The Hierarchical Concept in Paradise Lost

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THE HIERARCHICAL CONCEPT IN PARADISE LOST

BY

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CHAPTER I

THE HIERARCHICAL CONCEPT

C. S. Lewis in his Preface to Paradise Lost devotes a chapter to the idea of Hierarchy which, in his estimation, "deserves a book." James Holly Hanford also refers to Milton's deep-seated conviction that there is a natural order of superior and inferior in the universe the preservation of which means peace and justice. It will be the object of the present thesis to give a full exposition of this concept as it is found in Paradise Lost by a close and detailed analysis of the text of the poem.

It will first be necessary, however, to define what is meant by the hierarchical concept. That advanced by C. S. Lewis may be taken as a good working definition.

According to this conception degrees of value are objectively present in the universe. Everything except God has some natural superior; everything except uninformed matter has some natural inferior. The goodness, happiness, and dignity of every being consists in obeying its natural superior and ruling its natural inferiors.

3 Lewis, 72.
Such a concept is neither new nor peculiar to Milton. It belongs to Western tradition and may be traced historically through the works of the great thinkers of the past. Indeed, it is the conclusion of almost any man who reflects at all upon the world about him.

Aristotle was at once led to this doctrine of hierarchy or scale of existence by his distinction of potency and act. For it is clear that an object which is in act as regards its own terminus a quo may be in potency as regards a further terminus ad quem. At the bottom of the ladder, so to speak, is prime matter, in itself unknowable and never actually existing apart from form. In union with the contraries, heat, cold, dryness, and wetness it forms the four bodies earth, air, fire, and water. These relatively simple bodies in turn form organic bodies and the simple tissues of living beings. Thus we gradually ascend the rungs of the ladder to the intellect of man, the intelligence of the celestial spheres, and finally the primum mobile.

This concept of hierarchy appears not only in Aristotle's system of metaphysics but is evident as well in his philosophy of nature and psychology. He maintained that the earth, spherical in shape, is at rest in the center of the universe. Round it lie the concentric heavenly spheres, of which the outermost containing the fixed stars owes its motion to the prime mover. Indeed, he treats at length of the hierarchic arrangement of
these spheres and their proportionate movements. Similarly, in his De Anima Aristotle carefully points out how the different types of souls form a series of such a kind that the higher presupposes the lower. Thus he carefully distinguishes nutritive, sensitive, and rational souls, each of which unites to itself the powers of the lower souls besides enjoying special powers of its own.

Since this principal of hierarchy is so basic to Aristotle, it is not surprising to find that he restates it at the beginning of his Politics before applying it to civil society. After first proving how in every department of the natural universe we find the relation of ruler and subject, he proceeds to explain just what the proper hierarchy should be.

...it is clear that the rule of the soul over the body, and of the mind and the rational and expedient; whereas the equality of the two or the rule of the inferior is always hurtful. The same holds good of animals in relation to men; for tame animals have a better nature than wild, and all tame animals are better off when they are ruled by man; for then they are preserved. Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind.

This concept of hierarchy may also be traced through the works of the Neo-Platonists. For them, however, hierarchy was based not upon the Aristotelian principles of act and potency but upon the theory of emanation. Thus according to Plotinus the one gives rise to Nous from which in turn emanates the World-soul, individual souls, and finally matter.7 Proclus holds a similar doctrine.8 But it is in the works of the Christian Neo-Platonist, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, that we find, perhaps, the most thorough exposition of the doctrine of hierarchy.

Dionysius in his works De Divinis Nominibus, Theologia Mystica, and De Coelesti et Ecclesiastica Hierarchia, which were translated by John Scotus Erigena at the beginning of the Scholastic era, makes this concept, as it were, the center about which he elaborates out his whole philosophy and theology. Indeed, St. Thomas in treating of this concept of hierarchy quotes Dionysius again and again. The Areopagite defines hierarchy as:

...the holy order, knowledge, and striving which approaches to Godlikeness as much as possible and which rises to the Divine in its own degree by reason of the participa-

8 Proclus, The Elements of Theology, ed. E. R. Dodds, Oxford University Press, London, 1933, see the entirety of Section C: Of the Grades of Reality, Props. 14-24, especially Prop. 20: "Beyond all bodies is the soul's essence; beyond all souls, the intellective principle; and beyond all intellective substances, the One."
tion essential to itself.9

The clearest exposition, however, of this concept of a carefully graduated scale of beings of diverse perfection whose summit is God Himself is found in St. Thomas. He maintains that if anyone

...consider carefully he will find that the diversity of things is made up of degrees, since above inanimate bodies he will find plants, and above these irrational animals, above these intelligent substances, and in each of these he will find diversity according as some are more perfect than others; so much so, that the highest members of a lower genus appear to be close to the higher genus, and conversely: e.g., animals that cannot move are like plants. Hence Dionysius says that divine wisdom has joined together the last things of higher degree to the first things of lower degree. Therefore it is clear that the diversity of things requires that all be not equal, but that there be order and degrees in the universe.10

Nor does St. Thomas, basing his answer upon Aristotle's principle of act and potency, hesitate to give the ultimate metaphysical explanation for this hierarchy so evident in reality.

The plan of the order in things is taken from the diversity of forms. Because, as it is


From the form that a thing has its being, and as a thing, in so far as it has being, approaches to a likeness to God, Who is His own simple being, it follows of necessity that the form is nothing else than a divine likeness existing by participation in things .... Now a likeness to one simple thing cannot be diversified except because the resemblance is more or less close, or more or less distant. Now the closer a thing approaches to the divine likeness, the more perfect it is.11

From what has been said it should be clear just what is meant by the hierarchical concept. That Milton from what we know of his life should have come upon this concept through his wide reading and profound study is sufficiently obvious. Similarly, that this hierarchical conception of things found common statement in the literature of Milton's day, in Milton's favored Spenser, in Shakespeare's Troilus, Taming of the Shrew, Comedy of Errors, and Macbeth has already been sufficiently pointed out by Mr. Lewis.12 What remains is that its centrality in Milton's own thought be indicated.

To trace the hierarchical conception throughout Milton's complete works is clearly beyond the possible scope of the present thesis. Indeed, this work has already been partially done by Saurat,13 Larson,14 Hanford,15 and others who have tried to

11 11 Loc. cit.
12 Lewis, 73-75.
15 Hanford, op. cit.
present some synthesis of Milton's various systems. It will be sufficient here to present an exposition of the hierarchical concept merely as it appears in *Paradise Lost*. Consequently, in developing the thesis primary sources will be used almost exclusively; for the procedure will be to depend upon an analysis of the text of the poem itself rather than upon some of Milton's other works or secondary sources. An attempt will be made to collect all the possible texts indicating the presence of the hierarchical concept in the poem and to present them in an ordered fashion allowing, whenever possible, Milton to speak for himself. Thus the hierarchical scale or reality as perceived and conceived by the mind of Milton will be reconstructed as far as possible.

Milton's perceptions of this graduated order of diverse beings with their consequent superior-inferior relationships group themselves about four focal hierarchies: the heavenly hierarchy, the infernal hierarchy, the new order of things introduced by Creation, and the relationships between Adam, Eve, and their progeny. Such divisions are obviously not adequately distinct and imply considerable overlapping. Yet they do stand out as the four great orders of relationships which occupied the mind of Milton. A chapter will be devoted to each.
CHAPTER II
THE HEAVENLY HIERARCHY

Even the most hurried perusal of Paradise Lost is sufficient to impress the reader with how completely Milton's mind was captivated by the contemplation of the heavenly hierarchy, the first of the four great orders of being upon which he focused his attention. This heavenly hierarchy includes within its compass that entire scale of diversely perfect beings from the most lowly angelic essence to the absolute perfection of the Godhead. So greatly did Milton delight in the graduated perfections of this heavenly order that, in the portrayal of its various grades, he has written, perhaps, the most magnificent lines in Paradise Lost.

At the summit of this heavenly hierarchy, which is indeed nothing else than the upper octave, as it were, of the complete scale of reality, Milton places the ineffable Godhead, Whom he pictures indirectly while describing the hymn of the angelic multitude.

Thee, Father, first they sung, Omnipotent, Immutable, Immortal, Infinite, Eternal King; thee, Author of all being, Fountain of Light, thyself invisible Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sitt'st Throned inaccessible, but when thou shad'st The full blaze of thy beams, and through a cloud
Drawn round about thee like a radiant shrine,
Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear,
Yet dazzle Heaven, that brightest Seraphim
Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes.¹

This God, unlike man who is finite, perfect only to a degree, and needful of the society of others, is, as Milton's Adam points out, one, absolute, infinite, perfect in Himself, and hence without any need of consort.

... Supreme of Things!
Thou in thyself are perfect, and in thee
Is no deficiency found; ...

... already infinite,
And through all numbers absolute, though One²...

He only is omniscient, Raphael tells Adam, and "hath suppressed in night" things
To none communicable in Earth or Heaven.³

In several lines, which are almost matchless for their beauty in all Paradise Lost, He is pictured by Milton as looking down serenely from above on all His creatures.

