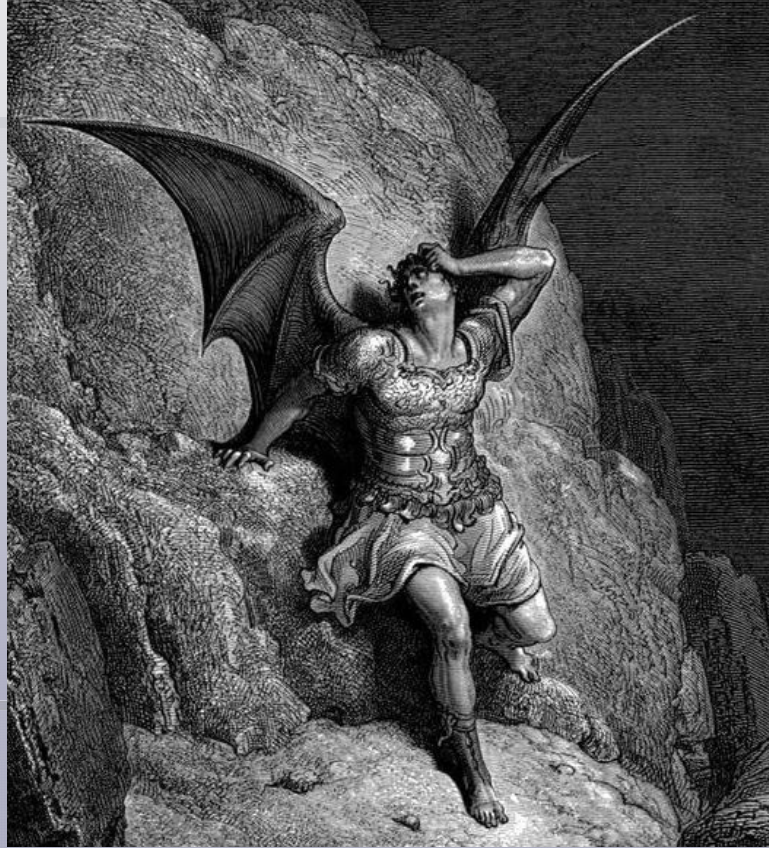


John Milton



Paradise lost

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John Milton- biography and career

John Milton was born on December 9, 1608, in London, as the second child of John and Sara. John Milton Senior worked as a scrivener, a legal secretary whose duties included preparation and notarisation of documents, as well as real estate transactions and money lending. Milton's father was also a composer of church music, and Milton himself experienced a lifelong delight in music. The family financial prosperity afforded Milton to be taught in classical languages, first by private tutors at home, followed by entrance to St. Paul's School at the age of twelve, in 1620.

In 1625, Milton was admitted to Christ's College, Cambridge, and studied there for seven years before he graduated as Master of Arts *cum laude* (with honour) on July 3, 1632.

As customary for young gentlemen of means, Milton set out on tour of Europe in the spring of 1638. He visited Paris, Florence, Rome and Naples, and met many famous minds of the century such as Galileo Galilei and many more. Milton's tour of Europe was cut short with rumours of impending civil war in England, and he returned home in July 1639.

Milton settled down in London, where he began schooling his two nephews, later also taking in children of the better families. The Civil War was brewing- King Charles I invaded Scotland in 1639, and the Long Parliament was convened in 1640. Milton began writing pamphlets on political and religious matters.

In the spring of 1642, Milton married Mary Powell, 17 years old to his 34, but the relationship was an unhappy one, and Mary left him to visit the family home briefly thereafter, and did not return. Over the next three years, Milton published a series of pamphlets arguing for the legality and morality of divorce. The 'Divorce Tracts' caused uproar both in parliament and clergy, as well as with general populace, which earned him the nickname 'Milton the Divorcer'. In 1645, Mary finally returned. They had four children: Anne, Mary, John and Deborah. The year 1652 was one of many personal losses for Milton: wife Mary died on May 5, 1652, from complications following Deborah's birth, in February Milton lost his sight. In June, John died at 15 months; his sisters all survived to adulthood. Then Milton married two more times. His last wife Elizabeth, cared for him until his death on November 8, 1674.

Milton's career

Milton spent years devoted entirely to prose work in service of the Puritan and Parliamentary cause. Milton wrote propaganda for the English Republic in the early 1650s, including the *Eikonoklastes* (Image Breaker), which attempts to justify the execution of Charles I. When he was caught and arrested in October 1659 he was not executed: several influential people had spoken on his behalf. Milton then lived in retirement, devoting himself once more to poetical work, and publishing *Paradise Lost* in 1667, the epic by which he attained universal fame (blind and impoverished, he sold the publishing rights to his work on April 27 that year for £10), to be followed by *Paradise Regained*, together with *Samson Agonistes*, a drama on the Greek model, in 1671. Milton penned *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* through dictation because of his blindness. This required him to store vast portions of the poems in his memory for oral recitation. Critical influences upon Milton's literary work can be easily found and include the Biblical books of Genesis, Job, and Psalms, as well as Homer, Virgil and Lucan.

