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Paradise Regained

John Milton

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(title page of the first edition)

PARADISE
REGAIN'D,
A
POEM.

In IV BOOKS.

To which is added

SAMSON AGONISTES.

The Author

JOHN MILTON.

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PARADISE REGAIN'D.

The First BOOK.



Who erewhile the happy Garden sung,
By one man's disobedience lost, now sing
Recovered Paradise to all mankind,
By one man's firm obedience fully tried
Through all temptation, and the Tempter foiled
In all his wiles, defeated and repulsed,

And Eden raised in the waste Wilderness.

Thou Spirit, who led'st this glorious Eremite
Into the desert, his victorious field

Against the spiritual foe, and brought'st him thence 10

By proof the undoubted Son of God, inspire,
As thou art wont, my prompted song, else mute,
And bear through highth or depth of Nature's bounds,
With prosperous wing full summed, to tell of deeds
Above heroic, though in secret done,
And unrecorded left through many an age:
Worthy to have not remained so long unsung.

Now had the great Proclaimer, with a voice
More awful than the sound of trumpet, cried

Repentance, and Heaven's kingdom nigh at hand 20

To all baptized. To his great baptism flocked
With awe the regions round, and with them came
From Nazareth the son of Joseph deemed
To the flood Jordan--came as then obscure,
Unmarked, unknown. But him the Baptist soon
Descried, divinely warned, and witness bore
As to his worthier, and would have resigned
To him his heavenly office. Nor was long
His witness unconfirmed: on him baptized

Heaven opened, and in likeness of a Dove 30

The Spirit descended, while the Father's voice
From Heaven pronounced him his beloved Son.
That heard the Adversary, who, roving still
About the world, at that assembly famed
Would not be last, and, with the voice divine
Nigh thunder-struck, the exalted man to whom
Such high attest was given a while surveyed
With wonder; then, with envy fraught and rage,
Flies to his place, nor rests, but in mid air

To council summons all his mighty Peers, 40

Within thick clouds and dark tenfold involved,
A gloomy consistory; and them amidst,
With looks aghast and sad, he thus bespake:--

"O ancient Powers of Air and this wide World
(For much more willingly I mention Air,
This our old conquest, than remember Hell,
Our hated habitation), well ye know
How many ages, as the years of men,
This Universe we have possessed, and ruled

In manner at our will the affairs of Earth,

Since Adam and his facile consort Eve
 Lost Paradise, deceived by me, though since
 With dread attending when that fatal wound
 Shall be inflicted by the seed of Eve
 Upon my head. Long the decrees of Heaven
 Delay, for longest time to Him is short;
 And now, too soon for us, the circling hours
 This dreaded time have compassed, wherein we
 Must bide the stroke of that long-threatened wound

(At least, if so we can, and by the head 60

Broken be not intended all our power
 To be infringed, our freedom and our being
 In this fair empire won of Earth and Air)--
 For this ill news I bring: The Woman's Seed,
 Destined to this, is late of woman born.
 His birth to our just fear gave no small cause;
 But his growth now to youth's full flower, displaying
 All virtue, grace and wisdom to achieve
 Things highest, greatest, multiplies my fear.

Before him a great Prophet, to proclaim 70

His coming, is sent harbinger, who all
 Invites, and in the consecrated stream
 Pretends to wash off sin, and fit them so
 Purified to receive him pure, or rather
 To do him honour as their King. All come,
 And he himself among them was baptized--
 Not thence to be more pure, but to receive
 The testimony of Heaven, that who he is
 Thenceforth the nations may not doubt. I saw

The Prophet do him reverence; on him, rising 80

Out of the water, Heaven above the clouds
 Unfold her crystal doors; thence on his head
 A perfect Dove descend (whate'er it meant);
 And out of Heaven the sovraign voice I heard,
 'This is my Son beloved,--in him am pleased.
 ' His mother, than, is mortal, but his Sire
 He who obtains the monarchy of Heaven;
 And what will He not do to advance his Son?
 His first-begot we know, and sore have felt,

When his fierce thunder drove us to the Deep; 90

Who this is we must learn, for Man he seems
 In all his lineaments, though in his face
 The glimpses of his Father's glory shine.
 Ye see our danger on the utmost edge

Of hazard, which admits no long debate,
 But must with something sudden be opposed
 (Not force, but well-couched fraud, well-woven snares),
 Ere in the head of nations he appear,
 Their king, their leader, and supreme on Earth.

I, when no other durst, sole undertook 100

The dismal expedition to find out
 And ruin Adam, and the exploit performed
 Successfully: a calmer voyage now
 Will waft me; and the way found prosperous once
 Induces best to hope of like success."

He ended, and his words impression left
 Of much amazement to the infernal crew,
 Distracted and surprised with deep dismay
 At these sad tidings. But no time was then

For long indulgence to their fears or grief: 110

Unanimous they all commit the care
 And management of this man enterprise
 To him, their great Dictator, whose attempt
 At first against mankind so well had thrived
 In Adam's overthrow, and led their march
 From Hell's deep-vaulted den to dwell in light,
 Regents, and potentates, and kings, yea gods,
 Of many a pleasant realm and province wide.
 So to the coast of Jordan he directs

His easy steps, girded with snaky wiles, 120

Where he might likeliest find this new-declared,
 This man of men, attested Son of God,
 Temptation and all guile on him to try--
 So to subvert whom he suspected raised
 To end his reign on Earth so long enjoyed:
 But, contrary, unweeting he fulfilled
 The purposed counsel, pre-ordained and fixed,
 Of the Most High, who, in full frequence bright
 Of Angels, thus to Gabriel smiling spake:--

"Gabriel, this day, by proof, thou shalt behold,
 Thou and all Angels conversant on Earth
 With Man or men's affairs, how I begin
 To verify that solemn message late,
 On which I sent thee to the Virgin pure
 In Galilee, that she should bear a son,
 Great in renown, and called the Son of God.
 Then told'st her, doubting how these things could be
 To her a virgin, that on her should come

130

The Holy Ghost, and the power of the Highest

O'ershadow her. This Man, born and now upgrown, 140

To shew him worthy of his birth divine
 And high prediction, henceforth I expose
 To Satan; let him tempt, and now assay
 His utmost subtlety, because he boasts
 And vaunts of his great cunning to the throng
 Of his Apostasy. He might have learnt
 Less overweening, since he failed in Job,
 Whose constant perseverance overcame
 Whate'er his cruel malice could invent.

He now shall know I can produce a man, 150

Of female seed, far abler to resist
 All his solicitations, and at length
 All his vast force, and drive him back to Hell--
 Winning by conquest what the first man lost
 By fallacy surprised. But first I mean
 To exercise him in the Wilderness;
 There he shall first lay down the rudiments
 Of his great warfare, ere I send him forth
 To conquer Sin and Death, the two grand foes.

By humiliation and strong sufferance 160

His weakness shall o'ercome Satanic strength,
 And all the world, and mass of sinful flesh;
 That all the Angels and aethereal Powers--
 They now, and men hereafter--may discern
 From what consummate virtue I have chose
 This perfect man, by merit called my Son,
 To earn salvation for the sons of men."

So spake the Eternal Father, and all Heaven
 Admiring stood a space; then into hymns

Burst forth, and in celestial measures moved, 170

Circling the throne and singing, while the hand
 Sung with the voice, and this the argument:--

"Victory and triumph to the Son of God,
 Now entering his great duel, not of arms,
 But to vanquish by wisdom hellish wiles!
 The Father knows the Son; therefore secure
 Ventures his filial virtue, though untried,
 Against whate'er may tempt, whate'er seduce,
 Allure, or terrify, or undermine.

Be frustrate, all ye stratagems of Hell, 180

And, devilish machinations, come to nought!"

So they in Heaven their odes and vigils tuned.

Meanwhile the Son of God, who yet some days
 Lodged in Bethabara, where John baptized,
 Musing and much revolving in his breast
 How best the mighty work he might begin
 Of Saviour to mankind, and which way first
 Publish his godlike office now mature,
 One day forth walked alone, the Spirit leading

And his deep thoughts, the better to converse 190

With solitude, till, far from track of men,
 Thought following thought, and step by step led on,
 He entered now the bordering Desert wild,
 And, with dark shades and rocks environed round,
 His holy meditations thus pursued:--

"O what a multitude of thoughts at once
 Awakened in me swarm, while I consider
 What from within I feel myself, and hear
 What from without comes often to my ears,

Ill sorting with my present state compared! 200

When I was yet a child, no childish play
 To me was pleasing; all my mind was set
 Serious to learn and know, and thence to do,
 What might be public good; myself I thought
 Born to that end, born to promote all truth,
 All righteous things. Therefore, above my years,
 The Law of God I read, and found it sweet;
 Made it my whole delight, and in it grew
 To such perfection that, ere yet my age

Had measured twice six years, at our great Feast 210

I went into the Temple, there to hear
 The teachers of our Law, and to propose
 What might improve my knowledge or their own,
 And was admired by all. Yet this not all
 To which my spirit aspired. Victorious deeds
 Flamed in my heart, heroic acts--one while
 To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke;
 Then to subdue and quell, o'er all the earth,
 Brute violence and proud tyrannic power,

Till truth were freed, and equity restored: 220

Yet held it more humane, more heavenly, first
 By winning words to conquer willing hearts,
 And make persuasion do the work of fear;
 At least to try, and teach the erring soul,
 Not wilfully misdoing, but unaware
 Misled; the stubborn only to subdue.

These growing thoughts my mother soon perceiving,
 By words at times cast forth, inly rejoiced,
 And said to me apart, 'High are thy thoughts,

O Son! but nourish them, and let them soar 230

To what highth sacred virtue and true worth
 Can raise them, though above example high;
 By matchless deeds express thy matchless Sire.
 For know, thou art no son of mortal man;
 Though men esteem thee low of parentage,
 Thy Father is the Eternal King who rules
 All Heaven and Earth, Angels and sons of men.
 A messenger from God foretold thy birth
 Conceived in me a virgin; he foretold

Thou shouldst be great, and sit on David's throne, 240

And of thy kingdom there should be no end.
 At thy nativity a glorious quire
 Of Angels, in the fields of Bethlehem, sung
 To shepherds, watching at their folds by night,
 And told them the Messiah now was born,
 Where they might see him; and to thee they came,
 Directed to the manger where thou lay'st;
 For in the inn was left no better room.
 A Star, not seen before, in heaven appearing,

Guided the Wise Men thither from the East, 250

To honour thee with incense, myrrh, and gold;
 By whose bright course led on they found the place,
 Affirming it thy star, new-graven in heaven,
 By which they knew thee King of Israel born.
 Just Simeon and prophetic Anna, warned
 By vision, found thee in the Temple, and spake,
 Before the altar and the vested priest,
 Like things of thee to all that present stood.
 This having heart, straight I again revolved

The Law and Prophets, searching what was writ 260

Concerning the Messiah, to our scribes
 Known partly, and soon found of whom they spake
 I am--this chiefly, that my way must lie
 Through many a hard assay, even to the death,
 Ere I the promised kingdom can attain,
 Or work redemption for mankind, whose sins
 Full weight must be transferred upon my head.
 Yet, neither thus disheartened or dismayed,
 The time prefixed I waited; when behold

The Baptist (of whose birth I oft had heard,

Not knew by sight) now come, who was to come
 Before Messiah, and his way prepare!
 I, as all others, to his baptism came,
 Which I believed was from above; but he
 Straight knew me, and with loudest voice proclaimed
 Me him (for it was shewn him so from Heaven)--
 Me him whose harbinger he was; and first
 Refused on me his baptism to confer,
 As much his greater, and was hardly won.

