

Shendi University
College of Graduate Studies and Scientific Research

God from Homer to Dante into Milton
Pagan Gods vs. Christian God

**A Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctorate of Philosophy in English (Literature)**

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

قال تعالى:

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا

تَشْكُرُونَ

صدق الله العظيم

سورة الملك الآية (23)

Dedication

To the Better Craftsman John Abaza.

To Literature

To My Beloved Family

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I would like to thank Allah for all the blessings He showered upon me.

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Abstract

The study tries to show three phases of relationship between life and religion: it takes the Greek Age as shown in the Iliad and the Odyssey of Homer. It continues to show the relation in the Middle Ages as reflected in Dante's Divine Comedy. Then the study shows the relation of life and religion in the modern era of Milton, as recorded in his Paradise Lost. It follows the analytical and descriptive method. It traces the religious elements and hints in the literary works in question and tries to find how they fit in the social context of that work. The data is collected from secondary sources: textbooks, references, periodicals, and internet sites. Of the main results of the study: The classical experiment surpasses the Christian one in flexibility, and in being more real to life. The classics were both intellectual and religious people. The pagan religion of the classics has influenced the heavenly Christian religion. It is Christianity that gives impetus to the enmity between faith and reason. Both the Middle Ages and the Modern Age have religious and scientific bias about them, respectively. Faith without reason led man to darkness and reason without faith has led man to spiritual void. Literature can give prescription for social imbalances and incongruity.

مستخلص البحث

تتناول هذه الدراسة ثلاثة اوجه لعلاقة الحياة بالدين. فهي تتناول هذا الموضوع في العصر الاغريقي كما ورد في الالياذة والاوديسا لهوميروس ثم في الكوميديا الالهية لدانتي في القرون الوسطي وفي العصر الحديث في الفردوس المفقود لملتون. اتخذت الدراسة المنهج التحليلي الوصفي. فقد تتبعت العناصر والاشارات الدينية في العمل المعني واتساقها مع الوسط الاجتماعي الذي ولد فيه النص. وقد جمعت البيانات من مصادر ثانوية مثل الكتب النصية، المراجع، الدوريات ومواقع الانترنت.
من نتائج الدراسة:

- * تفوقت التجرب الكلاسيكية علي التجربة المسيحية في المرونة والواقعية.
- * الكلاسيكيون عقلانيون ومتدينون في القت نفسه
- * دين الكلاسيكيون الوثني كان تأثيره واضعاً علي الدين المسيحي السماوي
- * المسيحية هي من اعطي زخماً لعداء الايمان والعقل
- * القرون الوسطي والعصر الحديث فيهما جنوح ديني وعلمي علي التوالي
- * الايمان بدون عقل قاد الانسان ظلام الجهل , والعقل بدون ايمان ادي بالانسان الي الخواء الروحي.
- * الادب قادر علي ان يقدم وصفا ناجعة للاختلالات الاجتماعية

Chapter One

Introduction

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0. Overview

This study treats the theme of God, religious system and compliance and in-compliance of religion and life to each other. It tries to fathom how the Greek theology influences the Christian dogma in the Mid-ages and the modern era. The study treats the theme in “The Iliad” and “The Odyssey” of Homer, “The Divine Comedy” of Dante and “Paradise Lost” of Milton. The study is exclusive to one classic author while it handles two Christian writers. That is because Dante represents the age of faith; the time of the dominance of religious institution. Milton represents the modern era; the time when the ascendancy of religious outlook is swept away. Dante represents the nascent and unrivalled Christianity; as Milton stands for the era of reason and secular outlook. This instant marks the dominance of reason and secular thought. Life is by now under the umbrella of secularism and the religious vein is clotted. The religious institution is in a tight corner, and yields a fertile soil for chauvinism and bigotry.

The study aspires to show three phases of relationship between life and religion: in the Greek Age, life and religion are one element or identical. It continues to show the relation when life and religion are two but concordant elements. That is in Dante’s

time of faith when life is adapted to religion. Then the study shows the relation when life and religion are two discordant elements. That is in the modern era of Milton. Not only that but a total divorce happened. Then an unhealthy and insecure situation ensues.

In the Greek society of Homer, there was no separation between life and religion. The life of the Greek citizen is either in concordance or clear discordance with religion and gods: the Greek consults gods in all embarkations. Every phenomenon is religiously interpreted. Piety is the acme of wisdom.“ The Divine Comedy” speaks about a society when religion prevails. The Middle Ages is a time of religious ascendancy. Religion controls life. Life submits to religion but with promises to rebel. “Paradise Lost” talks about a society when life has strengthened itself and submitted religion to its influence. Thanks to the Renaissance, Martin Luther and King Henry VIII, the church has given way to the state. The politician has assumed the highest place ever since.

Religion is of great importance to man simply as tomorrow is wrapped. Religion is necessary to human nature and entirely natural. Without religion man cannot attain the complete satisfaction of the highest aspirations of nature. He finds his intellect striving after knowledge of the whole truth in regard to his origin, nature, last end and the means to attain it; he finds his will

seeking out what is good and true; he finds even his senses needing the satisfaction which comes from the acknowledgement of a Supreme Being. It is only religion that can satisfy these yearnings of intellect will and senses of man. It is religion which convinces the intellect that man comes from God and must go to Him.

So the practice of some form of religion by man is universal. From dim of history to the present day, people practice religion. Dogmas are found everywhere-- at least belief in the existence of some supreme being, superior to man, caring for man, capable of helping or injuring man, and so be placated, adorned and propitiated.

Religion means a trust in one all-wise, all-powerful, eternal Being, the Ruler of the world, to whom we commit all our cares, and whose presence we feel not only in the outward world, but also in the warning voice of our hearts.

This study is concerned with two religions; Greek beliefs and Christianity. In Greek beliefs there were twelve Olympian gods whose home was atop Mount Olympus; the king of whom was Zeus. There was also Hera, Athena, Apollo, Aphrodite, Artemis, Ares, Poseidon, Hermes, Hebe, Hephaestus and Dionysus. The latter with Hades, Demeter and Persephone were the gods of the underworld. There were countless minor gods and goddesses.

The Greeks had no churches, but the gods had temples. People never entered them except to offer sacrifices. In this sense every man was a priest and all took part in the ritual. Religion and everyday life were one.

Christianity (the Kingdom of Heaven where Christ is King) is: faith and trust in God, communication with God through prayer and self-denial, observance of The Law which is written in the Scripture and the offering of sacrifice to God. Christianity conceives of God as one. This one God is a Trinity: The Father, the Son and The Holy Spirit (A controversial idea in Christianity). The central belief of Christianity is that by faith in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus, individuals are saved from death – both spiritual and physical.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Though the Greeks were pagans, their belief system has a seminal influence on modern creeds. Reason and religion are two sides of one equation. A decrease here means an increase there, which means imbalance. The prevailing of either reason (secular life) or religion gives an unhealthy society. The Mid-ages (time of religious ascendancy) and modern era (time of ascendancy of reason- secularism) illustrate that fact.

1.2. The Importance of the study

This study is important as it tries to prescribe a healthy society and diagnoses the illnesses of the mid- ages and modern societies. It tries to draw a balanced track for living. The study is never a didactic treatise but tries to deduce cure from some landmarks of literature.

1.3. Objectives of the study

This study aims at:

1. Showing that reason and religion are the two pillars on which a society stands. They are the legs that give balance to community.
2. Revealing that religious principles are innate in man.
3. Depicting that great literature is permanent, diagnostic and can give solutions.

1.4. Questions of the Study:

To fulfill the above objectives, the study processes to answer the following questions:

4. How balanced reason and faith give stability? And what are the sequels of imbalanced reason and faith?
5. Are there inherent religious teachings in man? Or is religion is something acquired?
6. What are the contributions of literature to its immediate strangling problems?

1.5. Hypotheses of the study

1. Religious teachings are inherent in man. That fact gives a seminal influence to Greek paganism on Christianity.
2. A stable society gives equal heed to religion and to reason (secularism).
3. The classics deftly balanced faith and reason.
4. The imbalance between faith and reason gives social disorder.

1.6. Methodology of the Study:

The study follows the analytical and descriptive method. It traces the religious elements and hints in the literary works in question and tries to find how they fit in the social context of that work. The data is collected from secondary sources: textbooks, references, periodicals, and internet sites.

1.7. Delimitation of the Study

This study treats the themes of god, religion, secular life in “The Iliad” , “The Odyssey”, “The Divine Comedy” and “Paradise Lost”.

1.8. Definition of Terms

1.8.1. Religion:

is the belief in spiritual being. It is a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to

direct and control the course of nature and human life. A system of faith and worship; life under monastic conditions.

Encyclopedia Britannica,

Vol. 19

1.8.2 God:

A being with determinate qualities which embody the value of which men are conscious. God is the Ground and Source of all existence. All positive qualities occurred in created existence must be ascribed to God. Knowledge is in God Omniscience, Will Omnipotence, Beauty perfect Loveliness. A supreme being from Whom all existence issues and to Whom aspires to return, or Super human being worshipped as possessing divine power, creator and ruler of universe.

Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 22

Chapter Two
Literature Review and
Theoretical Framework

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Religion and life in “The Iliad” and “The Odyssey”

2.0. Introduction

This chapter handles the theme of gods and religious system in “The Iliad” and “The Odyssey” of Homer. It shows how religion fits in the life of the Greeks. The chapter begins with giving a capsule summary for “The Iliad” then traces the religious elements and indications in it. It continues by summarizing “The Odyssey” then follows the religious tokens in it. The chapter proceeds with a general comment on the Greek religious beliefs.

2.1. Summary of the Plot of “the Iliad”¹

The Iliad is built upon the plot of two angry and stubborn contentions: one is the war between the Greeks and the Trojans; the other, a private quarrel between the leader of the Greeks, Agamemnon Atreides, and the champion Greek warrior, Achilles Peleides.

The poem begins in the last year of the ten-year Trojan war. The conflict had begun when a punitive expedition of some

1 (Homer, *The Iliad*, E.V. Rieu Translation, The Penguin Classics Penguin Books, 1950)

140,000 Hellenic warriors, under the command of Agamemnon of Mycenae, sailed to

Troy in Asia Minor, Paris, a prince of Troy, had abducted the wife of Agamemnon's brother, Menelaus, and the Greek force was determined to retrieve her.

The opening describes a recent Greek raid on an outlying city for supplies, treasure and captives. Agamemnon has captured the daughter of a priest of Apollo, Chryses.

The father offers a ransom and Agamemnon refuses. The priest then has Apollo sends a plague among the Greeks and the daughter is returned. To replace his own loss, Agamemnon then takes a captive girl that Achilles had claimed for himself.

Achilles sulks, refuses to fight for the Greek cause and also withdraws his Myrmidon army- a serious loss to Greek power. In humiliation, Achilles begs his goddess mother Thetis to have Zeus brings disgrace upon Agamemnon. A series of military setbacks then drives the Greeks from the Trojan walls and back against their ships, to which the Trojans are about to set fire. Achilles' companion, Patroclus, then comes to the aid of the Greeks, wearing Achilles armour to give them new spirit. He drives the Trojans back to their city, but is then killed by Hector, chief of the Trojan warriors.

Achilles enters the battle again, to avenge himself of Patroclus' death. He slays Hector, desecrates his body and drags it around the walls of the city, then to the Greek camp- where he allows it to be lie neglected and dishonoured. Patroclus' body is given a hero's funeral.

Priam, king of Troy, and father of Hector, comes alone to the Greek camp to beg for Hector's body. So tragic is the plea that Achilles complies and Hector is buried honourably in Troy.

2.2. Religion in The Iliad

The poem opens by that, gods are behind actions of man. All man's actions are fulfillment of Zeus' will. The quarrel of Agamemnon and Achilles, “ *which of the gods was it that made them quarrel?*” (The Iliad, P.23) The poet invokes the help of the god to compose this poem, “*let us begin, goddess of song...*” (The Iliad, P.25)

The feud first started by Apollo who sends the plague as punishment for Agamemnon's discourtesy to him. That is when Agamemnon refuses to accept the ransom and releases Apollo's priest daughter. Going contrary to god's will incurs punishment even unto a great king as Agamemnon. A fact known to the Greeks, “*The troops applauded. They wished to see the priest respected.*” (The Iliad, P.23).

If one keeps god's rights, god will help him. Priest Chryses prays to Apollo, "*if ever I built you a shrine... if ever I burnt you the fat thighs of a bull or a goat, grant me this wish. Let the Danaans pay with your arrows for my tears.*" (The Iliad, P.24)

Phoebus Apollo heard this prayer and came down in fury from the heights of Olympus with his bow. "*For nine days the god's arrows rained on the camp...*" (The Iliad, P.24)

The three parts prayer is conducted respectfully. First, god is invoked through his titles and shrines, then the sanction, in which the appealer mentions the services he rendered in the past to the god and at the end the entreaty, in which the god is asked to fulfill an urgent need. So Chryses, whose daughter has been carried off by Agamemnon, followed the correct form.

By order of goddess Hera the Greeks assembled to discuss the matter of the plague. Why Apollo is angry? Is it for a broken vow or a failure in rites? They try to pacify Apollo. Calchas, another priest, interprets the cause behind the wrath of the god. His insight is a gift from Apollo. Before speaking Calchas, asks the protection of Achilles, as his speech may offend Agamemnon. Calchas is a religious man but he gives king Agamemnon the fear and the respect a king deserves. "*A commoner is no match for a king whom he offends*", says Calchas." (The Iliad, P. 25)

Agamemnon yields to Calchas words and gives back Chryses' daughter to save his troops. "*I am willing to give her up, if that appears the wiser course, said Agamemnon.*" (The Iliad, P. 26)

The respect Calchas (religion) shows to his king Agamemnon (politics) and the reverence shown by king Agamemnon to the wise words of Calchas, is the unique balance on which the Greek life stands. And it is this equilibrium which drives the Greeks to progress and great achievements.

To make up for his loss (Chryses' daughter), Agamemnon takes Achilles' captive girl. A conflict between the two men rises. This conflict denies the pompous idealization of Greek life. Agamemnon, yielding to religion, gives up a sweetheart and assumes Achilles' mistress as he and Achilles are laities. A conflict is frozen for a while by gods (Athene sent by Hera) to save the Greek blood for a greater cause (the burning down of Troy).

To the Greeks, authority, strength and bravery are gifts from Zeus (god), so they must not be misused. Apollo is pacified by offering thighs of cattle, wine, music and songs. The appeased god sends them advantageous breeze that takes them to the Greeks' camp. "*...taking advantage of a breeze the archer-god had sent them.*" (The Iliad, P. 35)

Goddess Thetis, Achilles' mother, asked Zeus to help her son. Zeus consents as Thetis, among all the gods, served Zeus well. So it is an axiom among the Greeks: to serve gods well, gods will back you.

The argument between Zeus and Hera shows that no god shares ascendancy with Zeus while on earth Agamemnon is rivaled by Achilles. Then follows the false dream sent by Zeus to Agamemnon: that he has to fight as his chance of capturing Troy has come. *“Off with you evil dream to the Achaean ships. Go to Agamemnon.....”* (The Iliad, P. 40)

The addressing staff of Agamemnon is made by a god, Hephaestus, who gives it to Zeus and it descends from god to god to man. This means royalty is divinely supported.

King Agamemnon rose, holding a staff which Hephaestus himself had made. Hephaestus gave it to Zeus.....and Zeus to Hermes,...to Atreus... then bequeathed to Agamemnon. (The Iliad, p. 42)

The famous historical antagonism between the king and the priest, between the palace and the temple is not there. Politics receives legitimacy from religion and religion is in the service of politics, no conflict but a balanced co-existence. *“This was the staff*

that Agamemnon now leant on as he addressed his Argive troops”
(The Iliad, P. 42-43)

Although “*Kings are divine..*” but there is no theocracy. Kings are human beings and assumed no divine right. So Achilles objects to Agamemnon’s greed and Thersites criticizes him before all the troops. “*My lord, he shouted at the king... what more do you want? Your huts are full of bronze....*” (The Iliad, P. 46)

Religion pervades the life of the Greeks. Fighting and withdrawal are done according to god’s will and advice. When the Greeks assembled to discuss the withdrawal from Troy, a snake climbed a tree, in the assembly place, and ate the eight sparrows and their mother, this is religiously interpreted. A priest construes it as: the eight sparrows and their mother are the nine years they siege Troy and after that Troy will fall. Before going into battle, “*Each man has made his offerings to his favourite among the everlasting gods pray that he might come through the ordeal with his life. King Agamemnon himself sacrificed a fatted five-year-old ox.*” (The Iliad, P.50)

It is a diversified tolerant religion. Everything happens in concord with gods’ will. No success without the help of god. Even Homer invokes the help of the Muse to compose this poem and he

asks more help in sketching out the difficult parts of composition, like cataloguing the Greek forces.

“As for the rank and file that came to Ilium, I could not name or even count them, not if I had, ten tongues, ten mouths....unless you Muses of Olympus, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus, would serve me as remembrances.” (The Iliad, P. 55)

Hector taunts his brother, Paris, who escapes a single combat with Menelaus. Hector reproaches Paris’ cowardice that his lovely looks and all Aphrodite’s gifts will not help him in fighting brave Menelaus. Paris replies,

“But there is something you must not reproach me for—the lovely gifts I have from Golden Aphrodite. The precious gifts that the gods lavish on a man unasked are not to be despised, even though he might not choose them if he had the chance.” (The Iliad, P. 68)

A full compliance with gods’ destiny good or bad; man does not choose the gifts he has received from Heaven, they are given. It is from Aphrodite he has received the gift of beauty, the desire and the gift of inspiring love. Love and beauty are given gratuitously, they are divine. Paris will not allow them to be disparaged, because that would insult a deity. He has not chosen, he is aware of being elect. His passion is not that of a mere voluptuous but a kind of consecration. It doesn’t bring him only sensual pleasure but it also

brings him near a state that can be called divine. (Andre Bonnard, 1957) stated that:

In his warlike society, Paris behaves like a coward. His weakness is a yield to the divine will. His piety justifies his immorality. (P.43)

To Priam and Trojan elders, Helen and Paris are not blamed for the war as it is ordained by gods. *“I blame the gods. It is they who brought this terrible Achaean war upon me.”*(The Iliad, P. 68)

Priam is still a pious man. He accepts gods’ inflictions and offers libations to them. Helen wished death to elopement with Paris and desertion of her husband and daughter. *“I wish I had chosen to die in misery before I came here with your son.”* (The Iliad, P. 68)

Helen resists the passion that Aphrodite inflicts on her and would like to refuse the pleasure which the goddess forces her to share. Paris amorality stemmed from his piety; Helen’s morality causes her to rebel against the goddess. Both of them are beautiful and passionate, and this beauty and this passion are gifts which they can not a side and which constitute their destiny. Andre Bonnard, 1957) stated that:

The troubled feeling that possesses men in her presence is a religious feeling. The Trojan elders didn’t blame her conduct or her being a cause of war :Small blame that for a woman such as this, Trojans and armed Achaeans should be bearing Calamity so long; for she to look as wondrous like the

immortal goddess. Priam says, 'I find no fault at all with thee; I hold the gods to blame. (P. 44)

Helen had neither desired nor cultivated her beauty. She had received it, a curse as much as a gift of Heaven. A manifestation of divine omnipotence.