Milton coined many familiar modern words; in *Paradise Lost* readers were confronted by neologisms like *dreary*, *pandemonium*, *self-esteem*, *impassive*, *enslaved* and *satanic*.

Paradise Lost





- Context
- Plot
- Analysis of the major characters
- Themes, motifs and symbols

Context

Milton took public stances on a great number of issues, but most important to the reading of *Paradise Lost* are his positions on religion. In Milton's time, the Anglican Church, or Church of England, had split into the high Anglican, moderate Anglican, and Puritan or Presbyterian sects. Milton was a Presbyterian. This denomination called for the abolishment of bishops, an office that exists as part of the Catholic and Anglican churches. Milton, however, gradually took his views further, ultimately calling for the removal of all priests, whom he referred to as "hirelings." Milton despised the corruption he saw in the Catholic Church, repeatedly attacking it both in his poetry and prose. In "Lycidas," he likens Catholics to hungry wolves leaping into a sheep's pen, an image similar to his depiction of Satan leaping over the wall of Paradise in *Paradise Lost*, Book IV. He saw few problems with the division of Protestants into more and smaller denominations. Instead, he thought that the fragmentation of churches was a sign of healthy self-examination, and believed that each individual Christian should be his own church, without any establishment to encumber him. These beliefs, expressed in a great number of pamphlets, prompted his break with the Presbyterians before 1650.

From that point on, Milton advocated the complete abolishment of all church establishments, and kept his own private religion, close to the Calvinism practiced by Presbyterians but differing in some ways. Milton's highly individual view of Christianity makes *Paradise Lost* simultaneously personal and universal.

In his later years, Milton came to view all organized Christian churches, whether Anglican, Catholic or Presbyterian, as an obstacle to true faith. He felt that the individual and his conscience (or "right reason") was a much more powerful tool in interpreting the Word of God than the example set by a church. Throughout *Paradise Lost*, Milton expresses the idea that Adam and Eve's fall from grace was actually fortunate, because it gives individual human beings the opportunity to redeem themselves by true repentance and faith. The importance of remaining strong in one's personal religious convictions, particularly in the face of widespread condemnation, is a major theme in the later Books of *Paradise Lost*, as Michael shows Adam the vision of Enoch and Noah, two followers of God who risk death to stand up for him.



Paradise Lost also presents a number of Protestant Christian positions: the union of the Old and New Testaments, the unworthiness of mankind, and the importance of Christ's love in man's salvation. Nonetheless, the poem does not present a unified, cohesive theory of Christian theology, nor does it attempt to identify disbelievers, redefine Christianity, or replace the Bible. Instead, Milton's epic stands as a remarkable presentation of biblical stories meant to engage Christian readers and help them to be better Christians.

The Epic

At the early age of sixteen, Milton already aspired to write the great English epic. As he read the classical epics in school—Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid*—he began to fantasize about bringing such artistic brilliance to the English language.

Milton considered many topics for his epic. Early on, he thought that the story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table was a noble topic. Then, as he grew slightly older, he hoped to write an epic about Oliver Cromwell, who took control of England in 1653 after helping to dethrone and execute King Charles. Judging from these two topics, it is clear that Milton wanted to write his epic on a distinctly British topic that would inspire nationalist pride in his countrymen. Such a topic would also mimic Homer's and Virgil's nationalist epics of strong, virtuous warriors and noble battles. However, Milton abandoned both of these ideas, and for a time gave up the notion of writing an epic at all.

But in the mid-1650s, Milton returned to an idea he had previously had for a verse play: the story of Adam and Eve. He concluded that the story might fail as a drama but succeed as an epic. In 1656 the blind Milton began to recite verse each morning to one of his two daughters, who wrote his poem down for him. Milton continued to dictate *Paradise Lost* for several years, finishing in 1667 when it was first published in ten books. Milton soon returned to revise his epic, redividing it into twelve books (as the classical epics were divided), and publishing it in its authoritative second edition form in 1671.

The Plot

Milton's speaker begins *Paradise Lost* by stating that his subject will be Adam and Eve's disobedience and fall from grace. He invokes a heavenly muse and asks for help in relating his ambitious story and God's plan for humankind. The action begins with Satan and his fellow rebel angels who are found chained to a lake of fire in Hell. They quickly free themselves and fly to land, where they discover minerals and construct Pandemonium, which will be their meeting place. Inside Pandemonium, the rebel angels, who are now devils, debate whether they should begin another war with God. Beezlebum suggests that they attempt to corrupt God's beloved new creation, humankind. Satan agrees, and volunteers to go himself. As he prepares to leave Hell, he is met at the gates by his children, Sin and Death, who follow him and build a bridge between Hell and Earth. In Heaven, God orders the angels together for a council of their own. He tells them of Satan's intentions, and the Son volunteers himself to make the sacrifice for humankind. Meanwhile, Satan travels through Night and Chaos and finds Earth. He disguises himself as a cherub to get past the Archangel Uriel, who stands guard at the sun. He tells Uriel that he wishes to see and praise God's glorious creation, and Uriel assents. Satan then lands on Earth and takes a moment to reflect. Seeing the splendor of Paradise brings him pain rather than pleasure. He reaffirms his decision to make evil his good, and continue to commit crimes against God. Satan leaps over Paradise's wall, takes the form of a cormorant (a large bird), and perches himself atop the Tree of Life. Looking down at Satan from his post, Uriel notices the volatile emotions reflected in the face of this so-called cherub and warns the other angels that an impostor is in their midst. The other angels agree to search the Garden for intruders.