But, as I rose out of the laving stream, 280

The Spirit descended on me like a Dove;
 And last, the sum of all, my Father's voice,
 Audibly heard from Heaven, pronounced me his,
 Me his beloved Son, in whom alone
 He was well pleased: by which I knew the time
 Now full, that I no more should live obscure,
 But openly begin, as best becomes
 The authority which I derived from Heaven.

And now by some strong motion I am led 290

Into this wilderness; to what intent
 I learn not yet. Perhaps I need not know;
 For what concerns my knowledge God reveals."

So spake our Morning Star, then in his rise,
 And, looking round, on every side beheld
 A pathless desert, dusk with horrid shades.
 The way he came, not having marked return,
 Was difficult, by human steps untrod;
 And he still on was led, but with such thoughts

Accompanied of things past and to come 300

Lodged in his breast as well might recommend
 Such solitude before choicest society.

Full forty days he passed--whether on hill
 Sometimes, anon in shady vale, each night
 Under the covert of some ancient oak
 Or cedar to defend him from the dew,
 Or harboured in one cave, is not revealed;
 Nor tasted human food, nor hunger felt,
 Till those days ended; hungered then at last

Among wild beasts. They at his sight grew mild, 310

Nor sleeping him nor waking harmed; his walk
 The fiery serpent fled and noxious worm;
 The lion and fierce tiger glared aloof.
 But now an aged man in rural weeds,
 Following, as seemed, the quest of some stray eye,

Or withered sticks to gather, which might serve
 Against a winter's day, when winds blow keen
 To warm him wet returned from field at eve,
 He saw approach; who first with curious eye

Perused him, then with words thus uttered spake:-- 320

"Sir, what ill chance hath brought thee to this place,
 So far from path or road of men, who pass
 In troop or caravan? for single none
 Durst ever, who returned, and dropt not here
 His carcass, pined with hunger and with droughth.
 I ask the rather, and the more admire,
 For that to me thou seem'st the man whom late
 Our new baptizing Prophet at the ford
 Of Jordan honoured so, and called thee Son

Of God. I saw and heard, for we sometimes 330

Who dwell this wild, constrained by want, come forth
 To town or village nigh (nighest is far),
 Where aught we hear, and curious are to hear,
 What happens new; fame also finds us out."

To whom the Son of God:--"Who brought me hither
 Will bring me hence; no other guide I seek."

"By miracle he may," replied the swain;
 "What other way I see not; for we here
 Live on tough roots and stubs, to thirst inured

More than the camel, and to drink go far-- 340

Men to much misery and hardship born.
 But, if thou be the Son of God, command
 That out of these hard stones be made thee bread;
 So shalt thou save thyself, and us relieve
 With food, whereof we wretched seldom taste."

He ended, and the Son of God replied:--
 "Think'st thou such force in bread? Is it not written
 (For I discern thee other than thou seem'st),
 Man lives not by bread only, but each word

Proceeding from the mouth of God, who fed 350

Our fathers here with manna? In the Mount
 Moses was forty days, nor eat nor drank;
 And forty days Eliah without food
 Wandered this barren waste; the same I now.
 Why dost thou, then, suggest to me distrust
 Knowing who I am, as I know who thou art?"

Whom thus answered the Arch-Fiend, now undisguised:--
 "'Tis true, I am that Spirit unfortunate
 Who, leagued with millions more in rash revolt,

Kept not my happy station, but was driven 360

With them from bliss to the bottomless Deep--
 Yet to that hideous place not so confined
 By rigour unconniving but that oft,
 Leaving my dolorous prison, I enjoy
 Large liberty to round this globe of Earth,
 Or range in the Air; nor from the Heaven of Heavens
 Hath he excluded my resort sometimes.
 I came, among the Sons of God, when he
 Gave up into my hands Uzzean Job,

To prove him, and illustrate his high worth; 370

And, when to all his Angels he proposed
 To draw the proud king Ahab into fraud,
 That he might fall in Ramoth, they demurring,
 I undertook that office, and the tongues
 Of all his flattering prophets glibbed with lies
 To his destruction, as I had in charge:
 For what he bids I do. Though I have lost
 Much lustre of my native brightness, lost
 To be beloved of God, I have not lost

To love, at least contemplate and admire, 380

What I see excellent in good, or fair,
 Or virtuous; I should so have lost all sense.
 What can be then less in me than desire
 To see thee and approach thee, whom I know
 Declared the Son of God, to hear attent
 Thy wisdom, and behold thy godlike deeds?
 Men generally think me much a foe
 To all mankind. Why should I? they to me
 Never did wrong or violence. By them

I lost not what I lost; rather by them 390

I gained what I have gained, and with them dwell
 Copartner in these regions of the World,
 If not disposer--lend them oft my aid,
 Oft my advice by presages and signs,
 And answers, oracles, portents, and dreams,
 Whereby they may direct their future life.
 Envy, they say, excites me, thus to gain
 Companions of my misery and woe!
 At first it may be; but, long since with woe

Nearer acquainted, now I feel by proof 400

That fellowship in pain divides not smart,
 Nor lightens aught each man's peculiar load;
 Small consolation, then, were Man adjoined.

This wounds me most (what can it less?) that Man,
Man fallen, shall be restored, I never more."

To whom our Saviour sternly thus replied:--

"Deservedly thou griev'st, composed of lies
From the beginning, and in lies wilt end,
Who boast'st release from Hell, and leave to come

Into the Heaven of Heavens. Thou com'st, indeed, 410

As a poor miserable captive thrall
Comes to the place where he before had sat
Among the prime in splendour, now deposed,
Ejected, emptied, gazed, unpitied, shunned,
A spectacle of ruin, or of scorn,
To all the host of Heaven. The happy place
Imparts to thee no happiness, no joy--
Rather inflames thy torment, representing
Lost bliss, to thee no more communicable;

So never more in Hell than when in Heaven. 420

But thou art serviceable to Heaven's King!
Wilt thou impute to obedience what thy fear
Extorts, or pleasure to do ill excites?
What but thy malice moved thee to misdeem
Of righteous Job, then cruelly to afflict him
With all inflictions? but his patience won.
The other service was thy chosen task,
To be a liar in four hundred mouths;
For lying is thy sustenance, thy food.

Yet thou pretend'st to truth! all oracles 430

By thee are given, and what confessed more true
Among the nations? That hath been thy craft,
By mixing somewhat true to vent more lies.
But what have been thy answers? what but dark,
Ambiguous, and with double sense deluding,
Which they who asked have seldom understood,
And, not well understood, as good not known?
Who ever, by consulting at thy shrine,
Returned the wiser, or the more instruct

To fly or follow what concerned him most, 440

And run not sooner to his fatal snare?
For God hath justly given the nations up
To thy delusions; justly, since they fell
Idolatrous. But, when his purpose is
Among them to declare his providence,
To thee not known, whence hast thou then thy truth,
But from him, or his Angels president

In every province, who, themselves disdain
To approach thy temples, give thee in command

What, to the smallest tittle, thou shalt say 450

To thy adorers? Thou, with trembling fear,
Or like a fawning parasite, obey'st;
Then to thyself ascrib'st the truth foretold.
But this thy glory shall be soon retrenched;
No more shalt thou by oracling abuse
The Gentiles; henceforth oracles are ceased,
And thou no more with pomp and sacrifice
Shalt be enquired at Delphos or elsewhere--
At least in vain, for they shall find thee mute.

God hath now sent his living Oracle 460

Into the world to teach his final will,
And sends his Spirit of Truth henceforth to dwell
In pious hearts, an inward oracle
To all truth requisite for men to know."

So spake our Saviour; but the subtle Fiend,
Though inly stung with anger and disdain,
Dissembled, and this answer smooth returned:--

"Sharply thou hast insisted on rebuke,
And urged me hard with doings which not will,

But misery, hath wrested from me. Where 470

Easily canst thou find one miserable,
And not inforced oft-times to part from truth,
If it may stand him more in stead to lie,
Say and unsay, feign, flatter, or abjure?
But thou art placed above me; thou art Lord;
From thee I can, and must, submit, endure
Cheek or reproof, and glad to scape so quit.
Hard are the ways of truth, and rough to walk,
Smooth on the tongue discoursed, pleasing to the ear,

And tunable as sylvan pipe or song; 480

What wonder, then, if I delight to hear
Her dictates from thy mouth? most men admire
Virtue who follow not her lore. Permit me
To hear thee when I come (since no man comes),
And talk at least, though I despair to attain.
Thy Father, who is holy, wise, and pure,
Suffers the hypocrite or atheous priest
To tread his sacred courts, and minister
About his altar, handling holy things,

Praying or vowing, and voutsafed his voice 490

To Balaam reprobate, a prophet yet

Inspired: disdain not such access to me."

To whom our Saviour, with unaltered brow:--
 "Thy coming hither, though I know thy scope,
 I bid not, or forbid. Do as thou find'st
 Permission from above; thou canst not more."

He added not; and Satan, bowing low
 His gray dissimulation, disappeared,
 Into thin air diffused: for now began

Night with her sullen wing to double-shade 500

The desert; fowls in their clay nests were couched;
 And now wild beasts came forth the woods to roam.

PARADISE REGAIN'D.

The Second BOOK.

