



P E N G U I N



C L A S S I C S

JOHN MILTON

PARADISE LOST

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PARADISE LOST

The Verse

The measure is English heroic verse without rhyme, as that of Homer in Greek, and of Virgil in Latin; rhyme being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame metre; graced indeed since by the use of some famous modern poets, carried away by custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worse than else they would have expressed them. Not without cause therefore some both Italian and Spanish poets of prime note have rejected rhyme both in longer and shorter works, as have also long since our best English tragedies, as a thing of itself, to all judicious ears, trivial and of no true musical delight; which consists only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings, a fault avoided by the learned ancients both in poetry and all good oratory. This neglect then of rhyme so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming.

BOOK I

The Argument

This first book proposes, first in brief, the whole subject, man's disobedience, and the loss thereupon of Paradise wherein he was placed: then touches the prime cause of his fall, the serpent, or rather Satan in the serpent; who revolting from God, and drawing to his side many legions of angels, was by
5 the command of God driven out of Heaven with all his crew into the great deep. Which action passed over, the poem hastes into the midst of things, presenting Satan with his angels now fallen into Hell, described here, not in the centre (for heaven and earth may be supposed as yet not made, certainly not yet
10 accursed) but in a place of utter darkness, fitliest called Chaos: here Satan with his angels lying on the burning lake, thunder-struck and astonished, after a certain space recovers, as from confusion, calls up him who next in order and dignity lay by
15 him; they confer of their miserable fall, Satan awakens all his legions, who lay till then in the same manner confounded; they rise, their numbers, array of battle, their chief leaders named, according to the idols known afterwards in Canaan and the countries adjoining. To these Satan directs his speech, comforts them with hope yet of regaining Heaven, but tells
20 them lastly of a new world and new kind of creature to be created, according to an ancient prophecy or report in Heaven; for that angels were long before this visible Creation, was the opinion of many ancient Fathers. To find out the truth of
25 this prophecy, and what to determine thereon he refers to a full council. What his associates thence attempt. Pandaemonium the palace of Satan rises, suddenly built out of the deep: the infernal Peers there sit in council.

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater man
5 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
10 Rose out of Chaos: or if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
15 Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
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
20 Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the heighth of this great argument
25 I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view
Nor the deep tract of Hell, say first what cause
Moved our grand parents in that happy state,
30 Favoured of Heav'n so highly, to fall off
From their Creator and transgress his will
For one restraint, lords of the world besides?
Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?
Th' infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile
35 Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived
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,

40 He trusted to have equalled the Most High,
If he opposed; and with ambitious aim
Against the throne and monarchy of God
Raised impious war in Heav'n and battle proud
With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power
45 Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky
With hideous ruin and combustion down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamantine chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms.
50 Nine times the space that measures day and night
To mortal men, he with his horrid crew
Lay vanquished, rolling in the fiery gulf
Confounded though immortal: but his doom
Reserved him to more wrath; for now the thought
55 Both of lost happiness and lasting pain
Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes
That witnessed huge affliction and dismay
Mixed with obdurate pride and steadfast hate:
At once as far as angels' ken he views
60 The dismal situation waste and wild,
A dungeon horrible, on all sides round
As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Served only to discover sights of woe,
65 Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
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 unconsumed:
70 Such place Eternal Justice had prepared
For those rebellious, here their prison ordained
In utter darkness, and their portion set
As far removed from God and light of Heav'n
As from the centre thrice to th' utmost pole.
75 O how unlike the place from whence they fell!
There the companions of his fall, o'erwhelmed
With floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,
He soon discerns, and welt'ring by his side

One next himself in power, and next in crime,
80 Long after known in Palestine, and named
Beëlzebub. To whom th' Arch-Enemy,
And thence in Heav'n called Satan, with bold words
Breaking the horrid silence thus began.

If thou beest he; but O how fall'n! how changed
85 From him, who in the happy realms of light
Clothed with transcendent brightness didst outshine
Myriads though bright: if he whom mutual league,
United thoughts and counsels, equal hope
And hazard in the glorious enterprise,
90 Joined with me once, now misery hath joined
In equal ruin: into what pit thou seest
From what height fall'n, so much the stronger proved
He with his thunder: and till then who knew
The force of those dire arms? yet not for those,
95 Nor what the potent Victor in his rage
Can else inflict, do I repent or change,
Though changed in outward lustre, that fixed mind
And high disdain, from sense of injured merit,
That with the mightiest raised me to contend,
100 And to the fierce contention brought along
Innumerable force of Spirits armed
That durst dislike his reign, and me preferring,
His utmost power with adverse power opposed
In dubious battle on the plains of Heav'n,
105 And shook his throne. What though the field be lost?
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?
110 That glory never shall his wrath or might
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace
With suppliant knee, and deify his power
Who from the terror of this arm so late
Doubted his empire, that were low indeed,
115 That were an ignominy and shame beneath
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 advanced,
 120 We may with more successful hope resolve
 To wage by force or guile eternal war
 Irreconcilable, to our grand Foe,
 Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy
 Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heav'n.
 125 So spake th' apostate angel, though in pain,
 Vaunting aloud, but racked with deep despair:
 And him thus answered soon his bold compeer.
 O Prince, O chief of many thronè Powers
 That led th' embattled Seraphim to war
 130 Under thy conduct, and in dreadful deeds
 Fearless, endangered Heav'n's perpetual King;
 And put to proof his high supremacy,
 Whether upheld by strength, or Chance, or Fate;
 Too well I see and rue the dire event,
 135 That with sad overthrow and foul defeat
 Hath lost us Heav'n, and all this mighty host
 In horrible destruction laid thus low,
 As far as gods and Heav'nly essences
 Can perish: for the mind and spirit remains
 140 Invincible, and vigour soon returns,
 Though all our glory extinct, and happy state
 Here swallowed up in endless misery.
 But what if he our Conqueror, (whom I now
 Of force believe Almighty, since no less
 145 Than such could have o'erpow' red such force as ours)
 Have left us this our spirit and strength entire
 Strongly to suffer and support our pains,
 That we may so suffice his vengeful ire,
 Or do him mightier service as his thralls
 150 By right of war, whate'er his business be,
 Here in the heart of Hell to work in fire,
 Or do his errands in the gloomy deep;
 What can it then avail though yet we feel
 Strength undiminished, or eternal being
 155 To undergo eternal punishment?
 Whereto with speedy words th' Arch-Fiend replied.

