

## Storytelling and Literature(38041-01)

Fall 2017

Chankil Park(ckpark@ewha.ac.kr, 316 Humanities Bd., Office Hour: by appointment,  
Tel: 02-3277-2160)

Class: 307 Hakwan, Tue 12:30-13:45/ Fri 14:00-15:15

**Course Description:** This course explores the various forms of storytelling written or performed in English Literature. Analyzing the various ways in which the art of storytelling has been adopted in the tradition of English Literature, we will focus on a couple of episodes from the Bible and the classical mythology which English writers have kept retelling or remaking time and again in the long history of English Literature. Some film adaptations of the stories in question will also be discussed along with the literary texts based on the same materials.

**Text:** A coursepack will be made available at the Copy Centre at the beginning of the semester. Other materials will be provided at my website [www.armytage.net](http://www.armytage.net)). Unless otherwise specified, supplemental reading materials and/ or handouts will be posted online prior to class. Visit our Cybercampus regularly for announcements and/ or course materials.

**Evaluation:** Attendance and Class Participation 10%, Papers 10%, Quizzes 10%, Mid-term Exam 35% Final Exam 35%

### Tentative Schedule

#### September

- 1 Introduction: Storytelling and Literature: General Introduction
- 5 **Christian Theology and Storytelling: an introduction**
- 8 Stories from the Bible: *Genesis* 1-3 and *The Book of Revelation* 20-22
- 12 from Milton's *Paradise Lost*(in Modern English Version)
- 15 continued
- 19 Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*
- 22 continued
- 26 from Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*
- 29 continued(Quiz1)

## October

- 3-9 **National Holidays**(Makeup Class 1)
- 10 Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Celestial Railroad"
- 13 continued
- 17 C.S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce* 9, 12, 13, 14
- 20 Q & A Session(in Korean)(Paper1)
- 24 **Midterm Exam**
- 27 **Midterm Exam Period for General Subjects**(Makeup Class 2)
- 31 **Greek and Roman Myth and Storytelling: an introduction**

## November

- 3 Ovid, from *Metamorphoses* Book 10(1-154)
- 7 continued, Book 11(1-84)
- 10 Philip Sidney, from *Astrophil and Stella*
- 14 Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Orpheus'
- 17 Hilda Doolittle, 'Eurydice'
- 21 Margaret Atwood, 'Orpheus(1)', 'Euridice', 'Orpheus(2)'
- 24 Review II
- 28 Pygmalion: Ovid, from *Metamorphoses* Book 10(238-97)(Quiz 2)

## December

- 1 Jean-Jacques Rousseau and William Mason, from 'Pygmalion: A Lyrical Scene'
- 5 Bernard Shaw, from *Pygmalion*
- 8 Robert Graves, 'Pygmalion to Galatea', 'Galatea and Pygmalion'
- 12 Angela Carter, from 'The Loves of Lady Purple'
- 15 Review II(Paper 2)
- 19 Final Exam

Makeup Class 1: 10/20, Film Viewing I: *What Dreams May Come*(1998): 17:00-19:00

Makeup Class 2: 12/15, Film Viewing II: *Ex Machina*(2015): 17:00-19:00

\*Reading Schedule is only tentative and some changes can take place also in the list of poems, which will be announced at the first class.

THE BLACKWELL COMPANION TO

# THE BIBLE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE



EDITED BY

Rebecca Lemon, Emma Mason,

Jonathan Roberts, and Christopher Rowland

 WILEY-BLACKWELL



## CHAPTER 1

# General Introduction

Rebecca Lemon, Emma Mason, and  
Jonathan Roberts

“The Bible and literature” is a more specific field than it might first appear, and differs significantly from the ostensibly similar fields of: (a) “literature and theology”; (b) “Christianity and literature”; (c) “religion and literature”; and (d) “the Bible as literature.” We begin by taking a moment to differentiate these projects as a means to showing where this volume sits in relation to them.

### Literature and Theology

A writer can be theologically complex but have comparatively little of the Bible in his or her work (for example, T. S. Eliot), or, by contrast, may freely deploy biblical allusion but have little obvious theology (such as Virginia Woolf). For this reason there is only a partial intersection between “theology and literature” and “the Bible and literature.” Studies within the former field are often strongly theorized, not least because of the symbiotic relationship between literary studies and theology. The theo-philosophical work of thinkers such as Paul Tillich, Paul Ricoeur, Hans Georg Gadamer, Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous, and Martin Buber, for example, has foreshadowed a modern theoretical re-evaluation of literature that in turn has given way to a renewed interest in religious questions. The religiously inflected critical inquiry of writers such as Geoffrey Hartman, Luce Irigaray, J. Hillis Miller, Terry Eagleton, and John Schad has developed this tradition further, and provoked Stanley Fish, writing in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2005), to declare that religion might “succeed high theory and race, gender and class as the centre of intellectual energy in academe.” The field is well served by the journal *Literature and Theology*, as well as the recent *Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*.

### Christianity and Literature

“Christianity and literature” is distinct from “the Bible and literature” both because the former (like “literature and theology”) need not address the Bible itself, and because

“Christianity and literature” implies a focus on a faith perspective, whereas “the Bible and literature” does not (one need not identify as Jewish or Christian to draw on the Bible). “Christianity and literature” has a different range from “literature and theology” because the former might consider, for example, ecclesiastical or liturgical matters that do not necessarily coincide with theology. The presence of vicars and parsonage life in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction may have much to say about the lived experience of Christianity as life under a social institution, but does not necessarily entail discussion of conventional theological concerns such as the Incarnation, Trinity, or Resurrection. In practice, however, the faith orientation of “Christianity and literature” does tend to press it in a more reflective, didactic, or occasionally evangelizing direction. In one sense, the field is as old as the New Testament, as Christian writers (such as Paul) can be seen rereading Jewish Scripture in the light of their new faith within the Bible itself. These early typological readings are extended through a long history of attempts to read Christian echoes in texts from *The Odyssey* through to *The Lord of the Rings*. In the twentieth century, J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis became both proponents and subjects of this approach, as Lewis’s 1944 essay “Myth Became Fact” and Joseph Pearce’s 1998 *Tolkien: Man and Myth* exemplify.

As with “literature and theology,” in addition to these author-based studies, there are numerous journals dedicated to the topic: “The Conference on Christianity and Literature” and its associated journal *Christianity and Literature* is one of the longest-standing. There have also been numerous anthologies of essays in this field including David Barratt et al, *The Discerning Reader: Christian Perspectives on Literature and Theory* (1995), and, more recently, Paul Cavill and Heather Ward’s *The Christian Tradition in English Literature: Poetry, Plays, and Shorter Prose* (2007).

## Religion and Literature

“Religion and literature” is of a different order of magnitude, as it no longer deals with one religious text, but potentially with many texts, many gods, and many varieties of religious experience. It overlaps with “literature and theology” but goes beyond the Judeo-Christian traditions into the major world religions (see Tomoko Masuzawa’s *The Invention of World Religions* for a helpful introduction to this area). The most inclusive of the categories discussed here, this area also includes work on psychology (Carl Jung), belief (Slavoj Žižek and John D. Caputo), and ethics (Richard Rorty and Donna Haraway). Journals such as *Religion and Literature* have long been connected with this field, while new series like Continuum’s eclectic “New Directions in Religion and Literature” are suggestive of the evolving range of approaches and relevant texts opened up by the interplay between the two disciplines.

## The Bible as Literature

The ongoing debate over the relationship between literature and the Bible is not a historical curiosity, but is grounded in the fact that the Bible itself is literature. As writers such as Murray Roston (*Prophet and Poet: the Bible and the Growth of Romanticism*, 1965)

argue, this idea materialized in the sixteenth century with the translation of the Bible into the vernacular, and again in the eighteenth century due to a newfound interest in the principles of Hebrew poetics. The story of that rediscovery can be found in this volume (see Stephen Prickett's introduction to the eighteenth century), but the reception of the Bible as a book of (among other things) poetry seems to have been a discovery for – and a surprise to – every generation since. The Romantic recognition of the biblical prophets as poets (and therefore Romantic poets' self-recognition as prophets) segued into newly articulated forms of agnosticism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that found “the Bible as literature” an agreeable solution to a text at the center of their culture, the nature of which had gradually come to seem less clear. One result of this is that the Bible itself comes to be repackaged in editions such as Charles Allen Dinsmore's *The English Bible as Literature* (1931) and Ernest Sutherland Bates's *The Bible Designed to be Read as Literature* (1937).

The current sustained wave of interest in the Bible as literature owes much to Frank Kermode and Robert Alter's *Literary Guide to the Bible* (1987), which was preceded by Kermode's *The Genesis of Secrecy* (1979) and Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (1981). At a time when literary theory was at the height of its influence in the 1980s, Kermode and Alter's work showed that it was of equal significance to the work of biblical scholars, and that the Bible is composed of many diverse and disruptive examples of linguistic play and meaning.

## “The Bible and Literature”

The range of studies pertaining to the fields outlined above is extensive. Nonetheless, many of the works (particularly academic monographs) written on “religion” and particular authors would not fall into any of these categories. This is because while religion has been the subject of an increasing focus in literary studies in recent years, this has taken place primarily via the recovery of historical contexts and period discourses. To take one example, the past decade or so has witnessed the publication of many books on Romantic religion. These books, however, have focused almost exclusively on the recovery of, for instance, the dissenting cultures of William Blake's London, rather than his engagement with the Bible itself. This is a generalization, but indicates a trend. So, while the recovery of a history and hermeneutics of religion has been wide-ranging and essential to the very field of religion and literature to which this volume speaks, consideration of the uses that specific writers have found for the Bible has been comparatively underplayed. The foundations for this collection, David Lyle Jeffrey's *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* (1992), Stephen Prickett and David Jasper's *The Bible and Literature: A Reader* (1999) and David Norton's *A History of the Bible as Literature* (2000), have begun to redress this anomaly. Jeffrey presents the reader with an encyclopedic resource book detailing the appearance of biblical images and characters in later literature; Prickett and Jasper construct a helpful teaching book, offering groupings of extracts of literary texts by theme; and Norton provides a thorough historical trajectory of the subject. The present volume supplements these works by offering sustained and detailed analyses of the use of the Bible by specific authors,

the majority of whom receive an entire chapter written by an expert on that particular writer. This volume also supplements these earlier studies by providing discussions, within many of the chapters, of the versions of the Bible available to, and influential on, these authors. As a result of this historical attention to Bible translation, both terms – “Bible” and “literature” – as engaged in this volume are capacious and mobile: there are varieties of Bibles influencing these authors, just as there are varieties of literature (drama, poetry, prose, memoir). The descriptor “the Bible and literature,” then, is a means to taking a kind of textual engagement as a common denominator, rather than any more qualitative judgment grounded in adherence to a particular tradition, or maintenance of a particular belief.

Accessibility has been a key aim of this volume, and we have attempted to commission essays that will be usable by the widest audience. As the principal audience is expected to be students of literature, we have sought to include authors who typically appear on undergraduate syllabi; this has meant a selection that could certainly be described as canonical, and located within a specific geography, since we have concentrated on writers who are British or who worked substantially in the British Isles. We hope that this volume might help to inspire scholars and/or students to undertake other, complementary studies of literature and the Bible, in languages other than English, in countries outside of Britain, and through a selection of authors more wide-ranging than we could undertake here. We thus offer this volume as an aid in understanding the vast influence of the Bible on English literature, rather than as a definitive and exhaustive study of the topic. There are, inevitably, omissions: while in the case of some authors, we would have liked to invite several scholars to have written on them, in the case of others, we had great difficulty commissioning anyone at all. This was an unexpected but instructive aspect of compiling the volume. We learned that the authors whom one might most quickly identify as “religious” and in whose critical reception “religion” has featured may not, in fact, have stimulated much (if any) discussion of their biblical usages; and often it is the least religious (or at least the most anti-clerical) writers – Byron, Blake, Lawrence, for example – who are the most biblical.

Perhaps the most difficult editorial decision concerned the date range of the volume. After much discussion and consultation we decided to stop at what is sometimes called “high modernism”: the writer born latest in the collection is T. S. Eliot. However, this was not, perhaps surprisingly, due to a diminished interest in the Bible among later twentieth and twenty-first century writers. Quite the reverse: had we gone later, there would be a wealth of choices: Douglas Coupland, William Golding, Graham Greene, Elizabeth Jennings, David Jones, C. S. Lewis, Philip Roth, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Jeanette Winterson, to name just a few. Amidst this range it would be difficult to make the sort of canonical selection that characterizes the rest of the volume; and length restrictions would mean that looking at some of the more interesting modern authors here would mean losing authors from earlier periods. As mentioned above, here too we hope that the volume offers a foundation for further study and research both into those authors we were unable to include and into new perspectives on those writers that are discussed here.

One of the most illuminating aspects of editing the collection has been seeing the different approaches that our contributors have taken to the subject matter. Without

wishing to attempt to provide a typology of approaches, a selection of the chapters that follow is noted here to indicate the variety of critical approaches to be found in this collection.

Catherine Clarke's essay on Old English poetry begins the medieval section, offering a history of the Bible as an object of aristocratic exchange. Clarke's approach helps to illuminate how, to a large degree, the study of the Bible and literature concerns the history of the book itself. In contrast to her attention to book and manuscript circulation in England, other authors such as Douglas Gray (the medieval religious lyric), Christiania Whitehead (Chaucer), and Carol Kaske (Spenser) illuminate the range of specific ways in which authors engage with the Bible in their literary production. We see how historical authors draw on the Bible in numerous ways: typologically, allegorically, figuratively, affectively, and liturgically, to name only a few. These chapters are suggestive of the flexibility of biblical engagement, which extends beyond intertextual reference. Yet close attention to the nature of intertextual reference is itself revealing and several essays in these opening sections concentrate on how authors favour specific sections of the Bible. Here, Jeanne Shami's essay on Donne is exemplary. In tracking Donne's engagement with both the Psalms and Paul, her chapter engages Donne's vast meditations on the Bible, ranging from his essays to his sermons to his devotions to his poems, demonstrating continuity within his diverse writings. Yet another approach in our medieval and early modern sections illuminates the relation between biography and faith. Michael Lieb's essay is particularly instructive on how and why Milton engages with the Bible; Lieb gives a keen sense of the drama of this engagement, tracing the variations and continuities in the form of Milton's biblical influences. Similarly, Rivkah Zim's essay illuminates how Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, produces her translation of the Psalms from her position as an activist Protestant aristocrat.

The chapters in the remaining three parts of the volume are no less various. Valentine Cunningham, for example, grants the reader access to Defoe's biblical world through an anatomy of Defoe's use of particular scriptural words. Michael Giffin, by contrast, steps back and discerns a set of grand biblical themes in Austen's work, locating a particular worldview and faith position that he shares as an Anglican priest. For Deanne Westbrook, Wordsworth's hidden biblical allusions materialize as figure and parable, modes of linguistic articulation able to accommodate divine mystery even as they acknowledge the "fallen" nature of language so prevalent in *The Prelude*. Penny Bradshaw's approach to Romantic women's poetry, on the other hand, implements a historio-feminist methodology to highlight how these writers engaged with the ostensibly patriarchal traditions of divine and biblical poetics. Focusing on Hannah More and Felicia Hemans, Bradshaw suggests that they interrogate their relationship with the Bible as a way of finding an otherwise unavailable perspective on contemporary questions of gender and female voice. Ruskin too felt compelled to reassess the scriptural authority he had so meticulously studied in his youth, Dinah Birch shows us, but did so by sustaining a textual scrutiny of the Bible. Andrew Tate uses the framework of *fin de siècle* decadence to read Wilde's aesthetic exegesis of the Gospels, one that continually collapses into a Gospel-driven moralism removed from the sensuous spirituality with which Wilde is conventionally associated. By the time we arrive at Joyce,



William Franke shows, the “Word” of the Bible can be realized only in a fractured human language comprising biblical, colloquial and liturgical allusions alike.

As this brief overview indicates, the contributions to this volume are rich and diverse, and the insight they offer into the Bible and literature lies not only in their individual content, but in their range as a collection: they show the Bible and literature to be an infinitely complex topic, as the Bible changes in the hands of each author that reads it, modulating according to the style and theme of each literary work, and in the forms of belief and disbelief that underlie them.

Each of the five period sections in this volume – medieval literature, early-modern literature; eighteenth-century and Romantic literature; Victorian literature; and Modernism – is preceded by a general introduction. The volume begins, however, with two broad essays that set the scene: Christopher Rowland offers a perspective from biblical studies on the nature and genre of the Bible; and then David Jasper surveys interpretive approaches to that text in his chapter on biblical hermeneutics and literary theory.

## Note on Terms

A number of terms used in this volume have alternative, regional, or contested forms. These include the use of “Old Testament” or “Hebrew Bible”; of BC/AD or BCE/CE; of “the King James version” or “the Authorized Version”; and of variants such as “Paul,” “St Paul,” and “Paul the Apostle.” Rather than theologically or politically sanctioning one or other sets of these terms, we have left them as contributors have used them, thereby indicating their current diversity of usage.

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THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

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ENGLISH  
LITERATURE  
AND THEOLOGY

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*Edited by*

ANDREW HASS,  
DAVID JASPER

AND

ELISABETH JAY



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UNIVERSITY PRESS

## CHAPTER 47

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# VISIONS OF HEAVEN AND HELL

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ELENA VOLKOVA

... in my flight  
Through utter and through middle darkness borne,  
With other notes than to the Orphean lyre  
I sung of Chaos and eternal Night;  
Taught by the heavenly Muse to venture down  
The dark descent, and up to re-ascend,  
Though hard and rare: Thee I revisit safe,  
And feel thy sovran vital lamp....

(Milton, *Paradise Lost*)

## THE DESCENT INTO HELL

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There was only one Temple dedicated to Hades in Greece, and it only opened one day per year, perhaps because it represented the fact that people only descended into the realm of the dead once in their lives. Only priests were allowed to enter the temple on the Day of Hades. Mortals would be punished severely for penetrating the underworld, as Theseus found to his cost when he attempted to kidnap Persephone, the wife of Hades. However, the myths relate that there were certain men who did obtain

permission to enter: Orpheus, the famed poet and musician, descended there in the hope of bringing back his wife Eurydice; Odysseus, hero of the Trojan War, breached the threshold of Hades while trying to find a way back home to his own land of Ithaca. But whereas the mellifluous Orpheus failed in his quest, the artful Odysseus reached his goal. Their contrasting outcomes may symbolize the fact that in the Greek religion there was no return to life, and that neither love nor art were able to conquer death: Odysseus succeeded only because he did not attempt resurrection. He only sought mystic knowledge that would enlighten him on his way home.

Thus in Greek mythology it is only the priest, the artist, and the hero—representing spirit, genius, and courage—who might approach or enter the world of the dead. The aim of their respective descents is to worship the god, to save people from death, and to return home.

In the Christian faith by contrast, God miraculously raises people from the dead and descends into hell after his own death on the cross. There he rescues the faithful and opens the door to heaven for them. This is the first thing Jesus Christ does after his crucifixion: he takes Adam and others out of the world of death and brings them to their heavenly home. The three mythological motifs surrounding the descent into the underworld remain however—worshipping God, saving the dead, and returning home: God the Son does the will of his Father, saves humanity from evil, and translates the faithful out of hell and into their heavenly home.

E. M. W. Tillyard in his book *Some Mythical Elements in English Literature* (1961) describes a window in King's College Chapel, dating from about 1530, which

shows the first act of Christ after his death on the cross: that of leaving his body in the tomb, breaking Hell's gates, and haling out Adam, Eve and other patriarchs for transference to their new home in Paradise. This act was known as the harrowing or subduing of Hell. The King's chapel window, in point of treatment, is normally representative of the differing versions of this not entirely canonical series of acts; aesthetically it is one of the most eminent. (ibid. 20).

Alister E. McGrath (2003: 92) mentions a fifteenth-century English alabaster panel, which depicts Christ as Harrower of Hell. The story of Christ's descent into hell derives from scattered passages of Scripture (analysed in detail in John Pearson's *An Exposition of the Creed*, 1659), but in fact cannot be attested by the Bible (though there are hints in 1 Peter) for it comes from the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*. Nevertheless the story was very popular in both the Byzantine and the Western artistic tradition and became part of the Apostles' Creed. Tillyard thinks that the reason for the story's popularity lies in the medieval desire to fulfil Scripture in its account of Adam's fall and to persuade 'the ears of illiterate' that it is the church as Body of Christ that can guarantee them salvation:

As to establishing connections, the concrete rescue of Adam by Christ corresponded precisely with the perdition of Adam by Satan through the concrete act of eating the forbidden fruit. [...] If the doctrine of Redemption could be put in terms of Adam it would penetrate the simple man's mind more quickly and surely than through any other means. Looking at a mosaic or a fresco of Christ taking Adam by the hand, he could reflect: There I am; or there I could be, if I followed the commands of the Church. (Tillyard 1961: 27–8)



Medieval writers often show first-hand knowledge of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*. All four mystery cycles (York, Chester, Wakefield, and Coventry), the fourteenth-century drama *The Harrowing of Hell*, as well as the poems *Northern Passion* and *Cursor Mundi*, include versions of the Harrowing of Hell as if it were canonical. Langland combines the myth with that of the Four Daughters of God (Pity, Truth, Justice, Peace).

In early Christian art Orpheus was identified with Christ; the image of the legendary artist was seen as analogy for 'the good shepherd', because of his descent into Hades to save his wife. In this respect, the Descent into Hell, or the Harrowing of Hell, is archetypal and may refer to the calling of any writer, and even to the religious understanding of literature in general: every artist *descends* into the 'hell' of human life, in the sense that he has to engage with the realm of sin and suffering, crime and punishment, darkness and despair to save people either from their blindness, negligence, despair, or desolation.

Literature tends to represent human life, the world in which we live and which we are called to transform, as a metaphor of hell. Any work of literature that deals with conflict, pain, suffering, grief, misery, and disaster (and which does not, at least indirectly?) bears an analogy to hell, where life lacks love, bliss, and harmony. Aristotle's definition of the perfect tragic plot as one in which we note a 'change in the hero's fortunes [...] from happiness to misery', or Northrop Frye's identification of *Paradise Lost* as an archetypal plot convention, may prove the point. This earthly 'hell' may be presented as a social environment (in George Orwell's *1984*, J. G. Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition*, William Golding's *Darkness Visible*, and many others, particularly in dystopia, war, and Holocaust literature), like a gloomy city ('Hell is a city much like London' in the words of Shelley's *Peter Bell*) or as a symbolic Waste Land inhabited by Hollow Men in T. S. Eliot's poetry. It also refers to an inward state: Satan cries 'Myself is Hell' in *Paradise Lost*, and he is echoed in T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*: 'What is Hell? Hell is oneself.'

Christ descends into hell led by his compassionate love towards those who suffer there. In the last quatrain of the York version of the *Harrowing of Hell* Adam says:

To the, Lorde, be louyng  
That us has wonne fro waa;  
For solas will we syng,  
Laus tibi cum gloria.

(To Thee, Lord, be praise, who has won us from woe; for solace we will sing, Praise to thee with glory.)

Langland explains that Christ went to Hell 'to learn what all woe is'; Blake, who identifies God with the Poetic Genius, echoes: 'Can I see another's woe, | And not be in sorrow too?' ('On Another's Sorrow'). It is then being in sorrow with the fallen world that makes the Poetic Genius descend into hell, reconsider, and recreate it. That is why, perhaps, the Poet is 'of the devil's own party', as Blake writes of Milton: hell is the realm *he* has to descend into and to deal with. Joyce Carol Oates (1976: 7) believes,

that the serious artist insists upon the sanctity of the world—even the despairing artist insists upon the power of *his* art somehow to transform what is given. It may be that his role, his

function, is to articulate the very worst, to force up into conscience the most perverse and terrifying possibilities of the epoch, so that they can be dealt with and not simply feared; such artists are often denounced as vicious and disgusting when in fact they are—sometimes quite apart from their individual conception of themselves—in the service of their epoch, attempting to locate images, adequate to the unshaped, unconscious horrors they sense.

## ANTINOMY OF FALLING/RISING

Thomas Green, in his *The Descent from Heaven: A Study in Epic Continuity* makes the story of the descent a major element of the epic and sees descending as an intrinsic part of the ascending process. Together they create a complex religious duality in the text. Green (1963: 390) develops this idea by analysing the *vertical imagery* in Milton's *Paradise Lost*: '*Paradise Lost* plays continually with the paradoxical duality of lowness—the lowness of humility and of moral degradation or despair—and with the duality of height—of spiritual eminence of exaltation and of pride. It plays also with the paradoxes of rising and falling, the abasement that exalts and the pride that abases'.

The falling–rising paradox, he continues, is a biblical commonplace, referring to the prophesies of Isa. 40: 4 ('Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low'), and of Christ in Matt. 23: 12 ('Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted'), and to many other passages,<sup>1</sup> as well as in English poetry: Vaughan's 'The Morning Watch' ('O let me climb when I lye down'); Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* ('I am readier to fall to the earth, now I am up, than I was when I lay in bed . . . Even rising is the way to ruin!'; 'Now I am up, I am ready to sink lower than before').

Northrop Frye, in his *Words With Power* (1990), regards the coherence of the Bible's narrative to lie in its 'U-Shaped plot'. It begins in the garden in paradise, is followed by the fall, and concludes with the final triumph of ascent to the Celestial City of the New Jerusalem. This plotline may be found on a biographical level in the many biblical stories of fall and rise, such as those of Joseph, Moses, Ruth, Job, David, Peter, and Paul, as well as framing a wide range of literary narratives.

Thus we can suggest that when a writer tries to 'articulate the very worst, to force up into conscience the most perverse and terrifying possibilities of the epoch' he does not necessarily experience the fall himself, but rather makes the imaginative descent in order to elevate his readers' minds.

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. 21: 26; 31: 10–18; 1 Peter 5: 5–6; Job 24: 24; Matt. 11–23; Luke 14: 11; 18: 14; Jas. 1: 9–10; Eph. 4: 9–10; Phil. 2: 5–10 (Green 1963: 388–9).

## THE DESCENT OF HEAVEN TO EARTH

Where does the artist *descend* from? Barring the idea of a literal descent from life on a mountaintop (as in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*), there must be some vertical dimension in his or her life, some height within that furnishes him or her with the perspective to see the distortion of human life. And from what is it distorted? On what step of Jacob's ladder, which unites heaven and earth, does this or that artist stand, if he or she sees humanity as 'crashing down all the steps of this Jacob's ladder that reached from paradise to a hell on earth'? (as Bernard Shaw writes in *Back to Methuselah*). What is his heaven like?

Robert Herrick sees it as some *whiter Island*:

In this world (the *Isle of Dreames*)  
While we sit by sorrowes streams,  
Tears and terrors are our themes,  
Reciting:

In that *whiter Island*, where  
Things are evermore sincere;  
Candor here, and lustre there  
Delighting:

(*The white Island: or  
place of the Blest*)

For most medieval writers (the authors of the Middle Irish *Vision of Adomnán* (Fis Adomnan), the Middle English *Pearl* and *Doomsday*; *Vision of the Monk of Eynsha*, and *The Vision of Tundale*) the ideal of perfection is that presented in the Bible, where heaven is a transcendent other world, an abode of God, angels, and saints, revealed in visions to Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and John.

Heaven may be used as a synonym for paradise, or the Garden of Eden. There are three types of paradise in the Bible: the first, the natural terrestrial one, is planted by God on earth for human habitation (Gen. 2: 8,10; 4: 16). It is not in heaven, but since it is the place where people can see God face to face and live in peace with him, it may be seen to partake of the Heavenly Kingdom. There is no spiritual difference between heaven and earth in the beginning: God creates both as parts of a new universe. The second appears only after Adam and Eve have been expelled from paradise. For a time, there is no Eden, but Christ's crucifixion opens the door to a celestial paradise. Finally, heaven is also represented mystically in the form of sacred or secular visions, in revelations or dreams. A personal 'dream' displays the author's meekness, and his or her lack of control over the dream. It is authorized by the One who gives it, and confirmed by those capable of interpreting.

The Revelation of St John the Divine is a major source of medieval literary visions. The author of the last book of the Bible sees a new heaven and a new earth united—God's eternal Kingdom is revealed to him as

the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people,

and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. (Rev. 21: 2–4)

Biblical visions provide literature with the basic archetypes of heaven—those of the kingdom (up *there*), the garden (down *here*) and the city (descending from *there* to *here*). All of them also function as metonyms of God who dwells *there* in heaven, *here* in the earthly paradise, and descends twice—from heaven to earth, and from earth into hell.

The terrestrial and celestial paradises symbolically represent some kind of inner paradise—‘the Kingdom of God is within you’ (Luke 17: 21). Joseph Duncan’s *Milton’s Earthly Paradise: A Historical Study of Eden* analyses the tripartite interrelations between the natural, celestial and inner paradise in Milton:

Both the inner paradise of edenic innocence and the allegorical garden of virtues are lost, but the inner paradise of the regenerate may be gained and possessed in a fallen world. This paradise of inner grace, like the external, natural paradise, is created by God. Like the celestial paradise, it is foreshadowed and suggested by the loveliness of the natural paradise. In *Paradise Lost*, when Adam goes forth into the world, he possesses the paradise within, ‘happier farr’ than the external paradise he is leaving. [...] The inner paradise of innocence and the external paradise fuse to form a complex symbol of a spiritual state; and the inner life of Satan and the devils fuses with the external features of Hell to form a comparable symbol. (Duncan 1972: 264, 266)

Milton’s Satan tries to persuade himself that ‘The mind is its own place, and in itself | Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven’ (1. 254–5) (the idiom is borrowed from Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*).

Another biblical source of heaven symbolism is Jesus’s parables, where the Kingdom of Heaven is presented by symbolic things (‘treasures in heaven’ as opposed to ‘treasures on earth’, a ‘pearl of great price’, ‘a grain of mustard seed’, leaven) and people (a merchant seeking for pearls, a king who arranged a marriage for his son, a man who gives talents to his servants, ten virgins with lamps who go out to meet the bridegroom, a landowner who hired labourers for his vineyard). If the parable relates to man then he symbolizes either God himself (usually as king or master, who chooses the righteous for the kingdom), or the desire of the soul for heavenly riches. So they speak of the kingdom of heaven as both an objective domain of God and a state of one’s mind.