MEan while the new-baptized, who yet remained
 At Jordan with the Baptist, and had seen
 Him whom they heard so late expressly called
 Jesus Messiah, Son of God, declared,
 And on that high authority had believed,
 And with him talked, and with him lodged--I mean
 Andrew and Simon, famous after known,
 With others, though in Holy Writ not named--
 Now missing him, their joy so lately found,

So lately found and so abruptly gone, 10

Began to doubt, and doubted many days,
 And, as the days increased, increased their doubt.
 Sometimes they thought he might be only shewn,
 And for a time caught up to God, as once
 Moses was in the Mount and missing long,
 And the great Thisbite, who on fiery wheels
 Rode up to Heaven, yet once again to come.
 Therefore, as those young prophets then with care
 Sought lost Eliah, so in each place these

Nigh to Bethabara--in Jericho 20

The city of palms, AEnon, and Salem old,
 Machaerus, and each town or city walled

On this side the broad lake Genezaret,
 Or in Peraea--but returned in vain.
 Then on the bank of Jordan, by a creek,
 Where winds with reeds and osiers whispering play,
 Plain fishermen (no greater men them call),
 Close in a cottage low together got,
 Their unexpected loss and plaints outbreathed:--

"Alas, from what high hope to what relapse
 Unlooked for are we fallen! Our eyes beheld
 Messiah certainly now come, so long
 Expected of our fathers; we have heard
 His words, his wisdom full of grace and truth.
 'Now, now, for sure, deliverance is at hand;
 The kingdom shall to Israel be restored.'
 Thus we rejoiced, but soon our joy is turned
 Into perplexity and new amaze.
 For whither is he gone? what accident

30

Hath rapt him from us? will he now retire 40

After appearance, and again prolong
 Our expectation? God of Israel,
 Send thy Messiah forth; the time is come.
 Behold the kings of the earth, how they oppress
 Thy Chosen, to what highth their power unjust
 They have exalted, and behind them cast
 All fear of Thee; arise, and vindicate
 Thy glory; free thy people from their yoke!
 But let us wait; thus far He hath performed--

Sent his Anointed, and to us revealed him 50

By his great Prophet pointed at and shown
 In public, and with him we have conversed.
 Let us be glad of this, and all our fears
 Lay on his providence; He will not fail,
 Nor will withdraw him now, nor will recall--
 Mock us with his blest sight, then snatch him hence:
 Soon we shall see our hope, our joy, return."

Thus they out of their plaints new hope resume
 To find whom at the first they found unsought.

But to his mother Mary, when she saw 60

Others returned from baptism, not her Son,
 Nor left at Jordan tidings of him none,
 Within her breast though calm, her breast though pure,
 Motherly cares and fears got head, and raised
 Some troubled thoughts, which she in sighs thus clad:--
 "Oh, what avails me now that honour high,

To have conceived of God, or that salute,
 'Hail, highly favoured, among women blest!'
 While I to sorrows am no less advanced,

And fears as eminent above the lot 70

Of other women, by the birth I bore:
 In such a season born, when scarce a shed
 Could be obtained to shelter him or me
 From the bleak air? A stable was our warmth,
 A manger his; yet soon enforced to fly
 Thence into Egypt, till the murderous king
 Were dead, who sought his life, and, missing, filled
 With infant blood the streets of Bethlehem.
 From Egypt home returned, in Nazareth

Hath been our dwelling many years; his life 80

Private, unactive, calm, contemplative,
 Little suspicious to any king. But now,
 Full grown to man, acknowledged, as I hear,
 By John the Baptist, and in public shewn,
 Son owned from Heaven by his Father's voice,
 I looked for some great change. To honour? no;
 But trouble, as old Simeon plain foretold,
 That to the fall and rising he should be
 Of many in Israel, and to a sign

Spoken against--that through my very soul 90

A sword shall pierce. This is my favoured lot,
 My exaltation to afflictions high!
 Afflicted I may be, it seems, and blest!
 I will not argue that, nor will repine.
 But where delays he now? Some great intent
 Conceals him. When twelve years he scarce had seen,
 I lost him, but so found as well I saw
 He could not lose himself, but went about
 His Father's business. What he meant I mused--

Since understand; much more his absence now 100

Thus long to some great purpose he obscures.
 But I to wait with patience am inured;
 My heart hath been a storehouse long of things
 And sayings laid up, pretending strange events."

Thus Mary, pondering oft, and oft to mind
 Recalling what remarkably had passed
 Since first her Salutation heard, with thoughts
 Meekly composed awaited the fulfilling:
 The while her Son, tracing the desert wild,

Sole, but with holiest meditations fed,

Into himself descended, and at once
 All his great work to come before him set--
 How to begin, how to accomplish best
 His end of being on Earth, and mission high.
 For Satan, with sly preface to return,
 Had left him vacant, and with speed was gone
 Up to the middle region of thick air,
 Where all his Potentates in council sate.
 There, without sign of boast, or sign of joy,

Solicitous and blank, he thus began:-- 120

"Princes, Heaven's ancient Sons, AEthereal Thrones--
 Daemonian Spirits now, from the element
 Each of his reign allotted, rightlier called
 Powers of Fire, Air, Water, and Earth beneath
 (So may we hold our place and these mild seats
 Without new trouble!)--such an enemy
 Is risen to invade us, who no less
 Threatens than our expulsion down to Hell.
 I, as I undertook, and with the vote

Consenting in full frequency was impowered, 130

Have found him, viewed him, tasted him; but find
 Far other labour to be undergone
 Than when I dealt with Adam, first of men,
 Though Adam by his wife's allurements fell,
 However to this Man inferior far--
 If he be Man by mother's side, at least
 With more than human gifts from Heaven adorned,
 Perfections absolute, graces divine,
 And amplitude of mind to greatest deeds.

Therefore I am returned, lest confidence 140

Of my success with Eve in Paradise
 Deceive ye to persuasion over-sure
 Of like succeeding here. I summon all
 Rather to be in readiness with hand
 Or counsel to assist, lest I, who erst
 Thought none my equal, now be overmatched."

So spake the old Serpent, doubting, and from all
 With clamour was assured their utmost aid
 At his command; when from amidst them rose

Belial, the dissolutes Spirit that fell, 150

The sensualest, and, after Asmodai,
 The fleshliest Incubus, and thus advised:--
 "Set women in his eye and in his walk,
 Among daughters of men the fairest found.

Many are in each region passing fair
 As the noon sky, more like to goddesses
 Than mortal creatures, graceful and discreet,
 Expert in amorous arts, enchanting tongues
 Persuasive, virgin majesty with mild

And sweet allayed, yet terrible to approach, 160

Skilled to retire, and in retiring draw
 Hearts after them tangled in amorous nets.
 Such object hath the power to soften and tame
 Severest temper, smooth the rugged'st brow,
 Eneer, and with voluptuous hope dissolve,
 Draw out with credulous desire, and lead
 At will the manliest, resolute breast,
 As the magnetic hardest iron draws.
 Women, when nothing else, beguiled the heart

Of wisest Solomon, and made him build, 170

And made him bow, to the gods of his wives."

To whom quick answer Satan thus returned:--
 "Belial, in much uneven scale thou weigh'st
 All others by thyself. Because of old
 Thou thyself doat'st on womankind, admiring
 Their shape, their colour, and attractive grace,
 None are, thou think'st, but taken with such toys.
 Before the Flood, thou, with thy lusty crew,
 False titled Sons of God, roaming the Earth,

Cast wanton eyes on the daughters of men, 180

And coupled with them, and begot a race.
 Have we not seen, or by relation heard,
 In courts and regal chambers how thou lurk'st,
 In wood or grove, by mossy fountain-side,
 In valley or green meadow, to waylay
 Some beauty rare, Calisto, Clymene,
 Daphne, or Semele, Antiopa,
 Or Amymone, Syrinx, many more
 Too long--then lay'st thy scapes on names adored,

Apollo, Neptune, Jupiter, or Pan, 190

Satyr, or Faun, or Silvan? But these haunts
 Delight not all. Among the sons of men
 How many have with a smile made small account
 Of beauty and her lures, easily scorned
 All her assaults, on worthier things intent!
 Remember that Pellean conqueror,
 A youth, how all the beauties of the East
 He slightly viewed, and slightly overpassed;

How he surnamed of Africa dismissed,

In his prime youth, the fair Iberian maid. 200

For Solomon, he lived at ease, and, full
Of honour, wealth, high fare, aimed not beyond
Higher design than to enjoy his state;
Thence to the bait of women lay exposed.
But he whom we attempt is wiser far
Than Solomon, of more exalted mind,
Made and set wholly on the accomplishment
Of greatest things. What woman will you find,
Though of this age the wonder and the fame,

On whom his leisure will voutsafe an eye 210

Of fond desire? Or should she, confident,
As sitting queen adored on Beauty's throne,
Descend with all her winning charms begirt
To enamour, as the zone of Venus once
Wrought that effect on Jove (so fables tell),
How would one look from his majestic brow,
Seated as on the top of Virtue's hill,
Discountenance her despised, and put to rout
All her array, her female pride deject,

Or turn to reverent awe! For Beauty stands 220

In the admiration only of weak minds
Led captive; cease to admire, and all her plumes
Fall flat, and shrink into a trivial toy,
At every sudden slighting quite abashed.
Therefore with manlier objects we must try
His constancy--with such as have more shew
Of worth, of honour, glory, and popular praise
(Rocks whereon greatest men have ofttest wrecked);
Or that which only seems to satisfy

Lawful desires of nature, not beyond. 230

And now I know he hungers, where no food
Is to be found, in the wide Wilderness:
The rest commit to me; I shall let pass
No advantage, and his strength as oft assay."

He ceased, and heard their grant in loud acclaim;
Then forthwith to him takes a chosen band
Of Spirits likest to himself in guile,
To be at hand and at his beck appear,
If cause were to unfold some active scene

Of various persons, each to know his part; 240

Then to the desert takes with these his flight,
Where still, from shade to shade, the Son of God,

After forty days' fasting, had remained,
 Now hungering first, and to himself thus said:--

"Where will this end? Four times ten days I have passed
 Wandering this woody maze, and human food
 Nor tasted, nor had appetite. That fast
 To virtue I impute not, or count part
 Of what I suffer here. If nature need not,

Or God support nature without repast, 250

Though needing, what praise is it to endure?
 But now I feel I hunger; which declares
 Nature hath need of what she asks. Yet God
 Can satisfy that need some other way,
 Though hunger still remain. So it remain
 Without this body's wasting, I content me,
 And from the sting of famine fear no harm;
 Nor mind it, fed with better thoughts, that feed
 Me hungering more to do my Father's will."

