of Renaissance art and literature. In his 1436 treatise On Painting, Leon Battista Alberti made the first direct connection between humanism and the visual arts, calling for increased realism and naturalism to replace the symbolism that dominated Medieval art (Holmes 122). In literature, there seemed a parallel shift toward an emphasis on psychologically realistic portrayals of human individuals: there was a “tendency to express, and to consider worth expressing, the concrete uniqueness of one's feelings, opinions, experiences, and surroundings” (Kristeller Renaissance Thought 30). In humanist art and literature there was also an increase in the value placed on the human experience in this world. Visible beauty was considered a reflection of divine beauty and through its contemplation one was capable of elevating oneself to a higher life (Kristeller Eight 30). Similarly, earthly love for another human being was seen as a participation in, rather than a distraction from, the love of God (Kristeller Eight 47). These influences revolutionized art and literature and resulted in the tremendous flourishing of the arts in the Renaissance.

Although a comparative study between Michelangelo and Milton may at first glance seem unusual, an examination of their shared humanistic beliefs soon justifies such an undertaking. The relationship between humanism and religion reveals that the distance between the beliefs of Michelangelo and those of Milton is far from insurmountable.
Despite the fact that Italian humanists were faithful to the papacy and the Catholic church, their ideas furnished the Reformation with the ammunition it required seriously to challenge Catholic assumptions and authority. These views, adopted by leading reformers like Luther and Calvin, quickly diverged from those of humanism and took on an identity of their own. But almost immediately there were efforts to revise Reformation theology and return to some of the more moderate views of the Italian humanists. Milton's theological and artistic opinions locate him within this group wishing to mitigate the extreme views of the Reformers and reinstitute both the educational and cultural ideals of humanism. There seems to be a similarly radical division between Michelangelo and Milton on account of their different artistic media. However, Renaissance humanistic attitudes assuming close relationships between the arts justify an interart analysis of the two. Although humanism began as an educational movement including only the study of grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history and moral philosophy, it soon came to recognize the value of the visual arts and their ability to add to the moral character of their audience. As a result of this belief in the correlation between these different areas of study, Renaissance humanists, like Michelangelo and Milton, would have insisted upon the compatibility of the visual arts, literature and music. Such interdisciplinary studies are therefore consistent with Renaissance conceptions, and have the potential to add significantly to modern scholarship by uncovering intimate affiliations unrecognized by conventional academic practices that disregard such historical and cultural factors.

The modern inclination toward specialization stresses the absolute division between methods and objectives in different disciplines at the expense of losing sight of the common ground that exists between branches of scholarship (Dresden 44). In any case, interart studies are not wholly unprecedented, especially within Milton scholarship. Early interart studies attempted to draw similarities between Milton's poetry and contemporary artistic trends. Margaret Bottrall has argued that "Milton . . . is the one major poet whose work exemplifies the full grandeur of the baroque style" (34), suggesting that Milton conceived and composed his poetry in the spirit of Bernini and other Italian Baroque artists. Roy Daniells has claimed that Milton's early works are
Mannerist, while his later works, *Paradise Lost* in particular, are Baroque. In this study, Daniells explores the relationship between poetry, architecture and sculpture using more direct correlations than seen in Bottrall's article, but arriving at essentially the same conclusions. Early objections to this type of study attack the largely subjective and impressionistic nature of their investigative techniques and question the value of such scholarship (Tuve 829). However, Alastair Fowler seems the first critic to explore systematically the deficiencies of such studies. In “Periodization and Interart Analogies,” Fowler submits that the categorizations used by scholars trying to establish a correspondence between trends in the different arts oversimplify the complexities of history to such an extent as to render the categories ineffectual. Further, relationships between the arts are so variable and dynamic that no functional theory may be established to conduct interart analyses: “the notion of a universally valid systematic correspondence between the arts must be regarded as a chimera” (Fowler 506). However, Fowler does not suggest the abolition of periodised categories, nor does he deny the possibility of valuable interart investigations; rather, he entreats scholars to be aware of the inevitable limitations of artificial classifications and to put interart analogies through a more rigorous testing procedure than previously employed. Murray Roston contributes significantly to the study of the relationship between the arts, adding some practical recommendations to Fowler's exhortations. Advising that “[d]ue caution is needed to ensure that a theory is not being read into the literary work but genuinely arises out of it”, Roston insists that interart comparisons “be empirically tested by a rigorous and detailed analysis both of the art works and the literary text,” and that “the reading offered of [those] work[s] should emerge at the final stage as totally independent of the art parallels, resting instead upon substantiation adduced from the text” (7). In other words, Roston demands that interart studies be valid scholarly examinations of each work of art outside of its relation with another work and that the analogies be tangible rather than impressionistic, and justifiable by immediate reference to the individual works of art and literature.

While Fowler criticizes past efforts at constructing interart analogies, he also opens up a space for more profitable future engagements in such studies by affirming that “[r]eal
correspondences exist [between the arts that] may be worth analyzing” (506). Subsequent scholars seem to have seized upon this idea of particular rather than general correlations between literature and the visual arts, and adjusted their scholarship to accommodate such interests. Roland Mushat Frye's study of the iconographic tradition out of which Milton's Paradise Lost emerged examines individual works of Medieval and Renaissance art exploring the similarities and differences that exist between these works and Milton's epic. Like the earlier periodised or synchronic approaches, Frye does not insist upon any direct contact between Milton and the individual works of art. Instead, he concentrates on the tradition with which Milton would have been familiar and by which he was influenced. This reluctance to claim direct influence on Milton from a work of art continues in Milton scholarship even in studies comparing Milton to one particular artist or work. In Diane McColley's study of the similarities between the mosaics decorating the dome of the Basilica of San Marco in Venice, she explicitly denies that she is suggesting Paradise Lost was inspired by these mosaics:

I do not, of course, mean to claim that Milton was 'influenced' by particular works of visual art. His primary external sources were the Bible, nature, and literary predecessors. The San Marco mosaics share with Milton's epic a regenerative interpretation of Genesis that we can see more clearly by comparing iconographic analogues. (200n)

Mindele Anne Treip seems to be less dogmatic in her study of the figure of Urania in Paradise Lost and in Renaissance ceiling cycles, in particular that of Raphael in the Vatican. Although Treip nowhere insists upon Raphael as a source for Milton's Urania, she does not, like McColley, categorically deny this possibility. Instead, Treip suggests a penetrating affinity between Raphael's Urania and that of Milton, which may or may not suggest that Raphael's frescoes influenced Milton's poetry.

My study, like Treip's, will explore the commonalities between a particular work of art, Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling frescoes, and Milton's Paradise Lost, revealing a close affinity between the two. Like Treip, I will not claim that Milton was influenced substantially by Michelangelo's frescoes; however, unlike McColley, I will not deny the
possibility that such a debt is possible. Although Milton's primary sources for *Paradise Lost* were indisputably "the Bible, nature and literary predecessors," as McCollley points out, the Renaissance belief in the unity of the arts makes it feasible for Milton to have been inspired by the visual arts, either in general or in particular, when writing his epic. In my view, Milton's treatment of the creation myth in *Paradise Lost* is reminiscent of Michelangelo's treatment of the same theme in the Sistine Chapel. Milton's presentation of Adam and Eve as equal participants in the Fall of humanity recalls Michelangelo's similar depiction of the temptation in the Sistine ceiling. Likewise, both Milton and Michelangelo concentrate on the regenerative aspects of the Fall, rather than dwelling on the damming effects of transgression. Although this aspect of the Fall has found expression in other works of art and literature, the particular treatment of this theme by Milton recalls Michelangelo's treatment of the same theme in the Sistine ceiling. For both Michelangelo and Milton, Eve's role as the mother of Christ and the vehicle through which salvation will be achieved is emphasized far beyond the traditional conception of her as the mother of sin and the initiator of death and destruction in the world. Further, Milton's use of the stories of the Old Testament as revealed to Adam by the archangel Michael, is analogous to Michelangelo's portrayal of the ancestors of Christ. In both cases there is a direct link being made between the fall of humanity and its regeneration brought about by the birth of Christ. These affinities arise out of the humanistic beliefs fundamental to the works of both Michelangelo and Milton. Whether or not the similitude between the ceiling decoration of the Sistine Chapel and *Paradise Lost* indicates a direct connection between Michelangelo and Milton, a comparative study of the two works contributes to a deeper understanding of each individual work, in particular their common indebtedness to the humanistic tradition.
CHAPTER ONE

HUMANISM IN THE SISTINE CHAPEL CEILING FRESCOES

Michelangelo's decoration of the Sistine Chapel has fascinated and perplexed art historians for centuries. Although this masterpiece is one of the most written about works of western art, there is no consensus as to the intended meaning of either the individual ceiling frescoes or the programme of decoration as a whole. The primary basis of division for critics is whether to see Michelangelo as a displaced Florentine Neoplatonist or as a devout Catholic in the service of the highest Christian authority, the Pope. As much scholarship on Renaissance humanism has shown, this dichotomy between Neoplatonic philosophy and Christian orthodoxy is an artificial division projected onto Renaissance thinkers by modern scepticism and religious insecurity. Once this spurious division is dispensed with, Michelangelo's decoration of the Sistine Chapel can be appropriately interpreted as an expression of both his Neoplatonic and his Catholic beliefs integrated into a supreme expression of Renaissance humanism.

Before examining Michelangelo's decoration of the Sistine Chapel, it is necessary to consider briefly the state of the chapel decoration prior to Pope Julius II and Michelangelo. The chapel, commissioned by Pope Sixtus IV, was originally decorated with wall frescoes between 1481 and 1483, consisting of two historical series depicting the lives of Moses and Jesus, a series of portraits of the popes and an altar wall fresco of the Assumption of the Virgin. The two series of wall frescoes are arranged such that they provide an historical narrative beginning on the altar wall, proceeding along the longitudinal walls and ending on the entrance wall. This organization of the decoration of churches with historical narratives arranged from altar to entrance was a quattrocento tradition, harkening back to the organization of early Christian churches (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 20). The frescoes on the south wall depict the life of Moses, portraying him as a Jewish father, leader, lawgiver and protector of the Jewish people. On the opposite wall is the unfolding of the life of Christ, with particular attention being paid to Christ's role as minister to the people. The two series portray the life of two distinct
periods in the history of humanity: the time of Moses represents the history of humanity sub lege, under the law, whereas the time of Christ depicts life sub gratia, under grace.

The wall frescoes must also be read typologically, so that events of the Old Testament prefigure those of the New. Accordingly, the events of the life of Moses parallel and foreshadow those of Christ: baptism replaces circumcision as the sign of God's favour and grace; the crossing of the Red Sea and the calling of the Apostles both recall the efficacy of baptism as both depict movement through water toward salvation (Lewine 106); the story of the rebellion of Korah establishes the legitimacy of the priesthood in Aaron (Jeffrey 1-2), and foreshadows Christ's conferral of priestly authority on St. Peter depicted in The Gift of the Keys. Therefore, although the two series of frescoes depict two distant periods of human history, their significance lies largely in the intimate typological relationship attributed to the stories of the Old and New Testaments. The unity established in the historical frescoes extends to the portraits of the popes painted above, flanking the windows of the chapel. The scenes chosen to depict the lives of Moses and Christ stress their ministerial functions, thus establishing them as the models for the leader of the church, namely the pope: the histories "serve to emphasize the legal authority of the Pope as successor of both Moses and Christ in the capacities of law giver, priest, teacher, and ruler" (Leach 5). The portraits of the popes and the histories emphasize the purpose of this "new pontifical chapel" (Lewine 45), both of which offer an expression of and justification for the authority of the papal seat as the supreme authority of the church.

The final element of the decoration of the Sistine Chapel prior to Michelangelo is the fresco of The Assumption of the Virgin on the altar wall. Perugino's fresco unifies and harmonizes the themes prevalent in the historical scenes and the portraits of the popes. Although the fresco itself was destroyed in 1536 to make room for Michelangelo's Last Judgement, a "workshop drawing" of it survives in Vienna: "In the upper half of the Vienna sheet, the Virgin Assunta stands in heaven amid angels and cherubim. Sixtus IV kneels below her in prayer . . . . Sixtus is surrounded by several apostles, including Peter and Paul the patron saints of Rome" (Lewine 18). In addition to celebrating the miracle of
the Assumption of the Virgin, to which the chapel was dedicated, the connection made in the historical frescoes between the ministries of Moses, Christ, St. Peter and the office of the pope, is clearly repeated in this fresco. Likewise, the histories depicting two different historical periods and two means to salvation, the law and grace, and the portraits of the popes, salvation through devotion, were completed by Mary as the Assunta, another route to salvation (Lewine xvii). The decoration of the chapel was completed by a blue ceiling dotted with golden stars, meant to represent the heavens, again traditional in Christian chapel decoration. This papal program for the decoration of the Sistine Chapel offers a coherent whole that inevitably affected Michelangelo when he came to begin his frescoes on the Sistine ceiling.

Although the original frescoes and Michelangelo's work on the ceiling are separated by a mere quarter of a century, the conception and execution of Michelangelo's frescoes was revolutionary in comparison to the original frescoes, and yet Michelangelo's decoration maintained the existing thematic unity. From the limited surviving documentation regarding the commission of the further decoration of the Sistine chapel, it seems that Julius II gave Michelangelo an original plan significantly different from the plan finally executed by the artist. In a letter written several years after the completion of the ceiling decoration, Michelangelo writes:

[Pope Julius] put me to painting the vault of the Sistine . . . . The first design for this work was for twelve Apostles in the lunettes, and for the usual ornamentation in the remaining space.⁴

After the work was started, I thought it was turning out poorly; and so I told the Pope that if only the Apostles were done and nothing else I thought it would succeed very poorly. He asked me why; and I said, 'Because they themselves were poor men.' Then he gave me a fresh commission to do

⁴ From this it seems that the Apostles were to be placed in the area above the windows and the portraits of the popes; however, based on the evidence of Michelangelo's preliminary drawings for the decoration, the general consensus among modern scholars is that the Apostles were to be situated in the space later occupied by the Prophets and Sibyls. See Figures 1 and 2 in the Appendix, Illustrations for Chapter One, pages 43 to 52.
what I wanted; he would make me content, and I was to paint as far as the scenes below. (cf. G. Bull 101, emphasis added)

Typically, the decoration of the ceiling of a church was a relatively insignificant portion of the overall decoration because it consisted of mere ornamentation. However, if Michelangelo was going to undertake the task of decorating the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, which he did only reluctantly, he wanted it to be significant and not merely a complement to the earlier wall decorations. In the end, his decoration of the Sistine ceiling proved revolutionary and influenced ceiling decoration for centuries to come (C. Gilbert 32). Finally, on the evidence of his letter, it seems that Michelangelo himself devised a programme for the decoration of the ceiling that he felt was sufficiently monumental, while maintaining the unity of meaning of the chapel decoration as a whole.5 This programme of decoration provides a unified expression of both Michelangelo's orthodox religious beliefs and his fundamentally humanistic persuasion.

Michelangelo's scheme for the decoration of the ceiling of the Sistine chapel is very complex in both its formal design and its symbolic meanings (Figure 3). One of the innovative qualities of Michelangelo's decoration of the ceiling was that he took into consideration the architectural structure of the vault upon which the paintings were to be placed, planning a "comprehensive tectonic system" of decoration, creating a unique visual unity (Wolfflin 52). The divisions within the ceiling decoration follow the natural architectural divisions of the vault and make use of the architectural spaces, particularly the lunettes and spandrels, in addition to adding simulated architectural elements used to further divide the pictorial surface of the vault. The ceiling decoration may be divided into three architecturally distinct fields, making up the most important parts of the design: the histories, running the length of the spine of the ceiling; the monumental figures of the

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5 There has been significant debate by scholars over whether or not Michelangelo would have been capable of formulating the programme for the decoration of the ceiling himself or whether it would have been designed by a theologian in the service of Pope Julius II. Since there is no evidence that the Sistine ceiling was designed by an external party, and Michelangelo's surviving letter of 1523 (quoted above) intimates that he planned the ceiling himself, I will assume that Michelangelo conceived of the organization and iconography of the ceiling without the help of a professional theologian.
Prophets and Sibyls placed in the area between the spandrels above the lunettes; and the series of frescoes representing the ancestors of Christ, placed in the lunettes around the windows on the wall and the adjacent spandrels above, as well as the four oversized spandrels in the corners of the ceiling depicting important heroic scenes from the Old Testament.

The series of histories decorating the central axis of the ceiling represents the early chapters of Genesis telling the stories of the creation of the world and humanity, of the fall and expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and of Noah and his family. When Michelangelo decided upon the organizing theme for the ceiling decoration he was restricted by the traditional subjects represented on the walls. As stated earlier, the wall decoration consisted of the history of humanity sub lege and sub gratia. The only Biblical time of history not yet represented in the chapel was the history of humanity ante lege, before the law, which is what Michelangelo chose to represent in the central ceiling frescoes, thus completing the three Biblical histories of humanity (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 20).

Similarly, Michelangelo's plan for the decoration of the ceiling was inevitably influenced by the organization of the historical frescoes on the walls below from altar wall to entrance wall. Michelangelo was forced to arrange his frescoes in alignment with the lives of Moses and Jesus below. Therefore, the Genesis history begins at the altar wall with The Separation of Light from Darkness and ends at the entrance wall with The Drunkenness of Noah. This chronological organization of the frescoes from altar to entrance offers a traditional presentation of the stories of the early chapters of Genesis. The Christian significance of these frescoes lies in the general typological interpretation of the Genesis story as a foreshadowing of the New Testament: Adam and Eve as the prefigurations of Christ and Mary respectively. Thus, like the histories below, the Genesis frescoes express the ultimate grace of God and salvation through Christ. This is the traditional Christian meaning given to the Genesis cycle and maintains a unity with the symbolic significance of the lower historical scenes.

To modern viewers the presence of the Prophets and Sibyls in the Sistine ceiling is often perplexing as they seem to be out of place in a Christian church. However, from the
Middle Ages, it had become commonplace for Jewish prophets and pagan sibyls to be represented together, especially in conjunction with the ancestors of Christ (Heusinger 21). Prophets and sibyls, who foretold the coming of Christ as a saviour, were interpreted as symbols of God's omnipotence and mercy. The prophets announced the coming of Christ to the Jews, whereas the sibyls prophesied to the gentiles, the two groups that later came to make up the members of the Christian church. However, it seems that there were contradictory attitudes toward the pagan sibyls during the Renaissance. Some believed that the sibyls were limited in their ability to perceive the future because of their paganism (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 47), while others believed that the fact that “these mantic women had preached the divine word without preparation by Mosaic disciplines seemed only to increase their prophetic stature” (Wind 60). In any case, the presence of these figures instead of the figures of the twelve apostles, who were to dominate Pope Julius II’s original design for the ceiling decoration, accords with the religious orthodoxy of the time, as these men and women were considered the heralds of the news of the coming of Christ.

The prophets and sibyls are accompanied by a series of frescoes representing the ancestors of Christ, as was customary. These frescoes appear in the spandrels and lunettes above the windows of the chapel. The list of ancestors represented here is that found in the first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, and they are ordered, as are the historical frescoes above and below, from altar wall to entrance wall. The ancestors offer a natural link between the wall frescoes and the ceiling frescoes (Heusinger 12); the history of the coming of Christ, the Saviour, is presented on a continuum with the history of Adam, Eve and their fall, using the interceding generations. The ancestors “represent a humanity wholly immersed in the fatalities of history and institutions” (Dixon 510), depicting the history of fallen humanity emphasizing the necessity for a saviour. The ancestors are traditionally associated with the popes who are seen as the successors of Christ, and thus as a continuation of the lineage begun in the Old Testament. This helps to establish a consistency between the figurative meaning of the quattrocento and cinquecento decoration (M. Bull 599, Hope 203). The ancestors of Christ were a common subject for decoration of churches and religious monuments; but, as we shall see later,
Michelangelo's particular portrayal of the ancestors, like his portrayal of the other historical scenes, significantly changes their figurative meaning, adding particularly humanistic connotations to these traditional scenes.

Finally, the four oversized corner spandrels represent important scenes from the Old Testament. At the entrance wall are located the frescoes depicting the stories of Judith and Holofernes, and of David and Goliath. These two stories tell of the triumph of the weak over the strong in an effort to save the Jewish people from certain destruction. Typologically, these two stories prefigure the death of John the Baptist, as they all involve beheading. In turn, John the Baptist is a type of Christ and his death a type of the sacrifice to be made by Christ himself with his own death. Therefore, the stories of Judith and David both point to the death of Christ and the resulting salvation. Likewise, the two parallel spandrels at the altar end of the chapel depict scenes that prefigure the crucifixion (M. Bull 598). The fresco of the Brazen Serpent is set up such that the serpent on the staff clearly symbolizes the cross, while the arrangement of the people around it "emphasizes the difference in the fates reserved for those who are looking and show their faith and for those who do not have faith" (de Vecchi 184). The fresco clearly indicates the possibility of salvation through the crucifixion for those who maintain faith. The last of the four large spandrels represents the punishment of Haman told in the Book of Esther. Haman had wanted to exterminate the Hebrew people, but had been stopped by Esther who then brought about his punishment. In the Old Testament text, Haman is hanged, but in Michelangelo's fresco, as in Dante's Inferno (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 96), Haman is crucified so that he is made to represent "evil defeated by the cross and the evildoer punished by divine justice" (de Vecchi 190). The two frescoes at the altar end of the chapel reveal the power of the cross to punish and to save, depending on the actions of the individual.

We see here that Michelangelo was forced by tradition and by the earlier wall decoration of the chapel to organize his decoration of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel chronologically from altar wall to entrance wall. When read from altar to entrance, Michelangelo's series of frescoes offers a traditional orthodox presentation of Old
Testament prefigurations of the New Testament: the stories of Genesis focusing on the figures of Adam and Eve indicate the coming of Christ and the Church, respectively; the Prophets and Sibyls prophesied the arrival of Christ, the Saviour; and the ancestors of Christ in the spandrels and lunettes make the necessary transition from the Old to the New Testament, drawing a direct connection between the Fall and salvation. However, Michelangelo resisted the organization of the series from altar to entrance by inverting the paintings for those looking at them while walking toward the entrance. In other words, the paintings can only be seen properly by someone walking from the entrance of the chapel to its altar (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 22). This suggests that, although the frescoes unfold chronologically from the altar to the entrance, their arrangement encourages a figurative reading from the entrance to the altar. The suggestion that the frescoes should be read from entrance to altar has been a point of contention among modern scholars, dividing them primarily between those insisting on an orthodox reading of the decoration, and those suggesting a principally humanistic reading of the ceiling. However, the ceiling is apparently to be read both from altar to entrance and from entrance to altar, as one cannot avoid either the chronological sequence or the visual fact of the organization of the frescoes.