*Pearl*, a fourteenth-century poem ‘contains what is arguably the finest account of the New Jerusalem to have been written in the English language’ (McGrath 2003: 25). It is a wonderful example of a dream vision, in which the biblical reference to a pearl—itself a symbol of the Heavenly Kingdom—is incorporated into the particular story of a jeweller who lost a most precious pearl. He speaks of it both as a jewel and as a human being, probably a 2-year-old daughter. The image is developed through the story: from a material thing—up to the heavenly Pearl Maiden, a guide to the celestial city that symbolizes Christ, his triumphant love, mercy, and grace. The dreamer is allowed to see the procession of Christ the Lamb and virgins, his brides in New Jerusalem, all of whom are crowned as queens of the kingdom. The Pearl Maiden may be understood to represent the jeweller’s late daughter, or her soul, that reigns in heaven. *Pearl* actually offers an archetype of sorts for subsequent visions of

heaven as it has many motifs that will be developed: that of paradise lost, since on a literal level the jeweller lost what he valued most on earth, but on a spiritual level he also lost his inner paradise (an aspect which will attain primary significance in Romanticism); it contains a reunion with the departed (which will be a leitmotif in the Victorian treatment of heaven); and it contains a pilgrimage story as an allegory of life (which will attain prominence in Chaucer and Bunyan).

In biblical and medieval visions heaven reveals itself to man as if a window were opened and symbols descended through it from God to earth, or as if God himself opened a door into the soul to reveal the essence of the Christian faith. Man, as the jeweller in *Pearl*, is given a lesson in perfection which he is supposed to learn in order to realize his own sins, repent, and change his life. This is very much the way heaven is opened to the biblical prophets: unexpectedly, as a gift sent by God from above (the *Apocalypse* is said to be 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which *God gave* [ . . . ] unto his servant John'). The King of Heaven speaks to his servants, or sends a messenger to his people for them to know what they should be or live like. Messengers and guides appear as angels in the Bible and in Milton; in the form of Virgil and Beatrice—in Dante; in the form of the Maiden—in *Pearl*; in the form of Solid People—in Lewis's *Great Divorce*, etc. A seer is a spectator in the heavenly theatre, who is supposed to enjoy the scene or the speech and draw a moral from them. Although *Pearl* is usually identified as an elegy, it may also derive from the sermon tradition, in so far as the Pearl Maiden preaches to the jeweller as a priest would amongst a community of believers, who seem to know the Scriptures but do not live accordingly.

Colleen McDannel and Bernard Lang in their *Heaven: A History* (1988) designate the medieval visions as theocentric and distinguish them from the anthropocentric ones which, they observe, begin with the focus on the human afterlife in the works of Swedenborg. A theocentric vision is an encounter with an otherwise invisible world, which *descends* to man in the moment it becomes visible, in the same way Christ descended to earth when he took on human flesh, or in the way it is revealed that the New Jerusalem will descend in the book of Revelation. In this sense visibility and verbalization, seen from a Christian perspective, are in themselves embodiments of the divine into images which may be associated with the incarnation of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> Hence, the descent of heaven, or from heaven, is intrinsic to the religious nature of theocentric literature and art.

Incarnation for its part is theologically considered as the *kenosis* of Christ, 'emptying himself' of his divine prerogatives and subjecting himself to the laws of human birth and the lowliness of fallen human nature:

O Thou who camest from above,  
the pure celestial fire to impart  
kindle a flame of sacred love  
upon the mean altar of my heart.

(Charles Wesley, 1776)

<sup>2</sup> John of Damascus while defending icons against Iconoclasts in the eighth century, referred to incarnation: 'Of old God the incorporeal and uncircumscribed was not depicted at all. But now that God has appeared in the flesh and lived among humans, I make an image of the God who can be seen.'



Many hymns maintain the theocentric focus of beatific visions: this idea of the church is based on the image of the New Jerusalem, the city where heaven and earth (as church visible and invisible) are united and inhabited by the community of the righteous, who participate in the heavenly liturgy, singing praise to God together with the angels and the saints:

That undisturbed Song of pure content,  
Ay sung before the saphire-colour'd throne  
To him that sits thereon  
With Sainly shout, and solemn Jubily

(Milton, *At A Solemn Music*)

While John Milton believed that such harmony was only possible in the prelapsarian world, he anticipated that it would soon be restored:

O may we soon again renew that Song,  
And keep in tune with Heav'n, till God ere long  
To his celestial consort us unite,  
To live with him, and sing in endles morn of light.

## THE IMAGINATIVE ASCENT TO HEAVEN

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We can note an increasing anthropocentric tendency in Renaissance literature, which introduces a new, active type of a visionary—an artist or narrator who creates an idea or picture of the transcendent by his own intellect and imagination. In Spenser's *An Hymne of Heavenly Love* and *An Hymne of Heavenly Beauty* the poet tries to lift his mind with the help of the divine love and beauty so as to reach heaven and enjoy the vision of it:

Loue, lift me vp vpon thy golden wings,  
From this base world vnto thy heauens hight,  
Where I may see those admirable things,  
Which there thou workest by thy soueraine might,  
Farre about feeble reach of earthly sight

(*An Hymne of Heavenly Love*)

Man is incapable of comprehending heaven; nor can his language verbalize it:

I faine to tell the things that I behold,  
But feele my wits to faile, and tong to fold.

(*An Hymne of Heavenly Beauty*)

Spenser gives a Neoplatonic picture of Heaven, where 'those *Idees* on hie, | En-raunged be, which Plato so admired, | And pure *Intelligences* from God inspired.' His

heaven is hierarchal: Plato's ideas are part of the lowest level, 'where happy souls haue place', but higher and fairer are the heavens where a hierarchy of angels, *Powers*, *Potentates*, *Dominions*, *Cherubim*, and *Seraphim* preside (the ordering of these into three hierarchies in nine choirs Spenser borrows from the angelology of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite (c. AD 500). Spenser's heaven is 'the eternal fountaine' of perfect love, beauty, truth, wisdom, bliss, grace, mercy, and might. But it is love and beauty that he glorifies first, which reign in human hearts as dim reflections of God.

The anthropocentric tendency is far stronger in Milton's poetry. *Lycidas* was composed on the occasion of the death of fellow Cambridge student Edward King, who drowned when his ship sank off the coast of Wales in August 1637. Milton employs his favourite falling-rising antinomy: 'So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high'. Unlike the Pearl Poet, Milton does not need a divine sign to be certain that his *learned Friend* went up to heaven, and his emphasis remains upon the man. He does not rise to worship or serve God, and we are told that saints will 'entertain him' and 'wipe the tears for ever from his eyes'. In his poem *On Time*, Milton, developing the mythological image of the all-devouring Chronos, pronounces his certainty that all heavenly guided souls will dwell in heaven:

Then long Eternity shall greet our bliss  
With an individual kiss;

. . . . .  
Attir'd with Stars, we shall for ever sit,  
Triumphing over Death, and Chance, and thee O Time.

Having dominated in medieval and, to a lesser extent, Renaissance literature, there is a decided shift away from the biblical cosmology of earth in relation to heaven and hell for planetary mysticism in the metaphysical poets. In Crashaw's *Hymn to Sainte Teresa*, the moon, surrounded by maiden stars (supposedly representing St Mary and other virgins) has prepared room for St Teresa; the heavens, 'thy old friends', greet the saint 'and all in one weave a constellation | Of CROWNS, with which the King thy spouse, | shall build up thy triumphant browes'. Donne's *The Second Anniversary*, written on 'the religious death of Mistress Elizabeth Drury', abounds in planetary (esoteric?) imagery: the soul liberated by death from her 'living tomb' passes through many heavenly bodies: Hesper, Vesper, Mercury, Mars, the Sun, and finally reaches heaven. Astronomy and a new form of mysticism provide poetry with a new idea of the universe. As a result, the heaven of metaphysics gives a combination of biblical, classical, astrological images and scientific terms. To the bliss, love, holiness, worship, and other traditional associations of heaven Donne adds the knowledge which it implies and which can be obtained in its fullness only after death: 'In heaven thou straight know'st all, concerning it.'

The poetical rhythm and style tend to be lighter and more natural than in the Renaissance in spite of the metaphysical complexity of the message as, for example, in Herbert's poem 'Heaven', which is written in the form of a dialogue between the poet and echo about heaven:

Then tell me what is that supreme delight?  
*Echo.* *Light.*  
 Light to the mind: what shall the will enjoy?  
*Echo.* *Joy.*  
 But are there cares and business with the pleasure?  
*Echo.* *Leisure.*  
 Light, joy and leisure; but shall they persevere?  
*Echo.* *Ever.*

Each answer of the echo returns part of the last word in the question. The device is symbolic: it suggests that the essence of heaven is hidden in human language and may be derived from the similitude of words by means of rhyming, where the first rhyme-fellow (in the question of man) gives an earthly understanding of heaven, while the second one (that of the echo) reveals the mystery of heaven, which may be found either in the stem (the core of the word), as in *delight-light*, *enjoy-joy*, or through the consonance. Echo as a voice of heaven refers to the metaphysical understanding of rhyme as a device that reveals the hidden correspondence between things, which could help man comprehend the world as part of the spiritual universe, which wholeness and grandeur embraces all the divisions within it, where heaven and hell are parts of the global divine Providence, filled with the profound sense. The central symbol of echo also speaks of the growing anthropocentrism: heaven here is just a reflection of a Narcissus-like man.

This new metaphysical mode may be identified as microcosmic, for it is based on the idea of the human soul as a finite inner universe corresponding to the macrocosm of infinite existence. John Donne, in his *Second Anniversary*, writes that the heroine was 'to herself a State', 'a Church', and 'made this world in some proportion | A heaven'. Not only did she have a vast knowledge of heaven, she carried it within her soul and established it around her. Donne suggests that such souls, being a church unto themselves, can unite heaven and earth through their deeds and death:

So by the soul doth death string heaven and earth;  
 For when our soul enjoys this her third birth,  
 (Creation gave her one, a second, grace),  
 Heaven is as near, and present to her face,  
 As colours are, and objects, in a room  
 Where darkness was before, when tapers come.

In Traherne's 'Felicity', Dame Nature (playing the angelic role of messenger) reveals the infiniteness of the inner world to the poet: 'Dame Nature told me there was endless Space | Within my Soul, I spy'd its very face: | Sure it not for nought appears. | What is there which a Man may see | Beyond the Spheres?—FELICITY.'

Alistair McGrath (2003: 116) in his *A Brief History of Heaven* observes that

taking delight in nature is [...] seen as nourishing our anticipation of beholding God face to face—of satisfying the desire that owes its origins to God, and can only be fulfilled by God. Paradoxically, nature generates a longing that it cannot itself satisfy, and thus leads us to find God and heaven. While this theme is developed by many theologians, perhaps its most

systematic application is found in Romanticism and New England Transcendentalism. It is also a significant element in the writings of the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century.

The most influential literary depiction of natural paradise may be found in Milton's epic. But the natural world is also praised as Edenic in the poetry of Thomas Traherne, William Cowper, William Blake, and, in the most sublime and detailed way, by William Wordsworth in *The Excursion* and *The Prelude* ("That paradise, the lost abode of man, | Was raised again: and to a happy few, | In its original beauty, here restored" (IX 717–19).) While amongst the metaphysical and Romantic poets 'the kiss of Eternity' (to paraphrase Milton) became more individual and more hylozoic in nature, the Protestant religious literature of the seventeenth century returned to the biblical images of heaven.

## LIFE AS PILGRIMAGE: THE ROAD TO HEAVEN THROUGH HELL

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The vision of heaven is often linked to the pilgrimage story as a way up to the Kingdom of God. Forrest Smith, in his *Secular and Sacred Visionaries in the Late Middle Ages*, observes that

imaginary journeys into the afterlife [...] flourished in the medieval imagination as an interpretation of the primary, essential spiritual pilgrimage of man. The otherworld journey had as its counterpart in the secular world a search for perfection in this life as the terrestrial City of God. The journey took on the weight of myth, and for the late Middle Ages it was a plastic, unifying myth of Christian experience. [...] Visions in whatever form stand uniquely as an intersection of the eternal and the temporal and the divine and the human. (Smith 1986: 5, 7)

The most widely read English pilgrimage story was written by John Bunyan (1626–88). His *Pilgrim's Progress* presents scenes and characters that embody virtues and sins which may be understood to partake of heaven or hell. Christian and Evangelist (those who know and follow the Word of God), Goodwill, Interpreter (of the Bible), Patience, Discretion, Prudence, Piety, Charity, Hopeful, and Faithful certainly 'stand for the world to come'. With the help of them the pilgrim succeeds in the 'harrowing of hell', represented by the appearance of the characters Obstinate, Pliable, Worldly-Wiseman, Morality, Civility, Discontent, Shame, Ignorance, and other sinners, as well as by Apollyon, Beelzebub, and Legion, who are of infernal origin and construct a Vanity Fair on earth (according to a 'hell on earth' archetype) as a trap for the pilgrims to the Celestial City. All the characters are allegories of the proper and the improper, of true and false understandings of Christianity. Heaven in Bunyan has obvious allusions to the vision in Revelation: 'The city shone like the sun, the streets were paved with gold, and in the streets walked many people with crowns on their heads. They had palms in their hands, and carried golden harps with which

to sing praises. Some had wings, and they spoke to one another saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord!" Having approached paradise each pilgrim has to show a certificate to Enoch, Moses, and Elijah at the gate of the city to prove that he had passed all the way from the City of Destruction up to Heaven, which signifies the fullness of the spiritual battle one has fought. Bunyan's hero Christian is a warrior, who fights a spiritual war against sins and the enemies of God.

## WAR IN HEAVEN

Milton also sees heaven through the lens of war. He places an unusual emphasis on the wrath of Jesus Christ, emphasizing his metaphoric status as the Lion of Judah rather than as the meek Lamb, particularly in the scene in which he drives a chariot against Satan's troops:

So spake the Son, and into terrour changed  
His countenance too severe to be beheld,  
And full of wrath bent on his enemies.

Most critics believe that in the episode of the War in Heaven Milton sought to imitate the epic poetry of Homer, Virgil, Hesiod, Ariosto, Tasso, Spenser, and other poets. The Battle of the Angels abounds in epic allusions. But A. C. Dobbin in *Milton and the Book of Revelation: The Heavenly Cycle* (1975) has convincingly argued that the allusions and devices Milton used were not merely nods towards epic conventions: 'Milton's account of the War in Heaven is based upon a literal interpretation of Revelation 12: 7-9 and Revelation 6: 1-8' (ibid. 29).

J. R. Watson writes that sanctified by the authority of the Bible, the ideas of the Holy War and the spiritual inner war between good and evil may be found in the legends of medieval Christianity, in the Counter-Reformation ideology of the Jesuits, in Bunyan, Milton, John and Charles Wesley, and many other writers. In the seventeenth century 'the Great Rebellion, or the Civil War, produced a literature of conflict and of warfare applied to the spiritual state', while later we can even see 'the transition of the defensive mode to an offensive one in the fighting hymns of the 19th century' (Watson 1999: 13, 18, 22). Both Milton and Bunyan made their faith part of their politics. The ideological mentality of Bunyan, for example, seems not to know any Christian love for the enemy, or any compassion for those going to hell.

Milton's hell could be interpreted as a metaphor for a human society that has rebelled against God, gripped by fear and despair, which they try to dispel by different activities, such as sport, military training ('As at th' Olympian games or Pythian fields'), art ('Retreated in a silent valley, sing'), theology, philosophy ('Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy!'), travelling ('to discover wide | That dismal world').



## THE THEODICY OF HEAVEN AND HELL

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The seventeenth century is marked by a drastic reconsideration of the idea of hell. D. P. Walker in *The Decline of Hell* states that the doctrine of hell remained almost unchallenged for many centuries<sup>3</sup> because of the very strong scriptural authority until it began to lose its hold in the seventeenth century in the writings of the Cambridge Platonists Peter Sterry and Jeremiah White and in the visions of some Philadelphians—Jane Lead, the Petersens, and Richard Roach. ‘An abominable aspect of the traditional doctrine of hell’, Walker writes, ‘was that the part of the happiness of the blessed consists in contemplating the torments of the damned. This sight gives them joy because it is a manifestation of God’s justice and hatred of sin, but chiefly because it provides a contrast which heightens their awareness of their own bliss’ (Walker 1963: 29). F. W. Farrar called this type of enjoyment ‘an abominable fancy’ and opposed the title of his own book *Eternal Hope* (1878) to the idea of eternal torments in hell.

Lindsey Hall in his *Swinburne’s Hell and Hick’s Universalism* suggests that there are various theological perspectives on hell: a strong view of hell (‘which is the belief that God sends those who will not be saved to hell’); a weak view of hell (‘God does not send people to hell, rather than they send themselves there’); the idea of annihilation and conditional immortality (‘the unrighteous will cease to exist after death’); and universalism (‘belief in universal salvation or apokatastasis’) (Hall 2003: 10–17).

In the seventeenth century the traditional doctrine of eternal torments in hell raises a question of theodicy: can heaven coexist with hell? What kind of paradise might it be when the rest of humanity suffer in hell? Can the faith based on fear of punishment have any moral value? As Thomas Burnet ironically puts it:

Consider a little, if you please, unmerciful Doctor, what a theatre of Providence this is: by far the greatest part of the human race burning in the flames for ever and ever. Oh what a spectacle on the stage, worthy of an audience of God and angels! And then to delight the ears, while this unhappy crowd fills heaven and earth with wailing and howling, you have a truly divine harmony. (Walker 1963: 32)

The majority of the early Church Fathers assume hell literally to be a place of fiery torments, of darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth. Chaucer’s Parson vividly depicts ‘the horrible peynes of helle’ giving a lot of references to patristic and medieval understanding of the subject. In James Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* we can find a parody on the traditional naturalistic description of hell, inspired, as it seems, by the sermons and books of the infamous nineteenth-century Irish-English priest Fr. Furniss, whose surname speaks of his love of preaching eternal damnation to little children in terrible hair-raising details. Dan Kelly opens his

<sup>3</sup> It was as early as the third century when Origen developed the idea of the ultimate salvation for everyone and was condemned as heretic. Similar ideas were expressed by Gregory of Nyssa and Isaac of Nineveh, and later revived in the ninth century by Scotus Erigena.

sarcastic article 'Book Hell!' with a highly expressive quotation from Fr. Furniss's *The Sight of Hell*:

Perhaps at this moment, seven o'clock in the evening, a child is just going into Hell. Tomorrow evening at seven o'clock, go and knock at the gates of Hell, and ask what the child is doing. The devils will go and look. Then they will come back again and say, the child is burning! Go in a week and ask what the child is doing; you will get the same answer—it is burning! Go in a year and ask; the same answer comes—it is burning! Go in a million of years and ask the same question; the answer is just the same—it is burning! So, if you go for ever and ever, you will always get the same answer—it is burning in the fire! (Kelly 2002).

Steven Daedalus' priest Fr. Arnall preaches in Fr. Furniss's manner:

Imagine some foul and putrid corpse that has lain rotting and decomposing in the grave, a jelly-like mass of liquid corruption. Imagine such a corpse a prey to flames, devoured by the fire of burning brimstone and giving off dense choking fumes of nauseous loathsome decomposition. And then imagine this sickening stench, multiplied a millionfold and a millionfold again from the millions upon millions of fetid carcasses massed together in the reeking darkness, a huge and rotting human fungus. Imagine all this, and you will have some idea of the horror of the stench of Hell.

As Geoffrey Rowell shows in his *Hell and the Victorians* the doctrine of everlasting punishment was one of the central points of debate for the greater part of the nineteenth century. 'The Bible, after several decades of controversy and criticism, no longer occupied the position of unquestionable authority which it had once held, and even where men were still concerned to profess a biblical religion, there had been too much discussion of the texts concerning eternal punishment for them to be altogether unaware of the difficulties surrounding their interpretation' (Rowell 1974: 2).

## MARRIED AND DIVORCED

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William Blake in his *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* includes the doctrine of eternal torments among the list of the major Errors made by 'all Bibles and sacred codes'. Yet this is probably because Blake followed Swedenborg in naturalizing the supernatural, both heaven and hell, as imaginative projections. The narrator literally descends into 'hell': 'As I was walking among the fires of Hell delighted with the enjoyment of Genius, which to Angels look like torment and insanity, I collected some Proverbs; thinking as the sayings used in a nation mark its character, so the Proverbs of hell show the nature of Infernal wisdom better than any descriptions of buildings or garments.' Blake treats hell with the respect Christians traditionally pay to heaven and he looks for infernal wisdom instead of longing for the heavenly one. Blake's Hell is an ironic image of what the church has done to the idea of the human and the divine: both have been divided into two antagonistic counterparts (soul and body/heaven

and hell) while man and world, both microcosm and macrocosm, are inseparable within them and driven by Energy, which is the source of the Poetic Genius.

The descent into hell (both as a place and a state of mind) is a very important Romantic motif, because the Romantics placed special emphasis on evil and its power over human hearts. The tradition started in the Gothic novel and was developed by S. T. Coleridge, P. B. Shelley, Lord Byron, E. A. Poe and other writers. The beatific imagery in Romantic poetry is often fused with infernal features: Byron's Cain *ascends* to the realm of Lucifer as a world of powerful knowledge; Coleridge's enchanting vision of Kubla Khan as an Edenic place is 'haunted | By a woman wailing for her demon-lover'; his Ancient Mariner suddenly descends from a happy state of mind ('Happily did we drop...'; 'Hailed it in God's name') into the infernal realm of crime and punishment (a dead, cursed world with death-fires, witch's oils, drought, a lack of speech, the hatred of the dead but moving shipmates, the dead Albatross hanging around the Mariner's neck instead of the cross, the rotting sea, the lonely soul in agony), and finally through repentance and love restores inner joy and peace.

In his *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience*, Blake opposes the world of innocent paradise to that of conceptual evil which brings hell into human hearts and lives. But 'the fearful symmetry' (to use the title of Northrop Frye's book on Blake, adopted from Blake's *The Tyger*) of Blake's *Marriage* is so controversial that scholars tend to look for sources in other texts: mostly in Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell*, in Boehme's *The Threefold Life of Man*, and Shakespeare (Nurmi 1957; Sabri-Tabrizi 1973). As for the 'harrowing of hell' motif, Blake establishes the priority of the active over the passive, includes the 'hell' of religious mistakes, and shows how people have made infernal things of heavenly ones. His active 'harrowing' of the traditional idea of hell is caused by his belief in the divine nature of the Poetic Genius: 'For Blake, Paradise was the human imagination, and he spent most of his time there. He not only believed in it firmly, but he acted on it unhesitatingly and consistently. His greatest achievement in his poetry and his design is "to carry us with him into such an imaginative world,"' states G. E. Bentley, who sees Blake as *The Stranger from Paradise* (Bentley 1999: 93-4).

Two of the famous Inklings circle, J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, challenged both of Blake's Romantic ideas—his marriage of heaven and hell and his cult of genius. Lewis separates what Blake had put together in *The Great Divorce*: in his tale, people arrive on the threshold of paradise but cannot enter it. Ultimately they reject heaven and return to hell because they have nothing of paradise within them: they are filled with self-centredness, ambition, and vanity, all of which are alien to the realm of God's love and self-sacrifice. Lewis's allegory may serve as an illustration of Cardinal Newman's idea that heaven 'would be Hell to an irreligious man', because in heaven every man must 'do God's pleasure' rather than 'choose and take his own pleasure' (Walker 1963: 125).

Tolkien's 'Leaf by Niggle' introduces the artist not as a saviour but as a 'little man', 'the sort of painter who can paint leaves better than trees', yet wants 'to paint a whole tree'. He is 'little' not because he is less talented than other artists, but in comparison to God as the true Artist of the Universe. The tree which Niggle fails to paint

evidently refers to the world tree of mythology as a symbol of the universe. The artist has an ambition to be like God but can only echo the heavens in a Platonic way: it is only in heaven that he finally sees his own Tree completed, alive, 'its branches growing and bending in the wind that Niggle had so often felt or guessed, and had so often failed to catch. He gazed at the Tree, and slowly he lifted his arms and opened them wide: "It's a gift!" he said. He was referring to his art, and also to the result; but he was using the word quite literally.'

Tolkien allegorically presents the idea of synergy—the creative cooperation of God and man, which he designates as Creation and Sub-Creation. It is a process that requires all kinds of talents, which God furnishes to his people: Niggle (as an allegory of Art) and his neighbour Parish (an allegory of Life) together reach harmony in the paradise called Niggle's Parish. Both heaven in Tolkien's story and hell in Lewis's are nonetheless depicted in the quasi-Romantic terms of earthly life, where Edenic nature traditionally embodies heaven while Civilization (Town) represents the *infernal* world of darkness and death, the descent into which should paradoxically (as many things sound in Christianity) transfigure human souls. It should teach people the *heavenly* values of love and compassion, how to 'bear one another's burdens', which Charles Williams in his novel *Descent into Hell* (1937) calls the doctrine of Substituted Love.

Hell became one of the most significant metaphors of the twentieth century: after the development of psychoanalysis it is effectively presented as madness either of man or the world surrounding him (Hannah Greenberg's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, Doris Lessing's *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, Mark Vonnegut's *The Eden Express*, Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*).

We can conclude by saying that heaven and hell may be seen as two poles of the vertical dimension in literature. Originally based on the biblical story, they have been greatly reconsidered and developed as metaphors of the social and inner world: while the Descent into Hell may be seen as symbol of literature or of the writer called 'to make Heaven of Hell'.

However, both realms, heaven and hell, in spite of their diverse embodiment in literature, remain profound mysteries, the very inexpressibility of which inspires the poetic imagination:

O world invisible, we view thee,  
 O world intangible, we touch thee,  
 O world unknowable, we know thee,  
 Incomprehensible, we clutch thee!  
 (F. Thompson, *The Kingdom of God*)

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*The First Book of Moses**Commonly Called***GENESIS****CHAPTER 1 — [Click for Strong's Numbers on Gen 1](#)**

- 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
- 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
- 1:3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
- 1:4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.
- 1:5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.
- 1:6 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.
- 1:7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.
- 1:8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.
- 1:9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.
- 1:10 And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.
- 1:11 And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

- 1:12 And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.
- 1:13 And the evening and the morning were the third day.
- 1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:
- 1:15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.
- 1:16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.
- 1:17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,
- 1:18 And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.
- 1:19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.
- 1:20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.
- 1:21 And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.
- 1:22 And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.
- 1:23 And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.
- 1:24 And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.
- 1:25 And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

- 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.
- 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.
- 1:28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.
- 1:29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.
- 1:30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.
- 1:31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

## CHAPTER 2 — [Click for Strong's Numbers on Gen 2](#)

- 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.
- 2:2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.
- 2:3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.
- 2:4 These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,
- 2:5 And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.



- 2:6 But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.
- 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.
- 2:8 And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.
- 2:9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.
- 2:10 And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.
- 2:11 The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold;
- 2:12 And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone.
- 2:13 And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.
- 2:14 And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.
- 2:15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.
- 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:
- 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.
- 2:18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.
- 2:19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

- 2:20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.
- 2:21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;
- 2:22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.
- 2:23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.
- 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.
- 2:25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

### CHAPTER 3 — [Click for Strong's Numbers on Gen 3](#)

- 3:1 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?
- 3:2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:
- 3:3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.
- 3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:
- 3:5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.
- 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

- 3:7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.
- 3:8 And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.
- 3:9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?
- 3:10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.
- 3:11 And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?
- 3:12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.
- 3:13 And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.
- 3:14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:
- 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.
- 3:16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.
- 3:17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

- 3:18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;
- 3:19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.
- 3:20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.
- 3:21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.
- 3:22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:
- 3:23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.
- 3:24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

#### CHAPTER 4 — [Click for Strong's Numbers on Gen 4](#)

- 4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.
- 4:2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.
- 4:3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.
- 4:4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:
- 4:5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.
- 4:6 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

19:21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

**CHAPTER 20 — [Click for Strongs Numbers on Rev 20](#)**

- 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.
- 20:2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,
- 20:3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.
- 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.
- 20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.
- 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.
- 20:7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,
- 20:8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.
- 20:9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

- 20:10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.
- 20:11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.
- 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.
- 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.
- 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.
- 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

## CHAPTER 21 — [Click for Strongs Numbers on Rev 21](#)

- 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.
- 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
- 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.
- 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.
- 21:5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

- 21:6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.
- 21:7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.
- 21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.
- 21:9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.
- 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,
- 21:11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;
- 21:12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:
- 21:13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.
- 21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.
- 21:15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.
- 21:16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.
- 21:17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.
- 21:18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

- 21:19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;
- 21:20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.
- 21:21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.
- 21:22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.
- 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.
- 21:24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.
- 21:25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.
- 21:26 And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.
- 21:27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

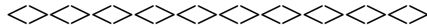
## CHAPTER 22 — [Click for Strong's Numbers on Rev 22](#)

- 22:1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.
- 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.
- 22:3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:



- 22:4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.
- 22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.
- 22:6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.
- 22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.
- 22:8 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.
- 22:9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.
- 22:10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.
- 22:11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.
- 22:12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.
- 22:13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.
- 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.
- 22:15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.
- 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

- 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.
- 22:18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:
- 22:19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.
- 22:20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.
- 22:21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.



## CHAPTER 25

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# JOHN MILTON

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MICHAEL LIEB

### BACKGROUND

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THE scholarship on Milton's theology is immense, in part because Milton is essentially a theological poet. In fact, he has always been looked upon as a theological poet. From the eighteenth century onwards, such groups as the Arians, the Socinians, and the Unitarians claimed him as their own. *Paradise Lost*, in particular, enjoyed a reading audience as large as that of the Bible. Even today's new historicist, gender-related, post-colonial, and postmodern criticism must address theological issues underlying Milton's works. There is no lack of scholarship on the subject of Milton's theology. Titled '*Bright Essence*' (1971), the volume of seminal essays compiled by William B. Hunter et al. alone attests to this fact. Almost every book and article published on Milton, however, addresses some aspect of his theological views, including the nature of Milton's God (Empson 1961; Danielson 1982), the developing concepts of Christian doctrine from the beginnings of the church up through the Reformation (Evans 1968; Patrides 1966), the concept of hypostasis in his rendering of Jesus (MacCallum 1986), and a host of related issues.