Though both the Trojans and the Achaeans intended peace but Zeus' will, to break out the war, prevailed. "...*but Zeus had no intention yet of bringing peace about.*" (The Iliad, P. 72)

This full submission, sometimes protested, is out of a deep belief that man is an instrument in the hand of god. The gods are behind the victory of Menelaus, the defeat of Paris, settling peace and stirring war. Gods back this side and oppose the other. To the Greeks, man succeeds because he is divinely supported and fails as he is divinely opposed. Paris replies to Helen, "*Menelaus has just beaten me with Athene's help.*" (The Iliad, P. 75)

Diomedes receives the unique privilege of fighting against the gods. Neither Achilles nor any other warrior takes the risk of confronting the immortals who mingle in the struggle between mortals. Diomedes confronts Aphrodite, Apollo and Ares. (Andre Bonnard, 1957) put it that:

He is in fact be friended by Athene, who dwells in him and mixes her soul with his. She rides beside him on his chariot,

urges him into the very melee, fills him with courage and strength. (P. 39)

In fighting and injuring the gods, Diomedes has no arrogance and utters no impious boasts. Still he is an instrument in the hands of the gods.

The Greek gods are men-like not only in countenance but also in behaviour. Hera out of jealousy and personal account insists on destroying Troy, though of all the cities it is the nearest to her heart. *“For all the cities that men live in under the sun and starry sky, the nearest to my heart was holy, Ilium. Replied the ox-eyed Queen of the Heaven.”* (The Iliad, P. 78)

That jealousy rises from Paris’ preference of Aphrodite to Hera or Athena, when he bestows the golden apple unto the first. These gods are whimsical and precarious. Troy never fails in paying full divine respect to Hera. Many a city or a man doesn’t fail in offerings and sacrifices for gods but that proves futility. The interpretation for that is: denying someone a wish is a fulfillment of the wish of another. To be granted a wish man prays to gods.

“Prayers are the daughters of Zeus. They are wrinkled and with downcast eyes. They follow sin which is faster and stronger than them. That is why man sinned then repent comes later. The man who receives them with humility is blessed and his petition granted. But when a man hardens his heart and rebuffs them, they go and pray to Zeus that he may

himself be overtaken by sin and punished through his fall.
(The Iliad, P.174)

Any scheme or undertaking is to be given ritual offerings to the god if it is to prosper and succeed. Any undertaking needs the good will of Heaven otherwise failure is the outcome. *“When they built this wall for the ships, they had failed to make ritual offerings to the gods... the wall was built without the goodwill of Heaven”*
(The Iliad, P.221)

So it didn't last for long. Poseidon and Apollo destroyed it.

Before attacking the Achaeans' ships, Hector defies a soothsayer's advice. Polydamas, Hector's brother, in obedience to a sinister augury urges Hector to desist from battle, the latter who cannot doubt the soundness of the augury but who will fight in spite of everything, replies: *“the best augury is to fight for one's country.”* A surprising remark in an age when auguries enjoyed great authority- especially surprising in a very pious man as Hector is. That is not defiance to a religious man or religion but because Hector has clear orders from Zeus himself.

Sometimes a blunder is caused by gods, Fate and Fury that blind man's judgment. Agamemnon attributes his quarrel with Achilles to them. *“But I was not to blame. It was Zeus and fate and the Fury...”* (The Iliad, P.356)

Man, in his limitation, is eager to know about tomorrow. The Greeks yearning in this wise is satisfied by priests, oracles, omens, dreams and supernatural creatures. The immortal horses of Achilles are endowed by ability to speak and prognosticate. Xanthus imparts the approaching death of his master, Achilles. “...*you too are doomed to fall in battle to a god and a man.*” (The Iliad, P. 364)

Zeus allows the gods to take part in war. The gods are divided between the two parties as Zeus watches over from Olympus. The god's role is to encourage a human hero and dishearten another. The gods in the end enacts Zeus' will even if that is contrary to their own wills. This is seen in the confrontation between Achilles and Hector, as the first chases the latter, Zeus says, “*I have a warm place in my heart for this man who is being chased.*” Here a god grieves for pious Hector. God always backs his loyal worshipper but Fate's decree is sharp and final. Zeus puts the lives of both heroes on the scale and death comes Hector's side. Apollo, though pro Trojans, deceives Hector by taking the shape of his brother who is supposed to supply Hector with a spear in the decisive moment of fighting Achilles. When Hector asks his supposed brother the spear he finds no body. The god deserts him and leaves him to his fate. So Apollo behaves contrary to his will that favours the Trojans. Achilles after killing Hector utters, “*now*

that the gods have let us get the better of this man... (The Iliad, P. 407)

At the point of death, Hector warns Achilles that if he outrages his body, angry gods will punish him. Also by Zeus orders Achilles gives Priam the body of his son, great Hector. With Hermes as a guide, Priam brings Hector's body to Ilium.

2.3. Summary of the Plot of the Odyssey”²

“Song of Odysseus” is what the title meant to Greek ears. Homer begins his story at a point when Odysseus’ wanderings are all but over. We see first his voyage from island Ogygia and his return to Ithaca, but the rest of the adventures are flashbacked by Odysseus himself when he is at the court of the Phaeacians. Not until the fifth book do we see Odysseus. The first four books are devoted to Telemachus, now twenty years old, and his wife Penelope.

Odysseus, king of Ithaca, had gone off to the Trojan war twenty years ago when the Odyssey begins. The war had lasted ten years; a series of extraordinary adventures have since kept Odysseus from returning to Ithaca. Book 1 opens before the hero's return, when he is with nymph Calypso. Poseidon, the sea god, has

² Homer, The Odyssey, Butcher & Lang translation, New York Collier, The Harvard Classics, 1909)

kept Odysseus from returning because the latter in self-defense, blinded his giant son, Polyphemus, the Cyclops.

Pallas Athena, goddess of intelligence asks permission to get the wily hero back to his faithful wife and son, who are in a quandary as to whether Penelope should assume that Odysseus is dead and marry again. The suitors pester her day and night and are eating the family into poverty. Calypso is ordered by Hermes to help Odysseus get home. As the hero sets out Poseidon sees him and tries to drown him. A nymph helps him to get to the land of the Phaeacians, a kindly people who listen to his recitation of his adventures. He takes his story at his departure from Troy. First they attack the Cicones then come across the Lotos Eaters. Lotos make one forgets home. The third adventure is with the giant Polyphemus.

They encounter Aiolos, the god of winds. After that they confront the cannibalistic Laistrygonians. Their next adventure is with the witch Circe. Then they descended into Hades to learn from Tiresias how to get home. Ascending from Hades, Circe advises them to choose the route of Scylla and Charybdis instead of that of the wandering rocks. She tells them how to avoid the temptation of the beautiful sea nymphs, the Sirens. They come across Helios cattle from which they must not eat but they do. Coming across these risks, Odysseus loses all his men. Calypso

rescues him and keeps him for seven years. Thus he has told the Phaeacians, who bring him home to Ithaca.

In Ithaca Odysseus makes contact with his faithful swineherd, his son and a few men needed to help him slay the suitors. Penelope has finally despaired of her husband's return and has promised to marry the winner of an archery contest that requires the use of Odysseus' bow. But none of the suitors can even string the bow. Odysseus disguised as a beggar, strings the bow, slays the suitors and discloses his identity. A blood feud between Odysseus and the relatives of the suitors is stopped by Athene, in the name of Zeus, and the poem ends with the scene of pastoral happiness. The lost is found, the wrongs are righted and the long suffering is over.

2.4. Religion in The Odyssey

The first religious reference in the epic is:

“Then wise Telemachus answered her,....it is not minstrel who are in fault, but Zeus, methinks, is in fault who gives to men, that live by bread, to each one as he will.” (The Odyssey, P.14)

Telemachus like Paris in The Iliad blames gods for his shortcomings. Zeus in the opening of the poem says,

“Lo you now, how vainly mortal men do blame the gods! For of us they say comes evil, where as they even of themselves,

through the blindness of their own hearts, have sorrows beyond that which is ordained.” (The Odyssey, P.9)

Men approve their limitation as it is from god. The gods attribute evils and pains of men to the latter's follies and not complying to gods' will. *“As the gods ever desired that men should be mindful of their commandments.”* (The Odyssey, P.38)

Most of the Greek heroes paid a terrible reckoning for sacking the holy Troy that never fails in worshipping. A city that pays its full religious obligations is dearer to gods. Agamemnon is assassinated by his wife, Menelaus is kept from home for a long time in Egypt and loses many of his men, Ajax suicides, Diomedes is banished from home, Achilles is killed under the walls of Troy, and Odysseus wanders in the seas for ten years and returns home lonely after losing all his men. Calypso is commanded by Zeus to let Odysseus go after keeping him as a sugar daddy for seven years. On his raft to Phaeacians coast, Odysseus after a pause of reflection, rejects the help of goddess Ino who emerges to him from among the waves and offering divine help in form of a sail which bear him up while swimming. Odysseus believes in gods and knowing that they can be perfidious as well as favourable, but trusts in the first place only to himself. He swims on for two days, with all his might, and makes land at the mouth of a stream. His efforts have been rewarded. Nausicaa, the daughter of king

Alcinous of the Phaeacians, is made by Athene to dream that she will soon be married and that she is to go to the beach to wash her clothes. That is to receive Odysseus who is casted naked the previous night. Nausica when first saw Odysseus answered him, “...it is Olympian Zeus himself that giveth weal to men, to the good and to the evil, to each one as he will...and so thou must in anywise endure it.” (The Odyssey, P.58)

Then she adds that no mortal comes to the Phaeacians as a foe, not because they are formidable but “for they are very dear to the gods.” (The Odyssey, P.59)

The famous snare set by Hephaestus to trap his wife Aphrodite and her illicit lover Ares, is a funny scene to gods who are free from morality and human calculations. The story has its foreboding on Odysseus who left his wife Penelope twenty years ago. A hastening urge of his heart’s beat and feet steps to his wife and his son. Lo! Even a goddess is disloyal.

In the Odyssey, the strange creatures and grotesque gigantic beings could not be objects of a cult. (Andre Bonnard, 1957,) says,

Syclops, Scylla and Charybdis to which no prayer can be offered, illustrate what appeared to the understanding of the primitive man as brutal, irrational and quite incomprehensible character of natural phenomena. (P.138)

Circe and the sirens are complex symbols. These fair nymphs are the traps laid by nature, that aspect of nature which attracts and enchants man. The smile of the nymph conceals hostility. Circe uses her charm to change men into beasts. The voice of the Sirens is divine, but the field where they sing is strewn with human bones. Nature is here represented in the contrast we imagine between her beauty and her mortal aversion for human life. Odysseus triumphs over these dehumanizing terrors by his humanity that binds him to society: love of his wife, son and homeland; and again by the help of gods.

The greediness and folly of Odysseus' men is what leads them to open the bag given by Aeolus, the god of the wind. The wind breaks forth from the bag loosed by his greedy men. It carries their ship away from outskirts their country. *"... for we were undone through our own heedlessness (The Odyssey, P. 87).* When man trespasses god's command or advice, he falls into troubles and misfortunes. Man's obstinacy is behind his debacles. But as he is quasi-divine, man enacts his discretion. Gods support he who always minds them. Hermes gives a herb of virtue to pious Odysseus to overcome Circe's magic.

"There with the slayer of Argos gave me the plant...howbeit with the gods all things are possible. Now when she had given it and I had drunk it off and was not bewitched." (The Odyssey, P. 92)

The goddess has the chance to bewitch Odysseus when she tempts him naked in her bed, but clever and god fearing Odysseus complies with Hermes words and orders to the last. So piety and full obedience saved him. “*Lest she make thee a dastard and unmanned, when she had thee naked.*” (The Odyssey, P. 92)

Burial of the dead is a duty of a living towards the dead. Lest that incurs gods’ anger on the one who fails to fulfill this duty. Elpenor is one of Odysseus’ men. He dies at Circe’s palace and left unburied. His ghost comes to Odysseus in Hades, “*leave not unwept and unburied as thou goes hence...lest haply I bring on thee the anger of the gods.*” (The Odyssey, P. 92)

Odysseus’ men deaf to gods’ warnings, feast for six days on the cattle of Helion Hyperion. “*So Zeus thundered and cast his bolt upon the ship*” (The Odyssey, P. 115)

The ship and all the men, save Odysseus, are washed away and drowned and perish. That is a clear and heavy reckoning for over noticing gods’ commands.

As Odysseus is divinely opposed by Poseidon, so the latter punishes the Phaeacians who convey Odysseus safely to Ithaca. The sea god turns the Phaeacian ship into a stone and walls them behind a great mountain. “*Then near her came the shaker of the*

earth, and he smote her into a stone, ...and overshadowed their city with a great mountain.” (The Odyssey, P. 118)

To pacify Poseidon, the Phaeacians sacrifice twelve bulls and pray at altars. Odysseus is respected by The Phaeacians and by his swineherd when he comes to his country disguised as a beggar. To the Greeks, guests and strangers should be respected and welcomed. Eumaeus, the swineherd, tells his disguised lord that, “*Guest of mine, it was an impious thing for me to slight a stranger, even if there came a meaner man than thou; for from Zeus are all strangers and beggars.*” (The Odyssey, P. 124)

On his return to Ithaca, Odysseus approaches the deep cavern of the nymphs by the sea shore. To them- of old- he had offered many sacrifices. To their care he now confides the treasure he has brought back from his voyages. He bows himself to the ground, he kisses that great deity, the corn-yielding Earth. And then raising his hands to Heaven, he begs the nymphs, as well as Athene, to grant him victory. In spite of his long absence and yearning for his son, Odysseus reveals himself to him only when Athene orders him to do so. “*And Athene spake to him saying: son of Laertes now is the hour to reveal thy word to thy son...*” (The Odyssey, P.145)

When Athene transforms Odysseus from old age to a youth, Telemachus thinks he is before a god, “*surely thou art a god of those that keep the wide heaven.*” (The Odyssey, P. 145)

It is not in a man’s ability to change from old to young. Telemachus tells his father that the suitors are 108, and it is hard for them two to defeat them. Odysseus answers him, “*...and consider whether Athene with Father Zeus will suffice for us twain, or whether I shall cast about for some other champion.*” (The Odyssey, P. 146)

The son who is as wise and pious as his father replies, “*valiant helpers in sooth, are these two thou namest.*” (The Odyssey, P.147)

A priest reads birds’ omen, prophecies “*that Odysseus is even now of a surety in his own country, resting or faring, learning of these evil deeds, and sowing the seeds of evil for all the wooers. So clear was the omen of the bird I saw...*” (The Odyssey, P.153)

The wooer Antinous is rude and harsh to Odysseus who disguises as a beggar. But one of the wooers wisely says,

“*Antinous, thou didst ill to strike the hapless wanderer ,doomed man that thou art,...if indeed there be a god in heaven. Yeah, and the gods, in the likeness of strangers from far countries, put on all manner of shapes, and wander*

through the cities, beholding the violence and righteousness of men.” (The Odyssey, P.160)

For the Greeks a god can take any shape; and to them divinity can be in any form and anywhere. So all the existence is sacred and one is to be alert.

Like omens, dreams foreshadow the future and show gods' ways. Penelope's dream or vision of twenty geese in the house, that eat wheat, and a great eagle broke all their necks and slew them; and they lay strewn in a heap in the halls. The geese are the wooers and the eagle is Odysseus. Not all the dreams are true visions.

“But there are two gates of shadowy dreams: one is fashioned of horn and the other of ivory. Such dreams as pass through the portals of sawn ivory are deceitful. But the dreams that come forth through the gates of polished horn bring a true issue.” (The Odyssey, P.180)

Gods ways are many. The night Odysseus spent at his house as a beggar, a good omen is sent to him by Zeus and it appears to him in the complaint of a servant woman worn out by serving the wooers. Prayers are raised by Odysseus, Penelope and the servant woman. All the three ask relief and that the suitors justly served and god consents. Theoclymenus, a seer, prophecies the slaying of the suitors at the hands of Odysseus. *“Ah! Wretched men, what*

woe is this ye suffer? Shrouded in might are your heads and your faces and your knees...” (The Odyssey, P. 187)

A clairvoyant is part of the spiritual heritage of all religions and cultures. A short while before slaying the suitors, a thunder of approval comes from Zeus, *“and Zeus thundered loud showing forth his tokens. And the steadfast goodly Odysseus was glad there at.”* (The Odyssey, P.196)

This hideous task of slaying the suitors is divinely approved and success is inevitable. As he discloses himself to the feasting wooers, Odysseus blames them for *“traitorously wooed my wife while I was yet a live, and ye had no fear of the gods.”* (The Odyssey, P.197)

The effrontery of the wooers is not only to Odysseus but also to gods. So they find the fate they deserve. And because their insolence is against god, so in the end peace is god-ordained. Slaying of the wooers can be a blood feud that might last generations, but it turns simply to be setting things in order. Peace and harmony are a gift from god.

When Eurycleia, the nurse, rejoices over the bodies of the wooers, Odysseus prevents her by saying, *“it is an unholy thing to boast over slain men. Now these hath the destiny of the gods overcome...”* (The Odyssey, P.204)

Eurycleia tells Penelope that Odysseus has returned and slain the suitors. To her repeated disappointments, Penelope thinks that it is a god in shape of her husband, “ *it is one of the deathless gods that has slain the proud wooers, in wrath at their bitter insolence and evil deeds.*” (The Odyssey, P.207)

Odysseus and his supporters anticipate the rising of Ithacans against them in vengeance, so they camp in a farm outside Ithaca and wait for gods’ guidance there, “*There after shall we consider what gainful counsel the Olympians may vouchsafe us.*” (The Odyssey, P.208)

The Greeks when launched the expedition against Troy to retrieve Helen, they are contented that Helen is not a tramp. If she is a whore, she doesn’t deserve fighting for. She is not to be blamed as it was the god who led her to elope with Paris. Also, the Ithacans see that Odysseus, in killing their impudent sons, is aided by god,

“*...for surely Odysseus planned not these deeds without the will of the gods. Nay I myself beheld a god immortal, who stood hard by Odysseus in the perfect semblance of Mentor.*”
(The Odyssey, P. 220)

So Odysseus is also forgiven by avengers. And Zeus and Athene decreed peace and forgiveness among Ithacans.

(Ripley, 1951) stated that:

The word “religio” (for which there is no exact counterpart in Greek) probably comes from Latin. It means “to bind”. An ancient writer, Lactantius, said: “we are tied to God and bound to Him by the bond of piety, and it is from this that religion has received its name. (P.15)

It meant originally paying regard to such unseen power as might influence mankind for good or ill. Religion is a voluntary subjection of oneself to God. It implies the recognition of a Divine personality in and behind the forces of nature, the Lord and Ruler of the world. The absence of the term among the Greeks doesn't mean absence of the concept. (Cary and Haarhoff, 1961, mentioned that *St. Paul found the Athenians a most god-fearing people. (P.306)*

This religious feeling is plentifully attested in Greek literature. For most Greeks, a daily trip to some temple to offer sacrifice to a god was common practice. de Selincourt, (1962) testified that:

Greek religion is peculiar in that it had no dogma, no sacred Book, no prophet, no revelation and no permanent professional priesthood. But the Greeks were deeply people and brought their religious sense to bear upon the smallest details of everyday life to an extent which is difficult for the modern man to appreciate or understand. (P.186-169)

Greek religion differs from most religions in that it had nothing in it of revelation, it was the progressive imaginative act of a highly intelligent people. A people get the gods which they deserve. The inscrutable demons who pester primitive man are born of nameless terrors and inhibiting ignorance; mirrored a race brutalized by incessant war and fearful of unknown privations. So too the Greek gods reflect with illuminating clarity some salient features in the Greek character. The Greek religion is unusual in its very lack of system, it begins at no fixed point and has roots which stretched into unchronicled past. It has no eminent prophet or law giver who expounded the nature of the gods, no sacred book whose authority is final on doctrine or morals, no central organization for its hierarchy, no conception of a dedicated religious life., no accepted scheme of redemption. Greek religion shows its essential Greek character by not conforming to any plan and by its generous freedom and inclusive tolerance.