Fall'n Cherub, to be weak is miserable
Doing or suffering: but of this be sure,
To do aught good never will be our task,
160 But ever to do ill our sole delight,
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,
165 And out of good still to find means of evil,
Which oft-times may succeed, so as perhaps
Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb
His inmost counsels from their destined aim.
But see the angry Victor hath recalled
170 His ministers of vengeance and pursuit
Back to the gates of Heav'n: the sulphurous hail
Shot after us in storm, o'erblown hath laid
The fiery surge, that from the precipice
Of Heav'n received us falling, and the thunder
175 Winged with red lightning and impetuous rage,
Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now
To bellow through the vast and boundless deep.
Let us not slip th' occasion, whether scorn,
Or satiate fury yield it from our Foe.
180 Seest thou yon dreary plain, forlorn and wild,
The seat of desolation, void of light,
Save what the glimmering of these livid flames
Casts pale and dreadful? Thither let us tend
From off the tossing of these fiery waves,
185 There rest, if any rest can harbour there,
And reassembling our afflicted powers,
Consult how we may henceforth most offend
Our Enemy, our own loss how repair,
How overcome this dire calamity,
190 What reinforcement we may gain from hope,
If not what resolution from despair.

Thus Satan talking to his nearest mate
With head uplift above the wave, and eyes
That sparkling blazed; his other parts besides
195 Prone on the flood, extended long and large

Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
As whom the fables name of monstrous size,
Titanian, or Earth-born, that warred on Jove,
Briareos or Typhon, whom the den
200 By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim th' Océan stream:
Him haply slumb'ring on the Norway foam
The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff,
205 Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
With fixèd anchor in his scaly rind
Moors by his side under the lee, while night
Invests the sea, and wishèd morn delays:
So stretched out huge in length the Arch-Fiend lay
210 Chained on the burning lake, nor ever thence
Had ris'n or heaved 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
215 Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
Evil to others, and enraged might see
How all his malice served but to bring forth
Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shown
On man by him seduced, but on himself
220 Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance poured.
Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool
His mighty stature; on each hand the flames
Driv'n backward slope their pointing spires, and rolled
In billows, leave i' th' midst a horrid vale.
225 Then with expanded wings he steers his flight
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air
That felt unusual weight, till on dry land
He lights, if it were land that ever burned
With solid, as the lake with liquid fire,
230 And such appeared in hue; as when the force
Of subterranean wind transports a hill
Torn from Pelorus, or the shattered side
Of thund'ring Etna, whose combustible
And fuelled entrails thence conceiving fire,

235 Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds,
 And leave a singèd bottom all involved
 With stench and smoke: such resting found the sole
 Of unblest feet. Him followed his next mate,
 Both glorying to have 'scaped the Stygian flood
 240 As gods, and by their own recovered strength,
 Not by the sufferance of supernal power.

Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,
 Said then the lost Archangel, this the seat
 That we must change for Heav'n, this mournful gloom
 245 For that celestial light? Be it so, since he
 Who now is sov'reign can dispose and bid
 What shall be right: farthest from him is best
 Whom reason hath equalled, force hath made supreme
 Above his equals. Farewell happy fields
 250 Where joy for ever dwells: hail horrors, hail
 Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell
 Receive thy new possessor: one who brings
 A mind not to be changed by place or time.
 The mind is its own place, and in itself
 255 Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.
 What matter where, if I be still the same,
 And what I should be, all but less than he
 Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least
 We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built
 260 Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
 Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
 To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
 Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n.
 But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,
 265 Th' associates and copartners of our loss
 Lie thus astonished 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
 270 Regained in Heav'n, or what more lost in Hell?

So Satan spake, and him Beëlzebub
 Thus answered. Leader of those armies bright,
 Which but th' Omnipotent none could have foiled,

If once they hear that voice, their liveliest pledge
 275 Of hope in fears and dangers, heard so oft
 In worst extremes, and on the perilous edge
 Of battle when it raged, in all assaults
 Their surest signal, they will soon resume
 New courage and revive, though now they lie
 280 Grovelling and prostrate on yon lake of fire,
 As we erewhile, astounded and amazed,
 No wonder, fall'n such a pernicious heighth.