Despite the plethora of books and articles devoted to various aspects of Milton's doctrinal beliefs, the question of *how* to read his works theologically has not received the attention it deserves (see Fish 1967/1998; 2001). Knowing Milton's views and reading his works are two different enterprises. In order to address the second issue, one must determine precisely what a 'theological reading' of Milton's works entails. What are the assumptions of such a reading? How do they operate? And how does one know if those assumptions are borne out by what happens in the poetry? In the case of the Miltonic oeuvre, the answers to those questions have long involved recourse to the *De Doctrina Christiana*. With the posthumous publication of the *De Doctrina* in 1825, the world of Milton scholarship felt confident that it had all the

answers to the various conundrums that had plagued it before the discovery of the manuscript. Although readers were either delighted with or horrified by the various heterodoxies evinced by the treatise (among them, mortalism, materialism, monism, polygamy, and Arianism), at least they felt that they had a 'handle' on Milton's putative theological beliefs as manifested in the poetry. No longer were they obliged to surmise that Milton was a member of this school or that—it was all there in the prose. All one had to do was look it up.

## GLOSSING THE TEXT

Assumptions of this nature became the basis of the 'classic' work on the subject: Maurice Kelley's *This Great Argument: A Study of Milton's 'De Doctrina Christiana' as a Gloss upon 'Paradise Lost'* (1941). From the time of its publication to the present, this book has been canonized by its adherents as the key to how Milton's epic is to be read as a 'theological document'. Although it is arguable that its detractors have become more persuasive than its adherents, the book must be given its due as a monument to how one might finally understand the theological intricacies and doctrinal premises of Milton's epic. The foreword to the book amounts to a credo that reflects the author's determination to defend his approach to a poem that is professedly theological, that is, a poem with its own codes, its own cues, and its own protocols in its unfolding of the story of all things. Eschewing what he claims is the prevailing school of 'critical mysticism' concerning *Paradise Lost*, Kelley dismisses any attempt to discover hidden meanings through distinctions such as conscious and unconscious modes of production. For these purveyors of the psychological approach, it is the world of the unconscious that matters, rather than what Kelley terms 'professed' and 'conscious' meanings. In place of this critical mysticism or 'intuitive criticism', Kelley offers an approach 'more logical and more productive of defensible conclusions' in the study of the theological bearing of Milton's epic. Kelley's book is grounded in the belief that 'the poet himself has something definite to say, and that he is more interested in conveying this message than in stimulating his readers to an irresponsible and uninhibited exercise of their associative powers'. The problem, Kelley observes, is that in attempting to communicate his message by means of poetic discourse, the poet 'may not be completely successful'. The reason for this lack of success stems from the annoying connotative associations that words possess. The language of theological poetry runs the risk of being undone by the ambiguities it masks. As a result, this mode of discourse tends to be less precise than the discourse of prose. For that reason, Kelley turns to 'Milton's own writings for a less ambiguous statement of the dogma, aims, and argument of his epic'. Kelley has found that statement, that *clavis*, in Milton's systematic theology, the *De Doctrina Christiana* (Kelley 1941: pp. viii–ix).

Confident that he has the key to unlock the mysteries of the text, Kelley declares in the subtitle of his book that what he has produced is a study of Milton's *De Doctrina Christiana* as a 'gloss' upon *Paradise Lost*. 'Gloss': what precisely does Kelley have in mind? Etymologically grounded in the Latin *glossa* (which in turn derives from the Greek *γλωσσα*: tongue, language), the term gloss was traditionally applied to certain kinds of interpretative practices extending back to the Middle Ages and earlier. In fact, the medieval period witnessed the production of glosses, *scolia*, or lexicons of various sorts for the purpose of explicating difficult words or texts by means of which the glossarist would unlock otherwise occluded meanings. His discourse might assume any number of shapes, including marginal glosses, interlinear glosses, or both. The text most often subjected to this form of interpretation was the Bible. Here, one encounters undertakings such as the *Glossa Ordinaria*, the very title of which suggests the nature of its utility for those who required immediate recourse to the meanings of a word, a passage, or an even larger unit of discourse. Bearing the imprint of multiple glossarists, the *Glossa Ordinaria* became a standard of all such glossarial endeavours. Biblical glosses found their correspondence in the area of the legal proceedings of the church. The product of ecclesiastical regulation, canon law attracted its own mode of interpretative discourse consistent with the proper glossing of texts.

In England, the term 'gloss' emerged during the early modern period when it too assumed the form of 'a word inserted between the lines or in the margins of a text' as a way of disclosing as clearly as possible the true meanings of a foreign or otherwise difficult word in the text. Like all such interpretative endeavours, the act of glossing a text was not without its detractors. Especially in its association with legal and ecclesiastical matters, 'glossing' was often viewed as a 'sophistical or disingenuous' form of interpretation (*OED*, s.v.). Although not all glosses were so conceived, those disinclined to embrace any attempt to contain the text within the narrow room of a particular glossarist's predilections greeted the idea of the gloss with suspicion, if not with disdain. For such detractors, the act of glossing a text carried with it the potential for being guilty of misleading and even duplicitous practices. Reflecting such an outlook, Milton himself was no friend of the glossarists. In the *Defensio Prima*, for example, he does not hesitate to castigate his enemies by declaring that they 'have spent more time and pains turning over glossaries and pompously publishing laborious trifles than in the careful and diligent reading of sound authors' (Milton 1931–8: vii. 187). For the Milton of *Paradise Lost*, the greatest practitioner of the gloss proved to be none other than that most suspect of interpreters—Satan himself. Thus, Satan is early accused by God of preparing to tempt Adam and Eve with 'his glozing lies' (*PL* 3. 93). 'Glozing' carries as much the meaning of deception as it does the idea of commenting upon or interpreting (*OED*, s.v.). In short, the world of Miltonic discourse is one in which the act of glossing is liable to assume a bearing at once suspicious and duplicitous.

Even at its most benign, the glossarial methodology prevalent in his own time is one that Milton himself initially adopted, only to reject it, as the guiding compositional principle of the *De Doctrina Christiana*. The story of his desire to approach the Bible in the vein of the glossarists is told in the epistle to the reader that prefaces

the theological treatise. There, Milton recounts the arduous task he undertook to produce a work that, by its very nature, would be *sui generis*. 'I entered', he says, 'upon an assiduous course of study in my youth, beginning with the books of the Old and New Testament in their original languages, and going diligently through a few of the shorter systems of divines, in imitation of whom I was in the habit of classing under certain heads whatever passages of Scripture occurred for extraction, to be made use of hereafter as occasion might require.' Moving from the shorter systems to 'some of the more copious theological treatises', he found in both 'any instances adverse reasonings either evaded by wretched shifts, or attempted to be refuted, rather speciously than with solidity, by an affected display of formal sophisms, or by a constant recourse to the quibbles of the grammarians' (Milton 1931-8: xiv. 6-7). Both with respect to the 'shorter systems of divines' and to the 'copious theological treatises', Milton has in mind the theological works that prevailed during his time. Essentially grounded in the exegetical manoeuvres of the biblical gloss or the so-called *locos communes*, Milton is at pains to dissociate himself from the common practices of the glossarists (whether of the shorter systems or of the copious treatises) that he knew only too well. By means of this dissociation, Milton devises a systematic theology that eschews the easy glosses of both the earlier and the later glossarists. The *De Doctrina Christiana* reflects this desire to be at once *sui generis* and infused with what is commonly referred to as the 'hermeneutics of suspicion'.

I contend that Maurice Kelley's way of reading *Paradise Lost* theologically should be greeted with a corresponding hermeneutics of suspicion, first because of its assumptions about the relationship between theological and poetic discourse; second, because of its determination to make correspondences between poem and treatise a one-to-one operation. This approach assumes that what the poem fails to yield about complex doctrinal matters will be set straight by the theological treatise. Implicit in the approach is the conviction that poems can get messy, especially Miltonic poems such as *Paradise Lost*, with its metaphors, poetic diction, periodic constructions, multiple points of view, and its use of the verse paragraphs to drive home its message. For Kelley, such potentially subversive exercises in the dissemination of the true *kerygma* are best understood by the straightforward, unembellished, systematic laying out of doctrine advanced in the theological treatise. Despite the strides that Milton studies have achieved since the publication of Kelley's book, the prevailing belief in the kind of theological reading of Milton's poetry that Kelley endorses continues to obtain among many who approach *Paradise Lost* as a theological poem.

## READING THEOLOGICALLY

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Even before proceeding to discuss Milton's poetry from a theological perspective, we must be aware of a major issue that confronts anyone who seeks to understand

Milton's doctrinal beliefs, especially as they are reflected in the *De Doctrina Christiana*. This issue concerns the authorship of the theological treatise and, by implication, how such a treatise is to be used once the issue is addressed, if not resolved. Except for the challenge to authorship launched by Thomas Burgess (1829), the nineteenth-century divine, shortly after the publication of the treatise, the provenance of the *De Doctrina Christiana* went unchallenged until William B. Hunter entered the fray. Having ventured forth with some preliminary articles that called Milton's authorship into question, Hunter then produced his monograph '*Visitation Unimplor'd: Milton and the Authorship of 'De Doctrina Christiana'*' (1998), to argue that we cannot assume categorically Miltonic authorship in whole or in part simply because the academy says so. Although Hunter's arguments have generally gone unheeded or have been cast aside with remarkably little fuss, few have elected to counter Hunter point-by-point. The particulars of the arguments are complex indeed and need not engage us here. Suffice it to say that Miltonists will continue to do battle over the question of authorship for many generations to come. Accordingly, anyone who deems it appropriate to invoke the *De Doctrina Christiana* to serve as a testing ground for clarifying the finer points of theology in Milton's poetry would be well advised to take into account the very real uncertainties that surround the theological treatise, especially in the vexed area of authorship. This is not to say that the theological treatise is no longer germane to Milton's outlook. Rather, it is to alert us to the multiple pitfalls that await any who would approach the treatise with the same glossarial *insouciance* that Kelley undertook to approach the subject in *This Great Argument*. When it comes to *Paradise Lost* (or to any of the other poems that Milton authored) the *De Doctrina Christiana* is no *Glossa Ordinaria*.

So how then is one to read *Paradise Lost* theologically? We begin with the Milton of the antiprelatical tracts, in particular, *The Reason of Church-Government* (1642), which provides invaluable insight into his self-reflections concerning his poetic ambitions. In the introduction to the second book of this tract, Milton distinguishes himself from what he calls those 'libidinous and ignorant Poetasters' who 'lap up vitious principles in sweet pills to be swallow'd down, and make the tast of vertuous documents harsh and sowr', rather than imparting sweetness and light in the Horatian mode (Milton 1931-8: iii. 239). Corresponding to the poetasters are the 'vulgar Amorist' and the 'riming parasite', both of whom receive their inspiration not from the Muse of divine, inspired poetry but from the pagan world of 'Dame Memory and her Siren daughters' (ibid.). Unlike these profane poets, Milton embodies the impulse of true religious devotion, which derives its inspiration from 'devout prayer to that eternall Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallow'd fire of his Altar to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases' (ibid. 241). The allusion, of course, is to Isa. 6: 1-7, in which the prophet receives his calling. Beholding 'the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up' so that 'his train filled the temple', Isaiah is transformed by a vision of the seraphim that cry unto one another 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.' At the prospect of receiving his calling, the prophet laments, 'Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell

in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.' In response to that lamentation, Isaiah is then purified, when one of the seraphim, having a live coal from the altar in its hand, flies to the prophet, lays the burning coal on his mouth, and declares, 'Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thy iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.' As one whose lips have been purified and whose sins have been cleansed, Milton envisions himself as such a prophet, whose vocation, he declares, is 'to 'inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue, and publick civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune, to celebrate in glorious and lofty Hymns the throne and equipage of Gods Almightyesse, and what he works, and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his Church' (ibid. 238).

## POETICS OF THE INEFFABLE

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One might argue—with some justification—that Milton's account of his vocation as prophet in the mould of Isaiah is not theology per se, but to adopt such a position would be to accede to a rather narrow view of theology. The point is that in the case of John Milton as poet, as well as polemicist, any attempt to divorce religious experience from theological experience is immediately suspect: for Milton, the two go hand in hand. This is true especially when it comes to a reading of *Paradise Lost*. The proem to the third book tells the tale. It opens with an address to light that delights in what has been called negative theology, a theology of not knowing, of divine ignorance, characteristic of the theology of Dionysius the Areopagite (AD 500?) and Nicholas of Cusa (1401–64). It may be read in fact as Milton's own statement of the *deus absconditus* or hiddenness of God:

Hail holy Light, ofspring of Heav'n first-born,  
 Or of th' Eternal Coeternal beam  
 May I express thee unblam'd? since God is light,  
 And never but in unapproach'd light  
 Dwelt from Eternitie, dwelt then in thee,  
 Bright effluence of bright essence increate.  
 Or hear'st thou rather pure Ethereal stream,  
 Whose Fountain who shall tell? (3. 1–8)

Among Milton scholars, a great deal of discussion has centred on the theological implications of this invocation. Scholars argue about the extent to which Milton is either orthodox or heterodox, whether he espouses Athanasian or Arian views, whether he is Trinitarian or anti-Trinitarian, whether his putative emanationism is consistent with patristic readings of the godhead, whether his discourse on the Son of God in the *De Doctrina Christiana* serves as an adequate gloss on his hymn to light in the epic. This is what might be called the 'theological Milton', that is, the construction



of Milton as a poet whose poetry re-enacts his theological habits of mind. It is a construction determined to transform the ineffable into theological doctrine. Given the doctrinal basis of Milton's epic and his own theological proclivities, such an approach is understandable, if not inevitable. On the other hand, a careful reading of the text suggests that the inclination to 'theologize' meets with the resistance in the attempt to draw theological conclusions from poetic discourse, especially the kind of discourse that the poet presents at the outset of the third book of his epic. In fact, it is precisely the determination to transform poetic discourse into theological doctrine that the poet of the invocation to light is at pains to counter. Paradoxically, he does so in the very act of invoking the theology of godhead in his paean. That is, at just the point that the poet entertains various ways of construing light as Athanasian or Arian, Trinitarian or anti-Trinitarian, and the like, he suggests his awareness of the ultimate impossibility of comprehending the ineffable through language at all. That is why he offers the alternatives of either/or: Godhead as *either* 'ofspring of Heav'n first-born' or as an emanation 'of th' Eternal Coeternal beam' or as 'Bright effluence of bright essence increate' or as 'pure Ethereal stream'. To offer options about the name and nature of godhead is at once to suggest both the hubris of engaging in such an act ('May I express thee unblam'd?') and the impossibility of naming the unnameable ('since God is light, | And never but in unapproached light...'). The only thing we know is that we cannot know. Poetry becomes the means by which this not knowing is most profoundly expressed.

Where does Maurice Kelley as a glossarist stand in all this? Interestingly, he adopts *neither* the Trinitarian nor the anti-Trinitarian position. Instead, Kelley reduces the possible meanings implicit in 'holy Light' to the realm of the literal. As far as Kelley is concerned, the proem to Book 3 opens with nothing more than 'an invocation to light *in the physical sense*' (italics mine). In place of theology, Kelley (1941: 92–3) substitutes 'physics'. To advance such a view runs the risk of denuding 'holy Light' of its sacrality. As much as Kelley might wish to conceive light in this way, no justification for such a conception is to be found in the *De Doctrina Christiana* itself. In fact, the theological treatise endorses the sacral dimensions of 'holy Light' throughout. Speaking of the *habitaculum Dei* or 'abode of God' in the treatise, Milton (1931–8: xiv. 29–31) observes that there is a 'habitation of God, where he diffuses in an eminent manner the glory and brightness of his majesty'. Out of the *habitaculum Dei* emanates 'holy Light' in its most glorious form. Disregarding such readings, Kelley leads us (by way of a footnote) to several biblical texts that he would have support his literalist interpretation. These texts include Ps. 104: 2 ('Who coverest *thyself* with a light as *with* a garment') and 1 Tim. 6: 16 ('Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see'). As much as Kelley wants these texts to yield a reading of 'holy Light' as entirely physical, they suggest an interpretation that is precisely the opposite. In the process, they reinforce once again the sacrality that underlies the idea of light as 'holy'. Thus, in Ps. 104, the act of covering oneself with light as with a garment involves a deliberate 'metaphorizing' of emanation. The passage represents the light of God as a kind of *pleroma* or 'fullness' that occludes as much as it reveals. Implicit in 1 Tim. 6,

the notion of dwelling in light, in turn, suggests in a New Testament context the *shekhinah* or dwelling presence of God, whose emanation once overwhelms the very process of beholding. There is nothing physical as such about 'holy Light': its radiance is simply of the most profound and spiritual sort. The Miltonic form of theology conceived as the 'phenomenology of the ineffable' is pervasive throughout the poetry and, in particular, throughout *Paradise Lost*.

What then is the ineffable? It is the *ineffabilis*, the unutterable, the inexpressible, the unspeakable. As that which utters the unutterable, expresses the inexpressible, and speaks the unspeakable, Milton's epic becomes the vehicle of the divine, the holy (Lieb 1981). By means of his epic, one gains access to the world of the ineffable, the world of the holy, a phenomenon quite set apart from the world of the profane, the commonplace, the diurnal. As that which lies outside the holy, that is, the *fanum* or consecrated area, the world of the profane represents the condition that Milton as poet seeks to transcend in his quest to realize the world of the holy. What is the holy, and how do we recognize it when we see it? The holy is a phenomenon most immediately associated with the work of Rudolf Otto, whose treatment of the subject is seminal. As Otto (1958) defines it, the holy (*das Heilige*) is a manifestation of the overwhelming encounter with the numinous, that power (*numen*) which resides in godhead. An encounter that defies conceptualization, the holy gives rise to a 'creature-feeling' that expresses itself as 'self-abasement' before 'an overpowering, absolute might'. As a revelation of divine 'otherness' (what Otto calls the 'wholly other' or *ganz andere*), the holy embodies a sense of 'awefulness' that is essentially primordial and archaic. Arising from what Otto terms the *mysterium tremendum* or the mystery of mysteries, the experience of the holy assumes many forms: 'It may at times come sweeping like a gentle tide, pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship' until it fades away into the "'profane", non-religious mood of everyday experience'. Or 'it may burst in sudden eruption up from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsions, or lead to the strangest excitements, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport, and to ecstasy'. In the presence of this 'mystery inexpressible and above all creatures', one is finally bound inextricably to that which one is at a loss to understand, to know, to articulate (ibid. 12–24).

From the perspective of the ineffable, Milton's invocation to 'holy Light' is striking in the extent to which it is aware of the numinous quality of the phenomenon it invokes. The poet knows that this is the *mysterium tremendum* that he calls upon, that, in fact, he 'hails' as one would acknowledge the divine presence of that which is to be hallowed in recognition of its holiness. This is Milton's *ave* to the source of all that is holy. His salutation is therefore a hallowing of that which is hallowed, a call that embodies the poet's own desire (*ave* as *avere*) to be made whole, to be imbued with that luminescence through which the poet himself will partake of the very numen he invokes. Otto speaks wisely of what he calls 'numinous hymns' that are themselves replete with 'numinous sounds' in the creation of poetry that gives voice to the unutterable. Milton's 'Hail' is one of those numinous sounds in its announcement of the numinous hymn to follow. Once again like the prophet Isaiah who appears before the Enthroned Deity in the Holy of Holies, Milton proclaims his

'Holy, holy, holy,' as he awaits the purification of his lips, so that he may speak, utter the unutterable, give expression through the word of his poetry to that which defies articulation (Isa. 6: 1-7). For Milton, the holy emerges not only as a phenomenon of the most archaic sort but as a manifestation of the religious impulse in its most advanced stages of development. As a phenomenon of the most archaic sort, it is conceptualized as a divine beam of light or as a pure ethereal stream, the source of which is both unknown and finally unapproachable and the lineage of which antedates the very creation of the universe. Emerging from the *tehom*, that which Milton in *Paradise Lost* (3. 11) calls the 'rising world of waters dark and deep', it occludes at precisely the point that it reveals, as it 'invests' the waters with its numinous mantle. Its presence overwhelms, and its manifestation resonates with all those qualities of the numinous that enshroud the *mysterium tremendum*. As that which existed before the sun and the heavens were created, however, the presence of God embodied in the ineffable is correspondingly conceived as the means of knowing, as the way in which one comes into knowledge of the 'wholly other' as it unfolds itself within the realm of humankind. As such, it assumes the form of wisdom and understanding 'possessed' by God 'in the beginning of his way, before his works of old'. It is this wisdom, this understanding, who (in personified form) declares: 'I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there *were* no depths, I was brought forth: when there *were* no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth.' Thus, wisdom proclaims that when God 'prepared the heavens I *was* there'; wisdom attended God, '*as* one brought up *with him*' and '*was* daily his delight, rejoicing always before him' (Prov. 8: 22-5, 27, 30). Thus, in its later stages of development, the holy reveals itself in that higher wisdom of knowing, of understanding, that is an essential part of God's own self-manifestation from the very foundations of the universe. It is precisely this wisdom that the poet seeks in his quest to express and to celebrate the essential nature of the ineffable in his poetry, in his articulation of the word as a paean to the holy in its bright essence.

Such an experience transcends the immediate concerns of the poet's allegiance to a particular church, denomination, or doctrinal persuasion. Whether one is an Anabaptist or a High Church Anglican is incidental to the kind of associations that engage us here. In Milton studies as well as in studies of other poets deemed to be 'religious', the thrust of prevailing scholarship is to 'locate' the poet within a particular religious milieu. Among other poets of his time, Milton is characteristically seen to reflect a particular poetic disposition that has its immediate source in seventeenth-century debates concerning the place of belief and dogma as an outgrowth of the Reformation. This approach is very much in keeping with what might be called Milton's doctrinal outlook. A theologian in his own right, Milton certainly invites the kind of analysis that views his poetry in the context of his lengthy discourses concerning vexed issues of Christian doctrine. But what I have in mind in addressing the relationship between poetry and the ineffable is an experience rooted in something much more 'primitive' than the immediate milieu in which Milton's poetry (or any religious poetry of a particular time or place) is grounded.

It is this phenomenological perspective that one sees in such scholars as Gerardus van der Leeuw, whose own masterwork *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (1968) approaches the holy from precisely this point of view. As a phenomenologist, van der Leeuw, like Otto, desires to get beyond the immediate forms of religion in order to gain insight into the essential power that inspired them. Those forms are the denominational or doctrinal postulates of belief through which the numinous is conceptualized. It is the province of the poet to deconceptualize, in effect, to deconstruct, such postulates or, at the very least, call them into question, in the portrayal of the ineffable as that which no creed, no denomination can fully comprehend.

## READING *PARADISE LOST*

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As one might conclude, the best way to read *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* theologically is to hold as suspect any interpretation determined to demonstrate that the epic is the 'versified' product of one or more schools of doctrinal thought. One might even go so far as to say that the best way to read Milton's epics theologically is to read *against* the inclination to 'theologize' the poem, or, at least, to be complacent in assuming that all the mystery will be resolved by resorting to a theological treatise the very provenance of which (in whole or in part) has come under fire as indisputably the product of John Milton's authorship. In this context, one might do well to remind himself that the first 'theologians' in the narrative encompassed by *Paradise Lost* are the fallen angels. Those inclined to discuss matters beyond their reach are described as follows:

[They] . . . apart sat on a Hill retir'd,  
 In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high  
 Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will and Fate,  
 Fixt Fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,  
 And found no end, in wandring mazes lost.      (2. 557-61)

To see the fallen angels in this posture is to realize the irony implicit in Milton's own agenda of asserting 'Eternal Providence' in order to 'justify the wayes of God to men' (1. 25-6). In such moments of self-parody, Milton makes a point of dramatizing the precarious position in which one always finds oneself in presuming to venture beyond one's proper station as a creature of God. This is something the fallen angels never learn: their blatant defiance of their limits accordingly results in their fall. With the fallen angels in mind, the poet knows that in his attempt to surpass the boundaries set for him he too runs the risk of those fallen theologians. Thus, he prays that he will not have to endure the fate of such over-reachers as Bellerophon. In his ascent 'above the flight of *Pegasean* wing', the poet fears that he too might be thrown from his 'flying steed'; to wander aimlessly as a crazed, blind fool on the '*Aleian* Field'

below (7. 4, 17–20). Such, one might suggest, is the fate of those who dabble in forbidden things, as much the stuff of poetry as the stuff of theology. For that reason, *Paradise Lost* counsels us to be ‘lowly wise’ (8. 173) in the face of all those temptations to cultivate a knowledge of things that lie beyond our grasp. At the same time, this is an epic of transcendence. It is an epic that invites us to behold God on his throne, to witness the war in heaven and the overthrow of the rebel angels by the Son in his divine chariot. It delights in recounting the creation of the world and the nature of prelapsarian existence. In short, this is an epic that takes immense risks in its portrayal of that which can only be accommodated to the limited capacities of human sense through the mediatorial function of poetic discourse. Any attempt to read that discourse theologically must take into account the insurmountable chasm between divine and human modes of perception.

## THE CELESTIAL DIALOGUE

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It is with this sensitivity to poetic nuance that such events as the dialogue between the Father and the Son in Book 3 of *Paradise Lost* must be read. This dialogue is at the heart of theological readings, for in it Milton portrays Father and Son speaking to each other in a manner customarily associated with performance on the stage. Recalling that Milton originally intended to write his great work in the form of drama, we should be alert to the dialogic implications of the celestial council scene. That scene in effect enacts what Milton in the *De Doctrina Christiana* calls ‘the drama of the personalities in the godhead’ (1931–8: xiv. 197). It is this drama (at its heart, ‘theological’) that has been the source of more entanglements than almost any other events in Milton’s poetic oeuvre. In response to the drama, readers have asked two fundamental questions: (1) How can a poet presume to portray the unportrayable as ‘characters’ in a drama; and, (2) assuming that such a portrayal is possible, what can be said about the nature of the relationship between the characters in this drama? To read *Paradise Lost* theologically is to attempt to answer these questions. At the very least, the answers lie not in subjecting the poetry of Milton’s epic to the ‘glossarial’ dimensions represented by the theological treatise. Determining whether Milton was an Arian, a Subordinationist, a Trinitarian, or a Socinian based upon our reading of the *De Doctrina Christiana* does not get us very far into the nature of what I would call Milton’s ‘poetic theology’. This is a theology of metaphor, paradox, and multiple modes of perception. It is the theology of the poet, not of the theologian. Poetic theology delights in subverting expectations, challenging doctrinal formulation, and confounding the glossarist’s determination to render it all clear as day.

One or two examples should suffice. The council scene in Book 3 opens through the delineation of what amounts to the stage setting for high theatre such as one

might witness in *Hamlet* or *King Lear*. First, the enthroned Father is described: 'Now had th'Almighty Father from above, | From the pure Emphyrean where he sits | High Thron'd above all highth, bent down his eye.' Surrounding him, 'all the Sanctities of Heav'n | Stood thick as Starrs.' On his right side 'the radiant image of his Glory sat, | His onely Son' (3. 56–64). So situated, the Son fulfils his role as one who is 'dextrous' (from the Latin '*dexter*') to perform his Father's work (cf. 5. 741). In this respect, the Son finds his counterpart in the figure of Sin, whose purpose is *sinister*, that is, implicitly situated on the left-hand side and hailed as 'a Sign | Portentous' (2. 760; cf. 10. 322). The significance of the setting of the celestial dialogue for a theological reading is one in which position is everything in life, because *position* implies *condition*. The semiological bearing of the Father–Son relationship reinforces the theological implications of how that relationship is to be interpreted. Milton himself implies as much in his act of situating Father and Son in the playing out of the dialogue. The stakes are high, for if Father and Son are situated or enthroned at the same level, then the parity of their enthronements would imply a parity of their respective natures. The problem is that the dialogue itself subverts, rather than supports, interpretations based upon settings or signs (portentous or otherwise). In fact, the discourse provides cues that actually appear to be contradictory. Thus, judging by what the Father himself declares, we might first assume that the Son is enthroned in a position equal to that of the Father. So the Father celebrates the Son in the following manner: 'Thou hast, though Thron'd in highest bliss | *Equal to God*, and equally enjoying | God-like fruition, quitted all to save | A World from utter loss' (3. 305–8; italics mine). Such a declaration would appear to support an orthodox reading of the dialogue consistent with the kind of description one finds in the proem to Milton's 'On the Morning of *Christ's* Nativity' which portrays the Son as one 'wont at Heav'ns high Council-Table | To sit the midst of Trinal Unity' (10–11). The setting is perfectly clear in the early celebration of Christ's nativity.

But matters become problematical in *Paradise Lost*. In the setting for the celestial council scene that Milton's epic portrays, there is no 'Trinal', for there is no direct reference to the Trinity. What then does the phrase 'Equal to God' really mean? The precise *theology* of the phrase is indeterminate, and such a condition is rendered even more perplexing by virtue of the praise later bestowed upon Father and Son by the angelic hosts. Their hymn celebrates the Son in relation to the Father in a manner that questions the very notion of parity. Thus, they conceive the Son as one who, 'regardless of the Bliss wherein hee sat | *Second* to thee [God], offerd himself to die | For mans offence' (3. 408–10; italics mine). So we might be inclined to ask whether the Son is equal to God or second to God? That is, are we to understand the Son as one enthroned at the same level as the Father, a position that implies parity, or, in keeping with Milton's hierarchical universe, is the Son enthroned (either literally or metaphorically) at a lower level, a positioning that implies imparity? Our response to those questions will determine our interpretation of both the dramatic and the theological implications of the dialogue. In either respect the so-called drama of the personalities in the godhead assumes different meanings. With complete parity,

we are invited to think of the dialogue as essentially monologue in which one character is portrayed as two, each an aspect of the other. With imparity, we are invited to think of the dialogue as one in which there are two different characters, each with his own personality, his own powers, his own history. From this perspective, the unfolding of the dialogue is such that the Father is able to 'test' the Son, educate him in the ways of what will become his destiny as Messiah, a destiny that the Son willingly and knowingly embraces to establish himself 'by Merit more then birthright Son of God' (3. 309). It really does matter where the Son sits and at what level he is enthroned. What is the answer? It is one in which the poetry complicates itself even further in its conception of who is where and of who exists when. For in God's dialogue with Adam in Book 8, we receive an entirely different rendering of God's 'situation' (a Miltonic word). Responding to Adam's request for a mate, God asks: 'What thinkst thou then of mee, and this my State, | Seem I to thee sufficiently possess | Of happiness, or not? *who am alone* | *From all Eternitie, for none I know* | *Second to me or like, equal much less*' (8. 403-7; italics mine). Forget the discourse of Book 3: God is God. There is no other who is equal to him or even second to him.

