

Paradise Lost, Book 1
(Course: ENGA-P5)

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John Milton (1608-1674)



(Engraved portrait of Milton at age 62)

Epic

Primary Epic (or Oral Epic)

- *Gilgamesh* (Sumerian epic)
- *Iliad*
- *Odyssey*
- *Bewoulf*
- *Chanson de Roland* (Song of Roland; French epic)

Secondary Epic (or Literary Epic)

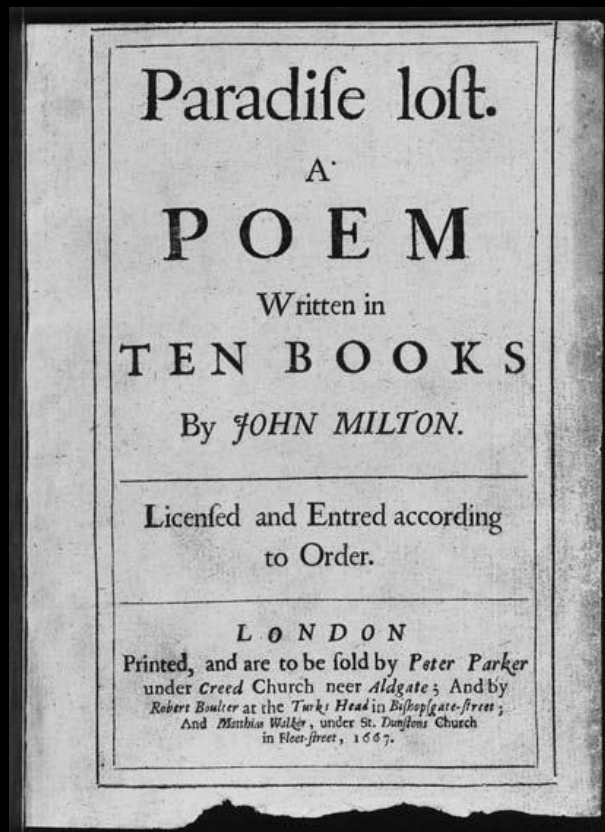
- Roman poet, Virgil (70-19 BC): *Aeneid* (c. 30-19 BC); unfinished at his death.
- Italian poet, Dante (1265-1321): *Divina Commedia* (c. 1310).
- Italian poet, Petrarch (1304-74): *Africa* (Latin epic, c. 1338-39).
- Italian poet, Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533): *Orlando Furioso* (1516; 1532).
- Italian poet, Torquato Tasso (1544-95): *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1575).
- Portuguese poet, Luís Vaz de Camões [Camoëns], (1525 -1580): *Os Lusíadas* (1572), an epic in ten cantos celebrating Vasco da Gama's heroic voyage of 1497-99 from Lisbon around Africa's Cape of Storms (later renamed Cape of Good Hope) to India and back.
- *Paradise Lost* (1667; 1674).

An early statement of Milton's ambition

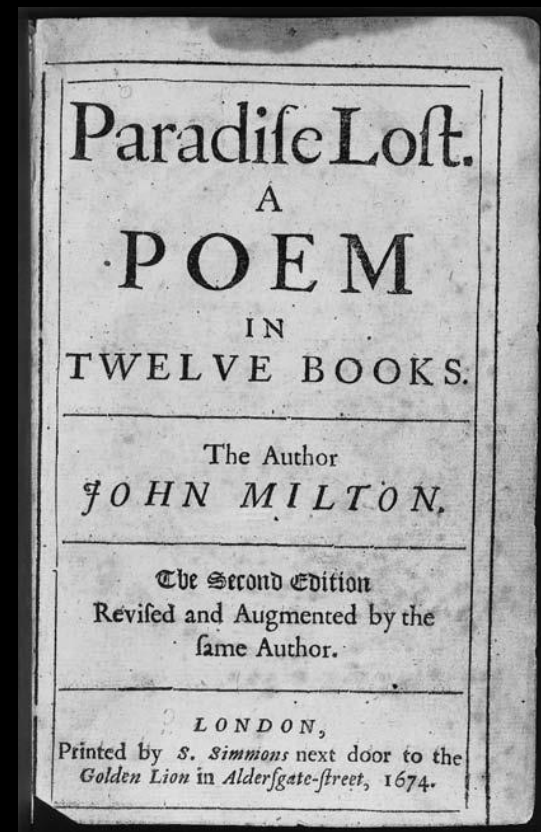
“[A]n inward prompting ... grew daily upon me, that by labour and intense study, (which I take to be my portion in this life,) joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die. ... For which cause ... I applied myself to that resolution ... to fix all the industry and art I could unite to the adorning of my native tongue, not to make verbal curiosities the end, (that were a toilsome vanity,) but to be an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things among mine own citizens throughout this island in the mother dialect. That what the greatest and choicest wits of Athens, Rome, or modern Italy, and those Hebrews of old did for their own country, I, in my proportion, with this over and above, of being a Christian, might do for mine.” – From Preface to Book II of Milton's pamphlet *The Reason of Church Government Urged Against Prelaty* (1642).