It was the hour of night, when thus the Son
 Communed in silent walk, then laid him down
 Under the hospitable covert nigh
 Of trees thick interwoven. There he slept,
 And dreamed, as appetite is wont to dream,
 Of meats and drinks, nature's refreshment sweet.
 Him thought he by the brook of Cherith stood,
 And saw the ravens with their horny beaks
 Food to Elijah bringing even and morn--
 Though ravenous, taught to abstain from what they brought;

260

He saw the Prophet also, how he fled 270

Into the desert, and how there he slept
 Under a juniper--then how, awaked,
 He found his supper on the coals prepared,
 And by the Angel was bid rise and eat,
 And eat the second time after repose,
 The strength whereof sufficed him forty days:
 Sometimes that with Elijah he partook,
 Or as a guest with Daniel at his pulse.
 Thus wore out night; and now the harald Lark

Left his ground-nest, high towering to descry 280

The Morn's approach, and greet her with his song.
 As lightly from his grassy couch up rose
 Our Saviour, and found all was but a dream;
 Fasting he went to sleep, and fasting waked.
 Up to a hill anon his steps he reared,
 From whose high top to ken the prospect round,

If cottage were in view, sheep-cote, or herd;
 But cottage, herd, or sheep-cote, none he saw--
 Only in a bottom saw a pleasant grove,

With chaunt of tuneful birds resounding loud. 290

Thither he bent his way, determined there
 To rest at noon, and entered soon the shade
 High-roofed, and walks beneath, and alleys brown,
 That opened in the midst a woody scene;
 Nature's own work it seemed (Nature taught Art),
 And, to a superstitious eye, the haunt
 Of wood-gods and wood-nymphs. He viewed it round;
 When suddenly a man before him stood,
 Not rustic as before, but seemlier clad,

As one in city or court or palace bred, 300

And with fair speech these words to him addressed:--

"With granted leave officious I return,
 But much more wonder that the Son of God
 In this wild solitude so long should bide,
 Of all things destitute, and, well I know,
 Not without hunger. Others of some note,
 As story tells, have trod this wilderness:
 The fugitive Bond-woman, with her son,
 Outcast Nebaioth, yet found here relief

By a providing Angel; all the race 310

Of Israel here had famished, had not God
 Rained from heaven manna; and that Prophet bold,
 Native of Thebez, wandering here, was fed
 Twice by a voice inviting him to eat.
 Of thee those forty days none hath regard,
 Forty and more deserted here indeed."

To whom thus Jesus:--"What conclud'st thou hence?
 They all had need; I, as thou seest, have none."

"How hast thou hunger then?" Satan replied.

"Tell me, if food were now before thee set, 320

Wouldst thou not eat?" "Thereafter as I like
 the giver," answered Jesus. "Why should that
 Cause thy refusal?" said the subtle Fiend.
 "Hast thou not right to all created things?
 Owe not all creatures, by just right, to thee
 Duty and service, nor to stay till bid,
 But tender all their power? Nor mention I
 Meats by the law unclean, or offered first
 To idols--those young Daniel could refuse;

Nor proffered by an enemy--though who

Would scruple that, with want oppressed? Behold,
 Nature ashamed, or, better to express,
 Troubled, that thou shouldst hunger, hath purveyed
 From all the elements her choicest store,
 To treat thee as beseems, and as her Lord
 With honour. Only deign to sit and eat."

He spake no dream; for, as his words had end,
 Our Saviour, lifting up his eyes, beheld,
 In ample space under the broadest shade,

A table richly spread in regal mode, 340

With dishes piled and meats of noblest sort
 And savour--beasts of chase, or fowl of game,
 In pastry built, or from the spit, or boiled,
 Grisamber-steamed; all fish, from sea or shore,
 Freshet or purling brook, of shell or fin,
 And exquisitest name, for which was drained
 Pontus, and Lucrine bay, and Afric coast.
 Alas! how simple, to these cates compared,
 Was that crude Apple that diverted Eve!

And at a stately sideboard, by the wine, 350

That fragrant smell diffused, in order stood
 Tall stripling youths rich-clad, of fairer hue
 Than Ganymed or Hylas; distant more,
 Under the trees now tripped, now solemn stood,
 Nymphs of Diana's train, and Naiades
 With fruits and flowers from Amalthea's horn,
 And ladies of the Hesperides, that seemed
 Fairer than feigned of old, or fabled since
 Of faery damsels met in forest wide

By knights of Logres, or of Lyones, 360

Lancelot, or Pelleas, or Pellenore.
 And all the while harmonious airs were heard
 Of chiming strings or charming pipes; and winds
 Of gentlest gale Arabian odours fanned
 From their soft wings, and Flora's earliest smells.
 Such was the splendour; and the Tempter now
 His invitation earnestly renewed:--

"What doubts the Son of God to sit and eat?
 These are not fruits forbidden; no interdict

Defends the touching of these viands pure; 370

Their taste no knowledge works, at least of evil,
 But life preserves, destroys life's enemy,
 Hunger, with sweet restorative delight.
 All these are Spirits of air, and woods, and springs,

Thy gentle ministers, who come to pay
Thee homage, and acknowledge thee their Lord.
What doubt'st thou, Son of God? Sit down and eat."

To whom thus Jesus temperately replied:--
"Said'st thou not that to all things I had right?

And who withholds my power that right to use? 380

Shall I receive by gift what of my own,
When and where likes me best, I can command?
I can at will, doubt not, as soon as thou,
Command a table in this wilderness,
And call swift flights of Angels ministrant,
Arrayed in glory, on my cup to attend:
Why shouldst thou, then, obtrude this diligence
In vain, where no acceptance it can find?
And with my hunger what hast thou to do?

Thy pompous delicacies I contemn, 390

And count thy specious gifts no gifts, but guiles."

To whom thus answered Satan, male-content:--
"That I have also power to give thou seest;
If of that power I bring thee voluntary
What I might have bestowed on whom I pleased,
And rather opportunely in this place
Chose to impart to thy apparent need,
Why shouldst thou not accept it? But I see
What I can do or offer is suspect.

Of these things others quickly will dispose, 400

Whose pains have earned the far-fet spoil." With that
Both table and provision vanished quite,
With sound of harpies' wings and talons heard;
Only the importune Tempter still remained,
And with these words his temptation pursued:--

"By hunger, that each other creature tames,
Thou art not to be harmed, therefore not moved;
Thy temperance, invincible besides,
For no allurement yields to appetite;

And all thy heart is set on high designs, 410

High actions. But wherewith to be achieved?
Great acts require great means of enterprise;
Thou art unknown, unfriended, low of birth,
A carpenter thy father known, thyself
Bred up in poverty and straits at home,
Lost in a desert here and hunger-bit.
Which way, or from what hope, dost thou aspire
To greatness? whence authority deriv'st?

What followers, what retinue canst thou gain,

Or at thy heels the dizzy multitude, 420

Longer than thou canst feed them on thy cost?
 Money brings honour, friends, conquest, and realms.
 What raised Antipater the Edomite,
 And his son Herod placed on Juda's throne,
 Thy throne, but gold, that got him puissant friends?
 Therefore, if at great things thou wouldst arrive,
 Get riches first, get wealth, and treasure heap--
 Not difficult, if thou hearken to me.
 Riches are mine, fortune is in my hand;

They whom I favour thrive in wealth amain, 430

While virtue, valour, wisdom, sit in want."

To whom thus Jesus patiently replied:--
 "Yet wealth without these three is impotent
 To gain dominion, or to keep it gained--
 Witness those ancient empires of the earth,
 In highth of all their flowing wealth dissolved;
 But men endued with these have oft attained,
 In lowest poverty, to highest deeds--
 Gideon, and Jephtha, and the shepherd lad

Whose offspring on the throne of Juda sate 440

So many ages, and shall yet regain
 That seat, and reign in Israel without end.
 Among the Heathen (for throughout the world
 To me is not unknown what hath been done
 Worthy of memorial) canst thou not remember
 Quintius, Fabricius, Curius, Regulus?
 For I esteem those names of men so poor,
 Who could do mighty things, and could contemn
 Riches, though offered from the hand of kings.

And what in me seems wanting but that I 450

May also in this poverty as soon
 Accomplish what they did, perhaps and more?
 Extol not riches, then, the toil of fools,
 The wise man's cumbrance, if not snare; more apt
 To slacken virtue and abate her edge
 Than prompt her to do aught may merit praise.
 What if with like aversion I reject
 Riches and realms! Yet not for that a crown,
 Golden in shew, is but a wreath of thorns,

Brings dangers, troubles, cares, and sleepless nights, 460

To him who wears the regal diadem,
 When on his shoulders each man's burden lies;

For therein stands the office of a king,
 His honour, virtue, merit, and chief praise,
 That for the public all this weight he bears.
 Yet he who reigns within himself, and rules
 Passions, desires, and fears, is more a king--
 Which every wise and virtuous man attains;
 And who attains not, ill aspires to rule

Cities of men, or headstrong multitudes, 470

Subject himself to anarchy within,
 Or lawless passions in him, which he serves.
 But to guide nations in the way of truth
 By saving doctrine, and from error lead
 To know, and, knowing, worship God aright,
 Is yet more kingly. This attracts the soul,
 Governs the inner man, the nobler part;
 That other o'er the body only reigns,
 And oft by force--which to a generous mind

So reigning can be no sincere delight. 480

Besides, to give a kingdom hath been thought
 Greater and nobler done, and to lay down
 Far more magnanimous, than to assume.
 Riches are needless, then, both for themselves,
 And for thy reason why they should be sought--
 To gain a sceptre, ofttest better missed."

PARADISE REGAIN'D.

The Third BOOK.

SO spake the Son of God; and Satan stood
 A while as mute, confounded what to say,
 What to reply, confuted and convinced
 Of his weak arguing and fallacious drift;
 At length, collecting all his serpent wiles,
 With soothing words renewed, him thus accosts:--
 "I see thou know'st what is of use to know,
 What best to say canst say, to do canst do;
 Thy actions to thy words accord; thy words

To thy large heart give utterance due; thy heart 10

Contains of good, wise, just, the perfect shape.
Should kings and nations from thy mouth consult,
Thy counsel would be as the oracle
Urim and Thummim, those oraculous gems
On Aaron's breast, or tongue of Seers old
Infallible; or, wert thou sought to deeds
That might require the array of war, thy skill
Of conduct would be such that all the world
Could not sustain thy prowess, or subsist

In battle, though against thy few in arms. 20

These godlike virtues wherefore dost thou hide?
Affecting private life, or more obscure
In savage wilderness, wherefore deprive
All Earth her wonder at thy acts, thyself
The fame and glory--glory, the reward
That sole excites to high attempts the flame
Of most erected spirits, most tempered pure
AETHEREAL, who all pleasures else despise,
All treasures and all gain esteem as dross,

And dignities and powers, all but the highest? 30

Thy years are ripe, and over-ripe. The son
Of Macedonian Philip had ere these
Won Asia, and the throne of Cyrus held
At his dispose; young Scipio had brought down
The Carthaginian pride; young Pompey quelled
The Pontic king, and in triumph had rode.
Yet years, and to ripe years judgment mature,
Quench not the thirst of glory, but augment.
Great Julius, whom now all the world admires,

The more he grew in years, the more inflamed 40

With glory, wept that he had lived so long
Inglorious. But thou yet art not too late."