Meanwhile, Adam and Eve tend the Garden, carefully obeying God's supreme order not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. After a long day of work, they return to their bower and rest. There, Satan takes the form of a toad and whispers into Eve's ear. Gabriel, the angel set to guard Paradise, finds Satan there and orders him to leave. Satan prepares to battle Gabriel, but God makes a sign appear in the sky—the golden scales of justice—and Satan scurries away. Eve awakes and tells Adam about a dream she had, in which an angel tempted her to eat from the forbidden tree. Worried about his creation, God sends Raphael down to Earth to teach Adam and Eve of the dangers they face with Satan.

Raphael arrives on Earth and eats a meal with Adam and Eve. After the meal, Eve retires, allowing Raphael and Adam to speak alone. Raphael relates the story of Satan's envy over the Son's appointment as God's second-in-command. Satan gathered other angels together who were also angry to hear this news, and together they plotted a war against God. Abdiel decides not to join Satan's army and returns to God. The angels then begin to fight, with Michael and Gabriel serving as co-leaders for Heaven's army. The battle lasts two days, when God sends the Son to end the war and deliver Satan and his rebel angels to Hell. Raphael tells Adam about Satan's evil motives to corrupt them, and warns Adam to watch out for Satan. Adam asks Raphael to tell him the story of creation. Raphael tells Adam that God sent the Son into Chaos to create the universe. He created the earth and stars and other planets. Curious, Adam asks Raphael about the movement of the stars and planets. Raphael promptly warns Adam about his seemingly unquenchable search for knowledge. Raphael tells Adam that he will learn all he needs to know, and that any other knowledge is not meant for humans to comprehend. Adam tells Raphael about his first memories, of waking up and wondering who he was, what he was, and where he was. Adam says that God spoke to him and told him many things, including his order not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. After the story, Adam confesses to Raphael his intense physical attraction to Eve. Raphael reminds Adam that he must love Eve more purely and spiritually. With this final bit of advice, Raphael leaves Earth and returns to Heaven.

Eight days after his banishment, Satan returns to Paradise. After closely studying the animals of Paradise, he chooses to take the form of the serpent. Meanwhile, Eve suggests to Adam that they work separately for awhile, so they can get more work done. Adam is hesitant but then assents. Satan searches for Eve and is delighted to find her alone. In the form of a serpent, he talks to Eve and compliments her on her beauty and godliness. She is amazed to find an animal that can speak. She asks how he learned to speak, and he tells her that it was by eating from the Tree of Knowledge. He tells Eve that God actually wants her and Adam to eat from the tree, and that his order is merely a test of their courage. She is hesitant at first but then reaches for a fruit from the Tree of Knowledge and eats. She becomes distraught and searches for Adam. Adam has been busy making a wreath of flowers for Eve. When Eve finds Adam, he drops the wreath and is horrified to find that Eve has eaten from the forbidden tree. Knowing that she has fallen, he decides that he would rather be fallen with her than remain pure and lose her. So he eats from the fruit as well. Adam looks at Eve in a new way, and together they turn to lust.

God immediately knows of their disobedience. He tells the angels in Heaven that Adam and Eve must be punished, but with a display of both justice and mercy. He sends the Son to give out the punishments. The Son first punishes the serpent whose body Satan took, and condemns it never to walk upright again. Then the Son tells Adam and Eve that they must now suffer pain and death. Eve and all women must suffer the pain of childbirth and must submit to their husbands, and Adam and all men must hunt and grow their own food on a depleted Earth. Meanwhile, Satan returns to Hell where he is greeted with cheers. He speaks to the devils in Pandemonium, and everyone believes that he has beaten God. Sin and Death travel the bridge they built on their way to Earth. Shortly thereafter, the devils unwillingly transform into snakes and try to reach fruit from imaginary trees that shrivel and turn to dust as they reach them.

