

Chapter 14**Short Note on *Paradise Lost***

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Paradise Lost is an [epic poem](#) in [blank verse](#) by the English poet [John Milton](#) (1608–1674). The poem concerns the [biblical](#) story of the [fall of man](#): the temptation of [Adam and Eve](#) by the [fallen angel Satan](#) and their expulsion from the [Garden of Eden](#). The first version, published in 1667, consists of ten books with over ten thousand lines of [verse](#). A second edition followed in 1674, arranged into twelve books (in the manner of [Virgil's Aeneid](#)) with minor revisions throughout.^{[1][2]} It is considered to be Milton's [masterpiece](#), and it helped solidify his reputation as one of the greatest English poets of all time.^[3]

At the heart of *Paradise Lost* are the themes of free will and the moral consequences of disobedience. Milton seeks to "justify the ways of God to men," addressing questions of [predestination](#), [human agency](#), and the nature of [good and evil](#). The poem begins [in medias res](#), with Satan and his fallen angels cast into [Hell](#) after their failed rebellion against [God](#). Milton's Satan, portrayed with

both grandeur and tragic ambition, is one of the most complex and debated characters in literary history, particularly for his perceived heroism by some readers.

The poem's portrayal of Adam and Eve emphasizes their humanity, exploring their innocence before the Fall of Man and their subsequent awareness of sin. Through their story, Milton reflects on the complexities of [human relationships](#), the tension between individual freedom and obedience to divine law, and the possibility of [redemption](#). Despite their transgression, the poem ends on a note of hope, as Adam and Eve leave [Paradise](#) with the promise of salvation through [Christ](#).

Milton's epic has been praised for its linguistic richness, theological depth, and philosophical ambition. However, it has also sparked controversy, particularly for its portrayal of Satan, whom some readers interpret as a heroic or sympathetic figure. *Paradise Lost* continues to inspire scholars, writers, and artists, remaining a

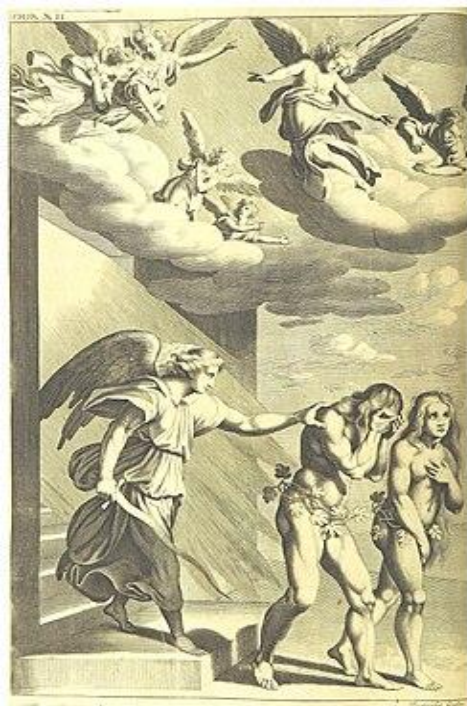
cornerstone of literary and theological discourse.

Milton's story has two narrative arcs, one about Satan (Lucifer) and the other about Adam and Eve. It begins after Satan and the other fallen angels have been defeated and banished to Hell, or, as it is also called in the poem, Tartarus. In Pandæmonium, the capital city of Hell, Satan employs his rhetorical skill to organise his followers; he is aided by Mammon and Beelzebub; Belial, Chemosh, and Moloch are also present. At the end of the debate, Satan volunteers to corrupt the newly created Earth and God's new and most favoured creation, Mankind. He braves the dangers of the Abyss alone, in a manner reminiscent of Odysseus or Aeneas. After an arduous traversal of the Chaos

outside Hell, he enters God's new material World, and later the Garden of Eden.

At several points in the poem, an Angelic War over Heaven is recounted from different perspectives. Satan's rebellion follows the epic convention of large-scale warfare. The battles between the faithful angels and Satan's forces take place over three days. At the final battle, the Son of God single-handedly defeats the entire legion of angelic rebels and banishes them from Heaven. Following this purge, God creates the World, culminating in his creation of Adam and Eve. While God gave Adam and Eve total freedom and power to rule over all creation, he gave them one explicit command: not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil on penalty of death. It is less often related that God was afraid that they would eat the fruit of the tree of life, and live forever.

Adam and Eve are presented as having a romantic and sexual relationship while still being without sin. They have passions and distinct personalities. Satan, disguised in the form of a serpent, successfully tempts Eve to eat from the Tree by preying on her vanity and tricking her with rhetoric. Adam, learning that Eve has sinned, knowingly commits the same sin. He declares to Eve that since she was made from his flesh, they



are bound to one another – if she dies, he must also die. In this manner, Milton portrays Adam as a heroic figure, but also as a greater sinner than Eve, as he is aware that what he is doing is wrong.

Image extracted from page 362 of *The Poetical Works of John Milton. Containing Paradise Lost. Paradise Regained. Samson Agonistes, and his Poems on several occasions, by Milton, John, Michael Burghers* (1695).

After eating the fruit, Adam and Eve experience lust for the first time, which renders their next sexual encounter with one another unpleasant. At first, Adam is convinced that Eve was right in thinking that eating the fruit would be beneficial. However, they soon fall asleep and have terrible nightmares, and after they awake, they experience guilt and shame for the first time. Realising that they have committed a terrible act against God, they engage in mutual recrimination.

Meanwhile, Satan returns triumphantly to Hell, amid the praise of his fellow fallen angels. He tells them about how their scheme worked and Mankind has fallen, giving them complete dominion over Paradise. As he finishes his speech, however, the fallen angels around him become hideous snakes, and soon enough, Satan himself turns into a snake, deprived

of limbs and unable to talk. Thus, they share the same punishment, as they shared the same guilt.

Eve appeals to Adam for reconciliation of their actions. Her encouragement enables them to approach God, and plead for forgiveness. In a vision shown to him by the Archangel Michael, Adam witnesses everything that will happen to Mankind until the Great Flood. Adam is very upset by this vision of the future, so Michael also tells him about Mankind's potential redemption from original sin through Jesus Christ (whom Michael calls "King Messiah"). Adam and Eve are cast out of Eden, and Michael says that Adam may find "a paradise within thee, happier far". Adam and Eve now have a more distant relationship with God, who is omnipresent but invisible (unlike the tangible Father in the Garden of Eden).

It is uncertain when Milton composed *Paradise Lost*.^[4] [John Aubrey](#) (1626–1697), Milton's contemporary and biographer, says that it was written between 1658 and 1663.^[5] However, parts of the poem had likely been in development since Milton was young.^[5] Having gone blind in 1652, Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* entirely through [dictation](#) with the help of [amanuenses](#) and friends. He was often ill,

suffering from [gout](#), and suffering emotionally after the early death of his second wife, Katherine Woodcock, in 1658, and their infant daughter.^[6] The image of Milton dictating the poem to his daughters became a popular subject for paintings, especially in the [Romantic](#) period.^[7]

The Milton scholar John Leonard also notes that Milton "did not at first plan to write a

biblical epic".^[5] Since epics were typically written about heroic kings and queens (and with pagan gods), Milton originally envisioned his epic to be based on a legendary [Saxon](#) or [British](#) king like the legend of [King Arthur](#).^{[8][9]} Leonard speculates that the [English Civil War](#) interrupted Milton's earliest attempts to start his "epic [poem] that would encompass all space and time"