To whom our Saviour calmly thus replied:--
"Thou neither dost persuade me to seek wealth
For empire's sake, nor empire to affect
For glory's sake, by all thy argument.
For what is glory but the blaze of fame,
The people's praise, if always praise unmixed?
And what the people but a herd confused,

A miscellaneous rabble, who extol 50

Things vulgar, and, well weighed, scarce worth the praise?
They praise and they admire they know not what,
And know not whom, but as one leads the other;

And what delight to be by such extolled,
 To live upon their tongues, and be their talk?
 Of whom to be dispraised were no small praise--
 His lot who dares be singularly good.
 The intelligent among them and the wise
 Are few, and glory scarce of few is raised.

This is true glory and renown--when God, 60

Looking on the Earth, with approbation marks
 The just man, and divulges him through Heaven
 To all his Angels, who with true applause
 Recount his praises. Thus he did to Job,
 When, to extend his fame through Heaven and Earth,
 As thou to thy reproach may'st well remember,
 He asked thee, 'Hast thou seen my servant Job?'
 Famous he was in Heaven; on Earth less known,
 Where glory is false glory, attributed

To things not glorious, men not worthy of fame. 70

They err who count it glorious to subdue
 By conquest far and wide, to overrun
 Large countries, and in field great battles win,
 Great cities by assault. What do these worthies
 But rob and spoil, burn, slaughter, and enslave
 Peaceable nations, neighbouring or remote,
 Made captive, yet deserving freedom more
 Than those their conquerors, who leave behind
 Nothing but ruin wheresoe'er they rove,

And all the flourishing works of peace destroy; 80

Then swell with pride, and must be titled Gods,
 Great benefactors of mankind, Deliverers,
 Worshipped with temple, priest, and sacrifice?
 One is the son of Jove, of Mars the other;
 Till conqueror Death discover them scarce men,
 Rowling in brutish vices, and deformed,
 Violent or shameful death their due reward.
 But, if there be in glory aught of good;
 It may be means far different be attained,

Without ambition, war, or violence-- 90

By deeds of peace, by wisdom eminent,
 By patience, temperance. I mention still
 Him whom thy wrongs, with saintly patience borne,
 Made famous in a land and times obscure;
 Who names not now with honour patient Job?
 Poor Socrates, (who next more memorable?)
 By what he taught and suffered for so doing,

For truth's sake suffering death unjust, lives now
Equal in fame to proudest conquerors.

Yet, if for fame and glory aught be done, 100

Aught suffered--if young African for fame
His wasted country freed from Punic rage--
The deed becomes unpraised, the man at least,
And loses, though but verbal, his reward.
Shall I seek glory, then, as vain men seek,
Oft not deserved? I seek not mine, but His
Who sent me, and thereby witness whence I am."

To whom the Tempter, murmuring, thus replied:--
"Think not so slight of glory, therein least

Resembling thy great Father. He seeks glory, 110

And for his glory all things made, all things
Orders and governs; nor content in Heaven,
By all his Angels glorified, requires
Glory from men, from all men, good or bad,
Wise or unwise, no difference, no exemption.
Above all sacrifice, or hallowed gift,
Glory he requires, and glory he receives,
Promiscuous from all nations, Jew, or Greek,
Or Barbarous, nor exception hath declared;

From us, his foes pronounced, glory he exacts." 120

To whom our Saviour fervently replied:
"And reason; since his Word all things produced,
Though chiefly not for glory as prime end,
But to shew forth his goodness, and impart
His good communicable to every soul
Freely; of whom what could He less expect
Than glory and benediction--that is, thanks--
The slightest, easiest, readiest recompense
From them who could return him nothing else,

And, not returning that, would likeliest render 130

Contempt instead, dishonour, obloquy?
Hard recompense, unsuitable return
For so much good, so much beneficence!
But why should man seek glory, who of his own
Hath nothing, and to whom nothing belongs
But condemnation, ignominy, and shame--
Who, for so many benefits received,
Turned recreant to God, ingrate and false,
And so of all true good himself despoiled;

Yet, sacrilegious, to himself would take 140

That which to God alone of right belongs?

Yet so much bounty is in God, such grace,
That who advances his glory, not their own,
Them he himself to glory will advance."

So spake the Son of God; and here again
Satan had not to answer, but stood struck
With guilt of his own sin--for he himself,
Insatiable of glory, had lost all;
Yet of another plea bethought him soon:--

"Of glory, as thou wilt," said he, "so deem;
Worth or not worth the seeking, let it pass.
But to a Kingdom thou art born--ordained
To sit upon thy father David's throne,
By mother's side thy father, though thy right
Be now in powerful hands, that will not part
Easily from possession won with arms.
Judaea now and all the Promised Land,
Reduced a province under Roman yoke,
Obeys Tiberius, nor is always ruled

150

With temperate sway: oft have they violated 160

The Temple, oft the Law, with foul affronts,
Abominations rather, as did once
Antiochus. And think'st thou to regain
Thy right by sitting still, or thus retiring?
So did not Machabeus. He indeed
Retired unto the Desert, but with arms;
And o'er a mighty king so oft prevailed
That by strong hand his family obtained,
Though priests, the crown, and David's throne usurped,

With Modin and her suburbs once content. 170

If kingdom move thee not, let move thee zeal
And duty--zeal and duty are not slow,
But on Occasion's forelock watchful wait:
They themselves rather are occasion best--
Zeal of thy Father's house, duty to free
Thy country from her heathen servitude.
So shalt thou best fulfil, best verify,
The Prophets old, who sung thy endless reign--
The happier reign the sooner it begins.

Rein then; what canst thou better do the while?" 180

To whom our Saviour answer thus returned:--
"All things are best fulfilled in their due time;
And time there is for all things, Truth hath said.
If of my reign Prophetic Writ hath told
That it shall never end, so, when begin

The Father in his purpose hath decreed--
 He in whose hand all times and seasons rowl.
 What if he hath decreed that I shall first
 Be tried in humble state, and things adverse,

By tribulations, injuries, insults, 190

Contempts, and scorns, and snares, and violence,
 Suffering, abstaining, quietly expecting
 Without distrust or doubt, that He may know
 What I can suffer, how obey? Who best
 Can suffer best can do, best reign who first
 Well hath obeyed--just trial ere I merit
 My exaltation without change or end.
 But what concerns it thee when I begin
 My everlasting Kingdom? Why art thou

Solicitous? What moves thy inquisition? 200

Know'st thou not that my rising is thy fall,
 And my promotion will be thy destruction?"

To whom the Tempter, inly racked, replied:--
 "Let that come when it comes. All hope is lost
 Of my reception into grace; what worse?
 For where no hope is left is left no fear.
 If there be worse, the expectation more
 Of worse torments me than the feeling can.
 I would be at the worst; worst is my port,

My harbour, and my ultimate repose, 210

The end I would attain, my final good.
 My error was my error, and my crime
 My crime; whatever, for itself condemned,
 And will alike be punished, whether thou
 Reign or reign not--though to that gentle brow
 Willingly I could fly, and hope thy reign,
 From that placid aspect and meek regard,
 Rather than aggravate my evil state,
 Would stand between me and thy Father's ire

(Whose ire I dread more than the fire of Hell) 220

A shelter and a kind of shading cool
 Interposition, as a summer's cloud.
 If I, then, to the worst that can be haste,
 Why move thy feet so slow to what is best?
 Happiest, both to thyself and all the world,
 That thou, who worthiest art, shouldst be their King!
 Perhaps thou linger'st in deep thoughts detained
 Of the enterprise so hazardous and high!
 No wonder; for, though in thee be united

What of perfection can in Man be found, 230

Or human nature can receive, consider
 Thy life hath yet been private, most part spent
 At home, scarce viewed the Galilean towns,
 And once a year Jerusalem, few days'
 Short sojourn; and what thence couldst thou observe?
 The world thou hast not seen, much less her glory,
 Empires, and monarchs, and their radiant courts--
 Best school of best experience, quickest in sight
 In all things that to greatest actions lead.

The wisest, unexperienced, will be ever 240

Timorous, and loth, with novice modesty
 (As he who, seeking asses, found a kingdom)
 Irresolute, unhardy, unadventurous.
 But I will bring thee where thou soon shalt quit
 Those rudiments, and see before thine eyes
 The monarchies of the Earth, their pomp and state--
 Sufficient introduction to inform
 Thee, of thyself so apt, in regal arts,
 And regal mysteries; that thou may'st know

How best their opposition to withstand." 250

With that (such power was given him then), he took
 The Son of God up to a mountain high.
 It was a mountain at whose verdant feet
 A spacious plain outstretched in circuit wide
 Lay pleasant; from his side two rivers flowed,
 The one winding, the other straight, and left between
 Fair champaign, with less rivers interveined,
 Then meeting joined their tribute to the sea.
 Fertil of corn the glebe, of oil, and wine;

With herds the pasture thronged, with flocks the hills; 260

Huge cities and high-towered, that well might seem
 The seats of mightiest monarchs; and so large
 The prospect was that here and there was room
 For barren desert, fountainless and dry.
 To this high mountain-top the Tempter brought
 Our Saviour, and new train of words began:--

"Well have we speeded, and o'er hill and dale,
 Forest, and field, and flood, temples and towers,
 Cut shorter many a league. Here thou behold'st

Assyria, and her empire's ancient bounds, 270

Araxes and the Caspian lake; thence on
 As far as Indus east, Euphrates west,
 And oft beyond; to south the Persian bay,

And, inaccessible, the Arabian drouth:
 Here, Nineveh, of length within her wall
 Several days' journey, built by Ninus old,
 Of that first golden monarchy the seat,
 And seat of Salmanassar, whose success
 Israel in long captivity still mourns;

There Babylon, the wonder of all tongues, 280

As ancient, but rebuilt by him who twice
 Judah and all thy father David's house
 Led captive, and Jerusalem laid waste,
 Till Cyrus set them free; Persepolis,
 His city, there thou seest, and Bactra there;
 Ecbatana her structure vast there shews,
 And Hecatompylos her hunderd gates;
 There Susa by Choaspes, amber stream,
 The drink of none but kings; of later fame,

Built by Emathian or by Parthian hands, 290

The great Seleucia, Nisibis, and there
 Artaxata, Teredon, Ctesiphon,
 Turning with easy eye, thou may'st behold.
 All these the Parthian (now some ages past
 By great Arsaces led, who founded first
 That empire) under his dominion holds,
 From the luxurious kings of Antioch won.
 And just in time thou com'st to have a view
 Of his great power; for now the Parthian king

In Ctesiphon hath gathered all his host 300

Against the Scythian, whose incursions wild
 Have wasted Sogdiana; to her aid
 He marches now in haste. See, though from far,
 His thousands, in what martial equipage
 They issue forth, steel bows and shafts their arms,
 Of equal dread in flight or in pursuit--
 All horsemen, in which fight they most excel;
 See how in warlike muster they appear,
 In rhombs, and wedges, and half-moons, and wings."