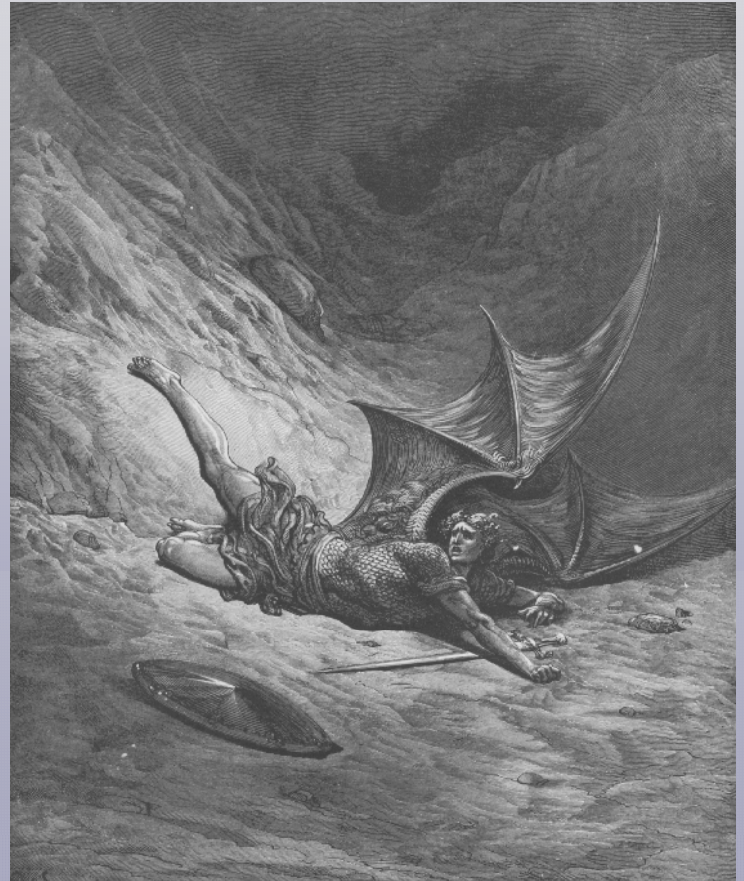
God tells the angels to transform the Earth. After the fall, humankind must suffer hot and cold seasons instead of the consistent temperatures before the fall. On Earth, Adam and Eve fear their approaching doom. They blame each other for their disobedience and become increasingly angry at one another. In a fit of rage, Adam wonders why God ever created Eve. Eve begs Adam not to abandon her. She tells him that they can survive by loving each other. She accepts the blame because she has disobeyed both God and Adam. She ponders suicide. Adam, moved by her speech, forbids her from taking her own life. He remembers their punishment and believes that they can enact revenge on Satan by remaining obedient to God. Together they pray to God and repent.

God hears their prayers, and sends Michael down to Earth. Michael arrives on Earth, and tells them that they must leave Paradise. But before they leave, Michael puts Eve to sleep and takes Adam up onto the highest hill, where he shows him a vision of humankind's future. Adam sees the sins of his children, and his children's children, and his first vision of death. Horrified, he asks Michael if there is any alternative to death. Generations to follow continue to sin by lust, greed, envy, and pride. They kill each other selfishly and live only for pleasure. Then Michael shows him the vision of Enoch, who is saved by God as his warring peers attempt to kill him. Adam also sees the story of Noah and his family, whose virtue allows them to be chosen to survive the flood that kills all other humans. Adam feels remorse for death and happiness for humankind's redemption. Next is the vision of Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. This story explains the perversion of pure language into the many languages that are spoken on Earth today. Adam sees the triumph of Moses and the Israelites, and then glimpses the Son's sacrifice to save humankind. After this vision, it is time for Adam and Eve to leave Paradise. Eve awakes and tells Adam that she had a very interesting and educating dream. Led by Michael, Adam and Eve slowly and woefully leave Paradise hand in hand into a new world.

Analysis of major characters

Satan

Some readers consider Satan to be the hero, or protagonist, of the story, because he struggles to overcome his own doubts and weaknesses and accomplishes his goal of corrupting humankind. This goal, however, is evil, and Adam and Eve are the moral heroes at the end of the story, as they help to begin humankind's slow process of redemption and salvation. Satan is far from being the story's object of admiration, as most heroes are. Nor does it make sense for readers to celebrate or emulate him, as they might with a true hero. Yet there are many compelling qualities to his character that make him intriguing to readers.



One source of Satan's fascination for us is that he is an extremely complex and subtle character. It would be difficult, perhaps impossible, for Milton to make perfect, infallible characters such as God the Father, God the Son, and the angels as interesting to read about as the flawed characters, such as Satan, Adam, and Eve. Satan, moreover, strikes a grand and majestic figure, apparently unafraid of being damned eternally, and uncowed by such terrifying figures as Chaos or Death. Many readers have argued that Milton deliberately makes Satan seem heroic and appealing early in the poem to draw us into sympathizing with him against our will, so that we may see how seductive evil is and learn to be more vigilant in resisting its appeal.

Milton devotes much of the poem's early books to developing Satan's character. Satan's greatest fault is his pride. He casts himself as an innocent victim, overlooked for an important promotion. But his ability to think so selfishly in Heaven, where all angels are equal and loved and happy, is surprising. His confidence in thinking that he could ever overthrow God displays tremendous vanity and pride. When Satan shares his pain and alienation as he reaches Earth in Book IV, we may feel somewhat sympathetic to him or even identify with him. But Satan continues to devote himself to evil. Every speech he gives is fraudulent and every story he tells is a lie. He works diligently to trick his fellow devils in Hell by having Beelzebub present Satan's own plan of action.