He scarce had ceased when the superior fiend
 Was moving toward the shore; his ponderous shield
 285 Ethereal temper, massy, large and round,
 Behind him cast; the broad circumference
 Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb
 Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
 At evening from the top of Fesole,
 290 Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,
 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,
 295 He walked with to support uneasy steps
 Over the burning marl, not like those steps
 On Heaven's azure; and the torrid clime
 Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with fire;
 Nathless he so endured, till on the beach
 300 Of that inflamèd sea, he stood and called
 His legions, angel forms, who lay entranced
 Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
 In Vallombrosa, where th' Etrurian shades
 High overarched embow'r; or scattered sedge
 305 Afloat, when with fierce winds Orion armed
 Hath vexed the Red Sea coast, whose waves o'erthrew
 Busiris and his Memphian chivalry,
 While with perfidious hatred they pursued
 The sojourners of Goshen, who beheld
 310 From the safe shore their floating carcasses
 And broken chariot wheels. So thick bestrown
 Abject and lost lay these, covering the flood,

Under amazement of their hideous change.
 He called so loud, that all the hollow deep
 315 Of Hell resounded. Princes, Potentates,
 Warriors, the flow'r of Heav'n, once yours, now lost,
 If such astonishment as this can seize
 Eternal Spirits: or have ye chos'n this place
 After the toil of battle to repose
 320 Your wearied virtue, for the ease you find
 To slumber here, as in the vales of Heav'n?
 Or in this abject posture have ye sworn
 To adore the Conqueror? who now beholds
 Cherub and Seraph rolling in the flood
 325 With scattered arms and ensigns, till anon
 His swift pursuers from Heav'n gates discern
 Th' advantage, and descending tread us down
 Thus drooping, or with linkèd thunderbolts
 Transfix us to the bottom of this gulf.
 330 Awake, arise, or be for ever fall'n.

They heard, and were abashed, and up they sprung
 Upon the wing, as when men wont to watch
 On duty, sleeping found by whom they dread,
 Rouse and bestir themselves ere well awake.
 335 Nor did they not perceive the evil plight
 In which they were, or the fierce pains not feel;
 Yet to their General's voice they soon obeyed
 Innumerable. As when the potent rod
 Of Amram's son in Egypt's evil day
 340 Waved round the coast, up called a pitchy cloud
 Of locusts, warping on the eastern wind,
 That o'er the realm of impious Pharaoh hung
 Like night, and darkened all the land of Nile:
 So numberless were those bad angels seen
 345 Hovering on wing under the cope of Hell
 'Twixt upper, nether, and surrounding fires;
 Till, as a signal giv'n, th' uplifted spear
 Of their great Sultan waving to direct
 Their course, in even balance down they light
 350 On the firm brimstone, and fill all the plain;
 A multitude, like which the populous North

Poured never from her frozen loins, to pass
 Rhene or the Danaw, when her barbarous sons
 Came like a deluge on the South, and spread
 355 Beneath Gibraltar to the Libyan sands.
 Forthwith from every squadron and each band
 The heads and leaders thither haste where stood
 Their great Commander; godlike shapes and forms
 Excelling human, Princely dignities,
 360 And Powers that erst in Heaven sat on thrones;
 Though of their names in Heav'nly records now
 Be no memorial, blotted out and razed
 By their rebellion, from the Books of Life.
 Nor had they yet among the sons of Eve
 365 Got them new names, till wand'ring o'er the earth,
 Through God's high sufferance for the trial of man,
 By falsities and lies the greatest part
 Of mankind they corrupted to forsake
 God their Creator, and th' invisible
 370 Glory of him that made them to transform
 Oft to the image of a brute, adorned
 With gay religions full of pomp and gold,
 And devils to adore for deities:
 Then were they known to men by various names,
 375 And various idols through the heathen world.
 Say, Muse, their names then known, who first, who last,
 Roused from the slumber on that fiery couch,
 At their great Emperor's call, as next in worth
 Came singly where he stood on the bare strand,
 380 While the promiscuous crowd stood yet aloof?
 The chief were those who from the pit of Hell
 Roaming to seek their prey on earth, durst fix
 Their seats, long after, next the seat of God,
 Their altars by his altar, gods adored
 385 Among the nations round, and durst abide
 Jehovah thund'ring out of Sion, throned
 Between the Cherubim; yea, often placed
 Within his sanctuary itself their shrines,
 Abominations; and with cursèd things
 390 His holy rites, and solemn feasts profaned,