The gods of Homeric poems are known as Olympians, they were imagined to dwell on the cloud-capped peak of Mount Olympus in Thessaly. But from their distant home they frequently visited the haunts of men, and indeed they were themselves men writ large – undying and more powerful, but of like shape and mind. They were not immune from human follies, for they indulged in amours, they lost their tempers and even fought one

another; but they also showed loyalty and compassion, and admiration for the human virtues.

(Graves, 1955, says that:

The familiar Olympian system is: a divine family of six gods and six goddesses, headed by Zeus and a co-sovereign Hera. Forming a council of gods. But after a conspiracy against Zeus, Hera became subservient to him. (P.20)

The Greek divinities seem to present an ordered system, living on Olympus with Zeus, the father of other deities, at their head, and each concerned with a more or less recognized sphere of activity.

The Greeks, like other peoples, needed gods to explain what is inexplicable. To the pre-scientific consciousness nature, both human and physical, is encompassed with mysteries which cry to be penetrated and mastered. The Greeks solved the matter to their own satisfaction by believing in gods who not only rule the visible world but at work in the fortunes and hearts of men. Just as it was natural to explain by divine agency thunder or storms or earthquakes or growth of the crops, so it was equally natural to attribute to gods the inspiring thoughts and passions that assail human beings.

Even today the workings of the human mind are at least obscure as the workings of nature, and the Greeks can hardly be criticized for believing that both were in the control of the gods.

They were indeed proud of their own powers, but they recognized that much lay beyond their own summons and that all this belonged to the gods. It was therefore important to form relations with them and to solicit the utmost help from them. (Cary and Haarhoff, 1961, told that:

In Greece, the belief was widely held that the gods were kindly rather than malicious or vindictive. When he invokes a god, a Greek usually stood erect, with unveiled head and hands uplifted, as if to receive a gift, and addressed the deity in words like "dear Zeus", "dear Apollo". The gods were endowed by Greek artists not only with beautiful figures, but with serene and compassionate expressions. The god is solicited for positive gifts: increase of crops and flocks, victory over enemies, recovery from illness, wise advice on the difficult problems of life. (P.309)

As the Greeks were incapable of accepting so much that was mysterious and incredible, they couldn't resign themselves to the incomprehensible; and so they soon substituted, for these monstrous gods and cruel nymphs, deities of human shape. Poseidon harnessed his steeds like some noble warrior in the Iliad. This anthropomorphism included even Zeus. Zeus was the god of the sky, thunder, and tempest; became the god of the enclosure, of the house and the hearth. Apollo was as fair as a day, his face shone with light. He purifies, heals and washes stains of crime. Also, he was the god of light, music and harmony. The best way of winning him is by offering festivals. Most of the gods were fond of

festivals. They were the joyous gods of a merry people which sought to win the divine favour by organizing beautiful performances, sporting competitions and balls. These gods loved laughter. They were won by praying, offering sacrifices, celebrate festivals and performing funny plays. Dancing accompanying the flute or the lyre enjoyed these gods who were carnal and sensitive as man to the beauty of rhythm and melody. (Bonnard, 1957) said:

We are aware of the physical presence of the gods. Zeus and Poseidon have hair blacker than nature, Hera wears precious stones and the perfume she uses is powerful: it fills heaven and earth. Athene's eyes glitter, Aphrodite's shine like marble, Hephaestus sweats and sponges his face.(P. 142)

These gods live in a state of endless bliss. They live in gaiety, laughter and absolute joy. *'tears are reserved for men, says Homer, laughter for the gods.'* The Olympus gods are serene because they have been freed from death, suffering no care. The wrath of Zeus with Hera and the treason of Aphrodite to her husband Hephaestus with Ares all end in laughter. But there was a deity who seemed absolutely resistant to any kind of humanization. That is shown in (Bonnard, 1957,) ,

Destiny, or as one said in Greek, 'Moirai' was never invested with any human form. She was a kind of law of the universe. She intervenes in the course of events to restore things to their place when they had been thrown into disorder by the relative liberty of men and the absolute liberty of the gods. (P.148)

Moirai was a principle placed above the liberty of both men and gods; a principle which causes the world to be truly an order, a thing in order.

The Greeks saw their gods in human shape; this means that the Greeks were so impressed by the range and possibilities of human gifts that they couldn't conceive of the gods in any other shape. They believed that nature was governed by powers similar to their own, vastly stronger but of the same kind. Instead of reckoning gods as beyond comprehension and therefore displayed in uncouth lineaments of beasts or monsters, they tried to impose some order on the whole scheme of things by assuming that it conformed, if not exactly to reason, at least to human nature in an advanced and extended degree. Seeing the gods in human shape, made the gods more real than in any other religion; and gave to men an increased self-respect because they resembled them.

The place of worship might be any temple or consecrated spot, and an altar was the place for sacrificing. (Bogart, 1968) explained that:

The Greek temple was in the form of a small rectangular wooden box (later of stone), covered with a flat roof. The temple contained the statue of the god or goddess to whom it was dedicated and usually a small altar with a priest in charge. The worshipers remained outside. (P.29)

The temple wasn't designed for the worshipers. Inside the temple were a space for the god and another for the priest ministered to the needs of the god and conducted the rites that honoured the god. The worshipers held their services and offered their prayers outside. Oracular seats were plentiful in Greece. (Cary and Haarhoff, 1961,) stated that:

The oracle, a priest or a priestess sat on the sacred tripod in an underground chamber of the god's temple, and answered inquiries by breaking into delirious and ambiguous talk. (P. 316)

Soothsaying in the service of the state was a profession reserved to those who could see signals or hear voices outside the ken of folk. Specialists in seer craft, who interpreted the will of the gods received a state appointments or a fee. The taking of omens (mostly from birds flight, entrails of sacrificial animals) was common, and oracles were consulted on occasions. Commanders in the field consulted the omens before making an important move, and gave thanks for victory by building new temples or making offerings. Greek political leaders sometimes referred their problems to an oracle for solution. (Cary and Haarhoff, 1961).

The ritual by which to win the divine favour was varied in detail. The sacred were separated from the profane. According to (Cary and Haarhoff, 1961,

Altars were not only store-houses of divine power, but served to keep the sacrifice above and away from the common earth. Votive offerings, after their purpose had been fulfilled, were broken up to prevent their returning from the sacred to the profane sphere. A man who would be in touch with the divine must first undergo a ritual purification from mundane contacts. A person infected with murder must undergo a ritual cleansing before he could commune with gods or men. (P.310)

The rituals were prayers, sacrifices, and ceremonies included processions, dancing and music, holding of competitions in which the worshippers glorified their god by exhibiting their prowess as musicians, athletes, dramatists and so on. They wore garlands, skin of animals and carried branches of olive as a means of sharing their fertilizing power. (Cary and Haarhoff, 1961)

Every Greek city had its patron god. Every family had its own religious observances: Greek houses commonly contained a small shrine for their domestic deities; like the altar of Hestia (the goddess of the hearth). So Greek religion which began with the individual and the family passed easily into the domain of the city-state. (Bowra, 1957, says,

Every city was protected by its special deity, who had his or her own temple and festivals. The deity who presided over the destinies of a city was responsible not only for its existence and its safety, but for its civic harmony and its grace of life. (P.69)

The town honoured its patron god more than other deities. That was, for instance, like Athene in Athens, Poseidon at Corinth and Apollo in Miletus. Distinguished mortals like Agamemnon, Helen or Menelaus were respected as heroes not gods. (Bowra, 1957)

The members of the Greek society were closely connected by ties of kindred as by their speech, their habits, their laws and tastes. Out of the bound of his own city each was an alien who had no proper claim to the protection of the laws, who couldn't become an owner of land in a soil sacred to the worship of gods not his own, and who couldn't inherit from the citizens because all inheritance implied the maintenance of a particular ritual, and this maintenance depended strictly upon blood. (Sonnenschein & company, 1904), show that

Only in his own city (state) could he live under the protection of law, that is, of religion. Anywhere else he must lead godless life. Hence the sentence of banishment became a punishment more terrible than that of death, for the banished man was wiped out from his family and from the worship of the family gods. He was no longer husband or father, and his kinsfolk were free to act as though he had never lived. (P. 222)

It would have been an act of impiety or madness if a family abandoned its worship and adopted that of another in its stead. A number of houses could unite in the common worship of a god. Politically, such a religious system starts by a family that after

generations becomes a clan, alliance of clans might lead to tribes that might constitute a city.

The Greek gods had their own spheres of action and their own personalities. They make a divine family but each combines control of some part of physical nature with a special function in regard to men. The first office may be older and more fundamental than the second, but it is easy to see how one could pass into the other. (Bowra, 1957, tells that

Zeus, the lord of the sky, is the father of gods and men. Apollo is the god of light, and therefore of inspiration, which does for the soul what light does to the world. Aphrodite is born of the sea, so she is the goddess of physical desire which is equally strong in gods, men, and beasts...Artemis, who presides over wild nature, over untamed animals. She dwells on the hills, and her virginity is appropriate to her character as one who loves solitude. ... Hermes is the master of flocks, herds, craft and guile. Poseidon is the lord of the sea, storms and earthquakes. Athene protects olive-trees without which no Greek population can survive and also stands for the national spirit in its intelligence. Hera, the queen of the gods, is the protectress of family and children. (P.68)

These gods and goddesses seemed to begin their careers as powers of nature but were given other functions and attributes by worshippers who wanted more from them than the control of the elements of nature. The other functions and attributes are things in human mind and heart.

Many gods were habitually associated with animals or reptiles or birds. As (de Selincourt, 1962) stated:

Athene with owl, Zeus with the eagle, snake or bull, Hera with the cow, Apollo with the bull or the dolphin, Dionysus with the goat, the lion or the snake. (P.173)

As in most primitive religions the animal played a leading part in ritual because of his strength and fertility. Primitive religion is always practical as it aims at the survival of the tribe. That is why it pervades every aspect of life. Primitive man could not, as perhaps some moderns can, keep one part of his mind and heart for religion, and another for his affairs. If crops failed, or there was pollution, it meant some power had been offended. An oracle was asked to advice.

(Bonnard, 1957,) says that,

The religious feeling of primitive man can be almost wholly defined as a feeling of the presence of "otherness". The divine may exist everywhere, in a stone, in water, in a tree or an animal. By luck or mischance, everything can manifest itself as deity. (P.133)

The Greek's life was interfered by not only the major gods, but also by countless minor gods who were restricted to particular homesteads of fields or woods, or springs. Sacredness was attributed to various inanimate objects. Rivers were few and sacred. In the same wise (Bonnard, 1957,) continues that

One should not cross a stream without saying a prayer and washing one's hands in the water. One should not urinate at the mouth of a stream or near its source. Rivers are regarded as fertilizing not only of fields but also the human species. When a boy grows up and for the first time cut his long hair, he devotes it to some stream in his native region. Each stream has its deity. A river-god who has the form of a bull with a human face. The water spirit also figures as a horse. Poseidon is associated with a horse and water. (P. 134)

In the Iliad, the river Xanthos is angry that Achilles has killed so many and desecrated his waters with such carnage. Achilles leaps in the river to fight the river-god. He is nearly drowned if not rescued by Hephaistos.

No people created their gods more thoroughly in their own image than the Greeks. It would be a mistake to regard them as irreligious, in fact they were most punctilious in performing religious ceremonies. The humanized gods manifestations were animal and other; they were made men and dwell among men, in rivers, in the trees, in the winds, in the springs and upon the high seas. In humanizing the gods the terrors of religion disappeared. If the gods resembled men, it was natural to bring them into contact with human society, and this affected the Greek conduct of sacrifice and prayer. (Bowra, 1957), testifies that:

Once in the far past sacrifices had been made to placate angry and inscrutable gods, and in times of guilty fear even human beings might be offered to them. So Iphigenia was

said to have been sacrificed by her father, Agamemnon, to appease Artemis and get favouring winds to enable his fleet to sail to Troy; it was an old practice, appeared here and there sometimes. But sacrifices had by then become a feast, at which oxen were slaughtered, and after, a portion had been set aside for the gods, the votaries ate the rest. It was assumed that the gods were present and took their places among the worshippers. (P.59).

Such rite could be cheerful and convivial without lacking reverence. So sacrifice transformed from an act of expiation to an act of hospitality; which is typical to the Greeks approach to the gods. (de Selincourt, 1962) says that:

Norman sacrifice to the Olympian gods was a feast the slaughtered animal was shared between the god and his worshippers. But at Diasia the sacrifice was a holocaust: the victim, that is, was burnt to ashes, and there was no feast, no rejoicing. It was a sacrifice offered to placate the dead, the ghosts, the powers of darkness. (P.172)

A similar directness can be seen in prayer. A prayer normally falls into three parts. First comes the invocation, in which the god is invoked through his titles and shrines, as if this was the respectful way to address him; next comes the sanction, in which the votary appeals to services which he has himself rendered in the past and which establish his credentials and assert a claim on the god's attention; finally comes the entreaty in which the god is asked to do something in urgent need. So when priest Chryses,

whose daughter had been carried off by Agamemnon, prays to Apollo for vengeance.

“Hearken O Lord of the silver bow, protector of Chryse, who in Cilla the holy and Tenedos mighty rulest, Mouse-god, if ever I roofed for thee a beautiful temple, Or if I ever have sacrificed the well-covered thigh-bones Either of oxen of goats, accomplish what now I beseech thee: Now man the Danaans pay recompense for my tears with thy arrows.”
(The Iliad, P. 24)

This is an appeal for practical help. Such an appeal is valid only between friends, between men who have proved their devotion and gods who recognize and welcome it. If a man wishes to be helped by the gods, he must pay due attention to them, and then he may reap his reward. Bowra, 1957, asserted that:

It is one thing to ask the gods for their help, and another to ask for counsel and some revelation of their purposes. The flight of birds was studied with wondering attention, notably before battles. Dreams were seriously regarded and were said to come from Zeus, but not all dreams. The Greeks paid great respect to the oracular utterances of gods given by their priests or priestess and especially to those given at Apollo’s shrine at Delphi. (P. 60).

The gods might live on Olympus or retire to the seclusion of their favourite shrines, but they also move among men and took part in human affairs. Homer not only make them fight in the Trojan war but bring them into close contact with heroes. The gods were believed to be present in feasts, in ceremonial songs and

dances, in marriages and funerals. A man could enter into a special intimacy with a god (Athene—Odysseus), yet there is no self-abasement or conscious humility. The glorious splendor of the god is indeed recognized and respected. (Bowra, 1957,) says that:

Gods sometimes did not carry out their obligations to men. God were not blamed for that but it was men's fault. It was divine privilege to refuse gifts without giving explanations. Sometimes gods deceived and betrayed men. (P.63)

As Zeus deceived Agamemnon and sends him a false dream. And Apollo deserts Hector when he is faced at last by Achilles. On his raft to Phaeacian coast, Odysseus rejects the help of the goddess Ino who emerges to him from among the waves and offering him divine help in form of a sail which will bear him up while swimming. The decisions of the gods are inexplicable and must simply be accepted. In “The Iliad”, Homer hints that the lechery of Paris causes the sorrow of Troy, and in “The Odyssey” made the gods approve and aid the punishment of the suitors by Odysseus. Approved (Bowra, 1957) that:

Homer's picture of the gods suggests that they are very little concerned with good or evil either in themselves or in men. Their attitude is explained by Achilles to Priam in a parable of two jars at the door of Zeus, one of which contains good things and the other evil. Zeus gives a mixture to some men, to other sonly evil. (PP.64-65).

The gods often interfere with men, but they do not, according to Achilles, base interference on the rightness or wrongness of men's actions. Bowra, 1957, stated that:

Greek religion was based on a belief in power; so a love of god is not there. Aristotle said, 'it would be eccentric for anyone to claim that he loved Zeus. (P.71)

Men may respect the gods and make friends of them, but there is nothing called a love of god. That because the gods personified power. Greek religion gives a first place to divine power and insists that the gods bestow this in different ways on men. It is a surprise that the Greeks not rejoicing in their achievements but coming to melancholy conclusion that life is a shadow of smoke and man a dream. It is as if, after their prodigious exertions, they asked what they had gained by them, and the answer was 'nothing'. In an outlook which called for vigorous action and expected man to live all the time at the top of his powers, greatest endeavours might fail, and that hard efforts, sometimes, brought no reward. This belief lay at the centre of their lives and sustained them all in their misgivings that the generations of men wither like the leaves and that impartial death waits at the end for all alike.

The notion that the gods are concerned with the doings of men was a natural development in a society rapidly becomes conscious of its domestic and civic obligations. If men felt the need

to punish evil-doers, it was only logical to assume that gods whom they honoured felt the same. According to (Bowra, 1957):

From the 6th century B.C. a belief grew that gods watched over the doings of men and in the end punished the wicked, that is according to Plato's system of rewards and punishments after death which would redress the injustice of this world. And his ideas in due course make their contribution to the Christian notion of Hell. (P. 66).

Greek gods, like Greek heroes, were moved by considerations of personal honour, and anything which might be construed as an affront to it, excited their anger and called for violent vengeance. Had a man offended them, he would have no excuse and could expect no mercy. In their jealousy for their known honour, the gods may also humble men who are too prosperous and enjoy more happiness than is fit for mortals. (Caryn and Harhoff, 1961, show that;

It was a general belief that the gods would punish certain forms of wrongdoing. If a man committed perjury, the god whose name he had taken in vain would naturally avenge on him the personal insult thus inflicted; and if a strong man were to kill or ill-treat a weaker person who had invoked the aid of a deity, it might be his turn to suffer at the hands of one more powerful than himself. Gods would intervene in cases of cheating and double-dealing. Gods also intervened against displays of arrogance. (P.330)

The disaster of the Titanic in 1912, would have appeared inevitable and right to the Greeks. Her owners loudly proclaimed her the

largest and finest vessel afloat, equipped her with every luxury, gave her a boastful name, finally said she was unsinkable. And so, on her first voyage, in a calm sea, with her owners and their friends aboard, she collided with an iceberg and sank. According to Cary and Haarhoff, 1961):

The real code of Greek morals was to obey the law and custom of the city. The Greek morality was based on other sanctions besides those of religion, if men acted rightly, it was largely because they had self-respect, or a sense of decency and beauty. To them war was not a natural right of man, but required justification and must be waged subject to certain conventions. To them war was an evil, accursed, men are to be treated humanely. (P.333).

In so far they did what they thought to be right not for hope to be rewarded but simply because their own natures impelled them to do it, it is a tribute to the strength of their human instincts. Today western ethics springs from here not from religious beliefs.

There is some form of belief in after-life among the Greeks. With death the spirit and body dissociated. The spirit slipped out of the body with last breath and migrated to the underworld of Hades. To them a long death is a sorrow compensation for a short life.

Achilles ghost said to Odysseus,

“Nay, speak not comfortably to me of death, oh great Odysseus. Rather would I live on ground as a hireling of

another, with a landless man who had no great livelihood, than bear sway among all the dead that be departed.” (The Odyssey, P.105).

