

“A JOY PRESUMPTUOUS TO BE THOUGHT”¹:
MILTON’S VINDICATION OF RADICAL THEOCRACY IN
PARADISE REGAINED AND *SAMSON AGONISTES*

MATTHEW MULLIN

In a letter to Alexander Pope dated 15 June 1722, Francis Atterbury offers a rare commentary on *Samson Agonistes*, one of John Milton’s lesser-known works. He encourages Pope to make “a new Perusal of it . . . [hoping] you think as I do, that it is Written in the very Spirit of the Ancients.” Atterbury further urges Pope to “review, and polish” Milton’s work, which he believes “is capable of being improv’d, with little trouble, into a perfect Model and Standard of Tragic Poetry” (Shawcross 243), in the way that Atterbury and Pope considered *Paradise Lost* the standard of epic poetry.² But Atterbury’s reactions to the play—specifically, that it is “Written in the very Spirit of the Ancients” but nonetheless could use some polishing and improvement to bring it to the standard of Milton’s other works—reflect the typical attitude of traditional Milton scholarship. Indeed, the vast majority of the Miltonic critical corpus centers on his prose and epic poems—*Paradise Lost* in particular but also *Paradise Regained* to a lesser extent—while *Samson Agonistes* receives vague praise but little in-depth critical analysis. That is, until recently.

¹ *Samson Agonistes* 1531

² An excellent argument in support of this statement appears in Kent Beyette’s influential 1976 article, “Milton and Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock* (cited below). He proves through intertextual critical analysis that Pope’s poem repeatedly borrows from *Paradise Lost*, and many since have used his argument in support of theirs.

Readers of *Samson Agonistes* have always been forced, at the end of the play, to grapple with the nature of Samson's final act of strength—the destruction of Dagon's temple in Ashdod and the attendant murder of three thousand Philistines. But the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York City prompted Milton scholars to undertake a reexamination of the Samson story through the lens of modern day terrorism. These scholars reach widely different conclusions; some interpret Samson as a terrorist, while others waver between Samson as hero and *Samson Agonistes* as a fundamentally ambiguous text. They all differ on the equally important topic of the play's relationship to *Paradise Regained*.

However, these widely varied readings focus on several of the same passages from *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Regained*. Through intertextual analysis of these key passages, along with synthesis of several recent scholarly arguments, Samson emerges from the narrative as a hero to God's chosen people by way of his terrorist action. Furthermore, the political overtones found in Milton's retelling of Samson's final act dovetail with the rejection of kingship by the Son in Book IV of *Paradise Regained*. Through a better understanding of the parallel political disruptions inherent in both works, scholars can better understand Milton's intentionality in publishing them alongside one another. In this essay I argue that in the original 1671 printing of *Paradise Regained*, to which is added, *Samson Agonistes*, Samson's destruction of the Philistine temple of Dagon parallels the Son's utter repudiation of worldly kingship, and both Samson and the Son reflect Milton's involvement in, and support of, the upheaval and rejection of temporal kingdoms.

Milton, who wrote his other two Restoration poems as epics, chose to use a different form for *Samson Agonistes*. Instead of casting Samson as an epic hero, Milton chose to portray him in the role of a traditional tragic hero. Joan S. Bennett claims that Milton wrote *Samson Agonistes* as a "Greek tragedy" because he recognized, and wanted his readers to recognize, its "power . . . to embody truth" (225). And according to Bennett, that truth inheres in Christian typology. Bennett reads the drama as a portrait of Samson, who "reaches the limit of the law and hence is able to transcend and fulfill it" (231), contrasted with everyone else involved in the drama, all of whom remain either bound within the law or outside of it. Samson appears therefore as a type of Christ, and appropriately so, Bennett notes, since *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Regained* were published as a single volume.

