



Paradise Regained

Milton, John, 1608-1674

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PARADISE REGAINED

THE FIRST BOOK

I, 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,

50 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
perfet 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, 130
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 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
perfet 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,

270 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 Heaven
opened her eternal doors, from whence
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 disdaining 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, bowling
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.

THE SECOND BOOK

MEANWHILE 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 complaints outbreathed:-- "Alas, from
what high hope to what relapse 30

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 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 complaints
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, 110
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 frequence 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,
Enerve, 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 260

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; 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 330
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 condemn,

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."

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
Æthereal, 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; 150 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 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,

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,
unadventrous. 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."

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 310 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
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.

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

Æmilian--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:--

170 "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 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
Ægean 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,

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; 390 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 loursing
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 dewes 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
ofttimes 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 offered 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 parole
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, 560

"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, 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

610 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.

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