The first scholar to suggest the reading of Michelangelo's decoration of the ceiling beginning at the entrance and moving toward the altar was Charles de Tolnay, the most prominent and prolific Michelangelo scholar in the twentieth century. In de Tolnay's monumental study of the works of Michelangelo, a Michelangelesque work in itself, he develops a complex Neoplatonic exegesis of Michelangelo's ceiling decoration of the Sistine Chapel. De Tolnay offers a very convincing and comprehensive argument for this reading of the Sistine ceiling. Although de Tolnay's interpretation of the Sistine ceiling decoration is arguably too strictly Neoplatonic, it offers the most comprehensive interpretation of Michelangelo's ceiling frescoes. Further, as we shall see presently, the Neoplatonism of Renaissance Florence was inextricably linked with Florentine humanism, as it used the highly renowned ancient philosopher, Plato, to support and justify the beliefs of Renaissance humanism.
In the Florence of Michelangelo's childhood, there was a great deal of interest among humanists in the philosophy of Plato and his followers, both ancient and contemporary. Lorenzo de Medici, one of the most prominent and popular members of the ruling family of Florence, established a community of humanistic scholars, writers and artists modelled after the Platonic Academy in ancient Athens. The two most prominent members of Lorenzo's informal academy were Marsilio Ficino, the most important Renaissance translator of Plato, and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, an influential humanist philosopher. The precocious Michelangelo joined this community as a young man and spent several years in the company and tutorship of the most important Neoplatonic and humanistic thinkers of the time (Panofsky 130, Schuyler 111). As a result of this early association with Lorenzo de Medici and his diverse society of scholars and thinkers, Michelangelo's philosophy of life and humanity was formed under the dual influence of humanism and Neoplatonism. Although there must be a distinction made between these two philosophies, there are many ways in which they converge. Florentine humanism prior to Ficino maintained an "exalted conception of both the earthly achievements and the heavenly destiny of man," (Trinkaus 29). Lorenzo Valla gives expression to this idea in his dialogue On Pleasure:

[He] described the Christian's entry into the celestial life in the image of a triumph, and in his sermon De mysterio Eucharistiae he declared 'Nor is it only that He himself is more similar to us than to the angels. From this it may also be known that God reveals to pious and believing minds that, as he transforms that bread, so he will transform us in the day of judgement, into God.' (Trinkaus 29).

This idea of the reunification of humanity with divinity is one of the tenets of Ficino's Platonism, and instead of breaking new philosophic ground, it gave a philosophic basis and justification to the pre-existent humanistic theory. Similarly, Ficino's philosophy attracted humanists because of their common "recognition of the value of beauty alongside of truth and goodness" (Trinkaus 30). The Renaissance Neoplatonic philosophy and theology arising in part from Ficino's translation of Plato and the Neoplatonists gave a
more systematic expression to the theories and beliefs of earlier humanists. Michelangelo was influenced by the humanistic attitudes advocated by the members of Lorenzo's academy, in addition to the Neoplatonic philosophy used to justify the speculative arguments of humanism, both of which find expression in Michelangelo's art.

Arguments have been made against a humanistic or Neoplatonic reading of Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling on the basis that Pope Julius II could never have tolerated such a programme in so holy a place as the Sistine Chapel. However, these arguments ignore the historical reality that, in the Renaissance, humanism was not isolated to small groups of secular scholars, but rather it dominated religious as well as secular thought of the time, extending even to papal circles (Blunt 3). Further, objections to humanistic expression in religious settings neglect the congenial fusion between Christianity and paganism in the Renaissance (Blunt 60). The Catholic church became concerned with the conflict between orthodoxy and pagan philosophy only after the advent of the Reformation, at which time the instability of Catholicism led to a fear that “the philosophic systems of antiquity . . . might lead to serious conflict with Christian principles” (Blunt 115). Finally, the aesthetic principles of the cinquecento required an organic correspondence between the function of a space and its decoration; Michelangelo's decoration of the papal chapel with scenes depicting the humanistic theme of the elevation of the soul and its reunification with the divine is in direct accord with the chapel's dedication to the Assumption of the Virgin (de Tolnay Art 44, 104).

De Tolnay's Neoplatonic reading of the Sistine ceiling is based on the idea that the ceiling is divided by its architectural framework into three zones, and a threefold hierarchy of content that corresponds with these three topographically and stylistically distinct areas. This division also corresponds to the Neoplatonic division of the levels of humanity into the body, the intellect and the soul.⁶ “the artist uses the lower zone formed by the lunettes and spandrels to represent humanity in its daily vicissitudes; this is the level of existence

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⁶ Although de Tolnay does not cite a source for this categorization of the levels of humanity, it seems to derive from the Neoplatonic adaptation of Plato's division of the soul into reason, emotion and appetite set out in Timaeus (97-100).
which is not yet spiritually conscious" (de Tolanay Sculptor 27-8); the second zone consists of the Prophets and Sibyls who are able to perceive the divine through their prophecies, and thus have a vague presentiment of the significance of the historical scenes above; the third and highest zone is comprised of the historical scenes depicting the gradual revelation of the divine and the ascension of humanity to its divine origins. In order to be understood fully, the ceiling must be read both transversely and longitudinally (Dixon 506): the first begins with the lunettes and spandrels on the walls, moving up through the figures of the seers into the central decoration of the ceiling, the Genesis history frescoes; the second progression begins at the entrance of the chapel and moves toward the altar depicting "the return to God of the human soul imprisoned in the body" (de Tolanay Art 43).

Michelangelo's depiction of the ancestors of Christ in the lunettes and spandrels of the Sistine Chapel represents the transient realm of matter inhabited by mortal beings, corresponding to Plato's cave-dwellers who go generations without seeing the "true reality" (de Tolanay Michelangelo II 77). Traditionally, the ancestors of Christ were represented once as a child and once as a father with their individual attributes (C. Gilbert 122), just as they are enumerated at the beginning of the Gospel According to Matthew: "Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren" (Mt 1.2). However, in the Sistine Chapel, the ancestors of Christ are depicted almost exclusively as children, particularly in relation to their mothers (Figures 4-5). This is particularly unique as the Biblical account and traditional depictions only refer to four of the mothers of Christ's ancestors: Tamar, Ruth, Uriah and Mary (Mt 1.2-16).

Michelangelo's unprecedented increase in the depiction of the female ancestors of Christ indicates his desire to harmonize his decoration with the purpose of the chapel: the mothers of the ancestors of Christ are in fact the ancestors of Mary, the mother of God, to

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7 De Tolanay's argument that the ancestors inhabited the mortal world equated to Plato's cave is based largely on the fact that they are depicted in a dark and shadowy world (Michelangelo II 77). Recent restoration of these frescoes uncovered their true brightness and vivid colour, concealed under layers of glue and dirt for centuries. However, the fact that Michelangelo's ancestors of Christ are represented as ordinary people engaged in the vicissitudes of life supports de Tolanay's claim that they represent mortal existence.
whom the Sistine Chapel is dedicated. Therefore, by depicting the ancestors of Christ as children under their mothers' care, Michelangelo is drawing attention to the important role of motherhood in a tribute to the Virgin Mary. Michelangelo's treatment of the ancestors of Christ also emphasizes the salvation to come through their seed. Although they live subject to the vicissitudes of life, they will eventually be saved by God and elevated to heavenly existence.

The Prophets and Sibyls, the occupants of the second zone of Michelangelo's decoration, represent the realm of the intellect, and are afforded a limited view of the "true reality" represented above (Figures 6-7). The contemplative and prophetic powers of the seers bring them to a partial spiritual rebirth allowing them to understand the spiritual rejuvenation occurring in the Genesis history frescoes (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 46-7). Therefore, the Prophets and Sibyls provide the necessary link between the "true reality" depicted in the histories and the ordinary people inhabiting the lunettes and spandrels, in addition to the visitors of the chapel and viewers of the frescoes. The physical attitudes of the seers reveal the degree of their spiritual inspiration. Zechariah, the first of the prophets, located at the entrance to the chapel, symbolizes "the intellectual concentration which precedes spiritual rapture" (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 48). In Joel, inspiration is beginning to be aroused, while in Isaiah the moment of awakening is represented while maintaining a hint of his former lethargy (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 49-50) (Figure 6). As we move toward the altar, Ezekiel appears to be completely overwhelmed by the revelation of God, Daniel meditates upon the meaning of what he has read in the spiritually weighty text on his lap, and Jeremiah is sunk in profound contemplation upon his tragic revelations (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 50-1). Finally, the figure of Jonah, located at the altar wall, a symbol of the resurrection, twists with great energy revealing his ecstatic state and, looking up, comes face to face with God, both literally and figuratively, as he contemplates God's first and most vital act of creation, in the fresco above (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 52).

The spiritual rapture seen in the Prophets is not as prevalent in the figures of the Sibyls, who are presented as much more passive and contemplative than their male
counterparts. However, their recognition of the gravity of their prophesies is evident in the two key figures: the Delphic Sibyl to the left of Zechariah, and the Lybian Sibyl to the left of Jonah. The representation of the Sibyls as somehow less visionary than the Prophets may be explained by one of two unique Renaissance attitudes toward the nature and role of the sibyl: either their natural feminine connection to the earth influences their vision of the future, making it vivid, but slow in coming and weakening as they approach God at the altar; or the Italian concept of the limited visionary skills of pagan seers of the Christian future influenced Michelangelo's portrayal of these Sibyls (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 57). The Delphic Sibyl seems to have been startled by revelation while reading from her scroll, revealing more prophetic insight at this point in the ceiling than either Zechariah beside her or Joel opposite (Figure 7). Conversely, the Erythraean Sibyl listlessly leafs through her book, giving the impression that she is gaining little insight into the events of the future. Both the Cumaean and Persian Sibyls are represented as old women, having difficulty reading their respective texts, but the concentration on their faces and concern in their brows, especially that of the Cumaean Sibyl, reveals their apprehension of the future. Finally, the young Libyan Sibyl, in the most dynamic pose of any of the previous sibyls, places the book she had been reading behind her with an expression of resignation (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 60). Although Libya's face does not reveal either the intense ponderousness of Jeremiah, nor the equally intense inspiration of Jonah, her knowledge of the future is no less accurate than that of Jeremiah or even Jonah, rather she merely maintains a different attitude toward her revelation. Between the twelve figures of the Prophets and Sibyls, Michelangelo represents the varying degrees of insight bestowed upon select individuals who act as the intermediaries between divine truth and human existence.

Though Michelangelo's depictions of the Prophets and Sibyls include the standard iconographic elements seen in contemporary and earlier depictions, the overall effect of these figures is significantly different. The figures are enthroned and represented with the obligatory tome or scroll, symbolic of their prophesies. However, Michelangelo's seers are much more individualized and dynamic than any seen previously in Western art.
When compared to the quattrocento portraits of the popes below, the singularity of the portraits of these ancient figures becomes evident. The seers are not only unique in their posture and comportment, as all of Michelangelo's figures in the Sistine Chapel are argued to be, fulfilling Alberti's ideal (Alberti 76), but they are totally individualized in their physical characteristics, serving to emphasize their prophetic qualities. This idealized portraiture is one of the distinguishing features of the defining artistic theory of the Renaissance, seen in particular in Michelangelo's works. By the time of the Renaissance, the Prophets and Sibyls came to be seen as individuals, in addition to being symbols of the coming of Christ; therefore it became important to represent them with unique identities. However, Michelangelo's depiction of these seers cannot be said to be true portraiture. These are imaginative and idealized portraits of classical and Jewish heroic figures: the physical traits and proportions of the Prophets and Sibyls are present in no single individual, but rather they are a composite of the best qualities of several individuals, a truly Michelangelesque stylistic technique (Condivi in G. Bull 69). Michelangelo's unique depiction of the Prophets and Sibyls as monumental but individual figures emphasizes his interest in humanity as the appropriate subject for art, as well as his desire to elevate humanity to the status of heroes, or even gods.

The idealized portraiture of the Prophets and Sibyls brings us to a consideration of one of the most striking elements in Michelangelo's art: his concentration on the human body, preferably nude, but also draped, indicative of his classical aesthetic theory of beauty. An understanding of Michelangelo's theory of beauty and how it is expressed in his works of art is central to a full and complete apprehension of his humanistic beliefs. In the Sistine ceiling, by far the most dominant element of the decoration is the innumerable human figures who populate all areas of the ceiling. Aside from the abundance of figures represented in the primary decoration of the ceiling, the historical narratives of Genesis, the ancestors of Christ, and the solitary figures of the Prophets and Sibyls, there are innumerable nude figures throughout the ceiling. The Prophets and Sibyls are accompanied by various nudes. Supporting the name-plaques below the seers are male and female putti in a myriad of attitudes. Similarly, each clairvoyant is accompanied by
two *putti* involving themselves in the actions of the seers, who are invariably oblivious to the presence of these *putti*. There are also pairs of *putti* represented as caryatids supporting the fictive cornice dividing the Prophets and Sibyls from the area occupied by the Genesis frescoes. These are painted in the same stone colour used for the architectural decoration throughout the ceiling, representing "the personification of the vital sources stored in the stone" released by the act of sculpting, an essential feature of Michelangelo's theory of sculpture (de Tolnay *Michelangelo II* 69). Occupying the triangular spaces between the top of the spandrels and the aforementioned cornice are reclining figures apparently rendered in bronze just as the *putti* seem to be rendered in stone. Finally, there are the much larger and more dynamic figures of *ignudi* flanking each of the nine histories along the axis of the ceiling. These *ignudi* are characteristically Michelangelo nudes: well-developed and muscular male bodies with particularly feminized features represented in a wide variety of tension and action, no two in the same position (Figures 8-9).8 All of these figures, the flesh-coloured *putti* and *ignudi*, and the apparently stone and bronze figures are interpreted as ornamental replacements for the traditional vegetal forms used to fill the unoccupied areas in a decorative program (Wolfflin 50). These figures, as well as the concentration on the human body in the historical frescoes of the Sistine ceiling, indicate Michelangelo's deep-seated preoccupation with the human form.

Michelangelo's aesthetic theory deviates slightly, but significantly from that of other Renaissance artists. There was a particular concern with naturalism in Renaissance art, upheld by Michelangelo's slightly older contemporary, Leonardo da Vinci, who worked faithfully by the Aristotelian saying, "All our knowledge has its origin in our perception" (cf. Blunt 59). In contrast, Michelangelo was devoted to the ideal of nature and beauty, rather than to nature itself or the scientific imitation thereof (Wolfflin 39).

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8 Interpretations of these figures varies: Condivi and Vasari said they were used to celebrate the della Rovere family, that of Pope Julius II, as they are adorned with oak leaves and acorns, a central feature in the della Rovere coat of arms (Sandstrom 185, Heusinger 19). In his Neoplatonic reading, de Tolnay argues that the nude figures surrounding the seers function as the personifications of the three levels of humanity (*Michelangelo II* 63): the supporters of the name-plaques represent the lower realm of human existence; the two *putti* accompanying the Prophets and Sibyls are projections of the intellect; and the *ignudi* above represent the higher qualities of humanity linking humanity with the divine.
Condivi says that the only true means to the correct theory of beauty is that used by Michelangelo following Zeuxis, who "when he wanted to paint a Venus was not content just to see one virgin but wished to contemplate many; and then he took from each one the most beautiful and perfect feature to use for his Venus" (cf. G. Bull 69). Further, Michelangelo's Neoplatonic training brought him to a belief in the "presence of the spiritual in the material" (Panofsky 180), a Christianization of Plato's assertion that "sensuous beauty is the reflection of absolute Beauty" (Clements 4). To Michelangelo, the human figure is the highest manifestation of divine beauty in the material world (Blunt 62). The Sistine ceiling offers Michelangelo's most comprehensive presentation of the exquisiteness of the human body and its significance as a reflection of the divine, and provides Michelangelo's first expression of the thesis "that no beauty exists outside the human form" (Wolfflin 50). This view of the potential for the human form to reflect the ideal of beauty establishes the ultimate dignity of humanity, even in its lower physical existence, and emphasizes the fundamentally anthropocentric outlook of Renaissance thinkers, including Michelangelo.

The majority of the figures in the Sistine ceiling are male, but there are also a surprisingly large number of women depicted in the ceiling decoration, another element illustrating Michelangelo's humanism. As we have seen, women play a primary role in the Sistine representation of the ancestors of Christ, and Michelangelo changed the original plan to fill the Sistine's twelve thrones with the Apostles, replacing them with seven Old Testament Prophets and five ancient Sibyls, a plan more varied in its artistic expression as it includes the alternation between male and female figures. In addition, the putti represented in the Chapel, a traditional element in both classical and Christian ornamentation, were composed of both male and female figures, a rather unique transformation seen only in Michelangelo. Further, in the historical Genesis frescoes above, the women are depicted in positions of equal importance to the men of the scenes. This position of near equality afforded the women of the Sistine ceiling is unique for this era (C. Gilbert 98). Further, Michelangelo's physical depiction of the women in the Sistine ceiling deviates significantly from the typically delicate and graceful Renaissance
characterizations of women. Michelangelo's women in the Sistine ceiling, and throughout his artistic output, show virility in their musculature (C. Gilbert 100); or, put more brusquely, Michelangelo "masculinizes female figures beyond recognition" (Even 29). This process of masculinization is most evident in the five Sibyls in the Sistine ceiling. Opinions regarding the justification for and significance of these manly women vary immensely, from those who applaud Michelangelo for his elevation of women at a time of traditionally repressive attitudes toward women (C. Gilbert 100), to those who scorn Michelangelo for his patriarchal attitude toward women, having to masculinize them before attributing to them any degree of authority or power (Even 32). However, when considering Michelangelo's masculinization of women, one must recall that Michelangelo also feminized his male figures, indicating his belief in a superior beauty consisting of the synthesis of the beautiful features of both sexes (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 61). This presentation of the ideal of human beauty as fundamentally androgynous, emphasizes Michelangelo's belief in the dignity of all of humanity, including women as well as men.

We now arrive at a consideration of the most important portion of the Sistine ceiling decoration: the frescoes depicting the story of Genesis. The Genesis cycle explores the relationship between the divine and humanity. Read from altar to entrance, it reveals the intimate relationship between God and his creation, soon to be violated by the fall of Adam and Eve. Subsequently, humanity is separated from God through its unvirtuous actions. When the ceiling is read in the opposite direction, from entrance to altar, there is a movement from the separation of humanity from the divine, to reunification; from the depravity of humanity, to the recovery of its virtue and morality. In the first four frescoes, Michelangelo portrays the fate of fallen humanity, revealing the mutability of the human condition based on its own actions. As one moves closer to the gate separating the nave of the chapel from its presbyterium, the actions depicted in the frescoes become more virtuous, or more accurately put, less immoral. Once the presbyterium is entered, human virtue has been restored in the perfect creations of God, Adam and Eve. Humanity's privileged and intimate relationship with God is revealed through the depiction of God and
humanity together. Finally, the heavenly destiny of humanity, which dominated humanistic and Neoplatonic thought in the Renaissance, is achieved as the solitary figure of God comes to dominate the remaining three frescoes: just as in a progression from altar to entrance, God created humanity through Adam and Eve, in the opposite direction, God subsumes humanity, reuniting the divine with its creation.

The firstresco in the series beginning at the entrance of the chapel is that depicting the drunkenness of Noah. The main action of this fresco is taken up by the reclining figure of Noah and his three sons hovering over him while directing their gaze away from their father. To the left of this main action is depicted the labouring figure of Noah who was said to have planted the first vineyard and become drunk on its harvest. In the Biblical story, the drunk and naked Noah is discovered by one of his sons, Ham, who tells his brothers. The brothers immediately cover Noah, sheltering their eyes to avoid seeing his nakedness. When Noah awakes, he curses Ham for his inappropriate conduct in mocking his father, rather than covering his nakedness in an effort to maintain his father's dignity. Most Christian exegetes interpret this scene in terms of its sexual implications; it is the nakedness of Noah and Ham's reaction to it that is at issue here rather than Noah's drunkenness. However, in the scene painted by Michelangelo, all the figures, including Noah and his three sons, are depicted as nude. Further, the son pointing at Noah, presumably Ham, is pointing at his head rather than at his exposed genitals (de Tornay *Michelangelo II* 25). The significance of the scene, therefore, relies on Noah's drunken state rather than his nakedness, which becomes irrelevant in Michelangelo's depiction. In the Neoplatonic philosophy of the Renaissance, drunkenness was the quintessential metaphorical expression of the severity of the captivity of the soul in the human body (de Tornay *Art* 45). Therefore, the drunkenness of Noah represents the depths to which humanity has sunk in its corporeal prison. The sons in the fresco are horrified not at the nakedness of Noah, but rather at the realization of his tragic confinement and the recognition of their own tragic fate in witnessing their father's loss of dignity. This fresco also reveals the extreme depravity of humanity. Not only has a previously virtuous person, Ham, one among very few chosen to survive the destruction of the flood, become
immoral, but his iniquity reveals the total separation between humanity and the divine. The relationship between a father and a son was typologically equated to the relationship between God and humanity; therefore, by violating the bond of respect between father and son resulting in the severance of their ties, Ham figuratively severs humanity's ties with God.

As we move further toward the altar, *The Drunkenness of Noah* is followed by the depiction of the Flood. In the foreground of this fresco is portrayed a seemingly endless stream of people climbing to the top of a mountain in order to escape the rising waters. One figure, realizing that there seems no end to the Flood, has even begun to climb the branches of a dead tree in despair. To the right of this scene is another temporary place of refuge, a high rock which is also populated with those trying to escape. In the middle ground is a boat in which a few people hope to save themselves while they ward off others who try to share in their deliverance. In the background is depicted the only true possibility for survival, the Ark, with Noah's arm extended out of the right side of the Ark, and the dove, a symbol of hope, perched on top (de Tolnay *Michelangelo II* 28). The Ark itself is not devoid of the desperate struggle for life of doomed humanity as several individuals cling to its sides in the hopes that they will survive the disaster. What is unique in this, Michelangelo's portrayal of the Flood, is that it "is dominated by the scenes of the frenzied flight of humanity gripped by inward terror" (de Tolnay *Michelangelo II* 26), instead of the means to salvation, the Ark. This scene represents a small, but significant, move toward the divine, the ultimate goal. The corporeal reality of humanity is still dominant, but there is no denying the presence of the Ark, which will save the chosen few who have maintained some of their divine nature. There is a striking resemblance between the Ark on the Sistine ceiling and the facade of the Sistine Chapel itself, pointing to the typological significance of the Ark as a symbol for the Christian Church and a means to the elevation of the soul.

After *The Deluge* is a fresco of ambiguous subject matter. The consensus in modern scholarship is that this fresco depicts the sacrifice of Noah, a gesture of thanks for being saved from the destruction of the Flood. If this is the case, the scenes from the life
of Noah would be chronologically incorrect, for which there are various justifications. What is fascinating is that, in Ascanio Condivi's authorized biography that Michelangelo apparently supervised, Condivi refers to this fresco as "the sacrifice of Cain and of Abel" (cf. G. Bull 35). Similarly, Giorgio Vasari identifies this scene with the story of Cain and Abel rather than with that of Noah in his Lives of the Artists, also written during the lifetime of Michelangelo (Vasari 445). Because the fresco only depicts the slaughtering of animals, it would depict only Abel's righteous sacrifice to God, including Cain's unscrupulous sacrifice of grain only by implication. In spite of these conflicting opinions, the figurative meaning of the fresco is not significantly affected by the ambiguity of its Biblical source, as it is the general rather than the specific significance of the scene that is relevant. This fresco depicts the next step in the progression toward virtue and the divine by humanity. The people in this scene are sacrificing to God, a symbol of piety, but also a mark of the limited nature of humanity in that their only communion with the divine is through sacrifice, a highly primitive form of worship, especially to Renaissance viewers. The central focus of the fresco is human obedience to God, but also the necessity of this superficial and corruptible gesture of obedience. Whether the sacrifice of thanksgiving performed by Noah after the subsidence of the Flood, or the virtuous sacrifice of Abel arousing the jealousy of Cain, this fresco emphasizes the limitations of human existence as well as the possibility for virtuous action.

The portion of the Sistine ceiling dealing with Adam and Eve themselves begins with The Temptation and the Expulsion (Figure 10). This fresco is arguably the most unique and revolutionary fresco in the Sistine Chapel, rivalled only by the better known Creation of Adam. In Italian iconography, the fall was traditionally represented "as the passive submission to temptation" by Adam and Eve (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 31). Michelangelo, however, presents a different interpretation of the event: he portrays Adam reaching for the fruit himself and Eve receiving it from the extended hand of the serpent. Adam and Eve have become, for the first time, active participants in the deciding event of their fate and that of humanity. In the expulsion portion of this fresco, Adam flees from the inner torment brought about by his sin, of which the angel wielding the sword in
pursuit of him is merely a materialization, while Eve is apparently only his passive companion (de Tornay *Michelangelo II* 32). Although this fresco depicts the quintessential sin, Adam and Eve are closer to God and the divine will in this fresco than any of the figures in previous frescoes. As a result, the progression toward virtue and fusion with the divine is continued even in this fresco that deals with the initial division between humanity and God.