Both Bennett and I agree that Milton's drama revolves around Samson's self-revelation; but whereas she views the destruction of the Philistine temple as "an obstacle" (237) to the play's moral teaching, I view it as the fulfillment of Samson's understanding of God's plan and his place within it. He brings down the temple and kills the Philistines because he finally understands the role into

which he has been cast. His last words to Manoa and the Chorus are: “The last of me or no I cannot warrant” (1426)—that is, he does not know whether he shall return. But he begins to understand that something remarkable is about to happen. In earlier discourse with the Chorus, Samson becomes aware of “Some rousing motions in me which dispose / To something extraordinary my thoughts” (SA 1382-3). These “rousing motions” have changed Samson’s mind; whereas he previously refused to obey the command of the Philistine lords that he attend them at the temple, he now appears willing to go because he has a “presage in [his] mind” (1387) of the events about to transpire. He declares triumphantly that “This day will be remarkable in my life / By some great act, or of my days the last” (1388-9). The “or” in Samson’s declaration implies that perhaps he does not know exactly what will transpire, for both conditions prove true—the “great act” causes his death also, making the “or” statement actually an “and” statement. His earlier refusals to go to the temple—“Return the way thou cam’st, I will not come” (1332), he tells the guard repeatedly—have given way to the “presage in [his] mind” that “some great act” awaits him.

Bennett’s approach to the text typifies the narrow, moralistic standpoint often taken by pre-9/11 scholarship. She acknowledges Milton’s intentionality in publishing the two works together, yet she does little to incorporate any aspects of *Paradise Regained* into her reading of *Samson*. If Samson is a type of Christ, as Bennett argues, then it would seem to make sense to read him alongside the portrait of Christ offered in the 1671 volume. Furthermore, her offerings seem concerned with her moralistic reading of Samson’s thoughts and actions, while skimming over—or ignoring—the problems a merely moralistic reading presents.

Bennett writes that Samson’s struggle is one of “personal spiritual suffering and growth” (227): “as Samson becomes capable of facing in himself a tremendous sense of guilt, so he proves capable finally of a relentless belief in the existence of that justice which includes within itself the mercy of a chastising Father” (231). Bennett declares that Samson’s belief in God’s justice prompts him to commit his final act of destruction, dispensing God’s justice both on himself and on the Philistines. His realization of his sin within the context of God’s justice and mercy has “brought with it victory over the ultimate enemy, over his own sin and despair” (237). For Bennett, then, *Samson Agonistes* is an intensely moral and spiritually reflective poem. It urges Christian readers to reflect on their sin, accept God’s propitiation for that sin, and live in “victory over the ultimate enemy” (237), safe in the knowledge that God’s justice and mercy uphold the moral order.

Undeniably, Milton repeatedly championed Christian values such as repentance, justice, obedience, and redemption—not only in his poetry but in

his prose also.³ That Bennett should find these recurring themes within *Samson Agonistes* therefore makes perfect sense. But to take these moralistic themes as centerpieces of the drama—as the “embod[ied] truth” she claims Milton wants readers to see—conflicts with the final action of the play. Bennett acknowledges as much: “for some readers,” she concludes, “an obstacle to such a reading is present in the play’s catastrophe itself, where the physical vehicle for Samson’s spiritual victory involves the violent deaths of hundreds of people” (237-8). The Bible puts the death toll much higher, at “about three thousand men and women” (Judges 16:27); whether that makes Samson’s murderous act more terrible than if it were merely “hundreds,” Bennett does not address. To be fair, I must note Bennett’s article was printed in 1989, twelve years before the 9/11 terrorist attacks. She therefore had little reason as a pre- 9/11 American scholar to reflect on the terroristic and genocidal implications of the drama’s final scene (although, to her credit she notices them).