## CUES TO READING

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What, then, of our theological reading? I contend that contradictory (perhaps, paradoxical, perhaps oxymoronic) cues of this sort—the very stuff of poetry—are such that we are finally obliged to 'deconstruct' the theological (and semiological) significations we have always taken for granted. In theology (particularly of the systematic sort), such cues are not of immediate concern. In fact, they do not appear to be at issue at all. The use of the *De Doctrina Christiana* to clarify these issues causes more problems than it solves. In its treatment of the Son of God ('De Filio Dei') in the fifth chapter of the first book, the treatise makes clear that its concerns lie elsewhere. Invoking the distinction between 'essentia' and 'substantia', the treatise concerns itself not with 'cues' or 'signs' of any sort but rather with such metaphysical distinctions that are the very stuff of systematic theology. Specifically, the treatise is at pains to demonstrate that the Father and the Son are neither coeternal nor coessential but are rather consubstantial. (The terms 'essence' and 'substance' share a complex and vexed history that extends back to the earliest Church councils.) What this means for the treatise is that the Son is *subordinate* to the Father in all ways, including designations such as 'omnipotence', 'omniscience', and 'omnipresence'. All this is no doubt useful up to a point in the discussion of the Father-Son relationship in *Paradise Lost*, but finally one must come to terms with the actual cues embedded in the poem itself in order to read the poem theologically. This means coming to terms with the essentially ludic nature of the poem as poem. Here is

where we must sensitize ourselves to competing discourses that may be reconciled only through careful interpretive manoeuvres that take into account the possibility that these discourses may never be reconciled at all. Given Milton's fundamental adherence to the notion of the *deus absconditus* or 'hidden God', it is only just and fitting that his God be portrayed in this way. For this is a God described as 'invisible'. Indeed, 'Thron'd inaccessible', He is a God whose very skirts are 'dark with excessive bright'. His skirts 'dazzle Heav'n' so profoundly that even the 'brightest Seraphim' dare not approach Him but instead veil their eyes with their wings (3. 380–8). We recall Isa. 6: 2: 'Above it [the throne] stood the seraphim: each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.' This vision lies at the heart of the entire enterprise. For Milton, the vision serves to warn his readers that they must be aware of the dangers that attend upon an interpretation of his poetry, especially *Paradise Lost*. In the fashion of Isaiah, one must be in a position to have his own lips touched by the luminous coals from the altar before he presumes to hold forth on the theology of *Paradise Lost*. Perhaps, this is what Milton calls for when he invokes his 'fit audience'. Although he expected that audience to be 'few' (7. 31), Milton would have marvelled at the extent to which the theological basis of his *opera* (particularly *Paradise Lost*) has given rise to whole schools of thought among Miltonists. If we are to understand that *opera*, we must come to terms with the interpretative dynamics that distinguish this body of works. This will mean defining and redefining one's expectations at every point. If one can maintain not just a calm of mind but a flexibility of mind, the act of reading Milton's poetry 'theologically' will be that much more enhanced.

## MILTON'S 'BRIEF EPIC'

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The foregoing reading of *Paradise Lost* finds its counterpart in *Paradise Regained*. Once again, Milton's treatise *The Reason of Church-Government* is suggestive. There, Milton (1931–8: iii. 237) distinguishes between two kinds of epic that engage him: the 'diffuse epic' and the 'brief epic'. The first he associates with the epics of Homer, Virgil, and Tasso; the second with the book of Job. If the first looks forward to *Paradise Lost*, the second looks forward to *Paradise Regained*. The model suggested by the book of Job, of course, resides as much in *Samson Agonistes*, Milton's drama drawn from the book of Judges 13–16, as it does in *Paradise Regained*, the epic drawn from the Gospel of Luke 4 (compare Matt. 4). The publication of both poems (epic and drama) in the same volume in 1671 attests to the extent to which Job represents a 'subtext', as it were, to an understanding of the epic, on the one hand, and the drama, on the other. Theologically, *Paradise Regained* reaches back to *Paradise Lost* as well. It is a correspondence for which Milton's Quaker friend Thomas Ellwood might assume some responsibility. Having secured a 'pretty Box' for Milton at



Chalfont St. Giles to escape the plague in 1665, Ellwood relates in his autobiography that, upon a visit to the poet, he was presented by Milton with the manuscript of *Paradise Lost*. After reading and reflecting upon the poem, Ellwood in a return visit responded with the now-famous question: 'Thou hast said here much of *Paradise lost*, but what hast thou to say of *Paradise found*?' Some time after Milton had returned to London, he presented Ellwood with a copy of *Paradise Regained*. 'This', Milton said in a pleasant tone, 'is owing to you: for you put it into my Head, by the Question you put to me at *Chalfont*; which before I had not thought of' (Ellwood 1906: 199–200). Whether the story is apocryphal is difficult to determine. What is not difficult to determine is the extent to which the diffuse epic sets the stage for the brief one. Thus, in the last two books of *Paradise Lost*, Adam on the Hill of Speculation is made aware of the form redemption will assume in human history. It is a form in which the mystery of the *protevangelium* proclaimed in Gen. 3: 14–15 ('And the Lord God said unto the serpent . . . I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel') is finally disclosed. In response to his realization of exactly what the phrase 'seed of Woman' implies, Adam declares that 'Needs must the Serpent now his capital bruise | Expect with mortal pain,' but entirely misunderstands the nature of the warfare involved. Mistakenly assuming, however, that that warfare will be physical, Adam asks of his guide, the archangel Michael, to reveal 'where and when | Thir fight, what stroke shall bruise the Victors heel' (12. 383–5). Michael responds in the spirit of Saint Paul (Eph. 6: 10–24): 'Dream not of thir fight, | As of a Duel, or the local wounds | Of head or heel: Not therefore joyns the Son | Manhood to God-head' (12. 386–9). Rather, their warfare will be of the spiritual sort, one that destroys Satan's works in humankind and its offspring through renewed obedience to the 'Law of God' (12. 394–7). Internalized and spiritualized, the soteriology of renewed obedience is what underlies the action of the brief epic, one in which Satan becomes the Son's 'Spiritual Foe', against whom the Son proves his mettle (1. 10). The theology of *Paradise Regained* is one in which the battle in the 'wast Wilderness' is waged within the individual soul of the 'glorious Eremite', who in his sojourn into the Desert is described as having 'into himself descended' (1. 7–8; 2. 111). In the various attempts to understand the theology of *Paradise Regained*, there has been much discussion about the nature of the hypostatical union (Lewalski 1966), a topic addressed in detail in *De Doctrina Christiana* (1. 5). At issue is the way in which Milton conceived the union of God and human in the person of the Son as saviour. But an understanding of the theology of *Paradise Regained* makes it clear that such concepts, although of interest in the attempt to determine the nature of hypostasis, are not of immediate moment to the make-up of the incarnate Son of the brief epic. It is enough to know that in him God has joined manhood to godhead and that the three temptations (often referred to as those of the flesh (*concupiscentia carnis*), the world (*concupiscentia oculorum*), and the devil (*superbia vitae*)) that the Son resists are all-encompassing. (Designating these temptations as 'the triple equation', theologians have traditionally viewed them in the context of the temptations that Eve proved incapable of resisting in Eden.)

## SAMSON AGONISTES

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If *Paradise Regained* is the narrative that elaborates the soteriological dimensions manifested in *Paradise Lost*, the brief epic likewise finds its counterpart in the dramatic poem *Samson Agonistes*. As suggested, both may be said to draw their inspiration from the book of Job as subtext, a tie reinforced by the fact that both brief epic and dramatic poem appeared in the same volume in 1671. Just as the so-called triple equation in the brief epic is anticipated by the pattern of temptations embodied in the diffuse epic, so the triple equation may be said to extend to a corresponding pattern in the dramatic poem, one in which *concupiscentia carnis* is reflected in the figure of Manoa, *concupiscentia oculorum* is reflected in the figure of Dalila, and *superbia vitae* is reflected in the figure of Harapha of Gath. In addressing these correspondences, one must be careful not to succumb to the temptation of being overly formulaic. If one can speak of a 'theology' that underlies *Samson Agonistes*, it is one in which all formulas are defied and in which the figure of God is entirely hidden. In this context, God once again becomes the *deus absconditus*, a hidden God. If he has any sort of name through which he is identified, that name is 'our living Dread' (l. 1673), a phenomenon that returns us to Rudolf Otto, whose consideration of the holy (*das Heilige*) most aptly describes the experience of 'otherness' (*ganz andere*) that infuses the dramatic poem. In her splendid study *Towards 'Samson Agonistes'*, Mary Ann Radzinowicz sees Milton's dramatic poem as the culmination of his mature literary and theological outlook. If such is the case, then this 'maturity' is one in which the primal forces that underlie *Paradise Lost* are as present in the dramatic poem as they are in the diffuse epic. What is true of the diffuse epic is true of the dramatic poem: the best way to read Milton's poems theologically is to read *against* the inclination to theologize them, or to approach them as the poetic manifestations of a systematic theology.

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## CHAPTER 19

# John Milton

Michael Lieb

### The Psalmist

The influence of the Bible on the writings of John Milton (1608–74) can hardly be overestimated. In many respects, Milton was among our most “biblical” of authors. This means that as a source of both inspiration and belief, the Bible was crucial to him throughout his career as writer and as thinker.<sup>1</sup> As a young poet in his teens, he sought to do the Psalmist one better by paraphrasing Psalms 114 and 136, in anticipation, no doubt, of his later, more mature translations of Psalms 80–8, and, shortly thereafter, Psalms 1–8, during the tumultuous mid-century period culminating in the Protectorate. First published in the second edition of Milton’s *Poems* (1673), the two sets of Psalm translations are important both in their own right and for what they say about Milton’s self-conception as an aspiring biblical poet.<sup>2</sup> For both reveal Milton’s poetic practices as he conceives himself in the act not just of translating but of rewriting Scripture. The first set contains the explanatory headnote “April 1648. J. M.,” followed by the statement: “*Nine of the Psalms done into Metre, wherein all but what is in a different Character [that is, italics], are the very words of the Text, translated from the Original*” (*Poems*, I, 86). From the outset, the statement alerts the reader that the poet conceives his role as essentially that of a “translator.” As such, he seeks to be as accurate as possible in rendering the Hebrew Bible into English verse. Adhering to this principle, Milton is careful not just to italicize words or phrases that he inserts into the translation but also to provide marginal glosses as appropriate. Here, he is acting as a scholar, as well as a translator. Consistent with prevailing hymnals and psalters, among them the Sternhold and Hopkins edition *The Whole Book of Psalms Collected into English Metre* (London, 1562), Milton’s translations appear in the form conventionally known as “common meter,” a quatrain with alternating lines of iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter.

With the second set of translations, the text provides no explanatory headnotes as such, other than the dates when the individual psalms were “done into verse,” that is, during the week of August 7 (?) to August 14, 1653, a period of intense political uncertainty, one that witnessed the coming into power of Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector on December 16, 1653.<sup>3</sup> Reflecting the upheavals of the times, these psalm translations

are remarkable as representations of Milton's capabilities not simply as a translator but as a poet of importance. Eliminated are such qualifiers as "*the very words of the Text, translated from the Original.*" Gone are the marginal glosses as well. Rather than strictly subscribing to the conventional form discernible in the hymnals and psalters, these poems represent occasions for prosodic experimentation and the creation of new forms. No two of the eight psalms possess the same form. Whereas the first psalm assumes the form of a sixteen-line poem written in decasyllabic couplets, the second psalm, as the headnote indicates, assumes the form of "*Terzetti*," a scheme reminiscent of the Italian influence made evident most famously in Dante's *Commedia*, among other works; and the third psalm appears as a twenty-four line poem with a complex rhyme scheme and lines of various length that alternate catalectic as well as acatalectic feet. The other psalm translations in the set are correspondingly complex in form and texture. This mode of poetic discourse is, in turn, complemented by the presence of enjambment, as well as in the adoption of *caesurae* that occur variously throughout the lines. In short, Milton's translations of Psalms 1–8 are compositions that qualify as "poems" in their own right. They are as much Milton's as they are the Psalmist's. As such, they provide the occasion for Milton as a poet veritably to assume the role of the Psalmist himself. As a poet, Milton, in effect, writes his own Scripture. He himself becomes "the Psalmist" par excellence.

## Biblical Vocation

The biblical basis of Milton's self-conception as a poet is discernible throughout his works, both early and late. While still a young man fresh from his undergraduate years at Cambridge, Milton made known his poetic vocation in a Latin epistle (*Elegy*, 6) to his dear friend Charles Diodati, "Sojourning in the Country." Whereas the tone of this verse epistle is ostensibly jocular at times, the poem makes a serious point of providing the opportunity for the poet to delineate himself in both prophetic and priestly terms as one sacred to the gods and empowered thereby to appear before them (77–8). In keeping with this exalted view, the poem culminates in an account of Milton's poetic activities. "I am," the poet declares, "singing the King, bringer of peace by his divine origin / and the blessed times promised in the sacred books." Milton dedicates his poem to "the birthday of Christ" (81–7). What Milton has in mind is his early poem *On the Morning of Christs Nativity*, a work that represents a testament to his view of himself as a poet of things sacred and things biblical early in his evolving sense of his poetic vocation. It is this kind of view that underscores his determination to establish himself as a true votary of the life of Christ. Corresponding poems in this venue include *Upon the Circumcision* and *The Passion*, a poem that is particularly notable because of its unfinished state. It appears that the subject of Christ's Passion, so germane to medieval and Renaissance poems on the life of Christ, proved unsuitable for Milton, either because he did not respond to the Passion as an event that his poetic temperament could embrace or because he felt that the subject was finally beyond his powers. In either event, he did not hesitate to publish *The Passion*, along with his *Nativity* and *Circumcision* poems, in the 1645 and 1673 editions of his "minor" poems, as well as to append

an explanatory note underscoring the fact that he left *The Passion* a fragment: "This Subject the Author finding to be above the yeers he had, when he wrote it, and nothing satisfi'd with what was begun, left it unfinisht." Even so fragmentary a poem as *The Passion* Milton determined to publish as a testament to the extent of his devotion to delineate the crucial biblical events that constitute the life of Christ. Such a self-reflexive move underscores Milton's desire to make known to the world as many aspects of his sensibility as possible. This sense of self-reflexivity permeates his poems.

Milton's poem *On the Morning of Christs Nativity* is a case in point. In the introductory stanzas (or proem) to the "Hymn" proper, Milton conceives himself in almost disarmingly childlike terms by calling upon his Muse to get to the manger even before "the Star-led Wisards" arrive with their "odours sweet," because the young poet wishes to be the first one to lay his own gift (that is, his "humble ode") before the feet of "the Infant God." The gesture is at once charming and playful, both of which elements are implicit in the title of the poem. For *On the Morning of Christs Nativity* implies not only that this is a poem about Christ's Nativity and all that it signifies but also that this is a poem the action of which occurs "on" the very morning of Christ's Nativity. The poet, in effect, rewrites biblical history to "place" himself at the scene of the holy event itself. So, in his race to get to the manger before the Wise Men do, the poet calls out to his Muse: "O run, prevent them with thy humble ode, / And lay it lowly at his blessed feet; / Have thou the honour first, thy Lord to greet, / And joyn thy voice unto the Angel Quire, / From out his secret Altar toucht with hallow'd fire" (15–28). At issue is Isaiah's account of his receipt of the prophetic vocation in the sixth chapter of his prophecy. There, Isaiah envisions himself as having penetrated to the most sacred place of the temple, the Holy of Holies, where he beholds the Enthroned Deity with all his accoutrements. According to Isaiah's account of the event, the Lord appears to him "sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up," where the glory of his train envelops the temple. Above the throne, the seraphim appear: "each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." They cry unto each other "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah reacts disarmingly: "Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." One of the seraphim responds, in turn, by taking a "live coal" from off the holocaustal altar and laying the coal on Isaiah's lips, after which the seraph proclaims, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." At this point, Isaiah hears "the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Now purified, Isaiah is able to declare: "Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:1–8). Like Isaiah, Milton conceived himself as one who has penetrated to the Holy of Holies in order to behold the theophany of God, who bestows upon him the poet a calling all his own.

## The Celebrant

Although Milton reconceives both the setting and the terms of the Isaiah narrative to suit his poetic needs, the biblical event represents the allusive world in which Milton views himself an active participant. Such is particularly true of his festive poem *At a*

*solemn Musick*. As a magnificent celebration of the Enthroned Deity surrounded by the angelic choirs this poem becomes the occasion for Milton to portray himself as one called upon to “present / That undisturbed Song of pure concent / Ay sung before the saphire-colour’d throne / To him that sits theron” (5–8). His purpose is to “renew that Song” sung before the throne of God and there “live with him [God]” and “sing in endless morn of light” (25–8).<sup>4</sup> Implicit in the setting is not only Isaiah 6 but Revelation 4. In the Revelation account (drawn from Isaiah, among other prophecies), St John the Divine experiences his own celestial vision of God on his throne. Here, the vision is at once tumultuous and festive. If the tumultuous elements are discernible in “lightnings and thunderings and voices” that proceed from the throne, the festive elements are embodied in the “four beasts full of eyes before and behind” that John witnesses round about the throne. Like the seraphim of Isaiah, the four beasts or living beings “rest not day and night, saying Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (Revelation 4:1–8). Their “undisturbed Song of pure concent” is commonly known as the *trisagion* (“thrice holy”). Milton’s *At a solemn Musick* is his own *trisagion*. That is, he not only produces such a poem to celebrate the Enthroned Deity but, rather like the four creatures of Revelation, he portrays himself as an actual participant in the *trisagion*. In that way, his poem becomes the occasion through which he incorporates himself as celebrant into the divine setting. This remarkable gesture is later articulated in the angelic hymn to God that culminates the celestial dialogue in book 3 of *Paradise Lost* (372–415). If the hymn begins in the third person (“Thee Father first they sung Omnipotent”), it concludes in the first person (“Hail Son of God, Saviour of Men, thy Name / Shall be the copious matter of my Song / Henceforth, and never shall my Harp thy praise / Forget, nor from thy Fathers praise disjoin”). It is only too easy to miss the crucial transition here. Almost imperceptibly, the pronominal references in this hymn move from the angelic choir (“they sung”) to the poet himself (“my Song ... my Harp”). If the hymn is that of the angels surrounding the throne, Milton as poet/celebrant is as much a member of that celestial company as any one of the other members of the angelic throng.

## Prophetic Milton

What is true of the poetry is no less true of the prose works. In the introduction to the second book of *The Reason of Church-Government* (1642), he re-enacts the visionary drama delineated in Isaiah by situating it in the polemical context of his tracts against the prelates. Distinguishing between himself and other poets (such as “the vulgar Amorist” or the “rhyming parasite”) who do nothing more than invoke “Dame Memory and her Siren daughters” to inspire them, Milton promises to produce a major poem inspired by “devout prayer to that eternall Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallow’d fire of his Altar to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases” (I, 820–1). With the Spirit of God as his Muse, he bears witness to the fact that he, as much as any of the biblical prophets, is the one who has been chosen to be purified for the sake of undertaking the vocation of the prophet both in his poetry and in his prose. The vocational dimension of biblical prophecy is



transformed into the polemical setting of Milton's self-conception as poet-prophet. If for Milton, the office of the biblical prophet was not easy, it was also one that he could not refuse. As he states earlier in the introduction to *The Reason of Church-Government*, "when God commands to take the trumpet and blow a dolorous or a jarring blast, it lies not in mans will what he shall say, or what he shall conceal" (compare Jeremiah 20:8–10). Such an allusion, Milton observes, puts his own times on notice "not suddenly to condemn all things that are sharply spoken" (I, 803). Particularly in the polemical context of Milton's prose, the burden of the prophet was palpably present throughout his writings both before and after total blindness overcame him later in life (1652).

The experience of that burden underscores Milton's determination to make use of his God-given talents and his deep-seated anxieties about his putative "belatedness" in failing to fulfill his obligations as a true servant of God. These issues haunted him his entire life. At the center of his anxieties lay the all-important experience of the unprofitable servant depicted in the Parable of the Talents. According to the parable, a man traveling into a far country called upon his servants to look after his goods, that is, his "talents," which the text conceives both as a form of currency and as the sign of ability. "And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability." Whereas the first two servants double the number of talents their lord has bestowed upon them, the third "went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money." Upon returning from the far country, the lord rewards the first two servants for their respective labors, but when he calls upon the third servant to account for his actions, the man responds, "Lord, I knew that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, *there* thou hast *that* is thine." In response to the third servant's statement, the lord accuses him of being "wicked and slothful" and commands that the talent be taken from him and bestowed upon the first servant, the one who already has more than the rest. "For," the lord says, "unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." Having issued this pronouncement, the lord has the unprofitable servant cast into "outer darkness," where we are told "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:14–30). The terror associated with the harsh lord of this parable culminates in the coming of the Son of man to sit upon his throne of glory to judge all the nations of the world.

From the time he was a young man, Milton revealed an ever-present awareness of the biblical implications of his vocational anxieties. Thus, as early as his "Letter to an Unknown Friend" (1631–3? or 1637?), he responded to the admonitions of one who reminded him "that the howres of the night passe on" and that the day "is at hand wherin Christ commands all to Labour while there is light" (John 9:4). Although the precise identity of the friend has never been disclosed, the dark mystery surrounding his identity serves to underscore, rather than to alleviate, the anxieties Milton experienced in his need to justify himself before God. In the letter, Milton conceives the friend as "a good watch man" (compare Ezekiel 33:7; Isaiah 21:12; Matthew 20:6) whose responsibility is to make certain that Milton make appropriate use of his gifts. But Milton does not need the watchman to remind him of what is at hand. His own

conscience is sufficient to that end. Accordingly, Milton thinks himself “bound though unask’t” to provide “an account, as oft as occasion is” of his “tardie moving,” in accord with the urging of his conscience, which he avers “is not without god.” With the coming judgment in mind, he places himself in the context of one ever mindful of the need to obey “that command in the gospell set out by the terrible seasing of him that hid the talent.” Paradoxically, it is the “very consideration of that great commandment,” he says, that prevents him from pressing forward with his great work but that obliges him instead to hold off with “a sacred reverence & religious advisement how best to undergoe,” that is, to undertake and fulfill the terms of his vocation. He justifies his belatedness through an allusion to the Parable of the Vineyards, in which the householder rewards all those who labored for him according to his will, whether they were the first to serve or the last: “So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen” (Matthew 20:1–15). It is through the consolation afforded by the Parable of the Vineyard that Milton responds to the terrors of the Parable of the Talents. So he views himself as “not taking thought of beeing late so it give advantage to be more fit, for those that were latest lost nothing when the maister of the vineyard came to give each one his hire” (I, 319–21).

As much as the Parable of the Vineyard might be invoked to relieve the anxieties wrought by the Parable of the Talents, it is this parable that represents the cornerstone of Milton’s view of his vocation. Once again, the introduction to the second book of the *Reason of Church-Government* is germane. Milton begins that introduction by declaring that “God even to a strictnesse requires the improvement of these his entrusted gifts.” Prompted by that awareness, Milton “cannot but sustain a sorer burden of mind, and more pressing then any supportable toil, or waight, which the body can labour under; how and in what manner he shall dispose and employ those summes of knowledge and illumination, which God hath sent him into this world to trade with” (I, 801). One notes immediately the extent to which the language of the discourse is infused with the harsh mercantilism of the Parable of the Talents itself. (Compare the version of this parable in Luke 19:12–27, which in the Authorized Version substitutes “pounds” for “talents.”) Although the mercantilism of this parable would appear to be directly at odds with biblical mandates against the evils of usury (for example, Exodus 22:25–7; Leviticus 25:35–7; Deuteronomy 23:19–20, etc.), such an outlook bespeaks the anxieties Milton experienced as one who felt that “burden of mind,” as well as that “toil” and “waight,” under which he labored in order to prove his worth before a God who would ultimately come to judge him. These anxieties underscore Milton’s poetry as well.

## The Sonnets

Anxieties are already present, for example, in Sonnet 7 (“How soon hath Time the subtle thief of Youth”), which Milton appended to his “Letter to an Unknown Friend” as a way providing poetic insight into the dilemma he was facing in the establishment of his accountability at that early juncture in his career. Commemorating the passing of his “three and twentieth year,” the sonnet becomes the means by which the poet takes

stock of his accomplishments to date and professes his faith in God's providence. The octave of this Petrarchan sonnet articulates the dilemma. Although the poet's "haysting dayes fly on with full career," his "late spring" at this point in his maturation reveals as yet "no bud or blossom." The first quatrain of the octave recalls Milton's own statement in the "Letter to an Unknown Friend" that he remains "suspicious" of himself and continues to "take notice of a certaine belatedness" in himself that he is frankly incapable of dispelling. The sonnet represents a poetic confirmation of this stance. The sestet, on the other hand, represents a kind of resolve that attempts to reconcile the underlying anxieties that arise from belatedness with a corresponding sense of resignation to the inscrutable ways of God: "Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow, / It shall be still in strictest measure eev'n / To that same lot, however mean or high, / Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heav'n," a statement that culminates in the declaration of faith in God's ways and a realization that the dilemma of belatedness can be overcome only with an awareness that the providential eye of God sees and foresees everything: "All is, if I have grace to use it so, / As ever in my great task-maisters eye" (compare Exodus 33:13; Romans 12:3, 6). If such a statement provides at best a momentary sense of resolution and reconciliation, the ever-present anxieties that characterize the "Letter to an Unknown Friend" find expression at various points throughout Milton's career, perhaps, because of the lingering sense that to be ever in the eye of the "great task-maister" is as much a source of disquietude as it is a source of comfort.

It is this "great task-maister" with his all-seeing eye that haunts Milton's Sonnet 19 ("When I consider how my light is spent"). In its own way, this sonnet, more than any other in the Miltonic canon, bespeaks the dread that the poet experiences in his account of what he had earlier called "the terrible seasing of him that hid the talent." Reinforced no doubt by the devastating fact of Milton's own blindness (1652), the prospect of that seizure assumes an especially grim and unsettling irony, one that further intensifies the anxieties that Milton experienced earlier in life. With the blindness in both of Milton's eyes fully realized, the bearing of the unprofitable servant invoked earlier in his career is now conceived not just as trope but as fact. The death that comes from unwillingly burying one's talent within oneself becomes the occasion for the dread of being cast into "outer darkness" as a result of one's inability to fulfill his God-given talents, despite his intense desire to please the "great task-maister." What a cruel joke appears to have played on the blind poet! Thus, he cries out: "Doth God exact day labour, light deny'd"? As it recalls John 9:4 ("I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work"), among other texts, the outcry that anticipates the *volta* in Sonnet 19 has already been sounded in Milton's statement in his "Letter to an Unknown Friend" that "the day is at hand wherin Christ commands all to Labour while there is light" (I, 319). Whereas in the letter the idea is framed as an observation, in the sonnet it becomes a "murmur" putatively countermanded by the serene voice of "patience," through which the consolation afforded by the sestet is articulated. How effective that consolation is in ameliorating the anxieties brought about by Milton's blindness remains to be seen. Clearly, that "great task-maister's eye" remains focused, indeed riveted, on the blind poet until his death.

## The Trinity College Manuscript

Whether in the form of poems on biblical themes early in his career or in the form of the great epics on the loss and regaining of paradise and the drama on the fallen hero of Judges published at the end of his career, Milton conceived himself throughout his life as a poet who aspired to refashion the Bible in his own terms. To that end, he maintained a list of biblical subjects that appear in what is known as the Trinity College Manuscript, now in the archives of Trinity College, Cambridge. Available in facsimile, this holograph and scribal notebook contains not only drafts of poems such as *A Mask* (later known as *Comus*) and *Lycidas*, as well as certain sonnets; it also contains detailed lists of subjects that might serve as the basis of possible works that Milton had in mind to execute on some later occasion. Although a goodly number of the items are drawn from the earliest periods of English history, a more extensive series of subjects (some accompanied by rather elaborate plans and outlines) are drawn from the Bible, both the Old Testament and the New. (The subjects drawn from the Bible are interspersed with those drawn from English history; and, among the subjects drawn from the Bible, the preponderance of these find their source in the Old Testament, as opposed to the New.) Milton, it would seem, looked upon himself as one through whom sacred biblical narrative, on the one hand, and secular historical narrative, on the other hand, found something of a common ground. In either case, it appears that, at some point in his career, Milton sought inspiration in the appropriate sources (sacred and secular) to discover essential sites that might serve as the basis of his creativity. More than any other text, the Bible represented his most important source of his desire to refashion sacred history, to transform it, to make it his own.

The subjects noted in the lists drawn from the Bible are especially illuminating, for they suggest an entire range of possibilities Milton found appropriate to his calling and deemed important enough to inspire him to embark upon major poetic undertakings. In citing the various topics of interest to him, Milton both provides a title and at times specifies the precise biblical text that his proposed work seeks to illuminate. Thus, one finds entries such as "Athalia 2 Reg. 10," "Asa or Æthiopes. 2 chron. 14," "Moabitides Num. 25," "Abimelech the usurper. Jud. 9," and "David Adulterous," among many others. Inventive with his titles, Milton often conceives them in a form that imbues his biblical subjects with a Greek sensibility, such as "Elias Polemistes." Those topics that truly catch his attention receive detailed description, as, for example, his plans for a drama to be called "Cupids funeral pile. Sodom Burning," with its source in Genesis 19. In this proposed drama, the angels rescue Lot from the barbarous behavior of the citizens of Sodom, and love is seen to triumph over lust. Both in theme and in tone, the proposed drama recalls *Comus*. Other topics of this sort receive detailed attention as well.