Innumerable divergent interpretations of Michelangelo's presentation of the temptation and expulsion of Adam and Eve exist without any consensus among scholars as to the most probable or justifiable reading of the actions of Adam and Eve in this scene. De Tornay finds Adam an active agent in Michelangelo's temptation, and Eve a passive recipient of the fruit from the serpent, and a passive sufferer of punishment after the fall. However, Michelangelo's depiction of the temptation changes the traditionally passive roles of both Adam and Eve. Condivi describes the scene as, “the devil, formed like a human from the middle upwards and like a serpent elsewhere, with legs transformed into coils, wraps himself around the tree; and giving the semblance of conversing with the man, he is inducing him to defy his Creator, while he holds out the forbidden apple to the woman” (cf. G. Bull 34-5). Adam is not only conversing with the serpent, he is also reaching into the midst of the foliage of the tree, presumably to pick the fruit for himself. In this depiction, Eve is no longer the mediator or the motivating force that brings about the downfall of humanity (C. Gilbert 95); rather, Adam and Eve act independently, each precipitating his or her own demise. The figure of Eve, far from being the passive recipient of the fruit from the serpent, looks to be a figure in the midst of making the transition from passivity to action as she turns around with her torso, her legs soon to follow, and reaches with her left arm for the forbidden fruit handed to her by the extended and straining arm of the serpent. Eve is captured here at the instant of sudden energy and movement after a period of immobility, a typical arrested moment in Michelangelo's art, seen also in the ceiling figures of the Prophets and Sibyls, in Adam at his creation and in

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9 Rather puzzlingly, Condivi refers to the serpent as male in this passage although Michelangelo clearly depicts the serpent as female in his fresco of the fall.
the many nude figures populating the ceiling. Further, in the scene of the expulsion, Eve cannot be interpreted as Adam's passive companion, as the dread and torment present on the face of the fallen Adam is just as evident on that of the fallen Eve as she cowers at the punishment brought about by her participation in the transgression. There are numerous arguments made in the Renaissance in an effort to vindicate Eve as the harbinger of sin for the world (C. Gilbert 96, King and Rabil 57-69), but generally they do so at the expense of the dignity of Eve and the female race in general. However, in Michelangelo's depiction of the temptation, both Adam and Eve participate equally in the downfall of humanity and take equal responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Pico della Mirandola, one of the humanist philosophers resident at Lorenzo de Medici's academy with Michelangelo, argues in his oration On the Dignity of Man that human dignity is based on the unique ability of humankind to create its own destiny:

Thou, like a judge appointed for being honorable, art the molder and maker of thyself; thou mayest sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer. Thou canst grow downward into the lower natures which are brutes. Thou canst again grow upward from thy soul's reason into the higher natures which are divine. (5)

Based on this definition of the dignity of humanity, undoubtedly familiar to Michelangelo, the depiction of Eve acting independently of Adam in the Sistine ceiling fresco of The Temptation and the Expulsion, reveals that she is in substantial control of her own condition, thereby affording Eve an equal share in the dignity bestowed upon man by Renaissance humanism.

The Creation of Eve offers the first direct link between God and humanity, indicating a much closer relationship between the two beings than had previously been presented in the fresco (Figure 11). Michelangelo's depiction of the birth of Eve is also unique in comparison to traditional renderings of the scene. In the Middle Ages, the Biblical story of Eve being created from the rib of Adam was interpreted as a miraculous feat performed by God. However, in the Renaissance, when scientific knowledge was much more highly valued, the creation of Eve came to be depicted, most often
unsuccessfully, as a material act of creation. Michelangelo, diverging from both of these traditions, portrays the birth of Eve as the emanation of an idea in the mind of God (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 33). God seems to be concentrating all his mental energy on raising Eve from the side of the sleeping Adam, while seemingly blessing his newest creation.

Perhaps most important for our interpretation of The Creation of Eve fresco is its placement above the original division between the nave of the chapel and the presbyterium, where the pope and cardinals would sit during mass (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 32). This dividing wall was later moved in order to make room for the growing number of Cardinals, but the original positioning may be used to explain the first appearance of the figure of God who subsequently comes to dominate the remaining frescoes placed over the presbyterium. As a result of its position, the exact middle of the ceiling decoration, as well as the first painting in the hallowed area of the church, The Creation of Eve maintains a pivotal role in the overall ceiling decoration. The placement of Eve at the centre of the chapel decoration proves to be most significant in terms of her orthodox typological role as the prefiguration of the Virgin Mary, to whom the chapel is dedicated. Further, the birth of Eve is also typologically significant as a foreshadowing of the birth of the institution of the Church, the celebration of which is again one of the fundamental functions of the Sistine Chapel. However, the central positioning of Eve is also relevant within a humanistic interpretation of the Sistine ceiling. God and Eve, the mother of the human race, share the compositional midpoint of the ceiling decoration indicating the shared interest in humanity and the divine that defined Renaissance thinking, and humanism in particular. Further, the fact that it is The Creation of Eve rather than that of Adam that is depicted in this central position supports the idea that Eve shared in the dignity of man upheld by humanists in the Renaissance.

In the famous Creation of Adam fresco, God is depicted as “an anthropomorphic cloud” hovering above the awakening Adam (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 35; cf. Figure 12). God is surrounded and seemingly supported by several seraphic figures, two of which stand out much more than any of the others. These two are on the left side of God:
the nude female figure nestled in the crook of God's left arm, and the nude child upon whose shoulder God's left hand rests. These two figures represent the preexistent images of Eve and Christ in God's intellect, a particularly Platonic and humanistic notion, concisely expressed by this Renaissance commentary on Dante: “Nella divina mente e sapientia pongono le cognitioni di tutte le cose, e queste Platone chiama Idee” (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 35). This also expresses the Christian belief in God's foreknowledge of all events and suggests that, even as he created humanity, God knew Adam and Eve would fall and that Jesus, represented as the child, would have to be sent in order to save humanity.11 Michelangelo's depiction of the creation of Adam, like that of the creation of Eve, breaks with traditional representations of this Biblical scene. Artists had usually tried to render the creation of Adam as closely to its Biblical telling as possible, depicting a stream of breath moving from the lips of God to those of Adam. In the Renaissance, it had also become standard to represent the creation with God giving the gesture of benediction (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 36). Instead, Michelangelo uses the hands of God and Adam as the means through which Adam is created, establishing a much more egalitarian relationship between the two. As in the case of the creation of Eve, the creation depicted here is not physical, but rather it is the bestowing on Adam of the qualities that both separate humanity from the lower creatures and provide the necessary link between humanity and the divine (de Tolnay Michelangelo II 35).

The final three frescoes in the Genesis cycle of the Sistine ceiling represent various scenes from the Biblical story of the Six Days of Creation (Gen. 1-2). The labelling of

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10 "In the divine mind and wisdom exists the knowledge of all things, and this is what Plato calls ‘Idea’.”

11 The identity of this female figure resting in the arm of God is another area of contention among Michelangelo scholars. She is usually seen as being one of three people: Eve, Mary or Wisdom. The possibility that she is Mary seems most convincing based on the remarkable resemblance between her and Michelangelo's later depiction of Mary in the Last Judgement fresco. The figurative meaning of the figure is not significantly affected if the figure is either Eve or Mary as the two are themselves figuratively linked. However, the third argument, that this figure is Wisdom, said to be present during God's creation of the world, would significantly change the figurative meaning of the figure (Rzepinska 181-7). Leo Steinberg offers a comprehensive overview of the debate from Vasari to the present, while Jane Schuyler offers a unique interpretation of the figure as emerging from the Jewish cabalistic tradition with which Michelangelo was familiar.
these scenes was established by Michelangelo's two biographers, Condivi and Vasari, who agreed that the scenes, in order from *The Creation of Adam* to the altar wall, are *God Separating the Earth from the Waters; The Creation of the Sun, Moon, and Plants*; and finally *God Separating Light from Darkness*. God is represented by Michelangelo as an anthropomorphic being with extraordinary powers revealed in his acts of creation. By this time, humanity has returned to and united with its origins in God, indicated not only by looking at the acts of creation in reverse, but also by the figure of Eve who has been reunited with God and waits for Adam in the crook of God's arm. At this point humanity has regained its position in heaven through the intercession of Christ, who, through his sacrifice, brought about salvation and reunification with God. The figure of God in the remaining three frescoes of the Genesis cycle represents that to which humanity must strive through faith. By the final fresco, the solitary figure of God dominates the whole pictorial space, allowing room for nothing apart from small areas of light and darkness, indicative of the notion that everything now exists in God as it once did prior to creation.

This humanistic reading of the ceiling decoration as the progression from sin to virtue emphasizes the dignity of humanity, one of the defining features of Renaissance humanism, as God is seen to be the origin of humanity and the ultimate end of human history. Michelangelo's subversion of the traditional organization of church decoration indicates his particular interest in the visitors to the church rather than merely the spiritual relevance of his frescoes. The Sistine ceiling is chronologically organized from altar to entrance in keeping with the quattrocento wall decoration and the traditional ordering of church decoration. However, from entrance to altar, the ceiling decoration may also be read as a humanistic affirmation of the dignity of humanity, thus providing a narrative to be read by worshippers and visitors to the chapel as they enter and move toward the altar. This shows a unique interest on the part of Michelangelo in how his artwork is viewed by its audience and in maintaining his audience's interest, even within a religious setting. Further, the Sistine ceiling decoration demands a "process of participation" from its audience (Dixon 507): Michelangelo painted the Sistine frescoes such that each individual fresco insists upon its own point of view, thus forcing the viewer to move through the
chapel in order to see each part of the ceiling decoration (Dixon 506). This demand on the audience for participation in the viewing of an artwork is again indicative of Michelangelo's concern with the human element in the world, rather than merely the spiritual or symbolic meaning of his art, an element still absent from the visual arts of the Renaissance until this time.

In order to gain a full understanding of Michelangelo's genius, it is imperative to see his decoration of the Sistine ceiling as both a presentation of orthodox Christian themes and a unique expression of humanistic thought. The traditional quattrocento decoration of the Chapel had an inevitable influence on Michelangelo's plan for the ceiling adornment. The wall frescoes were arranged chronologically from the altar wall to the entrance wall depicting human history sub lege and sub gratia. As a result, Michelangelo was forced to arrange his frescoes parallel to those below and he decided to represent the only human history still absent from the chapel decoration, the history ante lege. The dominant themes introduced in the original decoration of the chapel are still evident in Michelangelo's frescoes as he celebrates Mary and the institution of the church, as well as emphasizing the mercy of God and the saving grace of Christ. Although the earlier decoration of the chapel forced Michelangelo to organize his frescoes chronologically from altar to entrance and include orthodox themes, he manipulated this organization in order to encourage a figurative reading of the ceiling beginning at the entrance and moving toward the altar. This figurative reading contributes significantly to a view of Michelangelo as a central proponent of the humanist values. In the progression from entrance to altar, humanity moves from a state of desperate depravity to one of exaltation, revealing to viewers the hope that remains in God's promise of salvation. Michelangelo's unique presentation of the ancestors of Christ as ordinary families rather than as leaders and kings shows an interest in the dignity of common people. The monumental figures of the Prophets and Sibyls are individualized and idealized, making them significant as individuals rather than merely symbols, while elevating humans to a level of superhuman or, in Platonic terms, the Ideal of humanity. Michelangelo's affection for representing the human body, particularly the nude figure, reveals the fundamental
shift that occurred in the Renaissance, especially in the art of Michelangelo, from spiritual to human subjects and point of view, in addition to revealing a belief in the beauty and dignity of humanity. Further, Michelangelo's increased attention to women in all areas of his decoration bestows upon women the dignity traditionally restricted to men. Finally, Michelangelo's organization of the Sistine ceiling decoration as a series of individual frescoes leading the viewer to the altar, necessitating the participation of his viewers emphasizes the fundamentally humanistic conception of this work of art. Both an overall interpretation of the ceiling decoration and a consideration of its parts reveals humanism as an integral part of Michelangelo's programme of decoration for the Sistine Chapel.
APPENDIX
ILLUSTRATIONS FOR CHAPTER ONE

Figure 1  Michelangelo, sketch of original conception of the Sistine ceiling decoration from Pierluigi de Vecchi, *The Sistine Chapel: A Glorious Restoration.* (New York, 1994) 12.

Figure 2  Reconstructed plan for original decoration of the Sistine ceiling from Sven Sandsrom, *Levels of Unreality.* (Stockholm, 1963) 174.

The plan for the original decoration of the ceiling with only twelve figures of the apostles emphasizes the revolutionary quality of Michelangelo's final decoration. Michelangelo's ceiling, as it was executed, places humanity at the centre in the Biblical and historical scenes and figures, and at the periphery ornamenting his decoration with innumerable nude figures.
The plan shows the complex organization of the ceiling to be read from both altar to entrance and from entrance to altar. Notice also the position of the gate dividing the nave from the presbytery in relation to the frescoes above. The *Creation of Eve* fresco, placed at the centre of the decoration and first in the presbytery emphasizes Eve's importance as the prefiguration of Mary, the mother of Christ.

Figure 5 Michelangelo, Salmon-Booz-Obeth spandrel from Pierluigi de Vecchi, *The Sistine Chapel: A Glorious Restoration*. (New York, 1994) 221.

The ancestors of Christ provide the link between the fall of humanity and the promise of salvation to come in the figure of Christ: the unique presentation of the ancestors of Christ as families, particularly mothers and children, evokes both the curse placed on the female race due to the fall, as well as the promise of salvation made at the same time: women will suffer in childbirth, but from her seed will emerge the son of God, who will defeat evil in this world.
Figure 6 Michelangelo, *Isaiah* from Pierluigi de Vecchi, *The Sistine Chapel: A Glorious Restoration*. (New York, 1994) 133.

Michelangelo's representation of the Prophets and Sibyls reveals his view of the majesty and dignity of humanity, created in the image of God and a reflection of divine power and glory. The decision to change these twelve figures from the twelve apostles to seven Prophets and five Sibyls indicates Michelangelo's conscious desire to emphasize the regenerative promise resulting from the fall and prophesied by these twelve clairvoyants.
Figure 7 Michelangelo, *Delphic Sibyl* from Pierluigi de Vecchi, *The Sistine Chapel: A Glorious Restoration*. (New York, 1994) 125.

Female figures are given a position of prominence in the decoration of the Sistine Chapel indicative of Michelangelo's desire to include them in the dignity and power given to men by Renaissance humanists. However, Michelangelo's representation of women diverges significantly from the delicate feminine beauty depicted by his contemporaries; ideal beauty for Michelangelo was the androgynous mixture of the most pleasing qualities of the male and female bodies. This ideal is represented in the Delphic Sibyl whose face is distinctly feminine, while her body's great musculature is more masculine.
These figures, only two out of innumerable ornamental figures, reveal both Michelangelo's theory of the androgyny of ideal beauty, and his belief in the human body as the most perfect reflection of God's beauty and goodness.

Adam and Eve are depicted for the first time in Western art as active participants in the fall of humanity indicating their free choice to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. While they were represented together, they act independently of one another, thus responsibility for the fall is equally distributed between the two, as is the punishment and finally the salvation. In the scene of expulsion, the immediate psychological effects of the fall are evident on the tormented faces of both Adam and Eve, their true punishment for transgression.

The placement of this fresco at the centre of the ceiling decoration and as the first fresco within the presbyterium of the chapel emphasizes the regenerative aspect of the fall of humanity. Eve is inextricably linked with the mothers of the ancestors of Christ represented in the lunettes and spandrels and with Mary, the mother of Christ, to whom the chapel is dedicated. This places regeneration rather than damnation at the heart of Michelangelo's programme.

In this scene, Michelangelo's rendering of Adam's body is seen to be equal to his majestic sculptures of David and Moses, depicting the nobility and ideal beauty of human creation. The two figures to God's left are believed to represent the pre-existent figures of Eve (Mary) and Christ, again emphasizing the primarily regenerative quality of the fall and the promise of salvation through Christ's sacrifice made before the creation of humanity.
CHAPTER TWO
HUMANISM IN PARADISE LOST

As is the case in Michelangelo scholarship, the importance of humanism in Milton's poetry is controversial. By the time Milton was writing his most important literary works, true Renaissance humanism is often believed to have expired due to the destructive influences of the Protestant Reformation and the defeat of the Commonwealth in England (Elton 260). However, Paradise Lost abounds in humanistic elements, demonstrating that, although Milton's chronological historical positioning is beyond the usual bounds attributed to humanism, he in fact maintains many of the apparently superseded attitudes. Milton's opinions on education as expressed in and by Paradise Lost are in direct accordance with the theory of education upheld by humanists of the Renaissance. This philosophy of education, argued by modern scholars to be the only characteristic shared by humanists, leads to a belief in the ultimate dignity of humanity and the human experience in this world, a conviction likewise advanced in Paradise Lost. Milton presents Adam and Eve within the poem as free agents making fully reasoned choices crucial to their spiritual identities, a quality consonant with humanistic opinions of human capabilities. This attitude toward education and the nature of humanity reveals that humanism was significant in the development of Milton's conception of life and humankind as expressed within Paradise Lost.

Education was an issue of central concern for Milton as it was for Renaissance humanism. By 1644, Milton had developed a complete theory of education and given it extensive expression in Of Education, a prose tract published that year. These convictions

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12 The most important work done on Milton's humanism was undertaken around the middle of this century by critics such as James Holly Hanford, Douglas Bush, M.M. Mahood and Herschel Baker. Although these views are generally accepted, some critics, such as Paul M. Dowling and Balachandra Rajan, have objected to the classification of Milton as a humanist. However, these arguments against Milton's humanism are based primarily on readings of Samson Agonistes and Paradise Regained, and do not engage adequately with the humanistic elements of Paradise Lost to justify a negation of Milton's humanism. Further, they do not recognize in Samson Agonistes and Paradise Regained the affirmation of human freedom and the humanistic concentration on "the dynamics of their protagonists' interior experience" (Bennett 161).
about education arose out of Milton's contemplation of his own educational experiences as a student, and were employed by Milton when he undertook the education of his two nephews. Although little is known about the specific curriculum followed, it is certain that Milton's education began at home with tutors his father hired to instruct him in preparation for school. Later, in *Ad Patrem*, Milton thanked his father for the gift of five languages: Latin, Greek, French, Italian and Hebrew. Since Milton learned only Latin, Greek and a little Hebrew at St. Paul's School in London, it may be assumed that the other languages were learned at home where Milton often read and studied far beyond the requirements for school: "he began early his life long task of self-education" (Parker 13). St. Paul's School, in the shadows of the old St. Paul's Cathedral, was founded by John Colet, one of England's most renowned early humanists, who established its programme of study based on Erasmus's educational philosophy (Clark 57). Study concentrated on the learning of the classical languages, primarily Latin, but also Greek and Hebrew, providing the means by which students could study ancient "history, oratory, philosophy, poetry, and drama" (Bush *John Milton* 21). The study of Christian authors in Latin was also of principal importance in St. Paul's as the ultimate purpose of education was to promote Christian knowledge and virtue: in Colet's words, "my entent is by thys scole specially to inccresse knowledge and worshippimg of god and oure lorde Crist Jesu and good Cristen lyff and maners in the Children" (Clark 100). Milton's home study pursued

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"It was at your expense, dear father, after I had got the mastery of the language of Romulus and the graces of Latin, and acquired the lofty speech of the magniloquent Greeks, which is fit for the lips of Jove himself, that you persuaded me to add the flowers which France boasts and the eloquence which the modern Italian pours from his degenerate mouth—testifying by his accent to the barbarian wars—and the mysteries uttered by the Palestinian prophet" (84-5; trans. Merritt Y. Hughes).

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13 For a complete consideration of Colet's programme of study at St. Paul's see Clark, *John Milton at St. Paul's School*, esp. 100-130.
the same methodology, yet embraced the study of living languages and cultures, as he continued studying Italian and French. This emphasis on languages as the most effective and beneficial programme of study was one of the defining characteristics of the humanistic theory of education (Dresden 79).

Milton's experience of university education at Cambridge was significantly different: at the time, "[t]he course of study was medieval and tradition-taut" (Parker 23). This rigid style of education, based on the scholastic tradition, did not accord with the ideals already established in the mind of young Milton. After his graduation from Cambridge as a Master of Arts, Milton felt totally unprepared to enter the ministry, the expected end of a Cambridge education, and embarked on "a five-year 'regency' of private reading, a rigorous experiment in personal education" (Parker 113). During these years of independent study at his parent's house, Milton reverted to the type of education he had encountered earlier in life, immersing himself in the systematic reading of the history of the Christian church, the history of ancient Greece and that of Italy through to the Renaissance (Parker 146, 150).

Milton's own theory of education, expounded in Of Education, owes a great deal both to his positive experiences of education at home and at St. Paul's, as well as to his negative experiences at Cambridge. Milton placed the highest importance on learning languages as a means to explore the most erudite cultures and the knowledge they produced: "seeing every nation affords not experience and tradition enough for all kinde of learning, therefore we are chiefly taught the languages of those people who have at any time been most industrious after wisdom" (YP II.369). However, for Milton, language itself is not the end of education, rather it is to lead directly and immediately to the study of learned writings in their original language: "language is but the instrument conveying to us things usefull to be known" (YP II.369). The programme of study expounded by Milton is based on the theory "that before a student advances to abstract concepts he must have an education thoroughly grounded in sensible, physical knowledge" (Coiro 137).

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15 Milton kept a detailed record of the books he read and studied beginning at this time in his Commonplace Book, providing scholars with invaluable information about his interests and the development of his ideas.
Students were to read ancient writings on practical subjects like agriculture, architecture and medicine before they were faced with the philosophical and theoretical notions of ethics, morality, politics, law and theology. Only after these topics had been mastered would a student move to the study of rhetoric, poetry and poetics, and finally the art of composition.

The concentration on language and the importance placed on reading ancient works of wisdom suggests that Milton's ideal "school as he dreamed it was in many respects like St. Paul's School if notably unlike Cambridge" (Clark 250). However, Milton significantly expanded the study of ancient works beyond the concentration on literature, history and oratory at St. Paul's. Milton was also unique in his insistence that composition must be delayed until an education is complete so that students are not forced to write before they have anything worthwhile to say. Above all, Milton was against the "idle speculation" and scholasticism he encountered at Cambridge (Marajara 282).

The purpose of this elaborate programme of education outlined by Milton was to lead its participants to a greater "love of God and of mankind" (YP II.362):

The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the neerest by possessing our souls of true vertue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith makes up the highest perfection. (YP II.366-7)

Milton proposes that an education based on his ideals, the study of wise writings in various languages, would not only bring about virtuous behaviour in his students, but in fact would bring his students to a knowledge of God producing the "paradise within" promised Adam by Michael in the closing lines of Paradise Lost. However, this true knowledge of God is only available to those who combine their lower wisdom, the "knowledge that rests in the contemplation of naturall causes and dimensions" (YP I.801), with absolute faith in God, in his omnipotence and in his beneficence. Although earthly knowledge in itself is insufficient to gain true wisdom, the knowledge "of God, and of his true worship, and what is infallibly good and happy in the state of mans life" (YP I.801), it
is also, for Milton, the most effective means of progressing toward that most desirable end.