The Greeks preference for life to the after-life comes from the axiom “man is the measure of all things.” Their life’s outlook is contrary to the outlook of ancient Egyptians who gave the after-life foremost importance, a thing clear in the preparation of the king and other royal family members of their pyramids and tombs during their lives. That is why the Greeks had no monumental graves. (Cary and Haarhoff, 1961. mentioned that ;

In Hades a special corner (Tartarus) was a place of torture for those who offended the Olympian gods. Good people did not come to Hades but to Elysium (Paradise), a place for those lived a consistently just life. Bliss was not bestowed by the arbitrary favour of the gods, but as a reward of virtue. An alternative Pythagorean system said that departed spirits migrated into other bodies of men or of animals, and pass through a cycle of existence. (P.339)

The Greeks never had a book-religion. It is plain that a long religious history lies behind Homer. Greek speculation remained far unfettered. (Toynbee et al, 1921,) illustrate that

What Greek religion has to teach to us is the faith that Truth is our friend, and that the knowledge of truth is not beyond our reach. Faith in honest seeking of Truth is at the heart of the Greek view of life. Curiosity, as the Greeks knew and the Middle Ages knew not, is a virtue not a vice. (P.55)

Greek religion was the progressive imaginative act of a highly intelligent people. It never barred the way to greater knowledge; as it did not force a rigid conformity. (Randall, 1947,) stated that;

but the gods of Greece were for the most part friendly family deities whose inhibitions were few and whose rules were light. All the world was open to thought and observation, holy and forbidden ground was scarce, and the spirit of man for once was free. (P.17)

In some religions man is hedged round by taboos, the things that he may not do, and the thoughts that he may not think. The anthropomorphic character of the gods was a factor in producing an absence of religion tyranny. (de Selincourt, 1962, opined that:

One result of the local conservatism of Greek religious practice, combined with an extreme fluidity in the interpretation of the significance of the acts involved, was the absence throughout Greek history of religious persecution. In modern Europe much blood has been shed, or frizzled, in the name of the creator. (P.169).

The Greeks were intellectuals with a passion to use their minds. Leisure time is to be used in thinking and finding out about the world.

(Bogart, 1968,) says that,

Both the state and religion as a rule left the Athenian free to think and say what he pleased. Socrates was probably the

only man in Athens to suffer death for his opinions. Ideas were even more important to young people than their beloved games. There is a story of how they stopped practicing and crowded around Socrates to ask questions whenever he appeared in their gymnasium. (P. 27)

Of the factors added to the tolerance and fluidity of Greek religion, the absence of any regular priesthood and the absence of a sacred book.

(Toynbee et al, 1921 stated that;

The Greeks escaped the evils of priestly government. Theocracy was alien to their civilization. (P. 42).

The first result of that is the intellectual freedom. But freedom by itself is corrupting. With the Greeks, this freedom is led by conservatism and a sense of balance and harmony. (Cary and Haarhoff, 1961,) say that,

The god conservative, and stood for the more enlightened usage of the day, and his guiding principle of ‘nothing over much’ gave exact expression to the innate Greek sense of balance and harmony. (P.317)

The words said to have been inscribed in the shrine at Delphi were “Know thy self” and ‘Nothing in excess”. The spirit of Greece pervades all Greek creations. (Randall,1947) illustrated that:

It is balanced and measured because balance and measure were of the essence of Greek thought. (P.63)

This free intellect, beside its inherent balance and harmony, never over notices religion and religious rituals. The pervasiveness of this religious feeling is clearly attested in statement of (Cary and Haarhoff, 1961 that:

men of science worked out their problems on a strictly rational plane, but they did not assume a purely material or mechanical view of the universe. (P.307)

The conflict between science and religion was not opened in ancient times.

Although the ancient Greek world was one of separate city-states which did not form an administrative national unity, there did develop among them a sense of cultural nationality based upon the many elements of life which all Greeks held in common. Language and religion are the unifying elements for all Greeks.

According to Hayes et al, 1967:

Despite differences of dialect, men from various parts of the Greek world could understand one another. Literature and religion also fostered common traditions, (P.17).

Through the Homeric epics all the Greeks became familiar with the same gods and with the heroic deeds of their own ancestors.

The Greek literary tradition, which commenced with The Iliad and The Odyssey of Homer, includes the lyrics of Pindar and Sappho, and above all, the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles.

Their dramas, as also the comedies of Aristophanes, found intelligent and critical audiences in Athens. So skillful was the handling of the timeless themes of life, death, fate and religion that Greek tragedies have become ‘classics’ for every subsequent age. (Hayes, et al, 1967,) say that:

Athens also produced three renowned historians, Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon. There were great buildings such as The Acropolis, The Pantheon, The temple of Athena and many other public buildings that bear witness to a combination of seldom equaled architectural skill and artistic taste. (P. 22)

The Greeks did produce various works of art, buildings statues and books, which instead of decently dying or falling out of fashion in the lifetime of the men, who made them, lasted on and can still cause high thoughts and intense emotions. (Toynbee et al, 1921, approved that:

We should find that, for the branch of mankind which is responsible for western civilization, the seeds of almost all that we count best in human progress were sown in Greece. (P.21)

The conceptions of ‘Beauty’, ‘Freedom’, ‘Justice’, ‘Truth’ and ‘universal fellowship’ were all Greeks. (Murray Inge, 1921).

Toynbee et al, 1921, in the same wise added that:

Without what we call our debt to Greece we should have neither our religion, nor our philosophy, nor our science nor

our literature nor our education nor our politics. We should be mere barbarians. (P.27)

The western civilization is a tree which has its roots in Greece, or, it is a river which has received affluent from every side; but its head waters are Greeks.

2.5. Related Previous Studies

There are many studies in different countries and times that have been conducted in the field of classical religions, mythologies and Christianity. The field has attracted the interest of many researchers in both circles of literature and theology.

Here are some M.A. and PhD. studies related to this study.

1. Paul Anderson, (2000), *Gods, Men and their Gifts*. A PhD. Thesis. Louisiana State University

This study is an examination of the *Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *The Aeneid*, and *Paradise Lost*, based upon their similar depictions of gods and men, in regard to the use of gifts. The nature and the use of gifts is examined in the four works. The themes are: justification of God's ways and gifts, the obligatory gifts versus free gifts.

Of the results of the study:

- Milton describes good and evil powers in other terms that Homer and Virgil could not have known: The Father, the Son

and the Holy Spirit; and other concepts of The Incarnation, Satan, eternal life, Hell.

- Milton's God is not arbitrary in giving gifts. The classical poets are inconsistent in the matter of gifts giving.
- Milton's god is consistent in rewards and punishments.

2. Kathleen Potthoff Mchugh, (1993), *The Muses and the Creative Inspiration: Homer to Milton*. M.A. thesis
University of North Florida

The study traces the influences and references to the Muses from ancient Greece through the end of the English Renaissance.

Of the results of the study:

- There was transformation in muses through time.
- Muses were revived from ancient time to the Renaissance.
- In Milton's *Paradise Lost* the muses have religious significance.
- Sometimes the Muses were substituted by the Beloved, Cupid or Apollo.
- The Muses were revived and referred to in the works of the great poets of the English Renaissance: Spencer, Sidney, Johnson, Donne and Shakespeare.

3. Charles Andrew Keim, (2004), *Milton's God and the Sacred Imagination* Ph.D. thesis, University of British Columbia

The study treats Milton's God in *Paradise Lost* compared to God in Hebrew Scriptures and the tremendous diversity of His portrayal in the Bible: once a human form, then a voice, a light or awesome presence.

The study finds that:

- Milton's God shares less attributes with the God of Genesis.
 - In Genesis, God enjoys a daily walk in the garden with Adam and Eve. In *Paradise Lost*, it is as a vision of light that God reveals Himself to Adam and Eve; they see God not at all.
 - It is Raphael who visits the human pair in *Paradise Lost* not God as in Genesis.
 - In Genesis, God creates Adam from clay with god's presence. In *Paradise Lost*, God visits the alone Adam at his first feeling of consciousness.
 - Milton shows the oneness of the divisions of time before God, and that transcends the boundaries and limitations of the human.
4. Neil Harris, (1985), *Milton's "Sataneid" the Poet and the Devil in Paradise Lost*, Ph.D. thesis University of Leicester

This thesis shows the influence of Dante, Boiardo and Ariosto on Milton in his *Paradise Lost*. It discusses how these three Italian poets influenced Milton in the figure of Satan and in narration.

5. Rebekah Waltman, (2012), *The Intricacies of Using Pagan Myths for Christian Purposes in the Divine Comedy and Paradise Lost*,

M.A. thesis Liberty University, School of Communications

The study treats the use of pagan myths in the Christian works of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

It explains how these two Christian poets have appropriated the pagan myths in their Christian works.

Of the findings of the study:

- Both Dante and Milton have succeeded in integrating the classical myths in their works and the result is more richness.
- In his *Paradise Lost*, Milton insists on distinguishing between what is pagan and what is Christian.
- Dante and Milton exploited the pagan myths to add beauty to their poems and to enhance Christian themes.
- Both poets allegorized the myths to harmonize the conflict between the pagan and the Christian.

- The two poets chose specific myths that fit the concept they are trying to portray.
- The allegorical nature of the Divine Comedy has fit the allegorical interpretation of the myths.
- Dante and Milton have made a clever accomplishment by using pagan myths and not harm their Christian works.

All the above-mentioned studies are, in one way or another, relevant to this study. The uniqueness of this study comes from its adoption of the themes of the relation between religion and life and faith and reason; and how that relation affects the stability of the social context in which the literary work is found.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Chapter Three

Methodology

Religion and life in “The Divine Comedy”

The Christian God 1

3.0. Introduction

This part of the study handles religion in “*The Divine Comedy*” of Dante as a Christian literary work. The chapter starts with a plot summary for the poem; then fathoms the general system of the epic with special focus on the pagan influences. A trace for the pagan elements is conducted in the three parts of the poem.

The Encyclopedia Britannica stated that:

The Divine Comedy, Italian La Divina Commedia, original name Commedia, long narrative poem written circa 1308–21 by Dante. It is usually held to be one of the world’s great works of literature. Divided into three major sections—Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso

Each section contains 33 cantos (or chapters). The first one is *Inferno*, which contains one introductory canto plus 33 cantos depicting hell. The second section is *Purgatorio*, which depicts purgatory, and the third section is *Paradiso*, which depicts heaven.

Dante acts as both the authorial poet and as the central character of this story. In the poem, the character Dante travels

through all of hell, purgatory, and heaven to make his way back to God, meeting several characters from history and literature on his way.

3.1. Summary of the Plot of the Inferno

The Inferno opens when Dante, in the middle of his life, is lost in a metaphorical dark wood, which is sin. He looks for guidance. He sees the sunlit top mountain of Purgatory. He decides to climb. His path to the mountain is blocked by three beasts: a leopard, a lion and a she-wolf, which typify the sins of lust, pride and avarice. As he is about to retreat in the darkness of the wood, the spirit of the Roman epic poet, Virgil, comes to the rescue. Dante's fears and worries are tranquilized on knowing that Virgil has been sent by three ladies in heaven (The Virgin Mary, Saint Lucy and Beatrice, his youth-love who died years earlier). He is to lead Dante to salvation.

Virgil says, they must go through hell to get to Beatrice in Heaven. Dante is a little frightened, but is encouraged by Beatrice's supervision. They come to the foot of the mountain where Hell exists in the middle of the earth. It is made up of 9 circles. From Virgil and Hell's dwellers, Dante learns that each sin is punished according to its severity; systematically going from lighter sins of incontinence (giving in to one's desires) to more

severe sins of violence (actively willing evil) and to fraud (here malice motivates). The sinners of Hell never repent in life, so they suffer the sequels.

Hell is like an upside down cone. With every descent the circle become narrower and containing more aggravated sin and more suffering.

The two poets go through the space outside Hell where they meet neutral souls, neither good nor bad.

Inside Hell the first circle contains the unbaptized and pagans who lived before Christ like (Plato, Aristotle, Homer, Virgil,..etc). In (circle 2) lust is punished, gluttony circle 3, greed circle 4, wrath circle 5. Hell proper or the City of Dis starts with circle 6 for the heretics, circle 7 is for the violent, circle 8 contains deceivers and circle 9 includes those who betrayed trust.

In the very heart and the deepest place in Hell, Satan freezes in Cocytus. With his three mouths grind the archetype betrayers of all time: Judas (Jesus betrayer), and Brutus and Cassius (betrayers of Julius Caesar).

3.2. Plot Summary of Purgatory

Passing the painful experience of Hell, Dante and Virgil climb on the body of Satan to reach the other side, the southern

hemisphere where mount Purgatory stands very high. Here penitent souls endure the torture of purging themselves before admittance into Heaven. If the sinners in Hell remain and suffer their horrible punishment forever, Purgatory souls are different. Hellish sinners did not admit their sins, while in Purgatory the souls are already saved as they confessed their sins before death. So they ascend upward to heaven. Their admittance into Paradise is a matter of time.

So the general mood has changed: the souls are not isolated or in a state of dark ignorance. They learn in groups from examples of the virtue and vice that correspond to their penance.

Purgatory is a high mountain that rises in the watery southern hemisphere. It is mapped out in seven rings parallel to the seven deadly sins (pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony and lust).

At the peak of the mountain is the earthly paradise (The Garden of Eden); here Virgil (symbol of reason) leaves and Beatrice leads Dante forth to Heaven.

Mount Purgatory has three parts across which the two poets march. These parts are: ante-purgatory where the indolent and late-repentants dwell. Lower Purgatory is the realm of the proud, the envious and wrathful. Upper Purgatory is peopled by the slothful,

the covetous, the gluttonous, and the lustful. The mountain is peaked by Earthly Paradise.

Purgatory represents the spiritual cleansing of a soul. So it obligates an ascent similar to the descent through Hell.

But the process imposed on the sinners, here, is purification and cleansing rather than punishment process.

In ante-Purgatory the souls start cleansing, then pass through Peter's Gate and ascend the steps of penitence (confession, contrition and satisfaction). An angel inscribes seven P's on the sinners' foreheads to symbolize the seven capital sins. With every circle ascent a P drops.

3.3. Plot Summary of Paradise

Beatrice replaces Virgil as Dante's guide in Paradise, because it is interdicted to a pagan. She is Dante's real-life love interest. She motivates his procession through the pains of Hell and encourages his difficult climbing of the sloping Purgatory.

Dante rises toward Heaven with Beatrice after being cleansed from his sins. His worldview is according with Ptolemaic system; as Weinberg (1961) told on Dante's astronomical lore

There are for him as for Ptolemy, nine spatial revolving heavens.... from the Heaven of the Moon, nearest the Earth,

to the outermost Primum mobile. Each of the first seven heavens carries one of the seven heavenly bodies: the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. The eighth heaven carries the constellations; the Ninth is the clear space. (P.69)

The earth is in the centre surrounded by heavenly spheres. These spheres are; the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Beyond them is the sphere of the Fixed Stars, still further is the Primum Mobile. And beyond all nine spheres lies the Empyrean that contains the Celestial Rose where all the blessed souls reside. It is a circle of white light within which a golden centre of God's glory.

The blessed souls in Heaven form a strict hierarchical Community that exists in all permeating feeling of love and bliss which comes from the joy and peace of being in the proper place of God's creation.
(<http://www.enotes.com/topics/divine-comedy>)

In images of light, Dante evokes what lies beyond human experience, such as the radiance of the blessed souls and Dante's vision of God.

3.4. Paganism of the Comedy

This part fathoms the general system of Dante's Christian afterlife world that is depicted in his comedy. Then pinpoints the pagan traces that permeate such a Christian edifice from Hell to Purgatory into Paradise.

3.4.1. The General System of the Comedy

Literally, the Comedy is a voyage through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. Allegorically, it is a search for understanding of the order and nature of the universe; projecting a moral and Christian examination of the soul's wanderings from and return to God. (Brandies, 1960).

It is a clash between man's immediate (substantial) goals and his final ideal ones, taking place in human's consciousness and giving responses of suffering and joy.

Dante is a man of his age, not a man in advance of his age. He interprets all medieval Europe. In him the Middle Age lives as it does in its cathedrals. His philosophy is that of Aquinas and his science is that of Aristotle. (Garnett, 1898).

The story springs from the underground chamber of familiar myth. Like Adonis and Osiris, Odysseus and Aeneas, the hero of the comedy enters the country of the dead, undergoes, gains experiences that equip him with new powers, and returns home bearing holy object or peculiar knowledge which is the key to life renewal. To die and to reborn: this is an old story, the old-age quest motif. As shown by (Bergin, 1965)

The journey relates to the world of the dead not only to Virgil and through him to Homer, but the roots lying far below these obvious literary sources. "Necessity not sports, leads him on, says Virgil of his pupil in Inferno XII, even as Odysseus, obeying an ancient law, was compelled to carry out the inexorable commands of Circe. (P. 263)

The system adapted by Dante in his comedy is classic one more than Christian. What is punished is the deed not the intention (motive) that prompts it. For instance, Cain killed his brother out of envy. He is not punished with the envious but banished to the deepest chasm of hell, with the traitors.

For his hell, Dante seeks a philosophical base not a purely religious one. It is to be open to all; Christian, pagan and unbeliever. His sinners would be sinners in any world that is human at all.

Among the population of Dante's hell, (Bergin1965) states tha

Only the heretics and simonists are Christian sinners, in the sense that their sins presuppose a Christian world. (P.267)

A medieval poet dealing with moral error is expected to follow a Christian canon in designing a scheme for his work. That is what Dante has done in mapping out Inferno and Purgatorio. He adopts the seven deadly sins but with Aristotelian arrangement. These two realms are arranged according to the gravity of sin.

In his Ethics, Aristotle identifies three major sources of wrongdoing: vice, incontinence and brutishness. Vice is the worst

of the three as acting of vice is voluntary and deliberate. The incontinent knows what is good but does wrong for lacking of self-control. Brutishness is an extreme form of irrational wrongdoing. A brute (violence) has no sense of what is right or wrong. (Bergin, 1965).

Vice is the opposite of virtue. It is a disposition to behave in a certain way. A person with the vice of licentiousness is disposed to behave licentiously, and will think of this licentiousness as the correct form of behavior. Vice acts are preceded by thought and decision. Incontinence is not as bad as vice, since it is more a form of weakness than actual moral badness. In Aristotle's view, it is possible to do wrong while knowing what is right, because the intellect does not always have full control over the mind's lower functions. (Bergin, 1965)

Dante takes this scheme to structure both his hell and purgatory. (Bergin, 1965) remarks that:

The order of gravity in the Inferno is incontinence, violence and fraud. (P.268)

The same hierarchal principle of sin gravity is at work in the subdivisions and in Dante's reactions. For instance violence is divided in violence against neighbor, against self and against God (in order of heinousness). Again, fraud is arranged in two

categories: sinners deceiving their own fellow men, and worse than them are betrayers of a trust who terminated with Lucifer God's betrayer.

The emotional reactions of Dante reinforces the principle; as he moves to compassion on hearing the story of Francesca in circle 2, but kicks a sinner's face in the ice of Cocytus (last circle).

The same schematic Aristotelian principle of sin's heinousness arranges purgatory. As Bergin, (1965) clarifies that

on the mount of Purgatory the categories of misdirected love are lowest (i.e., worst) while incontinence appears at the highest level and is clearly regarded as less pernicious. (P. 268)

In Purgatory the sins of misdirected love (pride, envy and wrath) are graver than the above sins of insufficient love (sloth) and sins of excessive love of (avarice, gluttony and lust). The latter category is placed on top, it is least punished.

The parade of sinners (in Hell) and penitents (in Purgatory) begins and ends with lust; in accordance to a principle given by Aristotle.