Paradise Lost

Title page to *Paradise Lost*, 1667



Title page to *Paradise Lost*, 1674



Summary (Books 1-6)

The whole poem tells of Satan's expulsion from Heaven, his vengeful tempting of Eve, and the expulsion of Adam & Eve from Paradise.

Book 1: Satan and his fellow rebels awake in Hell, build the palace of Pandemonium, and sit in council.

Book 2: The fallen angels debate how best to retaliate against or appease God. Satan embarks for the newly created earth to seek revenge. At the gates of Hell he meets Sin and Death.

Book 3: Satan's journey is observed from Heaven. The Son offers to sacrifice himself to redeem humankind from the sin into which Satan will lead it.

Book 4: Satan reaches the Garden and plots to make Adam and Eve sin by eating of the Tree of Knowledge. On his first attempt to seduce Eve in her sleep, he is apprehended by the angel Gabriel.

Book 5: Raphael dines with Adam and Eve, and tells them the story of Satan's rebellion in Heaven.

Book 6: Raphael tells of the war in Heaven, and the expulsion of Satan and the rebel angels by the Son of God.

Summary (Books 7-12)

Book 7: Raphael tells of the creation of the world in six days.

Book 8: Adam tells Raphael of his own creation and meeting with Eve.

Book 9: Satan returns in the guise of a serpent and tempts Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Learning what she has done, Adam consents to eat as well. They fall victim to lust, shame, and mutual recrimination.

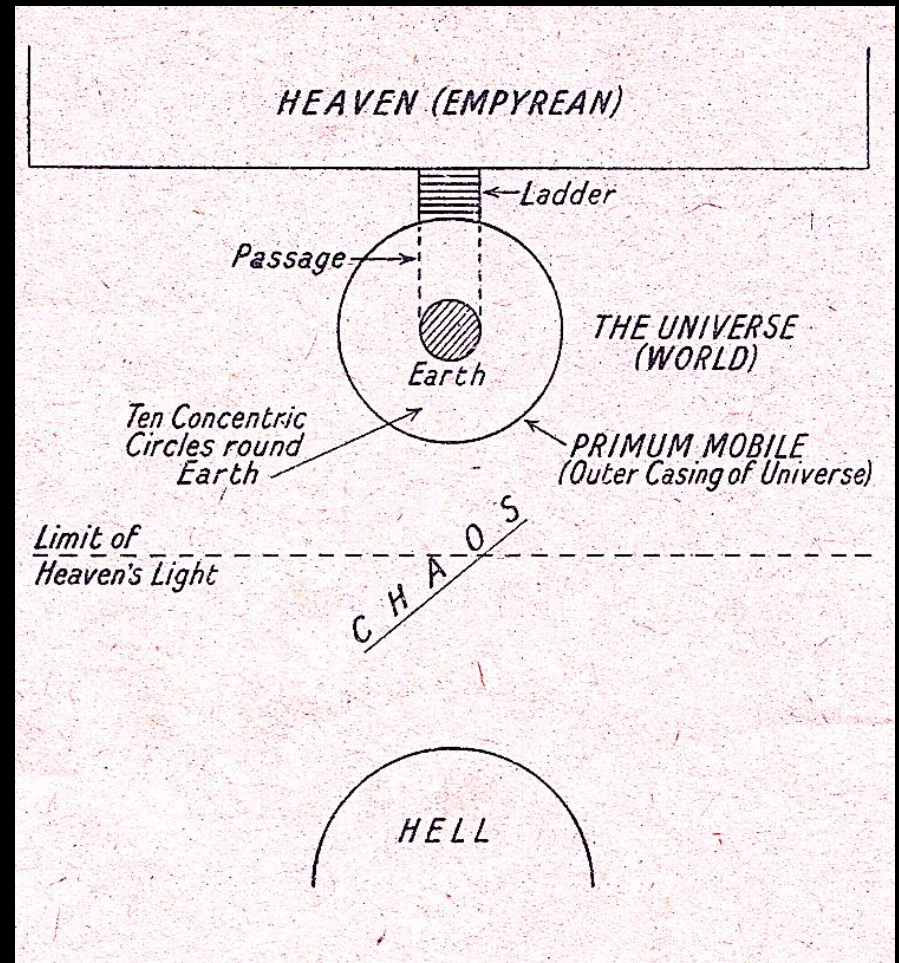
Book 10: Satan returns in triumph to Hell, but he and his devils are transformed into snakes. Adam and Eve bemoan their state.

Book 11: The angel Michael tells Adam and Eve that they must depart from Paradise. First, he reveals to Adam the future of humankind.