Milton's attitude toward earthly learning, in particular classical works, is problematised by Jesus's rejection of Athens and the knowledge it embodies in *Paradise Regained*. However, when read in context, this scene accords directly with Milton's positive appraisal of education, particularly the extensive reading of pagan works from ancient Greece and Rome. In Satan's earlier temptations of Jesus, Satan offers the earthly perversions of Christ's spiritual powers: Satan tries to tempt Jesus with physical riches and power whereas Christ seeks spiritual wealth and monarchy. Similarly, Satan's temptation of classical learning, which he claims “will render thee a King complete/Within thyself” (IV.283-4), is a perversion of the true wisdom sought by Jesus: “Satan has offered Christ human knowledge (*scientia*) terming it wisdom (*sapientia*)” (Lewalski *Milton's Brief Epic* 298). *Sapientia* is the knowledge of God bestowed upon the faithful believers and the final condition required in order to reunite humanity with the divine.

Since “God is the source and substance of wisdom” (Lewalski *Milton's Brief Epic* 298), wisdom cannot be achieved through human study, but only by faith. Therefore, Christ rejects knowledge only because it is presented by Satan in the place of God-given wisdom; “the question of knowledge in its own sphere, the natural order, is never at issue in this passage” (Lewalski *Milton's Brief Epic* 298). Further, the value of classical learning is not denied, rather it is subordinated to the study of the Bible, a view totally consistent with Milton's attitudes expressed elsewhere (Blessington 103). Christ reproaches individuals who lack judgement when reading the classics (IV.322-8), and later admits the potential wisdom of pagan writings “where moral virtue is expressed/By light of nature, not in all quite lost” (IV.351-2). Milton does not categorically reject earthly learning, rather he emphasizes the necessity to direct learning to a knowledge of God and to recognize that it

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16 Francis C. Blessington, in the Appendix to *Paradise Lost and the Classical Epic*, explores Milton's expressed attitudes toward classical literature, quoting several passages from Milton's prose and poetry to show that Milton believed the classics, particularly Homer and Virgil, could be read in support of Christian moral ideals and should be used for instruction and as models for Christian readers and writers whenever possible.
is not an end in itself, but rather a means to virtue and faith by which true wisdom will be revealed, a view consonant with those presented in both *Of Education* and *Paradise Lost*.

In *Of Education*, Milton suggests that the study of poetics and poetry should be the penultimate subject for study in his programme, followed only by composition. This affords poetry a prestigious position requiring vast knowledge to obtain a full appreciation of the value of poetry and the wisdom it imparts. This positioning of poetry is central to Milton's poetics and derives from humanistic poetics of the Italian Renaissance. Although Milton never devoted a full work of prose to expounding his poetics, his comments on education and on his own poetic career in *Reason of Church-Government*, enable a reasonable reconstruction of Milton's poetic theory. The most crucial aspect of Milton's poetics in relation to his humanistic theory of education was his insistence on the dual purpose of poetry to both instruct and entertain its readers:

> Teaching over the whole book of sanctity and vertu through all the instances of example with such delight to those especially of soft and delicious temper who will not so much as look upon Truth herself, unlesse they see her elegantly drest, that whereas the paths of honesty and good life appear now rugged and difficult, though they be indeed easy and pleasant, they would then appear to all men both easy and pleasant though they were rugged and difficult indeed. (*YP* I.817-8)

The *locus classicus* for this notion of the dual purpose of good literature is Horace's *Ars Poetica*: “*Aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae/ aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere vitae*” (333-4). Due to the immense influence of the ancients on literary critics and theorists of the Italian Renaissance, who were themselves pre-eminent in European thought on the subject, Horace's ideal for the twofold aim of poetry had gained wide acceptance in England. The most prominent and eloquent English proponent of this theory was Sir Philip Sidney, in his *An Apologie for Poetrie*. Milton echoed Sidney's

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17 “Poets aim either to benefit, or to amuse, or to utter words at once both pleasing and helpful to life” (479; trans. H. Rushton Fairclough).

18 For the development of this literary theory see Allan H. Gilbert *Literary Criticism Plato to Dryden*.
argument that a poet is one who imitates "both to delight and teach, and delight to moue men to take that goodnes in hande, which without delight they would flye as from a stranger; and teach, to make them know that goodnes whereunto they are mooued, . . . the noblest scope to which euer any learning was directed" (107). Sidney goes on to claim that this unique combination of pleasure and instruction makes poetry superior to both history and philosophy, as it is more effective in bringing about virtue in its audience (116, 119). Similarly, Milton's claim that "our sage and serious Poet Spencer [sic]" was "a better teacher then Scotus or Aquinas" (YP II.516), suggests that in Milton's mind, poetry could surpass not only history and philosophy as Sidney postulated, but also theology in its ability to instruct. This elevation of poetry accords with the humanistic theory of the arts and in part justifies a humanistic approach to Milton and his poetry.

For a historicized, culturally informed reading of Milton's poetry, we should recall this Renaissance literary theory that, although poetry is entertaining, its ultimate purpose is to instruct readers and bring them to virtuous behaviour. In writing Paradise Lost, Milton puts into practice many of the concepts he had theorized in his prose works many years earlier. Although he had written a great deal by the time he began composing Paradise Lost, this particular literary effort was the culmination of Milton's own education, anticipated at least as early as 1642 when he publicly announced his intention to write an English epic equal to those of Homer, Virgil and Tasso (YP I.812-3). In Of Education, Milton had insisted that the art of composition be taught at the end of the programme of study, at which point students would have ample learning to draw on for their own literary expressions. In accordance with this ideal, Milton draws on the knowledge he gained during his years of intensive and extensive reading and studying in an effort to reveal as much as possible about the nature of God. Milton attempts to bring his audience to a comprehensive knowledge of humanity and human existence in preparation for the leap of faith they must make in order to gain a true knowledge of God. In Paradise Lost, the reader is challenged to engage in the contemplation of diverse topics including architecture, agriculture, astronomy, geography, morality and theology, all of which play a significant role in education as conceived by Milton. Milton's epic poem is a microcosm
of his education system, both of which lead to the highest possible knowledge available through the contemplation of creation.

*Paradise Lost* is not only concerned with the education of its audience, but is also intrinsically about the education of Adam and Eve: “in more than half of the epic, Adam, as well as the Christian reader, is explicitly instructed about various things by the archangels Gabriel, Raphael, and Michael, who are sent specifically for this purpose” (Marajara 290). The education of Adam and Eve, like the education of Milton's students, moves from practical to theoretical knowledge and ultimately to the point after which only faith will bring them to a full knowledge of God. By the time we meet Adam and Eve, they have lived in the garden for an unspecified amount of time, during which they have undertaken the study and practice of sensible knowledge, symbolically represented by their expert gardening skills. When Raphael descends from Heaven, they are introduced to theoretical issues of ethics and morality. This instruction is meant to strengthen Adam and Eve's obedience to God and to prepare them for the trial they will inevitably face. In the closing books of the poem, Michael teaches the fallen Adam everything he requires in order to bring him to the completion of his knowledge of sensible things, at which point his faith in the redemptive powers of Christ and the mercy of God will bring about his ultimate knowledge of God.

The knowledge of sensible things brings Adam and Eve to a self-knowledge without which they have no hope of knowing God. Although this self-knowledge is brought about within the poem through the study of externals, the notion that self-knowledge may be achieved either “by introspection or by one's viewing himself mirrored in the world's state” (Fields 392) is also represented within *Paradise Lost*. Adam reveals in his account of his own creation that he immediately looked up to the heavens and “instinctively recognized the hand of 'some great Maker' ([XIII.]278) in his creation” (McColgan 31). Unlike Adam's reliance on reason and his direct apprehension of his source in heaven, Eve does not recognize her source and looks into a lake in which she sees only a reflection of herself and of heaven. Eve is temporarily deceived by what she sees reflected in the lake as she becomes enamoured of her own image rather than letting
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its beauty lead her to the contemplation of heavenly beauty. This reveals the danger of deception in externals, a hazard which may be overcome through recognition and the conscious redirection of one's thoughts (Jacobus 34-5). In both cases, Adam and Eve are guided by the divine, "instilling in [Adam and] Eve a measure of self-knowledge" (McColgan 33), enough to give them the means to undertake their own education. Through his presentation of the creations of Adam and Eve, Milton reveals the two possible means to self-knowledge, after which he uses the figures of Raphael and Michael to explore the substance of Adam and Eve's education.

The morning after Satan is discovered whispering into the ear of the sleeping Eve, Raphael is engaged by God to be a messenger to Paradise in order to reinforce in Adam and Eve the knowledge that they are free, but that their happiness is contingent on their continued obedience to God's will. Therefore, if they are tempted by Satan, who is out to bring about their downfall, and choose to turn away from God, they will lose their position and its accompanying bliss. The discourse between Raphael and Adam is initiated by Adam's inquiries regarding the nature of angelic existence and of life in Heaven. In his answer, Raphael reveals that angels and humans are divided only by degrees and tells Adam that "Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit... If ye be found obedient" (V.497-501). Adam's request for clarification on the matter of obedience is addressed by Raphael's account of the history of the rebel angels and the War in Heaven, used to show Adam the possibility of disobedience and its consequences, in addition to warning him of the existence of Satan and his evil intent. Raphael acts as the narrator and translator of the history of Heaven, as he organizes the events of the war into a cohesive story and renders it in terms accessible to Adam. It is necessary for Raphael to accommodate Adam, and implicitly the reader, when recounting events in Heaven, as even Adam's unfallen human nature is unable to comprehend celestial events as they really happened: "God is always described or outlined not as he really is but in such a way as will make him conceivable to
us" (YP VI.133). The role played here by Raphael is analogous to that of the authors of written histories studied by students of the humanities in the Renaissance: Raphael is to the War in Heaven as Thucydides is to the Peloponnesian War and Caesar is to his Gallic and other campaigns. Raphael's role is likewise analogous to Milton's role as the poet of *Paradise Lost*. The narrative of the War in Heaven functions as Adam's encounter with the history of another culture beyond his immediate range of experience. After the end of the history of the War in Heaven, Raphael continues with the narrative of the creation of the earth, in which he maintains his position as historian, but now he is retelling the history of Adam's own country: Adam is like an Englishman of the Renaissance reading the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Adam is intended to learn numerous lessons from these annals, so to speak: he is to beware of both the external temptation with which he will be faced in the figure of Satan, as well as the internal enticement of ambition and pride that brought about the fall of the angels; he is also to learn, through the figure of Abdiel, the strength given to those who maintain faith and obedience, even after an initial lapse; finally, Adam is to be moved to realize and admire God's omnipotence and the nature of his own relation to God, which will lead him to a deeper love and respect for God and his directives. Raphael's choice to instruct Adam by this means conforms to the humanistic model of education, which stresses study of different cultures in order to gain a greater understanding of human and divine natures, and thus reveals Milton's belief in the ultimate value of such an approach to education and the true end of this knowledge.

Over the course of his extended instruction of Adam, Raphael addresses the question of what is appropriate for Adam to know and what lies beyond his realm of investigation and understanding. Adam's inquiry about "things above his world" (V.455), a phrase to be read both literally and figuratively, is answered by Raphael with the story of the War in Heaven, as Raphael uses it to instruct Adam, fulfilling his divine mission to Paradise. However, later when Adam cautiously asks about events closer to his level,

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19 A comprehensive discussion of the theory of accommodation as it relates to both Raphael and Michael may be found in Lee A. Jacobus's chapter "Revelation and Accommodation" in *Sudden Apprehension: Aspects of Knowledge in Paradise Lost*. 
Raphael begins with a short lecture on the nature of knowledge:

Yet what thou canst attain, which best may serve
To glorify the maker, and infer
Thee also happier, shall not be withheld
Thy hearing, such commission from above
I have received, to answer thy desire
Of knowledge within bounds; beyond abstain
To ask, nor let thine own inventions hope
Things not revealed, which the invisible king,
Only omniscient, hath suppressed in night,
To none communicable in earth or heaven:
Enough is left besides to search and know.  
(VII.115-25)

Raphael is going to answer Adam's query because he feels that what he has to say will not only satisfy Adam's curiosity, but, more importantly, it will exalt God in Adam's estimation, the true purpose of all instruction. However, Raphael warns Adam that some things are beyond human comprehension, and those things should not engage the interest or inquiry of humanity as there is sufficient material for exploration within the bounds of human understanding.

Raphael goes on to say that an attitude of temperance is necessary toward the acquisition of knowledge, as it is toward all other human appetites:

to know

In measure what the mind may well contain,
Oppresses else with surfeit, and soon turns
Wisdom to folly, as nourishment to wind.  
(VII.127-30)

Knowledge acquired without moderation, he claims, is not only onerous, but is ultimately a means to foolishness rather than to wisdom. Despite this clear admonition against desiring to know too much and things beyond the human realm of knowledge, Adam later requests to have the nature of the spheres of heaven and their movement explained. After a short discussion of the irrelevance of whether the earth moves around the sun or the sun
around the earth, Raphael reminds Adam of the need to curb and direct his desire for knowledge to things appropriate for him to know:

Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid,
Leave them to God above, him serve and fear;
Of other creatures, as him pleases best,
Wherever placed, let him dispose: joy thou
In what he gives to thee, this Paradise
And thy fair Eve; heaven is for thee too high
To know what passes there; be lowly wise:
Think only what concerns thee and thy being . . . . (VIII.167-74)

Adam is reminded of his limitations when Raphael says explicitly for the first time that the proper subject for human inquiry and investigation is the world they live in and their immediate surroundings, not Heaven and the world above. Adam repeats Raphael's message, saying: "to know/ That which before us lies in daily life,/ Is the prime wisdom" (VIII.192-4), indicating his understanding and internalization of Raphael's advice and his recognition of his limitations and the appropriate subject for his contemplation.

The assumption that humanity should study its immediate surroundings rather than concern itself with investigating things outside its realm of experience, and ultimately incomprehensible to a human intellect, is essentially a humanistic attitude toward knowledge and education. The humanists of the early Renaissance brought about a revolution in attitude toward learning, placing the greatest importance on the study of the humanities, namely subjects concerned primarily with human knowledge and experience, as opposed to the tradition of scholarship followed throughout the Middle Ages devoted almost exclusively to the contemplation of theological issues: humanists emphasized the human perspective on knowledge both of this world and the next, whereas Medieval scholars desired to deny or transcend their human nature in an effort to understand divinity and the after-life. Milton uses Raphael, in his role as humanity's instructor, to express his conviction that the mysteries of divine intelligence and existence are ultimately beyond the realm of humanity, thus futile as a subject of human investigation. Instead, Milton
believes that one is led to the appropriate attitude toward God through a study of human experience. This idea is also prominent in Milton's tract on education in which he says: "because our understanding cannot in this body found itself but on sensible things, nor arrive so clearly to the knowledge of God and things invisible as by orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature, the same method is necessarily to be followed in all discreet teaching" (YP II.367-9). Milton's view of the appropriate subject of human investigation is therefore humanistic in nature.

Raphael's narrative also brings about in Adam a recognition of the value and necessity of earthly love as a means to divine love. Early in their discussion, Raphael reveals to Adam the possibility for humanity to be raised to the level of angels, with whom humanity will share residence in Heaven if obedience to God is maintained. Adam's response to this early instruction indicates his comprehension of Raphael's message that will not be confirmed until much later:

Well hast thou taught the way that might direct
Our knowledge, and the scale of nature set
From centre to circumference, whereon
In contemplation of created things
By steps we may ascend to God.

(V.508-12, emphasis added)

Here, Adam recognizes that his realm of investigation is limited, but that through the knowledge and love of God's creation, all of which is a reflection of divine beauty, humanity will be led to God, first to the love of God as sovereign and finally to a communion with God currently enjoyed by the angels. This theme is taken up again at the end of Raphael's visit after Adam has expressed some concern about his feelings toward Eve, her beauty and her apparently excessive adornment. Raphael's response to Adam's apprehension is to remind him again of the necessity of temperance toward his yearnings and to emphasize the positive potential of healthy human love:

What higher in her society thou find'st
Attractive, human, rational, love still;
In loving thou dost well, in passion not,
Wherein true love consists not; love refines
The thoughts, and heart enlarges, hath his seat
In reason, and is judicious, is the scale
By which to heavenly love thou mayst ascend,
Not sunk in carnal pleasure, for which cause
Among the beasts no mate for thee was found.  (VIII.586-94)

The distinction is clearly made between love, the state of true communion between rational beings, and the passion that defines carnal or animal relations. True love is characterized by its capacity to elevate its participants to "heavenly love," the ultimate goal of all human action. Even before the Fall, Adam and Eve must consciously direct their passion toward love, a tempering that becomes infinitely more difficult after the Fall. Immediately following Adam's partaking of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, their passions overtake them:

Carnal desire inflaming, he on Eve
Began to cast lascivious eyes, she him
As wantonly repaid; in lust they burn:
Till Adam thus gan Eve to dalliance move.  (IX.1013-7)

Further, when the two guiltily appear before the Son, come to Paradise as judge, "Love was not in their looks, either to God/ Or to each other" (X.111-2). With the Fall, Adam and Eve have lost their hitherto appropriate attitude toward their passions and therefore have lost their love for themselves, for each other and for God. However, this love has not been irrevocably forfeited, although the preservation of this right attitude toward each other is now more labouriously sustained. The importance placed on the necessity of Adam and Eve to love each other and their progeny as reflections of divine beneficence and beauty, and through this love to arrive at a deeper and more complete love of God, is an essential characteristic of humanism in the Renaissance (Kristeller Eight 47).

At the end of the poem, God sends another angelic emissary to Paradise in order to banish Adam and Eve from Paradise for their crime, but also to reveal the future of humanity to them so that they are sent forth out of the garden "though sorrowing, yet in
peace" (XI.117). Michael, like Raphael, is sent in the role of an instructor to the now fallen Adam and Eve. Michael's instruction of Adam differs from that of Raphael: rather than being in the role of a historian, Michael has become the prophet of events to come in the future of humanity. In this sense, Michael's role is much more scriptural compared to the almost purely humanistic presentation of Raphael. However, Michael's instruction of Adam is still fundamentally humanistic in conception because of the purpose it serves and the means by which this is accomplished. God foresees that Michael's prophecy will bring peace to grief-stricken Adam and Eve; the story of the future of humanity will regenerate Adam and Eve's love of themselves, each other and the human race. Further, this renewed love for humanity will inevitably bring about the rejuvenation of their love of and respect for God. Adam and Eve are brought to this revitalized love through hearing, or dreaming in the case of Eve, about human history. This embodies the humanistic concept that the study of the humanities, in this case human history in particular, is sufficient if not ideal in arousing or reestablishing the love of humanity and through that the love of the divine: as Milton states in Of Education, "the end of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright" (YP II.366-7). Therefore, Milton's humanistic attitude toward the method, subject and purpose of education is presented in its entirety in these two scenes of angelic missions to Paradise from Heaven.

The episodes containing the descent from heaven of the angels Raphael and Michael also establish the importance of humanism in Milton's conception of education and philosophy of life by providing examples of the innumerable ways in which Milton makes use of his knowledge of classical literature in his poetry. Raphael's history of the War in Heaven and the creation of the earth is an imitation of Aeneas's account of the Trojan War told upon his arrival at the court of Dido (Porter 28). These narrative interludes are literary devices designed to reveal the events leading up to the point at which the poems begin in medias res, as well as defining the heroic terms by which the subsequent action of the poem needs to be judged. Similarly, Michael's consultation with

\[\text{20 Aeneid, Books II and III; trans. Robert Fitzgerald.}\]
Adam echoes the classical precedent of Anchises's revelation of the future of Rome to Aeneas in the Underworld. Anchises tells Aeneas that his purpose in revealing this vision of his progeny is "So you may feel with me more happiness/ At finding Italy" (VI.963-4). This is analogous to Michael's purpose of renewing Adam's love and respect for himself and humanity in order to give him the motivation and means by which to initiate the human race. Milton reveals through these passages the benefits of a humanistic education and puts into practice the ideals of that education, by working closely with such material and activating it for his readers through allusion. Through his knowledge of the classics, Milton is able to appropriate and manipulate epic paradigms making them useful for his own purposes. The purpose to which he is employing classical models is to celebrate and venerate his Christian God. This is an example of the practical application of the humanist ideal of using the study of literature in particular to arrive at a knowledge of virtue and to magnify one's love of God. To teach through pleasure is, for Milton, the purpose not only of classical or continental literature, but also the function of his own poetry, especially Paradise Lost. By reading Paradise Lost, one is meant to come to as complete an understanding of God as possible, and to a knowledge of the necessary principles of virtue to be followed by all of humanity, without being conscious of such didacticism. For Milton, as for all Renaissance humanists, poetry is the most effective means of conveying this message, superior to philosophy, history and theology, as it mixes learning with pleasure (Langdon 72).

Milton uses various means to express his views on education within Paradise Lost. Raphael and Michael are cast as instructors, thereby conveying Milton's views on the appropriate subjects of investigation, the right methodology for instruction and the edifying objectives to be achieved through such an education. As our investigation of Milton's theory of education has demonstrated, he maintained a fundamentally humanistic attitude toward knowledge and learning. Humanity is, in his view, to study itself in order to gain a better knowledge of the divine, through knowing as much as possible about this

physical world, in addition to having an extensive knowledge of works produced by diverse cultures. The new idea of the value of investigation into human experience inescapably leads to a renovated estimation of the nature of humanity. The humanistic view stresses humanity's profound dignity, essential freedom, and rational capabilities. 

*Paradise Lost* advocates the humanistic attitude toward the fundamental dignity of human existence, in addition to asserting the undeniable presence and significance of free will and reason in all human beings.

In *Paradise Lost*, the divine perspective is essential in establishing the true nature of humanity as originally created, as a supplement to the relatively limited perspective of Adam and Eve, and the warped vision of Satan. In God's first appearance in *Paradise Lost*, he sees Satan making his way to the newly created earth, and thus comments on the future events of the Fall. God foretells Satan's successful deception of humanity resulting in the Fall. He goes on to address the question of responsibility, an inevitable issue in this context:

> whose fault?
> Whose but his own? Ingrate, he had of me
> All he could have; I made him just and right,
> Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall. (III.96-9)

This, the most important divine account of the nature of humankind within *Paradise Lost*, reveals Milton's fundamental belief in the strength and freedom of humanity, not only within his poetry, but also in his unique theology.

In addressing the question of the free will of humankind, Milton engages the issue of free will and predestination that had become controversial among Protestants on account of the extreme pessimism of Calvin. In the seventeenth century, Calvinism was the official theological doctrine of the Church of England. The dominant feature of

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22 The five points of Calvinist theology were adopted by the Church of England at the Synod of Dort (1618-9). They are: total depravity; unlimited grace; limited atonement; irresistible grace; and perseverance of the saints (Henry 52). Although officially Calvinist, the Church of England was very diverse in practice: "Lutheran in its intellectual origins, Catholic in its polity, Reformed in its official confessional statements, Radical in its Puritan outcome, and, according to the old saw, 'Pelagian in its pulpit, but Augustinian in its prayer book" (Pelikan 2). Milton's heterodox theology becomes fathomable within the context of this
Calvinist theology is the doctrine of double predestination: according to Calvin, the spiritual fate of every individual is decreed by God and is in no way "contingent upon the foreseen free acts or choices of men, there being no such freedom" (Danielson 68). This Calvinist dogma elicited severe opposition, both in England and on the continent. The most important movement at this time against Calvin and his views on free will was known as Arminianism, named after the Dutch reformer Arminius who believed that freedom was "an inalienable constituent of man" (Slaatte 31); the fall of Adam and Eve was "perpetrated by the free will of man, from a desire to be like God" (Arminius 480). Further, Arminius argues that the responsibility for their disobedience lies squarely on Adam and Eve:

But (*culpa*) the guilt of this sin can by no means be transferred to God . . . . For He neither perpetrated this crime through man, nor employed against man any action, either internal or external, by which he might incite him to sin . . . . He neither denied nor withdrew any thing requisite for that purpose, and preserved him after he was thus endued" (Arminius 482).

