

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-62006-3 - John Milton: Paradise Lost: Books V and VI

Edited by A. W. Verity

Excerpt

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PARADISE LOST.

BOOK V.

V. M. V.

I

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THE ARGUMENT.

Morning approached, Eve relates to Adam her troublesome dream ; he likes it not, yet comforts her : they come forth to their day labours : their morning hymn at the door of their bower. God, to render Man inexcusable, sends Raphael to admonish him of his obedience, of his free estate, of his enemy near at hand—who he is, and why his enemy, and whatever else may avail Adam to know. Raphael comes down to Paradise ; his appearance described ; his coming discerned by Adam afar off, sitting at the door of his bower ; he goes out to meet him, brings him to his lodge, entertains him with the choicest fruits of Paradise got together by Eve ; their discourse at table. Raphael performs his message, minds Adam of his state and of his enemy ; relates, at Adam's request, who that enemy is, and how he came to be so, beginning from his first revolt in Heaven, and the occasion thereof ; how he drew his legions after him to the parts of the North, and there incited them to rebel with him, persuading all but only Abdiel, a Seraph, who in argument dissuades and opposes him, then forsakes him.

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NOW Morn, her rosy steps in the eastern clime
 Advancing, sowed the earth with orient pearl,
 When Adam waked, so custom'd; for his sleep
 Was airy light, from pure digestion bred,
 And temperate vapours bland, which the only sound
 Of leaves and fuming rills, Aurora's fan,
 Lightly dispersed, and the shrill matin song
 Of birds on every bough; so much the more
 His wonder was to find unawaken'd Eve
 With tresses discomposed, and glowing cheek, 10
 As through unquiet rest. He, on his side
 Leaning half-raised, with looks of cordial love
 Hung over her enamour'd, and beheld
 Beauty, which, whether waking or asleep,
 Shot forth peculiar graces; then, with voice
 Mild as when Zephyrus on Flora breathes,
 Her hand soft touching, whispered thus: "Awake,
 My fairest, my espous'd, my latest found,
 Heaven's last, best gift, my ever-new delight!
 Awake! the morning shines, and the fresh field 20
 Calls us; we lose the prime, to mark how spring
 Our tended plants, how blows the citron grove,

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What drops the myrrh, and what the balmy reed,
 How Nature paints her colours, how the bee
 Sits on the bloom extracting liquid sweet."

Such whispering waked her, but with startled eye
 On Adam, whom embracing, thus she spake :

"O sole in whom my thoughts find all repose,
 My glory, my perfection! glad I see
 Thy face, and morn returned ; for I this night 30

(Such night till this I never passed) have dreamed,

If dreamed, not, as I oft am wont, of thee,

Works of day past, or morrow's next design,

But of offence and trouble, which my mind

Knew never till this irksome night. Methought,

Close at mine ear one called me forth to walk

With gentle voice ; I thought it thine. It said,

'Why sleep'st thou, Eve? now is the pleasant time,

The cool, the silent, save where silence yields

To the night-warbling bird, that now awake 40

Tunes sweetest his love-laboured song ; now reigns

Full-orbed the moon, and, with more pleasing light,

Shadowy sets off the face of things—in vain,

If none regard. Heaven wakes with all his eyes,

Whom to behold but thee, Nature's desire,

In whose sight all things joy, with ravishment

Attracted by thy beauty still to gaze?'

I rose as at thy call, but found thee not :

To find thee I directed then my walk ;

And on, methought, alone I passed through ways 50

That brought me on a sudden to the Tree

Of interdicted Knowledge. Fair it seemed,

Much fairer to my fancy than by day ;

And, as I wondering looked, beside it stood

One shaped and winged like one of those from Heaven

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BOOK V.