Much recent *Samson Agonistes* scholarship, conversely, focuses intensely and specifically on Samson’s final words and actions, approaching the text from a very different historical and ethical perspective than Bennett’s. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, scholars have increasingly attempted to discern whether Samson is a terrorist or a hero. John Carey, for example, believes that “Milton’s drama is, in fact, a drastic rewriting of the Samson story” which “calls into question Samson’s motivation, and whether he has any divine sanction for his suicide attack” (623). Some scholars, including Stanley Fish, have argued that Samson’s act conforms to the will of God, and that his conformity justifies his slaughter of the Philistines. Carey revolts at the notion that such a theologically charged standard should be applied when addressing the ethical nature of actions – after all, he argues, in this vein “the similarities between the biblical Samson and the hijackers are obvious” (623)—down to the number of victims (cf. Rajan 1). He suggests that “common humanity

³ Milton explicated these and other doctrinal issues in his controversial and heterodox *De Doctrina Christiana* (“The Christian Doctrine,” hereafter *CD*). (In recent years some scholars have called into question Milton’s authorship of the work, but I agree with Stanley Fish and others who argue that Milton is its author.) Although he also explored Christian themes in other writings, *De Doctrina Christiana* remains the primary source text for Milton’s examination of systematic theology. It also serves as an excellent reference for defining the terms Milton uses in his rhetoric. For Milton’s view of the need for man’s repentance, cf. *CD* 1: 145-156. For Milton’s praise of divine justice, cf. *CD* 2: 148-152, and also 3: 303-306. Milton’s most intricate examination of obedience is, of course, *Paradise Lost*, but he also discusses obedience alongside repentance in *CD* 1: 145-156 (for Milton, repentance and obedience walk hand-in-hand), and (notably, as it applies to my argument) in *CD* 4: 403-405, where he discusses “obedience in things unlawful”—“this passage [I Pet. 2:13—‘submit yourselves to every ordinance of man’] . . . applies to [governments] only so far as they are legitimately constituted” (403). Also, Milton poignantly states, “That it may be the part of prudence to obey the commands even of a tyrant in lawful things, or, more properly, to comply with the necessity of the times for the sake of public peace, as well as of personal safety, I am far from denying” (404-5).

supplies a ‘*standard for evaluating*’ mass murder” (624, emphasis in original), whether in Samson’s action or in the 9/11 attacks—and by this standard both actions deserve the name of “terrorism.”

“Crucially,” Carey asserts, “Milton omits Samson’s prayer, as narrated in Judges” (623). Carey makes an accurate observation; the Messenger only describes Samson’s posture: “with head a while inclined, / And eyes fast fixed he stood, as one who prayed, / Or some great matter in his mind revolved” (*SA* 1636-8). This reworking of Samson’s prayer found in the Bible (Judges 16:28) is so crucial to Carey’s thesis because he views it as an admission by Milton that his Samson “perhaps . . . prays, perhaps not. If he does pray, his prayer cannot be the same as the biblical Samson’s” (623). Carey further asserts that Samson “does not need to pray for strength,” evidenced by the amazing feats of strength he already performed for the Philistines.

Within the passage Carey explicates, the presence of the Miltonic “or” within the messenger’s narrative draws my attention. Milton is well known for his comparative statements in *Paradise Lost*—most of which utilize the word “or,” sometimes stringing together long chains of complementary epic similes. In contrast with Milton’s other Restoration works, *Samson* contains few “or” statements. Many readers of Milton are predisposed to notice the Miltonic “or,” and a close reading of *Samson* reveals how rarely this word appears. Comparisons are few and far between in *Samson*, and therefore each one stands out more than in Milton’s other works. Furthermore, this particular “or” appears at a crucial moment in the story. Let us again examine the words of the Messenger: “with head a while inclined, / And eyes fast fixed he stood, as one who prayed, / Or some great matter in his mind revolved” (*SA* 1636-8). Milton’s Samson is clearly more thoughtful than the Biblical Samson—or at least, Milton gives his readers a deeper view of Samson’s thought life than the Bible reveals. But Samson is hardly a deep thinker throughout the narrative, hardly one from whose mind the reader expects “great matter[s]” to issue. This peculiar break in the messenger’s narration raises the question, what exactly is Samson up to here? For that matter, what is Milton doing by inserting the “or” statement at this crucial point in the story?