Arminius admitted that humanity forfeited its free will at the fall, but also asserted that "God graciously willed to renew in each man sufficient freedom for him to attain everlasting life" (M. Kelley Introduction 81). Though still ultimately effected by the grace of God, salvation is contingent on the faith and obedience of individuals rather than being decided arbitrarily by God: people have the freedom to either accept or reject grace and salvation (Slaatte 29). This theology offers an alternative to orthodox Calvinism, allowing humanity to maintain its free will, without denying the beneficence and omnipotence of God.

Although Milton was not a self-proclaimed Arminian, his theology and conception of humanity, as expressed most completely in his *Christian Doctrine*, are remarkably
similar to those of continental Arminianism. In his early prose works, Milton had disparaged Arminianism on more than one occasion; however, it was the “popish and Pelagian” Arminianism of Archbishop Laud dominant in England, a perversion of true Arminianism, which Milton spurned (Danielson 59). In Areopagitica, Milton's assumption that individuals are free to choose between good and evil marks the beginning of a radical change in Milton's theology from the orthodox Calvinism of his earlier works to the liberal Arminianism dominant in his mature writings (Hill 154). In Christian Doctrine, Milton, deviating from Calvinism, asserts the existence of freedom in individuals as a necessary quality of humanity: “[t]he matter or object of the divine plan was that angels and men alike should be endowed with free will, so that they could either fall or not fall” (YP VI.163). Milton also insists in Paradise Lost upon Adam and Eve's potential to resist Satan's temptation, for which they had been prepared by Raphael, and consequently to remain unfallen. However, both Adam and Eve choose freely to

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23 Recently, Milton's authorship of Christian Doctrine has been questioned by Milton scholar William B. Hunter. In his 1991/2 article “The Provenance of the Christian Doctrine,” Hunter suggests that “Milton did not write the Christian Doctrine and that accordingly all of the criticism of his works based on the assumption that he did should be rethought” (130). Hunter's argument “centers on three issues: the alleged disparities and contradictions between the theological tract and Milton's other works, especially Paradise Lost; the state of the De Doctrina text and the names and initials inscribed on it; and the external evidence surrounding the document, notably the questionable probity of Daniel Skinner” (Lewalski “Forum” 143). The rebuttals to Hunter's hypothesis offered by Barbara K. Lewalski and John T. Shawcross address each of these points and call into question the premises and conclusions forwarded by Hunter. The surviving evidence regarding the authorship of Christian Doctrine is limited and circumstantial, but what is available seems to lend support to the traditional view that this was in fact Milton's “Body of Divinity out of the Bible” (Lewalski “Forum” 147), and Hunter has not yet proven otherwise.

24 Laudian Arminianism placed a great deal more emphasis on the role played by virtuous action on earth in the achievement of salvation, whereas pure Arminianism, while suggesting the importance of an individual's earthly behaviour in deciding his/her spiritual fate, insisted on the supremacy and ultimate necessity of God's saving grace.

25 Milton, based on his humanistic attitude toward learning, believed that scripture and reason were the two basis upon which theological arguments should be based (Lewalski “Forum” 149). Further he believed that each individual was responsible for making theological judgements based on his/her own reason and reading of the Scripture, rather than relying on any external authority, including himself: “Assuredly I do not urge or enforce anything upon my own authority. On the contrary, I advise every reader, and set him an example by doing the same myself, to withhold his consent from those opinions about which he does not feel fully convinced, until the evidence of the Bible convinces him and induces his reason to assent and to believe” (YP IV.121-2). This affords individuals further freedom in religious thought and action.
transgress God's command resulting in the Fall. Further, Milton argues that, though humanity's freedom was jeopardized by disobedience, a degree of free will remained or was restored by God in humankind: "As a vindication of God's justice, especially when he calls man, it is obviously fitting that some measure of free will should be allowed to man, whether this is something left over from his primitive state, or something restored to him as a result of the call of grace" (*YP* VI.397). For Milton and Arminius, grace was resistible, whereas for Calvin it is irresistible; for the former, the freedom of humanity is to be used either to accept or reject salvation, a gift of God contingent on individual faith (*YP* VI.173). Milton's views on the necessity of human freedom, both fallen and unfallen, clearly oppose Calvin's dogmas and display a remarkable affinity with the opinions asserted by contemporary Arminians.26

Although *Christian Doctrine* represents the most complete exploration of Milton's theology, his Arminian beliefs are integral to *Paradise Lost*.27 For Arminius, the concern for divine righteousness is central to the rejection of the Calvinist theology of predestination. Milton's claim in his opening invocation of *Paradise Lost* that his poem will "justify the ways of God to men" (I.26) indicates a similar concern with theodicy. Calvin's doctrine of double predestination had called into question the justness of such a God. Calvin responded to questions regarding the justice of his God by insisting that humanity cannot judge or understand God's will, but that divine will is by nature righteous, so that everything God wills must be righteous since it is willed by him (Danielson 69). However, these arguments were unsubstantiated and ultimately unsatisfactory for critical thinkers like Arminius and Milton. For himself and for his readers, Milton had to construct a theology that would logically explain the events of the Fall of humanity without jeopardizing either the nature of humanity or that of God. In

26 For a more comprehensive examination of Milton's position among contemporary theologians in relation to the Calvinism-Arminianism debate see Dennis Danielson's *Milton's Good God* and Gary D. Hamilton's "Milton’s Defensive God: A Reappraisal".

order to achieve this, Milton struck a balance between an omnipotent God who foresees, but does not foreordain human events, who permits but does not will human action, and a humanity that is created free to make choices concerning its spiritual fate. In Milton's theology, the freedom of humanity in no way inhibits the supremacy of God, as Calvin feared, but attests to and ensures the fairness of God, thereby facilitating Milton's aim of justifying the ways of God to humanity.

Using the voice of God as the first pronouncement of human freedom, Milton establishes this as the defining nature of humanity by which the poem must be read and interpreted. God explicitly denies the possibility of placing the blame for the Fall on himself, his foreknowledge of human events or the created nature of humankind:

They therefore as to right belonged,
So were created, nor can justly accuse
Their maker, or their making, or their fate,
As if predestination overruled
Their will, disposed by absolute decree
Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed
Their own revolt, not I: if I foreknew,
Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
Which had no less proved certain unforeknown. (III.111-9)

This prepares the reader for the invalid arguments to be posited later by both Satan and postlapsarian Adam. Further, God sends Raphael to Paradise in order to remind Adam that "his will though free" is "Yet mutable" (V.236-7) and to "let him know,/ Lest willfully transgressing he pretend/ Surprisal, unadmonished, unforewarned" (V.243-5). Milton's God knows the excuses and arguments made after the Fall and in every case he has answers for them. In addition, through God's preparations for these invalid arguments, Milton makes the reader aware of their underlying falsity and establishes in the reader the response required when these fallacious arguments are encountered later.

One issue inevitably raised by the story of the Fall is theodicy. The fact that Milton's God sees the emergence of Satan from Hell and his imminent arrival on earth,
that he foretells the events of the Fall, but does not intervene directly to prevent their occurrence, might lead readers to a belief in God's culpability in the Fall. However, Milton argues within his poem, as well as in his prose works, against such a reading of God's obligation to protect humanity from the temptation of evil. Within *Paradise Lost*, Milton establishes the fact that Adam and Eve are free to choose for themselves whether or not to maintain their obedience to God's will. Freedom is essential to human nature: “when God gave [Adam] reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had bin else a meer artificiall Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions” (*YP* II.527). Liberty and freedom are not only necessary to make genuine human action possible (N. Frye 94), they are imperative to establish obedience to God: “Not free, what proof could [Adam and Eve] have given sincere/ Of true allegiance, constant faith or love” (III.103-4). This belief is similarly expressed in Milton's *Areopagitica*:

> I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd & unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortall garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is triall, and triall is by what is contrary. (*YP* II.515, emphasis added)

Milton asserts the ultimate value and necessity of testing the virtues of humanity because of the purifying nature of trial and the worthlessness of “cloister'd vertue”. For Milton, the test of virtue is to be achieved by permitting Satan to approach humanity unhindered, by allowing Eve to face Satan's temptations alone, much as the poet would allow all things to be published and freely accessible, leaving the people of England the freedom to choose for themselves what to read and what to reject. As Milton says in *Areopagitica* and epitomizes in the narrative of *Paradise Lost*, “what were virtue but a name” if left untried and unproven (*YP* II.527).

The nature of humanity from Milton's standpoint is likewise elucidated by the angels' perception of humanity, and the affinity established between the angels and humankind. God's intentions of creating a new world to be inhabited by a new race had
been revealed to the angels prior to the rebellion and the outbreak of war. As a result, the fallen angels in Hell know the general nature of humanity, and Beelzebub recommends seeking revenge on God by means of an attack on this new race called Man, about this time

   To be created like to us, though less
   In power and excellence, but favoured more
   Of him who rules above . . . .

(II.348-51)

Finally, when Satan sees Adam and Eve in Paradise for the first time, this view of humanity is confirmed by Satan's recognition that these two were created in the image of God, superior to all other beasts on earth, "yet to heavenly spirits bright/ Little inferior"

(IV.361-2). A more detailed treatment of the difference between angels and humans is given when Raphael, at the beginning of his extended conversation with Adam, tries to explain to Adam the nature of angelic existence. Raphael reveals that, fundamentally, humans and angels are made up of the same elements, but in different quantities: angels have more spirit, whereas people have more corporeality (V.473). There is a difference of degree, rather than of kind, between angels and prelapsarian humans.

This separation of mere degree allows a great deal of interaction between the two species and several mutual interests. Paradise is said to be "A heaven on earth" (IV.208), minimizing the difference between those two realms and making it easier to believe that the angels would descend willingly to visit earth. Raphael comments on the worthiness of Adam and Eve's home as a place to receive frequent friendly visits from angels. Similarly, Satan is easily able to deceive Uriel when he approaches in the guise of a lesser angel asking for directions to earth. Satan claims to be irresistibly drawn by the beauty of God's newest creation, both the earth and humanity, believing that by viewing them his praises of the "universal maker" (III.676) will increase. Although it comes from the demonic mouth of Satan, this argument is valid and convinces Uriel, one of the most powerful angels. Further, Adam's reception of these noble beings is revealing about the nature of unfallen and fallen humanity. When Raphael descends to Paradise early in Paradise Lost, he is received by Adam as a superior, but not with fear or even awe
Later, after the Fall, when the Son descends to earth as both a judge of and a mediator for humanity, Adam and Eve hide in fear and shame at his imminent arrival. Milton's presentation of the descent of the Son is not in any significant way different from the other angelic visitations; the reaction of Adam and Eve to the Son's appearance is not due to the nature of the Son, but rather to the changed natures of Adam and Eve due to the Fall. By the end of the poem when Michael, the final angelic missionary to Paradise, arrives, Adam has regained some of his prior dignity, and is able to receive Michael, though with significantly more effort and humility than his earlier unfallen greeting of Raphael. This is indicative of humanity's alienation from heaven due to the Fall.

*Paradise Lost* insists throughout upon the similarity between human nature and angelic nature. Milton uses the numerous references to the points of contact between humans and angels as subtle expressions of the true nature of humanity indicated by other elements in the poem. This technique emphasizes the true freedom possessed by Adam and Eve until their momentous act of eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. In God's presentation of humanity and its freedom, he remarks on the essential similarity in this respect between the angelic and human species, who were both made "Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall":

> Such I created all the ethereal powers  
> And spirits, both them who stood and them who failed;  
> Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.  

(III.99-102)

Raphael similarly explains the difference between angels and humans to Adam, when beseeching him to be obedient:

> My self and all the angelic host that stand  
> In sight of God enthroned, our happy state  
> Hold, *as you yours*, while our obedience holds;  
> On other surety none; freely we serve,  
> Because we freely love, as in our will  
> To love or not; in this we stand or fall . . . .  

(V.535-40, emphasis added)

Adam and Eve are like the angels in that their continued happiness relies on their
continued obedience and "voluntary service" to God (V.529). Further, in Raphael's narrative of the fall of the rebel angels and the War in Heaven, he uses the affinity between angels and humans as the basis for his warning of Adam and his admonition against disobedience.

After establishing this intimate affiliation between the two species, Milton uses Satan to instill in the reader an indubitable certainty about the freedom enjoyed by Adam and Eve until and including their choice to disobey. When contemplating his own fall in retrospect, Satan says:

Hadst thou the same free will and power to stand?
Thou hadst: whom hast thou then or what to accuse,
But heaven's free love dealt equally to all?
Be then his love accursed, since love or hate,
To me alike, it deals eternal woe.
Nay cursed be thou; since against his thy will
Chose freely what it now so justly rues. (IV.66-72)

Satan, after much doubting, realizes that the only one he has to blame for his fall is himself, despite his desire to place the blame on something external to himself, in particular on God. This reaction will be seen later in the fallen Adam and Eve, who try to blame each other first, and then God, before accepting the blame themselves for their downfall. The reader is indispensably prepared to interpret Adam and Eve's actions as free by this presentation of the angels and their relation to humanity.

To gain a further understanding of Milton's representation of the human condition within *Paradise Lost* we must consider Adam and Eve themselves. In Adam's first appearance in the poem, he reveals the basis upon which his own and Eve's subsequent actions must be appraised. Adam reveals to both the reader and the onlooker, Satan, that the only "sign" of their obedience to God is the "easy charge" of not eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil (IV.411-39). Adam and Eve's relations with God are characterized primarily by freedom and power, with only one stipulation, that they obey God's one symbolic prohibition. In preparation for the events soon to bring about the Fall
of humanity, Milton adds to the traditional story of the Fall Satan's poisoning of Eve's dream in order to define and to explore in greater depth the nature of Adam and Eve and their service to God. After Eve has related the events of her disturbing dream Adam is concerned, but assures her that she has nothing to worry about because she has not approved these thoughts and sin is only accomplished by reasoned consent:

Evil into the mind of god or man
May come and go, so unapproved, and leave
No spot or blame behind . . .

(V.117-9)

Within this speech, Adam also acknowledges the purity of Eve's created nature, which he will question subsequent to the Fall. An essential characteristic of the nature of transgression is revealed through Adam's treatment of Eve's dream. Milton asserts through Adam that sin is not achieved by evil thoughts alone, but rather through the willful and reasoned choice of evil over good. Therefore, the unwilled dream leaves no stain on Eve's prelapsarian purity and innocence.

The separation scene proves to be pivotal in Milton's presentation of the nature of human freedom and service. Eve suggests to Adam that they separate in order to be more efficient in their gardening. Adam's primary objection to Eve's suggestion is his apprehension about what may befall Eve alone: "But other doubt possesses me, lest harm/ Befall thee severed from me" (IX.251-2). This questioning of her firmness of faith and love is disturbing to Eve, who becomes obstinate in her conviction of her ability to withstand temptation just as effectively alone as in the company of Adam. She goes on to argue that their freedom is lost if they insist on limiting their actions due to a fear of what they may face:

If this be our condition, thus to dwell
In narrow circuit straitened by a foe,
Subtle or violent, we not endued
Single with like defence, wherever met,
How are we happy, still in fear of harm?  (IX.322-6)

This is similar to the argument offered by Milton in favour of Christian liberty in
Areopagitica regarding the worthlessness of cloistered and untested virtue (McColley “Free Will” 117). Eve believes that “if they allow the enemy to narrow the scope of goodness, he will have won a major victory” (McColley Milton’s Eve 177). Further, Eve is not challenging Satan or arrogantly soliciting temptations, “she is seeking free obedience not ‘strait’nd by a Foe.’ She perceives that one does not resist evil by a crabbed and defensive exclusion but by open integrity and clarity of life” (McColley Milton’s Eve 179). Eve presents a fully reasoned and effectively argued case justifying her desire to work apart from Adam. She believes that their separation not only allows them to serve God more effectively by becoming more efficient gardeners, it is necessary to preserve their freedom in the face of evil.

Eve’s conception of freedom, however, is mistaken. In her argument, she assumes that freedom means being able to “do what you want” (Bennett 113), which would be jeopardized by modifying their actions to avoid Satan alone. But, in Milton’s view, this is not the definition of true freedom, rather being free means being able to “understand and choose the good” (Bennett 113), in which case, Adam and Eve would be exercising their freedom in choosing to remain together and face Satan’s temptations jointly. Therefore, although Eve argues her complex case effectively, she comes to the wrong conclusion based on her misconception of freedom. Adam’s role “as Eve’s superior is to protect her liberty, not by force but by education” (McColley “Free Will” 117). Adam had a responsibility to correct Eve’s mistaken view, but instead makes a willful choice to acquiesce to her desire to separate. If Adam had lived up to his obligations, far from limiting Eve’s freedom by commanding her not to leave him, his revelation of the true nature of freedom would have convinced Eve to choose the better good of remaining with Adam, by which she would be exercising her true freedom.

Although Eve is represented as making the wrong decision based on a reasoned choice, this in no way necessitates the Fall as many critics have argued. It remains

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28 There has been an ongoing debate among Milton scholars for at least the last fifty years as to whether or not Eve is fallen before the actual Fall. Influential critics like A.J.A. Waldock, Balachandra Rajan, E.M.W. Tillyard, Millicent Bell and Fredson Bowers have all argued that Eve’s fall occurred with her separation from Adam, or even with her perverted dream. However, if this had been the case then Milton’s God would
entirely possible for Eve to resist Satan's temptation and to choose obedience to God. In consenting to their separation, Adam repeats the warning they had received earlier from Raphael:

Against his will he can receive no harm.
But God left free the will, for what obeys
Reason, is free, and reason he made right,
But bid her well beware, and still erect,
Lest by some fair appearing good surprised
She dictate false, and misinform the will
To do what God expressly hath forbid. (IX.350-6)

In this admonishment, Adam reconfirms their continued freedom of choice and obedience, while also, in effect, providing arguments against any who may suggest that Eve's Fall began before she actually ate the fruit, either with her dream or with her desire to separate from Adam. It is clearly established in this speech that Adam and Eve are still fully innocent and free to shape their futures. Eve's position after her separation from Adam is analogous to Abdiel's situation when he chose to side with Satan; they both make a wrong choice, but maintain the potential to resist the final temptation to disobey God. In the case of Abdiel, he freely chooses to return to God and reject Satan, whereas Eve decides to forsake God. In both cases, the initial mistaken decision in no way necessitates the final choice of whether to stand or to fall.

Milton's treatment of the nature of temptation and the Fall is interesting in terms of his humanistic beliefs as established within Paradise Lost. The traditional belief that the Fall was brought on by eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was so embedded in

have created an imperfect Eve, not "Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (III.99), as he says of both Adam and Eve. Other critics, like Barbara Lewalski and J.M. Evans, have seen the downfall of such a view of Eve's inadequacy and have suggested that Adam and Eve were still unfallen in the separation scene, but that this scene marked the beginning of a gradual fall. Again this seems to be inadequate as the Fall happens instantaneously when evil is approved in the minds of Adam and Eve. Still other critics, such as Joseph H. Summers, Wayne Shumaker, Irene Samuel, Thomas H. Blackburn and Diane Kelsey McColley, insist upon the continued innocence and freedom of Adam and Eve until the moment they each decide to eat the fruit, interpreting the separation scene as a mistake that can still be corrected and overcome unlike the disobedience that results in the Fall.
Christian tradition that it would have been impossible for Milton to change. However, the fact that it is knowledge that brings about the Fall of humanity may seem contradictory to Milton's humanistic belief in the value and virtue of knowledge. Despite this apparent contradiction, Milton's presentation of knowledge and the Fall within *Paradise Lost* reconciles the traditional attitude toward the Fall with his humanistic beliefs about education, knowledge and human experience. In Satan's invasion of Eve's dream, he appeals to Eve by suggesting that, since knowledge is not bad in itself, then neither can the knowledge gained by eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge be evil: “since good, the more/ Communicated, more abundant grows,/ The author not impaired” (V.71-3). Later, when Eve encounters Satan in person and is led to the Tree of Knowledge itself, Satan again uses the same argument, saying “And wherein lies/ The offense, that man should thus attain to know?/ What can your knowledge hurt him, or this tree/ Impart against his will if all be his?” (IX.725-8). In both cases, this would seem to be a logical humanistic argument, namely that one's virtue and love of God is increased proportionately to one's increase in knowledge. However, as we have seen in Milton's presentation of the proper pursuit of knowledge, one's appetite for knowledge, like all other appetites, must be properly tempered, because excessive knowledge will lead one from wisdom into folly. Again, this idea is prevalent elsewhere in Milton's work: “Wherefore did he create passions within us, pleasures round about us, but that these rightly tempered are the very ingredients of virtue?” (YP II.527). Eve forgets this need for temperance and gives in to Satan's suggestion to eat the fruit and elevate herself to the status of a god. Through this presentation of the temptation of knowledge, Milton in no way contradicts his humanistic belief in the ultimate value and virtue of knowledge as it is merely Eve's loss of a temperate attitude toward knowledge and her other passions that brings about the Fall, rather than the knowledge itself.

The Fall of humanity is not only or primarily characterized by an increasing of Eve's and Adam's knowledge, but rather also by a critical loss of knowledge. As Milton states in *Christian Doctrine* “[i]t was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil because of what happened afterwards: for since it was tasted, not only do we know evil,
but also we do not even know good except through evil” (YP VI.352). This is the definition offered by Milton as the loss of innocence or the state of fallen existence: the inability to know good in itself, exclusive of one's knowledge of evil. This essential quality of postlapsarian humanity is most clearly represented in Michael's narrative of the future of humanity in which he represents terrible human suffering before he is able to show Adam the eventual saving grace to descend from Heaven. In addition, the nature of fallen life is revealed to a degree through Adam and Eve's responses to the Fall. Adam and Eve's postlapsarian attitudes toward each other are dominated by mutual blame. Adam is the worst offender in this regard as he immediately turns on Eve, placing all the responsibility and culpability for both of their actions on her alone. At first, Adam chides Eve for allowing the serpent to beguile her, but soon he moves to a forceful reprimand for insisting that they work separately, which, he says, resulted in the Fall. Eve, provoked by this censure, suggests that it was Adam's refusal to assert his power over her that brought about the Fall:

Being as I am, why didst not thou the head
Command me absolutely not to go
Going into such danger as thou saidst?
Too facile then thou didst not much gainsay,
Nay didst permit, approve, and fair dismiss.
Hadst thou been firm and fixed in thy dissent,
Neither had I transgressed, nor thou with me. (IX.1155-61)

Eve now places the blame squarely on Adam, at the expense of her own dignity, kindling in Adam the momentary recollection of their true natures and the freedom with which they acted:

I warned thee, I admonished thee, foretold
The danger, and the lurking enemy
That lay in wait; beyond this had been force,
And force upon free will hath here no place. (IX.1171-4, emphasis added)

Although Adam seems to have recognized their prelapsarian freedom, this is merely self-
exculpation as he immediately returns to his condemnation of Eve when confronted by the Son. Adam is reprimanded for putting the onus wholly on Eve, and turning to Eve, the Son receives an honest and noble response: “The serpent me beguiled and I did eat” (X.162). Adam's final, and most brutal attack on Eve for bringing about the Fall of humanity occurs when both have descended into a state of despair regarding the future they envisage for themselves as fallen beings. Adam goes on a tirade, referring to Eve as the serpent and claiming she was created fundamentally flawed (X.867-908). Adam and Eve's fallen responses to their actions had been foreseen by Milton's God and by Milton, who made ample preparations so that his readers would reject these fallacious arguments.