He looked, and saw what numbers numberless
 The city gates outpoured, light-armed troops
 In coats of mail and military pride.
 In mail their horses clad, yet fleet and strong,
 Prauncing their riders bore, the flower and choice
 Of many provinces from bound to bound--
 From Arachosia, from Candaor east,
 And Margiana, to the Hyrcanian cliffs

310

Of Caucasus, and dark Iberian dales;
From Atropatia, and the neighbouring plains

Of Adiabene, Media, and the south 320

Of Susiana, to Balsara's haven.
He saw them in their forms of battle ranged,
How quick they wheeled, and flying behind them shot
Sharp sleet of arrowy showers against the face
Of their pursuers, and overcame by flight;
The field all iron cast a gleaming brown.
Nor wanted clouds of foot, nor, on each horn,
Cuirassiers all in steel for standing fight,
Chariots, or elephants indorsed with towers

Of archers; nor of labouring pioners 330

A multitude, with spades and axes armed,
To lay hills plain, fell woods, or valleys fill,
Or where plain was raise hill, or overlay
With bridges rivers proud, as with a yoke:
Mules after these, camels and dromedaries,
And waggons fraught with utensils of war.
Such forces met not, nor so wide a camp,
When Agrican, with all his northern powers,
Besieged Albracea, as romances tell,

The city of Gallaphrone, from thence to win 340

The fairest of her sex, Angelica,
His daughter, sought by many prowest knights,
Both Paynim and the peers of Charlemane.
Such and so numerous was their chivalry;
At sight whereof the Fiend yet more presumed,
And to our Saviour thus his words renewed:--

"That thou may'st know I seek not to engage
Thy virtue, and not every way secure
On no slight grounds thy safety, hear and mark

To what end I have brought thee hither, and shew 350

All this fair sight. Thy kingdom, though foretold
By Prophet or by Angel, unless thou
Endeavour, as thy father David did,
Thou never shalt obtain: prediction still
In all things, and all men, supposes means;
Without means used, what it predicts revokes.
But say thou wert possessed of David's throne
By free consent of all, none opposite,
Samaritan or Jew; how couldst thou hope

Long to enjoy it quiet and secure 360

Between two such enclosing enemies,

Roman and Parthian? Therefore one of these
 Thou must make sure thy own: the Parthian first,
 By my advice, as nearer, and of late
 Found able by invasion to annoy
 Thy country, and captive lead away her kings,
 Antigonus and old Hyrcanus, bound,
 Maugre the Roman. It shall be my task
 To render thee the Parthian at dispose,

Choose which thou wilt, by conquest or by league. 370

By him thou shalt regain, without him not,
 That which alone can truly reinstall thee
 In David's royal seat, his true successor--
 Deliverance of thy brethren, those Ten Tribes
 Whose offspring in his territory yet serve
 In Habor, and among the Medes dispersed:
 The sons of Jacob, two of Joseph, lost
 Thus long from Israel, serving, as of old
 Their fathers in the land of Egypt served,

This offer sets before thee to deliver. 380

These if from servitude thou shalt restore
 To their inheritance, then, nor till then,
 Thou on the throne of David in full glory,
 From Egypt to Euphrates and beyond,
 Shalt reign, and Rome or Caesar not need fear."

To whom our Saviour answered thus, unmoved:--

"Much ostentation vain of fleshly arm
 And fragile arms, much instrument of war,
 Long in preparing, soon to nothing brought,

Before mine eyes thou hast set, and in my ear 390

Vented much policy, and projects deep
 Of enemies, of aids, battles, and leagues,
 Plausible to the world, to me worth naught.
 Means I must use, thou say'st; prediction else
 Will unpredict, and fail me of the throne!
 My time, I told thee (and that time for thee
 Were better farthest off), is not yet come.
 When that comes, think not thou to find me slack
 On my part aught endeavouring, or to need

Thy politic maxims, or that cumbersome 400

Luggage of war there shewn me--argument
 Of human weakness rather than of strength.
 My brethren, as thou call'st them, those Ten Tribes,
 I must deliver, if I mean to reign
 David's true heir, and his full sceptre sway

To just extent over all Israel's sons!
 But whence to thee this zeal? Where was it then
 For Israel, or for David, or his throne,
 When thou stood'st up his tempter to the pride
 Of numbering Israel--which cost the lives 410

of threescore and ten thousand Israelites
 By three days' pestilence? Such was thy zeal
 To Israel then, the same that now to me.
 As for those captive tribes, themselves were they
 Who wrought their own captivity, fell off
 From God to worship calves, the deities
 Of Egypt, Baal next and Ashtaroth,
 And all the idolatries of heathen round,
 Besides their other worse than heathenish crimes;

Nor in the land of their captivity 420

Humbled themselves, or penitent besought
 The God of their forefathers, but so died
 Impenitent, and left a race behind
 Like to themselves, distinguishable scarce
 From Gentiles, but by circumcision vain,
 And God with idols in their worship joined.
 Should I of these the liberty regard,
 Who, freed, as to their ancient patrimony,
 Unhumbled, unrepentant, unreformed,

Headlong would follow, and to their gods perhaps 430

Of Bethel and of Dan? No; let them serve
 Their enemies who serve idols with God.
 Yet He at length, time to himself best known,
 Remembering Abraham, by some wondrous call
 May bring them back, repentant and sincere,
 And at their passing cleave the Assyrian flood,
 While to their native land with joy they haste,
 As the Red Sea and Jordan once he cleft,
 When to the Promised Land their fathers passed.

To his due time and providence I leave them." 440

So spake Israel's true King, and to the Fiend
 Made answer meet, that made void all his wiles.
 So fares it when with truth falsehood contends.

PARADISE REGAIN'D.

The Fourth BOOK.

PErplexed and troubled at his bad success
 The Tempter stood, nor had what to reply,
 Discovered in his fraud, thrown from his hope
 So oft, and the persuasive rhetoric
 That sleeked his tongue, and won so much on Eve,
 So little here, nay lost. But Eve was Eve;
 This far his over-match, who, self-deceived
 And rash, beforehand had no better weighed
 The strength he was to cope with, or his own.

But--as a man who had been matchless held 10

In cunning, over-reached where least he thought,
 To salve his credit, and for very spite,
 Still will be tempting him who foils him still,
 And never cease, though to his shame the more;
 Or as a swarm of flies in vintage-time,
 About the wine-press where sweet must is poured,
 Beat off, returns as oft with humming sound;
 Or surging waves against a solid rock,
 Though all to shivers dashed, the assault renew,

(Vain battery!) and in froth or bubbles end-- 20

So Satan, whom repulse upon repulse
 Met ever, and to shameful silence brought,
 Yet gives not o'er, though desperate of success,
 And his vain importunity pursues.
 He brought our Saviour to the western side
 Of that high mountain, whence he might behold
 Another plain, long, but in breadth not wide,
 Washed by the southern sea, and on the north
 To equal length backed with a ridge of hills

That screened the fruits of the earth and seats of men 30

From cold Septentrion blasts; thence in the midst
 Divided by a river, off whose banks
 On each side an Imperial City stood,
 With towers and temples proudly elevate
 On seven small hills, with palaces adorned,
 Porches and theatres, baths, aqueducts,
 Statues and trophies, and triumphal arcs,
 Gardens and groves, presented to his eyes
 Above the highth of mountains interposed--

By what strange parallax, or optic skill 40

Of vision, multiplied through air, or glass
Of telescope, were curious to enquire.
And now the Tempter thus his silence broke:--

"The city which thou seest no other deem
Than great and glorious Rome, Queen of the Earth
So far renowned, and with the spoils enriched
Of nations. There the Capitol thou seest,
Above the rest lifting his stately head
On the Tarpeian rock, her citadel

Impregnable; and there Mount Palatine, 50

The imperial palace, compass huge, and high
The structure, skill of noblest architects,
With gilded battlements, conspicuous far,
Turrets, and terraces, and glittering spires.
Many a fair edifice besides, more like
Houses of gods--so well I have disposed
My aerie microscope--thou may'st behold,
Outside and inside both, pillars and roofs
Carved work, the hand of famed artificers

In cedar, marble, ivory, or gold. 60

Thence to the gates cast round thine eye, and see
What conflux issuing forth, or entering in:
Praetors, proconsuls to their provinces
Hasting, or on return, in robes of state;
Lictors and rods, the ensigns of their power;
Legions and cohorts, turms of horse and wings;
Or embassies from regions far remote,
In various habits, on the Appian road,
Or on the AEmilian--some from farthest south,

Syene, and where the shadow both way falls, 70

Meroe, Nilotic isle, and, more to west,
The realm of Bocchus to the Blackmoor sea;
From the Asian kings (and Parthian among these),
From India and the Golden Chersoness,
And utmost Indian isle Taprobane,
Dusk faces with white silken turbants wreathed;
From Gallia, Gades, and the British west;
Germans, and Scythians, and Sarmatians north
Beyond Danubius to the Tauric pool.

All nations now to Rome obedience pay-- 80

To Rome's great Emperor, whose wide domain,
In ample territory, wealth and power,
Civility of manners, arts and arms,

And long renown, thou justly may'st prefer
 Before the Parthian. These two thrones except,
 The rest are barbarous, and scarce worth the sight,
 Shared among petty kings too far removed;
 These having shewn thee, I have shewn thee all
 The kingdoms of the world, and all their glory.

This Emperor hath no son, and now is old, 90

Old and lascivious, and from Rome retired
 To Capreae, an island small but strong
 On the Campanian shore, with purpose there
 His horrid lusts in private to enjoy;
 Committing to a wicked favourite
 All public cares, and yet of him suspicious;
 Hated of all, and hating. With what ease,
 Endued with regal virtues as thou art,
 Appearing, and beginning noble deeds,

Might'st thou expel this monster from his throne, 100

Now made a sty, and, in his place ascending,
 A victor-people free from servile yoke!
 And with my help thou may'st; to me the power
 Is given, and by that right I give it thee.
 Aim, therefore, at no less than all the world;
 Aim at the highest; without the highest attained,
 Will be for thee no sitting, or not long,
 On David's throne, be prophesied what will."

To whom the Son of God, unmoved, replied:--

"Nor doth this grandeur and majestic shew 110

Of luxury, though called magnificence,
 More than of arms before, allure mine eye,
 Much less my mind; though thou should'st add to tell
 Their sumptuous gluttonies, and gorgeous feasts
 On citron tables or Atlantic stone
 (For I have also heard, perhaps have read),
 Their wines of Setia, Cales, and Falerne,
 Chios and Crete, and how they quaff in gold,
 Crystal, and myrrhine cups, imbossed with gems

And studs of pearl--to me should'st tell, who thirst 120

And hunger still. Then embassies thou shew'st
 From nations far and nigh! What honour that,
 But tedious waste of time, to sit and hear
 So many hollow compliments and lies,
 Outlandish flatteries? Then proceed'st to talk
 Of the Emperor, how easily subdued,
 How gloriously. I shall, thou say'st, expel

A brutish monster: what if I withal
Expel a Devil who first made him such?