And with their darkness durst affront his light.
First Moloch, horrid king besmeared with blood
Of human sacrifice, and parents' tears,
Though for the noise of drums and timbrels loud
395 Their children's cries unheard, that passed through fire
To his grim idol. Him the Ammonite
Worshipped in Rabba and her wat'ry plain,
In Argob and in Basan, to the stream
Of utmost Arnon. Nor content with such
400 Audacious neighbourhood, the wisest heart
Of Solomon he led by fraud to build
His temple right against the temple of God
On that opprobrious hill, and made his grove
The pleasant valley of Hinnom, Tophet thence,
405 And black Gehenna called, the type of Hell.
Next Chemos, th' obscene dread of Moab's sons,
From Aroer to Nebo, and the wild
Of southmost Abarim; in Hesebon
And Horonaim, Seon's realm, beyond
410 The flow'ry dale of Sibma clad with vines,
And Elealè to th' Asphaltic pool.
Peor his other name, when he enticed
Israel in Sittim on their march from Nile
To do him wanton rites, which cost them woe.
415 Yet thence his lustful orgies he enlarged
Even to that hill of scandal, by the grove
Of Moloch homicide, lust hard by hate;
Till good Josiah drove them thence to Hell.
With these came they, who from the bord'ring flood
420 Of old Euphrates to the brook that parts
Egypt from Syrian ground, had general names
Of Baälim and Ashtaroth, those male,
These feminine. For Spirits when they please
Can either sex assume, or both; so soft
425 And uncompounded is their essence pure;
Not tied or manacled with joint or limb,
Nor founded on the brittle strength of bones,
Like cumbrous flesh; but in what shape they choose
Dilated or condensed, bright or obscure,

430 Can execute their airy purposes, -
And works of love or enmity fulfil.
For these the race of Israel oft forsook
Their Living Strength, and unfrequented left
His righteous altar, bowing lowly down
435 To bestial gods; for which their heads as low
Bowed down in battle, sunk before the spear
Of déspicable foes. With these in troop
Came Astoreth, whom the Phoenicians called
Astarte, queen of Heav'n, with crescent horns;
440 To whose bright image nightly by the moon
Sidonian virgins paid their vows and songs,
In Sion also not unsung, where stood
Her temple on th' offensive mountain, built
By that uxorious king whose heart though large,
445 Beguiled by fair idolatresses, fell
To idols foul. Thammuz came next behind,
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allured
The Syrian damsels to lament his fate
In amorous ditties all a summer's day,
450 While smooth Adonis from his native rock
Ran purple to the sea, supposed with blood
Of Thammuz yearly wounded: the love-tale
Infected Sion's daughters with like heat,
Whose wanton passions in the sacred porch
455 Ezekiel saw, when by the vision led
His eye surveyed the dark idolatries
Of alienated Judah. Next came one
Who mourned in earnest, when the captive ark
Maimed his brute image, head and hands lopped off
460 In his own temple, on the grunsel edge,
Where he fell flat, and shamed his worshippers:
Dagon his name, sea-monster, upward man
And downward fish: yet had his temple high
Reared in Azotus, dreaded through the coast
465 Of Palestine, in Gath and Ascalon
And Accaron and Gaza's frontier bounds.
Him followed Rimmon, whose delightful seat
Was fair Damascus, on the fertile banks

Of Abbana and Pharphar, lucid streams.
 470 He also against the house of God was bold:
 A leper once he lost and gained a king,
 Ahaz his sottish conqueror, whom he drew
 God's altar to disparage and displace
 For one of Syrian mode, whereon to burn
 475 His odious off'rings, and adore the gods
 Whom he had vanquished. After these appeared
 A crew who under names of old renown,
 Osiris, Isis, Orus and their train
 With monstrous shapes and sorceries abused
 480 Fanatic Egypt and her priests, to seek
 Their wand'ring gods disguised in brutish forms
 Rather than human. Nor did Israel 'scape
 Th' infection when their borrowed gold composed
 The calf in Oreb: and the rebel king
 485 Doubled that sin in Bethel and in Dan,
 Lik'ning his Maker to the grazèd ox,
 Jehovah, who in one night when he passed
 From Egypt marching, equalled with one stroke
 Both her first-born and all her bleating gods.
 490 Belial came last, than whom a Spirit more lewd
 Fell not from Heaven, or more gross to love
 Vice for itself: to him no temple stood
 Or altar smoked; yet who more oft than he
 In temples and at altars, when the priest
 495 Turns atheist, as did Eli's sons, who filled
 With lust and violence the house of God.
 In courts and palaces he also reigns
 And in luxurious cities, where the noise
 Of riot ascends above their loftiest tow'rs,
 500 And injury and outrage: and when night
 Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons
 Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.
 Witness the streets of Sodom, and that night
 In Gibeah, when the hospitable door
 505 Exposed a matron to avoid worse rape.
 These were the prime in order and in might;
 The rest were long to tell, though far renowned,

Th' Ionian gods, of Javan's issue held
 Gods, yet confessed later than Heav'n and Earth
 510 Their boasted parents; Titan Heav'n's first-born
 With his enormous brood, and birthright seized
 By younger Saturn, he from mightier Jove
 His own and Rhea's son like measure found;
 So Jove usurping reigned: these first in Crete
 515 And Ida known, thence on the snowy top
 Of cold Olympus ruled the middle air
 Their highest heav'n; or on the Delphian cliff,
 Or in Dodona, and through all the bounds
 Of Doric land; or who with Saturn old
 520 Fled over Adria to th' Hesperian fields,
 And o'er the Celtic roamed the utmost isles.
 All these and more came flocking; but with looks
 Downcast and damp, yet such wherein appeared
 Obscure some glimpse of joy, to have found their chief
 525 Not in despair, to have found themselves not lost
 In loss itself; which on his count'nance cast
 Like doubtful hue: but he his wonted pride
 Soon recollecting, with high words, that bore
 Semblance of worth, not substance, gently raised
 530 Their fainting courage and dispelled their fears.
 Then straight commands that at the warlike sound
 Of trumpets loud and clarions be upreared
 His mighty standard; that proud honour claimed
 Azazel as his right, a Cherub tall:
 535 Who forthwith from the glittering staff unfurled
 Th' imperial ensign, which full high advanced
 Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind
 With gems and golden lustre rich emblazed,
 Seraphic arms and trophies: all the while
 540 Sonórous metal blowing martial sounds:
 At which the universal host upsent
 A shout that tore Hell's concave, and beyond
 Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night.
 All in a moment through the gloom were seen
 545 Ten thousand banners rise into the air
 With orient colours waving: with them rose