Now had the Almighty Father from above,
From the pure empyrean where he sits
High throned above all height, bent down his eye
His own works and their works at once to view:
About him all the Sanctities of Heaven
Stood thick as stars, and from his sight received
Beatitude past utterance:⁴

Even Belial admits that beneath that gaze nothing can lie

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³ P.L., vii, 123-24
⁴ P.L., iii, 56-62
hid:

With him, or who deceive his mind, whose eye Views all things at one view?5

Moreover, Milton is careful to make evident the Father's position as Supreme Head of the whole heavenly hierarchy by the titles bestowed upon Him: "great Creator,"6 "Heaven's matchless King,"7 "Kind of Heaven,"8 "Heaven's Lord Supreme."9 Even the Son in addressing the Father confesses this headship.

'O Father, O Supreme of Heavenly Thrones,
First, Highest, Holiest, Blest, . . .'10

Consequently, the dominion of this Supreme Being who rules from the apex of the complete hierarchy of reality in universal and absolute. This fact even Beelzebub is forced to admit:

For he, be sure,
In height or depth, still first and last will reign Sole king and of his kingdom lose no part By our revolt, but over Hell extend His empire, and with iron sceptre rule Us here, as with his golden those in Heaven.11

Hell itself is not "beyond his potent arm" nor exempt "From Heaven's high jurisdiction" but remains "In strictest bondage."12

In discussing the position of the Son in the heavenly hier-

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5 P.L., ii, 188-90.
6 P.L., ii, 385.
7 P.L., iv, 41.
8 P.L., ii, 229.
9 P.L., ii, 236.
archy there will be no attempt to determine whether the passages referring to the Son in *Paradise Lost* should be interpreted in an Arian or Orthodox sense. Nor in the use of the word hierarchy as applied to the relation between the Father and the Son is there any attempt to prejudice the issue by the use of a term which in its strictest theological sense, as St. Thomas points out, should not be used in reference to the Trinity. What is clear is that there is some relation of order between the Father and Son. To point that out will be sufficient. To determine its exact nature is an entirely different question.

Milton describes the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity:

```
... of all creation first,
Begotten Son, Divine Similitude,
In whose conspicuous countenance, without cloud
Made visible, th' Almighty Father shines,
Whom else no creature can behold: on thee
Impressed the effulgence of his glory abides;
Transfused on thee his ample Spirit rests.
He Heaven of Heavens, and all the Powers therein,
By thee created; and by thee threw down
Th' aspiring Dominations...14
```