Let his tormentor, Conscience, find him out; 130

For him I was not sent, nor yet to free
That people, victor once, now vile and base,
Deservedly made vassal--who, once just,
Frugal, and mild, and temperate, conquered well,
But govern ill the nations under yoke,
Peeling their provinces, exhausted all
By lust and rapine; first ambitious grown
Of triumph, that insulting vanity;
Then cruel, by their sports to blood inured

Of fighting beasts, and men to beasts exposed; 140

Luxurious by their wealth, and greedier still,
And from the daily Scene effeminate.
What wise and valiant man would seek to free
These, thus degenerate, by themselves enslaved,
Or could of inward slaves make outward free?
Know, therefore, when my season comes to sit
On David's throne, it shall be like a tree
Spreading and overshadowing all the earth,
Or as a stone that shall to pieces dash

All monarchies besides throughout the world; 150

And of my Kingdom there shall be no end.
Means there shall be to this; but what the means
Is not for thee to know, nor me to tell."

To whom the Tempter, impudent, replied:--
"I see all offers made by me how slight
Thou valuest, because offered, and reject'st.
Nothing will please the difficult and nice,
Or nothing more than still to contradict.
On the other side know also thou that I

On what I offer set as high esteem, 160

Nor what I part with mean to give for naught,
All these, which in a moment thou behold'st,
The kingdoms of the world, to thee I give
(For, given to me, I give to whom I please),
No trifle; yet with this reserve, not else--
On this condition, if thou wilt fall down,
And worship me as thy superior Lord
(Easily done), and hold them all of me;
For what can less so great a gift deserve?"

Whom thus our Saviour answered with disdain:--

"I never liked thy talk, thy offers less;
 Now both abhor, since thou hast dared to utter
 The abominable terms, impious condition.
 But I endure the time, till which expired
 Thou hast permission on me. It is written,
 The first of all commandments, 'Thou shalt worship
 The Lord thy God, and only Him shalt serve.'
 And dar'st thou to the Son of God propound
 To worship thee, accursed? now more accursed

For this attempt, bolder than that on Eve, 180

180 And more blasphemous; which expect to rue.
 The kingdoms of the world to thee were given!
 Permitted rather, and by thee usurped;
 Other donation none thou canst produce.
 If given, by whom but by the King of kings,
 God over all supreme? If given to thee,
 By thee how fairly is the Giver now
 Repaid! But gratitude in thee is lost
 Long since. Wert thou so void of fear or shame

As offer them to me, the Son of God-- 190

To me my own, on such abhorred pact,
 That I fall down and worship thee as God?
 Get thee behind me! Plain thou now appear'st
 That Evil One, Satan for ever damned."

To whom the Fiend, with fear abashed, replied:--

"Be not so sore offended, Son of God--
 Though Sons of God both Angels are and Men--
 If I, to try whether in higher sort
 Than these thou bear'st that title, have proposed

What both from Men and Angels I receive, 200

Tetrarchs of Fire, Air, Flood, and on the Earth
 Nations besides from all the quartered winds--
 God of this World invoked, and World beneath.
 Who then thou art, whose coming is foretold
 To me most fatal, me it most concerns.
 The trial hath indamaged thee no way,
 Rather more honour left and more esteem;
 Me naught advantaged, missing what I aimed.
 Therefore let pass, as they are transitory,

The kingdoms of this world; I shall no more 210

Advise thee; gain them as thou canst, or not.
 And thou thyself seem'st otherwise inclined
 Than to a worldly crown, addicted more
 To contemplation and profound dispute;

As by that early action may be judged,
 When, slipping from thy mother's eye, thou went'st
 Alone into the Temple, there wast found
 Among the gravest Rabbies, disputant
 On points and questions fitting Moses' chair,

Teaching, not taught. The childhood shews the man, 220

As morning shews the day. Be famous, then,
 By wisdom; as thy empire must extend,
 So let extend thy mind o'er all the world
 In knowledge; all things in it comprehend.
 All knowledge is not couched in Moses' law,
 The Pentateuch, or what the Prophets wrote;
 The Gentiles also know, and write, and teach
 To admiration, led by Nature's light;
 And with the Gentiles much thou must converse,

Ruling them by persuasion, as thou mean'st. 230

Without their learning, how wilt thou with them,
 Or they with thee, hold conversation meet?
 How wilt thou reason with them, how refute
 Their idolisms, traditions, paradoxes?
 Error by his own arms is best evinced.
 Look once more, ere we leave this specular mount,
 Westward, much nearer by south-west; behold
 Where on the AEgean shore a city stands,
 Built nobly, pure the air and light the soil--

Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts 240

And Eloquence, native to famous wits
 Or hospitable, in her sweet recess,
 City or suburban, studious walks and shades.
 See there the olive-grove of Academe,
 Plato's retirement, where the Attic bird
 Trills her thick-warbled notes the summer long;
 There, flowery hill, Hymettus, with the sound
 Of bees' industrious murmur, oft invites
 To studious musing; there Ilissus rowls

His whispering stream. Within the walls then view 250

The schools of ancient sages--his who bred
 Great Alexander to subdue the world,
 Lyceum there; and painted Stoa next.
 There thou shalt hear and learn the secret power
 Of harmony, in tones and numbers hit
 By voice or hand, and various-measured verse,
 AEolian charms and Dorian lyric odes,
 And his who gave them breath, but higher sung,

Blind Melesigenes, thence Homer called,

Whose poem Phoebus challenged for his own. 260

Thence what the lofty grave Tragedians taught
 In chorus or iambic, teachers best
 Of moral prudence, with delight received
 In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
 Of fate, and chance, and change in human life,
 High actions and high passions best describing.
 Thence to the famous Orators repair,
 Those ancient whose resistless eloquence
 Wielded at will that fierce democracy,

Shook the Arsenal, and fulminated over Greece 270

To Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne.
 To sage Philosophy next lend thine ear,
 From heaven descended to the low-roofed house
 Of Socrates--see there his tenement--
 Whom, well inspired, the Oracle pronounced
 Wisest of men; from whose mouth issued forth
 Mellifluous streams, that watered all the schools
 Of Academics old and new, with those
 Surnamed Peripatetics, and the sect

Epicurean, and the Stoic severe. 280

These here revolve, or, as thou likest, at home,
 Till time mature thee to a kingdom's weight;
 These rules will render thee a king complete
 Within thyself, much more with empire joined."

To whom our Saviour sagely thus replied:--
 "Think not but that I know these things; or, think
 I know them not, not therefore am I short
 Of knowing what I ought. He who receives
 Light from above, from the Fountain of Light,

No other doctrine needs, though granted true; 290

But these are false, or little else but dreams,
 Conjectures, fancies, built on nothing firm.
 The first and wisest of them all professed
 To know this only, that he nothing knew;
 The next to fabling fell and smooth conceits;
 A third sort doubted all things, though plain sense;
 Others in virtue placed felicity,
 But virtue joined with riches and long life;
 In corporal pleasure he, and careless ease;

The Stoic last in philosophic pride, 300

By him called virtue, and his virtuous man,
 Wise, perfect in himself, and all possessing,

Equal to God, oft shames not to prefer,
 As fearing God nor man, contemning all
 Wealth, pleasure, pain or torment, death and life--
 Which, when he lists, he leaves, or boasts he can;
 For all his tedious talk is but vain boast,
 Or subtle shifts conviction to evade.
 Alas! what can they teach, and not mislead,

Ignorant of themselves, of God much more, 310

And how the World began, and how Man fell,
 Degraded by himself, on grace depending?
 Much of the Soul they talk, but all awry;
 And in themselves seek virtue; and to themselves
 All glory arrogate, to God give none;
 Rather accuse him under usual names,
 Fortune and Fate, as one regardless quite
 Of mortal things. Who, therefore, seeks in these
 True wisdom finds her not, or, by delusion

Far worse, her false resemblance only meets, 320

An empty cloud. However, many books,
 Wise men have said, are wearisome; who reads
 Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
 A spirit and judgment equal or superior,
 (And what he brings what needs he elsewhere seek?)
 Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
 Deep-versed in books and shallow in himself,
 Crude or intoxicate, collecting toys
 And trifles for choice matters, worth a sponge,

As children gathering pebbles on the shore. 330

Or, if I would delight my private hours
 With music or with poem, where so soon
 As in our native language can I find
 That solace? All our Law and Story strewed
 With hymns, our Psalms with artful terms inscribed,
 Our Hebrew songs and harps, in Babylon
 That pleased so well our victor's ear, declare
 That rather Greece from us these arts derived--
 Ill imitated while they loudest sing

The vices of their deities, and their own, 340

In fable, hymn, or song, so personating
 Their gods ridiculous, and themselves past shame.
 Remove their swelling epithetes, thick-laid
 As varnish on a harlot's cheek, the rest,
 Thin-sown with aught of profit or delight,
 Will far be found unworthy to compare

With Sion's songs, to all true tastes excelling,
 Where God is praised aright and godlike men,
 The Holiest of Holies and his Saints

(Such are from God inspired, not such from thee); 350

Unless where moral virtue is expressed
 By light of Nature, not in all quite lost.
 Their orators thou then extoll'st as those
 The top of eloquence--statists indeed,
 And lovers of their country, as may seem;
 But herein to our Prophets far beneath,
 As men divinely taught, and better teaching
 The solid rules of civil government,
 In their majestic, unaffected style,

Than all the oratory of Greece and Rome. 360

In them is plainest taught, and easiest learnt,
 What makes a nation happy, and keeps it so,
 What ruins kingdoms, and lays cities flat;
 These only, with our Law, best form a king."

So spake the Son of God; but Satan, now
 Quite at a loss (for all his darts were spent),
 Thus to our Saviour, with stern brow, replied:--

"Since neither wealth nor honour, arms nor arts,
 Kingdom nor empire, pleases thee, nor aught

By me proposed in life contemplative 370

Or active, tended on by glory or fame,
 What dost thou in this world? The Wilderness
 For thee is fittest place: I found thee there,
 And thither will return thee. Yet remember
 What I foretell thee; soon thou shalt have cause
 To wish thou never hadst rejected, thus
 Nicely or cautiously, my offered aid,
 Which would have set thee in short time with ease
 On David's throne, or throne of all the world,

Now at full age, fulness of time, thy season, 380

When prophecies of thee are best fulfilled.
 Now, contrary--if I read aught in heaven,
 Or heaven write aught of fate--by what the stars
 Voluminous, or single characters
 In their conjunction met, give me to spell,
 Sorrows and labours, opposition, hate,
 Attends thee; scorns, reproaches, injuries,
 Violence and stripes, and, lastly, cruel death.
 A kingdom they portend thee, but what kingdom,

Real or allegoric, I discern not;

Nor when: eternal sure--as without end,
 Without beginning; for no date prefixed
 Directs me in the starry rubric set."