A forest huge of spears: and thronging helms
Appeared, and serried shields in thick array
Of depth immeasurable: anon they move
550 In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood
Of flutes and soft recorders; such as raised
To heighth of noblest temper heroes old
Arming to battle, and instead of rage
Deliberate valour breathed, firm and unmoved
555 With dread of death to flight or foul retreat,
Nor wanting power to mitigate and swage
With solemn touches, troubled thoughts, and chase
Anguish and doubt and fear and sorrow and pain
From mortal or immortal minds. Thus they
560 Breathing united force with fixèd thought
Moved on in silence to soft pipes that charmed
Their painful steps o'er the burnt soil; and now
Advanced in view they stand, a horrid front
Of dreadful length and dazzling arms, in guise
565 Of warriors old with ordered spear and shield,
Awaiting what command their mighty chief
Had to impose: he through the armèd files
Darts his experienced eye, and soon traverse
The whole battalion views; their order due,
570 Their visages and stature as of gods,
Their number last he sums. And now his heart
Distends with pride, and hard'ning in his strength
Glories: for never since created man,
Met such embodied force, as named with these
575 Could merit more than that small infantry
Warred on by cranes: though all the Giant brood
Of Phlegra with th' heroic race were joined
That fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side
Mixed with auxiliar gods; and what resounds
580 In fable or romance of Uther's son
Begirt with British and Armoric knights;
And all who since, baptized or infidel
Jousted in Aspramont or Montalban,
Damasco, or Morocco, or Trebizond,
585 Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore

When Charlemagne with all his peerage fell
 By Fontarabbia. Thus far these beyond
 Compare of mortal prowess, yet observed
 Their dread commander: he above the rest
 590 In shape and gesture proudly eminent
 Stood like a tow'r; his form had yet not lost
 All her original brightness, nor appeared
 Less than Archangel ruined, and th' excess
 Of glory obscured: as when the sun new ris'n
 595 Looks through the horizontal misty air
 Shorn of his beams, or from behind the moon
 In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
 On half the nations, and with fear of change
 Perplexes monarchs. Darkened so, yet shone
 600 Above them all th' Archangel: but his face
 Deep scars of thunder had intrenched, and care
 Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows
 Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride
 Waiting revenge: cruel his eye, but cast
 605 Signs of remorse and passion to behold
 The fellows of his crime, the followers rather
 (Far other once beheld in bliss) condemned
 For ever now to have their lot in pain,
 Millions of Spirits for his fault amerced
 610 Of Heav'n, and from eternal splendours flung
 For his revolt, yet faithful how they stood,
 Their glory withered. As when Heaven's fire
 Hath scathed the forest oaks or mountain pines,
 With singèd top their stately growth though bare
 615 Stands on the blasted heath. He now prepared
 To speak; whereat their doubled ranks they bend
 From wing to wing, and half enclose him round
 With all his peers: attention held them mute.
 Thrice he assayed, and thrice in spite of scorn,
 620 Tears such as angels weep, burst forth: at last
 Words interwove with sighs found out their way.
 O myriads of immortal Spirits, O Powers
 Matchless, but with th' Almighty, and that strife
 Was not inglorious, though th' event was dire,

625 As this place testifies, and this dire change
 Hateful to utter: but what power of mind
 Foreseeing or presaging, from the depth
 Of knowledge past or present, could have feared,
 How such united force of gods, how such
 630 As stood like these, could ever know repulse?
 For who can yet believe, though after loss,
 That all these puissant legions, whose exile
 Hath emptied Heav'n, shall fail to reascend
 Self-raised, and repossess their native seat?
 635 For me be witness all the host of Heav'n,
 If counsels different, or danger shunned
 By me, have lost our hopes. But he who reigns
 Monarch in Heav'n, till then as one secure
 Sat on his throne, upheld by old repute,
 640 Consent or custom, and his regal state
 Put forth at full, but still his strength concealed,
 Which tempted our attempt, and wrought our fall.
 Henceforth his might we know, and know our own
 So as not either to provoke, or dread
 645 New war, provoked; our better part remains
 To work in close design, by fraud or guile
 What force effected not: that he no less
 At length from us may find, who overcomes
 By force, hath overcome but half his foe.
 650 Space may produce new worlds; whereof so rife
 There went a fame in Heav'n that he ere long
 Intended to create, and therein plant
 A generation, whom his choice regard
 Should favour equal to the sons of Heav'n:
 655 Thither, if but to pry, shall be perhaps
 Our first eruption; thither or elsewhere:
 For this infernal pit shall never hold
 Celestial Spirits in bondage, nor th' abyss
 Long under darkness cover. But these thoughts
 660 Full counsel must mature: peace is despaired,
 For who can think submission? War then, war
 Open or understood must be resolved.