After being severely reviled by Adam, as cited above, Eve's dignified response initiates the process of reconciliation accomplished by the end of the poem. Instead of returning Adam's accusations with her own accusations as she had done earlier, Eve begins to take responsibility for her actions, and in fact removes the blame from Adam: she says that when the time of final judgement arrives,

There with my cries importune heaven, that all
The sentence from thy head removed may light
On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe,
Me me only just object of his ire. (X.933-6)

As we know, Eve is not to blame for Adam's Fall as he chose to eat the fruit of his own free will; but here Eve makes an effort to move beyond the endless cycle of attributing blame so that they may achieve some degree of peace for the future. Eve's strategy is successful as Adam recognizes the futility of their arguments and the necessity of reestablishing their love. That these two are now fallen beings is emphasized by the fact that immediately following this apparent spiritual rejuvenation, Eve suggests that they try to ameliorate human suffering either by abstaining from procreation or by bringing death upon themselves immediately so that their progeny will not suffer. Adam is able to dissuade Eve from such thoughts with the assurance that humanity will eventually be restored to its original nature and evil defeated as promised by the Son. This faith in the benevolence of God and the necessity to trust in his promise is what sets Adam and Eve
apart from the fallen angels who refuse to repent for their actions. Adam and Eve's appropriate attitude toward themselves and each other is finally restored fully by the revelation of the future of humanity, revealed to Adam by Michael and to Eve by divine inspiration in her dream. However, this recovered love and respect is no longer a state easily maintained by Adam, Eve or humanity in general. In its fallen state, humanity must continually labour in order to sustain right relationships.

Milton's exhaustive portrait of humanity within *Paradise Lost* has a great deal in common with the liberal opinions upheld by early Italian humanists and maintained by subsequent humanistic thinkers. Renaissance studies of humanity were concerned primarily with investigations into free will, which endorsed the belief in the supreme dignity of humanity, and the knowledge gained through a liberal education (D. Kelley 46). One of the most influential humanists of the Italian Renaissance, Pico della Mirandola, believed that the dignity of humanity was based on the fact that, among the other animals on earth, humanity was the only one able to determine its own nature through its actions (Dresden 13): Pico, in his famous oration *On the Dignity of Man*, believes God to have said to Adam:

> In conformity with thy free judgement, in whose hands I have placed thee, thou are confined by no bounds; and thou wilt fix limits of nature for thyself. . . . Neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal have We made thee. Thou, like a judge appointed for being honorable, art the molder and maker of thyself; thou mayest sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer. Thou canst grow downward into the lower natures which are brutes. Thou canst again grow upward from thy soul's reason into the higher natures which are divine. (5)

The fundamental tenets of the humanistic attitude toward humanity are outlined very succinctly in this short excerpt from Pico's speech. Human individuals alone have the ability to degrade or elevate themselves by means of the reasoned choices they make and the exercising of their free will. Human nature has the potential to span the immense gap between the animals and the divine due to its self-defining capabilities. Similarly, the
essential qualities of English Renaissance humanism are summarized as "the assertion of the spiritual dignity of man, its recognition of the degree to which his higher destinies are in his own hands, its repudiation of the claim of his lower nature to control his higher or of any force or agency external to his own mind and will to achieve for him salvation" (Hanford Poet and Humanist 179). In Paradise Lost, Milton clearly advocates a view of Adam and Eve analogous to that forwarded here by Pico and perpetuated by English humanists: Adam and Eve are distinct from the other animals due to their reason and free choice, which, as Raphael points out, can either bring them into communion with the divine or lower them to the status of animals. Even after the Fall, people are left much responsibility for determining their own natures through their actions, as seen in the endeavours of postlapsarian Adam and Eve, as well as those who appear in Michael's narrative. Milton's portrayal of Adam and Eve, both before and after the Fall, clearly establishes his humanistic attitude toward human nature and its position in the world.

Through a close examination of Paradise Lost, Milton's affinity with Renaissance humanism becomes clear. Milton's education, especially at St. Paul's School and his own independent studies as a child and as an adult, conforms with the humanistic programme developed in Italy more than a century earlier. This education significantly influenced Milton's later views on education, its worth and its purpose. In addition, it shaped his presentation of knowledge within Paradise Lost. Adam and Eve are taught to love and respect each other and God through their encounter with history as revealed to them by Raphael and Michael. Further, Raphael explicitly instructs Adam and Eve in the proper subjects of inquiry for them and the approach they should take toward the acquisition of knowledge. Raphael says that they should study humanity and the visible world in order to gain a knowledge and love of God, rather than striving in vain to know spiritual realities beyond human understanding. He also says that they should always maintain an attitude of temperance toward knowledge, as they should toward all their desires. The Fall of Eve is brought about by a lapse in this moderation, resulting in humanity being henceforth unable to know good other than through the knowledge of evil. This presentation of knowledge, its purpose as well as its limitations, is in keeping with humanistic theories of
education. Milton's humanism is further supported by his presentation of Adam and Eve, both before and after the Fall, as entirely dignified creatures characterized by their ability to reason and their freedom of action. These were two of the most important and defining qualities of humanity for early Italian humanists, as they were for later English humanists. Though only one of various cultural and intellectual influences on Milton, humanism is definitely of crucial importance for understanding Paradise Lost.
CHAPTER THREE

THE SISTINE CEILING AND PARADISE LOST COMPARED

Although Michelangelo and Milton may appear to contradict one another in their philosophy, theology and art, Milton's representation of Adam and Eve, and of the Genesis story in general, is remarkably similar, in its overall conception, to Michelangelo's humanistic exploration of the same theme in the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Though the correspondences between the works of Michelangelo and Milton are profound, there is not enough evidence to claim with absolute confidence that Paradise Lost was directly influenced by Milton's recollection of Michelangelo's decoration of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Like Treip in her study of Milton and Raphael, I would like to investigate the resemblances between the frescoes of Michelangelo and Milton's poetry in order to suggest the deep-seated affinities that exist between these two artists. Such an examination of the significant elements shared by these artistic masterpieces not only suggests a possible connection between these two works and their artists, but also gives greater insight into each individual work, since the comparison is based on characteristics emerging from within the works that are emphasized and elucidated by the interart analogy.

In any case, Milton's humanistic beliefs certainly warrant investigation into the relationship between Milton and the visual arts, in particular Italian Renaissance frescoes. Although there is a deficiency in material evidence regarding Milton's attitude toward the visual arts, and specifically his attitude toward the works he would have seen in Italy during his continental journey in 1638-9, I will argue that, as a result of Milton's humanistic convictions and theory of art, Milton not only would have seen the Sistine Chapel frescoes, but that his attitude toward these Catholic images would have been liberal enough to allow his experience of them to influence his own presentation of the Genesis story in his epic written decades after his return to England. I will then proceed to explore the affinities I perceive between Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling and Milton's Paradise Lost, suggesting how Michelangelo may have affected Milton and his poetry.
The humanistic education of the young Milton was completed by a continental tour in 1638-9. The paramount destinations of Milton's prospective tour were Italy and Greece, where Milton intended to enlarge his experience and advance his learning through direct encounters with remnants of the ancient Mediterranean cultures he had studied so extensively, and the contemporary Italian culture by which he had been so profoundly influenced. Unfortunately, no record of Milton's journey or its impact upon his literary development has survived. However, a reasonable reconstruction of Milton's itinerary on his trip is possible using passing references to dates and times spent in different areas. After a short sojourn in Paris and a leisurely passage through France, Milton engaged a boat in Nice to transport him to the city of Genoa on the coast of northern Italy, from where he made his way with great enthusiasm to Florence, the one-time cultural and humanistic heart of Italy and Europe. Milton spent two months in Florence, primarily in the company of intellectuals associated with the small academies of that city, vestiges of the great humanistic academies founded in the Italian Renaissance after ancient Greek models. From Florence, Milton continued on to Rome for another two months, followed by a month in Naples. He had originally intended to go by boat to Sicily from Naples, and then on to Greece for the second portion of his journey. However, Milton cut his continental tour short when he heard about the unrest in England and the death of his intimate friend Charles Diodati. From Naples, instead of continuing on to Sicily and Greece, Milton returned to Rome and Florence for a further two months in each city, followed by a month in Venice, and a short visit with Charles Diodati's famous uncle, the theologian Giovanni Diodati, in Geneva. Milton arrived back in England by the end of the summer of 1639, approximately sixteen months after his departure.

In spite of the fact that Milton left little record of his specific engagements and entertainments during his stay in Italy's important cities, the numerous contemporaneous accounts of continental journeys made by Englishmen allow us to speculate about the time Milton spent in Italy, especially in Rome. Although Italy remained almost exclusively Catholic through the Reformation, Protestant travellers were generally welcome and safe in Northern Italy, but hostilities increased significantly as one approached Rome. In 1594,
an English traveller, Fynes Moryson, insisted on entering Rome and remaining there incognito for several days in order to see its sights, including the Sistine Chapel, in spite of the threat of the Inquisition. By the 1630s, however, tensions between English Protestants and Catholic Italians were substantially alleviated by Charles I's marriage to Henrietta Maria, the Catholic daughter of Marie de Medici, and by the increasingly tolerant policies toward Catholics in England (Sells 188). Therefore, by the time Milton embarked on his continental journey, he could expect to be as well-received in Rome as he was in the northern cities.

With the increased toleration of Protestants in Rome, access to many of the treasures of Rome was facilitated for Englishmen. Although Moryson was in a good deal of danger while in Rome, he deemed it essential to see not only the ancient sights of Rome, but also the Christian and Renaissance attractions, including St. Peter's and the Vatican (Moryson 131).29 Records of English travellers to Italy in the years immediately following Milton's own travels reveal a greater acceptance of English Protestant travellers by Roman Catholics, making the rooms and chapels of the Vatican more accessible. Two English Protestant diarists not only toured the Vatican, but also attended Catholic services at the Vatican: John Evelyn frequently attended ceremonies at Catholic churches while in Rome, including services at St. Peter's on both Good Friday and Easter Sunday in 1645, and later that year was presented to Pope Innocent X (Evelyn 386, 391); likewise, John Raymond “visited the Sistine Chapel on Good Friday (1647) and attended a service in St [sic] Peter's on Easter Sunday” (Sells 214). These Protestant travellers were comfortable enough in Catholic Rome and confident enough in their Protestant beliefs not only to enter Catholic churches on numerous occasions, but also to attend masses therein to gain a first-

29 Moryson mentions many of the rooms he saw on his tour of the Vatican, one of which was the Sistine Chapel. Like many of the diarists of the time, he gives very little detail and no personal opinion about what he saw: he tells us he visited the Sistine Chapel, mentions the Last Judgement fresco and relates an inaccurate anecdote about Michelangelo's relations with the Pope during the decoration of the chapel (131). Likewise, Richard Lassels, an English Catholic, enumerates the chapel as one of the stops on his tour of the Vatican, saying only that the Last Judgement fresco is “A rare peice [sic] and bold” (Chaney 195). John Evelyn goes into a little more detail, not only commenting on the Last Judgement, “the contemplation of which incomparable Worke tooke up much of our tyme & wonder,” but also saying “The roofe is also full of rare worke” (198), although the ceiling decoration is not usually mentioned in these accounts.
hand knowledge and experience of Catholic customs and practices. Further, the prosaic presentation in these diaries of the writers' repeated excursions to the Vatican and church services lead the reader to believe that these were common and expected events in a comprehensive tour of Rome.

Based on the accounts given by Milton's contemporaries of their easy access to the Vatican, it is viable that Milton himself visited both St. Peter's Basilica and the Vatican, including the Sistine Chapel, during his first two months in Rome. However, no concrete evidence arises placing Milton within or in contact with the Vatican until his second sojourn in Rome. When Milton returned to Rome from Naples, he approached Lucas Holstenius, a prominent humanistic scholar and eminent librarian at the Vatican. Through this association, Milton gained access to the Vatican library where he was able to peruse at his leisure rare Greek manuscripts, in addition to many other literary treasures only to be found in such a rich and extensive collection as that of the Vatican (Parker 176). Milton, therefore, indisputably visited the Vatican, on at least one occasion while he was in Rome.

If Milton had not previously viewed the Vatican collection of ancient and Renaissance art, it would seem almost unheard of for him to leave the Vatican without at least a quick tour of the collection's highlights, which doubtless would have included several works of ancient sculpture, Raphael's decoration of the Pope's apartments and Michelangelo's frescoes in the Pope's Chapel.

The purpose of a continental tour in the seventeenth century was not only to improve one's foreign language skills and immerse oneself in an exotic culture, but also to see the places and cultural objects one had read and heard about, but been unable to visit. The Sistine Chapel frescoes, from the moment of their unveiling, had been the pride of the papal art collection and have remained the marvel of visitors to Rome through the sixteenth century to the present. The assumption that Milton would have seen many of the masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance, including the Sistine Chapel, while he was in Italy.
goes generally undisputed in Milton scholarship. The issues that are more controversial are: how Milton reacted to these works of art; and what impact, if any, they had on Milton and his later poetry.

In addition to the general scepticism about the validity of combining the study of the visual arts with that of literature, Milton's historical positioning in the middle of two centuries of severe Puritan iconoclasm in England raises even more complex questions about his attitude toward art and its potential effect upon his poetry. In 1540, England's churches were purged by radical Puritans who destroyed vast quantities of religious artwork. Without these traditional ornamentations, for generations "Englishmen, even well-educated ones, had very little experience of painting and sculpture-- and virtually no experience of religious art" (O'Connell 220). In his revisionist treatment of Milton's relationship to Italian art, Michael O'Connell argues that, due to this lack of daily contact with art, the Englishmen travelling in Italy in the seventeenth century, including Milton, would have been unable to appreciate the apparent masterpieces of Renaissance art held in such high regard by their Italian contemporaries. As a result, O'Connell concludes, Milton's experience of Italian art was "a deeply ambiguous one" (230), manifesting itself in Milton's poetry as objections to art, artists and tourism evident in Paradise Regained (234). I believe that O'Connell is correct in suggesting that Milton's perception of Italian art would have been profoundly ambiguous; as Katherine Duncan-Jones remarks, it was common for English travellers to see "the Italians at once as monsters of ingenious

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30 It is generally assumed, by scholars such as David Masson (793), Roland Mushat Frye (27) and Mindele Anne Treip ("Descend from Heav'n Urania" 9), that Milton would have seen the major works of Renaissance art in Italy, including the Sistine Chapel. John Holly Hanford goes further in John Milton, Englishman, suggesting that Milton's Paradise Lost was indebted to Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, although he does not go on to explore this claim. Even Michael O'Connell, whom, we shall see, questions Milton's attitude toward Italian Renaissance art, admits that he would have seen its masterpieces when he was in Italy (217).

31 Most notable is Alastair Fowler's objection to the assumption that the art and literature of a certain period should be examined together merely because they coexisted temporally. In this article, "Periodization and Interart Analogies", Fowler addresses many of the problems faced by early interdisciplinary studies, including the differences in terminology from one medium to another, the change that occurs in relations between the arts at different historical times and the often impressionistic attitude toward interart relations. Fowler does not deny the validity of interart relations, rather he points out the shortcomings in studies on these relations in an effort to elevate interart scholarship to the level he feels possible and appropriate.
depravity and as paragons of aesthetic taste, good manners, and creativity” (1). However, O'Connell neglects the positive influences Italian art may have had upon Milton and his poetry, as well as the effect Milton's humanism would have had on his attitude toward the art of Italy.

Milton's attitude toward Renaissance Italian poetry and literary criticism may offer some insight into the approach Milton took to other aspects of near-contemporary Italian culture. When Milton was in Italy, he was received affectionately by the members of intellectual academies, especially those in Florence. Although Milton had a reputation as a good poet at Cambridge, and the performance of his masque, Comus, was successful, it seems that, in Italy, for the first time Milton's poetry was acclaimed in the company of his intellectual and poetic equals for whom he had great respect. Milton's decision to pursue a literary instead of a ministerial career was made shortly after his return to England from Italy, suggesting that his experience of Italy, presumably, in part, the favourable reception of his work by highly critical Italian thinkers, influenced his resolution to concentrate his efforts on poetry. In his declaration of his intentions in Reason of Church-Government, Milton attests to his admiration of Italian literature by placing Torquato Tasso, author of Gerusalemme Liberata, or Il Goffredo as Milton refers to it in his Commonplace Book (385), in a privileged position among the classical poets Homer and Virgil, and the Hebrew Book of Job. In the same work, Milton goes on to explore briefly his aims and motivations for writing a national epic, revealing himself to be indebted not only to Horace's theory of poetry, but also to Renaissance Italian poetics, especially as expressed by Tasso, as well as by Castelvetro and Mazzoni (YP I. 815-711). Based on Milton's high esteem of Renaissance Italian literature and literary theory and the close relationship in the period between literary and visual arts, it seems unlikely that he would have been insensible to the potential value of Italian visual art contemporary with the literature he aspired to emulate.

Although Milton does not expound his views on visual art anywhere in his poetry or prose, it is possible to reconstruct Milton's attitude based upon his humanistic philosophy and theory of poetry. In her influential study of Milton's theory of art, Ida
Langdon deduces, based on the usage of the word “art” in his writings, that “to Milton every adept is an artist, whether in the exercise of his craft he concocts a broth, charts the heavens, or writes an epic” (29). The only stipulation or valid basis for criticism would be, as it was for Milton's poetry, how well the form complements the function and the work's contribution to humanity (Langdon 27). The problem in establishing Milton's attitude toward the visual arts arises in the tension between his identity as an English Puritan and his philosophic sympathies toward humanism. Although Milton was a seventeenth century Puritan, there is no evidence that he himself was an iconoclast, except that he believed that the executed monarch, Charles I, should not be represented in art as a martyr (O'Connell 235). This political iconoclasm, however, does not necessitate, or even suggest, an iconoclastic attitude toward religious art, nor a negative attitude toward art in general, since the justification for political iconoclasm is radically different from that for religious iconoclasm. Conversely, Milton's humanistic attitudes suggest that he would share with his Italian predecessors a fundamental faith in the value of the visual arts in celebrating humanity and the created world, as well as in elevating one's thoughts to a more profound worship of God through the contemplation of such beauty. The humanists of the Italian Renaissance were the first in modern times to raise the status of the artist, either painter, sculptor or architect, to that afforded poets for centuries. Michelangelo was, of course, the quintessential example of this exaltation; after 1530 he was consistently referred to throughout Italy as “il divino” (G.Bull 249). Even if Milton did not maintain such an inflated opinion of artists, it seems virtually impossible that he would have denied altogether the value of art and its potential to elevate one to a greater worship of God through its representation of humanity and the created world.

Such a concept of art is profoundly different from the art against which the English Puritans rampaged in 1540. The iconoclasts objected to representations of God and Christ that were in danger of being worshipped in themselves rather than for what they represented. In the early sixteenth century, although the new humanistic theories of art of the Italian Renaissance had already reached and passed their peak, these theories were just beginning to make their way through the continent and had not yet reached England. As a
result, the visual arts of England were still medieval in conception. The artists of the Italian Renaissance had shifted their focus from exclusively symbolic representations of elements of heaven to a concentration on the human elements of this world. Therefore, while the purpose of art remained primarily to celebrate God, medieval art achieved this through imaginative representations of the divine and its mysterious qualities, whereas Renaissance art achieved it through realistic representations of the human and visible world, the physical manifestations of divine power and nature. As we have seen in Milton's poetry, part of the humanistic philosophy was the idea that one's understanding and worship of God would be increased through the contemplation of the created world. However, there was always the threat that one would worship the created world instead of seeing the reflection of God's omnipotence therein. The same conception can be applied to art; works of art representing the created world are meant to bring the viewer to a greater appreciation and love of God, but if they are viewed without the proper attitude, the viewer might end up worshipping the work in itself, or what it represents, rather than what the work is actually celebrating. Based on his insistence upon the necessity of active and unceloistered virtue in Areopagitica, it seems reasonable to surmise that Milton would have maintained the same attitude toward the visual arts, namely that one should have one's virtue tested through art as it is through literature, no matter what the potential consequences for those who fail to recognize the divine in its beauty.

O'Connell, in his consideration of Milton's relationship to Italian art also suggests that Milton's lack of experience of works of visual art would have necessarily limited his ability to appreciate the works of art he saw in Italy. However, Milton's expressed interest in music, architecture and landscape-gardening reveals a willingness to broaden his knowledge and apply his literary theories to other arts. At the end of Langdon's short consideration of Milton's writings on visual arts, she concludes that, despite the scarcity of information about Milton's attitude toward the visual arts, "[i]t does not follow that to a mind so endowed and so sensitive other avenues of aesthetic enjoyment were closed, or other fields of technique unfamiliar" (58). Further, Renaissance art and literature shared many sources, including the Bible, works of classical literature and philosophy, the
theological musings of the Church Fathers and the popular writings of humanistic philosophers, facilitating the transition from literary studies to the study of the visual arts. Like Langdon, Treip believes in the interchangeability of learning from poetry to painting:

"To 'read' an allegorical painting was therefore a case of working back to recover the embedded allusions, usually literary and mythological in origin, and reinterpreting them in their new visual setting. It requires no special evidence to think that the learned Milton too could respond to the allusions in a 'speaking picture' with ease and recognition, and interpret its new *invenzione* in just the way he could read and interpret a densely allusive Renaissance literary text." ("'Celestial Patronage'" 241)

Therefore, Milton, being such an accomplished literary scholar, would have had little difficulty understanding and appreciating the arts of Italy.

The information supplied by the diaries of contemporary English travellers to Italy offers a considerable amount of information applicable to Milton and his Italian sojourn. From their accounts, Milton's tour of the Vatican and perusal of Michelangelo's decoration of the Sistine Chapel becomes virtually indisputable. The problems arising from the lack of surviving evidence of Milton's attitude toward visual arts are likewise overcome by reference to his humanistic attitudes toward literature. Milton's tendencies toward humanistic beliefs were largely shaped by his encounters with ancient texts, as well as Renaissance reformulations of classical ideas. These thoughts and works were also influential in shaping Michelangelo's artistic theory. The result of this significant overlap in philosophical readings and influences is that many of the ideas expressed in Michelangelo's artwork are also evident in Milton's poetry over a century later. Many of these beliefs were likely formed prior to Milton's continental journey, but the sixteen months Milton spent away from England proved to be instrumental in the formation of his character and career. Although Milton's Protestant beliefs seem to have been confirmed by his direct experience of Catholicism, upon his return to England, Milton finally decided to pursue a literary career instead of entering the ministry. Milton never gave up the vocation to serve God; however, he decided that the best means for him to do this was no
longer from the pulpit, but rather was through his pen: the art of composition is "the inspired gift of God rarely bestow'd . . . and [is] of power beside the office of a pulpit, to imbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of vertu" (IP I.816). It seems that during his continental tour, Milton had realized that being a minister was not the only, nor necessarily the most effective way for him to devote himself to God. Milton doubtless arrived at this revelation through his stimulating intellectual and religious debates at the Florentine academies he frequented, as well as through his experience of Renaissance religious art.

The artistic theory embodied in the works of art Milton saw during his travels in Italy is reflected in Milton's own artistic theory as manifested in his later poetry, especially in Paradise Lost. Although Milton is assumed to have seen a considerable amount of humanistic art of the Renaissance in Italy, Michelangelo's decoration of the Sistine ceiling is the most fully developed expression of the theories that were to appear in Milton's poetry. The frescoes in the Sistine Chapel were intended to celebrate not only the power and prestige of Pope Julius II and the papal office, but more importantly they were designed to venerate and glorify God. The means by which Michelangelo effected this reverence of the divine was through an exploration of the world God created. Michelangelo faithfully expressed the humanistic belief that physical "beauty is the reflection of the divine in the material world" (Blunt 62) and that one can arrive at an appreciation and adoration of God through an erudite knowledge of the physical world. The unique element in Michelangelo's humanistic theory was his insistence on the human figure as the supreme physical manifestation of divine beauty (Blunt 62).

