



*Book VI, Lines 207-209*

Milton's  
**Paradise  
Lost**

*A Poem, in Twelve Books*

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# Book I

## The Argument

*The First Book proposes, first in brief, the whole subject, man's disobedience, and the loss thereupon of Paradise, wherein he was placed; then touches the prime cause of his fall, the Serpent, or rather Satan in the Serpent; who, revolting from God, and drawing to his side many legions of angels, was, by the command of God, driven out of Heaven, with all his crew, into the great deep. Which action passed over, the Poem hastens into the midst of things, presenting Satan with his angels now falling into Hell, described here, not in the center, for Heaven and Earth may be supposed as yet not made, certainly not yet accursed, but in a place of utter darkness, fitliest called Chaos. Here Satan, with his angels, lying on the burning lake, thunderstruck and astonished, after a certain space recovers, as from confusion, calls up to him who next in order and dignity lay by him; they confer of their miserable fall; Satan awakens all his legions, who lay till then in the same manner confounded. They rise; their numbers; array of battle; their chief leaders named, according to the idols known afterward in Canaan and the countries adjoining. To these Satan directs his speech, comforts them with hope yet of regaining Heaven, but tells them lastly of a new world, and a new kind of creature to be created, according to an ancient prophecy, or report in Heaven; for, that angels were long before this visible creation, was the opinion of many ancient fathers. To find out the truth of this prophecy, and what to determine thereon, he refers to a full council. What his associates thence attempt. Pandemonium, the palace of Satan, rises, suddenly built out of the deep: the infernal peers there sit in council.*



**F** Man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the World, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,

Sing, heavenly Muse, that, on the secret top  
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire  
That shepherd<sup>1</sup> who first taught the chosen seed  
In the beginning how the heavens and earth  
Rose out of Chaos: or, if Sion hill  
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook<sup>2</sup> that flowed  
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence  
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,  
That with no middle flight intends to soar  
Above the Aonian mount,<sup>3</sup> while it pursues  
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.  
And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer  
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,  
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first  
Was present, and, with mighty wings outspread,  
Dove-like satst brooding<sup>4</sup> on the vast Abyss,  
And madest it pregnant: what in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support;  
That, to the height of this great argument,  
I may assert Eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.

Say first—for Heaven hides nothing from thy view,  
Nor the deep tract of Hell—say first what cause  
Moved our grand parents,<sup>5</sup> in that happy state,  
Favoured of Heaven so highly, to fall off  
From their Creator, and transgress his will  
For one restraint, lords of the World besides.  
Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?

The infernal Serpent; he it was whose guile,  
Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived  
The mother of mankind, what time his pride

<sup>1</sup> **Shepherd:**  
Moses

<sup>2</sup> **Siloa's brook:**  
a small brook that  
flowed near the  
Temple of  
Jerusalem

<sup>3</sup> **Aonian mount:**  
Mount Helicon, the  
seat of the Greek  
Muses; the poet  
aims at higher  
things than could  
have come from  
their inspiration.

<sup>4</sup> **Genesis 1:2,**  
"The earth was  
without form and  
void, and darkness  
was over the face of  
the deep. And the  
Spirit of God was  
hovering over the  
face of the waters."

<sup>5</sup> **Grand parents:**  
first, or great  
parents; Adam and  
Eve

Had cast him out from Heaven, with all his host  
 Of rebel angels, by whose aid, aspiring  
 To set himself in glory above his peers,  
 He trusted to have equalled the Most High,  
 If he opposed, and with ambitious aim  
 Against the throne and monarchy of God,  
 Raised impious war in Heaven and battle proud,  
 With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power  
 Hurl'd headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,  
 With hideous ruin and combustion, down  
 To bottomless perdition, there to dwell  
 In adamantin<sup>6</sup> chains and penal fire,  
 Who durst<sup>7</sup> defy the Omnipotent to arms.

<sup>6</sup>Adamantine:  
 unbreakable

<sup>7</sup>Durst:  
 dared

Nine times the space that measures day and night  
 To mortal men, he, with his horrid crew,  
 Lay vanquished, rolling in the fiery gulf,  
 Confounded, though immortal. But his doom  
 Reserved him to more wrath; for now the thought  
 Both of lost happiness and lasting pain  
 Torments him: round he throws his baleful eyes,  
 That witnessed huge affliction and dismay,  
 Mixed with obdurate<sup>8</sup> pride and steadfast hate.  
 At once, as far as angels ken,<sup>9</sup> he views  
 The dismal situation waste and wild.