But His relation of order to the Almighty Father Milton brings out even more clearly through the words addressed to the Son by the Father Himself:

```
'Effulgence of my glory, Son beloved,
Son in whose face invisible is beheld
Visibly, what by Deity I am,
And in whose hand what by decree I do,
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13 Thomas Aquinas, Commentum in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum, Parmae, 1856, II, d.9, q.1, a.1, ad 6.
14 P.L. 111, 383.
Sacred Omnipotence! 15

This relation of order is further brought out first by the position in the heavenly court granted the Second Person of the Trinity:

on his right
The radiant image of his glory sat,
His only Son 16

and second by the titles: "Filial Godhead," 17 "Only-begotten Son," 18 and "Heir of all my might." 19

To the Son also belongs an absolute and universal dominion similar to that proper to the Father by reason of His position as Head of the entire heavenly hierarchy. But the dominion of the Son differs from that of the Father in that His is a "vicegerent reign" received through the decree of the Father.

'Hear, all ye Angels, Progeny of Light,
Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers,
Hear my decree, which unrevoked shall stand!
This day I have begot whom I declare
My only Son, and on this holy hill
Him have anointed, whom ye now behold
At my right hand. Your head I him appoint,
And by myself have sworn to him shall bow
All knees in Heaven, and shall confess him Lord.
Under his great vicegerent reign abide,
United as one individual soul,
For ever happy. Him who disobeys
Me disobeys, breaks union, and, that day,
Cast out from God and blessed vision falls

15 P.L., vi, 680.
16 P.L., ii, 63.
17 P.L., vi, 722.
18 P.L., ii, 80.
19 P.L., v, 720.
Into utter darkness, deep engulfed, his place
Ordained without redemption, without end.  

Consequently, the Son is the "Anointed universal King," "King Anointed" as distinct from the Father Who has His dominion by reason of Himself alone.

This idea is repeated in Book Three where the Father tells the Son:

All power
I give thee; reign for ever, and assume
Thy merits; under thee, as Head Supreme,
Thrones, Princedoms, Powers, Dominions, I reduce:
All knees to thee shall bow of them that bide
In Heaven, or Earth, or, under Earth, in Hell.

and twice orders the elect in heaven to

'Adore the Son, and honour him as me.'

The fact that the Son actually enjoys this complete dominion bestowed upon Him by the Father is evident from His utter victory over Satan and his forces in the Sixth Book and by the fact that as He went into battle

At his command the uprooted hills retired
Each to his place; they heard his voice, and went
Obsequious; Heaven his wonted face renewed,
And with fresh flowerets hill and valley smiled,

Thus Milton places the Son second in the heavenly hierarchy

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20 P.L., v, 600.
21 P.L., iii, 311, (Italics mine).
22 P.L., v, 664, (Italics mine).
23 P.L., iii, 317.
24 P.L., iii, 343.
25 P.L., vi, 781.
and gives to Him an absolute although decreed dominion over all the grades of beings which are below Him. This position of the Son as Regent, under the Father, of the entire heavenly hierarchy will have, as we shall see in the next chapter, its counterpart and parallel in the position accorded Satan in the infernal hierarchy.

That Milton considered the angels to be not all equal but ranged in magnificent orders of heavenly hierarchies beneath the Godhead must be already evident. For the Almighty Father, in the previously quoted decrees whereby He bestows dominion upon His Son, in speaking to the "Sanctities of Heaven," after addressing them by their generic names, always calls upon them according to their ranks and titles.

'Hear, all ye Angels, Progeny of Light, Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers.'

Similarly, the Father declares that beneath His Son

as Head Supreme,
Thrones, Princedoms, Powers, Dominions, I reduce.

But these are not the only places where Milton mentions the division of the heavenly hosts into hierarchies. Again and again hierarchy among the angels is indicated, and always the text stresses the fact that all the angels are not alike but belong to different orders or grades of being. Such passages

26 P.L., v, 600.
27 P.L., ii, 317.
Raphael in describing the preparations in heaven for the reception of the Divine decree proclaiming the dominion of the Son relates how:

\[ \text{th' empyreal host} \]
\[ \text{Of Angels, by imperial summons called,} \]
\[ \text{Innumerable before th' Almighty's throne} \]
\[ \text{Forthwith from all the ends of Heaven appeared} \]
\[ \text{Under their hierarchs, in orders bright.} \]
\[ \text{Ten thousand thousand ensigns high advanced,} \]
\[ \text{Standards and gonfalons, 'twixt van and rear,} \]
\[ \text{Stream in the air, and for distinction serve} \]
\[ \text{Of hierarchies, of orders, and degrees;} \]
\[ \text{Or in their glittering tissues bear emblazed} \]
\[ \text{Holy memorials, acts of zeal and love} \]
\[ \text{Recorded eminent. Thus when in orb} \]
\[ \text{Of circuit inexpressible they stood,} \]
\[ \text{Orb within orb, the Father...spake.} \]

Adam is told that when the Son went forth from high heaven to the work of Creation:

\[ \text{About his chariot numberless were poured} \]
\[ \text{Cherub and Seraph, Potentates and Thrones,} \]
\[ \text{Virtues, winged Spirits...} \]

and that He the Only-Begotten Son of the Father

\[ \text{on the wings of Cherubim} \]
\[ \text{Uplifted, in paternal glory rode} \]
\[ \text{Far into Chaos and the World unborn.} \]

Milton repeats this concept of hierarchy among the angelic powers in Raphael's description to Adam of Satan's and the rebel angels' passage across heaven as they go to gather in the North

28 P.L., v, 583.
29 P.L., vii, 197.
30 P.L., vii, 217.
for their great rebellion.

Regions they passed, the mighty regencies
Of Seraphim and Potentates and Thrones
In their triple degrees—regions to which
All thy dominion, Adam, is no more
Than what this garden is to all the earth
And all the sea, from one entire globose
Stretched into longitude...31

The concept is evident also in Milton's portrayal of Raphael's
own departure from heaven for earth:

from among
Thousand celestial Ardours, where he stood
Veiled with his gorgeous wings, upspringing light
Flew through the midst of Heaven. Th' angelic quires,
On each hand parting, to his speed gave way
Through all th' empyreal road...32

Indeed, Raphael himself concludes his account of one of the
hymns of praise in heaven with "So sang the hierarchies."33 And
at the return of Messiah from his victory over the forces of Satan
each order bright
Sung triumph, and him sung victorious King.34

The Father instructs Michael:

Take to thee from among the Cherubim
Thy choice of flaming warriors35

with which to drive out Adam and Eve and guard the gates of Paradise;

and the Archangelic Power prepared

31 P.L., v, 748.
33 P.L., vii, 192.
34 P.L., vi, 885.
35 P.L., xi, 100.
For swift descent; with him the cohort bright
Of watchful Cherubim. Four faces each
Had, like a double Janus; all their shape
Spangled with eyes more numerous than those
Of Argus, and more wakeful than to drowse,
Charmed with Arcadian pipe, the pastoral reed
Of Hermes, or his opiate rod.36

Indeed, this concept of hierarchy among the angels has its
humorous aspects as well. For Milton relates that while

Betwixt these rocky pillars Gabriel sat,
Chief of the angelic guard awaiting night;
About him exercised heroic games
Th' unarmed youth of Heaven....37

Milton himself must have smiled when after having cast about for
a suitable disguise for his great Arch-Fiend, at last makes him
appear "a stripling cherub"

Not of the prime, yet such as in his face
Youth smiled celestial, and to every limb
Suitable grace diffused; so well he feigned.
Under a coronet his flowing hair
In curls on either cheek played; wings he wore
Of many a coloured plume sprinkled with gold,
His habit fit for speed succinct, and held
Before his decent steps a silver want.38

These texts are sufficient to prove that Milton conceived
of the angels not as being all alike, but arranged in a great
heavenly hierarchy. Moreover, this difference of perfection of
being and function among the angelic choirs in general he applied
to individual angels. Thus, throughout Paradise Lost we find
individual angels as different one from the other as the people

36 P.L., xi, 126.
37 P.L., iv, 549.
38 P.L., iii, 636.
we might meet on the street.

The most prominent of the individual angels we meet in the poem is

Raphael, the sociable Spirit, that deigned
To travel with Tobias, and secured
His marriage with the seven-times-wedded maid. 39

To him Milton devotes a whole series of epithets. At various times he is called "Angelic Virtue," "empyreal minister," "inhabitant with God," "winged Hierarch," "favorable Spirit, propitious guest," "Divine instructor." Milton's portrait of this magnificent being fills us with awe:

A Seraph winged. Six wings he wore, to shade
His lineaments divine: the pair that clad
Each shoulder broad came mantling o'er his breast
With regal ornament; the middle pair
Girt like a starry zone his waist, and round
Skirted his loins and thighs with downy gold
And colours dipped in Heaven; the third his feet
Shadowed from either heel with feathered mail,
Sky-tinctured grain. Like Maia's son he stood,
And shook his plumes, that heavenly fragrance filled
The circuit wide. 46

Nor do the other angels themselves fail to acknowledge Raphael's excellence and the important tasks given him by God:

Straight knew him all the bands
Of Angels under watch, and to his state
And to his message high in honour rise;
For on some message high they guessed him bound. 47
The Archangel Uriel is another of the individual angels to whom Milton introduces us in *Paradise Lost*. This angel, Milton tells us, is "Regent of the Sun"\(^{48}\) and is considered the sharpest-sighted Spirit of all in Heaven.\(^{49}\) But it is "Michael, of celestial armies Prince"\(^{50}\) whom the Almighty Father commissions to:

...lead forth to battle these my sons Invincible.\(^{51}\) For this "Archangelic Power"\(^{52}\) is the "Prince of Angels."\(^{53}\) Gabriel is "Chief of th' angelic guards"\(^{54}\) and "in military prowess next"\(^{55}\) to Michael himself. Immediately next in power\(^{56}\) to Gabriel is Uzziel. And among Gabriel's Cherubic guard Milton singles out Ithuriel and Zephon whom he calls "two strong and subtle Spirits."\(^{57}\) Ithuriel it was who, finding Satan disguised in Eden

"Squat like a Toad, close at the ear of Eve"\(^{58}\) pricked him with his spear forcing him to return to his own shape.\(^{59}\)

The last of the individual angels to whom Milton introduces

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48 P.L., iii, 690.
49 P.L., iii, 691.
50 P.L., vi, 44.
51 P.L., vi, 46.
52 P.L., xi, 126.
53 P.L., xi, 281.
54 P.L., iv, 549.
55 P.L., vi, 45.
56 P.L., iv, 781.
57 P.L., iv, 768.
58 P.L., iv, 800.
Abdiel, than whom none with more zeal adored
The Deity, and divine commands obeyed. 60

It is he who rebukes Satan's seditious speech and later, "stern" and "great in battle," 61 brings great Satan to his knees. His loyalty and obedience Milton eulogizes at the close of the Fifth Book:

'So spake the Seraph Abdiel, faithful found;
Among the faithless, faithful only he;
Among innumerable false unmoved,
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
Nor number nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth or change his constant mind,
Though single. From amidst them forth he passed,
Long way through hostile scorn, which he sustained
Superior, nor of violence feared aught;
And with retorted scorn his back he turned
On those proud towers, to swift destruction doomed.' 62

Such, then, were the individual angels whom Milton enumerates among the heavenly hierarchy. That they too enjoyed a dominion analogous to that of the Son over them is evident from the words of Raphael describing to Adam the battle in heaven. For the least of the angels, Raphael explains:

These elements, and arm him with the force
Of all their regions. 63

However, the main function of the angels, Milton explains, looks

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60 P.L., v, 804.
61 P.L., vi, 171.
62 P.L., v, 896.
63 P.L., vi, 221.
Godwards, as might be expected from their position in the heavenly hierarchy. For although they frequently act as God's messengers and agents, guard some by special grace, their main task is to reverence the Godhead even by alternate singing all night about His Throne. And that they do not fail in this task Adam points out in his beautiful words to Eve:

Millions of spiritual creatures walk the Earth Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep: All these with ceaseless praise his works behold Both day and night. How often, from the steep Of echoing hill or thicket, have we heard Celestial voices to the midnight air, Sole, or responsive each to other's note, Singing their great Creator! Oft in bands While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk, With heavenly touch of instrumental sounds In full harmonic number joined, their songs Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to Heaven.

Such, then, was Milton's presentation of the heavenly hierarchy from its lowest angelic order to the ineffable Divinity of the Godhead — a portrait of majestic order.

64 P.L., 11, 1030.
65 P.L., v, 657.
66 P.L., iv, 677.
CHAPTER III

THE INFERNAL HIERARCHY

The second of the four great orders of being to which Milton attended was what may be called the infernal hierarchy. It would not be correct to continue the metaphor of the previous chapter and describe the infernal hierarchy as the lower octave of the scale of reality just as the heavenly hierarchy was referred to as reality's upper octave. For the lowest of the fallen angels possesses a nature which, considered merely as a nature, far exceeds that of the most perfect man. The reason for this is that the devils, although they have undergone a moral perversion, remain, nevertheless, essentially angels and hence, in this aspect, superior to men or anything else inferior to angels in the scale of being.

Consequently the infernal hierarchy is better described as the inverted image of its heavenly counterpart. The infernal is the image of the heavenly because both orders of beings are of the same nature. It is an inverted image however since the infernal hierarchy is an order of perversion rather than of perfection.

The infernal hierarchy includes within its compass that
entire scale of diversely perverted beings from the lowest devil to the absolute perversion of Satan. Here again Milton's delight in a graduated order is evident—so much so, in fact, that his effort to portray the awesome majesty of Satan's angelic nature has falsely led some to believe that it indicated a secret sympathy.¹

Angels and devils, Milton believed were essentially the same. For the Father says to the Son:

\[
\text{thou know'st} \\
\text{Equal in their creation they were formed} \\
\text{Save what sin hath impaired.} \quad ²
\]

Consequently, if devils are nothing but fallen angels, and there was a hierarchy among the angels before their sin as has been shown in the previous chapter, there should be a hierarchy among the fallen angels. And if the infernal hierarchy is truly the inverted image of its heavenly parallel, then the most glorious angel before the fall should now be the most perverse according to the axiom *corruptio optimi pessima*. Thus the infernal hierarchy will be a graduated scale of perversion rather than perfection. In the text of Paradise Lost this is just what we find.

Thus, first, Milton portrays Satan as the most perfect of the angels before their fall. Second, Milton changes him to no

¹ See Larson, 206-209, and Hanford, 341-344, for summaries of critical opinion concerning Satan.
² *P.L.*, vi, 689.
ordinary devil but gives Satan special precedence and titles in
hell. Third, because of this superiority the poet describes
Satan as enjoying a dominion in hell analogous to that of the
Son in the heavenly hierarchy.

That Satan—or as he was then called, Lucifer—was the most
perfect of the angels is clear from Raphael's admission to Adam
that Satan was:

\[
\text{brighter once amidst the host}
\]
\[
\text{Of angels than that star the stars among.}^3
\]

Indeed, even at the gathering of the host in hell:

\[
\text{he, above the rest}
\]
\[
\text{In shape and gesture proudly eminent,}
\]
\[
\text{Stood like a tower: his form had yet not lost}
\]
\[
\text{All her original brightness, nor appeared}
\]
\[
\text{Less than Archangel ruined, and the excess}
\]
\[
\text{Of glory obscured.}^4
\]

For in heaven he had been

\[
\text{of the first}
\]
\[
\text{If not the first Archangel, great in power,}
\]
\[
\text{In favour, and pre-eminence.}^5
\]

Even Adam thought that:

\[
\text{Subtle he needs must be who could seduce}
\]
\[
\text{Angels.}^6
\]

Moreover, Satan himself reminds his fellow devils that God
created him their leader, a position which he jealously maintains
even in hell:

---

3 P.L., vii, 132.
4 P.L., i, 589.
5 P.L., v, 659.
Me though just right, and fixed laws of Heaven,
Did first create your leader, next free choice,
With what besides, in council or in fight,
Hath been achieved of merit, yet this loss,
Thus far at least recovered, hath much more,
Established in a safe, inenvied throne,
Yielded with full consent,  

This claim of leadership exercised in heaven was no vain Satanic boast. For the statement of Raphael,

all obeyed
The wonted signal and superior voice
Of their great Potentate; for great indeed
His name, and high was his degree in Heaven;
His count'nance, as the morning-star that guides
The starry flock...  

corroborates the fact that the angelic hosts acknowledged his leadership when, as yet innocent, they withdrew to the North just before the rebellion. And in remorse Satan himself admits how high he had once been lifted by God when in the apostrophe to the sun he exclaims:

how I hate thy beams,
That bring to my remembrance from what state
I fell, how glorious once above thy sphere.

Consequently, there can be no doubt that Satan had once been the most perfect of the angels in the heavenly hierarchy.

Second, that in the infernal hierarchy Milton changes Satan to no ordinary devil is equally obvious. For Milton has a long list of titles by which Satan is singled out from among his comp­peers in a way analogous to that in which the Father and Son

---

7 P.L., ii, 18.
8 P.L., v, 704.
9 P.L., iv, 37.
were distinguished from the remainder of the heavenly hierarchy.
Some of these Miltonic titles for Satan are: "Author of Evil,"10
"The Adversary,"14 "Apostate Angel,"15 "Arch Enemy,"16 and "Super-
ior Fiend."17 Similarly, Beelzebub addresses Satan as:

O Prince, O Chief of many throned Powers
That led th' embattled Seraphim to war
Under thy conduct...18

Leader of those armies bright
Which, but th' Omnipotent, none could have foiled.19

Third, it is also clear that Satan because of this superior-
ity enjoys a dominion over the infernal powers analogous to that
of the Son over the heavenly hierarchy. For Satan himself tells
us how he:

...should ill become this throne, O Peers,
And this imperial sovranty, adorned
With splendour, armed with power...20

10 P.L., v, 704.
11 P.L., ii, 629.
12 P.L., i, 156.
13 P.L., vi, 89.
14 P.L., vi, 282.
15 P.L., i, 125.
16 P.L., i, 81.
17 P.L., i, 283.
18 P.L., i, 128.
19 P.L., i, 272.
if he did not undertake the proposed hazardous journey to earth; and dryly remarks how

The happier state
In Heaven, which follows dignity, might draw
Envy from each inferior; but who here
Will envy whom the highest place exposes
Foremost to stand against the Thunderer's aim. 21

Indeed, Satan is reigning in hell precisely because he said:

...in my choice
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell. 22

Moreover, as Milton describes Satan in his position of dignity and dominion over the infernal hierarchy

High on a throne of royal state, which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,
Satan exalted sat, by merit raised
To that bad eminence; and, from despair
Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires
Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue
Vain war with Heaven... 23

we are reminded of the Son Who rules the heavenly host from the right hand of the Father; and the metaphor of the inverted image as applied to the infernal hierarchy becomes more meaningful. For this is the

nether empire, which might rise
By policy and long process of time,
In emulation to Heaven. 24

Here, instead of the heavenly hierarchy hymning the Creator, the
infernals host rises before Satan and

Towards him they bend
With awful reverence prone, and as a God
Extol him equal to the Highest in Heaven. 25

The metaphor describing the infernal hierarchy as an inverted
image of its celestial parallel holds; for instead of the Son
addressing the All-Perfect Father as
First, Highest, Holiest, Blest, 26
we hear Satan exclaiming
Evil, be thou my Good. 27

Furthermore, far from acquiring glory like Messiah from the praise
of his subjects Satan bemoans:

Under what torments inwardly I groan;
While they adore me on the throne of Hell,
With diadem and sceptre high advanced,
The lower still I fall, only supreme
In misery. 28

Thus carefully does Milton make the rule of Satan over the in-
fernal hierarchy the perverted image of the dominion of the Son
in heaven.

A further instance of this parallelism of Satan, the Lord of
the infernal hierarchy, and Christ, the Ruler of the heavenly
hierarchy, is noted by Hanford.

Attention should be called to the conscious
parallel between Christ's proposed sacrifice

26 P. L., vi, 724.
27 P. L., iv, 110.
28 P. L., iv, 89.
for man's salvation (lines 217 ff.) and the earlier offer of Satan to undertake his ruin. The silence of Heaven before the invitation to assume man's sin corresponds to the hesitation of the fallen spirits when the project of assaulting the new world is proposed. The pronouncement that in Christ 'love hath abounded more than glory abounds' points the contrast with Satan's masked motive of ambitious pride. 29

Indeed, this passage becomes even more striking if we consider how perfectly the Council in Hell secretly dominated by Satan is balanced by the Council in Heaven and the candour of Christ. And for still another instance, compare the parallel descriptions of Satan and Messiah in their chariots riding to battle. 30

In like manner Milton contrasts the dignified words of the Father to the Son as He gives the latter the seat of honor at His right hand:

Here shalt thou sit incarnate, here shalt reign
Both God and Man, Son both of God and Man,
Anointed Universal King 31

with Sin's greedy address to her lord Satan,

thou wilt bring me soon
To that new world of light and bliss, among
The gods who live at ease, where I shall reign
At thy right hand voluptuous, as beseems
Thy daughter and thy darling without end. 32

And Dr. Tillyard has developed at length "Milton's conscious intention" 33 that "Satan and Christ in some sort represent

29 Hanford, 201.
31 P.L., Iii, 315.
32 P.L., ii, 866.
Milton continues the parallel between the heavenly and infernal hierarchies by ranging the devils in various orders below Satan just as the angels were ranged in magnificent orders below the Godhead. That Milton considered the devils to be not alike but ranged in a hierarchy similar to that to be found among the angels is evidenced by Beelzebub's address to the infernal host:

Thrones and Imperial Powers, Offspring of Heaven, Ethereal Virtues! or these titles now
Must we renounce, and, changing style, be called
Princes of Hell?35

Satan also calls upon the devils according to their ranks and titles:

Powers and Dominions, Deities of Heaven,36

Princes, Potentates,
Warriors, the Flower of Heaven.37

In other places he addresses them as "mighty Powers,"38 and "Peers."39 Milton implicitly repeats this concept of order among the devils when he tells us how Satan

His potentates to council called by night.40

This division of the infernal powers into hierarchies is

34 Ibid., loc. cit.
35 P.L., 11, 310.
36 P.L., 11, 11.
37 P.L., 1, 315.
38 P.L., 11, 456.
40 P.L., vi, 406.
even more evident in Milton's description of how at Satan's first summons in hell

Worthwith, from every squadron and each band
The heads and leaders, thither haste where stood
Their great Commander; godlike Shapes, and Forms
Excelling human; Princely Dignities; and
Powers that erst in Heaven sat on thrones. 41

But perhaps the clearest statement of the division of the devils into graduated orders appears in the poet's description of the Council in Hell. Even at Milton's description of the announcement of the Council we note the immediate divisions of heralds, peers, representatives, and commons. For "winged Heralds" 42 proclaim this meeting at the capital "Of Satan and his peers." 43

Their summons called
From every band and squared regiment
By place or choice the worthiest: they anon
With hundreds and with thousands trooping came
Attended. 44

Indeed, this distinction of hierarchy is carefully preserved even during the wholesale metamorphosis which ensues as the devils swarm into Pandemonium. Not all were made small, Milton tells us, and even among those who kept their original shape we note distinctions of degree:

But far within,
And in their own dimensions like themselves,
The great Seraphic Lords and Cherubim
In close recess and secret conclave sat,
A thousand demi-gods on golden seats,
Nor does Milton fail to preserve this same hierarchical order in this description of the dissolution of the Council:

The Stygian council thus dissolved; and forth
In order came the grand Infernal Peers:
Midst came their mighty Paramount, and seemed
Alone th' antagonist of Heaven, nor less
Than Hell's dread Emperor, with pomp supreme,
And god-like imitated state: him round