Milton’s Samson stands in an imposing and defiant posture toward the Philistine authorities, simultaneously fixing his thoughts on God—the one who dispenses divine justice. Samson’s head, rather than being bowed in a meditative state, is “inclined” (1636)—that is, his visage is transfixed on the heavens. His eyes—or, rather, his eye sockets—remain “fast fixed” (1637) upwards. From his posture it appears that he is gazing, face upturned, away from the thrones of men and toward the throne of God. His posture indicates neither shame nor defeat, instead reflecting his defiant supplication, that he “may be avenged on the Philistines for [his] two eyes” (Judges 16:28). In this passage, Samson sees—as Milton himself saw—not with his physical eyes, but

with the eyes of faith.⁴ He sees himself as God's agent dispensing God's justice on the heathen, just as did Milton when justifying the regicide of Charles I, or the Cromwellian regime of terror during the Interregnum. This extra-biblical portrayal of Samson resonates with the repressed defiance of Milton; they share in the loss of sight, and in the loss of their respective battles, but on a deeper level they also share in their defiance and confidence in God's ultimate justice. Samson's portrayal in these lines thus appears concordant with Milton's view of himself—that is, they are both utterly defiant to the end, and they both draw strength from their faith in God and their belief that He backs their defiance.

The ambiguities introduced by Milton (or as Carey calls them, “complications” (624) within Milton's reworking of the Samson narrative) undergird the entire framework of Carey's argument. I find it, however, to be an unstable foundation, on the grounds that Carey repeatedly works from what cannot be known to establish his points. As he states, “perhaps he prays, perhaps not” — but if Samson prays, his prayer can or cannot be the same as that in Judges. He gives no evidentiary basis for his declaration that Milton's Samson's “prayer cannot be the same as the biblical Samson's.” To dismiss the notion that he prays to God for strength—and therefore conclude that God is not on his side—only because Milton chose not to regurgitate material with which his contemporary readers would certainly have been familiar, is too much of a stretch. Milton, who devoted so much of his life attempting to “assert eternal providence, / And justify the ways of God to men” (*Paradise Lost* I. 25-6), would certainly not have published a work alongside *Paradise Regained* that calls into question the work of God in one of his chosen leaders, Samson—a man the New Testament consecrates as a pillar of faith (cf. Hebrews 11:32-8).⁵

Tobias Gregory notes that it is “fair to ask why Milton chose not to include the words of Samson's prayer in Judges 16:28”—but both Gregory and I doubt that “Milton wanted to undermine his hero at the climax of the story” (178), which is precisely what Carey asserts. Gregory states that Milton “elaborates on some elements of his scriptural sources; he leaves other elements as unadorned as he found them; he omits others entirely. What Milton does not do in the late poems is explicitly contradict the biblical text, and given his scripture-centered

⁴ Cf., for example, 2 Corinthians 4:18: “as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” The Scriptures are loaded with contrasts between physical and spiritual sight, with the latter being preferred in every instance.

⁵ I am greatly indebted to Marshall Grossman's argument that Milton intentionally created structural similarities between the 1671 volume and the book of Hebrews, and I shall attempt to further reinforce his argument later in the essay. Suffice to say, I firmly believe that to read Milton in a way that undermines the Scriptures—as Carey and others appear to do—is to commit a grave error, given that Milton continually used the Scriptures as his guide and authority. This is not to say that he always interpreted the Bible in a consistent or orthodox way; rather, I believe Milton would not have contradicted or undermined the Scriptures *as he understood them*.

theology, one would not expect him to” (180). Until the end of his life, Milton remained greatly invested in “justify[ing] the ways of God to men” (*PL* I.26). Therefore, no justifiable reason exists to cast *Samson Agonistes* in antithesis to the Bible, as Carey chooses to do; nor should Samson and the Son appear in juxtaposition. On the contrary, since they were published together, they should be read as complements to one another.⁶

Arguments such as Carey’s draw support from the observation that Milton’s imagination supplies most of the dialogue in the story. However, these arguments fail to note that much of the action remains true to the tale of Samson told in Judges. As Gregory states, “Milton, far from drastically rewriting his biblical source, is in fact following it quite precisely” (180). Milton clearly thought it well within his poetic license to modify biblical narration of events, and this modification should not lead the reader to the belief that Milton is rewriting the holy text. But those alterations and deviations appear far more subtle than “drastic.” Carey and others do well to focus on them, but their arrows often miss the mark in their focus solely on the differences between Milton’s narrative and his source material.