In the Trinity College Manuscript Milton first provides detailed outlines and plot summaries for the action of a proposed tragedy on the theme of what would later emerge as *Paradise Lost*. Beginning with two lists of personages, Milton fleshed out his plans first with a five-act prospectus for a drama to be called "Paradise Lost" and several pages later with a detailed summary of another drama titled "Adam unparadiz'd" (as

well an apparently rejected title, “Adams *Banishment*”). Accordingly, the act of reworking or rearticulating biblical narrative is at the very heart of Milton’s plans for his great epic. The same is true for *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. In both cases, Milton draws inspiration from specific biblical narratives that he would reconceive in his own terms. In anticipation of the brief epic on the figure of Christ, Milton thus entertains subjects drawn from the gospels such as “Christ born,” “Christ bound,” “Christ crucifi’d,” “Christ risen,” and “Christus patiens,” subjects that ultimately assumed the form of *Paradise Regained*, which focuses on the temptations in the wilderness recounted in Luke 4. Finally, Milton’s dramatic poem *Samson Agonistes* may be said to find its grounding in the list of subjects on the strong man of Judges 13–16, including “Samson pur-sophorus,” that is, Samson the fire-bearer; Samson “Hybristes,” that is, the insolent Samson; Samson marrying, that is, the episode concerning the woman of Timnath; Samson in Ramath-Lechi, that is, the overcoming of the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass; and the “Dagonalia,” that is, the overthrow of the temple of Dagon in Gaza. Clearly, for this poet-in-the-making, biblical subjects on an entire range of subjects represented the basis of his outlook and his imagination from the very outset of his career and culminated in the masterpieces published at the very end of his career.<sup>5</sup>

## Hebraism versus Hellenism

As made apparent thus far, the Bible played a crucial role in what might be called Milton’s biblical poetics. If such is the case, it played no less crucial a role in his vocation as an interpreter of the biblical text. A child of the Reformation, Milton was a figure for whom the Bible assumed a primacy that superseded that of all other sources, including the very Greco-Roman classics upon which the notion of Renaissance humanism was grounded. In *Paradise Regained*, Milton’s Jesus becomes the spokesman for this kind of radical view as he is subjected to the barrage of temptations that Satan places before him in the wilderness. Having been unsuccessful in his attempt to seduce Jesus by his earlier temptations, Satan plays what he hopes is a trump card, that is, the temptation to wisdom. In this case, it is wisdom of a particular sort that Satan has in mind. Rather than relying solely upon “the *Pentateuch* or what the Prophets wrote,” Satan advises Jesus, seek to know the world of the gentiles: “The *Gentiles* also know, and write, and teach / To admiration, led by Natures light” (4.225–8). What does Satan mean by the word *Gentiles*? These are the individuals whose home is “*Athens* the eye of *Greece*, Mother of Arts / And Eloquence.” They include philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, orators such as Demosthenes and Pericles, and poets such as Homer, Sappho, and Pindar (4.240–84). To counter the tenor of such a temptation, Jesus “sagely” replies that the doctrines these figures espouse and the world they represent are “false, or little else but dreams, / Conjectures, fancies, built on nothing firm” (4.291–2). Jesus’ allegations are harsh, to say the least. Calling into question all aspects of the culture embraced by the gentiles, Jesus finds particularly repugnant “the vices of their Deities” as portrayed in their “Fable, Hymn, or song.” For the Jesus of Milton’s epic, the gentile gods are “ridiculous” and those who worship them “past shame.” As iconoclast, Jesus seeks to lay bare or denude these false deities as one would strip a harlot of her finery. In place



of the world of the gentiles, Jesus extols his own culture, his own heritage, and his own language, all of which are summed up in Hebrew Scriptures. Whether in the area of government, statesmanship, or law, the divine teachings of the Bible are unsurpassed. Such is true of oratory as well: the Bible is so eloquent that it surpasses “all the Oratory of Greece and Rome.” In the Bible, Jesus finds “All our Law and Story strew’d / With hymns, our Psalms with artful terms inscrib’d.” These, he calls “Sion’s songs,” a poetic form with which the literature of the gentile world is “unworthy to compare.” Unlike this “pagan” literature, the songs of the Hebrew Bible are divinely inspired by God (4.293–364). Jesus’ critique of the Greco-Roman world is as much literary as it is theological, political, or legal. That is, Jesus adopts the role of aesthetician and literary critic as much as he assumes the function of philosophical or theological commentator. In all respects, his response to Satan’s temptation is an indictment of everything the world of the gentiles represents in contradistinction to the Hebraism implicit in Jesus’ endorsement of the Bible as the true source of knowledge and wisdom.

Needless to say, the radical nature of Jesus’ response to the temptation to wisdom has generated a great deal of debate in the scholarly community about the extent to which Milton himself actually embraced such an outlook. Assuming that Milton projected his own views onto those of Jesus, critics have been understandably chagrined that the great spokesman for Renaissance humanism would have placed the temptation to study Homer, Plato, and Aristotle in the mouth of Satan, especially since the study of the Bible in all its aspects is as much a part of Renaissance humanism as is the mastery of the classics. It is not the purpose here to address the dilemma. Instead, the issue is raised simply to frame the subject so that one is made aware from the outset that any attempt to explore the place of the Bible in Milton’s works is immediately fraught with difficulties. Those difficulties are not made any easier in an analysis of what Milton says about the Bible in his theological treatise *De Doctrina Christiana*, a work the very canonicity of which has been questioned at various times since the manuscript was first discovered and subsequently published in the early nineteenth century. Assuming that in some form the work was authored by John Milton, one might well conclude that his treatment of the Bible in the theological treatise would obviously be of major significance to any understanding of the place of the Bible in his thought. What is true of *Paradise Regained* is no less true of *De Doctrina Christiana*: nothing can be taken for granted, and just about everything is problematical.

## The Hermeneut

At first blush, Milton’s attitude to the Bible in the theological treatise is crystal clear. As he maintains in his prefatory epistle to the reader, the Bible for him represents the most authoritative source of knowledge concerning all matters of Christian doctrine. Rather than “depend[ing] upon the belief or judgment of others in religious questions,” he maintains that the “only authority” he accepted in such matters is “God’s self-revelation” as manifested in the biblical text. Accordingly, he explains his exegetical method by asserting that “he read and pondered the Holy Scriptures themselves with all possible diligence” (VI, 118). Whereas other exegetes adopt the practice of relegating

biblical references to the margins with only “brief reference to chapter and verse,” he has “striven to cram [his] pages even to overflowing, with quotations drawn from all parts of the Bible and to leave as little space as possible for his own words” (VI, 122). Here is a theological treatise that allows the Bible to take centerstage, to speak for itself. This is a fascinating revelation of compositional practice or method, for it willingly privileges not the doctrinal assertions that the exegete seeks to advance but the scriptural evidence that the exegete draws upon to underscore his assertions. What results is a renewed emphasis upon the primacy of Scriptures as the source of interpretative insight and doctrinal belief. At the very point that Milton claims the liberty to sift and winnow each doctrine before advancing it, he makes certain that his conclusions are grounded in scriptural authority. “For my own part,” Milton maintains, “I devote my attention to the Holy Scriptures alone. I follow no other heresy or sect” (VI, 123).

When Milton addresses the subject of the Holy Scriptures in the treatise (book 1, chapter 30), the whole question of “authority” re-emerges in a new form, that having to do with the concept of the “double scripture,” the external and the internal. Accordingly, Milton distinguishes between “the external scripture of the written word and the internal scripture of the Holy Spirit.” The internal scripture is that which God has engraved “upon the hearts of believers.” Although it might be argued that such a dichotomy, in one form or another, is consistent with Reformation theology, Milton’s emphasis upon it is crucial to his interpretative posture as one who does not hesitate throughout his writings to justify the bold act of moving the seat of authority from the external to the internal, the visible to the invisible. Thus, he observes that “Nowadays the external authority for our faith, in other words, the scriptures, is of very considerable importance and, generally speaking, it is the authority of which we first have experience. The pre-eminent and supreme authority, however, is the authority of the Spirit, which is internal, and the individual possession of each man” (VI, 587). This is a remarkable statement, for followed to its logical conclusion, it calls into question the viability, if not the primacy, of the very text upon which Milton professes to base his entire theological system. What occurs, in effect, is an act of displacement: external authority grounded in the text as object is replaced by an internal authority grounded in the world of spirit. The text as object disappears. To reinforce his argument for such an act of displacement, Milton makes a point of calling attention to the “corruptions” inherent in the biblical text as it has been transmitted over the centuries. Focusing especially on the New Testament (the very basis of Christian belief), he maintains that the act of transmission (and, along with it, preservation) has given rise to codices that are of questionable authority. That is because those responsible for copying and disseminating the codices are themselves not to be trusted. (Although better preserved and more carefully transcribed, the Old Testament, Milton implies, is not without its problems as well.) One is confronted by such “an assortment of divergent manuscripts” and such a “medley of transcripts and editions” that knowing which version to adopt as truly authoritative for the purpose of exegesis represents in itself a major undertaking (VI, 587–8).

Whether in reference to the Bible, the church, or the implementation of God’s decrees, the movement from external to internal (and correspondingly, visible to invisible) is an essential constituent of Milton’s stock-in-trade. One thinks immediately of

the proem to book 1 of *Paradise Lost*. Moving from sources of inspiration as embodied in the teachings inscribed by God on the tablets that Moses receives on Sinai or in the events portrayed at such sites as “*Sion Hill*” or “*Siloe’s Brook that flow’d / Fast by the Oracle of God,*” the site of the temple in Jerusalem, the poet invokes as his consummate source of authority the Spirit of God itself: “And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer / Before all Temples th’ upright heart and pure, / Instruct me, for Thou knowst” (1.6–19). Clothed in the trope of poetic discourse, this testament to the power of the spirit within reflects the radical terms in which Milton conceives the Bible as the ultimate source of authority in the theological treatise.

## Milton’s Bibles

In the production of his theological treatise, Milton had available to him a multiplicity of scriptural versions.<sup>6</sup> These include versions that he owned or that were said to be in his possession. Among them are a 1612 edition of the Authorized Version (now extant), the Geneva Bible (1650), and a Hebrew Bible (given to him by his tutor) including the *Biblia sacra polyglotta* (1657), compiled by Brian Walton. Providing Hebrew, Greek, Latin (of the Vulgate), Arabic, Aramaic, Ethiopic, Persian, and Syriac transcriptions in separate columns (along with an interlinear Latin translation of the Hebrew), this multivolume work has been offered as one of the possible sources for the proof-texts cited in *De Doctrina Christiana*. Vying for equal, if not greater, claim to that distinction is the Junius-Tremellius-Beza translation of the Old and New Testaments (Junius-Tremellius for the Old Testament and Beza for the New). The version of choice for seventeenth-century Reformed dogmatics and exegesis, this edition assumed the reputation of a veritable *textus receptus* during the period when Milton’s theological treatise was being produced. These are only two of the likely sources behind the proof-texts Milton cites. As worthy as these editions are, Milton was painfully aware of their shortcomings in his attempt to ferret out the “truths” embedded in the “original” or “foundational” text. The point is not to discover the precise version (or versions) that Milton drew upon to produce his theological treatise but to acknowledge Milton’s awareness that the *ur-text* (of both the Old Testament and the New) is finally not to be had. This means that, despite (or, perhaps, because of) the range of versions available to him, Milton was sensitive to the limitations they represented in his quest to generate his theological treatise.

## The Major Poems

Each of Milton’s major poems is grounded in the Bible, a fact to which the Trinity College Manuscript fully attests. Each poem self-consciously elaborates certain core texts of the Bible that influenced Milton profoundly. Well before the appearance of any of the major poems, he looked forward to his vocation as biblical poet by reflecting upon his ambitions. Those ambitions characteristically placed the Bible at the very center of his reflections. Once again, the introduction to the second book of his prose treatise *The*



*Reason of Church-Government* (1642) is germane. Here, he considers the appropriate models upon which to found his future endeavors, be they epics or dramas. In his consideration of epic, his reflections move him to distinguish between what calls the “diffuse” model and the “brief” model. One thinks of *Paradise Lost*, on the one hand, and *Paradise Regained*, on the other. Moving between ancient and contemporary epics, as well as dramas of various kinds, he invokes classical and biblical forms through which his pursuit of a Christian hero might be realized. An entire range of possibilities presents itself. Notable are the references to the Bible as a source-book both for subjects and for forms. Searching for the ideal model of the brief epic, he invokes the book of Job, which leads in its own way as much to *Paradise Regained* as it does to *Samson Agonistes*, both later published in one volume (1671). Corresponding references to the Song of Songs and to the book of Revelation further suggest the esoteric and apocalyptic course of his thinking (I, 812–13). As he moved on with his plans, it became clear that the major poems, which lay ahead, would essentially be biblical in nature.

As indicated by the citations in the Trinity College Manuscript, such an approach is entirely consistent with Milton’s artistic practices. At the core of his thinking is the complex of narratives that constitutes the biblical text. This is as true for *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* as it is for *Paradise Lost*. Each work represents in epic or dramatic form an encounter with the Bible very much as subtext. As indicated, the essential core text for *Paradise Regained* is the fourth chapter of Luke, the base narrative having to do with the temptations in the wilderness. Although the account of Jesus’ sojourn in the wilderness is also the subject of the fourth chapter of Matthew, the order of the temptations differs markedly between Matthew and Luke. The reader is immediately presented with a conundrum: why did Milton choose Luke over Matthew? The very first questions we ask about the major poems are in response to their respective adoptions of the biblical texts as core. In the case of the dramatic poem *Samson Agonistes*, Milton has so altered the base narrative of Judges 13–16 that an entirely new fable, along with entirely new characters, makes its way to the fore. Harapha is a figure that never makes an appearance in Judges. Although Delilah most certainly makes her appearance in Judges, her reappearance in Milton’s poem in the form of Dalila is striking in the significance Milton bestows upon her not simply as one of the strong man’s sexual conquests but also as the symbol of another marriage gone bad. (Whereas Judges nowhere indicates that Delilah and Samson are married, Milton’s Dalila and Samson certainly are. This “revision” of the Judges narrative points to Milton’s willingness to alter the sacred text and to transform it into a text all his own.)

The core text upon which *Paradise Lost* is grounded is Genesis 1–3. As is well known, the first chapter provides the fundamental account of the creation of the universe (including the heavens and the earth, living things such as plants, animals, fish, and the like) and the creation of humankind. This event represents the culminating creative act that anticipates the celebration of divine rest toward which the chapter ultimately moves. Here, there is no prohibition of any sort. Instead, humankind (in the form of male and female) is to be fruitful and multiply and to have dominion over every living thing that moves upon the earth. The purpose of all such beings is finally to sustain humankind, which, as the crowning achievement of God’s creative acts, assumes a truly regal stature. It would take the next two chapters to introduce disharmony into

this sublime moment. In the next two chapters, Milton found such discordant enactments as the first prohibition (against the eating of the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil), as well as the first disobedience as a result of the willingness of the first man (“Adam”) and of the first woman (“Eve”) to fall victim to the wiles of the serpent. It to this dark narrative that Milton looked for evidence of the primal act that brought death into the world and that prompted the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden of God, known as Eden.

As Milton was well aware, the linkage of Genesis 1 with Genesis 2 and 3 offered its own unique problems and challenges. But this text remained at the core of *Paradise Lost*, as it anchored the narrative throughout the epic but especially in those books having to do with the creation of the universe and the relationship between Adam and Eve both before and after the Fall. But, of course, such concerns represent only one aspect (albeit a crucial one) of Milton’s epic. To tell the story of all things, Milton was obliged to draw upon other seminal biblical texts that he appropriated for his own particular use. One might consider, for example, the issue of Satan’s rebellion depicted in Milton’s narrative of the war in heaven. Genesis 1–3 says nothing about that crucial event, but it is an event fully attested in Revelation 12:7–9: “And there was a war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought against his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” At issue is not only the “fact” of celestial warfare, but also the “characters” in that warfare, including Michael and the angels, on one side, and the dragon, also known as the old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, along with his angels, on the other. Here, Milton would have most immediately found the link between the serpent of the Genesis story and the serpent of Revelation, who is at once dragon and devil and Satan to boot. But this tie in is already anticipated in such seminal texts as Isaiah 14:12–24, which alludes to the fall of “Lucifer, son of the morning,” and Ezekiel 28:12–19, which provides an account of the “covering cherub” who once inhabited “Eden the garden of God” but is now doomed to destruction. Customarily associated with Satan, both “Lucifer, son of the morning” and the “covering cherub” have their own distinct associations and translational histories, but for Milton they represented different dimensions of a very complex character. These are only a few of the many crucial texts upon which Milton as biblical poet grounded the narrative of his great epic.

## Conclusion

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, one can hardly overestimate the influence of the Bible on the writings of John Milton. This is a poet who does not hesitate to conceive of himself and his art in biblical terms. Whether as psalmist, as prophet, or as celebrant, he transforms the Bible and makes it his own. He conceives of his vocation or calling as an experience that empowers him to fill out the interstices of the biblical text, to tell of “secret” things unspoken in the narratives he recreates, whether that

having to do with the creation of the universe or that having to do with the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness. At the same time, he is aware that the gift of this vocation is potentially as much a curse as it is a blessing. He is ever aware that, if he fails to make proper use of this God-given talents, he might well find himself in the untenable position of the unprofitable servant cast into “outer darkness,” where we are told “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 25: 30). For Milton, the Bible was not simply a source of poetic experience but the means by which he forged an identity and a career centered on the conviction that the biblical text was in a very real sense his own.

## Notes

- 1 Unless noted otherwise, references to Milton’s poetry in my text are to *The Complete Poetry of John Milton*, ed. John T. Shawcross (New York, 1971). References by volume and page number in my text to Milton’s prose are to *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 8 volumes in 10, gen. ed. Don M. Wolfe et al. (New Haven, CT, 1953–82).
- 2 References by volume and page number in my text to Milton’s psalm translations are to the facsimile edition *John Milton’s Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Harris Francis Fletcher, 4 volumes (Urbana, IL, 1943).
- 3 Although the text does not provide a specific headnote date for the translation of Psalm 1, logic suggests that it dates to August 7, because the headnotes for the remaining psalm translations follow sequentially from August 8 to August 15, 1673.
- 4 In a manuscript still extant in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge (and therefore referred to as the Trinity College Manuscript) one can find, among many of Milton’s early poems and other jottings (some in Milton’s own hand), the first drafts of *At a Solemn Musick*. These drafts are especially interesting because they suggest that it is not only the angelic choirs that sing but also God himself: So the poet would “live & sing wth him [God] in endlesse morn of light” (28). Music encompasses the entire setting, one in which God is a participant in his own *tri-sagion*. See John Milton, *Poems Reproduced in Facsimile from the Manuscript in Trinity College, Cambridge* (Menston, England, 1972), pp. 4–5.
- 5 See *Poems Reproduced in Facsimile from the Manuscript in Trinity College, Cambridge*, pp. 36–41.
- 6 See the entry on “Bibles,” in *A Milton Encyclopedia*, gen. ed. William B. Hunter, 9 volumes (Lewisburg, 1978–83), I, p. 163. In the same volume, see the entry on Milton and the Bible, I, pp. 142–63.

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# Paradise Lost Study Guide

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## Summary

### Summary of the Work

A short summary, entitled *The Argument*, is presented by Milton as a preface to each of the 12 books of *Paradise Lost*. In the first book, he announces the subject of the poem, Man's disobedience and the loss thereupon of Paradise. The poem opens in the midst of things, after the war in Heaven but before the fall of Adam and Eve. Satan and his multitude of angels have been cast out of Heaven and into the Deep for rebelling against God and are chained on the burning lake in Hell. Satan awakens his legions of angels, comforting them in their dejected state by offering them hope of reclaiming Heaven. He recounts an old prophecy he has heard, while still in Heaven, of another world that will be created with a new kind of creature called Man. Satan calls a council in his newly erected palace, Pandemonium, to decide whether to wage another war on Heaven. After a lengthy debate, the council finally decides to send Satan to search for God's new creation instead. He flies toward the gates of Hell which are guarded by Sin and Death. They open the gates and Satan meets Chaos who directs him to the new world.

Seeing Satan flying toward Earth, God points him out to the Son, prophesying that Satan will tempt Man to sin. God demonstrates his justice by declaring his divine grace to Man, however, only if someone will offer himself as a ransom for his sin. The Son volunteers and is praised by the angels in Heaven. Meanwhile, Satan has travelled through the Limbo of Vanity and reached the orb of the sun. He quickly disguises himself as a Cherub before he asks Uriel for directions to Earth.

On Earth, Satan disguises himself as a water bird in the Tree of Life where he overlooks the beauty of Adam and Eve in their blissful state. Later that night, Satan is caught at Eve's ear, tempting her in a dream, and he flies from the Garden. In the morning, Eve relates her disturbing dream to Adam.

Raphael is sent by God to caution Adam about the evil that is lurking in Paradise. After dining, Raphael engages Adam in a long conversation, reminding him of his obedience to God though he has been given free choice. Raphael informs Adam of the war in Heaven and the victory of the Son who drove Satan and his legions over the wall of Heaven and into the Deep. The Son was later sent by God to perform the work of creation in six days. Taking his leave, Raphael again cautions Adam to beware of God's command.

Returning to Paradise by night, Satan enters the body of the sleeping serpent. The next day, Eve innocently suggests to Adam that they work in separate areas of the Garden. Remembering Raphael's warning, Adam refuses at first but finally consents. Left alone, Eve is approached and flattered by the Serpent. He tells her his human speech and understanding were brought about by tasting of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. He slowly convinces Eve to eat this same fruit. Although pleased with the taste and the exhilarating feeling, Eve approaches Adam with some reluctance. She convinces him to taste the fruit, and the effects are quickly felt, prompting them to cover their nakedness and blame each other for the sinful deed.



The guardian angels ascend to Heaven, and the Son is sent to judge the sinful pair. Out of pity, he also clothes them. In anticipation of their future appearance on Earth, Sin and Death build a broad highway over Chaos to make Earth more accessible. Satan returns to Pandemonium where he is greeted with a hiss from the fallen angels now transformed into serpents.

On Earth, Adam and Eve lament their fallen state. To avoid the curse that they have brought upon future generations, Eve considers taking her life, but Adam gives her hope that the promised Messiah, their seed, will avenge Satan by overcoming Death. The Son intercedes for the earthly pair, presenting their prayers of repentance to God who forgives them but proclaims that they must leave Paradise. Michael is sent from Heaven to deliver the unhappy message. Grieving his loss of Paradise, Adam pleads with Michael but finally abides by God's orders. Michael leads Adam to a high hill where he engages in a lengthy prophecy of the future of all mankind. He explains the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God. Comforted by God's promise, Adam awakens Eve who has been dreaming gentle dreams that have composed her spirit. Taking each of them by the hand, Michael leads them out of Paradise, guarded by the Cherubim and ushered by God's blazing sword.

### **The Life and Work of John Milton**

John Milton left a rich legacy of English poetry and prose comprised of sonnets, lyric and epic poems, and controversial political and social pamphlets defending divorce, freedom of the press, and the Puritan cause. He was born in London on December 9, 1608. Though his father had been disinherited for transferring his allegiance from the Catholic to the Protestant church, he had made a substantial fortune as a scrivener and had also dabbled in money lending. As a talented musician, perhaps a professional, Milton's father would have kept company with artists and patrons alike. From early childhood the young Milton was exposed to the culturally rich atmosphere of seventeenth-century London. It is noteworthy that Shakespeare was still writing plays when Milton was born.

Recognizing their son's exceptional intellectual aptitude, his parents provided private tutors for him at an early age. In 1620, he attended St. Paul's school in London with Alexander Gill as his tutor. When he was 17, Milton entered Christ's College at Cambridge. His first years at Cambridge were not as happy as they had been at St. Paul's. Milton left college in his second year after a quarrel with his tutor, William Chappel. When he returned, he was assigned to a more compatible tutor, Nathaniel Tovey. Milton took his B.A. degree from Cambridge in 1629 and his M.A. three years later.

Though it had been Milton's intention to become a clergyman, his disillusionment with the Church of England under the leadership of Archbishop Laud had led him to direct his course toward the writing of poetry instead. Following his years at Cambridge, he went to live with his parents at Horton, their newly acquired country estate, where he enjoyed a period of uninterrupted leisure. Here he devoted his time to writing poetry and studying the Greek and Latin authors.

After the death of Milton's mother, his younger brother, Christopher, moved to Horton with his new wife. Perhaps his broken solitude and the loss of his mother influenced Milton to leave the family home and travel to the European continent in 1638. His travels through France and Italy, where he met many distinguished intellectuals and literary men, proved to be 16 of the most rewarding months of his life.

Upon arrival in England in 1639, Milton established residency in London. His nine-year-old nephew, John Phillips, boarded with him, receiving private tutoring. A year later John's older brother, Edward, joined them. When several other boarders moved in for private lessons, Milton's house began to resemble a small, private boarding school.

In 1642, Milton began to compose the dramatic version of *Paradise Lost* based on the ancient Greek model of tragedy. That same year, Milton, now 35 years old, brought a 17-year-old bride, Mary Powell, into the

scholarly atmosphere of his boarding school. Her aversion to the studious life, along with the differences in their ages and interests, resulted in an unfortunate match. After several months she went back to her parents for a visit and did not return. The Powells, a strong Royalist family, were perhaps afraid of their daughter's close association with Milton, a parliamentarian who had openly opposed the King's cause. Milton's rebuttal to his wife's desertion took the form of a series of pamphlets defending divorce on the grounds of incompatibility. Mary Powell returned to him after two years of separation. The Royalist cause had been defeated, and the Powell family needed Milton's protection. His wife and several of her family members moved in with him, resulting in noise and confusion that was not conducive to scholarly concentration.

Mary Powell bore him four children. In 1652, Milton's fortunes rapidly declined when his only son died. It was in the same year that Milton became totally blind. The following year his wife died just after the birth of his third daughter. At the age of 45, Milton, in his desolation, was a blind widower with three small children, Anne, six years old, Mary, only three, and Deborah, an infant.

After five years he married Katharine Woodcock, but the happy marriage ended when she, along with their three-month-old son, died 16 months later. In 1663, he married Elizabeth Minshull, a 24-year-old woman who gave him the support and stability that had been lacking with his three grown daughters. He had sought their help as readers and amanuenses in his work, but they had, without his knowledge, attempted to sell his books and other possessions.

Milton died on November 8, 1674, from a sudden attack of gout or rheumatism. He was buried in St. Giles Cripplegate near his father. Elizabeth Minshull lived to cherish his memory, providing biographers with valuable information about his final years.

### **Estimated Reading Time**

Milton's epic poetry is laced with classical and biblical allusions, and his language is elevated with a distinct departure from common speech. For an adequate understanding of the poem, it is, therefore, necessary to pay special attention to the difficult words and phrases and the allusions that are translated at the bottom of most texts of *Paradise Lost*. During the first reading, the 12 book, 282-page epic poem should be read for an understanding of the plot only. In this case, it can be read in approximately seven hours. After the initial reading, the poem should be read more carefully, making repeated use of a good dictionary and the glossary of the text to clarify the archaic language and Latinisms that frequently appear in Milton's verse. The second reading would probably take a little more than 12 hours for the entire epic poem, allowing about an hour for each book. Since the books vary from 15 to 34 pages, the reading time will not be the same for each book.

## **Additional Summary: Summary**

Considered the greatest epic poem in English literature, John Milton's monumental *Paradise Lost*, a twelve-book narrative poem written in iambic pentameter, tells the story

Of 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. . . .

Like classical epics of Greco-Roman antiquity, *Paradise Lost* opens in the midst of things (in medias res), at a central point of the action. In books 1 and 2, Satan and his peers have been defeated in the War in Heaven and, now in Hell, turn their vengeful thoughts toward another world, Earth, about to be created for some "new Race called *Man*." As infernal deliverer of fallen angels, Satan, "author of evil," promises to lead them out of Hell, thereby solidifying his hold on the throne of Hell. "Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven," Satan asserts, and he hopes to make God repent his act of creation. In escaping from Hell, Satan allies himself with



his offspring, both Sin, the gatekeeper of Hell, and Death, in opposition to God. After voyaging through Chaos, the “unbottom’s infinite Abyss,” he deceives the archangel Uriel in order to discover the location of Paradise and then practices deception in tempting Eve.

Meanwhile, in book 3, in Heaven, where all measures of time—past, present, and future—coexist, God the Father, knowing that Satan will deceive Man, announces that Man, despite continual ingratitude and faithlessness, will find salvation. The Father ordains the Son’s incarnation and commands that he shall reign as universal king, “both God and Man.”

In book 4, Satan invades the “blissful solitude” of Adam and Eve in Eden, a paradoxical realm of “Eternal Spring” without decay. Satan learns from Adam and Eve that of all Eden offers, they are “not to taste that only Tree/ Of Knowledge,” and it is “death to taste that Tree.” Satan decides to “excite thir minds/ With more desire to know,” thinking “they taste and die: what likelier can ensue?” He wants to convince them that the Tree is not a symbol of obedience to God’s will. He never imagines that his action will bring forth God’s goodness by providing a means of redemption.

In book 5, God the Father sends Raphael to warn Adam and Eve of the danger and to impart the knowledge they need to resist Satan. Raphael explains the threat resulting from the War in Heaven, recounted in book 6. Moved by jealousy of the Son’s elevation, Satan incites a third of the angels in Heaven to rebel against God, who, on the third day of the war, sends the Son to end the rebellion. Satan and his evil angels, now “to disobedience fall’n” and envying the “state” of Adam and Eve, plot to seduce them and all their progeny that they, too, may share in “Eternal misery.” Raphael also explains the workings of physical nature in book 5 and, in book 7, the creation of the universe, stressing natural theology as the expression of God’s mind through his works. Raphael imparts knowledge as a defense against evil. In book 8, Adam reveals the effect that Eve has upon him; Raphael tells him to love Eve but love God first by obedience.