These three fundamental aspects of Michelangelo's theory of art are shared by Milton. Paradise Lost was written primarily as a celebration of the power and justice of God. Milton wants to "justify the ways of God to men" (I.26); to present a vision of one of the most incomprehensible moments in history, the Fall of humanity resulting in the introduction of death and suffering into this world, so that people will stop blaming an unjust God for the downfall of humanity and recognize the freedom with which Adam and Eve acted. Milton, like Michelangelo, populates his work of art with human or humanized
characters, expressing the fundamental humanistic principle that, through an exploration of humanity and the visible world, one will arrive at a greater knowledge of the nature of God, which will in turn bring about a deeper love and respect of divinity. Finally, Milton considers physical beauty the reflection of divine and spiritual beauty, so that the contemplation of and participation in earthly beauty and love can yield divine love. Within *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve worship the beauty of each other and the garden as a means to the worship of the beauty of the divine, and their mutual love is a manifestation of their love of God. Milton's belief in the value of pleasure and beauty in bringing about virtuous behaviour is also expressed through the poem as a whole: Milton's choice of poetry as the most noble and effective way to serve God reveals his conviction in the superior potential for art, either visual or literary, to accomplish much more effectively what preaching was struggling to achieve. These prominent features of Milton's artistic theory are essential characteristics in a humanistic approach to life and literature, which Milton gained from his reading of ancient and Renaissance works of literature, as well as through his experience of Italian Renaissance art.

The correspondence between Michelangelo's theory of art and that of Milton becomes more noteworthy when the unique aspects of Michelangelo's exploration of the Fall are compared with Milton's treatment of the same theme in *Paradise Lost*. The resemblances suggest that Michelangelo's Sistine frescoes may have influenced Milton's conception and representation of the myth of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*. Although Milton would have seen numerous artistic explorations on the theme of the fall while in Italy, including the mosaics of San Marco in Venice, which, Diane McColley argues, have a great deal in common with Milton's *Paradise Lost*, it seems that Milton's poem shares the greatest affinity with Michelangelo's humanistic frescoes. The general likeness between the aesthetic and artistic philosophies of Michelangelo and Milton is supported by some more specific correspondences between the works of these two artists. Michelangelo and Milton converge on their unique artistic presentations of Adam and Eve at the Fall, and the larger meaning they extract from the events of the Fall.

One of the most unique aspects of Milton's presentation of the Fall of Adam and
Eve is his treatment of Eve and her role in the Fall. For Milton, the features that distinguish humanity from other creatures are its reason and free will: “Milton's Renaissance humanism and Reformation theology required an explanation of the Fall that took free will and human responsibility into account” (McColley Milton's Eve 14).

Previous interpretations of the story of the Fall were often deficient in their concern for the ideas of free will and responsibility, especially in relation to Eve. Justification for the actions of Adam was often of primary importance, whereas the Fall of Eve was largely dismissed. Eve's temptation by and capitulation to the serpent has been interpreted diversely, but usually at the expense of Eve's integrity. In Genesis, Eve explains her actions to God, saying, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat” (Gen 3:13). In the New Testament, Paul says: “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1Tim 2:14). This idea of the deception was the crux of the majority of later interpretations of Eve's Fall. Commentators commonly “purchase[d] her susceptibility to deceit at the (misogynistic) cost of denying her intellectual sufficiency” (Gallagher 56). Augustine of Hippo believed that Eve must have been an imperfect creation as the act of sin is necessitated by an inherent internal potential to sin (Evans 96-7). Others believed that Eve, because she caused Adam to fall, precipitated the downfall of humanity and is more to blame for fallen existence than Adam (Chambers 120). In these cases, it is clear that “there had been a tendency to minimize Adam's sin at the expense of Eve's” (Evans 287). Conversely, it has also been argued that “since original sin is an effect of Adam's sin, the human race would not have been involved if only Eve had sinned” (Williams 123). Even proto-feminist Renaissance interpreters of the story, such as Amelia Lanyer, saw Eve's sin as less significant than Adam's because of her ignorance and his superiority: “Her fault, though great, yet he was most to blame;/ What Weaknesse offer'd, Strength might have refused,/ Being Lord of all, the greater was his shame” (Lanyer 778-80).

A similar treatment of the Fall developed in artistic representations: in the visual arts the Fall is depicted as Eve receiving the fruit from the serpent in the tree and passing it
on to Adam.\textsuperscript{32} In many late Medieval and Renaissance illustrations, the serpent entwined around the tree is given a human head, most commonly female and the mirror image of the Eve to whom she hands the fruit. Further, Eve traditionally conveys the fruit to Adam before tasting it herself, suggesting that these artists, like many of the early commentators, believed that the Fall of humanity resided in the solitary act of Adam eating the fruit. Diane McColley argues that Eve's abstinence from eating the fruit absolves Eve of all guilt for the Fall of humanity, which she claims is also Milton's intention in \textit{Paradise Lost} ("Edenic Iconography" 211). However, these representations, like the commentaries on the Fall, suggest that Eve is the vehicle of Adam's Fall and that she herself did not participate in the Fall, placing her in the position of the serpent rather than the intimate companion of Adam.

These diverse and often contradictory interpretations, both literary and artistic, deny Eve's freedom of choice and responsibility for her actions, thereby denying in Eve the defining qualities of humanity. Far from being akin to such representations of Eve, as McColley claims, Milton's depiction of her role in the Fall actually deviates from the traditional representations of the fall. In \textit{Paradise Lost}, Eve is tempted alone, eats the fruit, and her actions become relevant to the unfolding of human history, rather than being invalidated or annihilated. Milton insists on both Eve's free will and her shared responsibility for the fate of humanity. Milton's representation of Eve and the Fall seems to be unprecedented in the Medieval and Renaissance literary and artistic tradition, but an examination of Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling will reveal a possible source for Milton's Eve. Whereas many critics have focused on the differences between Michelangelo's handling of the Fall in the Sistine ceiling and that of Milton in \textit{Paradise Lost}, Michelangelo's presentation of Adam, Eve and the Fall greatly anticipates Milton's

\textsuperscript{32} Roland Mushat Frye offers an overview of the Renaissance representations of the fall (286-91), but even more valuable than his cursory discussion are his abundant reproductions of paintings, tapestries and engravings.
literary treatment of the same theme.\textsuperscript{33}

Interpretations of Michelangelo's fresco of the Fall have been almost as varied as the theological contemplations of the doctrine of the Fall itself. Heinrich Wolfflin proposes that the reclining Eve recalls the Roman pose of indolence suggesting that “the luxurious idleness of the woman engenders sinful thoughts” (55-6). Charles de Tolnay sees Eve's position as reminiscent of erotic poses in the art of antiquity, supporting the view that the temptation and Fall were intimately entwined with sexual knowledge and experience (\textit{Michelangelo II} 31). Another more recent critic, John A. Phillips, takes this connection between the Fall and sexual experience further by postulating that “the serpent has either just interrupted or is about to preside over oral sexual activity” (27).

Although these interpretations of the action depicted by Michelangelo in this fresco are persuasively argued by influential scholars, I am ultimately unable to reconcile these readings with my own perception of Michelangelo's fresco. Phillips's suggestion, which he promptly dismisses, that “Michelangelo has depicted a moment \textit{before} the actual Fall, with Adam and Eve interrupted at innocent play” (28) is, to me, a more accurate description of what is happening in this fresco. The beautiful figure of Eve seems to be in the midst of shifting from a passive to an active position, rather than lounging languidly and indolently. As she reaches to her left to take the fruit from the human-headed serpent in the tree, Eve twists her upper body and curls her toes under as she prepares to swing her knees in the same direction in an effort to stand up. This moment of transition between a passive body and an active body is one of Michelangelo's favourite subjects as can be seen in his Prophets and Sibyls. This depiction of Eve as an active figure is in itself revolutionary. While Eve had often been presented plucking the fruit from the tree or being handed the fruit by the serpent, her attitude had almost always been apathetic. Michelangelo changes this by depicting Eve as decisive in her actions, indicative of her conscious apprehension of her actions and their consequences.

\textsuperscript{33} Frye, in his momentous study \textit{Milton's Imagery and the Visual Arts}, remarks that Milton and Michelangelo are at polar opposites in their conception of Eden (241), and Diane McCall claims that Renaissance humanist painters “usually make the Fall their primary act” instead of “celebrating creation and regeneration” as Milton does in \textit{Paradise Lost} (“Edenic Iconography” 200).
Michelangelo is also unique in his presentation of Adam. Like Eve, Adam is portrayed in a moment of physical awakening. He has risen from his seated or reclining position and is reaching over Eve into the midst of the branches of the tree, exerting all his energy in this gesture. The meaning of Adam's action is not absolutely clear: he may be trying to fight off the serpent who is tempting Eve, or attempting to gather some leaves with which to cover himself and Eve (Phillips 24), but the most plausible proposition is that he is reaching into the tree to pluck a piece of fruit for himself instead of waiting to be given the fruit from Eve (de Tolnay *Michelangelo II* 31). As Creighton Gilbert proposes, Michelangelo's dynamic presentation of Adam tends to remove blame from Eve for precipitating Adam's Fall or for being the motivating force for the Fall of humanity, without absolving Eve's guilt (95). In Michelangelo's depiction of the Fall, Adam and Eve choose independently to disobey God, but Eve's act of disobedience is equally important to that of Adam and the Fall of humanity is only brought about by the amalgamation of the autonomous choices and actions of both Adam and Eve.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton's more developed treatment of psychological aspects of the Fall seems quite correlative to Michelangelo's depiction of Adam and Eve in the Sistine ceiling frescoes. In order to provide reasonable justification for Eve's solitary encounter with Satan, Milton introduces a scene not present in the Biblical, literary and artistic accounts of the story. The separation of Adam and Eve is presented in such a way that Eve's motivations for persisting in her desire to work individually are revealed to be totally honest and virtuous. Likewise, Milton insists, through the events leading up to the separation, that in no way is the Fall of humanity necessitated by Adam and Eve facing their respective temptations alone. Further, Eve is shown to be perfectly capable of withstanding temptation alone, but free to choose whether to stand or to Fall. When Eve does come face to face with Satan, it becomes evident in Satan's subsequent tempting of Eve, that Milton affords her the full possibility to refuse Satan's offer to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. When Satan announces this fruit as that which gave the serpent the ability to speak, Eve's immediate reaction is to say:

Serpent, we might have spared our coming hither,
Fruitless to me, though fruit be here to excess,
The credit of whose virtue rest with thee,
Wondrous indeed, if cause of such effects.
But of this tree we may not taste nor touch;
God so commanded, and left that command
Sole daughter of his voice . . . . (IX.647-53)

Eve shows that one of the possible responses to Satan would be to refuse his offer and remain obedient to God's will. Eve is still capable of making a free choice between good and evil and she is fully aware of God's prohibition and the consequences of transgression. Despite Eve's knowledge, she subsequently makes the choice to eat the fruit. Eve is cognizant of the situation and she makes an informed choice to disobey God's commandment. Eve was deceived by the serpent in whom she did not recognize the presence of Satan, but she knew and recognized God's will up until the moment she ate the fruit.

After her own Fall, Eve turns her attention to Adam. Despite her initial inclination to hide her transgression, Eve resolves that "Adam shall share with me in bliss or woe:/ So dear I love him, that with him all deaths/ I could endure, without him live no life" (IX.831-3). When the couple are reunited, Eve reveals to Adam what she has done and encourages him to eat the fruit:

This tree is not as we are told, a tree
Of danger tasted, nor to evil unknown
Opening the way, but of divine effect
To open eyes, and make them gods who taste . . . . (IX.863-6)

She goes on to claim that, like the serpent, she has experienced favourable effects from eating the fruit and can feel herself "growing up to godhead" (IX.877). At this point, Eve still believes that what the serpent told her was the truth and that she is experiencing this elevation to divine status. This is significant for Milton's portrayal of Eve as it indicates that Eve, in her presentation of the situation of Adam, does not assume the role of Satan, as she believes she is telling him the absolute truth, whereas Satan intentionally deceived.
Eve with false information. Eve uses this information to entice Adam to eat the fruit, but she does not yet realize the true effects of her disobedience. Adam comprehends the full significance of the transgression, but he also chooses to fall:

Some cursed fraud
Of enemy hath beguiled thee, yet unknown,
And me with thee hath ruined, for with thee
Certain my resolution is to die;
How can I live without thee, how forgo
Thy sweet converse and love so dearly joined,
To live again in these wild woods forlorn? (IX.904-10)

Far from being deceived, Adam decides to join Eve in the Fall because of his love for her and his dread of solitude. Only at this point, after both Adam and Eve have eaten the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, has the fate of humanity been confirmed. Milton presents the disobedience of Adam and Eve as the individual exercise of liberty and free choice. Both Adam and Eve could have chosen to obey God's command, but they choose not to and must therefore confront the consequences.

Michelangelo's concept of the effects of the Fall may have had an equally profound influence on Milton's Paradise Lost. To the right of the Tree of Knowledge in the temptation fresco is Michelangelo's depiction of the results of Adam and Eve's transgression. Traditionally, the immediate consequence of the Fall is Adam and Eve's physical banishment from Eden. The ejection from the garden is present in Michelangelo's fresco, but it is by no means the sole effect of their transgression. Michelangelo is revolutionary here in his presentation of the psychological effects of the Fall evident in the expressions of wretchedness on the faces of Adam and Eve. De Tolnay provides an excellent account of Adam in this scene:

Adam flees, pursued not by the angel, but by his own inner remorse; the movement of his arms is a form of defence against the furies of his own conscience. And it is revealing that the gesture is taken from ancient sarcophagi representing Orestes pursued by the Erinyes. The angel armed
with the sword is only the materialization of the remorse visible in Adam's features. *(Michelangelo II 32)*

De Tolnay goes on to say that Eve is merely Adam's passive companion, overlooking the equally tormented visage of the fallen Eve. In this scene, Adam and Eve are confronted with the initial results of disobedience in their apprehension of evil and their fallen nature. Although Adam and Eve have not yet been physically punished for their violation of God's trust, the true nature of their punishment, inner turmoil, has already become manifest on their faces.

Similarly, Milton is adamant in his conviction that the psychological consequences of disobedience are far graver than the physical repercussions. The narrator's description of Satan flying to earth offers the first insight into Milton's conception of Hell:

> The hell within him, for within him hell
> He brings, and round about him, nor from hell
> One step no more than from himself can fly . . . . *(IV.20-23)*

Although Satan is leaving the physical boundaries of Hell, he is no further away from the torment of his sin because hell is a state of mind rather than a physical place. Satan himself soon recognizes his condition and utters in despair, "Which way I fly is hell; my self am hell" *(IV.75).* Satan's unequivocal statement about the nature of fallen existence becomes applicable to Adam and Eve soon after their Fall. Following the initial intoxication from eating the fruit, the gravity of the repercussions of their actions becomes apparent. For the first time in the poem, Adam and Eve argue maliciously without the love indicated by their tender grasping of hands in the separation scene. This loss of the natural tendency to love is one of the primary characteristics of fallen existence, and indicative of the psychological reality of disobedience.

Further evidence of the effects of the Fall arise in the arguments put forward by Adam and Eve in this barrage of imputations, revealing the fundamentally flawed logic brought about by their transgression. Milton cleverly integrates into the postlapsarian speeches of Adam and Eve the common interpretations of the story of Genesis that he feels to be erroneous, as well as any objections critics may have with his treatment of the
story of the Fall. Eve is blamed by Adam for initiating the separation and for her failure to withstand Satan's temptation. He later accuses her of being an imperfect creation and identifies her with the serpent. Eve retorts by pointing out that "thou couldst not have discerned/ Fraud in the serpent, speaking as he spake" (IX.1149-50), a claim substantiated by the earlier episode of Satan's successful deception of Uriel (Gallagher 54-5). Further, Eve claims that, if the Fall resulted from their initial separation, as Adam feared it would, he should have "Commanded me absolutely not to go" (IX.1156), concluding "Hadst thou been firm and fixed in thy dissent,/ Neither had I transgressed, nor thou with me" (IX.1160-1). Adam correctly points out:

I warned thee, I admonished thee, foretold
The danger, and the lurking enemy
That lay in wait, beyond this had been force
And force upon free will hath here no place.  

(IX.1171-4)

Through these fallen conversations between Adam and Eve, Milton reveals the nature of the Fall as being not only the physical banishment from Eden still to come, but also the change in one's mental apprehension of the world and attitude toward others. The primary result of the Fall is that Adam and Eve have lost their innocent view of the world, and as Milton states in Christian Doctrine, they know good only through evil, whereas previously they had known good by itself. Therefore, the consequences of the Fall are, as in Michelangelo's fresco, primarily psychological, rather than physical.

Milton's presentation of the Fall as an act involving the participation of both Adam and Eve, affirming Eve's freedom of choice and independent action as well as Adam's, is unprecedented in literary interpretations of the Genesis myth. Similarly, Milton's presentation of the effect of the Fall as principally psychological is unique in commentaries on the Genesis story. However, Michelangelo's conceptualization of the Fall may well have contributed significantly to Milton's novel poetic treatment of Adam, Eve and the Fall in Paradise Lost. Michelangelo's Adam and Eve are tempted at the same time and place, but, like Milton's Adam and Eve, they act independently of one another asserting their free will in their choices to disobey God's will. Further, original
sin, for Michelangelo, is only brought about by the transgressions of both Adam and Eve. By asserting that both Adam and Eve must eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge in order to bring about the Fall of humanity, Michelangelo insists on the importance of Eve's actions in the fate of humanity without blaming her excessively. Michelangelo's positive portrayal of Eve, despite the dominant misogynistic tradition, may have inspired Milton to affirm the human dignity of Eve to an even greater extent when he wrote *Paradise Lost*. Michelangelo's conspicuous deviation from the traditional artistic representations of the consequences of the Fall may have influenced Milton's conception and presentation of the psychological effects of the Fall. In the Sistine Chapel, Adam and Eve's fallen nature is revealed not through their physical surroundings, but rather through the physical manifestation of their mental states, visible on their faces. Milton was likewise concerned primarily with exploring the results of the Fall through the intellectual and emotional changes in Adam and Eve. While Milton does not neglect the physical realities of Adam and Eve's disobedience, they are not the primary focus of his consideration of the Fall.

Another aspect of Michelangelo's presentation of the temptation, Fall and expulsion in the Sistine Chapel bears on Milton's later treatment of these same events in *Paradise Lost*. Roland Mushat Frye details some of the contradictory conceptions of Eden held by Michelangelo and Milton. He contrasts the luxuriance of Milton's Paradise with Michelangelo's barren desert, concluding that “Michelangelo's landscape of Paradise is so pervasively unattractive, so desolate, that we may well wonder whether his Adam and Eve were driven to hopelessness so as to sin out of despair rather than presumption” (241). This rather glib commentary on Michelangelo's landscape seems superficial in its disregard of Michelangelo's aesthetic theory and how it affected his presentation of Eden. Michelangelo's belief in the infinite beauty of the created world and its symbolic representation of spiritual and divine beauty is just as penetrating as Milton's, but his expression of this concept is absolutely unique. For Michelangelo, the divine was reflected in all creation, but most perfectly in the human form. Therefore, instead of including trite elements of ornamentation, such as vegetation, in his momentous celebration of the divine, Michelangelo includes only the necessary elements external to
the human characters. He encourages viewers to concentrate on the human figures because they are, in his view, the most expedient means to the celebration of the divine. Likewise, Michelangelo ornaments his ceiling decoration primarily with human figures, adding other elements, like acorns, oak leaves and banners, only when they are necessary to add variety to the movements and positions of his nude figures.

*Paradise Lost* is not populated by human figures in the same way as the Sistine ceiling frescoes, but Milton shares many of Michelangelo's beliefs in the nature of beauty and the reflection of the divine in the physical. Like Michelangelo, Milton believed that the prelapsarian human figure, created in the image of God, was a clear reflection of divine beauty. When the reader first encounters Adam and Eve in Paradise, they are depicted "In naked majesty" and "in their looks divine/ The image of their glorious maker shone" (IV.290-2). This physical integrity is symbolic of their spiritual purity and innocence, so that after the Fall, their covering themselves with leaves to hide their shame is indicative of their lost innocence and beauty. The corruption of beauty as a result of the Fall is revealed most fully in the figure of Satan. Milton's angels are the most brilliant reflection of divine glory because of their greater degree of spirituality. However, because of their higher station, when the rebel angels fall, the effects are more profound than those experienced by humanity. Therefore, when Satan is discovered at Eve's ear by Ithuriel and Zephon, they do not know which of the rebel angels has invaded Paradise because his original beauty has been so severely disfigured by his disobedience. Satan, unaware of the radical change in his physical appearance, is astounded that he is not recognized, to which Zephon replies:

Think not, revolted spirit, thy shape the same,
Or undiminished brightness, to be known
As when thou stood'st in heaven upright and pure;
Thy glory then, when thou no more wast good,
Departed from thee, and thou resemblest now
Thy sin and place of doom obscure and foul. (IV.835-40)

In *Paradise Lost*, as in Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling, the psychological effects of the Fall
have physical manifestations. Beauty is a reflection of virtue and innocence, so that when those most worthy qualities are forsaken, the reflection of the divine is obscured.

Milton's theory of beauty encompasses not only the integrity of the human figure, but includes all of creation. Like most Renaissance humanists, Milton maintains that God is reflected in everything he created. Unlike Michelangelo, Milton can give full expression to this belief without compromising his presentation of humanity. Paradise, in Milton's poem, is a lush and abundant garden, constantly proliferating. Likewise, the garden is full of animals, all of whom live peacefully with one another. After the Fall,

The bird of Jove, stooped from his airy tower,
Two birds of gayest plume before him drove:
Down from a hill the beast that reigns in woods,
First hunter then, pursued a gentle brace . . . . (XI. 185-8)

The effects of the Fall are evident throughout God's creation, just as the virtue and innocence of creation is evident before the Fall. These details about the garden and the vegetal and animal life therein contribute to Milton's portrayal of humanity in the poem. Milton is able to use the plants and creatures of Paradise as analogies for exploring the state of humanity at different points in the narrative. If Michelangelo had decorated his Sistine ceiling with the vegetal or animal detail seen in Milton's Paradise, they would have detracted the viewer's attention from the human figures central to the meaning of the decoration. Therefore, although Michelangelo's depiction of a barren Paradise may seem contradictory to Milton's profuse garden, an examination of their respective theories of beauty reveals that Michelangelo and Milton converge significantly on their ideas of physical beauty and its reflection of the divine.

Michelangelo and Milton also share the conviction that the Fall of humanity is not solely, or primarily a tragedy, but rather part of a larger comic pattern, like Dante's Divine Comedy. Instead of concentrating solely on the negative effects of the Fall, both

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34 Milton originally conceived of the story of the Fall of Adam and Eve as a tragedy, exploring the idea in four drafts for a play. I believe Milton finally decided to write an epic rather than a tragedy largely because of his optimistic vision of the Fall as the introduction of redemption to overcome the effects of Adam and Eve's disobedience.
Michelangelo and Milton lead the reader through the negative to the positive, redemptive promise also brought about by the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Diane McColley has argued that Milton's regenerative view of the Fall is reminiscent of the mosaics that decorate the San Marco Basilica in Venice ("Edenic Iconography" 213). McColley is correct in her consideration of the importance of the regenerative aspect of the Fall in *Paradise Lost*, but Milton's exploration of this theme is more akin to Michelangelo's presentation of the renovation of humanity's relationship with God through the Son as a result of the Fall than it is to the mosaics of San Marco. Michelangelo's presentation of Eve emphasizes her role as mother of humanity and her connection with Mary, the second Eve, who will become the mother of God, an identity also accentuated in Milton's portrayal of Eve. Michelangelo also uses the history of humanity following the Fall to demonstrate the direct link between the Fall of humanity and the birth of Christ in the act of renewal. Milton uses the same means to inform his characters, as well as his audience, of God's promise that, although Adam and Eve disobeyed him willfully and knowingly, their separation from God and heaven will eventually be overcome by the sacrifice of the Son. These various resemblances between Milton's presentation of the regeneration of humanity and that of Michelangelo, which I will now explain further, seem to suggest that one of Milton's influential sources for *Paradise Lost* was Michelangelo's decoration of the Sistine Chapel.