<sup>8</sup>Obdurate:  
 impenitent,  
 hardened in sin

<sup>9</sup>Ken:  
 know

A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,  
 As one great furnace flamed; yet from those flames  
 No light; but rather darkness visible  
 Served only to discover sights of woe,  
 Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace  
 And rest can never dwell, hope never comes  
 That comes to all, but torture without end



Book I, Lines 44-45

Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed  
 With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed.  
 Such place Eternal Justice has prepared  
 For those rebellious; here their prison ordained  
 In utter darkness, and their portion set,  
 As far removed from God and light of Heaven  
 As from the center thrice to the utmost pole.  
 O how unlike the place from whence they fell!  
 There the companions of his fall, o'erwhelmed  
 With floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,  
 He soon discerns; and, weltering by his side,  
 One next himself in power, and next in crime,  
 Long after known in Palestine, and named  
 Beelzebub.<sup>10</sup> To whom the Arch-Enemy,  
 And thence in Heaven called Satan,<sup>11</sup> with bold words  
 Breaking the horrid silence, thus began:

“If thou beest he—but O how fallen! how changed  
 From him who, in the happy realms of light  
 Clothed with transcendent brightness, didst outshine  
 Myriads, though bright!—if he whom mutual league,  
 United thoughts and counsels, equal hope  
 And hazard in the glorious enterprise  
 Joined with me once, now misery hath joined  
 In equal ruin; into what pit thou seest  
 From what height fallen: so much the stronger proved  
 He with his thunder; and till then who knew  
 The force of those dire arms? Yet not for those,  
 Nor what the potent Victor in his rage  
 Can else inflict, do I repent, or change,  
 Though changed in outward lustre, that fixed mind,  
 And high disdain from sense of injured merit,

<sup>10</sup>**Beelzebub:**  
*“the lord of the  
 flies”*; see  
*2 Kings 1:2*

<sup>11</sup>**Satan:**  
*enemy or  
 adversary, in  
 Hebrew*

That with the Mightiest raised me to contend,  
 And to the fierce contentions brought along  
 Innumerable force of Spirits armed,  
 That durst dislike his reign, and, me preferring,  
 His utmost power with adverse power opposed  
 In dubious battle on the plains of Heaven,  
 And shook his throne. What though the field be lost?  
 All is not lost—the unconquerable will,  
 And study of revenge, immortal hate,  
 And courage never to submit or yield:  
 And what is else not to be overcome?  
 That glory never shall his wrath or might  
 Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace  
 With suppliant knee, and deify his power  
 Who, from the terror of this arm, so late  
 Doubted his empire—that were low indeed;  
 That were an ignominy<sup>12</sup> and shame beneath  
 This downfall; since, by fate, the strength of Gods,  
 And this empyreal<sup>13</sup> substance,<sup>14</sup> cannot fail;  
 Since, through experience of this great event,  
 In arms not worse, in foresight much advanced,  
 We may with more successful hope resolve  
 To wage by force or guile eternal war,  
 Irreconcilable to our grand foe,  
 Who now triumphs, and in the excess of joy  
 Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heaven.”

So spake the apostate angel, though in pain,  
 Vaunting aloud, but racked with deep despair;  
 And him thus answered soon his bold compeer:<sup>15</sup>

“O Prince, O Chief of many throned Powers  
 That led the embattled Seraphim<sup>16</sup> to war

<sup>12</sup>**Ignominy:**  
*disgrace, dishonor,  
 or infamy*

<sup>13</sup>**Empyreal:**  
*a fiery substance,  
 formed of pure fire  
 or light*

<sup>14</sup>**Psalm 104:4,**  
*“...he makes his  
 messengers winds,  
 his ministers a  
 flaming fire...”*

<sup>15</sup>**Compeer:**  
*a person of equal  
 rank, a comrade  
 or companion*

<sup>16</sup>**Seraphim:**  
*an order of celestial  
 beings, conceived as  
 fiery and purifying  
 ministers of God*