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By us oft seen: his dewy locks distilled
 Ambrosia. On that Tree he also gazed;
 And, 'O fair plant,' said he, 'with fruit surcharged,
 Deigns none to ease thy load and taste thy sweet,
 Nor god, nor man? Is knowledge so despised? 60
 Or envy, or what reserve forbids to taste?
 Forbid who will, none shall from me withhold
 Longer thy offered good, why else set here?'
 This said, he paused not, but with venturous arm
 He plucked, he tasted. Me damp horror chilled
 At such bold words vouched with a deed so bold;
 But he thus, overjoyed: 'O fruit divine,
 Sweet of thyself, but much more sweet thus cropped,
 Forbidden here, it seems, as only fit
 For gods, yet able to make gods of men! 70
 And why not gods of men, since good, the more
 Communicated, more abundant grows,
 The author not impaired, but honoured more?
 Here, happy creature, fair angelic Eve,
 Partake thou also: happy though thou art,
 Happier thou may'st be, worthier canst not be;
 Taste this, and be henceforth among the gods
 Thyself a goddess; not to Earth confined,
 But sometimes in the Air, as we; sometimes
 Ascend to Heaven, by merit thine, and see 80
 What life the gods live there, and such live thou.'
 So saying, he drew nigh, and to me held,
 Even to my mouth of that same fruit held part
 Which he had plucked; the pleasant savoury smell
 So quickened appetite that I, methought,
 Could not but taste. Forthwith up to the clouds
 With him I flew, and underneath beheld
 The Earth outstretched immense, a prospect wide

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PARADISE LOST.

And various: wondering at my flight and change
 To this high exaltation, suddenly 90
 My guide was gone, and I, methought, sunk down,
 And fell asleep; but, O, how glad I waked
 To find this but a dream!" Thus Eve her night
 Related, and thus Adam answered sad:
 "Best image of myself, and dearer half,
 The trouble of thy thoughts this night in sleep
 Affects me equally; nor can I like
 This uncouth dream, of evil sprung, I fear,
 Yet evil whence? in thee can harbour none,
 Created pure. But know that in the soul 100
 Are many lesser faculties, that serve
 Reason as chief; among these Fancy next
 Her office holds; of all external things,
 Which the five watchful senses represent,
 She forms imaginations, aery shapes,
 Which Reason, joining or disjoining, frames
 All what we affirm or what deny, and call
 Our knowledge or opinion; then retires
 Into her private cell when Nature rests.
 Oft in her absence mimic Fancy wakes 110
 To imitate her; but, misjoining shapes,
 Wild work produces oft, and most in dreams,
 Ill matching words and deeds long past or late.
 Some such resemblances, methinks, I find
 Of our last evening's talk in this thy dream,
 But with addition strange; yet be not sad:
 Evil into the mind of god or man
 May come and go, so unapproved, and leave
 No spot or blame behind; which gives me hope
 That what in sleep thou didst abhor to dream, 120
 Waking thou never wilt consent to do.

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BOOK V.

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Be not disheartened, then, nor cloud those looks,
 That wont to be more cheerful and serene
 Than when fair Morning first smiles on the world;
 And let us to our fresh employments rise
 Among the groves, the fountains, and the flowers,
 That open now their choicest bosomed smells,
 Reserved from night, and kept for thee in store."

So cheered he his fair spouse, and she was cheered,
 But silently a gentle tear let fall 130
 From either eye, and wiped them with her hair;
 Two other precious drops that ready stood,
 Each in their crystal sluice, he, ere they fell,
 Kissed as the gracious signs of sweet remorse
 And pious awe, that feared to have offended.

So all was cleared, and to the field they haste.
 But first, from under shady arborous roof
 Soon as they forth were come to open sight
 Of day-spring, and the sun—who, scarce uprisen,
 With wheels yet hovering o'er the ocean-brim, 140
 Shot parallel to the Earth his dewy ray,
 Discovering in wide landskip all the east
 Of Paradise and Eden's happy plains—
 Lowly they bowed adoring, and began
 Their orisons, each morning duly paid
 In various style; for neither various style
 Nor holy rapture wanted they to praise
 Their Maker, in fit strains pronounced, or sung
 Unmeditated; such prompt eloquence
 Flowed from their lips, in prose or numerous verse, 150
 More tuneable than needed lute or harp
 To add more sweetness: and they thus began:

"These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
 Almighty! thine this universal frame,