In book 9, Satan, incarnated as a serpent, argues that he can improve on perfection. He convinces Eve, now separated from Adam, that God maliciously denies them fruit of the Tree of Knowledge to keep them “low and ignorant.” Eve, in trusting appearances rather than the divine command not to eat of the Tree, reaches for the fruit: “she pluck’d, she eat” and “Earth felt the wound.” Common belief at the time generally accepted nature’s involvement in the Fall. Adam, “against his better knowledge,” also eats “of that fair enticing Fruit.” Earth again shudders at this completion of “the mortal Sin/ Original.”

In book 10, God the Son, “mild Judge and Intercessor,” pronounces the Genesis “curse” upon Adam and Eve as well as the serpent, the curse upon the serpent involving a hint of its eventual defeat: “Her seed shall bruise thy head, thou bruise his heel.” God explains that change and decay will now occur in everything, in all possible forms with all possible consequences. Eve, moved by God’s grace, initiates Adam’s as well as her own regeneration. She accepts responsibility for their sin and prompts Adam to remember the hint of victory to come.

God the Father, in book 11, directs Michael to banish Adam and Eve from Paradise, now subject to death, “a long day’s dying,” and to give them hope in “what shall come in future days.” In books 11 and 12, Michael outlines the history of salvation up to and including Redemption and return of the Savior, his account grimly realistic. Adam and Eve, “the World . . . all before them,” take their “solitary way” out of Eden, with an obtainable “paradise within thee, happier far.”

## **Additional Summary: Summary**

In the tradition of the epic poem, *Paradise Lost* begins in medias res, in the middle of the story, showing in the first two of twelve books how Satan and his followers gathered their forces on the burning lake of Hell and

sought out the newly created race of humans on Earth. (The revolt and resulting war in Heaven that preceded this action and earned the devils their place in Hell is reported in books 5 and 6.)

In book 3, God observes Satan traveling toward Earth, predicts the fall of human beings, and asks for someone to ransom them. Christ, the Son, accepts. In book 4, Adam and Eve are introduced, as Satan lies hidden in the Garden of Eden. Satan appears in Eve's dream, encouraging her to taste of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge, and in book 5 God sends the angel Raphael to warn Adam and Eve of their danger. Raphael begins the story of Lucifer's revolt in Heaven, which he completes in book 6, and in book 7 Raphael tells of how God responded to Satan's revolt by creating a new world, the earth, and a new race in Adam and Eve. In book 8, Adam describes to Raphael his and Eve's creation, and Raphael delivers his final warning and departs. Book 9 tells the story of Satan's successful temptation of Eve, the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and the resulting discord between Adam and Eve. In book 10, Christ passes judgment on Adam and Eve, and Sin and Death build a bridge from the gates of Hell to Earth as Satan is returning to Hell. At the end of book 10, Adam and Eve resolve their discord and petition God for forgiveness, which is granted in book 11 as God sends the archangel Michael to give Adam a vision of the future for humans. In book 12, after the vision of Christ's sacrifice and redemption of the human race, Adam and Eve are expelled from Eden.

This brief synopsis, of course, does not communicate the grandeur and emotional intensity of Milton's great poem. Milton begins *Paradise Lost* with two captivating books set in Hell and featuring Lucifer, or Satan, who rallies his defeated forces and vows eternal war on God before journeying toward Earth to destroy Adam and Eve. In Hell, Satan has a kind of heroic splendor, and such apparent grandeur led English Romantic poets such as William Blake and Percy Bysshe Shelley to identify with Satan as a tragic rebel and to proclaim that Milton subconsciously admired Satan. Although Milton's subconscious mind must forever remain a mystery, this interpretation is very dubious, and generations of readers misled by Blake and his followers should read the poem more carefully. Milton began his epic with this larger-than-life portrait of Satan in order to provide God (who will obviously win) with a worthy adversary. Yet Satan's pseudoheroic size is severely diminished in all of his appearances outside the first two books, and by the end of the poem Satan is not at all prominent, the heroic focus having shifted to the figure of Christ and the tragic focus having shifted to Adam and Eve. By the end of the poem, Satan is defeated and overshadowed by the larger themes of redemption and human responsibility.

One of the main causes of this Romantic distortion of *Paradise Lost* is the contrast between the first two books and book 3, where God the Father delivers theological lectures and clears Himself of blame for the Fall that He foretells but does not predestine. Compared to Hell and Satan, the figures of God and Christ the Son discoursing in Heaven seem dull, at least to most modern-day readers. It is almost with relief at the end of book 3 that the reader finds Milton returning to the description of Satan, who nears the Earth and passes through what is called the Paradise of Fools.

Only when the reader meets Adam and Eve is there a narrative interest to compete with Satan's pseudoheroic stature, but the success of Milton's poem comes from the fact that the two human characters, who finally become much more interesting even than the diabolical Satan, are domestic rather than heroic figures. Gradually, Adam and Eve become characterized as much by their conflict with each other as by their conflict with Satan. In what are now seen as strikingly sexist characterizations, Milton describes Adam as "for contemplation . . . and valor formed" while Eve is formed "for softness . . . and sweet attractive grace." Yet the love between them is so convincingly real that even Satan is jealous as he watches "these two/ Imparadised in one another's arms." When Eve falls to Satan's temptations in book 9, she is attempting to rise toward Adam's supposedly superior status, and when Adam accepts sin and death with her, knowing the consequences, he does so out of "uxoriousness," or excessive love for and submission to a wife. The immediate consequence is domestic bickering, each blaming the other for what has happened. Then Eve initiates a reconciliation, Adam suggests praying for forgiveness, and the poem ends with the first married couple walking "hand in hand" out of Paradise.

This rich quality of domestic tragedy has helped make *Paradise Lost* significant and powerful for twentieth and twenty-first century readers. It also may have had some effect on the creation of the modern novel. It can be argued that eighteenth century writers, overwhelmed by Milton's achievement in *Paradise Lost*, were too intimidated to attempt again the epic scope in poetic form. Since no one was going to be able to surpass Milton in verse, the artistic impulse to work with epic size shifted to prose, and the novel was born in the eighteenth century with Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding. Certainly by shifting the epic subject from the traditional subjects of war and valor to marriage, *Paradise Lost* elevated domestic subject matter for centuries to come.

## **Additional Summary: Summary**

### **Book I**

Book I introduces the main subject matter of the poem: the creation, fall, and redemption of the world and humankind. Milton invokes the aid of the muse and the Holy Spirit as he sets out to perform "Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme," and, through the medium of the epic, to "justify the ways of God to men." In true epic style, Milton begins his story in mid-action (in medias res), after the great battle in Heaven and the fall of the rebel angels. The poem thus introduces its readers first to Satan, the cause of the fall of humankind, at the moment following his own first fall into Hell. Satan and his angels are described lying on a lake of fire in a place where flames cast no light, but only "darkness visible." Satan is the first to rise and, using his great spear as a walking stick, limps to the shore. He then awakens his legions, addressing them in a stirring speech and rousing them to action. He informs them of his hope of regaining Heaven and of the rumor of a new world to be created which they might yet make their own, if heaven be closed to them. He determines to call a full council and sets his host to work to build a suitable palace from which to rule Hell. The result of their efforts is Pandemonium, the palace of Satan, and there the angels of Hell enter to begin their council.

### **Book II**

Book II recounts the council of the demons and their deliberations concerning whether to attempt further battle in order to regain Heaven. Satan invites his minions to speak freely, and Moloch opens the debate, urging open war. Belial, who represents sloth, responds, arguing that battle against a foe who has so decisively defeated them is futile, and proposing that the demons take their ease in Hell and make the best of it. Mammon follows, counselling that they build a new kingdom in Hell and there rule supreme. Beelzebub, Satan's right-hand man, concludes, returning to the suggestion made by Satan in Book I, that they seek out the truth of a rumor about a new world and another creature to be created by God. If the rumor is true, he submits, they should then attempt to seduce God's new creature, Man, and rule on Earth if they cannot regain Heaven. The demons applaud this suggestion and Satan undertakes the dangerous task of searching out this new world. While the rest of the devils (in true epic style) play epic games to vent their grief and occupy themselves in the absence of their leader, Satan sets out alone. He travels to the gates of Hell, which he finds closed and guarded by Sin (his daughter) and Death (the son of their incestuous union). Satan persuades them to open the gates by offering the world to Sin to rule with him, and humankind to Death. He then makes the arduous journey through Chaos to the new world which he seeks.

### **Book III**

Book III moves the action to Heaven, where God, sitting on his throne, sees Satan flying towards the world. God tells his Son of Satan's diabolical plan to seduce humankind, foretelling Satan's success and simultaneously clearing himself of blame. He contends that humankind was created free and able to withstand temptation, yet outlines his purpose of allowing humankind grace, since they will fall, not out of malice, as Satan did, but deceived. This grace, however, cannot be achieved unless divine justice is satisfied, and the Son freely offers himself as a ransom for this purpose. God then ordains the Incarnation, and all the hosts of heavenly angels praise and adore the Son. Meanwhile, Satan has reached the world's outermost sphere, where

he finds a place called the Limbo of Vanity. He moves up to the Gate of Heaven and passes from there to the Orb of the Sun, where he encounters Uriel, the regent of that orb. He changes himself into the shape of a lesser angel and approaches Uriel, professing a great desire to behold the new creation and the human creature placed therein. Uriel, deceived by his disguise, directs him to the newly created world.

#### **Book IV**

Book IV returns to the quest of Satan who, as he approaches the Paradise of Eden, is beset by doubt, fear, envy, and despair. His confidence soon returns however, and, confirmed in his evil purpose, he journeys on to Paradise. The reader's first view of Paradise is thus seen through Satan's eyes. The Garden and Satan's first sight of its inhabitants are described as he sits in the shape of a cormorant on the Tree of Life (the highest tree in the Garden) and looks around him. Overhearing a conversation between Adam and Eve, Satan learns that they are forbidden to eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, on pain of death. This provides Satan with a plan for their destruction. Meanwhile Uriel, observing Satan's earlier struggle with himself, has seen through his disguise. He warns Gabriel, the guardian of the Gate of Paradise, that trouble is afoot, and Gabriel promises to find Satan by morning. Evening descends, and Adam and Eve retire to their rest after performing their evening worship. Gabriel appoints two angels to watch over Adam and Eve's bower, where they discover Satan (in the form of a toad) whispering into Eve's ear and tempting her in a dream. They bring him to Gabriel, who questions him. Satan answers scornfully and seems ready to resist, but at a sign from Heaven he decides to flee instead.

#### **Book V**

Morning arrives and Eve tells Adam of her troubling dream. Disturbed, he comforts her, and they proceed to their morning worship. In order to deprive them of any excuse for transgression, God sends Raphael to remind Adam of his freedom and the necessity for obedience, and to warn him of Satan's plan. As Adam and Raphael enjoy a meal of choice fruits prepared by Eve, Raphael tells Adam of Satan's rebellion and how he incited all the angel Legions of the North to join him, with the sole exception of Abdiel, a seraph who had tried to dissuade him and, failing, had forsaken him.

#### **Book VI**

In Book VI Raphael continues the story of Satan's revolt in Heaven, which was prompted by his envy of the Son. Raphael relates how Michael and Gabriel fought against Satan for two days. On the first day, Satan is routed, but under the cover of night convenes a council and invents some "devilish Engines," including gunpowder, which his armies introduce on the second day. These cause considerable disorder amongst Michael and his angels, but they manage to overwhelm the forces of Satan by pulling up mountains. The battle is not yet won, however, and on the third day God sends his Son (the Messiah) into the fray. The Son drives into the midst of the enemy force with his chariot and thunder, pursuing them to the wall of Heaven, through which they leap down with horror and confusion into the Deep (a place which has been prepared for their punishment). The Messiah then returns in triumph to his Father.

#### **Book VII**

At Adam's request, Raphael continues his tale with the story of the creation of the world. He explains that, after the expulsion of Satan and his angels from Heaven, God wishes to repopulate Heaven. Rather than create more angels, God decides to create another world and other creatures to dwell in it. He therefore sends his Son with attendant angels to perform the work of Creation, which the Son accomplishes in six days. The angels celebrate creation with hymns, and return with the Son to Heaven.

#### **Book VIII**

Raphael's tale being ended, Adam seeks to satisfy his thirst for knowledge and inquires about the movements of the heavenly bodies. Raphael, while conceding that Heaven is a veritable book in which Adam can read the wondrous works of God, admonishes Adam concerning the limitations of knowledge and advises him to seek out knowledge which is more worthwhile. Adam agrees, and, in his turn, tells Raphael all that he can

remember since his own creation: his being placed in Paradise, his talk with God, his first meeting and marriage with Eve. After a discussion of Adam's relationship with Eve, Raphael departs with a final warning.

### **Book IX**

Satan returns to Eden by night as a mist, and enters into the sleeping serpent. In the morning Adam and Eve go out to their labor in the garden. Eve suggests that they would work more efficiently apart, but Adam expresses concern that the enemy of which they have been warned might harm her if he found her alone. Eve does not wish to be thought weak, and insists on working apart, and Adam gives in to her. Satan, in the form of the serpent, finding her alone, is momentarily struck dumb by her beauty. He proceeds to flatter her, praising her beauty and charm. Eve wonders at his ability to speak, and he explains that he attained both speech and reason by eating the fruit of a certain tree. Eve asks to be shown the tree, but when she finds that it is the Tree of Knowledge she asserts that eating of its fruit is forbidden. The serpent, after many arguments, persuades her to eat. Pleased with the taste, she debates whether or not to take the fruit to Adam, but eventually decides to do so and repeats the arguments by which she was persuaded to eat. Adam is not deceived, but seeing that she is lost, resolves to perish with her because he loves her too much to live without her. He eats the fruit, and the consequences are dire. Their first response is lust, followed by shame. After covering themselves, they begin to argue and to blame each other.

### **Book X**

The angels who are guarding Paradise return to Heaven, to be absolved by God of any responsibility for the fall of Adam and Eve, which they could not have prevented. God then sends the Son to judge Adam and Eve. Sin and Death, who have been waiting by the gates of Hell, are aware of Satan's success and decide to follow Satan up to the world. In order to make the journey easier, they pave a bridge over Chaos, from Hell to the world. Satan, meanwhile, returns to Hell and boasts of his success to the assembly of his angels in Pandemonium. Instead of applause, however, his tale is received with a "universal hiss," as he and his angels are transformed into serpents, according to the judgement pronounced upon him in Paradise by the Son. Deluded by a mirage of the forbidden tree, they devour the fruit, only to find themselves chewing on dust and ashes. Sin and Death having arrived in the world, God foretells their final defeat at the hands of the Son, but in the meantime commands certain alterations to take place in the heavens. Adam and Eve lament their fallen condition and Eve tries to comfort Adam. He at first refuses her consolation, but eventually he is appeased and they reconcile. She suggests several violent ways of evading the Curse pronounced upon them and their offspring, but he resists and counsels hope, reminding her of the promise that revenge against the serpent would be given through her offspring. They seek peace with God through repentance and supplication.

### **Book XI**

Hearing the prayers of Adam and Eve, the Son intercedes with God on their behalf. God accepts their prayers, but decrees that they can no longer live in Paradise and sends Michael with a band of cherubim to cast them out. Adam sees Michael coming and goes out to greet him. Upon hearing that they must leave, Eve laments and Adam pleads, but eventually they submit. Before removing them from Eden, however, Michael takes Adam up to a high hill and reveals to him in a vision all that will happen until the Flood of Noah's age.

### **Book XII**

Michael continues his story of things to come, moving from the Flood to [Abraham](#) and then to Christ. He explains that Christ will be the Seed of the Woman who was promised to Adam and Eve at their fall, and that his Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension will inaugurate the salvation of humankind. Michael then describes the Age of the Church until the Second Coming of Christ. Adam is comforted by these revelations and returns to Eve, who has been sleeping. She wakes from gentle dreams, refreshed and composed. Michael takes them by the hand and leads them out of Paradise, setting a fiery sword and cherubim to guard the gates. Adam and Eve pause for a moment, looking back and shedding some "natural tears" at the loss of Paradise. The reader's last view of Adam and Eve is, however, a hopeful one as they dry their tears and walk away, hand in hand, the whole world before them and Providence as their guide.

political tracts opposing the former monarchy. Among them was *Eikonoklastes* (1649), an answer to Charles I's *Eikon Basilike*, a work purportedly written the night before his execution, in which Charles depicted himself as a royal martyr. Although he became totally blind in 1652, Milton continued his duties as Secretary, hiring Andrew Marvell in 1653 to act as his assistant. Upon the death of Cromwell in September of 1658, however, the Commonwealth government became unstable. By mid-1659, Milton had gone into hiding. Parliament began pursuing his arrest, and his books—*A Defense of the English People* (1651) and *Eikonoklastes* especially—were burned publicly. Milton moved from house to house that year until he was captured and imprisoned for approximately two months. Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660, and although Milton was pardoned, his personal life remained troubled: his marriage to his third wife, Elizabeth Minshull, in 1663, infuriated his daughters from his first marriage, who may have attempted retaliation by disposing of his books. He escaped the plague of 1665 by leaving London, but the Great Fire of 1666 destroyed his father's house. He had, however, finished *Paradise Lost* in 1664, according to some sources, and succeeded in publishing it in 1667; his contract with the printer Samuel Simmons is the earliest surviving author's contract. The poem was published again in a slightly expanded second edition in 1674, with prefatory poems by "S. B." and Marvell. Thanks in large part to *Paradise Lost*, recognition of Milton's skill and talent as a poet had grown considerably by the time of his death that year.

### **Plot and Major Characters**

*Paradise Lost* tells a story that is among the most familiar in Judaic and Christian cultures: the story of the Fall of humanity in Eden. The central figures in the poem include God, Jesus, Satan, Adam, Eve, and the archangels Raphael and Michael. Book 1 begins as Satan awakes in hell, having lost his rebellion against God in heaven. He awakens his followers; begins to plot revenge against God by corrupting God's newest creation, Man; and convenes a council of the fallen angels. Book 2 recounts the proceedings of this council, during which Satan volunteers to search out earth and this new creation. He escapes hell, passing through the gate guarded by Sin and Death, crosses the vast gulf between hell and heaven, and comes to the edge of the universe. In Book 3 God, who sees all, is aware of Satan's plan and creates a remedy for Man's imminent fall: the Son (Jesus) will come to earth and conquer death. In the meantime, Satan makes his way toward earth, deceiving the angel Uriel, who guards the way. Uriel directs Satan to earth. In Book 4 Satan finds Eden. There he sees Adam and Eve and listens to them talk. The couple recall their creation and their first meeting, and Satan burns with grief and jealousy. That night, in the shape of a toad at Eve's ear, Satan influences her dreams as she sleeps. However, he is discovered by angels guarding Paradise and departs. Book 5 opens with Eve relating her dream to Adam. In the dream, Satan, appearing as a good angel, leads Eve to the forbidden tree, eats the fruit, and encourages her to do the same. Later, the angel Raphael comes to talk to Adam and warns him of Satan's plans. In response to Adam's questions, Raphael relates the story of the war in heaven. This narration concludes Book 5 and continues through all of Book 6. In response to further questions from Adam, Raphael recounts the story of the Creation in Book 7. In Book 8 Adam in turn tells Raphael about what he recalls since his creation and the creation of Eve, the partner whom he requested from God, and they discuss the nature of human love. Book 9 presents the downfall first of Eve then of Adam. Satan sneaks back into the garden and hides inside a serpent. The next morning, as Eve is working in the garden, he goes to her and convinces her to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, although she knows God has forbidden it. Knowing she has done wrong, and unable to bear being separated from Adam, she convinces him to eat the fruit too. From that moment, lust and anger define their relationship. In Book 10 the Son comes to judge Adam and Eve, who refuse to take responsibility for their actions. They are to be expelled from Eden. Eve will experience pain in childbirth and must submit to the will of her husband; Adam must labor for his food. Both will know death. Sin and Death are pleased with Satan's success and make plans to come live on earth, building a bridge between earth and hell in order to ease the path between them. Satan returns to hell to celebrate with the other fallen angels, but they are all turned into snakes. God reorders the heavens and earth, bringing about harsh weather and climates. Adam and Eve are despondent, and Eve considers suicide before Adam relents in his anger. They decide to ask God for forgiveness and are glad that they are still together. In Book 11 the Son is moved by their remorse and intercedes for them with God. God forgives them but insists that they leave

Paradise, sending Michael to guide them out and instruct them on proper living. Beginning in Book 11 and continuing into Book 12, Michael shows Adam a vision of the future, telling the stories of Cain and Abel, Abraham, Moses, David, and other Old Testament figures. He also reassures Adam that the Son will come and conquer death by taking on Adam's punishment himself. Michael also tells Adam that although they must leave Paradise, God is everywhere on earth and will be near them. Michael then leads Adam and Eve to the gates of Paradise, and they set off in the world together, hand in hand.

## Major Themes

Milton's stated purpose in *Paradise Lost* was to "justify the ways of God to man." Central to this project was defining the nature of obedience, free will, and just authority. Satan provides a foil for God, setting up an illegitimate kingdom in hell that contrasts with the natural and just rule of God in heaven. Satan's arguments are often compelling: he claims the angels have liberty in hell, if not comfort, and he opposes the hierarchies of heaven. The contrast compels readers to judge the true nature of liberty and the true source of authority, and encourages them to distinguish between genuine freedom and mere lawlessness or chaos, while firmly asserting humanity's free will with respect to God. Among the hierarchies of greatest interest to Milton in *Paradise Lost* is that found in marriage. As some critics have noted, Milton spends a large amount of time establishing and reinforcing an idea that almost no one in his age would have seriously contested: the inferiority of women to men. The extent to which the poem actually portrays women as inferior has long been a matter of debate, but it clearly states, more than once, that women must be in a mediated position: Eve relates to God through Adam; she is in the background when Adam talks to the angels; she is expected to follow Adam's lead. Nonetheless, despite the repeated stress on Eve's lower position with respect to Adam, the poem also describes in detail the ideal nature of wedded love as ordained by God. In long passages discussing love and marriage, Milton portrays the model relationship as an equal partnership of shared labor. God creates Eve to provide Adam with a companion worthy of him, after Adam complains that the beasts are not enough. While she is not Adam's equal in reason, she has merits he lacks, and enough reason to be fit for mutual conversation and work. Among the most fascinating of Adam and Eve's conversations are those in which they discuss their creation and self-recognition. The development of selfhood and the recognition of others as distinct from the self is a crucial part of Milton's creation story. In particular, Eve's awakening and subsequent introduction to Adam is a model for the gradual human development of self-awareness.

## Critical Reception

Milton's poetic contemporaries were generally awed by his achievement. John Dryden, the leading poet of Restoration society, remarked that in *Paradise Lost* Milton had outdone any other poet of his time: "This man has cut us all out, and the ancients too," he was reported to have said. Some scholars have verified Dryden's assessment, suggesting that the decline of the epic genre was the direct result of Milton's supreme achievement, making any further efforts in the epic impossible and superfluous. Although in many ways Milton was very much out of step with his contemporaries—religiously, politically, and artistically—his accomplishment in *Paradise Lost* was readily acknowledged, and his stature as a poet only increased through the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, perhaps reaching a peak during the Romantic era. Romantic poets, including John Keats, William Blake, and Percy Shelley, celebrated Milton's genius and drew heavily from his influence. By the early twentieth century, however, some literary scholars began to question Milton's talent. Inconsistencies in the poem became a target for the criticism of such luminaries as F. R. Leavis and T. S. Eliot. Milton's artistry and reputation was already established, however. Criticism of the later twentieth century falls generally into three broad schools: political readings of the work, stylistic readings, and thematic interpretations. Scholars take for granted that *Paradise Lost* reflects Milton's frustration with the failed Revolution. Joan Bennett has argued that Milton's depiction of Satan has strong connections to Charles I, linking his exploration of tyranny in *Paradise Lost* to his prose writings on the tyranny of the monarchy. More broadly, historian Christopher Hill has suggested that the Fall of Man was for Milton analogous to the collapse of the Commonwealth government, each constituting a failure of humanity to choose the right path.

On whom the Angel "Hail"  
Bestowed, the holy salutation used  
Long after to blest Mary, second Eve.  
P. L., V, 385–87

In Book XI we again identify Eve with Mary, the second Eve, whose seed (Christ) will crush Satan's strength by defeating Sin and Death. It is ironic that Eve is associated with Sin, Death, and the fall, but, at the same time, holds the promise of redemption and life as the "Mother of all things living."

Adam approaches the archangel Michael with some reservation, seeing him as a majestic-looking monarch who brings "great tidings" from God's throne. He does not appear as the "sociably mild" Raphael with whom he has shared food and pleasant conversation in Books V-VIII. The seriousness of Michael's mission, Adam and Eve's expulsion from Paradise, lends an air of solemnity and awe to his manly appearance. Unlike Raphael, God's spirit will be with him to inspire him in his somber task. "I shall thee enlighten." This forewarns us that Michael's task is of a divine nature. When he arrives, Michael needs "no preface" but goes straight to the business at hand. He minces no words, promptly informing Adam and Eve that, although grace has been granted, they must leave Paradise. In administering God's punishment, it is logical that Michael would be portrayed with more severity than Raphael.

Though he has heard much about Death as the punishment for his sin, Adam finally sees Death for the first time when Michael presents the scene of the evil brother murdering the one who is righteous. This alludes to the story of the first murder in Genesis. "Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him" (Genesis 4:8). Adam is appalled at the injustice of the evil man killing the upright one who was devoted to God. Michael informs Adam that these brothers will be his offspring. He points out that, though the bloody deed will be avenged at the time of judgment, justice is not necessarily carried out in a sinful world.

As Michael presents the vision of war, Adam experiences another heartrending reflection of a chaotic world with death and destruction at every hand. In the midst of the carnage, however, one man speaks out for justice, truth, and peace but is snatched up in a cloud and taken to Heaven. This is an allusion to Enoch who was a righteous man. "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Genesis 5:24). Noah too is the "one just man alive" who stands alone as an example of righteousness in a dark age of licentiousness and moral degradation. He preaches conversion and repentance but, like Enoch, no one will listen to him. Milton is fond of the moral image of one righteous man who stands alone against the hostile crowd. Abdiel's independent rebuke of Satan's heresy against God in the war in Heaven has been reviewed elsewhere in the text. Abdiel was also the only dissenter. "Among the faithless, faithful only he" (P. L., V, 896). The final exemplar, an even greater man (Christ), will be revealed in Book XII.

## Chapter Summaries: Book 12 Summary and Analysis

### Summary

After the vision of Noah and the destruction of the world by flood, Michael pauses for a moment to give Adam an opportunity to ask further questions. Since he does not respond, Michael hurries on to resume the story of human history, but instead of showing the events he will now tell about them.

With the judgment of God by flood still fresh in their minds, Noah's descendants live righteous and peaceful lives, Michael says, until Nimrod, ambitious for power, rises up in rebellion to God. To make a name for himself that will be remembered throughout the world, he gathers a crew to help him build the Tower of Babel "whose top may reach to Heaven." It is made from brick and the bituminous elements that boil onto the plain from the mouth of Hell. Before the tower is completed, however, God intervenes, confusing their native language so that the builders cannot communicate. Feeling mocked by God, they angrily leave the ridiculous



tower unfinished.

Displeased with his descendant, Adam criticizes Nimrod for usurping the authority of God who has given Man dominion over beast, fish, and fowl but has not made him lord over other men. Adam is appalled at the insolence of a wretched man who would think that he could encroach upon Heaven and defy God. He argues that the air is too thin above the clouds, and there is no food to sustain men at that height. Michael replies that Adam's accusation of Nimrod is justified, but he must remember that "rational liberty" along with "right reason" was lost after the fall, and men and government are often controlled by their passions. Sometimes nations become tyrannical as is the case with the "irreverent son" of Noah, Ham, whose people and their succeeding generations are cursed to become a race of servants.

The world goes "from bad to worse" until God, weary of people's immorality, resolves to leave them to their own wicked ways and focus his attention on "a mighty nation," Israel, that springs from "one faithful man," Abraham. His race is blessed with the seed that will produce the "great Deliverer, who shall bruise/ The Serpent's head," Michael says, but this will be revealed to Adam more clearly at another time.

Moses is later sent by God to deliver his people out of captivity in Egypt and into the promised land. Extending his rod over the Red Sea Moses with God's power, parts the sea and the Israelites march safely through on dry land to Canaan on the other side. The Egyptians, led by Pharaoh, follow in pursuit but are swallowed up by the sea as Moses bids the waters return. The Israelites found their government in the wilderness, and Moses establishes the Ten Commandments, ordained by God on Mount Sinai, as their laws. A tabernacle is built to house the ark containing the testimony of God's covenant "promised to [Abraham](#) and his seed."

Adam replies that he now sees how all the nations will be blessed through Abraham, but he still does not understand why so many laws are needed. Many laws indicate sins, and he wonders how God can tolerate such sinful people. Michael tells Adam that the laws govern them only until they can move "from imposition of strict laws, to free/ Acceptance of large grace." It is, therefore, not Moses who leads his people into Canaan, Michael says, but Joshua, who comes later. Judges and kings then rule the Israelites, and from the royal stock of King David, the "Woman's Seed" will produce a kingdom without end. David's son Solomon, famous for his wealth and wisdom, builds a "glorious temple" where he places the Ark of the Covenant. The "foul idolatries" of Solomon's subjects "so incense God," however, that he allows them to be taken to Babylon and held in captivity for 70 years. Upon return, they live moderately for a few years, but dissension, starting among the priests, soon grows among them, and they lose the kingdom to foreign powers. "Barred of his right" to inherit the royal kingdom, the Messiah is born of a virgin, and his Sire is the "Power of the Most High."