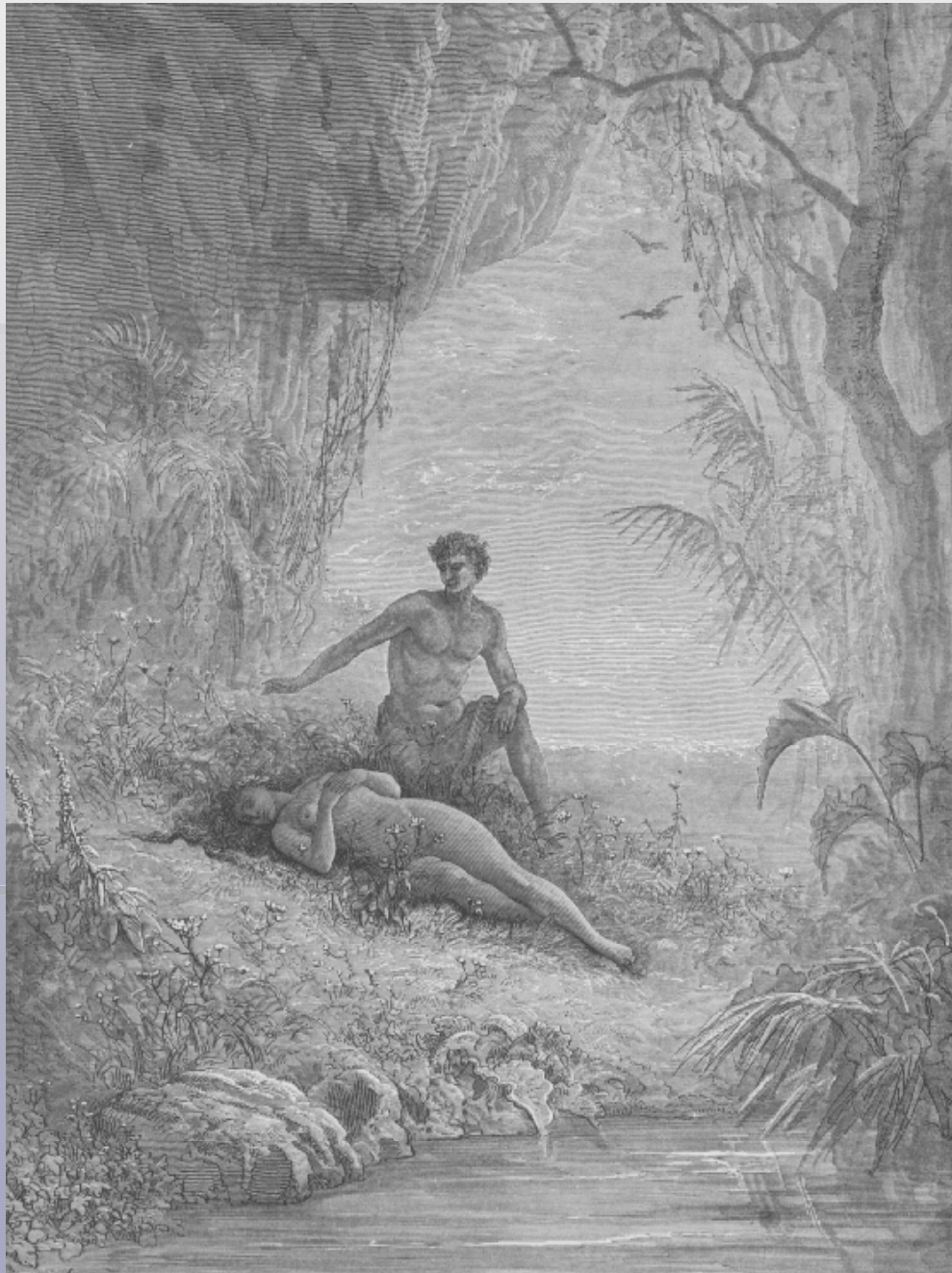
Satan's character—or our perception of his character—changes significantly from Book I to his final appearance in Book X. In Book I he is a strong, imposing figure with great abilities as a leader and public statesman, whereas by the poem's end he slinks back to Hell in serpent form. Satan's gradual degradation is dramatized by the sequence of different shapes he assumes. He begins the poem as a just-fallen angel of enormous stature, looks like a comet or meteor as he leaves Hell, then disguises himself as a more humble cherub, then as a cormorant, a toad, and finally a snake. His ability to reason and argue also deteriorates. In Book I, he persuades the devils to agree to his plan. In Book IV, however, he reasons to himself that the Hell he feels inside of him is reason to do more evil. When he returns to Earth again, he believes that Earth is more beautiful than Heaven, and that he may be able to live on Earth after all. Satan, removed from Heaven long enough to forget its unparalleled grandeur, is completely demented, coming to believe in his own lies. He is a picture of incessant intellectual activity without the ability to think morally. Once a powerful angel, he has become blinded to God's grace, forever unable to reconcile his past with his eternal punishment.