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Thus wondrous fair: thyself how wondrous then!
 Unspeakable! who sitt'st above these Heavens
 To us invisible, or dimly seen
 In these thy lowest works; yet these declare
 Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine. 160
 Speak, ye who best can tell, ye Sons of Light,
 Angels, for ye behold him, and with songs
 And choral symphonies, day without night,
 Circle his throne rejoicing—ye in Heaven;
 On Earth join, all ye creatures, to extol
 Him first, him last, him midst, and without end.
 Fairest of stars, last in the train of night,
 If better thou belong not to the dawn,
 Sure pledge of day, that crown'st the smiling Morn
 With thy bright circlet, praise him in thy sphere 170
 While day arises, that sweet hour of prime.
 Thou Sun, of this great world both eye and soul,
 Acknowledge him thy greater; sound his praise
 In thy eternal course, both when thou climb'st,
 And when high noon hast gained, and when thou fall'st.
 Moon, that now meet'st the orient sun, now fliest,
 With the fixed stars, fixed in their orb that flies,
 And ye five other wandering Fires, that move
 In mystic dance not without song, resound
 His praise who out of darkness called up light.
 Air, and ye Elements, the eldest birth 180
 Of Nature's womb, that in quaternion run
 Perpetual circle, multiform, and mix
 And nourish all things, let your ceaseless change
 Vary to our great Maker still new praise.
 Ye Mists and Exhalations, that now rise
 From hill or steaming lake, dusky or gray,
 Till the sun paint your fleecy skirts with gold,

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In honour to the world's great Author rise ;
 Whether to deck with clouds the uncoloured sky,
 Or wet the thirsty earth with falling showers, 190
 Rising or falling still advance his praise.

His praise, ye Winds, that from four quarters blow,
 Breathe soft or loud ; and wave your tops, ye Pines,
 With every plant, in sign of worship wave.
 Fountains, and ye that warble, as ye flow,
 Melodious murmurs, warbling tune his praise.

Join voices, all ye living Souls ; ye Birds,
 That singing up to Heaven-gate ascend,
 Bear on your wings and in your notes his praise.

Ye that in waters glide, and ye that walk 200
 The earth, and stately tread, or lowly creep,
 Witness if I be silent, morn or even,
 To hill or valley, fountain, or fresh shade,
 Made vocal by my song, and taught his praise.
 Hail, universal Lord ! be bounteous still
 To give us only good ; and if the night
 Have gathered aught of evil, or concealed,
 Disperse it, as now light dispels the dark."

So prayed they innocent, and to their thoughts
 Firm peace recovered soon, and wonted calm. 210

On to their morning's rural work they haste,
 Among sweet dews and flowers ; where any row
 Of fruit-trees over-woody reached too far
 Their pampered boughs, and needed hands to check
 Fruitless embraces : or they led the vine
 To wed her elm ; she, spoused, about him twines
 Her marriageable arms, and with her brings
 Her dower, the adopted clusters, to adorn
 His barren leaves. Them thus employed beheld
 With pity Heaven's high King, and to him called 220

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PARADISE LOST.

Raphael, the sociable Spirit, that deigned
 To travel with Tobias, and secured
 His marriage with the seven-times-wedded maid.
 "Raphael," said he, "thou hear'st what stir on Earth
 Satan, from Hell scaped through the darksome gulf,
 Hath raised in Paradise, and how disturbed
 This night the human pair; how he designs
 In them at once to ruin all mankind.
 Go, therefore, half this day, as friend with friend,
 Converse with Adam, in what bower or shade 230
 Thou find'st him from the heat of noon retired
 To respite his day-labour with repast
 Or with repose; and such discourse bring on
 As may advise him of his happy state—
 Happiness in his power left free to will,
 Left to his own free will, his will though free
 Yet mutable; whence warn him to beware
 He swerve not, too secure. Tell him withal
 His danger, and from whom; what enemy,
 Late fallen himself from Heaven, is plotting now 240
 The fall of others from like state of bliss;
 By violence? no, for that shall be withstood;
 But by deceit and lies. This let him know,
 Lest wilfully transgressing he pretend
 Surprisal, unadmonished, unforwarned."
 So spake the Eternal Father, and fulfilled
 All justice; nor delayed the winged Saint
 After his charge received; but from among
 Thousand celestial Ardours, where he stood
 Veiled with his gorgeous wings, upspringing light, 250
 Flew through the midst of Heaven; the angelic quires,
 On each hand parting, to his speed gave way
 Through all the empyreal road, till, at the gate