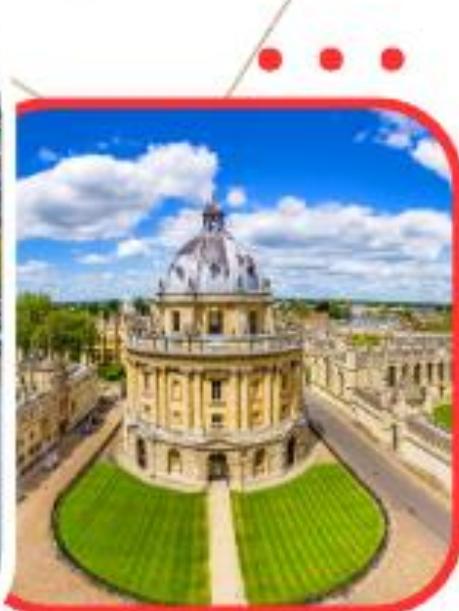




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LANGUAGE, POWER, AND DIVINE ORDER IN THE WORKS OF JOHN MILTON

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the intricate relationship between language, power, and divine order in the works of John Milton, one of the most influential poets and thinkers of the seventeenth century. It argues that Milton used language not merely as a poetic tool, but as a medium for expressing divine truth, moral authority, and intellectual freedom. Through close readings of *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Areopagitica*, the study reveals how Milton's vision of language reflects his belief in free will, spiritual hierarchy, and divine justice. Furthermore, the research emphasizes that Milton viewed the creative power of words as a reflection of God's creative act, positioning the poet as both a servant and interpreter of divine order.

Keywords: John Milton, language, power, divine order, *Paradise Lost*, *Areopagitica*, theology, freedom, moral responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

John Milton, one of the most influential poets and thinkers of the seventeenth century, explored the deep connections between language, power, and divine order in his works. Living in a time of religious conflict and political change, Milton viewed language as a sacred gift that could express truth and uphold moral authority. In *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Areopagitica*, he presents language as both a creative and spiritual force that reflects divine justice and human freedom. Through his poetic and philosophical vision, Milton shows that true power lies not in domination but in the righteous use of words guided by divine will.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY

Scholarly interest in John Milton's treatment of language, power, and divine order has remained strong for centuries, reflecting the complexity and richness of his thought. Critics have long emphasized that Milton's understanding of language was both theological and political. According to Barbara K. Lewalski (2000), Milton regarded language as a divine instrument of revelation a means through which God communicates moral truth to humankind. Similarly, Stanley Fish (1997) argues that Milton's use of





language in *Paradise Lost* exposes the moral responsibility of interpretation, where every word becomes a test of obedience and understanding.

Other scholars have examined Milton's view of power and its relationship to divine justice. Stephen M. Fallon (1991) notes that Milton's writings combine Christian theology with Renaissance humanism, portraying true power as rooted in moral choice rather than political dominance. In *Areopagitica*, Milton famously defends the liberty of speech and the press, asserting that human reason, guided by faith, is capable of discerning truth without the need for censorship. As Thomas N. Corns (2008) points out, Milton's defense of free expression stems from his belief that truth is inherently active it must struggle against falsehood to reveal divine order.

Furthermore, Milton's approach to divine order is best understood through his belief in free will and moral hierarchy. For Milton, God's order is not coercive but harmonious it allows humans the freedom to choose virtue or sin. His poetic language mirrors this structure: rhythm, syntax, and metaphor serve to express cosmic balance and moral clarity. The careful use of biblical allusion and classical imagery demonstrates Milton's effort to unite sacred revelation with human intellect.

The methodology of this research is primarily analytical and comparative. It involves a close textual reading of *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Areopagitica*, focusing on how Milton's language conveys theological and philosophical ideas about authority and freedom. The study also draws upon secondary sources including critical works by Lewalski, Fish, Fallon, and Corns to contextualize Milton's vision within the broader framework of seventeenth-century religious and political thought. By combining literary analysis with theological interpretation, this research seeks to uncover how Milton transformed language into a vessel of divine power and moral truth.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of John Milton's works reveals that language in his writing operates as a moral and spiritual force a medium through which divine truth is revealed and human responsibility is tested. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton presents language as a reflection of divine order, where harmony in speech symbolizes obedience to God. When Adam and Eve speak truthfully and with humility, their words sustain the balance of creation; however, when Satan manipulates language to deceive, he distorts divine meaning and introduces chaos. As Stanley Fish (1997) notes, Milton uses the very act of speaking and interpreting as a moral trial words themselves become instruments of salvation or corruption. Milton's concept of power also reflects his theological and moral convictions. True authority, in his view, belongs to those who act according to reason and virtue, not force or tyranny. In *Areopagitica* (1644), Milton argues that censorship corrupts truth because genuine power arises





from the freedom to choose rightly. This echoes Stephen M. Fallon's (1991) interpretation that Milton's political and religious ideas are unified by the belief that moral freedom is a divine gift. Milton's defense of free speech thus becomes a defense of divine justice the idea that humans, as rational beings created in God's image, must have the liberty to seek and express truth.

Furthermore, Milton's vision of divine order is inseparable from his understanding of the human condition. In *Paradise Lost*, the cosmic hierarchy God, angels, and humans represents not oppression but harmony rooted in love and obedience. Disobedience, which stems from pride and the misuse of language, disrupts this sacred order. According to Barbara K. Lewalski (2000), Milton's poetic structure mirrors divine design: the elevated diction, rhythmic symmetry, and classical references all contribute to expressing a world governed by divine law. The poet, therefore, becomes both a participant in and interpreter of God's eternal order.

The results also show that Milton's language functions as an act of creation, reflecting the biblical notion of God's Word bringing the world into existence. By crafting his epic in a tone of solemn majesty and moral clarity, Milton positions himself as a prophet-poet one whose words aim to restore order where sin and falsehood have caused decay. As Thomas N. Corns (2008) emphasizes, Milton's linguistic power lies in its ability to unite theology, philosophy, and art into a single act of spiritual revelation.

Ultimately, the discussion reveals that Milton transforms language into an ethical instrument of divine authority. His works teach that words are never neutral they carry the weight of truth, power, and moral choice. In this way, Milton's poetry and prose illuminate the sacred relationship between human speech and divine order, demonstrating that language, when used in the service of truth, becomes a reflection of God's own creative will.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, John Milton's works embody a profound union of language, power, and divine order, reflecting his belief that speech and writing are sacred acts of moral responsibility. Through *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Areopagitica*, Milton shows that the proper use of language can mirror divine truth, while its corruption leads to chaos and moral downfall. The study confirms that Milton viewed power as inseparable from moral virtue true authority arises not from political control but from obedience to divine law and the exercise of free will. His defense of freedom of speech in *Areopagitica* demonstrates his conviction that human reason, guided by faith, must be allowed to search for truth.

Furthermore, Milton's poetic style rich in biblical allusion, classical imagery, and rhythmic harmony serves to express the cosmic order of God's creation. By uniting theology and artistry, Milton transforms language into an instrument of revelation, reflecting the eternal balance between divine justice





and human freedom. His works remind readers that words hold divine power: they can create, enlighten, and redeem when aligned with truth.

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