



Paradise Lost

John Milton

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Paradise Lost is an epic poem in blank verse by the 17th-century English poet John Milton. It was originally published in 1667 (though written nearly ten years earlier) in ten books, with a total of over ten thousand individual lines of verse. A second edition followed in 1674, redivided into twelve books (in the manner of the division of Virgil's Aeneid) with minor revisions throughout and a note on the versification; most of the poem was written while Milton was blind, and was transcribed for him. The poem concerns the Christian 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. Milton's purpose, stated in Book I, is to "justify the ways of God to men" and elucidate the conflict between God's eternal foresight and free will. Although the primary event in the epic is about the Fall of Man, the character Satan serves as an anti-hero and as a prominent driving force in the plot. His depiction has fascinated critics, some of which have interpreted Paradise Lost as a poem questioning the church's power (a common theme during the English Renaissance) rather than only a description of the fall of Adam and Eve. Milton incorporates Paganism, classical mythology, and Christianity into the poem. While Milton's principal goal in the work is to give a compelling Theodicy, he nevertheless deals with a range of topics, from marriage to politics (Milton was politically active during the time of the English Civil War). Many difficult theological issues are deliberately addressed, including fate, predestination, the Trinity, the introduction of sin and death into the world, as well as the nature of angels, fallen angels, Satan and the war in heaven. Milton draws on his knowledge of languages, and diverse sources — primarily Genesis, much of the New Testament, the deuterocanonical Book of Enoch, and other parts of the Old Testament. Milton's epic is often considered one of the greatest literary works in the English language, along with those of Shakespeare.

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