Under thy conduct, and, in dreadful deeds  
 Fearless, endangered Heaven's perpetual King,  
 And put to proof his high supremacy,  
 Whether upheld by strength, or chance, or fate,  
 Too well I see and rue the dire event  
 That, with sad overthrow and foul defeat,  
 Hath lost us Heaven, and all this mighty host  
 In horrible destruction laid thus low,  
 As far as Gods and heavenly Essences  
 Can perish: for the mind and spirit remains  
 Invincible, and vigour soon returns,  
 Though all our glory extinct, and happy state  
 Here swallowed up in endless misery.  
 But what if he our Conqueror (whom I now  
 Of force believe almighty, since no less  
 Than such could have o'erpowered such force as ours)  
 Have left us this our spirit and strength entire,  
 Strongly to suffer and support our pains,  
 That we may so suffice<sup>17</sup> his vengeful ire,  
 Or do him mightier service as his thralls<sup>18</sup>  
 By right of war, whate'er his business be,  
 Here in the heart of Hell to work in fire,  
 Or do his errands in the gloomy Deep?  
 What can it then avail though yet we feel  
 Strength undiminished, or eternal being  
 To undergo eternal punishment?"

Whereto with speedy words the Arch-Fiend replied:  
 "Fallen Cherub,<sup>19</sup> to be weak is miserable,  
 Doing or suffering: but of this be sure—  
 To do aught good never will be our task,  
 But ever to do ill our sole delight,

<sup>17</sup>**Suffice:**  
satisfy

<sup>18</sup>**Thralls:**  
Anglo-Saxon  
for slaves

<sup>19</sup>**Cherub:**  
a winged  
angelic being

As being the contrary to his high will  
 Whom we resist. If then his providence  
 Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,  
 Our labour must be to pervert that end,  
 And out of good still to find means of evil;  
 Which ofttimes may succeed so as perhaps  
 Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb  
 His inmost counsels from their destined aim.  
 But see! the angry Victor hath recalled  
 His ministers of vengeance and pursuit  
 Back to the gates of Heaven: the sulphurous hail,  
 Shot after us in storm, o'erblown hath laid  
 The fiery surge that from the precipice  
 Of Heaven received us falling; and the thunder,  
 Winged with red lightning and impetuous rage,  
 Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now  
 To bellow through the vast and boundless Deep.  
 Let us not slip the occasion, whether scorn  
 Or satiate fury yield it from our foe.  
 Seest thou yon dreary plain, forlorn and wild,  
 The seat of desolation, void of light,  
 Save what the glimmering of these livid flames  
 Casts pale and dreadful? Thither let us tend  
 From off the tossing of these fiery waves;  
 There rest, if any rest can harbour there;  
 And, re-assembling our afflicted powers,  
 Consult how we may henceforth most offend  
 Our enemy, our own loss how repair,  
 How overcome this dire calamity,  
 What reinforcement we may gain from hope,  
 If not, what resolution from despair."

Thus Satan, talking to his nearest mate,  
 With head uplift above the wave, and eyes  
 That sparkling blazed; his other parts besides  
 Prone on the flood, extended long and large,  
 Lay floating many a rood,<sup>20</sup> in bulk as huge  
 As whom the fables name of monstrous size,  
 Titanian<sup>21</sup> or Earth-born, that warred on Jove,  
 Briareos<sup>22</sup> or Typhon<sup>23</sup>, whom the den  
 By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast  
 Leviathan, which God of all his works  
 Created hugest that swim the ocean-stream.  
 Him, haply slumbering on the Norway foam,  
 The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff,  
 Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,  
 With fixed anchor in his scaly rind,  
 Moors by his side under the lee, while night  
 Invests the sea, and wished morn delays.  
 So stretched out huge in length the Arch-Fiend lay,  
 Chained on the burning lake; nor ever thence  
 Had risen, or heaved his head, but that the will  
 And high permission of all-ruling Heaven  
 Left him at large to his own dark designs,  
 That with reiterated crimes he might  
 Heap on himself damnation, while he sought  
 Evil to others, and enraged might see  
 How all his malice served but to bring forth  
 Infinite goodness, grace, and mercy, shewn  
 On man by him seduced, but on himself  
 Treble confusion, wrath, and vengeance poured.