There is an apparent discrepancy between the system adapted by Dante and the conventional system of his age. His system in both Hell and Purgatory is classic more than Christian. For

instance, in Inferno V11 the spendthrift and the avaricious endure the same punishment, because they made no expenditure in moderation; and in Purgatory XX11 Statius explains that he is atoning for spendthrift years in the terrace of the avaricious. It is difficult to make sense of that in a Christian context. How a vice and its extreme opposite get same punishment? How too much chastity or too much mildness is a sin?

Dante has in mind Aristotle's "vices in pairs of extremes and the classical moral of 'nothing in excess.'" (Bergin 1965).

Virtue is a rational mean between the extremes of excess and deficiency, both vices. Tsanoff, (1942) comments on the Aristotle's doctrine of 'Golden Mean' that:

Between the extremes of foolhardiness and cowardice, reason follows the middle course of courage. Temperance is reason's choice between overindulgence (intemperance) and insensibility. (P.17)

The concept of the sin in the Comedy of Dante has Greek roots. To Plato, a thing is itself in that it finds and realizes itself. So in attaining his characteristic good, man achieves or expresses his full and true being. The Greek ethics sought to express the ideal of human perfection, the fruition of character in the life of well-being individual and social. (. Tsanoff, 1942).

(Brandies, 1960) tells about Dante's sinning souls:

The soul's good is modeled on the absolute good, it is written firmly into the souls being from its beginning.... It is at liberty to follow any lures it chooses, but never to free itself from the good norm; either it copies that model or else it suffers. (P.193)

Dante's hell is based on that: the sin is doing contrary to principle of the soul or contrary to how the soul is formatted.

(Tsanoff, 1942) clarifies that:

St. Augustine declared that there is no evil nature. Evil is unnatural, a perversion. When the will abandons the higher and turns to what is lower, it becomes evil--- not because that is evil to which it turns, but because the turning itself is perverse. (P.54)

So the perverse is painful as it is going against the grain of the soul. Sins hurt as they deform the soul with respect to the good that it cannot possibly refrain from loving.

In the system that permeates Hell and purgatory, the classical influence is very conspicuous. But what about the chartering of Paradise?

Heaven is arranged in a series of 9 spheres, which loosely correlate to the planets' orbits. Music and delight characterize heaven, and the souls and supernatural beings there bask in the light of God's holiness. Paradise is based on Ptolemaic cosmos; all the planets orbit the earth upon a series of transparent concentric spheres.

These celestial spheres provide the external order that characterizes Heaven. They guide the seven heavenly bodies that circle the earth: Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Beyond the planets is the Sphere of Fixed Stars, and still further is the Primum Mobile.

In a conference, (Bertolino 2007), remarked that:

The universe that Dante creates is geocentric, based firmly on Aristotelian physics, later echoed by the astronomer, Ptolemy, known as the 'Mathematician' written in 2nd century A.D.

The structure of Dante's Hell, Purgatory and Heaven violates the conventional Christian conception of these states because of his use of the gyre to describe each.

If Hell and Purgatory are a descending scale of evil, Paradise is an ascending scale of good. (Tsanoff, 1942) tells that

To Plato, the idea of good is the highest idea, the supreme reality. This is Plato's God, the ideal principle of Dominant Perfection toward which all significance worth in the world aspires and in which they abide.' In this abides the Christian concept of God and creatures. (P.11)

The blessed dwellers of Heaven are arranged according to degree of bliss. From the Moon, a lower and so a lesser sphere of bliss, to the Empyrean where the dwellers enjoy the Beatific Vision.

*Then saw I clearly how each spot in Heaven
Is Paradise, though with like gracious dew
The supreme virtue shower not over all.*

(Paradise, Canto 111)

Piccarda a spirit in the Moon tells Dante the mystery of the Mansions of Beatitude: (Cary, English translation, 1908)

There are degrees in glory though the vision that gives that glory is the same in all, and each soul is perfectly blessed for each is perfectly full according to her capacity of the supreme grace of knowledge and love. (P.303)

Piccarda and Empress Constance both reside in a lesser sphere of bliss; both have been forced to leave the spiritual life that they would have preferred and enter into forced marriages. Even so they experience a full measure of happiness. They know the infinite bliss of Heaven to the full measure of their ability to comprehend it. Their joy is no less than that of the souls in the Empyrean, even though they reside within a lower sphere.

Neo-Platonism teaches that, in all stages of existence, the world is a manifestation of ultimately Perfect Reality. All things are in God and from God. To him, the world is a hierarchy of emanation. From the all radiating perfection of God arises universal Nous (Reason) or spirit, spirit in turn emanates in soul, and soul overflows into Matter, bodies. As from a luminous centre

in ever more diffused and dimmer periphery to outer most darkness. (Tsanoff, 1942). With every outer movement from the shining central Celestial Rose, light dims out in the lower Heaven states to Purgatory and into the darkness of Hell where Lucifer in the lowermost region freezes away from God's light.

(Brandeis, 1960) states that

Another tradition gave Dante the metaphorical identification of light with truth. Somewhat as Plato had done in the Cave Myth Dante takes it and explores it from Hell to Empyrean revealing the underlying connection between light and truth. In the New Testament God is light, light is truth—are merged God's wisdom is his light. (P. 170)

So the inhabitants of Hell are in rational and moral blindness.

In the Paradise of Dante Beatrice and St. Bernard lead the poet through the blessed heavens to the intimate presence of God.

(Tsanoff, 1942) illustrates that

Socrates' speech in Plato's Symposium records a sublime vision of the steps in the gradation of love which lead to Perfection. St. Bernard surveys the heavenly ladder. From common self-seeking love, man rises to a love of God... the apogee of Christian love is reached when in mystic ecstasy the soul is rapt in devotion to God, lost to itself and one with the divine. (P.65)

Dante's epic poem is obviously a deeply Christian work. One might be surprised, then, to find that it is filled with allusions to

pagan mythology and is populated not just by biblical figures, but also by characters of Greek and Roman myth and history. Perhaps the most important character after Dante is, a pagan: Virgil, Dante's master and guide.

The Comedy is rife with tensions between the pagan influences Dante admires and Christian ideas he values.

3.4.2. The Pagan Elements in Hell

In the visits to the underworld as told in three epic poems, Homer's *The Odyssey*, Virgil's *The Aeneid* and Dante's *Inferno*, it would be easy to assume that since Homer and Virgil present the Greek and the Roman mythological views of the underworld, that Dante would be rendering a Christian view.

The description of *hell* that Dante portrays, however, is not an accurate representation of Christian ideology regarding life after death. Dante infuses Greek and Roman mythology into his portrayal of hell. If anything represented to be Christian contains pagan elements, then it is not Christian at all.

The total renunciation of paganism is represented many times in the Bible. Consider the following:

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and

despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.
(Matthew 6:24).

In *Canto 1* of *The Inferno*, Dante tells that the creation of the world as told in the Bible took place "as the sun was climbing Aries", which suggests that pagan astrology was significant in the creation of the Earth. In *Canto 2*, Dante appeals to the Greek muses for inspiration. He then extends Virgil's story from *The Aeneid* about Aeneas and his visit to the underworld, where the future glory of the Roman Empire is foretold, to include the history of the Roman Catholic Church. He then compares Aeneas, the offspring of a Roman deity, Venus, to the Apostle Paul, suggesting that their lives and missions were similar or somehow connected.

In *Canto 14*, Dante encounters Capaneus, who was killed by a thunderbolt hurled from Olympus by Zeus. Virgil then tells Dante, regarding Capaneus, "*Living, he scorned God, and among the dead, he scorns Him yet*".

Note that the Christian God" and the head Greek God are identical.

Greek and Roman mythological characters are found in abundance in *The Inferno*. We find Charon (the son of Erebus and Nyx – Night) the ferryman in *Canto 3*, Minos the king of Crete in *Canto 5*, Cerberus the three headed dog in *Canto 6*, Plutus and the river

Styx in *Canto 7*, Phlegyas the ferryman *Canto 8*, Medusa the gorgon and the Furies the avenging goddesses in *Canto 9*, the Minotaur and the centaurs in *Canto 12*, and Geryon *Canto 16*.

In *Canto 30*, we find Sinon, the Achean who convinced the Trojans to bring the horse inside the gates of the city.

In *Canto 34*, we finally meet Satan, only to discover that he is a three headed monster who is munching on Judas Iscariot, Brutus, and Cassius in his three mouths. Judas Iscariot was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ who betrayed him for 30 pieces of silver. Brutus and Cassius likewise betrayed Julius Caesar. Are we to believe then, that the betrayal of a pagan emperor of a pagan empire is a sin equal in magnitude to the betrayal of Jesus Christ, who Christians regard as the Son of God?

Just as Milton attempts to "justify the ways of God to men" in *Paradise Lost*, Dante apparently tries to justify pagan mythology to Christians. Dante obviously thinks very highly of Virgil and his poetry, since the Roman poet is chosen as Dante's guide through hell. Dante does not renounce *The Aeneid* and other works of Greek and Roman mythology as paganism, but considers them to be of such great value that he has to make them fit somehow into Christian ideology.

Throughout the poem, Dante refers to Virgil as being his “master” who teaches him along the way during their pilgrimage. Their relation could be of a father and a son, and symbolically is a relation between paganism and Christianity; as Virgil embodies human reasoning. It is paganism that influences and teaches the church.

That is clearly stated by (Lowke, 2001)

Christianity as a whole has a long history of adopting and absorbing Pagan beliefs into its own mythology, Dante overtly continues this tradition...Christian theology took pre-existing literary traditions and reinterpreted them in a Christian light using broad and liberal allegory.

Dante produces a solidified Hell whose geography and population show a great resemblance to the Greek and Roman underworlds. In the Christian scriptures Hell is mentioned only four times as an unquenchable fire (Oxford Annotated Bible, 2001), with no geographic description.

Satan, the lord of Hell, is scarcely mentioned, and is referred to as the Devil, Lucifer or Beelzebub (Oxford Annotated Bible, 2001). May be, the detailed images for Hell and Satan are behind the popularity of Dante’s Inferno. He gives the Christians a vivid Hell which he populates with elements from various cultures, ranging from Homer to the Muslims Prophet Mohammed and Saladin.

With great efforts, he tries to appropriate them to Christian system. By that Dante wrenches the neck of history and cancels reason in accommodating Pre-Christian figures in his Christian –schemed Hell.

3.4.3. The Pagan Elements in Purgatory

Dante invokes the Muses. He asks Calliope Greek goddess of epic poetry to help him in writing lofty poetry. Cato of Utica (a pagan Roman and statesman who lived before Christ. He guards the entrance of Purgatory. Cato exemplifies moral liberty. (Canto 1). In spite of being a pagan, committed suicide, and fought Caesar, Dante places Cato in Purgatory and not in Hell. A reference is made in Canto 2 to Aurora, the goddess of dawn. In Canto 12, the terrace of pride, a sculpture of many mythological figures who have suffered from their pride, is displayed. That includes; Pallas, and Mars who contemplate the giants they ‘ve dismembered, Nimrod at the foot of his Tower of Babel, Arachne , who was turned into a spider and the city of Troy. And other classical mythological figures Dante uses to illustrate a Christian lesson about Pride. In Canto 16, Marco Lombardo lectures on the free will, saying that people believe that Heaven is “the necessary source of every motion. This is wrong because then there will be no free will so the punishment system (Hell, Purgatory..) would

break down because man could not be blamed. But the mind of man is not completely ruled by heaven.

The reasoning mind uninfluenced of the stars. (Purg. Canto XVI)

This recalls the speech of Zeus to the council of the Gods in the opening of “The Odyssey”. “*Lo you now, how vainly mortal men do blame the gods! For of us they say comes evil, Where as they even of themselves, through the blindness of their own hearts, Have sorrows beyond that which is ordained.*” (*The Odyssey, P.I.*)

Canto 17 gives classical examples for the wrathful in the story of the sister Procne, who in anger slew her son and fed his flesh to his father Tereus, and Philomela who was raped by (Tereus) her brother-in-law. Both sisters turned into birds to escape Tereus’ rage. Another image for wrath is the wailing of Lavinia on the suicide of her wrathful mom, Amata. The Canto finishes with a classical example of the slothful Trojans who are out of exhaustion did not follow Aeneas to Italy. So they died a cowardly death. Dante’s illustrative images for wrath are from the rich Greek and Roman heritage.

In Canto 19, Dante dreamt of the Siren that seduced men to their deaths and distracted Ulysses. The classical avaricious examples in Canto 21, include: king Midas the greedy whose touch

turn things in gold, the king of Thrace, Polymnestor who killed Polydorus, sent by king Priam with gold as a gift to ask help. And Crassus, a member of the Roman triumvirate (With Caesar and Pompey) whose greed was known. His enemies killed him by pouring molten gold down his throat.

In Canto 22, a pagan poet, Statius, follows. He converts to Christianity through the Aeneid of Virgil. “*Poet and Christian both to thee I owed.*” (Purgatory XXII)

Here is a paradox: a superior human being who is not saved (Vigil), and who guides others (Dante and Statius) (less superior on the human scale of values) to salvation. Statius sin is prodigality.

Baroliniano, 2015) stated that:

Statius explains that his sin was prodigality, and that he was saved from damnation as a prodigal by a passage in Aeneid 3. This passage in Aeneid 3 taught Statius that prodigality is as much a sin as avarice.

In Dante’s account, therefore, damned Virgil saved Statius in two ways and both times through the medium of a text. He saved him from being damned for prodigality through *Aeneid 3*.

*“I was baptized, but secretly, through fear;
Remain’d a Christian, and conform’d long time*

*To pagan rites. Four centuries and more,
I, for that lukewarmness, was fain to pace
Round the fourth circle. Thou then, who hast raised
The covering which did hide such blessing from me,*

The terrace of Statius includes both penitents purged from avarice and from prodigality; the two extremes. Statius was punished for the latter.

Baroliniano, 2015) asserted that

This shows that Dante's commitment to Aristotelian ethics is profound. He continues to show his fascination with the Aristotelian idea of virtue as not an extreme but a mean.

We can see Dante playing with two ethical systems—the Aristotelian ternary system and the Christian binary system—and think of this as a profound instance of his cultural hybridity. The Christian system of the seven capital vices is now contaminated by another system, whereby virtue is the golden mean between the two sinful extremes of avarice and prodigality.

Canto 23 of the gluttonous contains two instances of classical culture: Erysichthon a Thessalian prince was punished with insatiable hunger for chopping down a tree sacred to goddess Ceres. And the gluttonous Centaurs avidly feasted on food and wine and abducted the bride, were driven away by Theseus.

Approaching the Earthly Paradise, and with the nearness of Beatrice's appearance, the classical references ebb down. Virgil who embodies the classical reason and philosophy now suddenly and sadly disappears; as unbaptized these territories are denied to him.

The procession in the Earthly Paradise contains religious elements of Christian origin. That is like the seven candelabra, the chariot stands for the church. It is drawn by a gryphon (Christ). Some of the elements have pagan or classical origin: prudence has three eyes and the gryphon, a hybrid beast represents the savior; these are Greek influences. (Bergin, 1965).

3.4.4. The Pagan Elements in Paradise

Paradiso opens with Dante's invocation to Apollo and the Muses, asking for his divine task. In Canto 5, the first Heaven, the sphere of the Moon abide the souls who broke their vows. A classic example of rash vow is Agamemnon's vow to Artemis to sacrifice the fairest thing the year yields. He is compelled to victimize Iphigenia his daughter. Canto 8 is about the sphere of Venus, the Roman goddess of love.

In Canto 17 Dante, as he wants to know from his grandfather Cacciaguida about difficulties of the future, likens himself to Phaeton (the son of the sun god). He refers to his mother to know

if Apollo is really his father. Another classical story analogizes Dante to Hippolytus. Phaedra wrongfully accused Hippolytus of her unchaste desire; so are the corrupt citizens of Florence accused Dante of malversation and treason.

Canto 20 justifies the admission of two pagans, Trajan and Ripheus, in paradise. The Roman emperor Trajan is recognized for having consoled a poor widow, an act displaying his love of justice (he punished the killers of the woman's innocent son).

Dante must accept, as true, the medieval legend that Pope Gregory, the Great, admired the (pagan) Roman emperor and prayed for him. The prayers were answered: Trajan, who like other noble pagans had been confined to Limbo in hell, came back to life so he could embrace the Christian faith and thereby reap his heavenly rewards.

Ripheus, is Praised in Virgil's *Aeneid* as the "first among the Trojans in justice" The salvation of the Trojan Ripheus, a pagan who lived long before the advent of Christianity, offers powerful evidence of Dante's insistence that God's ways exceed all human limits to understanding. (Cary, 1908).

Facing the divine shining, and at moments of mortal weakness, Dante's words and memory fail him. Twice, he takes refuge in classical tangibility from the absolute abstraction he faces. That

happens in Canto 27 when he is before St. Peter. Dante looks down upon the earth and sees the sea which Ulysses sailed. *“I beheld the unwise passage of Laertes’ son.”* (Paradise XXVII).

The second instance is in Canto 33 when The Virgin Mary gazes on him. Dante compares his loss of language to the mischievous wind which carried away the leaves on which the prophetess Sibyl wrote.

*“Thus in the winds on flitting leaves was lost
The Sibyl’s sentence.”* (Paradise XXXIII)

Throughout the entire work of Dante’s Divine Comedy, pagans play an integral role. Pagans are present in each of the three parts of Dante’s afterlife and a pagan is even chosen to be Dante’s guide. The prevalence of these individuals suggests that the Greco-Roman tradition played an essential part in this Christian work.

For Dante, the classical world is as alive as his own. It is parallel and interwoven with it. His hell, purgatory, and paradise, to some extent, surge up with more classical references rather than Christian ones. The classical influence is apparent as Hightet (1949) puts it:

The two essential classical influences on Dante’s Comedy are the ethical and physical system of Aristotle, and Virgil’s imagination, patriotism and character. (p.78)

A classical lesson is behind the success of Dante's journey through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. In his poem, Dante refers to classics who perform perilous undertakings or journeys and out of ignorance and pride exceed the limits assigned to them by God. These classics are:

Arachne, Icarus son of Dedalus, Phaeton and Ulysses. Arachne has an exceptional skill in embroidery. She competed with goddess Minerva who turned her into a spider.

“Colours variegated more

Nor Turks, nor Tartars e'er on cloth of state

With interchangeable embroidery wove

Nor spread Arachne o'er her curious loom. (Hell XVII)

Phaeton, son of Apollo, demanded in proof of his divine parentage to be allowed to drive the chariot of the sun for one day. He lost control of the chariot and scorched a portion of heaven and would have burnt up the earth had not Jupiter struck him dead.

Dedalus, the typical craftsman of mythology, made wings for himself and his son Icarus to escape a labyrinth. Icarus flew too near the sun, and the wax of the wings melting, fell into the sea and was drowned.

“Nor greater was the dread, when Phaeton

The reins let drop at random, whence high heaven,

Whereof signs yet appear, was wrapt in flames;

Nor when ill-fated Icarus perceived ,

By liquefaction of the scalded wax,

The trusted pennons loosen'd from his loins,

His sire exclaiming loud, "Ill way thou keep'st;" (Hell XVII)

Ulysses tells about his last mad voyage beyond the Pillars of Hercules which were held to be the western limit of the inhabited world. He and his crew exceeded mortal limits so they drowned.

