Paradise Lost – Book 1

For an annotated version see: <https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/pl/book_1/text.shtml>

OF Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit

Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast

Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,

With loss of Eden, till one greater Man

Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat, [ 5 ]

Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top

Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire

That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,

In the Beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth

Rose out of Chaos: Or if Sion Hill [ 10 ]

Delight thee more, and Siloa's Brook that flow'd

Fast by the Oracle of God; I thence

Invoke thy aid to my adventrous Song,

That with no middle flight intends to soar

Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues [ 15 ]

Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime.

And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer

Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure,

Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first

Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread [ 20 ]

Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss

And mad'st it pregnant: What in me is dark

Illumin, what is low raise and support;

That to the highth of this great Argument

I may assert Eternal Providence, [ 25 ]

And justifie the wayes of God to men.

Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view

Nor the deep Tract of Hell, say first what cause

Mov'd our Grand Parents in that happy State,

Favour'd of Heav'n so highly, to fall off [ 30 ]

From thir Creator, and transgress his Will

For one restraint, Lords of the World besides?

Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt?

Th' infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile

Stird up with Envy and Revenge, deceiv'd [ 35 ]

The Mother of Mankind, what time his Pride

Had cast him out from Heav'n, with all his Host

Of Rebel Angels, by whose aid aspiring

To set himself in Glory above his Peers,

He trusted to have equal'd the most High, [ 40 ]

If he oppos'd; and with ambitious aim

Against the Throne and Monarchy of God

Rais'd impious War in Heav'n and Battel proud

With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power

Hurld headlong flaming from th' Ethereal Skie [ 45 ]

With hideous ruine and combustion down

To bottomless perdition, there to dwell

In Adamantine Chains and penal Fire,

Who durst defie th' Omnipotent to Arms.

Nine times the Space that measures Day and Night [ 50 ]

To mortal men, he with his horrid crew

Lay vanquisht, rowling in the fiery Gulfe

Confounded though immortal: But his doom

Reserv'd him to more wrath; for now the thought

Both of lost happiness and lasting pain [ 55 ]

Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes

That witness'd huge affliction and dismay

Mixt with obdurate pride and stedfast hate:

At once as far as Angels kenn he views

The dismal Situation waste and wilde, [ 60 ]

A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round

As one great Furnace flam'd, yet from those flames

No light, but rather darkness visible

Serv'd onely to discover sights of woe,

Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace [ 65 ]

And rest can never dwell, hope never comes

That comes to all; but torture without end

Still urges, and a fiery Deluge, fed

With ever-burning Sulphur unconsum'd:

Such place Eternal Justice had prepar'd [ 70 ]

For those rebellious, here thir Prison ordain'd

In utter darkness, and thir portion set

As far remov'd from God and light of Heav'n

As from the Center thrice to th' utmost Pole.

O how unlike the place from whence they fell! [ 75 ]

There the companions of his fall, o'rewhelm'd

With Floods and Whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,

He soon discerns, and weltring by his side

One next himself in power, and next in crime,

Long after known in Palestine, and nam'd [ 80 ]

Beelzebub. To whom th' Arch-Enemy,

And thence in Heav'n call'd Satan, with bold words

Breaking the horrid silence thus began.

If thou beest he; But O how fall'n! how chang'd

From him, who in the happy Realms of Light [ 85 ]

Cloth'd with transcendent brightness didst out-shine

Myriads though bright: If he Whom mutual league,

United thoughts and counsels, equal hope

And hazard in the Glorious Enterprize,

Joynd with me once, now misery hath joynd [ 90 ]

In equal ruin: into what Pit thou seest

From what highth fall'n, so much the stronger prov'd

He with his Thunder: and till then who knew

The force of those dire Arms? yet not for those,

Nor what the Potent Victor in his rage [ 95 ]

Can else inflict, do I repent or change,

Though chang'd in outward lustre; that fixt mind

And high disdain, from sence of injur'd merit,

That with the mightiest rais'd me to contend,

And to the fierce contention brought along [ 100 ]

Innumerable force of Spirits arm'd

That durst dislike his reign, and me preferring,

His utmost power with adverse power oppos'd

In dubious Battel on the Plains of Heav'n,

And shook his throne. What though the field be lost? [ 105 ]

All is not lost; the unconquerable Will,

And study of revenge, immortal hate,

And courage never to submit or yield:

And what is else not to be overcome?

That Glory never shall his wrath or might [ 110 ]

Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace

With suppliant knee, and deifie his power,

Who from the terrour of this Arm so late

Doubted his Empire, that were low indeed,

That were an ignominy and shame beneath [ 115 ]

This downfall; since by Fate the strength of Gods

And this Empyreal substance cannot fail,

Since through experience of this great event

In Arms not worse, in foresight much advanc't,

We may with more successful hope resolve [ 120 ]

To wage by force or guile eternal Warr

Irreconcileable, to our grand Foe,

Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy

Sole reigning holds the Tyranny of Heav'n.

So spake th' Apostate Angel, though in pain, [ 125 ]

Vaunting aloud, but rackt with deep despare:

And him thus answer'd soon his bold Compeer.