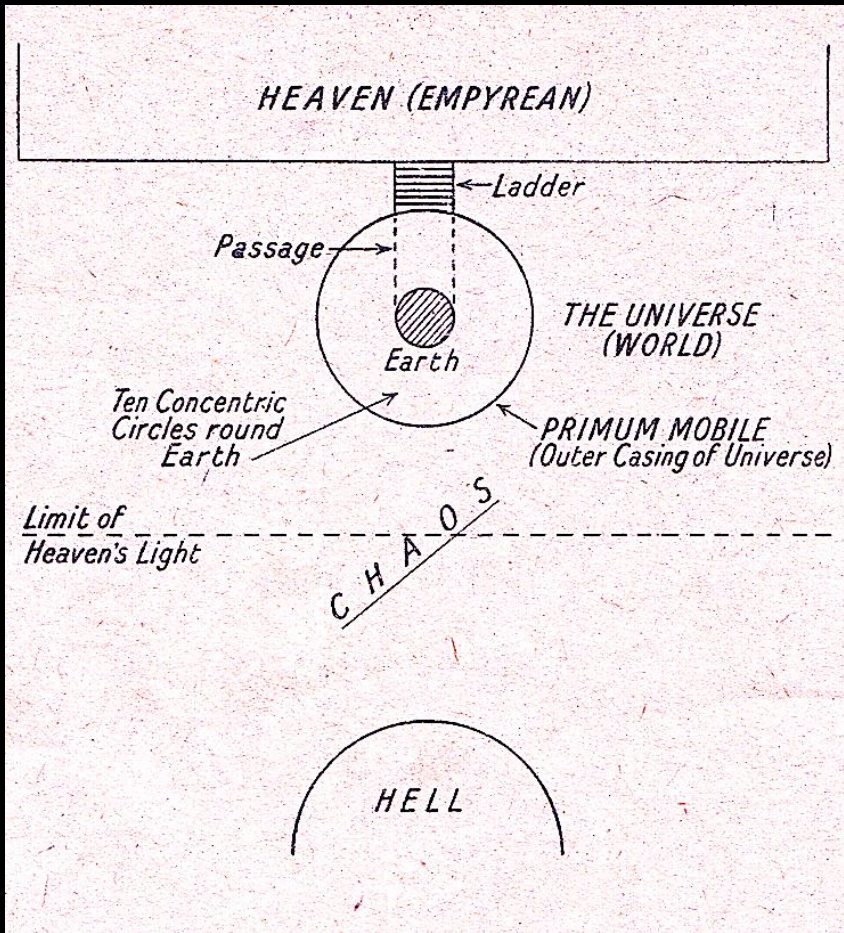
Book 12: Michael continues his revelation, including the coming of Christ. Hand in hand, Adam and Eve depart from Paradise.

The Cosmology of *Paradise Lost*

Milton's cosmos is made up of finite space conceived of having a top and a bottom. At the top is Heaven, or the Empyrean; at the bottom is Hell. At first there was only Heaven and Chaos, but the rebellion of Satan caused God to create Hell as a prison by taking space from Chaos. The final picture, after the Fall of Satan and the rebel angels, can be represented by a diagram.