He spake: and to confirm his words, out flew

Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
 665 Of mighty Cherubim; the sudden blaze
 Far round illumined Hell: highly they raged
 Against the Highest, and fierce with grasped arms
 Clashed on their sounding shields the din of war,
 Hurling defiance toward the vault of Heav'n.
 670 There stood a hill not far whose grisly top
 Belched fire and rolling smoke; the rest entire
 Shone with a glossy scurf, undoubted sign
 That in his womb was hid metallic ore,
 The work of sulphur. Thither winged with speed
 675 A numerous brigade hastened. As when bands
 Of pioneers with spade and pickaxe armed
 Forerun the royal camp, to trench a field
 Or cast a rampart. Mammon led them on,
 Mammon, the least erected Spirit that fell
 680 From Heav'n, for ev'n in Heav'n his looks and thoughts
 Were always downward bent, admiring more
 The riches of Heav'n's pavement, trodden gold,
 Than aught divine or holy else enjoyed
 In vision beatific: by him first
 685 Men also, and by his suggestion taught,
 Ransacked the centre, and with impious hands
 Rifled the bowels of their mother Earth
 For treasures better hid. Soon had his crew
 Opened into the hill a spacious wound
 690 And digged out ribs of gold. Let none admire
 That riches grow in Hell; that soil may best
 Deserve the precious bane. And here let those
 Who boast in mortal things, and wond'ring tell
 Of Babel, and the works of Memphian kings,
 695 Learn how their greatest monuments of fame,
 And strength and art are easily outdone
 By Spirits reprobate, and in an hour
 What in an age they with incessant toil
 And hands innumerable scarce perform.
 700 Nigh on the plain in many cells prepared,
 That underneath had veins of liquid fire
 Sluiced from the lake, a second multitude

With wondrous art founded the massy ore,
 Severing each kind, and scummed the bullion dross:
 705 A third as soon had formed within the ground
 A various mould, and from the boiling cells
 By strange conveyance filled each hollow nook,
 As in an organ from one blast of wind
 To many a row of pipes the sound-board breathes.
 710 Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
 Rose like an exhalation, with the sound
 Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet,
 Built like a temple, where pilasters round
 Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
 715 With golden architrave; nor did there want
 Cornice or frieze with bossy sculptures grav'n;
 The roof was fretted gold. Not Babylon,
 Nor great Alcairo such magnificence
 Equalled in all their glories, to enshrine
 720 Belus or Serapis their gods, or seat
 Their kings, when Egypt with Assyria strove
 In wealth and luxury. Th' ascending pile
 Stood fixed her stately height, and straight the doors
 Op'ning their brazen folds discover wide
 725 Within, her ample spaces, o'er the smooth
 And level pavement: from the archèd roof
 Pendent by subtle magic many a row
 Of starry lamps and blazing cressets fed
 With naphtha and asphaltus yielded light
 730 As from a sky. The hasty multitude
 Admiring entered, and the work some praise
 And some the architect: his hand was known
 In Heav'n by many a towered structure high,
 Where sceptred angels held their residence,
 735 And sat as princes, whom the súpreme King
 Exalted to such power, and gave to rule,
 Each in his hierarchy, the orders bright.
 Nor was his name unheard or unadored
 In ancient Greece; and in Ausonian land
 740 Men called him Mulciber; and how he fell
 From Heav'n, they fabled, thrown by angry Jove

Sheer o'er the crystal battlements: from morn
 To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,
 A summer's day: and with the setting sun
 745 Dropped from the zenith like a falling star,
 On Lemnos th' Aégean isle: thus they relate,
 Erring; for he with this rebellious rout
 Fell long before; nor aught availed him now
 To have built in Heav'n high tow'rs; nor did he 'scape
 750 By all his engines, but was headlong sent
 With his industrious crew to build in Hell.
 Meanwhile the wingèd heralds by command
 Of sov'reign power, with awful ceremony
 And trumpets' sound throughout the host proclaim
 755 A solemn council forthwith to be held
 At Pandaemonium, the high capital
 Of Satan and his peers: their summons called
 From every band and squarèd regiment
 By place or choice the worthiest; they anon
 760 With hundreds and with thousands trooping came
 Attended: all accèss was thronged, the gates
 And porches wide, but chief the spacious hall
 (Though like a covered field, where champions bold
 Wont ride in armed, and at the Soldan's chair
 765 Defied the best of paynim chivalry
 To mortal combat or career with lance)
 Thick swarmed, both on the ground and in the air,
 Brushed with the hiss of rustling wings. As bees
 In springtime, when the sun with Taurus rides,
 770 Pour forth their populous youth about the hive
 In clusters; they among fresh dews and flowers
 Fly to and fro, or on the smoothèd plank,
 The suburb of their straw-built citadel,
 New rubbed with balm, expatiate and confer
 775 Their state affairs. So thick the airy crowd
 Swarmed and were straitened; till the signal giv'n,
 Behold a wonder! They but now who seemèd
 In bigness to surpass Earth's Giant sons
 Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room
 780 Throng numberless, like that Pygméan race

Beyond the Indian mount, or faery elves,
Whose midnight revels, by a forest side
Or fountain some belated peasant sees,
Or dreams he sees, while overhead the moon
785 Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth
Wheels her pale course: they on their mirth and dance
Intent, with jocund music charm his ear;
At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.
Thus incorporeal Spirits to smallest forms
790 Reduced their shapes immense, and were at large,
Though without number still amidst the hall
Of that infernal Court. But far within
And in their own dimensions like themselves
The great Seraphic Lords and Cherubim
795 In close recess and secret conclave sat
A thousand demi-gods on golden seats,
Frequent and full. After short silence then
And summons read, the great consult began.