Adam

Adam is a strong, intelligent, and rational character possessed of a remarkable relationship with God. In fact, before the fall, he is as perfect as a human being can be. He has an enormous capacity for reason, and can understand the most sophisticated ideas instantly. He can converse with Raphael as a near-equal, and understand Raphael's stories readily. But after the fall, his conversation with Michael during his visions is significantly one-sided. Also, his self-doubt and anger after the fall demonstrate his new ability to indulge in rash and irrational attitudes. As a result of the fall, he loses his pure reason and intellect.

Adam's greatest weakness is his love for Eve. He falls in love with her immediately upon seeing her, and confides to Raphael that his attraction to her is almost overwhelming. Though Raphael warns him to keep his affections in check, Adam is powerless to prevent his love from overwhelming his reason. After Eve eats from the Tree of Knowledge, he quickly does the same, realizing that if she is doomed, he must follow her into doom as well if he wants to avoid losing her. Eve has become his companion for life, and he is unwilling to part with her even if that means disobeying God.

Adam's curiosity and hunger for knowledge is another weakness. The questions he asks of Raphael about creation and the universe may suggest a growing temptation to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. But like his physical attraction to Eve, Adam is able to partly avoid this temptation. It is only through Eve that his temptations become unavoidable



Eve

Created to be Adam's mate, Eve is inferior to Adam, but only slightly. She surpasses Adam only in her beauty. She falls in love with her own image when she sees her reflection in a body of water. Ironically, her greatest asset produces her most serious weakness, vanity. After Satan compliments her on her beauty and godliness, he easily persuades her to eat from the Tree of Knowledge.

Aside from her beauty, Eve's intelligence and spiritual purity is constantly tested. She is not unintelligent, but she is not ambitious to learn, content to be guided by Adam as God intended. As a result, she does not become more intelligent or learned as the story progresses, though she does attain the beginning of wisdom by the end of the poem. Her lack of learning is partly due to her absence for most of Raphael's discussions with Adam in Books V, VI, and VII, and she also does not see the visions Michael shows Adam in Books XI and XII. Her absence from these important exchanges shows that she feels it is not her place to seek knowledge independently; she wants to hear Raphael's stories through Adam later. The one instance in which she deviates from her passive role, telling Adam to trust her on her own and then seizing the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, is disastrous.

Eve's strengths are her capacity for love and emotion. She persuades Adam to stay with her after the fall, and Adam in turn dissuades her from committing suicide, as they begin to work together as a powerful unit. Eve complements Adam's strengths and corrects his weaknesses. Thus, Milton does not denigrate all women through his depiction of Eve. Rather he explores the role of women in his society and the positive and important role he felt they could offer in the divine union of marriage.

God

An omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent character who knows everything before it happens. Attempting to present such an unimaginable character accurately, Milton appropriates several of God's biblical speeches into his speeches in *Paradise Lost*. God loves his creation and strongly defends humankind's free will. He presents his love through his Son, who performs his will justly and mercifully.

God, in *Paradise Lost*, is less a developed character than a personification of abstract ideas. He is unknowable to humankind and to some extent lacks emotion and depth. He has no weaknesses, embodies pure reason, and is always just. He explains why certain events happen, like Satan's decision to corrupt Adam and Eve, tells his angels what will happen next, and gives his reasoning behind his actions in theological terms. God allows evil to occur, but he will make good out of evil. His plan to save humankind by offering his Son shows his unwavering control over Satan.

The Son

For Milton, the Son is the manifestation of God in action. While God the Father stays in the realm of Heaven, the Son performs the difficult tasks of banishing Satan and his rebel angels, creating the universe and humankind, and punishing Satan, Adam and Eve with justice and mercy. The Son physically connects God the Father with his creation. Together they form a complete and perfect God.

The Son personifies love and compassion. After the fall, he pities Adam and Eve and gives them clothing to help diminish their shame. His decision to volunteer to die for humankind shows his dedication and selflessness. The final vision that Adam sees in Book XII is of the Son's (or Jesus') sacrifice on the cross—through this vision, the Son is able to calm Adam's worries for humankind and give Adam and Eve restored hope as they venture out of Paradise.



Themes, motifs and symbols

The Importance of Obedience to God

The first words of Paradise Lost state that the poem's main theme will be "Man's first Disobedience." Milton narrates the story of Adam and Eve's disobedience, explains how and why it happens, and places the story within the larger context of Satan's rebellion and Jesus' resurrection. Raphael tells Adam about Satan's disobedience in an effort to give him a firm grasp of the threat that Satan and humankind's disobedience poses. In essence, Paradise Lost presents two moral paths that one can take after disobedience: the downward spiral of increasing sin and degradation, represented by Satan, and the road to redemption, represented by Adam and Eve.

While Adam and Eve are the first humans to disobey God, Satan is the first of all God's creation to disobey. His decision to rebel comes only from himself—he was not persuaded or provoked by others. Also, his decision to continue to disobey God after his fall into Hell ensures that God will not forgive him. Adam and Eve, on the other hand, decide to repent for their sins and seek forgiveness. Unlike Satan, Adam and Eve understand that their disobedience to God does not know that their disobedience will be corrected through generations of toil on Earth. This path is obviously the correct one to take: the visions in Books XI and XII demonstrate that obedience to God, even after repeated falls, can lead to humankind's salvation.