So saying, he took (for still he knew his power
 Not yet expired), and to the Wilderness
 Brought back, the Son of God, and left him there,
 Feigning to disappear. Darkness now rose,
 As daylight sunk, and brought in louring Night,
 Her shadowy offspring, unsubstantial both,

Privation mere of light and absent day. 400

Our Saviour, meek, and with untroubled mind
 After hisaerie jaunt, though hurried sore,
 Hungry and cold, betook him to his rest,
 Wherever, under some concourse of shades,
 Whose branching arms thick intertwined might shield
 From dews and damps of night his sheltered head;
 But, sheltered, slept in vain; for at his head
 The Tempter watched, and soon with ugly dreams
 Disturbed his sleep. And either tropic now

'Gan thunder, and both ends of heaven; the clouds 410

From many a horrid rift abortive poured
 Fierce rain with lightning mixed, water with fire,
 In ruin reconciled; nor slept the winds
 Within their stony caves, but rushed abroad
 From the four hinges of the world, and fell
 On the vexed wilderness, whose tallest pines,
 Though rooted deep as high, and sturdiest oaks,
 Bowed their stiff necks, loaden with stormy blasts,
 Or torn up sheer. Ill wast thou shrouded then,

O patient Son of God, yet only stood'st 420

Unshaken! Nor yet staid the terror there:
 Infernal ghosts and hellish furies round
 Environed thee; some howled, some yelled, some shrieked,
 Some bent at thee their fiery darts, while thou
 Sat'st unappalled in calm and sinless peace.
 Thus passed the night so foul, till Morning fair
 Came forth with pilgrim steps, in amice grey,
 Who with her radiant finger stilled the roar
 Of thunder, chased the clouds, and laid the winds,

And griesly spectres, which the Fiend had raised 430

To tempt the Son of God with terrors dire.
 And now the sun with more effectual beams
 Had cheered the face of earth, and dried the wet
 From drooping plant, or dropping tree; the birds,

Who all things now behold more fresh and green,
 After a night of storm so ruinous,
 Cleared up their choicest notes in bush and spray,
 To gratulate the sweet return of morn.
 Nor yet, amidst this joy and brightest morn,

Was absent, after all his mischief done, 440

The Prince of Darkness; glad would also seem
 Of this fair change, and to our Saviour came;
 Yet with no new device (they all were spent),
 Rather by this his last affront resolved,
 Desperate of better course, to vent his rage
 And mad despite to be so oft repelled.
 Him walking on a sunny hill he found,
 Backed on the north and west by a thick wood;
 Out of the wood he starts in wonted shape,

And in a careless mood thus to him said:-- 450

"Fair morning yet betides thee, Son of God,
 After a dismal night. I heard the wrack,
 As earth and sky would mingle; but myself
 Was distant; and these flaws, though mortals fear them,
 As dangerous to the pillared frame of Heaven,
 Or to the Earth's dark basis underneath,
 Are to the main as inconsiderable
 And harmless, if not wholesome, as a sneeze
 To man's less universe, and soon are gone.

Yet, as being oftentimes noxious where they light 460

On man, beast, plant, wasteful and turbulent,
 Like turbulencies in the affairs of men,
 Over whose heads they roar, and seem to point,
 They oft fore-signify and threaten ill.
 This tempest at this desert most was bent;
 Of men at thee, for only thou here dwell'st.
 Did I not tell thee, if thou didst reject
 The perfect season offered with my aid
 To win thy destined seat, but wilt prolong

All to the push of fate, pursue thy way 470

Of gaining David's throne no man knows when
 (For both the when and how is nowhere told),
 Thou shalt be what thou art ordained, no doubt;
 For Angels have proclaimed it, but concealing
 The time and means? Each act is rightliest done
 Not when it must, but when it may be best.
 If thou observe not this, be sure to find
 What I foretold thee--many a hard assay

Of dangers, and adversities, and pains,

Ere thou of Israel's sceptre get fast hold; 480

Whereof this ominous night that closed thee round,
So many terrors, voices, prodigies,
May warn thee, as a sure foregoing sign."

So talked he, while the Son of God went on,
And staid not, but in brief him answered thus:--

"Me worse than wet thou find'st not; other harm
Those terrors which thou speak'st of did me none.
I never feared they could, though noising loud
And threatening nigh: what they can do as signs

Betokening or ill-boding I contemn 490

As false portents, not sent from God, but thee;
Who, knowing I shall reign past thy preventing,
Obtrud'st thy offer'd aid, that I, accepting,
At least might seem to hold all power of thee,
Ambitious Spirit! and would'st be thought my God;
And storm'st, refused, thinking to terrify
Me to thy will! Desist (thou art discerned,
And toil'st in vain), nor me in vain molest."

To whom the Fiend, now swoln with rage, replied:--

"Then hear, O Son of David, virgin-born! 500

For Son of God to me is yet in doubt.
Of the Messiah I have heard foretold
By all the Prophets; of thy birth, at length
Announced by Gabriel, with the first I knew,
And of the angelic song in Bethlehem field,
On thy birth-night, that sung thee Saviour born.
From that time seldom have I ceased to eye
Thy infancy, thy childhood, and thy youth,
Thy manhood last, though yet in private bred;

Till, at the ford of Jordan, whither all 510

Flocked to the Baptist, I among the rest
(Though not to be baptized), by voice from Heaven
Heard thee pronounced the Son of God beloved.
Thenceforth I thought thee worth my nearer view
And narrower scrutiny, that I might learn
In what degree or meaning thou art called
The Son of God, which bears no single sense.
The Son of God I also am, or was;
And, if I was, I am; relation stands:

All men are Sons of God; yet thee I thought 520

In some respect far higher so declared.
Therefore I watched thy footsteps from that hour,

And followed thee still on to this waste wild,
 Where, by all best conjectures, I collect
 Thou art to be my fatal enemy.
 Good reason, then, if I beforehand seek
 To understand my adversary, who
 And what he is; his wisdom, power, intent;
 By parle or composition, truce or league,

To win him, or win from him what I can. 530

And opportunity I here have had
 To try thee, sift thee, and confess have found thee
 Proof against all temptation, as a rock
 Of adamant and as a centre, firm
 To the utmost of mere man both wise and good,
 Not more; for honours, riches, kingdoms, glory,
 Have been before contemned, and may again.
 Therefore, to know what more thou art than man,
 Worth naming the Son of God by voice from Heaven,

Another method I must now begin." 540

So saying, he caught him up, and, without wing
 Of hippogrif, bore through the air sublime,
 Over the wilderness and o'er the plain,
 Till underneath them fair Jerusalem,
 The Holy City, lifted high her towers,
 And higher yet the glorious Temple reared
 Her pile, far off appearing like a mount
 Of alabaster, topt with golden spires:
 There, on the highest pinnacle, he set

The Son of God, and added thus in scorn:-- 550

"There stand, if thou wilt stand; to stand upright
 Will ask thee skill. I to thy Father's house
 Have brought thee, and highest placed: highest is best.
 Now shew thy progeny; if not to stand,
 Cast thyself down. Safely, if Son of God;
 For it is written, 'He will give command
 Concerning thee to his Angels; in their hands
 They shall uplift thee, lest at any time
 Thou chance to dash thy foot against a stone.'"

To whom thus Jesus: "Also it is written,
 'Tempt not the Lord thy God.'" He said, and stood;
 But Satan, smitten with amazement, fell.
 As when Earth's son, Antaeus (to compare
 Small things with greatest), in Irassa strove
 With Jove's Alcides, and, oft foiled, still rose,
 Receiving from his mother Earth new strength,

560

Fresh from his fall, and fiercer grapple joined,
Throttled at length in the air expired and fell,
So, after many a foil, the Tempter proud,

Renewing fresh assaults, amidst his pride 570

Fell whence he stood to see his victor fall;
And, as that Theban monster that proposed
Her riddle, and him who solved it not devoured,
That once found out and solved, for grief and spite
Cast herself headlong from the Ismenian steep,
So, strook with dread and anguish, fell the Fiend,
And to his crew, that sat consulting, brought
Joyless triumphals of his hoped success,
Ruin, and desperation, and dismay,

Who durst so proudly tempt the Son of God. 580

So Satan fell; and straight a fiery globe
Of Angels on full sail of wing flew nigh,
Who on their plummy vans received Him soft
From his uneasy station, and upbore,
As on a floating couch, through the blithe air;
Then, in a flowery valley, set him down
On a green bank, and set before him spread
A table of celestial food, divine
Ambrosial fruits fetched from the Tree of Life,

And from the Fount of Life ambrosial drink, 590

That soon refreshed him wearied, and repaired
What hunger, if aught hunger, had impaired,
Or thirst; and, as he fed, Angelic quires
Sung heavenly anthems of his victory
Over temptation and the Tempter proud:--

"True Image of the Father, whether throned
In the bosom of bliss, and light of light
Conceiving, or, remote from Heaven, enshrined
In fleshly tabernacle and human form,

Wandering the wilderness--whatever place, 600

Habit, or state, or motion, still expressing
The Son of God, with Godlike force endued
Against the attempter of thy Father's throne
And thief of Paradise! Him long of old
Thou didst debel, and down from Heaven cast
With all his army; now thou hast avenged
Supplanted Adam, and, by vanquishing
Temptation, hast regained lost Paradise,
And frustrated the conquest fraudulent.

He never more henceforth will dare set foot

In paradise to tempt; his snares are broke.
 For, though that seat of earthly bliss be failed,
 A fairer Paradise is founded now
 For Adam and his chosen sons, whom thou,
 A Saviour, art come down to reinstall;
 Where they shall dwell secure, when time shall be,
 Of tempter and temptation without fear.
 But thou, Infernal Serpent! shalt not long
 Rule in the clouds. Like an autumnal star,

Or lightning, thou shalt fall from Heaven, trod down 620

Under his feet. For proof, ere this thou feel'st
 Thy wound (yet not thy last and deadliest wound)
 By this repulse received, and hold'st in Hell
 No triumph; in all her gates Abaddon rues
 Thy bold attempt. Hereafter learn with awe
 To dread the Son of God. He, all unarmed,
 Shall chase thee, with the terror of his voice,
 From thy demoniac holds, possession foul--
 Thee and thy legions; yelling they shall fly,

And beg to hide them in a herd of swine, 630

Lest he command them down into the Deep,
 Bound, and to torment sent before their time.
 Hail, Son of the Most High, heir of both Worlds,
 Queller of Satan! On thy glorious work
 Now enter, and begin to save Mankind."

Thus they the Son of God, our Saviour meek,
 Sung victor, and, from heavenly feast refreshed,
 Brought on his way with joy. He, unobserved,
 Home to his mother's house private returned.

The END.

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