A globe of fiery Seraphim enclosed
With bright emblazonry, and horrent arms.

The graduated order is preserved until at length "the ranged Powers" disband.

This same distinction of degree is evident also as the infernal host awaits the return of their lord Satan.

There kept their watch the legions, while the Grand In council sat, solicitous what chance
Might intercept their Emperor sent.

When Satan finally appears.

In show plebeian Angel militant
Of lowest order,...

it is only after he has been hailed with loud acclaim by "the Stygian throng" that at last

Forth rushed in haste the great consulting Peers,
Raised from their dark Divan, and with like joy
Congratulant approached him.
yet again Milton emphasizes this hierarchy in hell, for Satan's first words are:

'Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers—
For in possession such, not only of right,
I call ye, and declare ye now....'

Add to the above Satan's oath at his first sight of Adam and Eve:

Hell shall unfold,
To entertain you two, her widest gates,
And send forth all her kings...

and there can be no doubt but that Milton was as careful to preserve a carefully scaled hierarchy among his devils as he had been to present a graduated order among his angels. Moreover, this difference of being among the orders of devils in general Milton extended to individual devils so that his treatment of them is the perfect counterpart to his treatment of the individual angels just as the orders of devils balance the choirs of angels.

The most prominent of the individual fallen angels is Beelzebub whom Milton describes as next to Satan himself in power and crime. He like his leader Satan must have been one of the most glorious of the angels before his fall, for when Satan first notices him he exclaims in shocked surprise:

---

52 P.L., x, 460.
53 P.L., iv, 381.
54 P.L., i, 79.
If thou beest he—but oh, how fall'n! how changed
From him who, in the happy realms of light,
Clothed with transcendent brightness, didst outshine
Myriads, though bright!—if he whom mutual league,
United thoughts and counsels, equal hope
And hazard in the glorious enterprise,
Joined with me once, now misery hath joined
In equal ruin...55

This "Fall'n Cherub"56 it was who at the great Council in Hell
Plead'd his devilish counsel—first devised
By Satan, and in part proposed.57

The magnificence of his being had not been completely eclipsed
even by his fall from heaven, for Milton's portrait of him
clearly shows him as one fully worthy to stand next to Satan at
the head of the infernal hierarchy—so obviously does he excel
the other devils. As he rises to speak in the council he is de-
scribed as one

Satan except, none higher sat— With grave
Aspect he rose, and in his rising seemed
A pillar of state; deep on his front engraven
Deliberation sat, and public care;
And princely counsel in his face yet shone,
Majestic, though in ruin: sage he stood,
With Atlantean shoulders, fit to bear
The weight of mightiest monarchies; his look
Drew audience and attention still as night
Or summer's moontide air....58

The second most prominent of the fiends in hell is Belial,

than whom a Spirit more lewd
Fell not from Heaven, or more gross to love

55 P. L., i, 83.
57 P. L., ii, 378.
58 P. L., ii, 299.
Vice for itself. 59

Yet at the Council he appeared

in act more graceful and humane;
A fairer person lost not Heaven; he seemed
For dignity composed, and high exploit
But all was false and hollow; though his tongue
Dropped manna, and could make the worse appear
The better reason, to perplex and dash
Maturest counsels: for his thoughts were low;
To vice industrious, but to nobler deeds
Timorous and slothful: yet he pleased the ear. 60

How different a character from the great Beelzebub.

Milton sketches two more of the fallen angels rather vividly
Mammon and Molock. The one is completely different from the
other. Mammon, Milton tells us with traces of a quiet smile,
was

the least erected Spirit that fell
From Heaven; for even in Heaven his looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of Heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
Than aught divine or holy else enjoyed
In vision beatific. 61

Moloch is a different type of character. This "sceptered king"
stood up in the council

the strongest and the fiercest Spirit
That fought in Heaven, now fiercer by despair.
His trust was with th' Eternal to be deemed
Equal in strength, and rather than be less
Cared not to be at all; with that care lost
Went all his fear: of God, or Hell, or worse,
He recked not. 62

59 P.L., 11, 490.
60 P.L.; 11, 109.
61 P.L.; 1, 679.
62 P.L., 11, 44.
Besides these principal devils, Milton briefly mentions many other lesser ones who have less important offices among the infernal hierarchy. There is Azzael, "a Cherub tall,"63 Satan's standard-bearer; Mulciber, the architect of Pandemonium, whose hand was known

In Heaven by many a towered structure high;64 the embattled Nisroch, "of Principalities the prime,"65 the vanquished Ariel, Adramelech, Asmadai, Arioch, and Ramiel.66 Add to these the catalogue of those, "the prime in order and in might," who rallied from the burning lake to Satan's summons67 and we have an enumeration of individual devils among the infernal hierarchy which far exceeds the individual angels of the heavenly hierarchy mentioned by Milton.

Thus, throughout Paradise Lost we find that Milton's presentation of the infernal hierarchy as an inverted image balances his treatment of the heavenly hierarchy. And, lest any point of contrast be omitted, he gives to the fallen angels a power over the elements comparable to that which Raphael told Adam the least of the angels in heaven enjoyed.68 For during the building of Pandemonium Milton comments, while comparing Satan's palace with

63 P.L., 1, 534.
64 P.L., 1, 732.
65 P.L., vi, 447.
68 See Chapter II, 22.
Babel and "the works of Memphian kings," how the 
greatest monuments of fame, 
And strength, and art, are easily outdone
By Spirits reprobate, and in an hour
What in an age they, with incessant toil
And hands innumerable, scarce perform.69

The inverted image is completed; and the outline of the second
of the four great orders of being to which Milton attended stands
forth, a portrait not of a graduated scale of perfection but of
perversion.

69 P.L., 1, 695.
CHAPTER IV
THE EARTHLY HIERARCHY

The third hierarchy of being which Milton has traced in *Paradise Lost* is the scale of reality introduced by the creation of the world. Here again Milton's epic vision rejoices in the contemplation of an ample order of carefully graduated perfections. Milton, following Sacred Scripture, portrays this order as extending from the unformed anarchy of Chaos to the perfection of Man, the highest note in this lower octave of the gamut of reality, beyond whom lies the higher octave of the heavenly hierarchy and the absolute perfection of God.

Throughout the poem it is clear that Milton has gone to some pains to make evident this pattern which he perceived existing in reality. The portrayal of this pattern, therefore, did not occur just by chance. It was portrayed deliberately, and Milton intended that the pattern should be perceived. It is true that the pattern is not something new or peculiar to Milton. It is the same hierarchical order found in Scripture and taught by the philosophers. The precise points to be noted here, however, are that, first, we do find in *Paradise Lost* this order or hierarchy which is the consequence of the creation of the world; and second, that Milton intended that order to be perceived.
The best proof of the fact that Milton wanted the hierarchical scale of being consequent upon creation to be perceived is Adam's speech to Raphael in the Fifth Book. Raphael has just explained the existence of a carefully graduated order of beings in the created universe. The pattern has been explained, and Adam is explicit in his thanks for the lesson. He says:

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. 1

For what Raphael has really done is explain the quarta via of St. Thomas, how

In contemplation of created things, By steps we may ascend to God. 2

Now it would be strange indeed if after having so carefully explained in Raphael's speech—as we shall see—the existence of hierarchy in the created universe, Milton did not make this pattern of things clear throughout the rest of the poem. If that were the case, Raphael's speech would hardly be organic to the epic taken as a whole. For in his speech Raphael would then be insisting upon a hierarchy in nature which the rest of the poem would belie. That this was not the case and that this hierarchy in the created universe mentioned by Raphael may be traced throughout the poem can be shown. However, before attempting to indi-

1 P.L., v, 507.
2 loc. cit.
cate the presence of this hierarchical pattern throughout Milton's portrayal of the created universe, it would well to consider the explanation of hierarchy advanced by Raphael more in detail.

Fundamentally Raphael's explanation of hierarchy is no different than that advanced by Aristotle and St. Thomas. In the already quoted passage from St. Thomas, the Angelic Doctor remarked that "the closer a thing approaches to the divine likeness, the more perfect it is." Raphael says the same. Diversity, both agree, is achieved "because the resemblance is more or less close or more or less distant." The immediate result of this various propinquity or distance to the perfection of God is "degree", graduated degree, or hierarchy.

With these points in mind Raphael's statement of the hierarchical order in nature becomes quite clear if read carefully. Although lengthy it is worth quoting in full.

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3 No attempt is here made to reconcile the Thomistic and Miltonian concepts of prime matter, nor even to decide precisely what Milton held on the question of matter—a point of some consequence be it noted, however, because of its implications on such questions as the nature of God, creation, evil, and the nature of angels and the soul. See Lewis, Ch. XII, XV; Hanford, 221, 232; Saurat, 112 ff., 259; but especially Maurice Princeton, 1941, 36-37, 93-94, 112, 125-26, 206, 209, 211.

4 Aquinas, Contra Gentes, III, 97. (See Ch. I, 6.)

5 P.L., v, 476: "As nearer to him placed or nearer tending Each in their several active spheres assigned"

6 Aquinas, loc. cit.

7 P.L., v, 477.
"O Adam, one Almighty is, from whom
All things proceed, and up to him return,
If not depraved from good, created all
Such to perfection; one first matter all,
Endued with various forms, various degrees
Of substance, and, in things that live, of life;
But more refined, more spirituous and pure,
As nearer to him placed or neared tending
Each in their several active spheres assigned,
Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
Proportioned to each kind. So from root
Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves
More aery, last the bright consummate flower
Spirits odorous breathes: flowers and their fruit,
Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublimed,
To vital spirits aspire, to animal,
To intellectual; give both life and sense,
Fancy and understanding; whence the Soul
Reason receives, and Reason is her being,
Discursive, or intuitive: discourse
Is oftest yours, the latter most is ours,
Differing but in degree, of kind the same."8

This hierarchical pattern or scala naturae is evident throughout Paradise Lost in Milton's description of those creatures which came into being at the creation of the world. It is the earthly analogue of that hierarchy which was noted in Milton's depiction of both Heaven and Hell. It is distinct from both the heavenly and infernal hierarchies in that it is the consequence of creation, but it is one with them in that it dovetails perfectly into the higher orders of beings thereby making one tremendous gamut of reality to manifest the glory of the Lord.

The most splendid example of Milton's depiction of this earthly hierarchy is to be found in the Seventh Book. Indeed,
throughout the entire Seventh Book Milton depicts practically nothing else. Following the order of Genesis Milton proposes the successive creation of the various grades of being beginning from the lowest in what Hanford calls an "ornate and majestic paraphrase...a paean of created nature praising its great author."

The poet enumerates the successive creation of the tribes of fishes, birds, and animals with a luxuriance of detail, wealth of imagery, and abundance of example which almost staggers the mind and causes us to marvel at the tremendous amplitude of Milton's power of conception and ability to shape his material into truly majestic structure. It is here especially that we feel Milton's epic vision delighting in the contemplation of the vast hierarchy of created nature which embraces such marvelous variety.

At the pinnacle of this earthly hierarchy is Man. For at the close of the fifth day of creation, as Milton tells us:

```
There wanted yet the master-work, the end
Of all yet done—a creature who, not prone
And brute as other creatures, but endued
With sanctity of reason, might erect
His stature, and upright with front serene
Govern the rest, self-knowing, and from thence
Magnanimous to correspond with Heaven,
But grateful to acknowledge whence his good
Descends; thither with heart, and voice, and eyes
Directed in devotion, to adore
And worship God Supreme, who made him chief
Of all his works.10
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9 Hanford, 207.
10 P.L., vii, 505.
Therefore, God decides to

...make now Man in our image, Man
In our similitude, and let them rule
Over the fish and fowl of sea and air,
Beast of the fields, and over all the earth,
And every creeping thing that creeps the ground.\textsuperscript{11}

Thus, God made Man and told him:

\begin{quote}
Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the Earth;
Subdue it, and throughout dominion hold
Over fish of the sea, and fowl of the air,
And every living thing that moves on the Earth! \textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

thereby giving Man dominion over the earthly hierarchy as He had
given to His Son dominion over the order in Heaven.

But the Seventh Book is not the only place where Milton
depicts this earthly hierarchy and indicates Man's supremacy
and dominion. For when Satan at his first entrance into Para-
dise

Saw undelighted all delight, all kind
Of living creatures, new to sight and strange,\textsuperscript{13}

he perceived

Two of far nobler shape, erect and tall,
God-like erect, with native honour clad
In naked majesty, seemed lords of all,
And worthy seemed; for in their looks divine
The image of their glorious Maker shone.\textsuperscript{14}

In his bitter soliloquy which follows shortly thereafter his
remarks not only bring out the perfection of Man's being but
indicate Man's position in the over all hierarchy as:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{11} P.L., vii, 519.
\textsuperscript{12} P.L., vii, 531.
\textsuperscript{13} P.L., iv, 285.
\textsuperscript{14} P.L., loc. cit.
\end{flushright}
Not Spirits, yet to Heavenly Spirits bright
Little inferior—whom my thoughts pursue
With wonder, and could love; so lively shines
In them divine resemblance, and such grace
The hand that formed them on their shape
hath poured. 15

Moreover, this earthly hierarchy of which Man is a part is mirrored in Man the microcosm; for Adam tells Eve that there exists a hierarchy among the faculties of the soul, Fancy being inferior to Reason.

But know that in the soul
Are many lesser faculties, that serve
Reason as chief. Among these Fancy next
Her office holds.... 16

This supremacy and dominion of Man over the earthly hierarchy Milton does not portray merely through his own comments as narrator or those of the other characters in the epic such as Satan. Milton makes Man himself realize this truth and express it on several occasions. Before the creation of Eve Adam says to God:

Hast thou not made me here thy substitute
And these inferior far beneath me set? 17

thereby indicating not only that he is fully cognizant of his own supremacy over the rest of the creatures on earth, but also that he is fully conscious how clearly his dominion over these creatures is analogous to that of God Himself over all created things. That Milton is here striving to bring out the pattern or hierar-

15 P.L., iv, 361.
16 P.L., v, 100.
17 P.L., vii, 381.
chy among the creatures of earth is clear. For he has the Father pointedly comment thereupon to Adam and express His pleasure to

...find thee knowing not of beasts alone,
Which thou hast rightly named, but of thyself—
Expressing well the spirit within thee free,
My image, not imparted to the brute.18

Man's consciousness of his supremacy over the other creatures of earth is again expressed by Adam in the speech to Eve whereby he explains how man's dignity is declared by work.

Other creatures all day long
Rove idle, unemployed, and less need rest;
Man hath his daily work of body or mind
Appointed, which declares his dignity,
And the regard of Heaven on all his ways;
While other animals unactive range,
And of their doings God takes no account.19

In his efforts to portray objectively this hierarchy of being which he perceived existing among the creatures of earth20 Milton is not incapable of a gentle touch as well. After des-

18 P.L., vii, 438.
19 P.L., iv, 616.
20 P.L., ix, 83; An interesting example of Milton's perception of hierarchy even within the animal kingdom is found in the action of Satan who:

With narrow search, and with inspection deep
Considered every creature, which of all
Most opportune might serve his wiles, and found
The Serpent subtlest beast of all the field.
Him, after long debate, irresolute
Of thoughts revolved, his final sentence chose
Fit vessel, fittest imp of fraud, in whom
To enter, and his dark suggestions hide
From sharpest sight; for in the wily snake,
Whatever sleights, none would suspicious mink,
As from his wit and native subtlety
Proceeding, which in other beasts observed,
Doubt might beget of diabolic power
Active within beyond the sense of brute.
cribing with a sensitivity that reveals his deep love of floral beauty the "blissful bower" where Adam and Eve had their nuptial bed, Milton quietly adds:

...other creature here
Beast, bird, insect, or worm, durst enter none;
Such was their awe of Man.21

The catalogue is somewhat harsh; but his gentle half-line is reminiscent of the faun-like creatures of Grimm.

The universe that Milton pictured, therefore, was above all an ordered universe of creatures arranged in a hierarchical pattern. Such was the earth whose loss Satan bemoaned.

Terrestrial Heaven, danced round by other Heavens, That shine, yet bear their bright officious lamps; Light above light, for thee alone, as seems, In thee concentring all their precious beams Of sacred influence! As God in Heaven Is centre, yet extends to all, so thou Centring receiv'st from all those orbs; in thee, Not in themselves, all their known virtue appears, Productive in herb, plant, and nobler birth Of creatures animate with gradual life Of growth, sense, reason, all summed up in Man.22

Such was the earth Adam and Eve addressed in the glorious Miltonic Benedicite of Book Five.23 Such was the earth which swam before blind epic eyes in their vision of not a partial but a total pattern.

21 P.L., iv, 703.
22 P.L., ix, 104.
CHAPTER V
ADAM AND EVE

The fourth hierarchy upon which Milton focused his mind in the composition of Paradise Lost centers about Adam and Eve. Actually Milton here perceived a double hierarchy, for he considered Adam and Eve not only in their mutual relationship but also in their relationship to the rest of the race. In the perception of each of these relationships he was conscious of a separate hierarchical pattern, but in his epic he skillfully interwove both patterns into one fabric. For the sake of clarity, however, it will be advantageous to disentangle the threads and examine each of these hierarchies separately.

The first hierarchy we perceive in Milton's presentation of Adam and Eve is the immediate result of their having been created by God heads of the race. This headship is so evident throughout the poem that it may be dealt with somewhat summarily. The second hierarchy will require fuller treatment.

Milton's whole theme was to be the Fall of Man. Now right there in the material he chose for his epic we can see that his characters stand in a hierarchical relationship to their progeny. Indeed, it is this hierarchical relationship which gives his
theme its gravity and high seriousness. For this is not the sin of a particular man but of all men through one man; it is a sin whose effects not one man but every man shall feel. Such was the theme Milton found in the Scriptural account of the Fall.

In developing this hierarchical relationship between Adam and his descendents Milton emphasized three points. Each of these points, it is true, were common theological teaching. But it is interesting to note that if one were to approach the theme merely dramatically, the emphasizing of these three points would be precisely the thing which would heighten the central situation. First, Milton stressed the accidental superiority of our first parents' nature before the Fall. Second, he stressed their paternity. Third, he stressed their headship which concretely meant that he brought out the fact that the consequences of that sin would be visited on all their descendents.