Adam now understands God's divine promise concerning the future "Seed of Woman" but is still confused about "what stroke shall bruise the Victor's heel." Michael tells him the Serpent is not overcome in a duel with Christ. Satan's head is not literally trampled under Christ's heel, but, metaphorically speaking, Christ bruises the head of Satan by rising from the dead and in this way crushes his strength by defeating Sin and Death. Through his death on the cross, Christ pays the ransom for Adam's sin which brought Death into the world, Michael says. Ironically, he is "slain for bringing life" to mankind.

Christ is raised from the dead and enters Heaven to sit at God's right hand. In the last days he will judge the living and the dead and reward the faithful. At that time this Earth will be a far happier Paradise than the present Eden. Adam responds joyfully, praising God that so much good can come out of evil, but wonders what happens to the faithful followers of Christ left on Earth after His ascension into Heaven. Michael tells him they have been persecuted, but God sends his Spirit to guide them to truth as faith works through love in their hearts and gives them power "to resist/ Satan's assaults." The Holy Spirit is first given to the Apostles and then to all who are baptized. When the Apostles die, corrupt priests take over as teachers and, like sly

wolves, pervert the truth of the Scriptures with man-made traditions. Those who persevere, worshipping in Spirit and in Truth, bear “heavy persecution.” The world will go on like this until the day that the wicked will be avenged and the just rewarded with eternal life.

Adam feels he has all the knowledge he can absorb and is comforted by the fact that he will now leave Paradise with peace of mind. He has learned that “to obey is best,” and he must continue to love the only true God. “Suffering for truth’s sake” is the “highest victory” and to those who remain faithful, Death is the gate to eternal life. Michael commends him for attaining “the sum/ Of wisdom.” If he adds faith, virtue, patience, temperance, and love to his knowledge, he will not mind leaving Paradise, for he will possess a Paradise within himself.

As they descend from the hill, they find Eve awake and well-rested. God has given her a comforting dream in which she “the Promised seed shall all restore.” They are now ready to leave Paradise as the Cherubim stand watch, and God’s brandished sword blazes like a comet high in front of them. Michael takes each of them by the hand, leading them through the eastern gate and down the cliff to the plain and then disappears. “Looking back,” Adam and Eve shed “some natural tears” as they “through Eden took their solitary way.”

### **Analysis**

The dramatic structure of the last two books of *Paradise Lost* is considered the *denouement* or the unraveling of the plot of the narrative. After the climax, the fall of Adam and Eve in Book IX, the final books give Adam a vivid clarification and a necessary perspective of the dire consequences of his fall. Michael has used the device of visions in Book XI to drive home to Adam the far-reaching extent of the misery and suffering in a sinful world. He now shifts to a strictly narrative approach, changing his emphasis from a “world destroyed” to a “world restored.” Adam’s moral instruction must necessarily include hope for his lost condition to prepare him for his expulsion from Paradise. He comes to a full understanding of that hope when Michael helps him realize that it is Christ’s resurrection that crushes the Serpent’s head by defeating Sin and Death. He sees the significance of his own role in God’s master plan of redemption when he finally comprehends the lineage of Christ.

yet from my loins  
Thou (Virgin Mother) shalt proceed,  
and from thy womb the Son  
Of God Most High; so God with Man unites.

Michael’s education of Adam accomplishes God’s intent for Adam and Eve; to send them out of Paradise “though sorrowing, yet in peace” (P. L., XI, 117). Adam himself verifies this. “Greatly instructed I shall hence depart,/ Greatly in peace of thought, and have my fill/ Of knowledge.”

After the destruction of the world by flood, Michael says, Noah’s descendants, still living in fear of God’s judgment, lead their lives peacefully and productively. One man, “a mighty hunter,” soon rises up in rebellion against God, however, building a tower “whose top may reach to Heaven.” This alludes to the Scriptures. “He began to be a mighty one in the earth . . . Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel” (Genesis 10:9–10). Nimrod, who built the Tower of Babel, was also building a powerful empire and held men in “subjection to his empire tyrannous.” Many commentators see Milton’s contemporary reference to Charles I in the story of Nimrod.

Or from Heaven claiming second sovranity;  
And from rebellion shall derive his name,  
Though of rebellion others he accuse.

By claiming to receive his divine authority from God, the tyrant (Charles I) not only rebel falsely but also accuses the leaders of the Puritan Revolution of rebellion. Milton is sure to point out that Nimrod was dealt with by God just as he will deal with tyrants of his own time who attempt to destroy Man's liberty. He punctuates this idea through Adam. Remembering God's earlier injunction before the fall, Adam says that God has given authority over beast, fish, and fowl, "but man over men/ He made not lord." This type of tyranny can only be attributed to the fall, Michael says.

After Christ's ascension into Heaven, the Holy Spirit is sent to the Apostles to evangelize the nations. They baptize people and after they have performed Christ's ministry, they die. In their place "Wolves shall succeed for teachers, grievous wolves." The metaphor of "wolves" as clergymen is Milton's reference to the corruption of the Anglican as well as the Catholic church. Michael lists their many hypocritical practices. Priests and clergymen have held to traditions rather than the truths of the Scriptures; they have concerned themselves with their own positions and titles; they have used secular power under the guise of spiritual power to quiet dissenters; and the "Spirit of Grace itself" is bound by the observance of ritual in the church. These were all points that Milton had touched on in his earlier writings. The passage alludes to the condition of the Anglican church in the wake of the Protestant [Reformation](#) which had already become corrupt and ritualistic by the seventeenth century. When Milton writes about "secular power, though feigning still to act/ By spiritual," we are reminded of the political power of Archbishop Laud whose suppressive practices in the Anglican church were given complete support by Charles I.

Michael finishes his account of the "world restored" in which Christ will reward the faithful ones and create for them a new Heaven and Earth. In his enthusiasm about the news of salvation and the prospect of eternal happiness, Adam is suddenly overcome with joy when he sees that God is merciful.

That all this good of evil shall produce,  
And evil turn to good; more wonderful  
Than that which by creation first brought forth  
Light out of darkness.

Adam feels that his fall has created an even better Paradise than the one that was lost. This is often referred to as the *felix culpa* or "fortunate fall," translated literally from the Latin as the "happy fault." It is a paradox that the fall is the worst human misfortune, but at the same time it is God's highest opportunity for good. God has chosen to turn evil into good. It is Adam's hope and sustains him as he prepares to face his ultimate expulsion from Paradise.

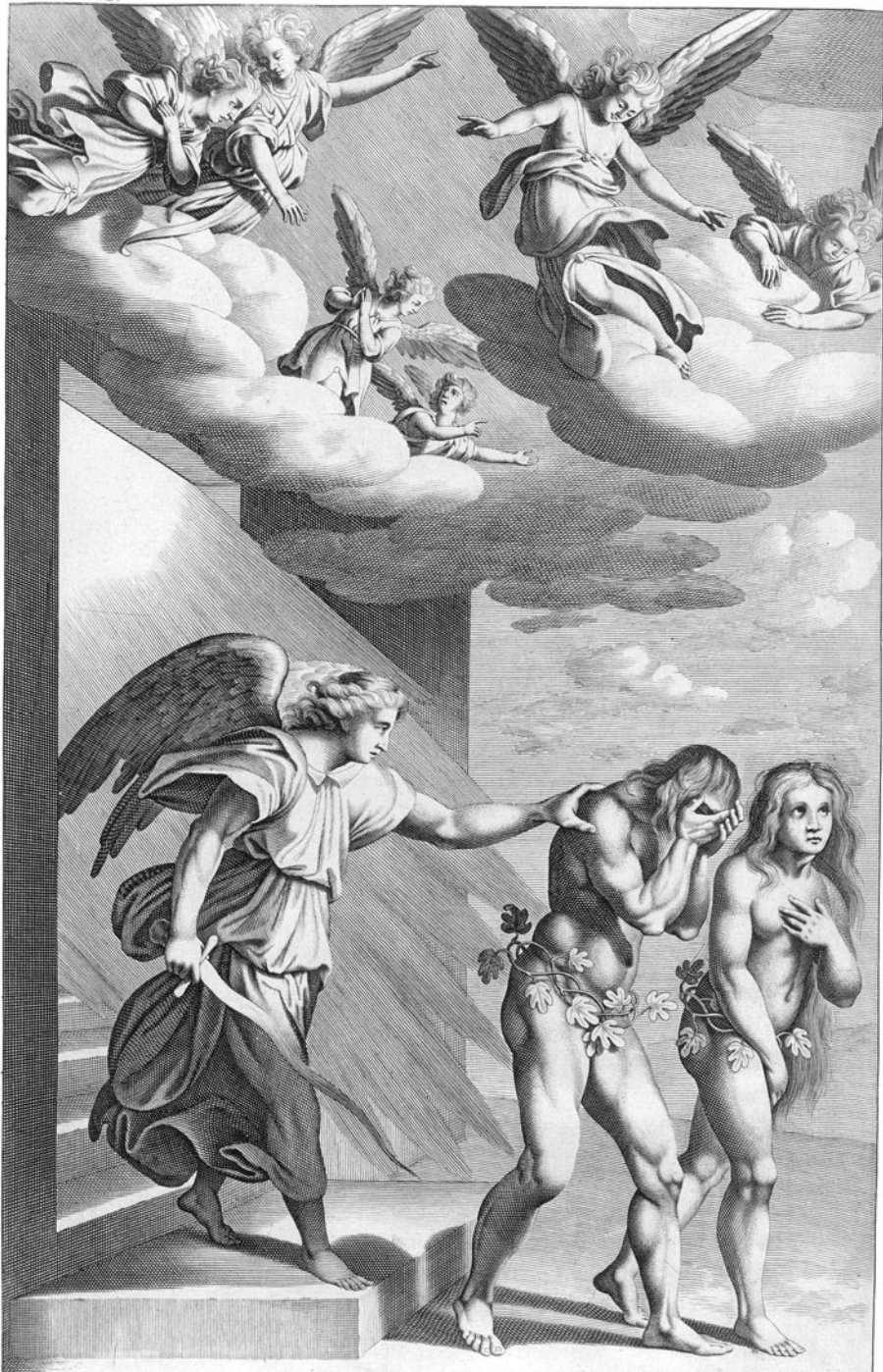
When Eve awakes from her restful sleep, she is prepared to leave with Adam. "With thee to go,/ Is to stay here; without thee here to stay,/ Is to go hence unwilling." These words echo those of Ruth in the Bible who says, "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge" (Ruth 1:16). Eve has made peace with her guilt. Though she is still aware that "all by me is lost," she also finds hope in the knowledge that "by me the Promised Seed shall all restore."

As Adam prepares to leave Paradise, we reflect on his development from his innocence before the fall, to his sin and consequent repentance and reconciliation with God, and finally to his realization that God is just and "to obey is best." This is the sum of all his wisdom. He now knows his place as Man in a world filled with woe, but he also has hope that Christ will restore that world. As Adam and Eve slowly find "their solitary way" on a foreign plain, their feelings of hope are mixed with sadness as they shed "some natural tears" over their loss of Paradise.

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**M**ICHAEL continues his foretelling of history down to the life and death of Christ, and beyond, including a severely Protestant view of the development of the church: ‘Wolves shall succeed for teachers, grievous wolves, | Who all the sacred mysteries of heaven | To their own vile advantages shall turn | Of lucre and ambition.’ However, finally after long ages all shall be well: ‘New heavens, new earth, ages of endless date | Founded in righteousness and peace and love | To bring forth fruits joy and eternal bliss.’ Eve, who has been sleeping, wakes to tell of a comforting dream: ‘By me the promised seed shall all restore.’ And then come the final twenty-five lines of this great poem, which we can only read and wonder at. ‘Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon’ is so simple, so truthful, and so generous that it reminds us that no work can be truly great if it is not about ourselves, and unless it tells us what it is like to be alive.

P. P.



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## *The Argument*

THE angel Michael continues from the flood to relate what shall succeed; then, in the mention of Abraham, comes by degrees to explain, who that seed of the woman shall be, which was promised Adam and Eve in the Fall; his incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension; the state of the church till his second coming. Adam greatly satisfied and recomforted by these relations and promises descends the hill with Michael; wakens Eve, who all this while had slept, but with gentle dreams composed to quietness of mind and submission. Michael in either hand leads them out of Paradise, the fiery sword waving behind them, and the cherubim taking their stations to guard the place.

AS ONE who in his journey bates at noon,  
Though bent on speed, so here the archangel paused  
Betwixt the world destroyed and world restored,  
If Adam aught perhaps might interpose;  
Then with transition sweet new speech resumes.

Thus thou hast seen one world begin and end;

And man as from a second stock proceed.

Much thou hast yet to see, but I perceive

Thy mortal sight to fail; objects divine

Must needs impair and weary human sense:

10

Henceforth what is to come I will relate,

Thou therefore give due audience, and attend.

This second source of men, while yet but few,

And while the dread of judgment past remains

Fresh in their minds, fearing the Deity,

With some regard to what is just and right

Shall lead their lives, and multiply apace,

Labouring the soil, and reaping plenteous crop,

Corn wine and oil; and from the herd or flock,

Oft sacrificing bullock, lamb, or kid,

20

With large wine-offerings poured, and sacred feast,

Shall spend their days in joy unblamed, and dwell

Long time in peace by families and tribes  
Under paternal rule; till one shall rise  
Of proud ambitious heart, who not content  
With fair equality, fraternal state,  
Will arrogate dominion undeserved  
Over his brethren, and quite dispossess  
Concord and law of nature from the earth,  
Hunting (and men not beasts shall be his game) 30  
With war and hostile snare such as refuse  
Subjection to his empire tyrannous:  
A mighty hunter thence he shall be styled  
Before the Lord, as in despite of heaven,  
Or from heaven claiming second sovereignty;  
And from rebellion shall derive his name,  
Though of rebellion others he accuse.  
He with a crew, whom like ambition joins  
With him or under him to tyrannize,  
Marching from Eden towards the west, shall find 40  
The plain, wherein a black bituminous gurge  
Boils out from underground, the mouth of hell;  
Of brick, and of that stuff they cast to build  
A city and tower, whose top may reach to heaven;  
And get themselves a name, lest far dispersed  
In foreign lands their memory be lost  
Regardless whether good or evil fame.  
But God who oft descends to visit men  
Unseen, and through their habitations walks  
To mark their doings, them beholding soon, 50  
Comes down to see their city, ere the tower  
Obstruct heaven towers, and in derision sets  
Upon their tongues a various spirit to rase  
Quite out their native language, and instead  
To sow a jangling noise of words unknown:  
Forthwith a hideous gabble rises loud  
Among the builders; each to other calls  
Not understood, till hoarse, and all in rage,

As mocked they storm; great laughter was in heaven  
And looking down, to see the hubbub strange 60  
And hear the din; thus was the building left  
Ridiculous, and the work Confusion named.

Whereto thus Adam fatherly displeased.

O execrable son so to aspire  
Above his brethren, to himself assuming  
Authority usurped, from God not given:  
He gave us only over beast, fish, fowl  
Dominion absolute; that right we hold  
By his donation; but man over men  
He made not lord; such title to himself 70  
Reserving, human left from human free.  
But this usurper his encroachment proud  
Stays not on man; to God his tower intends  
Siege and defiance: wretched man! what food  
Will he convey up thither to sustain  
Himself and his rash army, where thin air  
Above the clouds will pine his entrails gross,  
And famish him of breath, if not of bread?

To whom thus Michael. Justly thou abhorr'st  
That son, who on the quiet state of men 80  
Such trouble brought, affecting to subdue  
Rational liberty; yet know withal,  
Since thy original lapse, true liberty  
Is lost, which always with right reason dwells  
Twinned, and from her hath no dividual being:  
Reason in man obscured, or not obeyed,  
Immediately inordinate desires  
And upstart passions catch the government  
From reason, and to servitude reduce  
Man till then free. Therefore since he permits 90  
Within himself unworthy powers to reign  
Over free reason, God in judgment just  
Subjects him from without to violent lords;  
Who oft as undeservedly enthrall



His outward freedom: tyranny must be,  
 Though to the tyrant thereby no excuse.  
 Yet sometimes nations will decline so low  
 From virtue, which is reason, that no wrong,  
 But justice, and some fatal curse annexed  
 Deprives them of their outward liberty, 100  
 Their inward lost: witness the irreverent son,  
 Of him who built the ark, who for the shame  
 Done to his father, heard this heavy curse,  
*Servant of servants*, on his vicious race.  
 Thus will this latter, as the former world,  
 Still tend from bad to worse, till God at last  
 Wearied with their iniquities, withdraw  
 His presence from among them, and avert  
 His holy eyes; resolving from thenceforth  
 To leave them to their own polluted ways; 110  
 And one peculiar nation to select  
 From all the rest, of whom to be invoked,  
 A nation from one faithful man to spring:  
 Him on this side Euphrates yet residing,  
 Bred up in idol worship; O that men  
 (Canst thou believe?) should be so stupid grown,  
 While yet the patriarch lived, who scaped the flood,  
 As to forsake the living God, and fall  
 To worship their own work in wood and stone  
 For gods! yet him God the most high vouchsafes 120  
 To call by vision from his father's house,  
 His kindred and false gods, into a land  
 Which he will show him, and from him will raise  
 A mighty nation, and upon him shower  
 His benediction so, that in his seed  
 All nations shall be blest; he straight obeys,  
 Not knowing to what land, yet firm believes:  
 I see him, but thou canst not, with what faith  
 He leaves his gods, his friends, and native soil  
 Ur of Chaldaea, passing now the ford 130

To Haran, after him a cumbrous train  
Of herds and flocks, and numerous servitude;  
Not wand'ring poor, but trusting all his wealth  
With God, who called him, in a land unknown.  
Canaan he now attains, I see his tents  
Pitched about Sechem, and the neighbouring plain  
Of Moreh; there by promise he receives  
Gift to his progeny of all that land;  
From Hamath northward to the desert south  
(Things by their names I call, though yet unnamed) 140  
From Hermon east to the great western sea,  
Mount Hermon, yonder sea, each place behold  
In prospect, as I point them; on the shore  
Mount Carmel; here the double-founted stream  
Jordan, true limit eastward; but his sons  
Shall dwell to Senir, that long ridge of hills.  
This ponder, that all nations of the earth  
Shall in his seed be blessèd; by that seed  
Is meant thy great deliverer, who shall bruise  
The serpent's head; whereof to thee anon 150  
Plainlier shall be revealed. This patriarch blessed,  
Whom faithful Abraham due time shall call,  
A son, and of his son a grandchild leaves,  
Like him in faith, in wisdom, and renown;  
The grandchild with twelve sons increased, departs  
From Canaan, to a land hereafter called  
Egypt, divided by the river Nile;  
See where it flows, disgorging at seven mouths  
Into the sea: to sojourn in that land  
He comes invited by a younger son 160  
In time of dearth, a son whose worthy deeds  
Raise him to be the second in that realm  
Of Pharaoh: there he dies, and leaves his race  
Growing into a nation, and now grown  
Suspected to a sequent king, who seeks  
To stop their overgrowth, as inmate guests

Too numerous; whence of guests he makes them slaves  
Inhospitably, and kills their infant males:  
Till by two brethren (those two brethren call  
Moses and Aaron) sent from God to claim 170  
His people from enthralment, they return  
With glory and spoil back to their promised land.  
But first the lawless tyrant, who denies  
To know their God, or message to regard,  
Must be compelled by signs and judgments dire;  
To blood unshed the rivers must be turned,  
Frogs, lice and flies must all his palace fill  
With loathed intrusion, and fill all the land;  
His cattle must of rot and murrain die,  
Botches and blains must all his flesh emboss, 180  
And all his people; thunder mixed with hail,  
Hail mixed with fire must rend the Egyptian sky  
And wheel on the earth, devouring where it rolls;  
What it devours not, herb, or fruit, or grain,  
A darksome cloud of locusts swarming down  
Must eat, and on the ground leave nothing green:  
Darkness must overshadow all his bounds,  
Palpable darkness, and blot out three days;  
Last with one midnight stroke all the first-born  
Of Egypt must lie dead. Thus with ten wounds 190  
The river dragon tamed at length submits  
To let his sojourners depart, and oft  
Humbles his stubborn heart, but still as ice  
More hardened after thaw, till in his rage  
Pursuing whom he late dismissed, the sea  
Swallows him with his host, but them lets pass  
As on dry land between two crystal walls,  
Awed by the rod of Moses so to stand  
Divided, till his rescued gain their shore:  
Such wondrous power God to his saint will lend, 200  
Though present in his angel, who shall go  
Before them in a cloud, and pillar of fire,

By day a cloud, by night a pillar of fire,  
To guide them in their journey, and remove  
Behind them, while the obdurate king pursues:  
All night he will pursue, but his approach  
Darkness defends between till morning watch;  
Then through the fiery pillar and the cloud  
God looking forth will trouble all his host  
And craze their chariot wheels: when by command 210  
Moses once more his potent rod extends  
Over the sea; the sea his rod obeys;  
On their embattled ranks the waves return,  
And overwhelm their war: the race elect  
Safe towards Canaan from the shore advance  
Through the wild desert, not the readiest way,  
Lest entering on the Canaanite alarmed  
War terrify them inexpert, and fear  
Return them back to Egypt, choosing rather 220  
Inglorious life with servitude; for life  
To noble and ignoble is more sweet  
Untrained in arms, where rashness leads not on.  
This also shall they gain by their delay  
In the wide wilderness, there they shall found  
Their government, and their great senate choose  
Through the twelve tribes, to rule by laws ordained:  
God from the mount of Sinai, whose grey top  
Shall tremble, he descending, will himself  
In thunder lightning and loud trumpets' sound  
Ordain them laws; part such as appertain 230  
To civil justice, part religious rites  
Of sacrifice, informing them, by types  
And shadows, of that destined seed to bruise  
The serpent, by what means he shall achieve  
Mankind's deliverance. But the voice of God  
To mortal ear is dreadful; they beseech  
That Moses might report to them his will,  
And terror cease; he grants what they besought

Instructed that to God is no access  
 Without mediator, whose high office now 240  
 Moses in figure bears, to introduce  
 One greater, of whose day he shall foretell,  
 And all the prophets in their age the times  
 Of great Messiah shall sing. Thus laws and rites  
 Established, such delight hath God in men  
 Obedient to his will, that he vouchsafes  
 Among them to set up his tabernacle,  
 The holy one with mortal men to dwell:  
 By his prescript a sanctuary is framed  
 Of cedar, overlaid with gold, therein 250  
 An ark, and in the ark his testimony,  
 The records of his covenant, over these  
 A mercy-seat of gold between the wings  
 Of two bright cherubim, before him burn  
 Seven lamps as in a zodiac representing  
 The heavenly fires; over the tent a cloud  
 Shall rest by day, a fiery gleam by night,  
 Save when they journey, and at length they come,  
 Conducted by his angel to the land  
 Promised to Abraham and his seed: the rest 260  
 Were long to tell, how many battles fought,  
 How many kings destroyed, and kingdoms won,  
 Or how the sun shall in mid heaven stand still  
 A day entire, and night's due course adjourn,  
 Man's voice commanding, sun in Gibeon stand,  
 And thou moon in the vale of Aialon,  
 Till Israel overcome; so call the third  
 From Abraham, son of Isaac, and from him  
 His whole descent, who thus shall Canaan win.  
 Here Adam interposed. O sent from heaven, 270  
 Enlightener of my darkness, gracious things  
 Thou hast revealed, those chiefly which concern  
 Just Abraham and his seed: now first I find  
 Mine eyes true opening, and my heart much eased,

Erewhile perplexed with thoughts what would become  
Of me and all mankind; but now I see  
His day, in whom all nations shall be blessed,  
Favour unmerited by me, who sought  
Forbidden knowledge by forbidden means.  
This yet I apprehend not, why to those  
Among whom God will deign to dwell on earth 280  
So many and so various laws are given;  
So many laws argue so many sins  
Among them; how can God with such reside?  
To whom thus Michael. Doubt not but that sin  
Will reign among them, as of thee begot;  
And therefore was law given them to evince  
Their natural pravity, by stirring up  
Sin against law to fight: that when they see  
Law can discover sin, but not remove, 290  
Save by those shadowy expiations weak,  
The blood of bulls and goats, they may conclude  
Some blood more precious must be paid for man,  
Just for unjust, that in such righteousness  
To them by faith imputed, they may find  
Justification towards God, and peace  
Of conscience, which the law by ceremonies  
Cannot appease, nor man the moral part  
Perform, and not performing cannot live.  
So law appears imperfect, and but given 300  
With purpose to resign them in full time  
Up to a better covenant, disciplined  
From shadowy types to truth, from flesh to spirit,  
From imposition of strict laws, to free  
Acceptance of large grace, from servile fear  
To filial, works of law to works of faith.  
And therefore shall not Moses, though of God  
Highly beloved, being but the minister  
Of law, his people into Canaan lead;  
But Joshua whom the gentiles Jesus call, 310

His name and office bearing, who shall quell  
The adversary serpent, and bring back  
Through the world's wilderness long wandered man  
Safe to eternal paradise of rest.  
Meanwhile they in their earthly Canaan placed  
Long time shall dwell and prosper, but when sins  
National interrupt their public peace,  
Provoking God to raise them enemies:  
From whom as oft he saves them penitent  
By judges first, then under kings; of whom 320  
The second, both for piety renowned  
And puissant deeds, a promise shall receive  
Irrevocable, that his regal throne  
Forever shall endure; the like shall sing  
All prophecy, that of the royal stock  
Of David (so I name this king) shall rise  
A son, the woman's seed to thee foretold,  
Foretold to Abraham, as in whom shall trust  
All nations, and to kings foretold, of kings  
The last, for of his reign shall be no end. 330  
But first a long succession must ensue,  
And his next son for wealth and wisdom famed,  
The clouded ark of God till then in tents  
Wandering, shall in a glorious temple enshrine.  
Such follow him, as shall be registered  
Part good, part bad, of bad the longer scroll,  
Whose foul idolatries, and other fault  
Heaped to the popular sum, will so incense  
God, as to leave them, and expose their land,  
Their city, his temple, and his holy ark 340  
With all his sacred things, a scorn and prey  
To that proud city, whose high walls thou saw'st  
Left in confusion, Babylon thence called.  
There in captivity he lets them dwell  
The space of seventy years, then brings them back,  
Remembering mercy, and his covenant sworn

To David, stablished as the days of heaven.  
Returned from Babylon by leave of kings  
Their lords, whom God disposed, the house of God  
They first re-edify, and for a while 350  
In mean estate live moderate, till grown  
In wealth and multitude, factious they grow;  
But first among the priests dissension springs,  
Men who attend the altar, and should most  
Endeavour peace: their strife pollution brings  
Upon the temple itself: at last they seize  
The sceptre, and regard not David's sons,  
Then lose it to a stranger, that the true  
Anointed king Messiah might be born  
Barred of his right; yet at his birth a star 360  
Unseen before in heaven proclaims him come,  
And guides the eastern sages, who inquire  
His place, to offer incense, myrrh, and gold;  
His place of birth a solemn angel tells  
To simple shepherds, keeping watch by night;  
They gladly thither haste, and by a choir  
Of squadroned angels hear his carol sung.  
A virgin is his mother, but his sire  
The power of the most high; he shall ascend  
The throne hereditary, and bound his reign 370  
With earth's wide bounds, his glory with the heavens.  
He ceased, discerning Adam with such joy  
Surcharged, as had like grief been dewed in tears,  
Without the vent of words, which these he breathed.  
O prophet of glad tidings, finisher  
Of utmost hope! now clear I understand  
What oft my steadiest thoughts have searched in vain,  
Why our great expectation should be called  
The seed of woman: virgin mother, hail,  
High in the love of heaven, yet from my loins 380  
Thou shalt proceed, and from thy womb the Son  
Of God most high; so God with man unites.



Needs must the serpent now his capital bruise  
 Expect with mortal pain: say where and when  
 Their fight, what stroke shall bruise the victor's heel.

To whom thus Michael. Dream not of their fight,  
 As of a duel, or the local wounds  
 Of head or heel: not therefore joins the Son  
 Manhood to Godhead, with more strength to foil  
 The enemy; nor so is overcome 390

Satan, whose fall from heaven, a deadlier bruise,  
 Disabled not to give thee thy death's wound:  
 Which he, who comes thy saviour, shall recure,  
 Not by destroying Satan, but his works  
 In thee and in thy seed: nor can this be,  
 But by fulfilling that which thou didst want,  
 Obedience to the law of God, imposed  
 On penalty of death, and suffering death,  
 The penalty to thy transgression due,  
 And due to theirs which out of thine will grow: 400  
 So only can high justice rest apaid.

The law of God exact he shall fulfil  
 Both by obedience and by love, though love  
 Alone fulfil the law; thy punishment  
 He shall endure by coming in the flesh  
 To a reproachful life and cursèd death,  
 Proclaiming life to all who shall believe  
 In his redemption, and that his obedience  
 Imputed becomes theirs by faith, his merits  
 To save them, not their own, though legal works. 410

For this he shall live hated, be blasphemed,  
 Seized on by force, judged, and to death condemned  
 A shameful and accurst, nailed to the cross  
 By his own nation, slain for bringing life;  
 But to the cross he nails thy enemies,  
 The law that is against thee, and the sins  
 Of all mankind, with him there crucified,  
 Never to hurt them more who rightly trust

In this his satisfaction; so he dies,  
But soon revives, Death over him no power 420  
Shall long usurp; ere the third dawning light  
Return, the stars of morn shall see him rise  
Out of his grave, fresh as the dawning light,  
Thy ransom paid, which man from death redeems,  
His death for man, as many as offered life  
Neglect not, and the benefit embrace  
By faith not void of works: this Godlike act  
Annuls thy doom, the death thou shouldst have died,  
In sin forever lost from life; this act  
Shall bruise the head of Satan, crush his strength 430  
Defeating Sin and Death, his two main arms,  
And fix far deeper in his head their stings  
Than temporal death shall bruise the victor's heel,  
Or theirs whom he redeems, a death like sleep,  
A gentle wafting to immortal life.  
Nor after resurrection shall he stay  
Longer on earth than certain times to appear  
To his disciples, men who in his life  
Still followed him; to them shall leave in charge  
To teach all nations what of him they learned 440  
And his salvation, them who shall believe  
Baptising in the profluent stream, the sign  
Of washing them from guilt of sin to life  
Pure, and in mind prepared, if so befall,  
For death, like that which the redeemer died.  
All nations they shall teach; for from that day  
Not only to the sons of Abraham's loins  
Salvation shall be preached, but to the sons  
Of Abraham's faith wherever through the world;  
So in his seed all nations shall be blessed. 450  
Then to the heaven of heavens he shall ascend  
With victory, triumphing through the air  
Over his foes and thine; there shall surprise  
The serpent, prince of air, and drag in chains

Through all his realm, and there confounded leave;  
 Then enter into glory, and resume  
 His seat at God's right hand, exalted high  
 Above all names in heaven; and thence shall come,  
 When this world's dissolution shall be ripe,  
 With glory and power to judge both quick and dead, 460  
 To judge the unfaithful dead, but to reward  
 His faithful, and receive them into bliss,  
 Whether in heaven or earth, for then the earth  
 Shall all be paradise, far happier place  
 Than this of Eden, and far happier days.