Michelangelo is often criticized for his masculinized portrayal of women, which is interpreted as being a manifestation of his contempt for women and femininity, rather than the expression of his belief in the androgynous nature of true beauty. When looking at Michelangelo's complete programme of decoration in the Sistine Chapel, it is very difficult to find evidence in support of the view that Michelangelo maintained a disdainful attitude toward women. The women represented on the ceiling are at least as important as the men in both number and position and they are an integral part of the meaning of the ceiling. As we have seen, Michelangelo's portrayal of Eve at the Fall affords her a dignity and eminence not often assigned to Eve in the Renaissance. Eve is further privileged by Michelangelo in the creation scene. McColley would argue that Michelangelo's depiction
of Eve as emerging directly out of the side of Adam rather than being fashioned by God apart from Adam, as in the San Marco mosaics, is degrading to Eve and alien to Milton's conception of the event in *Paradise Lost*. This may be true of Michelangelo's *Creation of Eve*, but he compensates for this apparent slight to Eve's individuality and autonomy by his positioning of this fresco. The *Creation of Eve* is the first fresco in the decoration within the presbyterium, the most important location in the ceiling decoration. As a result, Eve becomes the focal point of the ceiling, both visually and figuratively as she provides the link between fallen humanity and their renewed relationship with the divine. Her central position also establishes a connection between Eve and Mary, to whom the chapel is dedicated. Therefore, instead of having the Fall as the central fresco in his depiction of the initial incidents in Genesis, Michelangelo places Eve at the centre in an effort to emphasize the regenerative aspect of the Fall by making a connection between Eve and Mary.

Milton uses the same technique of emphasizing the identity between Eve and Mary in order to remind his audience that Adam and Eve's transgression brought about the salvation of humanity as well as its Fall. The connection between Eve and Mary is made at two crucial moments in the poem, making the audience acutely aware of the significance of this identification. When Raphael descends to advise Adam about the danger of Satan and the necessity of his continued obedience, the narrator describes the angel's greeting of Eve, "On whom the angel Hail/ Bestowed, the holy salutation used/ Long after to blest Marie, second Eve" (V.385-7). Raphael's visit follows closely Adam and Eve's discussion of Eve's disturbing dream, a foreshadowing of the Fall still to come. By placing the first reference in the poem to Mary and her intimate association with Eve here, Milton is indicating, even before the actual Fall, that, although the effects of the Fall will be devastating for humanity, in the end their relationship with God will be repaired. Subsequently, Eve is not mentioned in relation to Mary again until the Son has descended to pronounce his judgement after the Fall. In ordaining the punishment of the serpent, the Son says: "Her seed shall bruise thy head, thou bruise his heel" (X.181). The Son goes on to obliquely explain the future events to occur involving himself and Satan, beginning his
explanation "Jesus son of Mary second Eve . . ." (V. 183). This is the first judgement the Son utters and, in presenting it in this way, Milton reveals the salvation of humanity before its punishment. Therefore, regeneration becomes the most significant effect of the Fall, superseding in importance the penalty of disobedience, although temporally it will follow a long period of punishment for humanity. By the end of the poem, Adam and Eve have realized the significance of the Son's pronouncement, but only after they have been shown the future history of humanity.

Milton's treatment of the history of humanity in the final two books of *Paradise Lost* also seems to recall Michelangelo's presentation of the events following the fall and the ancestors of Christ in the Sistine Chapel. The frescoes along the central axis of the ceiling depicting events subsequent to the Fall indicate the possible degrees of separation between God and humanity. The scene of the sacrifice represents the closest fallen humanity can come to reunification with the divine through the artificial physical acts of worship and obedience. Michelangelo's fresco of the flood depicts the division between those who are virtuous, Noah and his family in the ark, and the rest of humanity, by this time so depraved that God can do nothing but have them destroyed. Finally, *The Drunkeness of Noah* portrays virtue as a quality that must be constantly affirmed through the maintenance of the proper attitude toward God revealed by one's actions to others in this world. In this case, Noah's son, who had previously been one of the few righteous people who deserved to be spared from the flood, has now forgotten his proper relationship to his father and mocked him in his drunkenness and nakedness. Ham's loss of respect for his father is indicative of his loss of respect for God, as the relationship between father and son on earth is symbolic of an individual's relationship with God. Through these Genesis frescoes, central to the decoration of the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo explores the relationship between humanity and the divine, initially intimate, but severed by the Fall, never to be fully repaired until the sacrifice of Christ.

Interpretations of Michelangelo's exploration of the Fall usually end with the nine histories along the spine of the chapel ceiling, but he goes on to explore the effects of the Fall throughout the rest of his decoration of the ceiling. While Michelangelo revealed
three specific attitudes one may maintain toward God after the Fall in the Noah frescoes, he presents a more general view of fallen humanity in the lunettes and spandrels connecting the ceiling with the walls. In these spaces, Michelangelo creates a procession of people leading from the Fall of humanity to the redemption made possible and necessary by the Fall. Although these figures are presented as ordinary people, they are the noble ancestors of Christ. Michelangelo's representation of these characters without the traditional regal symbolism indicates his belief in the common suffering of humanity in the vicissitudes of life brought about by the Fall without regard to earthly distinctions: no matter who you are in this world, you must suffer the effects of the Fall with every other human being. Although the commonality of fallen human existence is stressed in these frescoes, the ultimate promise of redemption is also prominent in this area of the ceiling decoration. The ancestors of Christ, instead of being represented as kings and leaders of the Jewish people, are depicted as babies and children in the care of their parents, primarily their mothers. The concentration on the maternal role of women in these frescoes produces a dual effect on the viewer: on the one hand, one recalls God's pronouncement that, as a result of the Fall, Eve's suffering in childbirth will increase; on the other hand, the mother and child compositions are reminiscent of Renaissance representations of the Madonna and Child, evoking the promise that from Eve's seed there will emerge humanity's redeemer. Therefore, while these frescoes reveal the effects of the Fall in their exploration of the nature of fallen existence, they also remind the viewer of the promise of redemption and lead directly from the Fall to the birth of Christ, the redeemer.

Milton's treatment of the history of humanity as presented to Adam by Michael shares a great deal with Michelangelo's depictions in the central histories and the lunettes and spandrels. Michael is sent to Paradise by God, not only to expel Adam and Eve from the garden, but also to reveal the substance of the Son's prophesy that the seed of woman will defeat Satan and overcome the evil brought about by the Fall. In doing this, Michael will give Adam, Eve and the rest of humanity the motivation to continue living and the hope that things will improve. Michael brings about this hope in Adam and Eve by
revealing to them the future history of humanity:

know I am sent
To shew thee what shall come in future days
To thee and to thy offspring; good with bad
Expect to hear . . . .  

(XI.356-9)

Like the Old Testament Prophets and pagan Sibyls represented in Michelangelo's ceiling, Michael is a messenger sent from God to humanity to remind humanity of the promise of salvation and to renew human faith in divine love and mercy. Although the overall effect of the historical vision is the inspiration of redemption, the prophecy reveals the suffering introduced into the world through the Fall. The cruelty and brutality of fallen human nature is the first thing imparted to Adam in the story of Cain's slaying of his brother Abel, bringing Adam to the full realization of the gravity of the results of his transgression. Adam's horror is intensified by the vision of the infinite disease and suffering that will cause death in Adam's progeny. Michael goes on to reveal the wantonness of humanity and the violent nature that ensues, causing death and destruction on a massive scale. This is followed by the vision of the events surrounding the annihilation of humanity by the flood, save one virtuous family. In the story of Noah and his family there is the possibility of survival, as in the story of Enoch being rescued from the war, there was hope for renewed favour with God, but for Adam these small signs of hope are not enough to overcome the despair brought on by the vision of the immorality and iniquity of humanity. Adam laments his insight into the future:

O visions ill foreseen! Better had I
Lived ignorant of future, so had borne
My part of evil only, each day's lot
Enough to bear . . . .  

(XI.763-6)

The first part of Michael's prophecy to Adam deals primarily with the negative results of the Fall, revealing to Adam the wretchedness of fallen existence, before moving on to the revelation of the possibility for virtuous action in the fallen world and finally the redemption of fallen existence by the sacrifice of Christ.
Adam's attention begins to be redirected toward regeneration with the promise of a new race of humanity to emerge from Noah and his sons who, with the animals, survive the destruction of the flood. Adam says:

Far less I now lament for one whole world
Of wicked sons destroyed, than I rejoice
For one man found so perfect and so just,
That God vouchsafes to raise another world
From him, and all his anger to forget. (XI.874-8)

Following this foreshadowing of the act of true reparation, Milton makes a division in the narrative in order to emphasize the shift from the negative result of the Fall to the positive consequences that will eventually supersede the former. The narrator's comment "so here the archangel paused/ Betwixt the world destroyed and world restored" (XII.2-3), also draws the reader's attention to the change about to occur in the nature of Michael's revelation to Adam. Michael's narrative continues with the story of the Tower of Babel, another presumptuous act by humanity against God. He goes on to reveal the corruption of Noah's son Ham and his shift from virtue to idol-worshipping, even within living memory of the flood, God's punishment for depravity. However, out of Ham's descendants, Michael reveals that a virtuous tribe will emerge,

that all nations of the earth
Shall in his seed be blessed: by that seed
Is meant thy great deliverer, who shall bruise
The serpent's head; whereof to thee anon
Plainlier shall be revealed. (XII.147-51)

Abraham offers the first concrete connection with the redemption to come, establishing the direct ancestral lineage of Christ. Following the story of Moses and Aaron, Adam claims

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35 In its first edition, the poem was divided into ten books, but before the fourth printing, Milton decided to divide it into twelve books. In doing so, Milton divided Books VII and X of the original edition, and adding only a few lines, including the ones to be quoted in my next sentence (Fowler, Introduction 8). This resulted in the increased emphasis on the division between the narratives of damnation and those of restoration in Michael's prophesy.
to comprehend the nature of the promise made to humanity:

Thou hast revealed, those chiefly which concern
Just Abraham and his seed: now first I find
Mine eyes true opening, and my heart much eased,
Erewhile perplexed with thoughts what would become
Of me and all mankind . . . . (XII.272-6)

However, Adam goes on to question the necessity of the laws given to Moses, betraying his lack of understanding of the degree of degeneration in the world and that although there will be redemption, the world and human existence are still fallen. This duality continues throughout the remainder of Michael's presentation of Christ's ancestors who are, like Solomon, "Part good, part bad, of bad the longer scroll" (XII.336).

Adam does not gain a full understanding of what is to come until the very end of Michael's narrative. Michael's revelation of the birth of Christ evokes in Adam, like the narrative of Abraham and Moses, the declaration that he has a complete grasp of the future. Similarly, his misapprehension is revealed by his question as to where the fight between Satan and the Saviour will take place. Michael's further explanation that the defeat of Satan and sin cannot be brought about by destruction, but rather must be affected "Both by obedience and by love" (XII.403), finally makes Adam perceive the truth about the nature of the Fall, as well as the nature of the redemption. Adam says:

Greatly instructed I shall hence depart,
Greatly in peace of thought, and have my fill
Of knowledge, what this vessel can contain;
Beyond which was my folly to aspire.
Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,
And love with fear the only God, to walk
As in his presence, ever to observe
His providence, and on him sole depend . . . . (XII.557-64)

Eve's hope for the future has also been restored through the revelations of the vision given to her in sleep, preparing her for punishment, as well as revealing to her the renewal to
take place eventually:

This further consolation yet secure
I carry hence; though all by me is lost,
Such favour I unworthy am vouchsafed,
By me the promised seed shall all restore.  (XII.620-3)

By the end of the poem, Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden in punishment for their sins, but they leave with the knowledge that, although the suffering for themselves and their progeny will be severe, it will be bearable because of the promise of redemption and increased glory initiated by the Son and his loving sacrifice for the salvation of humanity.

Milton's presentation of the history of humanity is analogous to Michelangelo's employment of the Genesis history following the Fall and his representation of the ancestors of Christ. In the Noah frescoes, Michelangelo revealed the separation between humanity and the divine will resulting from the Fall, in addition to indicating the possibility for some degree of reparation through righteousness. Further, Michelangelo's ancestors of Christ in the lunettes and spandrels make the direct connection between the Fall and the coming of Christ. The ancestors are portrayed as ordinary people coping with the vicissitudes of life, but their representation as families, primarily as mothers and children, foreshadowing Mary's relationship to Christ, establishes a duality between their arduous existence and the promise of regeneration. Although Milton's presentation of the ancestors of Christ does not employ the same construction of mother and child used by Michelangelo, the effect of evoking the ambivalence of human existence remains the same. The histories told to Adam by Michael reveal that, while the ancestors of Christ are privileged because the saviour of humanity who will fulfill God's promise will descend from their line, they remain plagued by the sins of humanity, initiated by the original sin of Adam and Eve. Likewise, Milton does not include all of the ancestors of Christ as listed at the beginning of Matthew's gospel, and as pictorially represented by Michelangelo; nevertheless, they lead directly to the birth of Christ and the salvation of humanity.
Michelangelo's original decoration of the Sistine Chapel forced the viewer to make the intellectual leap from the ancestors of Christ to the actual birth of Christ and the ensuing redemption of humanity. However, after twenty years Michelangelo returned to paint the Last Judgement on the altar wall, completing his exploration of the creation and Fall of humanity with Christ and the salvation.36 Milton, of course, would have seen only the completed decoration of the Sistine Chapel providing the direct connection between the ancestors and Christ. In Paradise Lost, Milton is able to omit many of the less significant ancestors of Christ without sacrificing his audience's understanding of the lineage of Christ. Both Paradise Lost and the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel use the stories of the Old Testament to reveal to their respective readers and viewers the promise of salvation, as well as the punishment inflicted on humanity as a result of the Fall.

The similarity between Michelangelo and Milton becomes evident when their respective works of art are examined beyond the superficial differences often used as the basis for dismissing comparative examinations of their works. The possibility for Michelangelo's influence on Milton is established by looking at Milton's Italian voyage through the limited evidence he left in combination with the extensive evidence of contemporary travellers. There can be little doubt that Milton would have seen the Sistine Chapel and Michelangelo's frescoes while he was in Rome. Further, Milton's humanistic tendencies suggest that his attitude would be more akin to the tradition out of which Michelangelo's frescoes emerged than to the iconoclastic attitudes still prevalent in England at the time. Milton's poetics reveal his liberal view of the potential of poetry to celebrate God and his creation most effectively by combining learning with pleasure: poetry is pleasurable and entertaining while being instructive. It takes very little to extend this view of the dual nature of poetry and apply it to the visual arts as Milton did to music. Based on the surviving evidence, it is very likely that Milton maintained a positive attitude toward art and its potential, while remaining wary of the allurements it possesses.

36In Vasari's discussion of Michelangelo, he mentions that Michelangelo intended to repaint the entrance wall of the Sistine Chapel at the same time he painted the Last Judgement with a fresco depicting the fall of the rebel angels. This information would have been readily available to Milton, and may have served as the inspiration for his later organization of Paradise Lost (Vasari 458).
Due to the overlap in educational sources, it comes as no surprise that many of the attitudes and theories of art seen in Michelangelo are also evident in Milton's thought and poetry over a century later. They share a fundamental belief in the value of humanity and human experience, as well as an unequivocal faith in the beauty and virtue of the created world, a reflection of these qualities in the divine. Michelangelo concentrated on the human body as the manifestation of divinity in the physical world, whereas Milton was able to incorporate a great deal more of the natural world into his poem, complementing rather than detracting from the human drama at the centre of the narrative. Elements in Milton's treatment of the Fall in *Paradise Lost* that appear to lack literary precedents are conspicuous in Michelangelo's frescoes. Milton's presentation of Eve as an autonomous, but crucial participant in the Fall of humanity has long been considered unprecedented in Renaissance treatments of the Fall. However, upon further examination, Michelangelo's treatment of the Fall exhibits a similar attitude toward the individual nature of Adam and Eve's actions. Michelangelo's depiction of the effect of the Fall manifesting itself in the visages of Adam and Eve revealing the psychological nature of their punishment, also finds expression in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in which he presents hell as a state of mind rather than of body. When considered as a whole, Michelangelo's decoration of the Sistine ceiling offers a primarily regenerative vision of the Fall, concentrating more on the promise brought about by Adam and Eve's transgression rather than the curse levelled on them for their disobedience. Eve's intimate relationship with Mary, the mother of Christ, is emphasized by the central position she maintains in the historical frescoes along the axis of the ceiling. The promise that from Eve's seed will arise the saviour of humanity is likewise accentuated by Michelangelo's depiction of the ancestors of Christ as families, echoing earlier representations of the holy family, primarily of the Madonna and Child. Milton also uses this identification between Eve and Mary at crucial moments in *Paradise Lost*.

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37 Merritt Hughes's "Myself am Hell" studies Milton's conception of Hell as a psychological state within the context of its literary tradition. The most important advocate of the interpretation of Hell as a spiritual rather than a physical state, according to Hughes, was Cristoforo Landino (a disciple of Marsilio Ficino) in his commentary on Dante's *Divine Comedy* (140). Both Michelangelo and Milton would have been intimately familiar with this popular commentary and the views it propounded.
Lost to indicate the promise of redemption brought about by the Fall. Further, like
Michelangelo, Milton uses the history of the ancestors of Christ to inspire Adam with the
knowledge of salvation, in addition to revealing to him the suffering his progeny must
endure before God's promise is fulfilled. Although the means by which Michelangelo and
Milton explore these themes in their respective works of art may not correspond exactly,
their meaning remains remarkably similar and unique in their own media. For this reason,
the possibility that Milton was deeply affected by Michelangelo's treatment of the Fall in
the Sistine ceiling appears to be a great deal more feasible than previous scholarship has
allowed.
CONCLUSION

The profound influence that Renaissance humanism had on both Michelangelo and Milton provides the foundation upon which the two may appropriately be brought together in a comparative study. Executed at the height of the humanistic movement in Italy, Michelangelo's frescoes decorating the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel represent the most extensive exploration of the humanistic theme of the dignity of humanity and human existence. A century and a half later, Milton's *Paradise Lost* embodies the same humanistic beliefs. Aside from the obvious connection between the Biblical stories dealt with in the Sistine ceiling and *Paradise Lost*, Michelangelo's frescoes and Milton's poem are linked by their unique presentations of this theme.

Their belief in the dignity of humanity forces both artists to portray Adam and Eve as free and autonomous individuals who chose to disobey God's sole commandment despite their knowledge and apprehension of the gravity of such rebelliousness and the severity of the consequences for themselves and their progeny. While many Renaissance humanists advocated the advanced education of women, their attitudes toward Eve and their explanation of Eve's role in the fall of humanity often denies Eve the dignity afforded men at the time. However, both Michelangelo and Milton apply to women the views traditionally attached only to men, insisting on Eve's participation in the freedom to determine one's own nature bestowed on humanity by God. Women, like men, are able both to elevate themselves to the spiritual level of angels and degrade themselves to the level of animals based on their choices and actions. Since Michelangelo and Milton afford the female race free will, they must necessarily make women responsible for their actions. Therefore, in both the Sistine Chapel and *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve are depicted as equal partners in both the Fall of humanity and the punishment that ensues. Likewise, Adam and Eve are equal partners in the regeneration and salvation promised by the Son on

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38 For a good selection of humanistic exegeses of Eve and the fall of humanity see Pamela Joseph Benson *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman*. In *Women of the Renaissance*, Margaret L. King looks at the issue from the perspective of Renaissance women, offering a variety of female treatments of Eve and the fall, some of which are equally damning of the female race as contemporary male treatments.
behalf of their merciful God to repair the damage resulting from the Fall.

This, the regenerative aspect of the Fall, is of primary concern in both Michelangelo's and Milton's presentation of the Genesis story. Instead of dwelling on the damning effects of Adam and Eve's transgression, Michelangelo and Milton look past those to the promise of salvation through the magnanimous sacrifice of Christ. This concentration on regeneration and salvation likewise arises out of the humanism of both artists. Humanism of the Renaissance introduced into Catholicism, and later Protestantism, a generous view of humanity that superseded the dominant Augustinian pessimism that advocated the depravity of humanity and its existence on earth. Rejecting this negative view of this world, humanists asserted a view of the value and potential virtue of human experience, emphasizing not only the regenerative aspect of the Fall, but also the fundamental goodness of human beings, the images of God.

Finally, both Michelangelo and Milton adhere faithfully to the humanistic ideals of learning. Both men were highly educated in classical and Christian tradition, both of which find expression in their respective works. The knowledge gained by the rigorous humanistic programme of education undertaken by Michelangelo and Milton is employed in the instruction of the viewers of the Sistine Chapel and the readers of *Paradise Lost*. The Horatian ideal that poetry teaches while entertaining, the basis of Milton's own poetics, was applied to the visual arts early in the Renaissance. Like poetry, painting, sculpture and architecture were to "teach, please, and move" its viewers in an effort to lead them to virtuous behaviour (D. Kelley 120). Michelangelo, greatly concerned with his audience, manipulated his decoration of the Sistine Chapel ceiling so that worshippers, entering the chapel, were progressively brought toward virtue culminating in Christ's sacrifice and his merciful judgement of human souls based on their earthly actions. Milton explicitly reveals his purpose in writing *Paradise Lost*, indicating his desire to bring his audience to an understanding of the true nature of God, which will in turn bring them to virtuous behaviour by their clearer apprehension of God's will.

Despite prior studies of Milton's relation to the visual arts, and even to particular Italian works of art as with Treip and McColley, the remarkable similarities between these
works of Michelangelo and Milton have gone unexamined in Milton studies. Some early critics comment on the general affinity between these two works of art or the two artists themselves, both giants in their respective eras, while others see only the apparent contradictions between their artistic expressions. Although their beliefs may seem divergent upon initial consideration, a more comprehensive examination of the works of Michelangelo and Milton shows that the affinities mentioned by early scholars are present and merit greater investigation. Further, the correspondences between the works of Michelangelo and Milton seem significantly more pervasive than the interart analogies suggested by McColley between Milton and the mosaics of San Marco in Venice, and Treip's connection of Italian Renaissance pictorial representations of the figure of Urania with the muse of Paradise Lost.

Ultimately, the comparison between Michelangelo's ceiling decoration of the Sistine Chapel and Milton's Paradise Lost arises out of elements integral to each individual work. While the interart analogy provides a new basis for consideration of these two works, it also provides valuable insight into each work independently. By studying Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling in conjunction with Milton's Paradise Lost, Michelangelo's belief in the freedom and dignity of both man and woman becomes more evident. Likewise, Michelangelo's depiction of Genesis, focussing on the fall of humanity, is revealed to be concerned primarily with the promise of regeneration and salvation resulting from the fall, rather than with the damming effects of the fall. Similarly, an examination of Paradise Lost in comparison to Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel exhibits the immensity of Milton's debt to Italian humanism. Milton's insistence on the freedom of humanity, first expressed in Areopagitica and of central importance to Paradise Lost, derives primarily from his encounters with Italian humanistic literature as well as art. However, Milton's views are also revealed to be significantly more advanced than many of his humanistic predecessors, specifically in regards to his attitude toward women. He takes liberal humanistic attitudes toward women further, truly making woman man's equal partner in this life. Further, Michelangelo's arrangement of the decoration of the Sistine Chapel in which the whole history of humanity leads the viewer to the salvation
promised at the fall, elucidates Milton's treatment of the same history in *Paradise Lost*; Adam, Eve and the reader are all brought to a view of humanity that provides them with the hope to allow them to continue living in this fallen world and the faith necessary to effect salvation for themselves. Whether or not Michelangelo's decoration of the Sistine Chapel ceiling was on the mind of Milton when composing *Paradise Lost,* a study of the two in conjunction brings us to a greater understanding and appreciation of the works of both artists, their optimistic and regenerative views of humanity in an age dominated by pessimism and the qualities that make them accessible to audiences centuries after their original composition.
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