C. S. Lewis has made the acute observation that

No useful criticism of the Miltonic Adam is possible until the last trace of the naif, simple, childlike Adam has been removed from our imaginations. The task of a Christian poet presenting the unfallen first of men is not that of recovering the freshness and simplicity of mere nature, but of drawing some one who, in his solitude and nakedness, shall really be what Solomon and Charlemagne and Haroun-al-Raschid and Louis XIV lamely and unsuccessfully strove to imitate on thrones of ivory between lanes of drawn swords and under jewelled baldachins.1

1 Lewis, 114.
He goes on to point out that this is just what Milton has done from the very first moment of Adam and Eve's appearance.

Among the beasts we see two "of far nobler shape," naked but "in naked Majestie," "Lords of all," reflecting "their glorious Maker" by their Wisdome and Sanctitude. And the wisdom and sanctitude, not in Adam only but in both, were "severe"—in the sense in which Cicero speaks of a man as severus et gravis; that is, they were like a severe style in music or architecture, they were austere, magnanimous, and lofty, not remiss, nor free and easy, nor florid—a dry flavour appealing to corrected palates. They are people with whom modern critics would be well advised not to take liberties. 2

If some one particular example of the accidental superiority of our first parents' nature over our own must be cited from the text, perhaps none better could be chosen that Milton's description of Adam going out to meet Raphael.

Meanwhile our primitive great Sire, to meet His godlike guest walks forth, without more train Accompanied than with his own complete Perfections; in himself was all his state, More solemn than the tedious pomp that waits On princes, when their rich retinue long Of horses led and grooms besmeared with gold Dazzles the crowd and sets them all agape. 3

Even in the angelic presence Adam retains his self-composure and remains "not awed" 4 although bowing low. So impressive are this pair that the hush is palpable and Satan himself

when Adam first of men,

2 loc. cit.
3 P.L., v, 350.
4 P.L., v, 358.
To first of women, Eve, thus moving speech
Turned him all ear to hear new utterance flow. 5

The second way Milton developed the hierarchical relationship between Adam and Eve and their descendents was by stressing their paternity. Adam is styled "Patriarch of Mankind," 6 "great Progenitor," 7 "prime of Men," 8 "our primitive great Sire." 9 Similarly Raphael greets Eve with the words:

'Hail! Mother of mankind, whose fruitful womb
Shall fill the world more numerous with thy sons
Than with these various fruits the trees of God
Have heaped this table!' 10

In other places she is addressed as "our general mother," 11 "the Mother of Mankind." 12

Emphasis of the fact that by reason of Adam and Eve's headship the consequences of their sin will be visited on all their descendents is the third way Milton stresses the hierarchical relationship between our first parents and the rest of the race. Texts stressing this point are numerous. "He with his whole posterity must die," 13 announces the Father in Heaven before the Son volunteers to undertake man's salvation.

'...thine and of all thy sons

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5 P.L., iv, 408.
6 P.L., v, 100.
7 P.L., v, 543.
8 P.L., v, 350.
10 P.L., v, 388.
11 P.L., iv, 492.
12 P.L., i, 36.
13 P.L., iii, 209.
The weal or woe in thee is placed, 14 solemnly warns Raphael. And in the Tenth Book fallen Adam bewails:

'...in me all
Posterity stands cursed. Fair patrimony
That I must leave ye, sons! Oh, were I able
To waste it all myself, and leave ye none!
So disinherited, how would ye bless
Me, now your curse! '15

The truth is repeated in the Almighty's stern command to Michael:

'Without remorse drive out the sinful pair,
From hallowed ground th' unholy, and denounce
To them and to their progeny, from thence
Perpetual banishment.'16

Similarly speaks Michael as he bids Adam look upon the vision of the murder of Abel.

'Adam now ope thine eyes, and first behold
Th' effects which thy original crime hath wrought
In some to spring from thee, who never touched
Th' excepted tree, nor with the Snake conspired,
Nor sinned thy sin, yet from that sin derive
Corruption to bring forth more violent deeds.'17

Sin, Michael later tells Adam, will reign among the descendants of Abraham "as of thee begot."18 Only at last by the Obedience of the Son will be absolved

The penalty to thy transgression due,
And due to theirs which out of thine will grow.19

14 P.L., viii, 637.
15 P.L., x, 817.
16 P.L., xi, 105.
17 P.L., xi, 423.
18 P.L., xii, 286.
19 P.L., xii, 398.
Thus by stressing the accidental superiority of our first parents nature, their paternity, and the consequences of their headship does Milton emphasize the hierarchical relationship between Adam, Eve, and their descendents.

The second hierarchical pattern centering about Adam and Eve which Milton portrayed in *Paradise Lost* turns about the question of their mutual relationship. To this question Milton devoted considerable attention, and we will find that the threads of this pattern run quite deeply throughout the entire poem. For Milton's insistence on hierarchy of being is not offset by emphasis on a graduated order within a class of beings.

What the mutual relationship between Adam and Eve should be Milton never hesitates to say. He announces it from the first. In his opening description of the pair, Milton at once sounds his theme. After a few brief lines describing how they appeared in Paradise he says:

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though both
Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;
For contemplation he and valour formed,
For softness she and sweet attractive grace;
He for God only, she for God in him.
His fair large front and eye sublime declared
Absolute rule; and hyacinthine locks
Round from his parted forelock manly hung
Clustering, but not beneath his shoulders broad;
She, as a veil down to the slender waist,
Her unadorned golden tresses wore
Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved
As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
Subjection, but required with gentle sway,
And by her yielded, by him best received,
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Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
And sweet, reluctant, amorous delay.20

Thus, from the very first Milton makes very clear exactly what
their mutual relation should be. Adam is the superior, Eve the
inferior. The domestic hierarchy is established.

Milton will develop this concept of the proper relationship
between the sexes. The theme will be heard in several variations
as the poet carries forward his narrative. But the hierarchy is
never reversed. The notes vary, but the theme remains unchanged.

Adam in his first recorded words to Eve has assumed the
position of authority. He explains God's command. He teaches,
she listens.21 When Eve at last does speak, her first words make
much of Adam's supremacy.

'O Thou for whom
And from whom I was formed flesh of thy flesh
And without whom am to no end, my guide
And head! 22

A few lines later she recurs to the same idea:

I..., who enjoy
So far the happier lot, enjoying thee
Pre-eminent by so much odds, while thou
Like consort to thyself canst nowhere find.23

Her first impression of Adam was of one

fair, indeed, and tall

Under a platan; yet methought less fair,

20 P.L., iv, 235.
21 P.L., iv, 411.
22 P.L., iv, 440.
23 P.L., iv, 445.
Less winning soft, less amiably mild
Than that smooth wat'ry image of herself which she had seen. And from the first time she gave herself to Adam she confesses to have seen
How beauty is excelled by manly grace
And wisdom, which alone is truly fair.

Eve re-iterates Adam's supremacy in the very first words of her next speech as well. She says to him:

My author and desposer, what thou bidd'st
Unargued I obey; so God ordains:
God is thy law, thou mine; to know no more
Is woman's happiest knowledge, and her praise.

This is perhaps Milton's clearest statement of what he considered the proper domestic hierarchy. It is quite plain, but at a second reading we catch the rich overtones of Sophoclean irony. This hierarchy may be destroyed.

Milton reverts at once, however, to his original theme. Thus in the next Book Eve does not attempt to solve the mystery of her dreams but brings her difficulty to Adam. Adam explains her doubts and gives an authoritative solution of her problem. It is to Eve to whom are assigned the domestic chores of preparing the meals "due at her hour" and to whom Adam gives the order for the preparation of the meal for Raphael.

24 P.L., iv, 477.
25 P.L., iv, 490.
26 P.L., iv, 635.
28 P.L., v, 303.
29 P.L., v, 313.
make haste, "she says and then obeys:

So saying, with dispatchful looks in haste
She turns on hospitable thoughts intent. 31

Adam goes forth to greet Raphael. 32 Eve remains at home. Adam leads in the conversation at dinner. Eve is silent, even when addressed by the angel. And at the conclusion of Raphael's account of the fall of the angels, Adam is told by the angel to "warn thy weaker." 33

As the Eighth Book opens we still see Eve allowing Adam to lead the conversation. She is certainly capable of following Raphael's remarks on astronomy. Yet she rises and goes forth to visit her garden, for she would prefer to have Adam teach her.