BOOK II

The Argument

The consultation begun, Satan debates whether another battle
be to be hazarded for the recovery of Heaven: some advise it,
others dissuade: a third proposal is preferred, mentioned
before by Satan, to search the truth of that prophecy or
5 tradition in Heaven concerning another world, and another
kind of creature equal or not much inferior to themselves,
about this time to be created: their doubt who shall be sent
on this difficult search: Satan their chief undertakes alone the
voyage, is honoured and applauded. The council thus ended,
10 the rest betake them several ways and to several employments,
as their inclinations lead them, to entertain the time till Satan
return. He passes on his journey to Hell gates, finds them
shut, and who sat there to guard them, by whom at length
they are opened, and discover to him the great gulf between
15 Hell and Heaven; with what difficulty he passes through,
directed by Chaos, the power of that place, to the sight of
this new world which he sought.

High on a throne of royal state, which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
Show'rs on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,
5 Satan exalted sat, by merit raised
To that bad eminence; and from despair
Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires
Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue
Vain war with Heav'n, and by success untaught
10 His proud imaginations thus displayed.
Powers and Dominions, deities of Heaven,
For since no deep within her gulf can hold
Immortal vigour, though oppressed and fall'n,

I give not Heav'n for lost. From this descent
 15 Celestial Virtues rising, will appear
 More glorious and more dread than from no fall,
 And trust themselves to fear no second fate:
 Me though just right, and the fixed laws of Heav'n
 Did first create your leader, next, free choice,
 20 With what besides, in counsel or in fight,
 Hath been achieved of merit, yet this loss
 Thus far at least recovered, hath much more
 Established in a safe unenvied throne
 Yielded with full consent. The happier state
 25 In Heav'n, which follows dignity, might draw
 Envy from each inferior; but who here
 Will envy whom the highest place exposes
 Foremost to stand against the Thunderer's aim
 Your bulwark, and condemns to greatest share
 30 Of endless pain? Where there is then no good
 For which to strive, no strife can grow up there
 From faction; for none sure will claim in Hell
 Précédence, none, whose portion is so small
 Of present pain, that with ambitious mind
 35 Will covet more. With this advantage then
 To union, and firm faith, and firm accord,
 More than can be in Heav'n, we now return
 To claim our just inheritance of old,
 Surer to prosper than prosperity
 40 Could have assured us; and by what best way,
 Whether of open war or covert guile,
 We now debate; who can advise, may speak.

He ceased, and next him Moloch, sceptred king
 Stood up, the strongest and the fiercest Spirit
 45 That fought in Heav'n; now fiercer by despair:
 His trust was with th' Eternal to be deemed
 Equal in strength, and rather than be less
 Cared not to be at all; with that care lost
 Went all his fear: of God, or Hell, or worse
 50 He recked not, and these words thereafter spake.

My sentence is for open war: of wiles,
 More unexpért, I boast not: them let those

Contrive who need, or when they need, not now.
For while they sit contriving, shall the rest,
55 Millions that stand in arms, and longing wait
The signal to ascend, sit ling'ring here
Heav'n's fugitives, and for their dwelling place
Accept this dark opprobrious den of shame,
The prison of his tyranny who reigns
60 By our delay? No, let us rather choose
Armed with Hell flames and fury all at once
O'er Heav'n's high tow'rs to force resistless way,
Turning our tortures into horrid arms
Against the Torturer; when to meet the noise
65 Of his almighty engine he shall hear
Infernal thunder, and for lightning see
Black fire and horror shot with equal rage
Among his angels; and his throne itself
Mixed with Tartarean sulphur, and strange fire,
70 His own invented torments. But perhaps
The way seems difficult and steep to scale
With upright wing against a higher foe.
Let such bethink them, if the sleepy drench
Of that forgetful lake benumb not still,
75 That in our proper motion we ascend
Up to our native seat: descent and fall
To us is adverse. Who but felt of late
When the fierce foe hung on our broken rear
Insulting, and pursued us through the deep,
80 With what compulsion and laborious flight
We sunk thus low? Th' ascent is easy then;
Th' event is feared; should we again provoke
Our stronger, some worse way his wrath may find
To our destruction: if there be in Hell
85 Fear to be worse destroyed: what can be worse
Than to dwell here, driv'n out from bliss, condemned
In this abhorrèd deep to utter woe;
Where pain of unextinguishable fire
Must exercise us without hope of end
90 The vassals of his anger, when the scourge
Inexorably, and the torturing hour