".... From the new land

A whirlwind sprang, and at her foremost side

Did strike the vessel. Thrice it whirl'd her round

With all the waves; the fourth time lifted up

The poop, and sank the prow: so fate decreed:

And over us the booming billow closed." (Hell XXVI)

All the above characters have surpassed their mortal limits so they met destruction and failure. Dante learns from these classical figures that man's endeavour should be within divinely assigned limits. He also comprehends the teaching that is given by *the Odyssey* and *the Aeneid*. That Odysseus succeeded in returning back home and imposes order again in Ithaca because he is divinely supported by Athena. Aenius also succeeded in finding the path to establish holy Rome as he is divinely helped by his mother Venus. The blend of the personal qualities of the heroes

(cleverness, wisdom and patience) and the divine support are the causes of success.

So Dante in journeying through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise is assuaged by the divine encouragement of Virgin Mary, Saint Lucy and Beatrice who sent Virgil to give guidance, protection and instructions. This is a divine sanction. The success of Dante here is achieved for the contribution of reason symbolized by Virgil (Cary, 1908, P.3) and faith symbolized by the three heavenly ladies.

So the blend of reason and faith is behind Dante's success in his journey and in his poem. Then the prescription of success is the balanced mixture of reason and faith. This is over-noticed by the church in its steadfast war against paganism and the entire classical heritage. |

A faint illustration of a rivalry between religion and philosophy or between faith and reason appeared. According to Limentani (1965)

The chase of religion and philosophy started in the twelfth Century when philosophy –reason- gains power on religion at the hand of Averroes in his conclusion, “subordinates religion to philosophy. (P.49)

St. Thomas, the 13th century Christian philosopher, had sought a synthesis of reason and faith, of philosophy and religion, as shown here by Tsanoff (1942) that

Christianity after scholasticism and the rising of rationalism in Europe endeavored to find a possible harmony of reason and faith. The solution is the Christian spirit entered and inhabited the body of Aristotelian doctrine, which matured in the system of St. Thomas Aquinas. (P.65)

St. Thomas' philosophy blends Aristotelian naturalism with Christian piety.

The 13th century Christian spirit shows a duality of motive and a divided loyalty of a demand for spiritual unity without neglect of natural life of active understanding and rational mastery. But the wed of reason to faith found resistance in the teachings of Duns Scotus who proceeded to subordinate reason to will. That is all nature is willed by God and God's will constitute perfect reason. (Tsanoff 1942).

Certainly, that is a cancellation for reason and widening for the cleavage between theology and science.

The paradox between paganism and Christianity exists because of the one true God of the latter and polytheism of the former. The Christian omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient God far surpassed the dealings of Zeus, Jove the other Olympians.

Fervent Christians look at the classical tradition as “heathen tradition” and the classical poets are “the devil’s prophets” and one of them suggests that all Christians should forget the names of their (classical poets’) gods and muses”. (Dell, 1816).

The tension between the classical pagan culture and the Christian culture started in the early times of the Christian sway. Waltmann (2012) stated that:

Allegory could resolve the conflict between the heathen myths and Christian Morals; that began when the church emerged as a dominant ecclesiastical institution . (P.32)

The outcome of this conflict is recalled by Bush (1963) that, in its beginnings Christianity itself assimilated elements of pagan religion and thought, and after the first clashes, Christian civilization recognized that in its secular activities and moral life, it had much to learn from the ancients. The ancients represent reason and science, gain lands over Christianity. Reason acquires confidence in this battle as illustrated by Limentani (1965)

The second half of the thirteenth century, when Dante grew to manhood, saw the general acceptance as the chief sources of philosophical and scientific culture for every educated European, whether cleric or layman, of works of Aristotle and of his Greek and Arabic commentators. But the cost of that acceptance was a profound disturbance to the Christian mind. (P.52)

The acceptance of the classical culture and the reason it represents, circulates a thesis at the faculty of arts in Paris in 1277 stating that Christian religion is an obstacle to progress in knowledge; that there are fables and falsehoods in Christianity as in other religions. Noble life is to devote oneself to secular philosophy; and that happiness is to be had in this life and not in another. (Limentani 1965).

This last proposition clearly depicts the tension between faith and reason and the courage the latter gained.

In the opening of his poem, Dante assigns virtuous pagans into Hell. Near the end, in Paradise XX he revises his doctrine assigned Ripheus the Trojan (virtuous pagan) into heaven.

*“Who, in the erring world beneath, would deem
That Trojan Ripheus, in this round, was set,
Fifth of the saintly splendours!”* (Paradiso XX)

This shows a triumph of humanity over religiosity. Dante starts fanatically religious and ends up flexibly humane and reasonable.

Of the aspects of reason and faith duality is the duality of state and church. In Hell XIV Dante makes a reference to the church and the empire.

“Within the mount, upright

*An ancient form there stands, and huge, that turns
His shoulders towards Damiata; and at Rome,
As in his mirror looks. Of finest gold
His head is shaped.....
And downward all beneath well-tempered steel
Save the right foot of potter's clay, on which
Than on the other more erect he stands."*

The feet are the spiritual and secular authorities, the Church and Empire. The right leg, on which the image rests most, is the ecclesiastical power, corrupted and weakened by the acquisition of the temporal power. (Cary, English translation, 1908).

As (Bergin, 1965) puts it:

Dante's political belief is that the two feet of (empire and church) which should support mankind. (P.256)

The well balanced two feet of Church and Empire are the crutch to which man looked for support and guidance.

In the terrace of wrath in Purgatory, Dante discourses with Mark the Lombard who is purified from wrath. He says:

*"Rome that turn'd it unto good,
Was wont to boast two suns, whose several beams
Cast light on either way, the world's and the God's.*

*One since hath quench'd the other; and the sword
Is grafted on the crook; and so conjoin'd,
Each must perforce decline to worse, unawed
By fear of other.” (Purgatory XVI)*

The two guiding powers that should lead the world aright have failed in their mission. The two leading powers of mankind are the spiritual and temporal authorities. Their imbalance results in man's depravity. This is clearly stated in Cary's English translation of (1908):

According to Dante, the Papacy and the Empire alike proceed from God, and are inseparably wedded to Rome, from which as two suns they should shed light upon man's spiritual and temporal paths, as divinely ordained by the infinite goodness of Him from whom the power of Peter and of Caesar branches as from a point. (P.215)

With Lucifer, Judas Iscariot, Jesus betrayer, and Brutus and Cassius, Caesar's betrayers receive the same punishment in inferno, with their heads munched in the three mouths of Lucifer.

*“Is Judas, he that hath head within
And plies the feet without. Of th' other two,
Whose heads are under, from the murky jaw
Who hangs, is Brutus : lo! How he doth writhe
And speaks not. The other, Cassius, that appears
So large of limbs.” (Hell XXXIV)*

Cary, 1908, calls them:

The three arch-traitors: Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Divine Founder of the Church; Brutus and Cassius, who murdered the imperial founder of the Empire. (P.245).

Chapter Four

Discussion and Analysis

Chapter Four

Discussion and Analysis

Religion and life in “Paradise Lost”

The Christian God 11

4.0. Introduction:

It is “Paradise Lost” of John Milton that gives this section of the study its shape and content. As the concern of this study is to juxtapose classical religion with Christianity, a second Christian work – Paradise Lost- is taken as a theme of this chapter. It is the difference of contexts which necessitates handling the two Christian works. Dante’s poem a fourteenth century work is not far from the age of faith or doctrine, as remarked Kelley (1998),

The Middle Ages as an age of faith, then, was an age of doctrine as a body of thought which men were taught to believe and not to question. (P.167)

A time of history when man believed unquestioningly in God. While Milton’s work, issued in 1667 (Albert, 1923), was born in the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century that destroyed the medieval view of the universe and established the scientific method. (Perry, 1997).A time when the scientific secular outlook prevailed.

The chapter first gives a summary for the poem's plot. Then follows the tracing of pagan elements and influences. The rivalry of Christianity with the State and science is also discussed.

4.1. Summary of the Plot of Paradise Lost

Satan and the rebel angels fall from Heaven into Hell on a lake of fire. He awakes them and encourages them to fight back in vengeance. He told his troops of fallen angels that a rumour from Heaven tells about a creation of a new world and a new creature – man.

To replace their Heavenly wards, the fallen angels build Pandemonium. Satan calls for a meeting to deliberate the recent rumour. Beelzebub suggests that they can pay God back by corrupting his new creation-man; then raises the question of who will undertake this difficult mission of searching this new world. Hell is silent. Satan courageously volunteers for the mission. Other fallen angels get involved in games.

Satan sets forth, the gates of Hell are guarded by his children Sin and Death. He flies the wide gulf between Hell and Heaven. He journeys through the difficulties of Chaos. The scene shifts to Heaven where God sees Satan flying towards the newly created world. God shows this to his Son on his right hand.

As he approaches his goal, Satan at the gates of Heaven disguised himself as a lower angel with a strong desire to see the new creation of God. By that way he flattered the guards and enters.

In the garden, Satan in the shape of a cormorant sits on the Tree of Life. He admires and envies Adam and Eve. He takes various animal forms to come near the couple. Then he hears Adam warning Eve of a certain fruit that will bring their death; a valuable information to Satan. The good angels detected him squatting like a toad by the ear of sleeping Eve. Then he flies out of Paradise.

To alert Adam, God sends, his messenger, Raphael to Paradise. He performs his message revealing to Adam the rebellion and defeat of angels, creation and imminent enemy that threatens Paradise. The angel opens Adam's eyes to the danger of passion before leaving.

Satan returns to Paradise by night as a mist. To his good luck, Satan, in form of a serpent, finds Eve tilling by herself. Satan approaches her and works his miracle of speech which endowed by eating a fruit. He brings Eve to the forbidden tree and she eats. Adam comes along; by love charms, Eve prevails over him and

makes him eat also. They experience intoxication, pleasure then shame.

The Son tells Adam and Eve that they will face hardships and death. But a son of a woman will crush the serpent's head. Satan hastens triumphantly to Pandemonium to celebrate victory among his followers who answer in hisses. He and all of them become serpents.

Change of nature takes place. The stars turn pale. Adam resents his fall and Eve ponders suicide. Then they pray and God accepts their repentance but they will be banished from paradise.

Michael comes to dispossess them. He takes Adam to a hill top and shows him the future of the world. Then the angel leads the couple out of Paradise.

4.2. The Pagan Elements in the Poem

“Paradise Lost” surges up with Greco-roman figures and elements. These classical references add to the richness of the poem as allusion usually serves in literature. Adoption of classical elements in Milton’s Christian poem is incongruent. As Swardson (1962) puts it:

Milton in treating a Christian theme of the Fall of Man and the justification of god ways to Man, is unable to resist the tempting glamour of epic business. (P. 144).

Milton's major effect is a Christian theme which is sapped by a series of irresistible effects. (Swardson, 1962). The effects that undermine his Christian scheme are the classical pagan elements which he venerates. This tells the opposing Christian attitude to paganism.

In Book 1 just after introducing the theme of his poem, Milton crutches on a pagan symbol:

*Sing, Heavenly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb or of Sinai didst inspire... (Book 1, 6—7)*

The invocation of a god is a pagan tradition and usually the pagan divinity abides on top of a mountain.

The pagan myth gives Milton an analogy for his Satan as he prostrates on the fiery lake; huge and gigantic like;

*Titanian or Earthen- born that warred on Jove
Briareos or Typhon.... (1, 198—199)*

For cataloguing of Satan's legions and forces of fallen angels, Milton refers to a full host of pagan deities. These deities like "Astoreth", "Thammuz", "Rimon", "Isis", "Osiris" "Zeus", "Jove", "Saturn" and "Mulciber, familiar as Hephaestus or Vulcan are likened to the fallen devils who are seated in pandemonium for consultation. This finishes the first book.

In the speech of Moloch a reference is made to the pagan place of punishment, Tartarus, the pagan hell:

*Among his angels, and his throne itself
Mixed with Tartarean sulphur and strange fire,
His own invented torments. (II, 69—71)*

When Satan volunteered to take the perilous journey to heaven, his followers are involved in different matter; some start Olympian Games competition. This is a classic legacy:

*Part on the plain, or in the air sublime,
Upon the wing or in swift race contend,
As at the Olympian games or Pythian fields; (II, 528—30)*

Another group of fallen angels explores the region of hell where they discover the four infernal rivers of “Styx”, ‘Acheron”, “Cocytus” and “Phlegethon”, then they come to the river of oblivion “Lethe”. The geography of hell is almost pagan not Christian. (II, 575—85).

The exploring bands of fallen angels also come across mythological monsters, the Medusa, Tantalus, Hydras, Chimaeras and Scylla. (II, 611—60).

The flying Satan in the region of Chaos on his way to heaven is likened to a fabulous eagle-headed winged lion, the “gryphon”:

As when a gryphon through the wilderness

With winged course o'er hill or moory dale (11, 943—44)

In his journey from Chaos to Heaven, Satan passes perils and dangers and likened to Argo, the ship of Jason, and to Ulysses who both of them hardly escape the danger of the whirlpool of Charybdis:

And more endangered than when Argo passed

Through Bosphorus betwixt the jostling rocks,

Or when Ulysses on the larboard shunned

Charybdis,.... (11, 1017—20)

Of the realms Satan travels across is the “Paradise of Fools” of Aristotle, now uninhabited and part of the empty world of Chaos. Together with the philosophers “Empedocles” and “Cleombrutus” who pay their lives as a proof of their divinity. (111, 470—90)

When Satan leaves the darkness of Chaos behind and comes to the brightness of Paradise, Milton makes a reference to Proteus, a sea god in the Greek mythology who would take all manner of shapes, as an indication of transmutation.

In various shapes old Proteus from the sea,

Drained through a limbec to his native form. (111, 604—50)

The Garden of Eden is described like the Gardens of king Alcinous of Phaesia:

*Thus was this place,
A happy rural seat of various view;
Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm,
Others whose fruit, burnished with golden rind,
Hung amiable, Hesperian fables true,
If true, here only, and of delicious taste. (IV, 246—57)*

The miracle is worked out that the classical Hesperian fables become true as a Christian imagery. The classical falsehoods are credited when used to clarify a Christian image or idea. The famous garden of Enna and Daphne in Sicily and Syria are given as tangible examples for Eden. The beauty of these worldly gardens is spoilt by the kidnap of Proserpina and the turning of Daphne into a laurel by gods. This indicates Satan's role in tempting Eve and ruining of Eden. (Paradise Lost, Book IV)

The juxtaposition of Eve with classical characters continues in Eve's admiration of her reflection on a fountain like Narcissus who loved his reflection and the gods changed him into a flower, as punishment for self-love and vanity. This portends the fall of Eve.

Satan enters Paradise and with jealousy sees Adam and Eve's fondness of each other:

.....*He, in delight*

Both of her beauty and submissive charms,

Smiled with superior love, as Jupiter

On Juno smiles..... (IV, 497—500)

The nuptial bower of Adam and Eve is superior to any classical edifice, according to Milton:

In shadie Bower

More sacred and sequestered , though but fiegn'd

Pan or Silvanus never slept, nor Nymph,

Not Faunus haunted..... (IV, 705—8)

The contradiction is that Milton takes the classical materials as measures and standards but at the same time relegates them. This is like his invocation of Urania, the classical Muse. He accommodates the pagan to the Christian. Milton's worry of that is clear as he cares a lot to strip Urania from her pagan connotation:

....by that name

If rightly thou art called

The meaning not the Name I call.

To prepare the readers for Eve's disobedience, Milton associates her with Pandora who was brought to the unwise

Epimetheus, as the gods' revenge for Prometheus' theft of fire. She came with a box containing all human ills, upon the opening of the box the ills spread over the earth.

*More lovely, than Pandora, whom the gods
Endowed with all their gifts; and O! too like
In sad event, when to the unwiser son
Of Japhet brought by Hermes, she ensnared
Mankind with her fair looks, to be avenged*

On him who had stole Jove's authentic fire. (IV, 714—19)

Both Eve and Pandora are beautiful and cause the fall of man. Pandora's husband shares in releasing ills in the world, so Adam out of uxorious feeling joins Eve in the fall.

On the visit of Raphael to Adam and Eve in paradise, the richness and profusion of the fruits in the Garden of Eden is likened to the gardens of Alcinous, the king of the Phaeacians in the Odyssey.

*.....Or where
Alcinous reigned, fruit of all kinds, in coat
Rough or smooth rind, or bearded husk, or shell,
She gathers, (V, 340—43)*

Raphael describes the fairness of Eve in terms of the fairness of two pagan goddesses (Pomona, the Roman goddess of flower

and fruit, and Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty. The three Greek goddesses are Hera, Athene and Aphrodite who contested for the title of supreme beauty who would be awarded the golden apple of discord. This can be attached to Eve's apple:

.....*but Eve,*

Undecked, save with herself, more lovely fair

Than wood-nymph, or the fairest goddess feigned

Of three that in Mount Ida naked strove, (V, 379—382)

Book VII opens with reference to Urania, the goddess of astronomy, the Nine Muses and the Olympian Hill where Greek gods abide. Then Bacchus, the god of revelry and Orpheus the bard of Thrace in ancient Greece are mentioned when Milton speaks about composing his poem that will appeal to few audience.

Milton speaks about his poem as an argument more heroic than the sternness of Achilles when chasing Hector round the walls of Troy; or than the anger of Turnus when Aeneas married his fiancée Lavinia; or than the grudge of the Greek gods Neptune and Juno towards Odysseus and Aeneas respectively.

Not less but more heroic than the wrath

Of stern Achilles on his foe pursued

Thrice fugitive about Troy wall; or rage

Of Turnus for Laviniadisepoused;

Or Neptune's ire, or Juno's, that so long

Perplexed the Greek and Cytherea's son: (IX, 14—19)

On parting from Adam to work alone, Eve is contrastively likened to figures of innocence and chastity. This is a little before the approach of Satan in serpent guise. She is analogized to “a nymph Oread or Dryad” or “Delia” (Diana), “Pales”, “Pomona”, “Ceres” or “Propserpina”. (IX, 385—96) Satan sees her as a fair unsupported flower more delicious than Adonis who comes to life after being slain by the boar and more fair than the gardens of Alcinous.

The serpent when appears to Eve is lovelier than any mythological serpent; either to which Theban Cadmus and Hermione changed. The serpent is like an orator in Athens or Rome as it addresses Eve.

As when of old some orator renowned

In Athens or free Rome,..... (IX, 670—71)

The triumph of the serpent over Eve is paralleled with Ophion, the serpent titan that was defeated by Saturn and yielded Olympus. It is identified with the same serpent of Eden;

And fabled how the serpent, whom they called

Ophion, with Eurynome (the wide-

Encroaching Eve perhaps), had first the rule

Of high Olympus, (X, 580--83)

To show the effect of the sin of Adam and Eve on nature, Milton as usual refers to the classic pagan tradition:

At that tasted fruit,

The Sun, as from Thyestean banquet, turned

His course intended, (X, 687—89)

In the mythology Atreus slew the children of his brother Thyestes and served them to him at a banquet—a transgression from which the Sun averted his face and reversed his course for one day. The eating of the forbidden fruit is compared to the fatal and monstrous feast of Thyestes. Man eating man is an offence to nature. So eating the fruit is an offence that changes the course of the sun.

The repenting and prayers of our parents after sinning are like the prayers of Deucalion and chaste Pyrrha to restore the race of mankind who were drowned by the deluge from Zeus. Themis goddess of justice advised them to cast stones behind them, which turned into men and women. A new race called the Stone people.