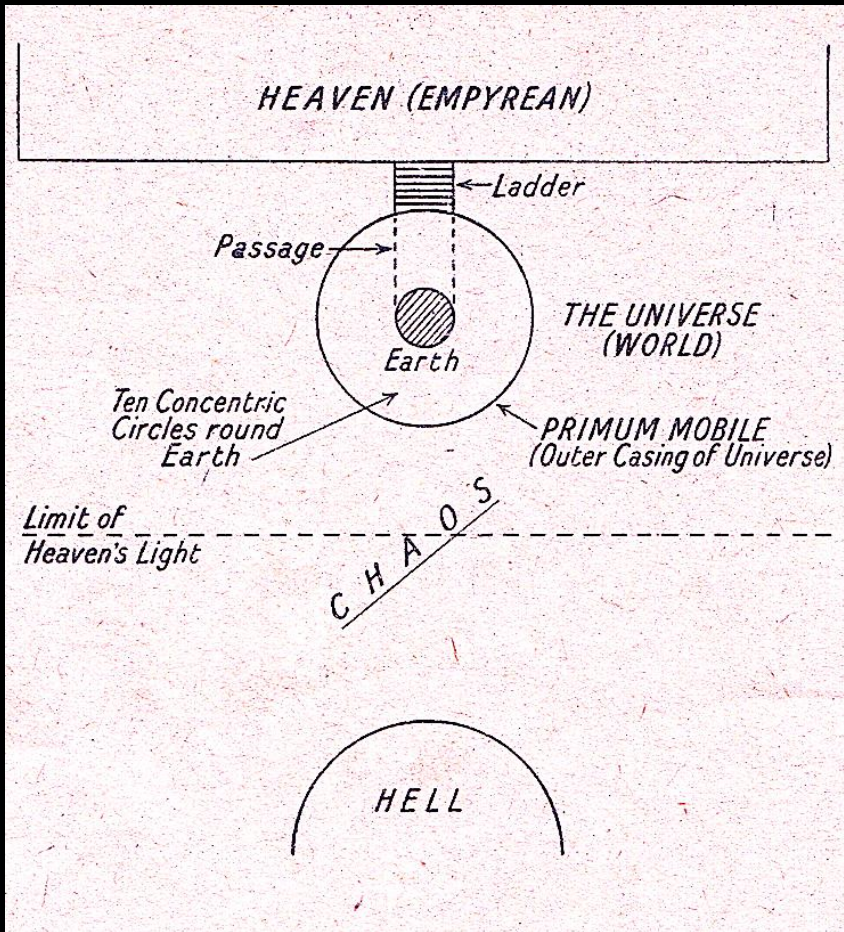


The Cosmology of *Paradise Lost*



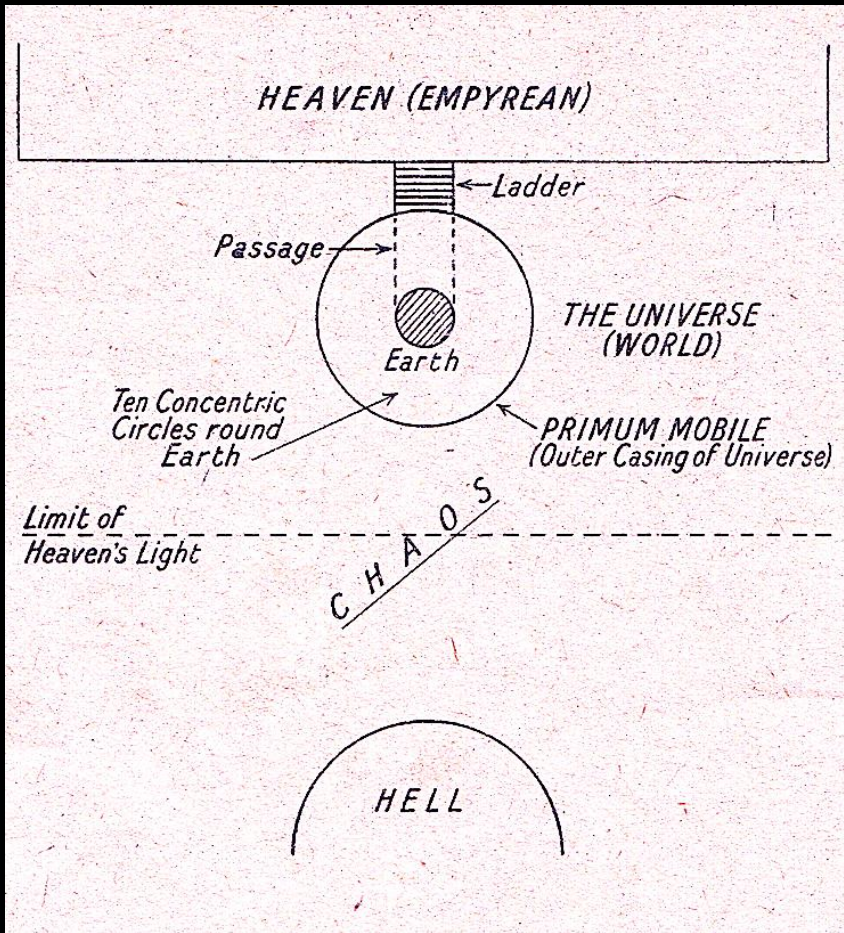
The World (or Universe) is suspended from Heaven by a golden chain fastened to Heaven's floor at a point near Heaven's gate (from where Satan and the rebel angels fell) and at the head of a flight of retractable stairs that leads down to the top of the Primum Mobile. There the chain is fastened at a point near an opening or aperture, through which God can look down into the Universe from Heaven and through which can pass all traffic between Earth and Heaven or Hell.