Calls us to penance? More destroyed than thus
 We should be quite abolished and expire.
 What fear we then? What doubt we to incense
 95 His utmost ire? Which to the height enraged,
 Will either quite consume us, and reduce
 To nothing this essential, happier far
 Than miserable to have eternal being:
 Or if our substance be indeed divine,
 100 And cannot cease to be, we are at worst
 On this side nothing; and by proof we feel
 Our power sufficient to disturb his Heav'n,
 And with perpetual inroads to alarm,
 Though inaccessible, his fatal throne:
 105 Which if not victory is yet revenge.
 He ended frowning, and his look denounced
 Desperate revenge, and battle dangerous
 To less than gods. On th' other side up rose
 Belial, in act more graceful and humane:
 110 A fairer person lost not Heav'n; he seemed
 For dignity composed and high exploit:
 But all was false and hollow; though his tongue
 Dropped manna, and could make the worse appear
 The better reason, to perplex and dash
 115 Maturest counsels: for his thoughts were low;
 To vice industrious, but to nobler deeds
 Timorous and slothful: yet he pleased the ear,
 And with persuasive accent thus began.
 I should be much for open war, O Peers,
 120 As not behind in hate; if what was urged
 Main reason to persuade immediate war,
 Did not dissuade me most, and seem to cast
 Ominous conjecture on the whole success:
 When he who most excels in fact of arms,
 125 In what he counsels and in what excels
 Mistrustful, grounds his courage on despair
 And utter dissolution, as the scope
 Of all his aim, after some dire revenge.
 First, what revenge? The tow'rs of Heav'n are filled
 130 With armèd watch, that render all access

Impregnable; oft on the bordering deep
 Encamp their legions, or with óbscure wing
 Scout far and wide into the realm of Night,
 Scorning surprise. Or could we break our way
 135 By force, and at our heels all Hell should rise
 With blackest insurrection, to confound
 Heav'n's purest light, yet our great Enemy
 All incorruptible would on his throne
 Sit unpolluted, and th' ethereal mould
 140 Incapable of stain would soon expel
 Her mischief, and purge off the baser fire
 Victorious. Thus repulsed, our final hope
 Is flat despair: we must exasperate
 Th' Almighty Victor to spend all his rage,
 145 And that must end us, that must be our cure,
 To be no more; sad cure; for who would lose,
 Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
 Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
 To perish rather, swallowed up and lost
 150 In the wide womb of uncreated Night,
 Devoid of sense and motion? And who knows,
 Let this be good, whether our angry Foe
 Can give it, or will ever? How he can
 Is doubtful; that he never will is sure.
 155 Will he, so wise, let loose at once his ire,
 Belike through impotence, or unaware,
 To give his enemies their wish, and end
 Them in his anger, whom his anger saves
 To punish endless? Wherefore cease we then?
 160 Say they who counsel war, we are decreed,
 Reserved and destined to eternal woe;
 Whatever doing, what can we suffer more,
 What can we suffer worse? Is this then worst,
 Thus sitting, thus consulting, thus in arms?
 165 What when we fled amain, pursued and strook
 With Heav'n's afflicting thunder, and besought
 The deep to shelter us? This Hell then seemed
 A refuge from those wounds: or when we lay
 Chained on the burning lake? That sure was worse.

170 What if the breath that kindled those grim fires
Awaked should blow them into sevenfold rage
And plunge us in the flames? Or from above
Should intermitted vengeance arm again
His red right hand to plague us? What if all
175 Her stores were opened, and this firmament
Of Hell should spout her cataracts of fire,
Impendent horrors, threatening hideous fall
One day upon our heads; while we perhaps
Designing or exhorting glorious war,
180 Caught in a fiery tempest shall be hurled
Each on his rock transfixed, the sport and prey
Of racking whirlwinds, or for ever sunk
Under yon boiling ocean, wrapped in chains;
There to converse with everlasting groans,
185 Unrespited, unpitied, unreprieved,
Ages of hopeless end; this would be worse.
War therefore, open or concealed, alike
My voice dissuades; for what can force or guile
With him, or who deceive his mind, whose eye
190 Views all things at one view? He from Heav'n's height
All these our motions vain, sees and derides;
Not more Almighty to resist our might
Than wise to frustrate all our plots and wiles.
Shall we then live thus vile, the race of Heav'n
195 Thus trampled, thus expelled to suffer here
Chains and these torments? Better these than worse
By my advice: since Fate inevitable
Subdues us, and omnipotent decree,
The Victor's will. To suffer, as to do,
200 Our strength is equal, nor the law unjust
That so ordains: this was at first resolved,
If we were wise, against so great a foe
Contending, and so doubtful what might fall.
I laugh, when those who at the spear are bold
205 And vent'rous, if that fail them, shrink and fear
What yet they know must follow, to endure
Exile, or ignominy, or bonds, or pain,
The sentence of their Conqueror: this is now

'An endless moral maze,
introducing literature's first
Romantic, Satan'

JOHN CAREY

In his epic poem *Paradise Lost*, Milton conjured up a vast, awe-inspiring cosmos ranging across huge tracts of space and time. And yet, in putting a charismatic Satan and naked Adam and Eve at the centre of this story, he also created an intensely human tragedy on the Fall of Man. Written when Milton was in his fifties – blind, bitter and briefly in danger of execution – *Paradise Lost*'s apparent ambivalence has led to intense debate about whether it manages to 'justify the ways of God to men' or exposes the cruelty of authority.

P E N G U I N



C L A S S I C S

Edited with an Introduction and Notes by John Leonard



Cover: Detail from Original Sin, Flemish tapestry, in the Accademia, Florence (photo: Scala)



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