Deucalion and Chaste Pyrrha, to restore

The race of mankind drowned , before the shrine

Of Themis stood devout. (XI, 12—14)

After repentance, Adam and Eve awake to new hope and full shining awareness like Janus the Roman god who presided over the gates and seasons; or like Argus the Greek god who watches and guards with his hundred eyes. They start a fresh like Leucothea the shining goddess of dawn. (XI, 129—135)

Swardson, 1962) stated that;

Milton had to give physical, geometric embodiment to a far-reaching scheme of abstract speculation and thought—part of it very reluctant to such a treatment. (P.109)

For tangibility and materialization of the Christian abstractions, Milton refers to the classical sources in spite of the Christian denouncement. So the committed Christian Milton relents and enriches his poem from the classical traditions.

Swardson, 1962) stated that:

Basil Wilkey and Boileau pronounce that the Christian faith is unsuitable for poetic treatment. (P. 109)

Marvell, Milton's friend, praises the edition of Paradise Lost in a poem:

The argument

Held me a while misdoubting his intent,

That he would ruine (for I saw him strong)

The sacred truths to Fable and old Song. (P. 110)

As Hight, 1949) expressed it that;

In Dante's comedy and Milton's Paradise Lost, the Christian religion is the essential moving factor. But in none of them could Christianity have been well expressed without the pagan vehicle. (P.263)

Milton's use of classical myths serves a double purpose in description and themes. To convey his religious message, Milton relies on the rich classical pagan culture not the Bible. So he alludes to paganism to establish Christian principles. (Collet, 1970).

As Banks (1969) asserted that to Milton the Bible is not the only source and that his infatuation with literature overrides the frames of religion.

Highet (1949) stated that

The Christian religious epics of Milton, Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained are wholly arranged in the classical manner. The classical influence in every one of them is all-pervading and without which they cannot be understood. (P.147)

4.3. Pagan and Christian Tensions and Influences in the Poem

Milton treats the Christian theme of the Fall of Man and the justification of God ways to man. He includes many pagan classical elements and sources in handling this theme. The mingling of a Christian theme with pagan elements necessarily arouses tensions and conflicts. Swardson (1962) raises the question:

How the classical pagan machinery and imagery be a vehicle for a Christian religious poem? This results into a tension between the two traditions.. (P.104)

Douglas Bush (1963) speaks of the gulf between Milton's material and his theme.

A tension between Christian tradition and classical tradition permeates the poem. Milton follows a classical literary model to present a Christian theme. The model and the theme conflict with each other.

According to Swardson (1962):

The two traditions come, as we know, from mutually antipathetic traditions..... we are force to conclude that one of the two traditions is satisfied at the expense of the other, there is no fruitful reconciliation of the strain between them, and that the tension is unresolved. (P.147)

What aggravates the tension is the genre Milton chooses for his work. His is an epic form that handles a Christian theme. Sir William Temple (1690) observes that the religion of the Gentiles had been woven into the contexture of all ancient poetry with a very agreeable mixture but the true religion was not found to become fiction. And the attempts of this kind seemed rather to debase religion than to heighten poetry. So there is incompatibility of form and matter.

Milton's preference for the epic form is stated by Douglas Bush, 1964);

.. Milton returned to the epic because he shared the Renaissance veneration for that as the supreme poetic form and because his genius inclined to a panoramic sweep of narrative and was cramped by dramatic limitations. (P.141)

But the epic has certain characteristics that are different from the spiritual and metaphysical world of Christianity. The epic includes martial atmosphere, heroic games, adventures, battles, ... Things that have disparity with God and religious spiritualities. The complexity of Milton's situation is expressed by Swardson, 1962);

Milton's double requirements forces his God into two roles, one for his epic functions, another for his Christian or metaphysical functions. The characteristics of one role are incongruous in the other and the two roles clash. (P.139)

How can an Omniscient and Omnipresent Christian God involved in the events of an epic and treated as a character with flaws and shortcomings? What follows clarifies how this Christian poem is bespattered with out- of- place epic qualities.

In Book IV, Gabriel was in charge of the gate of paradise:

*Betwixt these rocky pillars Gabriel sat,
Chief of the angelic guards, awaiting night;*

*About him exercised heroic games
The unarmed youth of heaven; but nigh at hand
Celestial armoury, shields, helms and spears,
Hung high, with diamond flaming and with gold. (IV, 549—540)*

Here is a military flavor of classical epics than a Christian climate. The descriptions suit martial theme of an epic but not the Christian theme of the poem. The characters are heroic warriors with war-like machinery, technical military terms and guarding shifts. (Swardson, 1962).

*And from their ivory port the cherubim
Forth issuing at the accustomed hour stood armed
To their night-watches in war-like parade (IV, 778—80)*

Heaven has this soldierly signs even before the mutiny of Satan. The angels' assembly is described in military expressions:

*Innumerable before almighty's throne
Forthwith from all the ends of heaven appeared
Under this hierarchs in orders bight
Ten thousand thousand ensigns high advanced,
Standards, and gonfalons twixt van and rear
Stream in the air, and for distinction serve
Of hierarchies, of orders, and degrees; (V, 585—91)*

It is like the headquarters of a general commandment swarming with soldiers and officers of different ranks. This is at odd with the Christian conception of heaven—the abode of peace, eternal light and continuous prayers.

Another opposite concept of Christian God is given here:

..... *the of heaven are filled*
With armed watch, that render all access
Impregnable; oft on the bordering deep
Encamped their legions, on with obscure wing
Scout far and wide into the realm of night,
Scorning surprise. (11, 129—34)

How an Omniscient could be taken unaware and surprised?
Swardson (1962) stated that the Christian God:

is a being apprehended by the reason, beyond the senses, the personification of philosophically perceived attributes—omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, perfection, completeness, self-sufficiency, independence. How can such a being be drawn into the bust action of the epic? (P.115) .

Milton sacrifices the Christian godly concepts for the sake of pagan epic ones. He succumbs for classical literary tradition in a starchy central doctrinal issue. Here Milton is in an unenvied situation of facing the sharp classical –Christian tension.

H.A.K. Thompson (1951) stated that:

Both in its general structure and in its separate episode Paradise Lost is formed with careful and learned fidelity upon the mode of the ancient epic. (P.61)

Here is a sweeping survey for the poem that shows how Milton deviates from Christian grounds into pagan classical context.

Milton's influence by the classics is clear from the beginning where he stated the whole subject of the poem like the Iliad, the Odyssey and the Aeneid, along with the invocation of the Muse;

*Of Man's first Disobedience Sing
Heavenly Muse.....*

The poem starts in "medias res" in the middle of things like Homeric epics. Presenting Satan and his legions awake from Hell lake. They rise and leaders named. This is catalogue of characters. Satan tells his followers of a prophecy of new creation. The device of prophecy is a convention in classical epics. Another convention is the councils of elaborate speeches. The Pandemonium's orations imitate the orations of the classical poems. Sin in Milton's poem pictures Ovid's Scylla in the "Metamorphoses". Satan's journey from Hell to Paradise echoes the voyages of Odysseus and Aeneas. Achilles and Hector confrontation, with the golden scale before god to decide, gives the copy of Satan --- Gabriel confrontation.

Satan changes himself into a meaner angel to enter paradise is frequent in Homer and Virgil.

Inside paradise Satan disguises as a cormorant like Athena and Apollo in the Iliad sit on an oak in shape of vultures. Paradise reminds one of the gardens of king Alcinous and the island of Calypso.

Satan tempts Eve by a dream; dreams play serious roles in ancient epics. Agamemnon in the Iliad was about to withdraw from Troy as a god advised him in a dream. In the Aeneid, Aeneas was warned in his dream to leave Carthage and the love of dido to establish a holy city. The decisive confrontation between Gabriel and the spying Satan with golden scales held by God in heaven are the very golden scales held by Zeus as Hector and Achilles faced each other in the Iliad (XXII).

God sends Raphael to open the eyes of Adam to obedience and the approach of his enemy. It recalls Zeus sending of Hermes to Calypso (Odyssey, Book V). God's messengers --- Iris in the Iliad or Hermes in the Odyssey—are tools for the poet to enact the machinery of divine intervention.

Raphael narrates the revolt of Satan to Adam as a flashback is the same as Odysseus telling his adventures to king Alcinous.

In the fight between Michael and Gabriel against Satan the champions defy each other before using their arms. This is Homeric type. Angels' hurl of mountains on Satan is like the heroes of Homer and Virgil who hurl stones on each other.

In the third day of the fight in heaven, God sends his son to the battle on a Homeric chariot. The entrance of the irresistible Messiah in the battle is like return of the irresistible Achilles to the battle in the Iliad and like the formidable Aeneas in the Aeneid.

The serpent, to the ancients, was a depiction of subtlety, trickling and a rebel against god. J.A.K. Thomson, (1951) stated that:

Typhon and Python are monsters partially snakes who fought the gods Zeus and Apollo. Both monsters flee and run away before the victorious God. (P.60)

Satan returns successfully to Pandemonium, all his allies and himself changed into serpents. This imitates Ovid's story of the transformation of Cadmus into a snake. (*Metamorphoses of Ovid PP. 118—19*)

Michael is sent by God to dispossess Adam and Eve, but before that reveals the future. The angel, on a high hill, discloses to Adam what will happen till the flood. In Book VI of the Aeneid, Anchises takes his son Aeneas to a height and shows him the visionary forms of those who will make the history of Rome.

Thomson, (1951) stated that

Both in its general structure and in its separate episodes Paradise Lost is formed with careful and learned fidelity upon the model of the ancient epic. (P.61)

Gilbert Highet (1949) drives in the same direction as he stated that;

In Dante's Comedy and Milton's paradise Lost, the Christian religion is the essential moving factor. But in none of them could Christianity have been well expressed without the pagan vehicle. (P.263)

Dante found no Christian teacher to guide him better than the pagan Virgil. Milton in the opening of his poem summons the aid of a pagan heavenly Muse.

It is not only the military atmosphere of heaven that clearly depicts the deviation of a Christian work from the Christian context. There are still other episodes flows in that effect. Marvell, Johnson and Douglas Bush (above mentioned) have pinpointed the gulf between Milton's material and theme. He has to sacrifice either poetry or religion. The sketching out of Mammon by Milton in the first Book of the poem as:

*Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell
From heaven, for even in heaven his looks and thoughts
Were always down-bent, admiring more*

The riches of Heaven's pavement, trodden gold, (1, 678- 83)

Literary wise, these traits suit Mammon. The discrepancy is that religiously Mammon is a blessed angel in Heaven; how he could conceive covetousness? And show signs of avarice? This tarnishes the Christian picture of the blessed souls in heaven. And how Mammon sinned before Sin existed in the world? Then heaven dwellers are avaricious! Swardson, (1962), thumbed this by writing;

Milton is not only in danger of making a gross reduction of his subject, but of making incongruous and inconsistent statements about it. (P.112)

The incongruity is that: in Christianity Heaven is perfect bliss but the literary necessity profanes it.

The poem is full of classical models and images that cloud the Christian ones. This is clear in the celebration in heaven on the occasion when god crowns his Son to be head of the angels;

... ..from dance to sweet repast they turn

Desirous; all in circles as they stood,

Tables are set, and on a sudden piled

With angels' food, and rubied nectar flows:

In pearl, in diamond, and massy gold,

Fruit of delicious vines, the growth of Heaven. (V, 630—35)

This more a revelry banquet on top of the Olympus than a Christian Heaven that shines with light and echoes with prayers and God praising.

Another example is as Satan journeys to paradise, he meets Sin and Death at the Gate of Hell. Satan and Death exchange insults and defiant speeches before combat. They are like two epic warriors about to go into a hectic duel. Death addresses Satan defiantly;

.....*Back to thy punishment,*
False fugitive, and to thy speed add wings,
Lest with a whip of scorpions I pursue
Thy lingering, or with one stroke of this dart
Strange horror seize thee, and pangs unfelt before. (11, 700—4)

Satan is the author of evil. Death strikes evil? Kill evil? Religiously, this is inconsistent. Milton here enriches the epic atmosphere and impoverishes the religious connotation. The poetic effect overshadows the theological one. The prevalence of classical concepts and images over Christian ones is obvious even in the most central religious concept as God.

4.3.1. God

In this part, the study tries to fathom if the God in the poem is fully a Christian God? According to Swardson (1962), the Christian God is:

A being apprehended by the reason, beyond the senses, the personification of philosophically conceived attributes—omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, perfection, completeness, self-sufficiency, and independence. (P.115)

Let us dive into the poem and trace if Milton's God has these qualities.

In Book 111, Milton gives god a Christian portrait: the angels hail him:

*“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,..... (111, 372—77)*

The picture of God in Book V is of a general with his soldiers fighting a rebellion:

*“Son, thou in whom my glory I behold
In full resplendence, Heir of all my might,
Nearly it now concerns us to be sure
Of our omnipotence, and with what arms*

*We mean to hold what anciently we claim
Of deity or empire: such a foe
Is rising who intends to erect his throne
Equal to ours, throughout the spacious North,
Nor, so content, hath in his thought to try
In battle what our power is or our right.
Let us advise, and to this hazard draw
With speed what force is left, and all employ
In our defence, lest unawares we lose
This our high place, our sanctuary, our hill. (V, 720—32)*

The God, who addresses his son above, is in direct contrast to the Christian God. How an omnipotent doubts his omnipotence? What arms have to do with His governing? And how He worries about a competitor or a sharer on his domains? Can the omniscient be ‘unawares’? Milton makes his Christian God relinquish his metaphysical attributes.

Another picture for God is shown when Satan leaves Hell in search of the new world and the new creation:

*Only-begotten Son, seest thou what rage
Transports our Adversary? Whom no bounds
Prescribed, no bars of Hell, nor all the chains
Heaped on him there, nor yet the main abyss*

*Wide interrupt, can hold, so bent he seems
On desperate revenge that shall redound
Upon his own rebellious head. And now,
Through all restraint broke loose, (111, 80—87)*

How can a bond set by an omnipotent prove to be weak and fragile? May be Milton wants to raise the suspense in the coming battle. But that is done at the expense of the Omnipotent Christian God. He enriches the martial atmosphere of the classical epic and humbles the religious Christian aspects. Swardson, (1962) elucidated the point by saying:

Wherever Milton feeds our interest in the martial action, the epic appeal of the poem, he is led to absurdities in the religious scheme. (P. 118)

In Book V111, Raphael absent in a mission asked Adam about his creation:

*“For I that day was absent, as befell,
Bound on a voyage uncouth and obscure,
Far an excursion toward the Gates of Hell,
Squared in full legion (such command we had),
To see that none thence issued forth a spy
Or enemy, while God was in his work,
Lest he, incensed at such eruption bold,
Destruction with Creation might have mixed. (229---36)*

The lines tell that God overtaken by creation may not notice the stealth in of an enemy; and that may confuse and perplex god's creativity and the result will be losing self control and destruction of the world God handles at that moment. Such a God lacks omnipotence and omniscience, a diminished God, so not a Christian God.

In his confrontation with Satan, Gabriel in a defiance speech says:

*“And thou, sly hypocrite, who now wouldst seem
Patron of liberty, who more than thou
Once fawned, and cringed, and servilely adored
Heaven’s awful Monarch?” (IV, 957---60)*

Gabriel denies the absolute adorability of God and doubts the sincerity of the services of Satan before his fall. A sin of hypocrisy before was sin was introduced.

Paradise Lost is an epic. The epic has certain characteristics of soldierly character, heroes, fights, games, travels ..etc. Things that do not suit the God, religion and metaphysics. Swardson (1962) hinted that;

Milton’s double requirements forces his God into two roles, one for his epic functions, another for his Christian functions. The characteristics of one role are incongruous in the other and the two roles clash. (P.139)

The Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent Christian God is certainly reduced to a literary character in the interwoven events of an epic. Here is a good illustrative example. When god sends his Son to expel Satan and the rebelling angels from Heaven:

*“Go, then, thou Mightiest, in thy Father’s might;
Ascend my chariot; guide the rapid wheels
That shakes Heaven’s basis, bring forth all my war;
My bow and thunder, my almighty arms,
Gird on, and sword upon thy puissant thigh;
Pursue these Sons of Darkness, drive them out
From all Heaven’s bounds into the utter Deep; (VI, 710—16)*

A God on a chariot, with “bow” and “thunder” as His weapons is a Zeus not the Christian God. Douglas Bush, (1964) thinks that:

It may have been a strategic error to make God a speaking character, though it is hard to see how in such a fable, cast in the concrete heroic mold, that could have been avoided...in a few places God speaks like Milton the pamphleteer, at other he speaks like a deity. (p.153)

A speaking character is limited and lacks the infinity of God. It is hard to sketch the metaphysical infinite Christian God in an epic poem.

In the first description of Adam and Eve, in Book IV, Satan wonders at their excellent and happy state. Harry Blamires, (1971), adds that:

Milton emphasizes their superiority in form and lordship marks their special status as reflecting the image of their maker. The Miltonic theology gives us a Godlike man. (P.99)

The classic gods and goddesses have the qualities of men. In Book II, when Belial delivers his speech in the Pandemonium about fighting the incorruptible God. William Empson, (1961) stated that;

Milton makes Belial says that they have been defeated by 'fate Inevitable' some kind of law of Nature which may be prior to God. (P.51)

This is drawn from the classics. In the Greek religion "Fate" is a power superior and precedent to the power of gods. In the confrontation of Satan and Gabriel in Book IV, God weighs their fates on the golden scale. The same was done by Zeus and Jupiter in the confrontation of Achilles and Hector in the Iliad; and the one between Aeneas and Turnus in the Aeneid. On these identical incidents, Gilbert Highet (1949) says:

Milton's God does things which were done by Zeus and Jupiter. (P.150)

As Milton says in Book II,

“so was his will

Pronounced among the Gods, and by an oath

That shook Heaven’s whole circumference confirmed. (351—53)

Gilbert Highet (1949) again likened Milton’s God to Zeus and Jupiter and that Milton used the word “Gods” to refer to “angels”, shows how he conceived his divinities in the image of the Olympian Pantheon.

4.3.2. Other concepts in the poem

There are other concepts that come in the poem and have religious and classical tinge. These concepts have their bearing on the themes of the study. A main concept is that of order and hierarchy. All the Cosmo is based on hierarchy: Heaven and Earth. The angels are ordered in higher and lower status, same as among men. Man is not as high as angels.

“For know, whatever was created needs

To be sustained and fed. Of elements

The grosser feeds the purer: Earth the Sea;

Earth and the Sea feed Air; the Air those Fires

Ethereal.

(V, 414 –18)

Here are the four elements: earth, water, air and fire ordered from lowest and grossest, earth, to the highest and most pure, fire. This is Ptolemaic physics. Among the elements, earth aspires upward through water, air to fire. In plant, the roots surge up through stem, leaves, flowers to fruit; man's food. So man should aspire to turn all to spirit and ascend to God into Heaven. This order and hierarchy is even inside man. According to Majorie Hope Nicolson (1964): to Milton, man's soul includes the faculties (abilities): Reason, Fancy, Imagination, Senses and Passions. They are innate, given to man at birth. They are in hierarchy of higher and lower. Reason is the highest. It is God's supreme gift to man. As long as Reason is the ascendant, man is able to do the right.

The Fall upsets the hierarchy implanted by God into man. Northrop Frye (1966) tells that:

After the fall the hierarchy reversed. Appetite now moves into the top place of human soul and transformed into passion, so the drives of sex and hunger are perverted into lust and greed. Reason is reduced to the lowest point of the soul, where it is a helpless critic of what the passion is doing. (P.P.73)

Greed and lust cannot be satisfied. Eve's greed runs into a desire to possess Adam.