The Cosmology of *Paradise Lost*



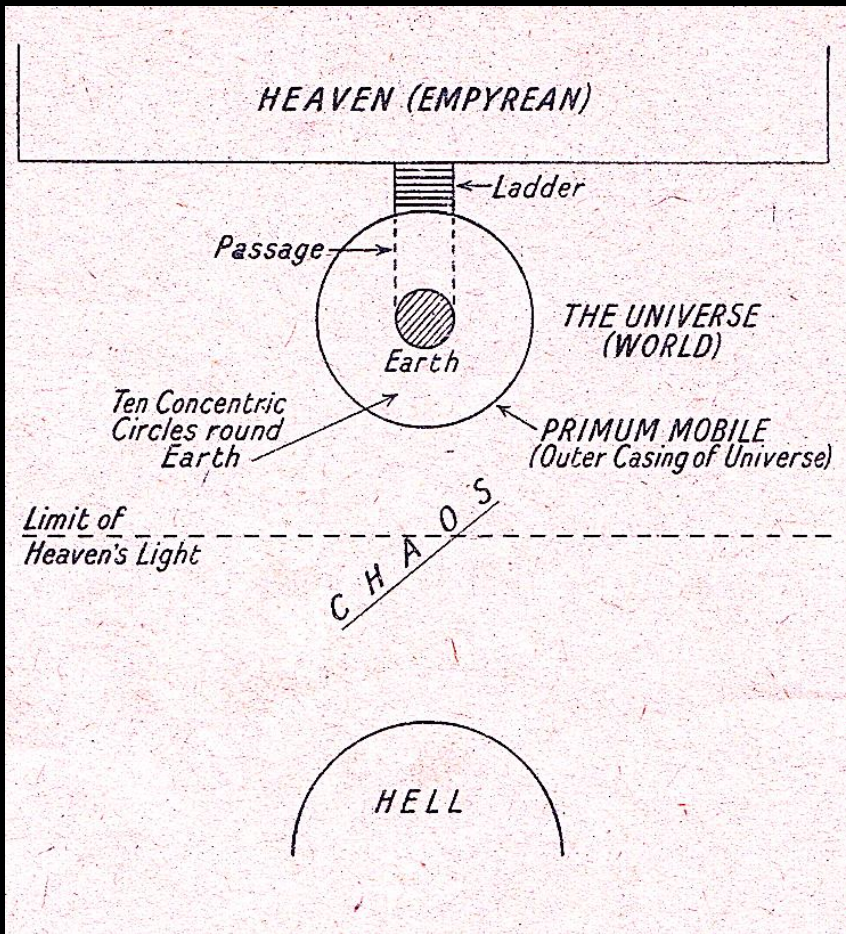
When Satan reaches the limit of Heaven's light, what he sees is the Universe (or World), consisting of Earth, a fixed central body, round which ten concentric circles revolve at varying speeds. These circles are thought of as moving shells of space carrying planets in the following order (from Earth outwards): Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Fixed Stars, the Crystalline Sphere, and the Primum Mobile. The Primum Mobile possesses a hard, opaque outer surface; it serves as an outer covering for the whole Universe.

The Cosmology of *Paradise Lost*



When Satan lands on the outer shell (Book III) he finds the aperture. He flies through the aperture and lands on the Sun. Here Satan meets Uriel, the Sun angel, whom he deceives by assuming the disguise of a youthful cherub and inquiring the way to Earth.

The Cosmology of *Paradise Lost*



Milton's cosmology is that of the Ptolemaic Universe, based upon Greek science and elaborated in the Middle Ages. Milton himself accepted the heliocentric cosmology advocated by Copernicus, Kepler, Brahe & Galileo, but adopted the geocentric cosmology of the ancient Roman astronomer, Ptolemy in *Paradise Lost* for reasons of convenience. The heliocentric cosmology was only gradually establishing itself in Milton's time, and could not yet replace the geocentric cosmology for imaginative purposes.

Michael Madhusudan Datta (1824-73)

Meghnad Badh Kabya (1861)

মেঘনাদবধ কাব্য

প্রথম সর্গ

সমুখ সমরে বীর-চূড়ামণি
বীরবাহু, চলি যবে গেলা যমপুরেঅকালে, কহ,
হে দেবি অমৃতভাষিণী^১,
কোন্ বীরবরে বরি সেনাপতি-পদে,
পাঠাইলা রণে পুনঃ রক্ষকুলনিধি^২
রাঘিবরি? কি কৌশলে, রাক্ষসভরসা
ইন্দ্রজিত মেঘনাদে^৩—অজ্ঞেয় জগতে—
উর্খিলাবিলাসী^৪ নাশি, ইন্দ্রে নিঃশক্তিলা? ^৫
বন্দি চরণারবিন্দ, অতি মন্দমতি
আমি, ডাকি আবার তোমায়, শ্বেতভূজে
ভারতি! যেমতি, মাতঃ, বসিলা আসিয়া,
বাঙ্গীকির রসনায় (পদ্মাসনে যেন)
যবে খরতর শরে, গহন কাননে,
ক্রৌঞ্চবধু সহ ক্রৌঞ্চ নিষাদ বিধিলা^৬,
তেমতি দাসেরে, আসি, দয়া কর, সতি।
কে জানে মহিমা তব এ ভবমণ্ডলে?
নরাধম আছিল যে নর নরকূলে
চৌর্যে রত^৭, হইল সে তোমার প্রসাদে,
মৃত্যুঞ্জয়, যথা মৃত্যুঞ্জয়^৮ উমাপতি!
হে বরদে, তব বরে চোর রত্নাকর
কাব্যরত্নাকর কবি! তোমার পরশে,
সুচন্দন-বৃক্ষশোভা বিষবৃক্ষ ধরে!
হায়, মা, এ হেন গুণ্য আছে কি এ
দাসে?কিন্তু যে গো তুণহীন সন্তানের মাঝে
মুচমতি, জননীর স্নেহ তার প্রতি
সমধিক। উর তবে, উর দয়াময়ি
বিশ্বরমে! গাইব, মা, বীররসে ভাসি,