The Hierarchical Nature of the Universe

Paradise Lost is about hierarchy as much as it is about obedience. The layout of the universe—with Heaven above, Hell below, and Earth in the middle—presents the universe as a hierarchy based on proximity to God and his grace. This spatial hierarchy leads to a social hierarchy of angels, humans, animals, and devils: the Son is closest to God, with the archangels and cherubs behind him. Adam and Eve and Earth's animals come next, with Satan and the other fallen angels following last. To obey God is to respect this hierarchy.

Satan refuses to honour the Son as his superior, thereby questioning God's hierarchy. As the angels in Satan's camp rebel, they hope to beat God and thereby dissolve what they believe to be an unfair hierarchy in Heaven. When the Son and the good angels defeat the rebel angels, the rebels are punished by being banished far away from Heaven. At least, Satan argues later, they can make their own hierarchy in Hell, but they are nevertheless subject to God's overall hierarchy, in which they are ranked the lowest. Satan continues to disobey God and his hierarchy as he seeks to corrupt mankind.

Likewise, humankind's disobedience is a corruption of God's hierarchy. Before the fall, Adam and Eve treat the visiting angels with proper respect and acknowledgement of their closeness to God, and Eve embraces the subservient role allotted to her in her marriage. God and Raphael both instruct Adam that Eve is slightly farther removed from God's grace than Adam because she was created to serve both God and him. When Eve persuades Adam to let her work alone, she challenges him, her superior, and he yields to her, his inferior. Again, as Adam eats from the fruit, he knowingly defies God by obeying Eve and his inner instinct instead of God and his reason. Adam's visions in Books XI and XII show more examples of this disobedience to God and the universe's hierarchy, but also demonstrate that with the Son's sacrifice, this hierarchy will be restored once again.



The Fall as Partly Fortunate

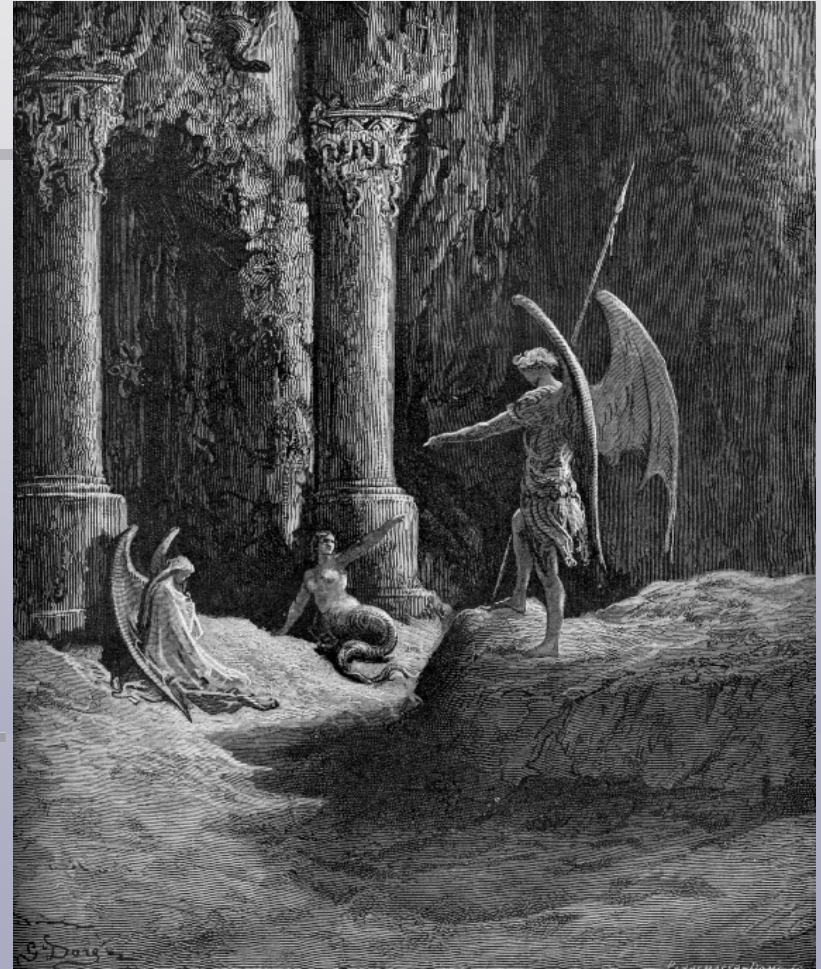
After he sees the vision of Christ's redemption of humankind in Book XII, Adam refers to his own sin as a *felix culpa* or "happy fault" or "fortunate fall" suggesting that the fall of humankind, while originally seeming an unmitigated catastrophe, does in fact bring good with it. Adam and Eve's disobedience allows God to show his mercy and temperance in their punishments and his eternal providence toward humankind. This display of love and compassion, given through the Son, is a gift to humankind. Humankind must now experience pain and death, but humans can also experience mercy, salvation, and grace in ways they would not have been able to had they not disobeyed. While humankind has fallen from grace, individuals can redeem and save themselves through continued devotion and obedience to God. The salvation of humankind, in the form of The Son's sacrifice and resurrection, can begin to restore humankind to its former state. In other words, good will come of sin and death, and humankind will eventually be rewarded. This fortunate result justifies God's reasoning and explains his ultimate plan for humankind.