*“Reason in Man obscured, or not obeyed
Immediately inordinate desires—*

*And upstart passions catch the government
From Reason, and to servitude reduce
Man, till then free. Therefore, since he permits
Within himself unworthy powers to reign
Over free reason, God, in judgment just,
Subjects him from without to violent lords
Who oft as undeservedly enthrall
His outward freedom.” (XII, 86—95)*

Eve's reason is deceived by the serpent's pretence. Her reason makes a false premise according to which she acts. Tillyard, (1951) stated that:

*Milton shows Eve sinning through a defect of the understanding and Adam of the will. He was not deceived but was overcome by female charm.
(P.22)*

At Eve's fall, Adam decides to die with her, rather than live without his wife. Because:

*“She gave him of that fair enticing fruit
With liberal hand. He scrupled not to eat,
Against his better knowledge, not deceived,
But fondly overcome with female charm.” (IX, 996—99)*

M. M. Mahood (1950), stated that;

Her beauty causes him to lose his sense of superiority. Eve's place was a rung below Adam, and accordingly, she has a

*much smaller share of reason...
(P.219)*

Adam's superiority to Eve is intellectual, it is in reason. But even the reason of Adam gives way before her beauty and attraction.

*“All higher knowledge in her presence falls
Degraded, Wisdom in discourse with her
Loses discountenanced, and like folly shows,
Authority and Reason on her wait...” (VIII, 551—54)*

Another cause for Eve's sinning is her aspiration to what is beyond assigned to her. She aspires to angelic or God height. Emile Saillens, (1964) puts it that;

*The Greeks were aware of the Cosmos order and hierarchy.
No one moves freely in the world except in his active sphere
assigned. Whoever wishes to go beyond it will be broken by
the cosmos. (P.289)*

This destroyed the Titans, Lucifer and Adam and Eve. Eve, in particular, who wants to rise to the hierarchy of the angels. They aspire above their order' so they are degraded. Like the men of Odysseus in the Odyssey, Book XII, who were warned not to harm the cattle of Helios. Their disobedience caused their perish.

In the poem, the Christian attitude towards reason is given in subtlety. That reason should not be in the vanguard, liberal and active, or free and leading. Free reason is not encouraged. In Book

XII, Michael advised Adam that a quiet Christian life is the one for him than running after mysterious knowledge;

“.... only add

Deeds to thy knowledge answerable; add faith;

Add virtue, patience, temperance; add love,

By name to come called Charity, the soul

Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loth

To leave this Paradise, but shalt Possess

A Paradise within thee, happier far.” (XII, 581—87)

These are the Christian virtues which to Christians represent life and true happiness. Geoffery Bullough (1962) stated that:

The lesson concludes when the angel tells Adam how to live a Christian life, which is better than to know “All secrets of the deep, all nature’s works. (P.29)

To this Adam, as a believer, replies to Michael:

“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, (XII, 557-61)

With a mild mind, Adam became contented and satisfied. His reason sufficed itself with knowledge fed by the Angel. This is a clear message to Christians to be contented with the Biblical

knowledge and not to search beyond it. Tillyard (1951):
comments:

*Adam and Eve forbidden for no given reason to eat the fruit,
see in the fruit itself an extension of the knowledge suited to
their condition. (P. 48)*

God sent Raphael in Book VIII to advise Adam:

*“..... Be lowly wise;
Think only what concerns thee and thy being;
Dream not of other worlds, what creatures there
Live, in what state, condition, or degree,
Contented that thus far hath been revealed
Not of Earth only, but of highest Heaven. (VIII, 173—78)*

This is the very same advice given to Adam by Michael before leaving Paradise. To which Adam gives the same reply as he has done with Michael:

*“..... taught to live
The easiest way, nor with perplexing thoughts
To interrupt the sweet of life, from which
God hath bid dwell far off all anxious cares,
And not molest us, unless we ourselves
Seek them with wandering thoughts, and notions vain!” (VIII,
182—87)*

In the two cases, the angels figure out for Adam the optimum way a Christian live. It is clear that Christianity does not encourage wandering of reason or seeking far knowledge. A Christian's reason be bound to certain limited confines. Harry Blamires, (1971), comments on the conversation of Raphael and Adam, as follows:

Raphael exhorts Adam that he shouldn't harass his thoughts with matters hidden from him, but concentrate on serving and fearing God. (P.193)

A direct hint that, the Christian should limit his reason and intellectual interplay to certain spheres of knowledge.

Pursuing knowledge and using of reason are strongly associated, in Christianity with sin and sinning. In the poem, sin is born from the head of her father, Satan. This parallels the birth of classical Athena from the head of her father Zeus. Athena is the goddess of wisdom.

Again, sin enters the world through Eve's desire for knowledge.

When she eats the forbidden fruit, Eve says:

*“O sacred, wise and wisdom-giving Plant,
Mother of science, now I feel thy power
Within me clear, ...”* (IX, 679—81)

So there is this Christian uneasiness with knowledge and reason.

Also here Milton hints at the tyranny of the church and how it stifles the free interplay of reason. The church denies man the freedom bestowed unto him by God:

*“ Reason in Man obscured, or not obeyed
Immediately inordinate desires—
And upstart passions catch the government
From Reason, and to servitude reduce
Man, till then free. Therefore, since he permits
Within himself unworthy powers to reign
Over free reason ,God, in judgment just,
Subjects him from without to violent lords
Who oft as undeservedly enthrall
His outward freedom.” (XII, 86—95)*

More explanations come from Northrop Frye (1966) who tells about a secular tyrant and a spiritual tyrant or priest. He adds:

“These two forms of tyranny produce what for Milton are the two infallible signs of a perverted church: inquisition and indulgence, the desire to suppress freedom of thought and the tendency to provide easy formulas for the less dangerous vices.” (P.74-75)

The church is against thought freedom which means free reasoning that allows more knowledge. The church’s attitude towards reason directly clashes with the seventeenth century new philosophy, that in accordance to Majorie Hope Nicolson, (1964) states:

...all intelligent men in the seventeenth century, had been stirred by the new philosophy that had called all in doubt. (P.271)

Nicolson asserts that, Milton lived in a context that was aware of the discoveries of Galileo and Kepler. Men like John Wilkins, a scientist and popularizer of science, beside, Francis Bacon and Thomas Browne who stated that there should be a harmony between God's Book of Words –The Bible- and God's Book of Works –Nature. Swardson (1962) tells that a conflict between the two renewed:

In the seventeenth century, with resurgence of the intransigent otherworldly spirit of the early church, the conflict becomes warm again. (P.35)

A clear chasm between the church and science that started with first church sway extends into the renaissance.

The inclusion of pagan myths in a Christian work was denounced by religious poets like Carew and Herbert (Swardson, 1962). Harding (1946) on the same point remarks that;

Milton has been severely criticized from time to time for the freedom with which he has introduced mythological elements into his poem. (P.88)

Gilbert Highet (1949) adds that:

Both the Catholic and the Protestant Churches have Divided on whether the pagan cultural legacy teaches good ? or evil? (P.263)

From literary point of view, a justice has been done to Milton by Douglas Bush, (1964) who stated that:

Paradise Lost would not be one of the supreme achievements of poetic imagination and art if it had not been fired by its author's intense and exalted religious faith. (P.145)

So it is a Christian poem that beautified with classical ornaments and driven on pagan classical vehicle.

Milton's futile attempt to wed classical traditions with the Christian traditions is indicated in Emile Saillens, 1964, in the remarks of Professor Kenneth Muir who points at Milton's double allegiance:

The rift between humanism and Puritanism, between poetry and theology, between human sympathy and religious belief may set up stresses and strains in the structure of the poem. (p.291)

The antipathy and opposition between the two traditions arises from the Christian attitude as Swardson (1962) blamed the Christian religion and its insistence as an exclusive revelation of the truth and its casting suspicion on all writing outside the faith and particularly the classical pagan works in spite of their attraction.

According to the Christian scope the story is true, the word of God, but the classical myth is false. As the myth has an impelling resonance, the poet faces the tension between the two traditions. So the Christian attitude towards pagan works is attraction and repulsion at the same time.

It is the classical traditions that substantiate the abstraction of Christian traditions and make them more intelligible. In spite of its repulsive condemning attitude, Christianity heavily depends on paganism to convey its message and teachings. The classical sway and influence is obvious.

The conflicting opinions on the poem, give a reflection for the conflict of the two traditions – Christian/Pagan in the spheres of the seventeenth century and that takes the form of faith and reason conflict afterwards.

Chapter Five

Findings and Conclusion

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5.0. Introduction

This chapter contains the findings of the study, the recommendations, the conclusion and suggestions for further studies.

5.1. The Findings of the Study

The study has come to some results worth consideration. These results can be keys and guidance to alleviate or at least mitigate the ills of our modern life. These results are:

1. A peaceful balanced life stands on the two feet of faith and reason. Any weakness or encroachment of a foot on another will result in a symptom of imbalance and sickness.
2. The classical experiment surpasses the Christian one in tolerance, being more real to life (flexibility) and in cultural richness.
3. The classics tolerance and wide intellectual horizon was congruent to their religious punctiliousness. They cherished reason and sciences and were very religious.
4. The pagan religion of the classics has influenced the heavenly Christian religion.

5. It is Christianity that starts and sharpens the famous and historical enmity between faith and reason.
6. Both the Middle Ages and the Modern Age have some lameness about them as the first was of religious sway and the latter has witnessed the scientific influence.
7. Faith without reason led man to darkness and reason without faith has led man to spiritual void.
8. Literature has always its contributions, solutions and prescription for imbalances and incongruity. It gets weak but never dies as it is the gist of brilliant minds.

5.2. Recommendations:

According to the findings of this study, mentioned above, the researcher has figured out the following recommendations:

1. The study encourages the culture of tolerance and shuns bigotry and violence.
2. Man should care for both his spiritual and corporeal sides.
3. People should not live with a punctured memory, but try to learn from the lessons of history.
4. Chauvinism and extremism are vices to be crowded away and understanding should be enacted as a preface to forgiving.

5. The cultural and religious heritage of man can shed light on man's present and future.

5.3. Conclusion

This study follows the analytical and descriptive method. It traces the religious elements and hints in the literary works in question and tries to find how they fit in the social context of that work. It attempts to verify that the religious teachings are inherent in man. That fact gives a seminal influence to Greek paganism on Christianity.

It tries to check the following: that social stability comes from giving equal heed to religion and to reason, the classics deftly balanced faith and reason and that the imbalance between faith and reason gives social disorder.

From the works discussed in the study, it is clear that the classical tradition has influenced the Christian tradition. And so paganism has done Christianity. The first is richer and more prolific than the latter. Paganism has high heels over Christianity.

The classical age is the only age that witnessed a balance of faith and reason, and that makes of an age of great achievements. According to Livingstone, 1912,

Greece has given us an art never surpassed and has given us the staple of our vocabulary in every domain of thought and knowledge, politics, tyranny, democracy, anarchism, philosophy, physiology, geology, history—these are all Greek words. (P. 11)

He continued to add that the modern world in many ways is a continuation of Greece and Rome.

Then what gives distinction to the pagan tradition over Christianity?

From what preceded, the pagan religion is tolerant, resilient and in good terms with science and reason. Henry Randall, 1947, stated that;

The Greeks never had a bible. Their religion was not one of the book. The Greeks were free of them. A sacred literature makes dogmatic assertions that are beyond question, and so strangled in its infancy. (P.17)

Homer is the extant Greek literature. He was not sacred like the Bible. This liberated the Greek mind from inhibitions. So the Greeks could inquire into everything and subject it to final test of reason. Randall, 1947, added that:

The Greeks were the first people in the whole world who allowed reason to have full play; rationalism is a Greek creation and the modern world has received it from them. (P. 16)

This rationalism is a natural gift. It was not the result of long struggle with obscurantism as the case in the modern Christian world. It did not bear the scars of conflict but came natural and sat easily. (Ibid)

For the Greeks, Homer was the origin and root of their literature and education. Michael Kelley, 1998, put it that:

Homer was the Bible of Greek education. He provided the authoritative word for Greek culture as a whole. (PP. 23—24)

Here appears the genius of Homer and the stable well balanced Greek pathos. In the same wise Kelley, 1947, added that:

Homer was the greatest creator and shaper of Greek life and Greek character. It was an attempt by a man without the true knowledge of God to fashion a true explanation man. The Homeric epics contain the germs of all Greek philosophy. (P.25)

For instance, Homer's epics were taken as a map that gave success to the archaeological excavations led by Schiller in the nineteenth century.

The study indicates that the Greeks were very religious people; they consult gods before any mission and never failed to offer rites and sacrifice to gods. Randall, 1947, put it that:

It would be quite a mistake to regard them—Greeks- as irreligious; in fact they were more punctilious in

performance of the ceremonies that religion required. But they were clear that religion must be kept in its place. (P.25)

This shows that the Greeks have a spacious room for reason and another spacious room for religion.

Another factor that aligns the Greek pagan religion to reason is that knowledge and humanity and the anthropomorphic character of their gods along with the absence of priestly caste. These characteristics helped the Greek religion to avoid religious tyranny and ecclesiastical courts (Randall, 1947).

Bertrand Russell, 1945, asserted that:

Priests had formed a separate ad powerful caste in Egypt, Babylonia and Persia, but not in Greece or Rome. (P.408)

And Randall, 1947, sings the same hymn that:

Knowledge in Greece never became the monopoly of a priestly cast, because the priestly cast had no existence. (P. 17)

Religions develop despotic character through clergy class that claim knowledge and excludes it to itself.

The Greek gods were friendly deities. They befriended men like Athena/Odysseus, Aphrodite /Aeneas, Apollo and Aphrodite helped the Trojans while Hera and Athena helped the Greeks in the Trojan war. Some Greek heroes have parental divinity. This is like

the others of Achilles and Aeneas. The inhibitions of the Greek gods were few and their rules were light. No many taboo areas or interdicted spheres. So the world was open to thought and observation. So the spirit of man is free. Kelley, 1998, said about the Greek gods that:

The gods did not stand above, but belonged with men within the same cosmic order, within the same conception of culture and civilization. (P.22)

Randall, 1947, goes in the same direction saying that:

... because of the humanistic trend in the spirit o Greece, their gods were made men and dwelt among men in rivers, in the trees, in the winds.....etc. (P.23)

Then the Greek religion is humanly oriented. So Randall, 1947, stated that : *The spirit of Greece is humanistic; man is the measure of all things. (P.23).*

The Greek character is a balanced mixture of human and divine. This equal mixture is contrasted to a Christian dualism pointed out by Christopher Dawson, 1950, that:

In Middle Ages, the religious unity imposed by the church involved a dualism between the spiritual and the temporal powers, which produced an internal tension in western society. (PP. 15—16)

Christianity has the known duality of sacred and secular, clergy and laity, priest and king, church and state....

So it carries the germ of fission inside its womb that includes contraries.

Another point that causes Paganism /Christianity oddness, is not for the polytheism of classical paganism and monotheism of Christianity but because they had contradicting explanation on just about everything, especially the claims to possess solution to the problem of human existence. The solution in classical paganism is that man becomes civilized and learned. Through reason man can achieve true humanity in culture and civilization. Christianity has no cultural alternative except pagan culture that clashes with Christian doctrine, so Christianity denounced pagan culture as evil; and retreats into monasticism. (Kelley, 1998). Christianity resigns a battle for which it has no weapons save the weapon of labeling paganism as evil.

Dawson, 1950, told about the Middle Ages that:

So Europe slipped into a period of religious ascendancy and absence of reason and science. (P.19)

Kelley, 1998, digs in the same place to add that:

The Middle Ages as an age of faith, then, was an age of doctrine as a body o thought which men were to taught to believe and not to question. (P.167)

So the medieval church had a hostile attitude towards reason and science. With all its might and ascendancy, the church imposed harassment and persecution on scientists and thinkers.

Boccaccio was the first modern author who rejected Christianity for paganism. There were many instances of this. The reaction is not only rejection but positive claim that Greek and Roman ideas of God and morality are better, freer, more real to facts of life, less misanthropic, less other-worldly, happier and more humane. (Highet, 1949).

A feeling of repulsion to Christianity escalated as shown by Kagan, Ozment and Turner (1979) that:

By the end of the sixteenth century, many people, weary of religious strife, no longer embraced the old Catholics or the new Protestant absolutes. The century that followed was a period of intellectual as well as political transition. (P.498)

The sixteen century is the time of the Renaissance which is the revival for the classical tradition and the flourishing of reason and science. Marvin Perry, 1997, assured that:

A secular outlook came to dominate Renaissance society. Intrigued by the active life of the city and eager to enjoy the worldly pleasures, wealthy merchants and bankers moved away from the medieval preoccupation with Salvation. Religion had to compete with worldly concerns. (P. 216)

Less heed is paid to religion. The immediate pleasures of this world are more appealing to well off classes than the far away uncertain heavenly promised happiness. A full divorce between Christianity and secular outlook happened, according to Perry, 1997, when:

The secular outlook gathered strength and led to the conviction that the individual should be freed from theological dogma and ecclesiastical authority to concentrate on the quality of earthly existence. (P.216)

In this time a disproportional relation between faith and reason, religion and science ensued with the enervation of the former and invigoration of the latter. The church is weakened from within by the Reformation and from without by the sweeping current of science.

The scientific Revolution of the 17th century destroyed the medieval outlook and installed the scientific method. Science displaced theology as the queen of knowledge and reason which had been subordinate to faith in the Middle Ages, asserted its high heel (Perry, 1997).

The chase of religion and science, faith and reason continued. The Middle Ages witnessed the prevalence of religion and faith over the weak but growing science and reason. From the Renaissance and onward, science and reason became vigor and

crowded away the once strong, now weak, religion. Allan Touraine, 1995, stated that:

The idea of modernity makes science, rather than God, central to society, and at best relegates religious beliefs to the inner realm of private life. (P. 9)

So science dominates. And now the sway is for reason. Religion (faith) is pressed in a tight corner. The scientific approach and reason swell to extreme. Touraine 1995, put it that:

Reason takes nothing for granted; it sweeps away social and political beliefs and forms of organization which are not based upon scientific proofs. (P.11)

The result is acute and extreme scientific outlook envelops the universe. This excess of reason is not fully positive. It comes at the expense of the spiritual territories of life. Perry, 1997, certified that:

Removing God from life ends in spiritual emptiness and gnawing emotional distress. (P.650)

That reason without God degenerates into overriding concern for materialism, technical efficiency that produces mass-destruction weapons, polluting environment, and other ills of modern life that leave man suffers from restlessness, meaningless void life, violenceetc.

Touraine, 1997, refers to what he called:

The dangers of reason not directed by spiritual value that produces oppressive governments, military complexes, slavery, imperialism, racism, sexism, class exploitation and the ravaging of environment. (P.650)

I can add to this list of evil, the terrorist organizations of Alqaida and Da'ish, which are an outcome of denying religion enough space to express itself. Religion is now denied any margin to live and revive. With such desperate situation, religion gives birth to organizations like Alqaida and Da'ish whose violence and terrorism exempts no corner in the world.

It is the classical tradition that gave the example of a balanced life of faith and reason. An experiment that has no religious or scientific extremism or persecution.

The study encourages the adoption of the tolerance of the classical experiment as a solution for our imbalanced life. But that should not be understood as a call to worship the gods of the classical pantheon. It is the approach that worth copying not the worship of Zeus and Jupiter. This means that literature has its prescription for the ills of today.

5.4. Suggestions for further Studies

The study opens avenues of searching in the following spheres:

- Age/Genre relationship in literature.
- The literary audience through ages.

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