মহাগীত; উরি, দাসে দেহ পদছায়া।
—তুমিও আইস, দেবি, তুমি মধুকরী
কল্পনা! কবির চিন্ত-ফুলবন-মধু
লায়ে, রচ মধুচত্র, গৌড়জন যাহে
আনন্দে করিবে পান সুধা নিরবধি।
কনক-আসনে বসে দশানন বলী—
হেমকূট-হৈমশিরে শৃঙ্গবর যথা
তেজঃপুঞ্জ। শত শত পাত্রমিত্র আদি
সভাসদু, নতভাবে বসে চারি দিকে।
ভূতলে অতুল সভা—ফটিকে গঠিত;
তাহে শোভে রত্নরাজী, মানস-সরসে
সরস কমলকুল বিকশিত যথা।
শ্বেত, রক্ত, নীল, পীত স্তম্ভ সারি সারি
ধরে উচ্চ স্বর্ণছাদ, ফণীশ্রু^৯ যেমতি,
বিন্দুরি অমৃত ফণা, ধরেন আদরে
ধরারে।^{১০} কুলিছে ঝলি ঝালরে মুকুতা,
পদ্মরাগ, মরকত, হীরা; যথা খোলে
(খচিত মুকুলে ফুলে) পদ্মবের মালা
ব্রতালয়ে। ক্ষণপ্রভা^{১১} সম মুহুঃ হাসে
রতনসম্ভবা বিভা^{১২}—অলসি নয়নে!
সুচারু চামর চারুশোভা কিঙ্করী
চুলায়; মৃগালভূজ আনন্দে আন্দোলি
চন্দ্রাননা। ধরে ছত্র ছত্রধর; আহা
হরকোপানলে কাম যেন রে না পুড়ি
দাঁড়ান সে সভাতলে ছত্রধর রূপে।^{১৩}
ফেরে ঘারে দৌবারিক, ভীষণ মুরতি,
পাণ্ডব-শিবির ঘারে রুদ্রেশ্বর যথা

১ অমৃতভাষিণী—সরস্বতী, অমৃতের ন্যায় মধুর ভাষা। ২ রাক্ষসকূলের আধার বা আশ্রয়।
৩ ইন্দ্রজিত মেঘনাদ—মেঘনাদ দেবরাজ ইন্দ্রকে পরাজিত ও বন্দী করেছিলেন।
৪ উর্খিলা বীর আনন্দ সেই লক্ষণ। ৫ ভীতি দূর করল।
৬ বাঙ্গীকির কবিভূলাভের পেছনের পৌরাণিক ঘটনার উল্লেখ।
৭ রত্নাকর নামে পরিচিত বাঙ্গীকির দস্যুজীবনের প্রসঙ্গ। পৌরাণিক উল্লেখ।
৮ মৃত্যুকে নিশি জয় করেছেন, মহাদেব। ৯ বাসুকি। ১০ বাসুকি কর্তৃক পৃথিবীর ভারবহনের পৌরাণিক প্রসঙ্গ।
১১ বিভাৎ। ১২ রতনসম্ভবা বিভা—রত্ন থেকে বিকীরণ রশ্মি।
১৩ মহাদেব কর্তৃক মদন-ভবের পৌরাণিক উল্লেখ। কাশিদাসের 'কুমারসম্ভব' কাব্যে এই প্রসঙ্গের অত্যুচ্ছল চিত্র
আছে।

The Slaying of Meghnada

Trans. Clinton Seeley

When in face-to-face combat Vīrabāhu, crown-gem of
warriors, fell and went before his time to Yama's city—
speak, O goddess of ambrosial speech—which best of warriors
did the foe of Rāghava, treasure-trove among that clan
of Rākṣasas, designate commander, then send fresh to
the battle? And by what stratagem did he, the joy of
Ūrmilā, destroy the hope of the Rākṣasas, Indra's
conqueror, that Meghanāda—invincible throughout
the world—and thus free Indra from his terror? I, who am
ignorant, praise your lotus feet and call upon you once
more, white-limbed Bhārātī! Come, chaste woman, favor me, your
servant, as you came and sat once on Vālmiki's tongue (as
though upon a lotus-throne), Mother, when that fowler deep
in the forest with a keen arrow pierced the heron perched
beside his mate. Who in this world comprehends your greatness?
That most mean of men, who robbed, was made immortal, by your
grace, like Umā's husband, Mṛtyuñjaya! O Vārādā,
by a boon of yours that thieving Ratnākara came to
be the poet of a mine of poetry! At your touch,
a poison-tree can endue the splendor of a graceful
sandalwood! Alas, Mother, is there like virtue in this
slave? Yet, a mother's love reaches out as strongly to that
dearest of her children who lacks talent, is slow of wit.
Come from on high, compassionate one, appear, enticer
of the universe! Let me, Mother, sing this epic song
filled with virile *rasa*. Grant this thrall the shadow of your
feet. You come also, goddess, you who are the honeybee
Imagination! Glean honey from the flower garden
of the poet's mind and form your honeycomb from which the
folks of Gauḍa might in bliss sip nectar ever after.