Like Carey and Bennett, Gregory believes that an ulterior motive works beyond the narrative itself in *Samson Agonistes*—but for him it is a political motive. The difference between Gregory and Carey, although both assert that Samson commits a “terrorist” action, inheres in their treatment of the precise nature of this action. Carey doubts God’s involvement with Samson’s “suicide attack” (Carey 623), thereby casting Samson as a “moral being” who fails to make the correct conclusions about what “he thinks he is getting from a supernatural agency” (626). Gregory, on the contrary, recognizes that Milton wrote “from the defeated side of an English nation still deeply polarized in the first decade after the Restoration”; yet Milton refused to succumb to his defeat. His Samson is therefore “politically unrepentant, morally uncompromising, and unequivocally homicidal” (193). He is a terrorist—but a terrorist against the godless on the side of the godly. “He is fighting a war of liberation and therefore has the right to kill Philistines whenever the opportunity presents itself” (195-6), concludes Gregory.

Gregory’s reading of the drama “in the context of post-Restoration nonconformity” (175) reveals a call to resistance and action on the part of the recently dispossessed and re-enslaved under monarchy. He declares emphatically that Milton “meant to show Samson’s final act as praiseworthy . . . A work in praise of terrorism is precisely what *Samson Agonistes* is”—although Gregory points out that “Milton would not have expressed the matter

⁶ This is hardly a new argument; however, I must acknowledge Gregory and Rajan for pointing me in this direction and enabling me to better understand the parallels between *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Regained*.

in [such] terms” (175-6). Milton, who “endorsed Oliver Cromwell’s massacres in Ireland, which were meant to terrify the Irish rebels into submission” (193), apparently had no qualms about violent actions (even against noncombatants—a key element of “terrorism”), provided the motivations behind such actions aligned with his notions of justice.⁷

A parallel reading of the two texts in the 1671 volume also reveals the similarities between the Messenger’s words in *Samson Agonistes* and the narration of the Son’s victory in *Paradise Regained*: “with head a while inclined, / And eyes fast fixed he stood, as one who prayed, / Or some great matter in his mind revolved” (*SA* 1636-8); “To whom thus Jesus: ‘Also it is written, / “Tempt not the Lord thy God,”’ he said and stood” (*PR* IV.560-1). In both instances the actions are identical; Samson and Jesus stand in the moment of imminent victory, and their enemies fall around them. In their defeat, Satan and the Philistines also parallel one another. *Paradise Regained* relates that “Satan smitten with amazement fell” (IV.562)⁸; Satan “amidst his pride / fell whence he stood to see his victor fall” (IV.571). Similarly, the Philistines, full of pride that they had “made their dreadful enemy their thrall” (*SA* 1622), become literally “smitten” as Samson pulls down the temple. Samson declares that his final act of strength “with amaze shall strike all who behold” (1645). Both the Philistines and Satan are thus amazed and smitten by the sudden usurpation of their authority, as Samson and the Son stand before them as righteous usurpers and instantiations of theocratic supersession. These contrasts are politically motivated in both works. Samson’s willingness to sacrifice himself in order to “begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines” (Judges 13:5) foreshadows the crucifixion of Jesus, through which he will