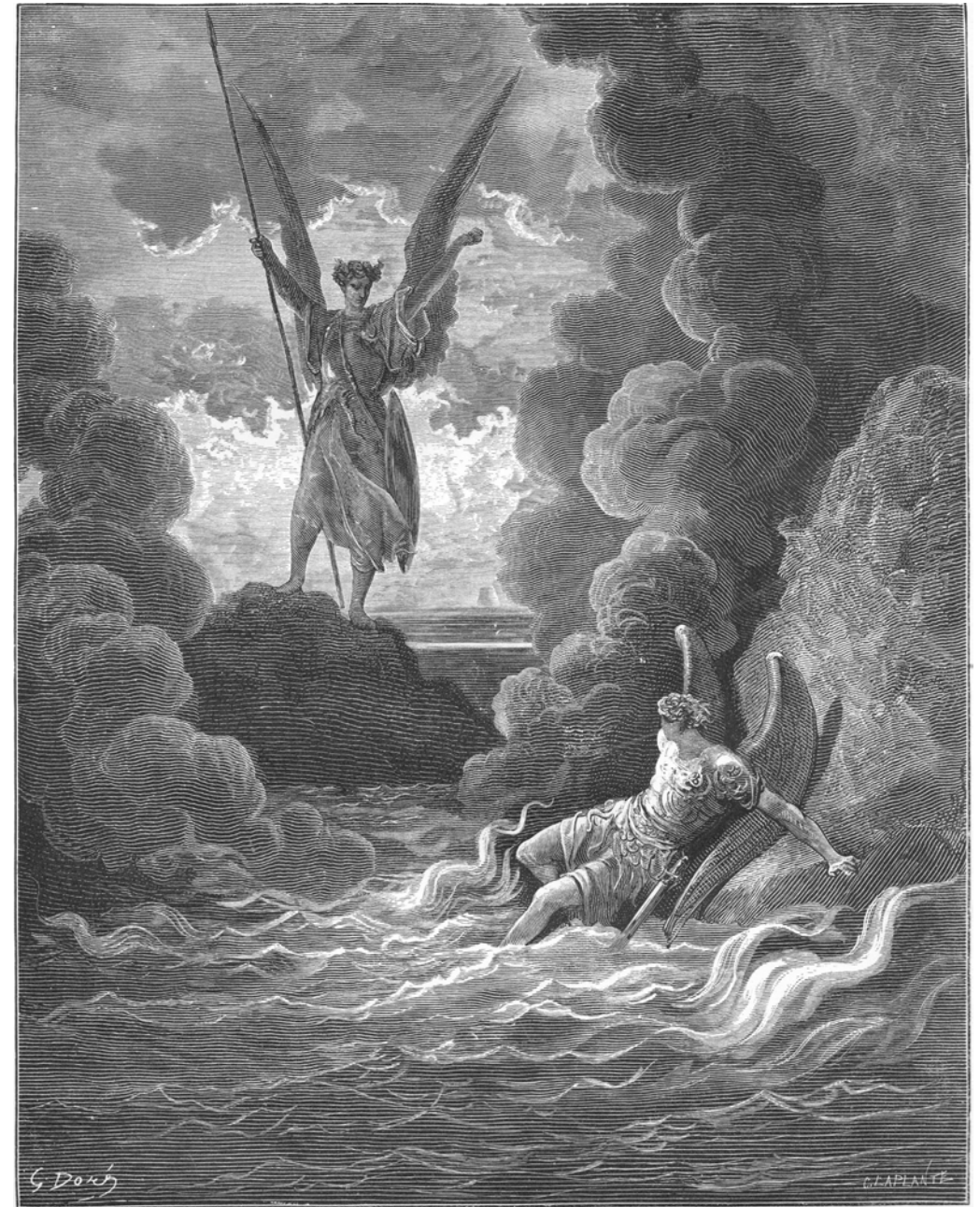
Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool  
 His mighty stature; on each hand the flames

<sup>20</sup>**Rood:**  
*a square measure  
 usually equal to  
 1/4 of an acre*

<sup>21</sup>**Titanian:**  
*the Titans, giants  
 in Greek mythology  
 who made war  
 upon the gods*

<sup>22</sup>**Briareos:**  
*a monster with a  
 hundred heads said  
 to have given  
 victory to the gods  
 over the Titans*

<sup>23</sup>**Typhon:**  
*a tempest-  
 producing and  
 sometimes a fire-  
 breathing giant*



Book I, LINES 221-222