10

20

30

Notes on the Invocation, Book 1

1-26: The first proem or invocation; there are three more invocations (Books, 3, 5 & 7). The first contains the epic statement of theme (1-5) and the invocation.

4: greater Man: Christ, the second Adam.

6: heavenly Muse: Milton calls his Muse 'Urania' in Book 7. Urania, the Greek Muse of astronomy, had been made into the Muse of Christian poetry by Du Bartas and other religious poets. Here she is identified as the divine Logos that inspired biblical prophet-poets.

8: shepherd: Moses, thought to be the author of Genesis and the other four books of the Pentateuch, was tending sheep on Mount Horeb ("Oreb") when God spoke to him from a burning bush (Exod. 3:1-2); he received the Law on the highest peak, "Sinai." **chosen seed:** the children of Israel; the Jews.

9-10: In the beginning: Echoes Gen. 1:1; Milton thought God created the universe out of formless, primordial matter ("chaos"), not out of nothing.

Sion hill: Mount Zion, associated with the biblical poet David (author of many psalms); also the site of Solomon's Temple with its songs and ceremonies.

Notes on the Invocation, Book 1 (contd.)

11-12: Siloa's brook: Siloah, a pool near Mount Zion (Neh. 3:15) in Jerusalem; it parallels Aganippe, the Muses' spring on Mount Helicon. **oracle:** Mount Zion as site of divine teaching and prophecy (Isa. 2:3).

15: Aonian mount: Mount Helicon, home of the classical Muses.

16: The line translates Ariosto's boast in *Orlando Furioso* 1.2.2: "Cosa non detta in prosa mai, né in rima" ('What never yet was said in prose or rhyme').

unattempted: 'Unattempted even in the Bible?' or 'Unattempted in English literature?' asks Daiches.

17: Spirit: Probably the creative power of God, but possibly the Holy Spirit (the third person of the Trinity), in spite of Milton's argument in *Christian Doctrine*, 1.6 that invocation of the Holy Spirit as a separate person has no Biblical foundation. Unlocalised and operating inwardly, the Spirit provides the impulse of every creative act, divine or human. There is an implied analogy between creation and poetic making.

17-22: A composite of Biblical phrases (e.g., Gen. 1:2, 1 Cor. 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22, and John 1:32). **Dove-like...pregnant:** The Spirit of God 'brooded' (hatched) the Universe out of the unshaped matter of Chaos ("abyss"), thus putting life into Chaos, making it "pregnant". The Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, appeared as a dove on the occasion of Jesus' baptism (John 1:32).

Notes on the Invocation, Book 1 (contd.)

22-26:

“... what in me is dark

Illumine, what is low raise and support;

That to the height of this great argument

I may assert eternal providence,

And justify the ways of God to men.”

Readers and those casually acquainted with *Paradise Lost* frequently misunderstand what Milton means by the word *justify*, assuming that Milton is rather arrogantly asserting that God's actions and motives seem so arbitrary that they require vindication and explanation. Milton does not use the word *justification* in its modern sense of proving that an action is or was proper. Such a reading of *justify* would mean that Milton is taking it upon himself to explain the propriety of God's actions—a presumptuous undertaking when one is dealing with God. Rather, Milton uses *justify* in the sense of showing the justice that underlies an action. Milton wishes to show that the Fall, death, and salvation are all acts of a just God. To understand the theme of *Paradise Lost*, a reader does not have to accept Milton's ideas as a vindication of God's actions; rather the reader needs to understand the idea of justice that lies behind the actions.

The second proem or invocation, Book 3 (1-55)

“... thou celestial Light
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight. ” (lines 51-55)

The third proem or invocation, Book 7 (1-39)

Descend from heav'n Urania, by that name
If rightly thou art called, whose voice divine
Following, above th' Olympian Hill I soar,
Above the flight of Pegasean wing.

The meaning [heavenly], not the name I call: for thou
Nor of the muses nine,** nor on the top
Of old Olympus dwell'st, but heav'nly born, (lines 1-7)

** **Clio**: history; **Calliope**: epic poetry; **Erato**: lyric poetry; **Euterpe**: music;
Melpomene: tragedy; **Thalia**: comedy; **Terpsichore**: dance; **Polyhymnia**:
song; **Urania**: astronomy.

The fourth proem or invocation, Book 9 (1-47)

... sad task, yet argument [subject]

Not less but more heroic than the wrath
Of stern Achilles ... (lines 13-15)

...