⁷ Milton wrote of the Irish frequently; in several of his works he denigrates them and campaigns for their extermination. Through his vitriolic language, it appears that to Milton, the Irish are no different than Samson’s Philistines. In his *Reason of Church Government Urg’d Against Prelaty*, Milton refers to the Irish as “these murderous Irish the enemies of God and mankind, a cursed offspring of their own connivence (sic)” (227). In *Eikonoklastes* he repeatedly condemns Charles I’s affiliation with the “murderous Irish” (289): “the King call[ed] over that Irish army of Papists, which he had cunningly rais’d, to reduce *England*” (92). The Irish people’s support of the Pope and Charles I gave Milton all the ammunition he needed to levy a full-scale war of words against them; their acts of terrorism against the Scots (cf. *Eikonoklastes* 212) further vindicated Cromwell’s terror campaign against them. As in *Samson Agonistes*, the godless must be punished by the godly in order to protect and uphold the noble cause—by whatever means necessary. Milton’s *First Defense Of the English People* is both a public statement of this principle and a justification of the Interregnum government’s actions against all who opposed them—vigorously defended and bolstered by Milton’s interpretations of history and the Scriptures.

⁸ Readers of Milton’s other works will recall that, in “*Lycidas*,” the “two-handed engine at the door, / Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more” (130-1). Whatever that means—and there are a wide range of interpretations—I would like to suggest that Milton intentionally reuses this word in *Paradise Regained* to suggest the power and singularity of Jesus’ defeat of Satan; that Satan is “smitten” once and need not be smitten again resonates with the power invoked in the “two-handed engine” of Milton’s earlier work.

“begin to save mankind” (*PR* IV.635) from the tyranny and oppression of Satan.

The politicized defiance of temporal authority found in *Samson Agonistes* also appears in *Paradise Regained* IV, when the Son rejects all worldly authority offered to him by Satan. His declaration that “he who receives / Light from above, from the fountain of light, / No other doctrine needs” (*PR* IV.288-90) confounds Satan, who only understands worldly doctrines. This prompts him to ask the Son, “What dost thou in this world?” (372). It appears to Satan that the Son repudiates all temporal power and force. In fact, the Son recognizes—as did Milton, as did Samson—that God’s authority supersedes worldly authority. Therefore, his rejection of the kingdoms offered to him is, like Samson’s rejection of the Philistine authorities, an acknowledgment of their relative insignificance compared to the authority vested in him by God.

Balachandra Rajan, who reads *Samson* as a “fundamentally ambiguous text” (2), concedes that with a couple of substitutions—Islam for Israel, and the World Trade Towers for Dagon’s temple—“we have an almost perfect Al Qaeda text” (1). The same could be said about the similarity of the drama with Cromwell’s terrorist attacks on the Irish during the English Civil Wars. Rajan insists, however, that Milton did not wish for *Samson Agonistes* to be read in a vacuum, as nothing more than a work advocating terrorism. He claims that Samson’s final pun, “As with amaze shall strike all who behold” (*SA* 1645), “is a clear reference to the climax on the pinnacle in *Paradise Regained* in which the Son stands as Satan falls ‘smitten with amazement’ (4.562)” (Rajan 3). Therefore, Milton wanted Samson to appear alongside the Son, rather than in antithesis to him—that is, their similarities “suggest that Samson’s action was consonant with the Son’s on a considerably lower level of implementation” (Rajan 3).

Rajan works in the tradition of Joseph Wittreich, who “has wisely counselled us to use *Paradise Regained* as a guide to reading *Samson*” (4). Doing so complicates *Samson Agonistes*, but in a way that lends itself to a better understanding of both works. For example, Rajan notes that the Son in *Paradise Regained* will liberate man from “Brute violence and proud tyrannic power” (*PR* 1.219), but he will do so by “winning words”, allowing “persuasion” to do “the work of fear” (*PR* 1.22-3) (Rajan 4). By contrast, Rajan points out that “the ‘brute and boisterous force’ (*SA* 1273) from which Samson is supposed to deliver Israel is a trait which applies with unhappy aptness to Samson himself. Samson “makes fear do the work of persuasion”; he has no “winning words to use nor willing hearts to conquer” (Rajan 4). Samson therefore appears more like Satan at times than like Christ, as they share an unwavering commitment to temporal force; whereas the Son uses heavenly power to usurp Satan’s dominion over the world, pre-Christian worldly power “is the only force that Samson knows” (Rajan 5).