So spake our Sire, and by his countenance seemed
Enter on studious thoughts abstruse; which Eve
Perceiving, where she sat retired in sight,
With lowliness majestic from her seat,
And grace that won who saw to wish her stay,
Rose, and went forth among her fruits and flowers,
To visit how they prospered, bud and bloom
Her nursery; they at her coming sprung,
And, touched by her fair tendance, gladlier grew.
Yet went she not as not with such discourse
Delighted, or not capable her ear
Of what was high; such pleasure she reserved,
Adam relating, she sole auditress;
Her husband the relater she preferred
Before the Angel, and of his to ask
Chose rather; .... 34

As if the above statements of what he considered the proper
domestic hierarchy were not sufficient, Milton insists upon this doctrine once more before proceeding to the account of the Fall. This time the poet will have Adam not only express this relationship between himself and Eve implicitly by his actions but explicitly through his very words. Thus, towards the end of his conversation with Raphael Adam says:

For well I understand in the prime end
Of Nature her th' inferior, in the mind
And inward faculties, which most excel;
In outward also her resembling less
His image who made both, and less expressing
The character of that dominion given
O'er other creatures. 35

Nor does Raphael mince words in his reply. "With contracted brow" he solemnly reiterates his warning to Adam not to attribute overmuch to things inferior. 36 As for Eve, he continues:

For what admir'st thou, what transports thee so?
An outside; fair, no doubt, and worth well
Thy cherishing, thy honouring, and thy love;
Not thy subjection: weigh with her thyself;
Then value: oft-times nothing profits more
Than self-esteem, grounded on just and right
Well managed. Of that skill, the more thou know'st
The more she will acknowledge thee her head,
And to realities yield all her shows—.... 37

Without attempting to enter into a discussion of the precise nature of the Fall this much is clear; namely, that throughout its portrayal we can trace the thread of this hierarchical relationship of Adam and Eve and can notice how the Fall was in part,

35 P.L., viii, 540
36 P.L., viii, 561.
37 P.L., viii, 567.
at least, occasioned and caused by the inversion of this domestic hierarchy. Moreover, this inversion of the proper in the poem superior-inferior relationship between Adam and Eve is one of the Fall's most obvious results.

Thus, Eve's fall begins with her failure to follow her superior's advice not to separate from him in the garden. But she heeded not his "mind thou me," persisted, yet submit, won, or rather presumed upon Adam's permission, and went anyway. Satan himself was more fearful of Eve's superior, Adam

Whose higher intellectual more I shun,
And strength, of courage haughty, and of limb
Heroic built, though of terrestrial mould.

Eve falls; and immediately begins to debate whether she should tell Adam or

...keep the odds of knowledge in my power
Without co-partner? so to add what wants
In female sex, the more to draw his love,
And render me more equal, and perhaps—
A thing not undesirable—sometime
Superior; for, inferior, who is free?

She decides, however, to share her experience with Adam and tempts him by arguing that difference of degree will now desjoin them—since she supposedly is now growing up to Godhead. Instead, she pleads for equality; whereas, in fact, before her fall their

38 P.L., ix, 290-384.
39 P.L., ix, 358.
40 P.L., ix, 377.
41 P.L., ix, 483.
42 P.L., ix, 820.
love was based on inequality.

Thou, therefore, also taste, that equal lot
May join us, equal joy, as equal love;
Lest thou not lasting, different degree
Disjoin us, and I then too late renounce
Deity for thee, when Fate will not permit. 43

Adam dismayed exclaims:

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? 44

Adam the superior has now inverted the proper hierarchy and
become dependent upon his inferior. Eve with a mind now darkened
by sin praises this

...embraced him, and for joy
Tenderly wept, much won that he his love
Had so ennobled as of choice to incur
Divine displeasure for her sake, or death. 45

Adam eats "fondly overcome by female charm." 46

Milton closes the Book narrating the Fall with a quarrel in
which both Adam and Eve implicitly admit that it was the inver-
sion of this superior-inferior relationship in them which caused
the Fall. Eve accuses Adam:

...why didst not thou, the head
Command me absolutely not to go,
Going into such danger, as thou saidst?

43 P.L., ix, 881.
44 P.L., ix, 904.
45 P.L., ix, 990.
46 P.L., ix, 999.
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. 

Adam retorts in kind and bitterly at last concludes:

Thus it shall befall
Him who, to worth in women over trusting,
Let's her will rule: restraint she will not brook;
And left to herself, if evil thence ensue,
She first his weak indulgence will accuse.

Milton's insistence upon this hierarchical relationship
between man and woman is no less evident in his resolution of the
problem caused by the Fall than it was in his description of it
as one of the occasions, causes, and results of the Fall. Thus,
at the opening of the Tenth Book the Son in pronouncing judgement
upon the fallen pair says to Adam:

'Was she thy God, that her thou didst obey
Before his voice? or was she made thy guide,
Superior, or but equal, that to her
Thou didst resign thy manhood, and the place
Wherein God set thee above her, made of thee
And for thee, whose perfection far excelled
Hers in all real dignity? Adorned
She was indeed, and lovely, to attract
Thy love, not thy subjection; and her gifts
Were such as under government well seemed—
Unseemly to bear rule; which was thy part
And person, hadst thou known thyself aright.'

Similarly the second part of the sentence pronounced upon Eve
insists upon the restoration of the proper domestic hierarchy.

... and to thy husband's will

47 P. L., ix, 1155.
48 P. L., ix, 1182.
49 P. L., x, 145.
Thine shall submit; he over thee shall rule.  

Eve toward the end of the Book humbly admits her sin and perversion of order and touchingly confesses to Adam:

Both have sinned; but thou  
Against God only; I against God and thee,  
And to the place of judgement will return,  
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.

Eve has at last learned that she is to obey, for in the first part of the Eleventh Book at the advent of Michael she retires promptly at Adam’s command. Moreover, she humbly accepts Michael’s injunction that she is bound to follow her husband from Paradise and consider wherever he abides her native soil. As a sign of Adam’s headship the revelation of the future is given to him alone, although he is to share it with Eve “at season fit.” The poem then draws to its close with Eve’s speech to which Adam has not time to reply

for now too nigh  
Th’ Archangel stood, and from the other hill  
To their fixed station, all in bright array  
The Cherubim descended.

In words of meek submission which show how perfectly she has now grasped the right order of the relationship which should exist between them she tells Adam:

50 P.L., x, 195.  
51 P.L., x, 930.  
52 P.L., xi, 237, 265.  
53 P.L., xi, 291.  
54 P.L., xii, 597.  
55 P.L., xii, 625.
'...but now lead on;
In me is no delay; with thee to go
Is to stay here; without thee here to stay
Is to go hence unwilling; thou to me
Art all things under Heaven, all places thou,
Who for my wilful crime art banished hence.'

Thus painstakingly has Milton woven throughout the narrative
of Adam and Eve this second pattern; namely, what he perceived
to be the hierarchical relationship between man and woman. This
relationship together with Adam and Eve's relationship with the
rest of the race rounds out the fourth hierarchy which Milton
projected upon the screen of Paradise Lost.

Milton, it would seem, was a man completely enamoured of
order. Almost everything one knows about him, C. S. Lewis main­
tains, prepares us for such a conclusion.

He is a neat, dainty man, 'the lady of
Christ's'; a fastidious man, pacing in
trim gardens. He is a grammarian, a
swordsman, a musician with a predilection
for the fugue. Everything that he greatly
cares about demands order, proportion,
measure, and control. In poetry he con­
siders decorum the grand masterpiece. In
politics he is that which of all things
least resembles a democrat--an aristocratic
republican who thinks 'nothing more agree­
able to the order of nature or more for the
interest of mankind, than that the less
should yield to the greater, not in numbers,
but in wisdom and in virtue' (Defensio Secunda.
soaring far beyond the region of politics he
writes,'And certainly Discipline is not only
the removal of disorder; but if any visible
shape can be given to divine things, the

56 P.L., xii, 614.
very visible shape and image of virtue, whereby she is not only seen in the regular gestures and motions of her heavenly paces as she walks, but also makes the harmony of her voice audible to mortal ears. Yea, the angels themselves, in whom no disorder is feared, as the apostle that saw them in his rapture describes, are distinguished and quaternioned into their celestial princedoms and satrapies, according as God himself has writ his imperial decrees through the great provinces of heaven. The state also of the blessed in paradise, though never so perfect, is not therefore left without discipline, whose golden surveying reed marks out and measures every quarter and circuit of New Jerusalem.' (Reason of Church Government, I, cap.I. Prose Wks. Bohn, Vol. II, p.422)57

Consequently, it is not at all surprising that we should find throughout Milton's greatest work the perception of order in reality. But order to Milton meant far more than the perception of mere pattern among things of similar nature. Order to Milton was primarily hierarchical. It implied difference of degree, superiority and inferiority, graduated perfection, dominion and obedience, right and obligation, freedom and discipline—all nicely balanced. It began with the perception of the hierarchical order of the various grades of being, such as we have sketched here. But Milton's perception of hierarchy pierced far beyond the somewhat static essential order. Living beings must interact, so the hierarchical principle will have its dynamic applications as well in the realms of politics, ethics, and theology.

Here has been sketched Milton's perception of hierarchy

57 Lewis, 78-79.
in the order of essence and his emphasis of the graduated order within a class of beings. This is the foundation for the consideration of any of the problems Milton pondered in the hierarchy of operation. His perceptions of the graduated order of diverse beings with their subsequent superior-inferior relationships grouped themselves about the four focal hierarchies which we have considered in detail—hierarchies which embrace the totality of Being. Milton was no poet of petty patterns but an epic seer whose vision swept the horizon of reality.
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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Richard J. O'Brien, S.J. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Jan. 10, 1950  
Date

John B. Courtois, S.J.  
Signature of Adviser