If answerable [suited to the subject] style I can obtain

Of my celestial patroness, who deigns
Her nightly visitation unimplored,
And dictates to me slumb'ring, or inspires

Easy my unpremeditated Verse:

Since first this subject for heroic song
Pleased me long choosing, and beginning late;
Not sedulous [eager] by nature to indite [write about]

Wars, hitherto the only argument

Heroic deemed, ... (lines 20-29)

...

... Me of these

Nor skilled nor studious, higher argument

Remains, ... (lines 41-43)

The Fortunate Fall

At the end of *Paradise Lost*, Adam wonders whether he should be sorry or glad about the Fall:

“O goodness infinite, goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good; more wonderful
Than that which by creation first brought forth
Light out of darkness! **full of doubt I stand,**
Whether I should repent me now of sin
By me done and occasioned, or rejoice
Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring,
To God more glory, more good will to men
From God, and over wrath grace shall abound.” (XII: 473-478)

This is Milton’s version of the idea of the “fortunate fall” expressed in the Mass for Holy Saturday: *O felix culpa quae talem ac tantum meruit habere redemptorem* - “O blessed sin that was rewarded by so good and so great a redeemer!” Arthur O. Lovejoy calls it the ‘Paradox of the Fortunate Fall’.

The Fortunate Fall (contd.)

The final justification of God's ways is the manifestation of his grace in the redemption of man through the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ – “whereby man, being delivered from sin and death ... is raised to a far more excellent state of grace and glory than that from which he had fallen” (*Christian Doctrine*, I. xiv). Christ's death is the price paid as ransom to free man from the bondage of Satan, sin, and death into which Adam sold himself and all his progeny by his disobedience. In this act of atonement, Christ restored to man the possibility of eternal life (as in Paradise), freed him from the inherited guilt of Adam's sin, and made him more aware of God's infinite love than he had been before. In *Paradise Lost* God's providence is made to seem just by the conclusion of the “great argument” (1: 24) or story: Satan fell because he thought he merited more than he got, and Adam in his redemption got more than he merited. As Addison remarked, in the end “Satan is represented as miserable in the heights of his triumph, and Adam triumphant in the heights of his misery.”

Epic Simile

Epic similes are formal, sustained similes in which the secondary subject ('vehicle') is elaborated far beyond its points of close parallel to the primary subject ('tenor').

Epic Similes in *Paradise Lost*, Book 1

- lines 200-210: Satan's "mighty stature"
- lines 228-237: The "dry land" of Hell
- lines 284-291: Satan's shield
- lines 299-311: The fallen angels in the fiery lake
- lines 338-343: The fallen angels in the air
- lines 350-355: The fallen angels on land
- lines 571-587: Satan's army
- lines 589-599: Satan's appearance
- lines 760-775: The fallen angels swarming into Pandemonium

Fallen Angels

Lines 364-75: Richard Hooker (1554-1600) in *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1593) writes:

“... these wicked spirits [the fallen angels] the heathens honoured instead of gods, both generally under the name of *dii inferi*, ‘gods infernal’ and particularly, some in oracles, some in idols, some as household gods: in a word no foul and wicked spirit which was not one way or other honoured of men as God” (*Ecclesiastical Polity*, I, iv, 3). Also see F. T. Prince’s annotation , pg. 118.

Lines 376-521: The epic catalogue of fallen angels is a counterpart to Homer’s catalogue of ships in *Iliad* (II: 484-877) and Virgil’s list of warriors in *Aeneid* (VII: 641-817). These catalogues make the scale of the epic enormous. From among the multitude of fallen angels, the important ones are chosen for special consideration. These were princely powers in Heaven but now their names are erased from heavenly records. They would turn into false gods of pagan people and acquire new names in the times to come after the Fall of Man. For the sake of listing, Milton uses their future names. To do this prophetic act, he seeks the guidance of his muse, who knows all – the past, present & future. The point to note is Milton’s strong disapproval of all non-Christian gods and forms of worship. For him, all other deities except the Christian God are false gods and companions of Satan.

List of the Fallen Angels

Lines 392-490: Only twelve fallen angels are named, suggesting that they are the twelve chief disciples of Satan – a parody/travesty of Christ and his twelve chief disciples.

Moloch (392-405): Ammonite sun-god

Chemos or Peor (406-18): Moabite sun-god

Baalim, Ashtaroth (419-37): Collective names for sun-gods (Baalim) and moon-goddesses (Ashtaroth) of Phoenicians & Canaanites

Astoreth (437-46): Phoenician moon-goddess (singular of Ashtaroth)

Thammuz (446-57): Syrian god of love

Dagon (457-66): National god of Philistines

Rimmon (467-76): Syrian god

Osiris, Isis, Orus (476-89): Egyptian sun-god (Osiris), his wife (Isis), and son (Orus)

Belial (490-505): Belial is not personified as a specific deity; he is evil personified. Therefore his jurisdiction is not limited to a particular place or people but pervades all places where evil flourishes. Milton may have had in mind here the lechery of the Restoration Court and the insecurity of London's streets after dark.