principled movements of civil disobedience that have made history” in his time and ours. Both *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* portray heroic characters, but they travel two different paths. In the former, the Son demonstrates that “truth must avoid force if it is to establish itself as truth” (Rajan 7). But in the latter, Samson takes the path “of the triumphalist resistance, of the man in the margin pulling down the pillars of pride” (Rajan 7). *Samson Agonistes* declares that a man can justify violent acts on godly grounds, but the paradigm of *Paradise Regained* supersedes that of *Samson Agonistes*. The Son’s action, unlike Samson’s, “will sustain rather than undermine the human hopes which launched it. The activist solution”, concludes Rajan, is therefore “neither renounced nor endorsed. It is problematized and stripped of its barren simplicity” (8).

Carey and Gregory both recognize that Samson’s “activist solution” contains problems that a simple choosing of sides cannot resolve; yet neither of them attempts to move beyond choosing sides on the terrorist debate. By incorporating *Paradise Regained* into the discussion of Samson’s action—and particularly by his clever notice of the parallel puns across the two works—Rajan arrives at a better-rounded analysis of both works. Christ can be viewed as fulfilling the prophecy Samson only partially fulfilled: deliverance from “The brute and boisterous force of violent men” (*SA* 1273, cf. *PR* 1.219). And whereas Samson’s act of deliverance appears as a moment in history either heroic or terroristic, depending on one’s viewpoint, the Son’s act of deliverance appears as the most heroic event ever, one which informs all of history—including Samson’s complex terroristic heroism.

WORKS CITED

- Bennett, Joan S. “A Reading of *Samson Agonistes*.” *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*. Ed. Dennis Danielson. Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 225-41.
- Beyette, Kent. “Milton and Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*.” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1976, pp. 421-436. *JSTOR*, [jstor.org/stable/449724](https://www.jstor.org/stable/449724). Accessed 10 Oct. 2016.
- Carey, John. “A Work In Praise Of Terrorism? September 11 and *Samson Agonistes*”. From *The London Times Literary Supplement*, September 6, 2002, pp. 622-6.
- Dobranski, Stephen B. “Samson and the Omissa.” *SEL Studies in English Literature*, vol. 36, no. 1, 1996, pp. 149-169. *Literary Reference*

Center, web.b.ebscohost.com/lrc/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=a9f1ef0b-a37e-4c0e-8ef2-3afbd4046262%40sessionmgr2. Accessed 5 Oct. 2016.

Gregory, Tobias. "The Political Messages of *Samson Agonistes*." *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2010, pp. 175-203. *Project MUSE*, doi: 10.1353/sel.0.0088. Accessed 29 April 2016.

Holy Bible, English Standard Version. Crossway, 2001.

Milton, John. *De Doctrina Christiana*. Translated by Charles R. Sumner, Edited by James Holly Hanford and Waldo Hilary Dunn, Columbia University Press, 1933. 4 vols.

---. *Eikonoklastes*. Edited by Frank Allen Patterson, et al., Columbia University Press, 1932.

---. *Paradise Lost*. Ed. William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon, Modern Library, 2008.

---. *Paradise Regained, Samson Agonistes, and the Complete Shorter Poems*. Ed. William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon. Modern Library, 2012.

---. *The Reason of Church-government urg'd against Prelaty*. Edited by Frank Allen Patterson, et al., Columbia University Press, 1932.

Rajan, Balachandra. "Samson Hath Quit Himself / Like Samson". *Milton Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2007, pp. 1-11. *Academic OneFile*, eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=6&sid=cfc0ddf9-fdde-40b8-b39f-8f44f5e06b36%40sessionmgr106&hid=103. Accessed 29 April 2016.

Shawcross, John T., editor. *Milton: The Critical Heritage*. Barnes & Noble, 1970.