

Paradise Lost: Book I (1674 version)

BY JOHN MILTON

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,
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
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
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
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,
And justify the wayes of God to men.

Paradise Lost, epic poem in blank verse, one of the late works by John Milton, originally issued in 10 books in 1667 and, with Books 7 and 10 each split into two parts, published in 12 books in the second edition of 1674.

Many scholars consider *Paradise Lost* to be one of the greatest poems in the English language. It tells the biblical story of the fall from grace of Adam and Eve (and, by extension, all humanity) in language that is a supreme achievement of rhythm and sound. The 12-book structure, the technique of beginning in *medias res* (in the middle of the story), the invocation of the muse, and the use of the epic question are all classically inspired. The subject matter, however, is distinctly Christian.

The main characters in the poem are God, Lucifer (Satan), Adam, and Eve. Much has been written about Milton's powerful and sympathetic characterization of Satan. The Romantic poets William Blake and Percy Bysshe Shelley saw Satan as the real hero of the poem and applauded his rebellion against the tyranny of Heaven.