Matifs



Light and Dark

Opposites abound in Paradise Lost, including Heaven and Hell, God and Satan, and good and evil. Milton's uses imagery of light and darkness to express all of these opposites. Angels are physically described in terms of light, whereas devils are generally described by their shadowy darkness. Milton also uses light to symbolize God and God's grace. In his invocation in Book III, Milton asks that he be filled with this light so he can tell his divine story accurately and persuasively. While the absence of light in Hell and in Satan himself represents the absence of God and his grace.



The Geography of the Universe

Milton divides the universe into four major regions: glorious Heaven, dreadful Hell, confusing Chaos, and a young and vulnerable Earth in between. The opening scenes that take place in Hell give the reader immediate context as to Satan's plot against God and humankind. The intermediate scenes in Heaven, in which God tells the angels of his plans, provide a philosophical and theological context for the story. Then, with these established settings of good and evil, light and dark, much of the action occurs in between on Earth. The powers of good and evil work against each other on this new battlefield of Earth. Satan fights God by tempting Adam and Eve, while God shows his love and mercy through the Son's punishment of Adam and Eve.

Milton believes that any other information concerning the geography of the universe is unimportant. Milton acknowledges both the possibility that the sun revolves around the Earth and that the Earth revolves around the sun, without coming down on one side or the other. Raphael asserts that it does not matter which revolves around which, demonstrating that Milton's cosmology is based on the religious message he wants to convey, rather than on the findings of science or astronomy.

Conversation and Contemplation

One common objection raised by readers of *Paradise Lost* is that the poem contains relatively little action. Milton sought to divert the reader's attention from heroic battles and place it on the conversations and contemplations of his characters. Conversations comprise almost five complete books of *Paradise Lost*, close to half of the text. Milton's narrative emphasis on conversation conveys the importance he attached to conversation and contemplation, two pursuits that he believed were of fundamental importance for a moral person. As with Adam and Raphael, and again with Adam and Michael, the sharing of ideas allows two people to share and spread God's message. Likewise, pondering God and his grace allows a person to become closer to God and more obedient. Adam constantly contemplates God before the fall, whereas Satan contemplates only himself. After the fall, Adam and Eve must learn to maintain their conversation and contemplation if they hope to make their own happiness outside of Paradise.

Symbols



The Scales in the Sky

As Satan prepares to fight Gabriel when he is discovered in Paradise, God causes the image of a pair of golden scales to appear in the sky. On one side of the scales, he puts the consequences of Satan's running away, and on the other he puts the consequences of Satan's staying and fighting with Gabriel. The side that shows him staying and fighting flies up, signifying its lightness and worthlessness. These scales symbolize the fact that God and Satan are not truly on opposite sides of a struggle—God is all-powerful, and Satan and Gabriel both derive all of their power from Him. God's scales force Satan to realize the futility of taking arms against one of God's angels again.

Adam's Wreath

The wreath that Adam makes as he and Eve work separately in Book IX is symbolic in several ways. First, it represents his love for her and his attraction to her. But as he is about to give the wreath to her, his shock in noticing that she has eaten from the Tree of Knowledge makes him drop it to the ground. His dropping of the wreath symbolizes that his love and attraction to Eve is falling away. His image of her as a spiritual companion has been shattered completely, as he realizes her fallen state. The fallen wreath represents the loss of pure love.

Paradise Regained

Paradise Regained is published in 1671. It is connected by name to his earlier and more famous epic poem *Paradise Lost*, with which it shares similar theological themes. The writing style, however, is more thoughtful and thrives upon the imagery of Jesus' perfection in contrast to the shame of Satan, making it less epic than that of *Paradise Lost*, and accounting for why some consider this later work inferior.

Based on the Gospel of Luke's version of the Temptations of Christ, *Paradise Regained* is four books in length, in contrast to *Paradise Lost's* twelve. In it Milton uses parody to show Satan's folly in stark contrast to Jesus, the epitome of perfect heroism.

One of the major concepts emphasized throughout *Paradise Regained* is the use of reversals. As implied by its title, Milton sets out to reverse the 'loss' of Paradise. Thus, antonyms are often found next to each other throughout the story, reinforcing the idea that everything that was lost in the first epic is going to be regained by the end of the mini-epic.

Additionally, this work focuses on the idea of 'hunger', but in a literal and in a spiritual sense. After wandering in the wilderness for forty days Jesus is starved of both food and the Word of God. Satan, too blind to see any non-literal meanings of the term, offers Christ food and infinite power in order to satiate his hunger, but Jesus, 'hungering' for the Word of God, continually denies him. This creates an interesting connection between *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, where in one the heroes fall victim to their hunger while in the other the hero resists the temptation and thus effectively reverses the fall of mankind from the first epic.