**[…]**

Whereto with speedy words th' Arch-fiend reply'd.

Fall'n Cherube, to be weak is miserable

Doing or Suffering: but of this be sure,

To do ought good never will be our task,

But ever to do ill our sole delight, [ 160 ]

As being the contrary to his high will

Whom we resist. If then his Providence

Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,

Our labour must be to pervert that end,

And out of good still to find means of evil; [ 165 ]

**[…]**

Thus Satan talking to his neerest Mate

With Head up-lift above the wave, and Eyes

That sparkling blaz'd, his other Parts besides

Prone on the Flood, extended long and large [ 195 ]

Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge

As whom the Fables name of monstrous size,

Titanian, or Earth-born, that warr'd on Jove,

Briareos or Typhon, whom the Den

By ancient Tarsus held, or that Sea-beast [ 200 ]

Leviathan, which God of all his works

Created hugest that swim th' Ocean stream:

**[…]**

So stretcht out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay

Chain'd on the burning Lake, nor ever thence [ 210 ]

Had ris'n or heav'd his head, but that the will

And high permission of all-ruling Heaven

Left him at large to his own dark designs,

That with reiterated crimes he might

Heap on himself damnation, while he sought [ 215 ]

Evil to others, and enrag'd might see

How all his malice serv'd but to bring forth

Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shewn

On Man by him seduc't, but on himself

Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour'd. [ 220 ]

Forthwith upright he rears from off the Pool

His mighty Stature; on each hand the flames

Drivn backward slope thir pointing spires, and rowld

In billows, leave i'th' midst a horrid Vale.

Then with expanded wings he stears his flight [ 225 ]

Aloft, incumbent on the dusky Air

That felt unusual weight, till on dry Land

He lights, if it were Land that ever burn'd

With solid, as the Lake with liquid fire;

**[…]**

Is this the Region, this the Soil, the Clime,

Said then the lost Arch-Angel, this the seat

That we must change for Heav'n, this mournful gloom

For that celestial light? Be it so, since he [ 245 ]

Who now is Sovran can dispose and bid

What shall be right: fardest from him is best

Whom reason hath equald, force hath made supream

Above his equals. Farewel happy Fields

Where Joy for ever dwells: Hail horrours, hail [ 250 ]

Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell

Receive thy new Possessor: One who brings

A mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time.

The mind is its own place, and in it self

Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n. [ 255 ]

What matter where, if I be still the same,

And what I should be, all but less then he

Whom Thunder hath made greater? Here at least

We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built

Here for his envy, will not drive us hence: [ 260 ]

Here we may reign secure, and in my choyce

To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:

Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n.

But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,

Th' associates and copartners of our loss [ 265 ]

Lye thus astonisht on th' oblivious Pool,

And call them not to share with us their part

In this unhappy Mansion, or once more

With rallied Arms to try what may be yet

Regaind in Heav'n, or what more lost in Hell? [ 270 ]

**[…]**

He [Beelzebub] scarce had ceas't when the superiour Fiend

Was moving toward the shoar; his ponderous shield

Ethereal temper, massy, large and round, [ 285 ]

Behind him cast; the broad circumference

Hung on his shoulders like the Moon, whose Orb

Through Optic Glass the Tuscan Artist views

At Ev'ning from the top of Fesole,

Or in Valdarno, to descry new Lands, [ 290 ]

Rivers or Mountains in her spotty Globe.

His Spear, to equal which the tallest Pine

Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the Mast

Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand,

He walkt with to support uneasie steps [ 295 ]

Over the burning Marle, not like those steps

On Heavens Azure, and the torrid Clime

Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with Fire;

Nathless he so endur'd, till on the Beach

Of that inflamed Sea, he stood and call'd [ 300 ]

His Legions, Angel Forms, who lay intrans't

Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks

In Vallombrosa, where th' Etrurian shades

High overarch't imbowr; **[…]**

He call'd so loud, that all the hollow Deep

Of Hell resounded. Princes, Potentates, [ 315 ]

Warriers, the Flowr of Heav'n, once yours, now lost,

If such astonishment as this can sieze

Eternal spirits; or have ye chos'n this place

After the toyl of Battel to repose

Your wearied vertue, for the ease you find [ 320 ]

To slumber here, as in the Vales of Heav'n?

Or in this abject posture have ye sworn

To adore the Conquerour? who now beholds

Cherube and Seraph rowling in the Flood

With scatter'd Arms and Ensigns, till anon [ 325 ]

His swift pursuers from Heav'n Gates discern

Th' advantage, and descending tread us down

Thus drooping, or with linked Thunderbolts

Transfix us to the bottom of this Gulfe.

Awake, arise, or be for ever fall'n. [ 330 ]

**[…]**

He [Satan] now prepar'd [ 615 ]

To speak; whereat thir doubl'd Ranks they bend

From wing to wing, and half enclose him round

With all his Peers: attention held them mute.

Thrice he assayd, and thrice in spight of scorn,

Tears such as Angels weep, burst forth: at last [ 620 ]

Words interwove with sighs found out thir way.