So spake the archangel Michael, then paused,  
 As at the world's great period; and our sire  
 Replete with joy and wonder thus replied.

O goodness infinite, goodness immense!  
 That all this good of evil shall produce, 470  
 And evil turn to good; more wonderful  
 Than that which by creation first brought forth  
 Light out of darkness! full of doubt I stand,  
 Whether I should repent me now of sin  
 By me done and occasioned, or rejoice  
 Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring,  
 To God more glory, more good will to men  
 From God, and over wrath grace shall abound.

But say, if our deliverer up to heaven  
 Must reascend, what will betide the few 480  
 His faithful, left among the unfaithful herd,  
 The enemies of truth; who then shall guide  
 His people, who defend? will they not deal  
 Worse with his followers than with him they dealt?

Be sure they will, said the angel; but from heaven  
 He to his own a comforter will send,  
 The promise of the Father, who shall dwell  
 His spirit within them, and the law of faith  
 Working through love, upon their hearts shall write,  
 To guide them in all truth, and also arm 490

With spiritual armour, able to resist  
Satan's assaults, and quench his fiery darts,  
What man can do against them, not afraid,  
Though to the death, against such cruelties  
With inward consolations recompensed,  
And oft supported so as shall amaze  
Their proudest persecutors: for the spirit  
Poured first on his apostles, whom he sends  
To evangelize the nations, then on all  
Baptized, shall them with wondrous gifts endue 500  
To speak all tongues, and do all miracles,  
As did their Lord before them. Thus they win  
Great numbers of each nation to receive  
With joy the tidings brought from heaven: at length  
Their ministry performed, and race well run,  
Their doctrine and their story written left,  
They die; but in their room, as they forewarn,  
Wolves shall succeed for teachers, grievous wolves,  
Who all the sacred mysteries of heaven  
To their own vile advantages shall turn 510  
Of lucre and ambition, and the truth  
With superstitions and traditions taint,  
Left only in those written records pure,  
Though not but by the spirit understood.  
Then shall they seek to avail themselves of names,  
Places and titles, and with these to join  
Secular power, though feigning still to act  
By spiritual, to themselves appropriating  
The spirit of God, promised alike and given  
To all believers; and from that pretence, 520  
Spiritual laws by carnal power shall force  
On every conscience; laws which none shall find  
Left them enrolled, or what the spirit within  
Shall on the heart engrave. What will they then  
But force the spirit of grace itself, and bind  
His consort liberty; what, but unbuild

His living temples, built by faith to stand,  
 Their own faith not another's: for on earth  
 Who against faith and conscience can be heard  
 Infallible? yet many will presume: 530  
 Whence heavy persecution shall arise  
 On all who in the worship persevere  
 Of spirit and truth; the rest, far greater part,  
 Will deem in outward rites and specious forms  
 Religion satisfied; truth shall retire  
 Bestuck with slanderous darts, and works of faith  
 Rarely be found: so shall the world go on,  
 To good malignant, to bad men benign,  
 Under her own weight groaning till the day  
 Appear of respiration to the just, 540  
 And vengeance to the wicked, at return  
 Of him so lately promised to thy aid  
 The woman's seed, obscurely then foretold,  
 Now amplier known thy saviour and thy Lord,  
 Last in the clouds from heaven to be revealed  
 In glory of the Father, to dissolve  
 Satan with his perverted world, then raise  
 From the conflagrant mass, purged and refined,  
 New heavens, new earth, ages of endless date  
 Founded in righteousness and peace and love 550  
 To bring forth fruits joy and eternal bliss.

He ended; and thus Adam last replied.  
 How soon hath thy prediction, seer blessed,  
 Measured this transient world, the race of time,  
 Till time stand fixed: beyond is all abyss,  
 Eternity, whose end no eye can reach.  
 Greatly instructed I shall hence depart,  
 Greatly in peace of thought, and have my fill  
 Of knowledge, what this vessel can contain;  
 Beyond which was my folly to aspire. 560  
 Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,  
 And love with fear the only God, to walk

As in presence, ever to observe  
His providence, and on him sole depend,  
Merciful over all his works, with good  
Still overcoming evil, and by small  
Accomplishing great things, by things deemed weak  
Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise  
By simply meek; that suffering for truth's sake  
Is fortitude to highest victory, 570  
And to the faithful death the gate of life;  
Taught this by his example whom I now  
Acknowledge my redeemer ever blessed.

To whom thus also the angel last replied:  
This having learned, thou hast attained the sum  
Of wisdom; hope no higher, though all the stars  
Thou knew'st by name, and all the ethereal powers,  
All secrets of the deep, all nature's works,  
Or works of God in heaven, air, earth, or sea,  
And all the riches of this world enjoyed'st, 580  
And all the rule, one empire; only add  
Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add faith,  
Add virtue, patience, temperance, add love,  
By name to come called Charity, the soul  
Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath  
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess  
A paradise within thee, happier far.  
Let us descend now therefore from this top  
Of speculation; for the hour precise  
Exacts our parting hence; and see the guards, 590  
By me encamped on yonder hill, expect  
Their motion, at whose front a flaming sword,  
In signal of remove, waves fiercely round;  
We may no longer stay: go, waken Eve;  
Her also I with gentle dreams have calmed  
Portending good, and all her spirits composed  
To meek submission: thou at season fit  
Let her with thee partake what thou has heard,

Chiefly what may concern her faith to know,  
 The great deliverance by her seed to come 600  
 (For by the woman's seed) on all mankind.  
 That ye may live, which will be many days,  
 Both in one faith unanimous though sad,  
 With cause for evils past, yet much more cheered  
 With meditation on the happy end.

He ended, and they both descend the hill;  
 Descended, Adam to the bower where Eve  
 Lay sleeping ran before, but found her waked;  
 And thus with words not sad she him received.

Whence thou return'st, and whither went'st, I know; 610  
 For God is also in sleep, and dreams advise,  
 Which he hath sent propitious, some great good  
 Presaging, since with sorrow and heart's distress  
 Wearied I fell asleep: but now lead on;  
 In me is no delay; with thee to go,  
 Is to stay here; without thee here to stay,  
 Is to go hence unwilling; thou to me  
 Art all things under heaven, all places thou,  
 Who for my wilful crime art banished hence.  
 This further consolation yet secure 620  
 I carry hence; though all by me is lost,  
 Such favour I unworthy am vouchsafed,  
 By me the promised seed shall all restore.

So spake our mother Eve, and Adam heard  
 Well pleased, but answered not; for now too nigh  
 The archangel stood, and from the other hill  
 To their fixed station, all in bright array  
 The cherubim descended; on the ground  
 Gliding meteorous, as evening mist  
 Risen from a river o'er the marish glides, 630  
 And gathers ground fast at the labourer's heel  
 Homeward returning. High in front advanced,  
 The brandished sword of God before them blazed  
 Fierce as a comet; which with torrid heat,

And vapour as the Lybian air adust,  
Began to parch that temperate clime; whereat  
In either hand the hastening angel caught  
Our lingering parents, and to the eastern gate  
Led them direct, and down the cliff as fast  
To the subjected plain; then disappeared. 640  
They looking back, all the eastern side beheld  
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,  
Waved over by that flaming brand, the gate  
With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms:  
Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;  
The world was all before them, where to choose  
Their place of rest, and providence their guide:  
They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way.



## CHAPTER 34

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# JOHN BUNYAN

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ROBERT G. COLLMER

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY Puritanism offers a remarkable spectrum of political and religious diversity. Specifically, Monica Furlong (1975: 17) asserted that Puritanism produced 'two geniuses in the persons of John Milton and John Bunyan'. The complexity of thought and range of knowledge possessed by John Milton stand in sharp contrast to the apparent simplicity and narrowness of view of John Bunyan. Yet the concern of both these visionaries was Christian theology as applied to their worlds—one primarily political, the other personal. For Milton's thought we have, beyond the great poems—*Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*—the political writings and the systematic theology, unpublished until after his death, *De Doctrina Christiana*. From Bunyan, who wrote some sixty works (all but twelve published during his life), we have his imaginative books—*The Pilgrim's Progress* (PPI, PPII), *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (BM), and *The Holy War* (HW)—plus didactic works, his spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (GA), his systematic theology, *A Confession of my Faith* and *A Reason of my Practice* (CR), and other doctrinal writings. About Milton as a thinker on religious matters there is no doubt concerning his capacity, although the shape of his thoughts has been variously construed. Bunyan as a thinker deserves more attention.

Both writers cast much of their theology in literary forms. For Milton the patterns were set by classical or ancient standards, such as the epic, Greek drama, and Pauline epistolary style. Bunyan presents a different case. His theology is firmly Bible-based: as Christopher Hill (1989: 169) asserts, 'The Bible is Bunyan's sheet-anchor, his defense against despair and atheism. He would have been lost if he had abandoned it.' But it is the Bible refracted through Bunyan's experience, and therefore tracing the content and form of his writings means beginning with Bunyan's life: his theology is his life. His literary creations were not abstractions but sprang from problems and

successes in his immediate experience or in the experience of persons with whom he associated.

A survey of Bunyan's early life reveals the cultural impediments he had to overcome. Born in 1628 at Elstow, a village near Bedford in southern England, he came, as he wrote in *GA*, from a father's household 'of that rank that is meanest, and most despised of all the families in the Land' (p. 7). Even discounting the temptation among some persons who have achieved prominence to stress their pitiable origins, one concedes that Bunyan lacked the advantages of a son born into a prosperous family such as that of Milton. As he explains in *GA* (*ibid.*), encouraged by his parents, his early education in a school sufficed for him to learn to read and write, though 'to my shame I confess, I did soon loose [*sic*] that little I learned'.

His first encounter with the world beyond Bedford came when he was conscripted into the army on the Parliamentary side in late 1644; he served until 1646. As a young man in Bedford, he let 'loose the reins to my lusts' and 'was the very ringleader of all the Youth that kept me company, into all manner of vice and ungodliness' (*GA* 9). This way of life prevailed until his marriage (his wife's name is not recorded) in about 1649. Although he and his wife had not 'so much household-stuff as a Dish or Spoon betwixt us both' (*GA* 10), she did bring as dowry two popular religious books—Arthur Dent's *The Plain Mans Path-way to Heaven* and Bishop Lewis Bayly's *The Practice of Piety*. From this marriage came three daughters, including blind Mary, and a son. He pursued the trade of a tinker, or brazier, an itinerant repairer of pots and pans, through much of his life, for his (second) wife, Elizabeth, described him in 1660 as a 'Tinker, and a poor man' (*A Relation of My Imprisonment* 132).

As a child he suffered what he called 'terrible dreams', which he claimed came from God because of his 'cursing, swearing, lying and blaspheming the holy Name of God' (*GA* 8). He feared divine judgement and the torment of hell with devils and fiends. At the age of 9 or 10, while he was in his 'many sports and childish vanities', he was 'cast down and afflicted mentally'. Periods of depression entered Bunyan's mind throughout his life.

In the middle of the 1650s Bunyan experienced temporary relief from his anxieties. He recorded the end of his struggles: 'Now did my chains fall off my Legs indeed, I was loosed from my affliction and irons, my temptations also fled away: so that from that time those dreadful Scriptures of God left off to trouble me; now went I also home rejoicing, for the grace and love of God' (*GA* 74). In 1655 he joined the 'visible saints' in the Bedford church, which became known as Bedford Meeting and in the middle of that decade, with no university training and no authorization beyond the local church group, Bunyan began to preach, for in 1656 on the title-page of a lengthy tract he described himself as 'By the grace of God, Preacher of the Gospel of his dear son'.

In 1660 his troubles with the authorities of the restored monarchy and the re-establishment of the Church of England erupted. He was arrested for attending a conventicle and preaching without a licence near Bedford. He remained in prison in Bedford until 1672 with infrequent periods of liberty. In 1676–7 he was reincarcerated for about six months. Richard L. Greaves (2002: 494) estimated that

he 'spent more time in prison than almost any other nonconformist'. Had he compromised he would not have undergone what he called 'above eleven years imprisonment . . . this tedious tract of time'.

After his release from prison he continued as pastor of the church in Bedford, but increasingly he honed his skills in writing. It is widely accepted by historians that during his second, six-month imprisonment he wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part One. This was followed by his other three well-known imaginative books. Didactic treatises and a variety of works, including a book for boys and girls to teach them morality through the use of emblems as well as a guide for spelling, followed. Though continuing his ministry in Bedford and the surrounding villages, he frequently journeyed to London, where he engaged printers for his books and preached in nonconformist halls. Many of his works contain digests of sermons.

Tradition holds that he died as a consequence of having been drenched during a ride by horse to minister to a quarrelling son and father. He died in London and is buried in Bunhill Fields, the cemetery occupied by prominent dissenters. Bunyan's simplicity within greatness is reflected by the entry in the Bedford church book: 'wednesday the 4<sup>th</sup> of septembr was kept in prayre huemilyation for this heavy stroak upon us [,] the death of Bro. Bunyan'. It was the year 1688; he was 60 years, the same number of years as the number of books he wrote.

Always for Bunyan the Bible was his basic guide for putting experience into word. The title-page for *PPI* quotes Hosea 12: 10: 'I have used Similitudes'. He proclaimed a precedent for his work in the Holy Scripture, but there were other books with which he was familiar. For example, he may have structured the dialogues he employed in *PP* after Dent. Lewis Bayly offered much of the preparation for dying in the medieval *ars moriendi* genre, which controls the ultimate goal of *BM*. Beyond these two books lies one that Bunyan claimed he encountered in an old copy, Martin Luther's commentary on the book of Galatians, where Bunyan said, 'I found my condition in his [Luther's] experience, so largely and profoundly handled, as if his Book had been written out of my heart' (*GA* 43). This dense book in a modern edition of more than five hundred pages reveals a capability for concentration in Bunyan's mind beyond that of an ordinary autodidact. In his first imprisonment he purchased John Foxe's lengthy work usually entitled *Book of Martyrs* (original, 1563). Though he disclaimed 'Duncist Sophistry', he appeared to have read Bible commentaries, for example, on the book of Revelation, and books by Ranters and Fifth Monarchists. He mentioned the beliefs of Islam though he did not claim to have read the Koran. More imaginative reading from before his conversion lingered in his mind, for he confessed (in *A Few Sighs from Hell*; 1980: 333) that he used to enjoy 'a Ballad, a Newsbook, George on Horseback, or Bevis of Southhampton . . . some book that teaches curious arts, that tells of old fables'. The exploits of knights that entertained him in his youth insinuated into his mature imaginative creations.

A caveat arises concerning the Bible and Bunyan's style. A person of one book is often decried as limited in knowledge and vision, but that objection does not always apply to the Bible. First, the Bible is not just one book; it is a library of books, for it contains history, myth, law, drama, poetry, parables, tales, and nature descriptions

among other genres. Bunyan quoted from the King James and the Geneva Bibles, both of which included the Apocrypha, which he also mentions with respect. In the case of the Geneva Bible the illustrations accompanying the text expand the imagination. Second, a specific vitality and immediacy distinguished Bunyan's method of Bible reading. Literally it spoke inwardly to him. In *GA* when the Bible became, as he said, 'precious', the encounter spawned active verbs—a scripture 'on me did then fasten with conviction'; 'This Scripture did then trample all my desires'; 'it was so fresh . . . that it was if it talked with me'; 'these words broke upon my mind'; 'This Scripture made me faint and fear, yet it kindled fire in my soul'; 'wo be to him against whom the Scriptures bend themselves'. For Bunyan, words, particularly what he considered the words of God, bound into the Bible, became living beings.

The document from which the above quotations came is, of course, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. This book, published in 1666 during Bunyan's long imprisonment, has provoked a great deal of critical comment, for instance, from William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). James labelled it an autobiography. From *GA* James (1928: 157) deduced that Bunyan 'was a typical case of the psychopathic temperament, sensitive of conscience to a diseased degree, beset by doubts, fears, and insistent ideas, and a victim of verbal automatisms, both motor and sensory'. But the work proceeds not from a desire to write a story of the author's life, nor from the hope to write another Puritan self-examination. It is not a record of searching, in Calvinistic terms, to determine whether he was among the Elect. It is dedicated, Bunyan says in the preface, 'to those whom God hath counted him worthy to beget to Faith, by his Ministry in the Word'. He goes on to remind his church members, 'I stick between the Teeth of the Lyons in the wilderness'—the gaol in Bedford.

The usual reaction of a person imprisoned and, according to his own opinion, unjustly, is to rail against the legal system. Bunyan did not do this, but he wrote a report, *A Relation of the imprisonment of Mr. John Bunyan. . . . written by Himself*. This contains, mostly as dialogue, the record of the charges and responses involving Bunyan. It includes the report of Elizabeth's oral defence of her husband before the judges in the Swan Chamber in Bedford. It was published separately in 1665, one year before *GA*. *Grace Abounding* comes from a purpose Bunyan later (1672) explained in *CR*, which is the closest he came to writing a systematic theology. Most of Bunyan's thinking on theology came in fragments, often products of controversies with other religious thinkers or cases of conscience from immediate questions of faith and/or practice. *A Confession* is no exception because it starts by telling the (non-specific) reader, 'Sir, I Marvail not that both your self, and others do think my long Imprisonment strange (or rather strangely of me for the sake of that) for verily I should also have done it my self, had not the Holy Ghost long since forbidden me' (*CR* 135). He defined the subject as no 'other doctrine or practice, then what I held, professed, and preached when apprehended, and cast in Prison' (*ibid.*). So to understand *GA* one should study what Bunyan in *CR* claimed he had believed.

He cloaked his doctrinal positions in a narrative, so *GA* is a theological work told in story form, Bunyan's own story. Yet the emphasis is not on Bunyan except as

experience reveals 'grace abounding'. Since he wrote for his congregants, he set forth the events of his conversion and union with the Bedford 'visible saints'. It was a common practice in nonconformist fellowships for aspiring members to stand before the congregation and tell of their spiritual journey. In *CR* (165) he asserted that 'by the word of faith and of good works; moral duties Gospellized; we ought to judge of the fitness of members... to fellowship... a confession of this by word and life, makes this inward circumcision visible'.

He wrote it as an apology for his life leading up to his imprisonment in order to draw the reader into taking on the same experience. It is a mistake to assume that it is within the long line of autobiographies with their often self-serving motives. It is then different from, for example, St Augustine's *Confessions*, for it is directed to those he calls his 'Children... for your further edifying and building up in Faith and Holiness, &, yet that you may see my Soul hath fatherly care and desire after your spiritual and everlasting welfare' (*ibid.* 3). The recounting of events from Bunyan's life is selective, not definitive. Significant details are missing, for example, the name of his first wife.

To sustain the reader's interest, Bunyan fashioned events in his life that would attract a reader. The years between 1640 and 1670 in England contained much military activity, so Bunyan fashioned a bellicose tone to his book. *Grace Abounding*, with its recounting of mental battles to reveal the faith inside Christian-Bunyan and its emphasizing conduct as a precondition for entrance into the communion of saints, characterized his life. Nowhere in *GA* does he describe a baptismal act or the Lord's Supper, both ordinances in the Bedford group. For him 'Water baptism and the supper of the Lord' are 'not the fundamentals of our Christianity; nor grounds or rule to communion with Saints: servants they are, and our mystical Ministers, to teach and instruct us, in the most weighty matters of the kingdom of God' (*CR* 160). *Grace Abounding* is a confession of faith and morals directed towards those members of his congregation who might have joined after he entered the group, or persons with doubts of his beliefs resulting from his years of gaol time. It is also a tract to persuade outsiders to emulate what he later called his pilgrimage. It is a literary re-creation of Bunyan's beliefs and practice. It does not show what Alfred Noyes (1928: 105) called 'a congenital defect of the mind', but a description, as Bunyan recalled or constructed, of what God's grace did through him that led him into the communion of the saints in this world with the anticipation of entrance into the Celestial City. But before Bunyan arrived at the religious position sustaining *GA*, he had encountered other expressions of belief. Two are extensively set forth in *GA*; a third is briefly mentioned.

He explained that early in his pursuit of belief, 'I met with some *Ranters* books, that were put forth by some of our Country men; which Books were also highly in esteem by several old Professors [persons who only claimed to be religious]' (*GA* 18). The *Ranters* were an obscure, plebeian cluster of persons who emerged in England about 1649 and flourished for three or four years. They were not an organized sect; maybe, as one historian, J. C. Davis (1986), insisted, they did not exist but were a creation of deviant 'yellow-journalist' writers. Marxist critics from 1970 on, such as

A. L. Morton (1970) and Christopher Hill, praised them for their anti-establishment views. Most knowledge of them comes from detractors. Their supposed ideas sprang from a sort of pantheism, which meant that God was in everyone and everything, so sin did not exist independently of persons created by God; hence, all actions are permitted. It was an extreme antinomianism, that is, opposition to all rules, including personal and civil law. Blasphemy, adultery, and the belief that Christ had come to free them from societal controls, prevailed. The Ranter whom Bunyan met denied that 'there was a God, Angel, or Spirit, and would laugh at all exhortations to sobriety' (ibid. 18). Without arguing with him, Bunyan, 'abominating those principles, left his company forth with' (ibid. 19). Ranterism is for him encapsulated in one person.

Another group was the Quakers, whom he encountered after the Ranters and against whom he continued to write polemics from the 1650s through the 1680s. For Bunyan the movement was so pervasive that he did not summarize it within one person as he did for Ranterism. Geoffrey F. Nuttall's *Studies in Christian Enthusiasm: Illustrated from Early Quakerism* (1948), though written fifty years ago, is still a solid introduction. The first of Bunyan's works, *Some Gospel-truths Opened*, opposed the Quakers and from *GA* a reader can deduce Bunyan's concept of Quakerism as follows: The Bible is not the Word of God, but the Spirit of God dwells in every person; Christ's blood and body are within the saints; there will be no resurrection of the bodies of the dead; the Jesus who died on the cross did not ascend into heaven and will not return to earth in a Second Coming.

He dealt hurriedly at one point in his spiritual report with other, non-Christian religions and their followers. In *GA* (33) he claimed the Devil, the Tempter, raised a question: 'How can you tell but that the Turks had as good Scriptures to prove their *Mahomet*, as the Saviour, as we have to prove our *Jesus* is; and could I think that so many ten thousands in so many Countreys and kingdoms, should be without the knowledge of the right way to Heaven . . .?' He never answered that question: 'Onely by the distaste that they [such questions] gave unto my spirit, I felt there was something in me that refused to embrace them' (ibid. 34). Bunyan attempted no rational argument. Little logic appears in *GA*, for the work was never intended for a group either antagonistic or neutral. It was the explanation of the way God's grace had dealt with him and everything he said came from his position as a sort of father writing to his children.

The second major work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the book on which rests his prominence, the most widely translated book in the world written originally in English, appeared in 1678 though it may have been written much earlier. Some critics place its composition during the second imprisonment of 1676–7 though others, such as Hill and Greaves (2002: 638), think it was composed earlier, maybe as early as 1668. Drawing upon the medieval traditions of allegory, its target readership was defined in the author's apologia as persons not on a spiritual journey ('The Book will make a Travailer of thee'), people who seek out oddities ('Art thou for something rare and profitable?'), forgetful ones ('Art thou forgetful?'), bored people ('. . . may the minds of listless affect'), melancholics ('Would'st thou divert thy self from Melancholy?'),

lovers of riddles ('Would'st thou read Riddles?'), and persons who seek to learn about themselves ('Would'st read thy self, and read thou know'st not what | And yet know whether thou art blest or not | By reading the same lines?'). He had earlier in this defence appealed to the precedent in the Bible of 'Types, Shadows and Metaphors'. He cited the style of writing in dialogue ('...men [as high as Trees] will write | Dialogue-wise') alluding possibly to Dent. The final lines of the apology ask the reader to 'Lay my Book, thy Head and Heart together'. The purpose was to entice by mental tricks, if you will, to effect a change in the heart.

He chose a modality as venerable as Homer's *Odyssey* (surely unknown to him), with places as familiar as paths, ditches, sloughs, big houses, and hills of Bedfordshire, in language of proverbs and everyday, colloquial speech, with adventures echoic of knightly adventures from his boyhood reading. Paradoxically, however, he chose 'progress', a word associated with royalty (we remember T. S. Eliot's Prufrock 'could swell a progress'). Before Bunyan's time and not necessarily related to his example, 'progress' did not mean an upward advance. The modern connotation emerged in the eighteenth century. He peopled his book with types similar to the moods or states of being (a character Hopeful) and thoughts (Atheist) he had set out for his congregation in *GA*. The underlying theology is clearly Calvinist.

The story of *PP* is well known. A man, Graceless, with a burden on his back, flees from his family, home, and the City of Destruction to begin a journey. A spectrum of characters, many of whom are patently transparent to the reader though not always to Christian (who undergoes a name change after meeting with Evangelist), meet him along the road. They vary from the naïve (Pliable), through the deceptive (Mr Worldly Wiseman), to the monstrous (Apollyon, so unforgettably illustrated by William Blake), including a sexual seductive (Wanton, only described by Faithful), all the inhabitants of Vanity Fair, especially the unjust Lord Hategood and the biased jurors, the grotesque Giant Despair and his wife, Diffidence (who is an addition by Bunyan in the second edition). As the story unfolds, the deceivers and violent begin to recede though Christian's struggles nevertheless persist even to the point of death.

The last person to accompany Christian and his companion Hopeful (who replaces the martyred Faithful at Vanity Fair), and who stays with them until the River of Death, is Ignorance. He is the most interesting character who is wrong. He is sophisticated in religious language, believes in God and Jesus, but, according to Christian, lacks saving faith, and he ends by being bound hand and foot by Shining Ones and cast into hell. Probably many of the readers of *PP*, not terrified into acceptance of Bunyan's message, found themselves like Ignorance, not knowing the truth as Bunyan defined it. This character clearly stands for the Anglican Latitudinarian of the Restoration Period. On the other hand, of the characters with goodness there are, besides Evangelist, the Interpreter, the Porter, the women Discretion, Prudence, Piety, and Charity, Faithful (an example of a fellow from the gathered church), then Hopeful, the shepherds, and the Shining Ones who welcome travellers into the Celestial City.

Bunyan's next foray into a narrative with a moral was *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* which came in 1680 two years after *PP*. Abandoning the allegorical

form of the earlier work, it portrays the obverse of the man who seeks the Celestial City. The editors of this work in the Oxford Edition, James F. Forrest and Roger Sharrock, classify it as a 'Puritan rogue novel' rather than an allegory. The nineteenth-century editor of Bunyan's works, George Offor, apologized for its raciness calling it 'the only work proceeding from the prolific pen and fertile imagination of Bunyan, in which he uses terms that, in this delicate and refined age, may give offence'.

The letter to the Courteous Reader is one of the longest introductions that Bunyan affixed to any of his books, revealing the pains to which he went to make his purpose clear and to abort objections. The work falls into a large field called moral theology, which concerns the application of dogma to the human condition. The thesis is the following: 'If it was a transgression of Old, for a man to wear a Womans Apparel, surely it is a transgression now for a sinner to wear a Christian Profession for a Cloak. Wolves in Sheeps Clothing swarm in England this day. Wolves both as to Doctrine, and as to practice too' (*BM* 10). The doctrine and practice from *CR* of 1672 reappear. In the quotation above he continues, 'Some men make a Profession [of faith], I doubt [i.e. fear], on purpose that they may twist themselves into a Trade, and thence into an Estate; yea, and if need be, into an Estate Knavishly, by the ruin of their Neighbour; let such take heed, for those that do such things have the greater damnation' (*BM* 10). Bunyan intended to attack persons who use religion to gain respectability and attain their position by dealing dishonestly in commerce. He claimed that he had witnessed the conduct he describes: 'all the things I discourse of, I mean as to matter of fact, have been acted upon the stage of this World, even many times before mine eyes' (*BM* 1). He admonishes the immediate reader: 'Christian, a Profession according to the Gospel, is, in these dayes, a rare thing' (*BM* 10).

Like *PP*, the book is written in dialogue—literally, with slight background or description—between two persons, Wiseman (Bunyan's voice) and Attentive (like Bunyan's ideal congregant) as they discuss the life and death of Badman, who has recently died. Wiseman says, 'I will tell you a story. When I was in prison, there came a woman to me that was under a great deal of trouble' (*BM* 48). The men talk from morning until evening. Into the recounting of the events of his life enter other stories to drive a point which serve also to relieve the downward spiral of Badman's conduct. They reflect the manners in Bunyan's congregation and community. Six of these ancillary stories are drawn from Samuel Clarke's *A Mirrour or Looking-Glass for both Saints and Sinners* (second edition, 1654).

Wiseman tells of Badman's life in order to satisfy Attentive's major interest, namely, the manner of his death. Though Badman's parents were godly, he was 'very *bad*, given to lying and stealing from gardens and orchards: 'he swarmed with sins, even as a Begger does with Vermin, and that when he was but a Boy' (*BM* 24). 'He reckoned himself a mans Fellow, when he had learnt to Swear and Curse boldly' (*BM* 27). Wiseman cites examples of cursing—'God-damme, God perish me, or the like' (*BM* 30). His father apprenticed him to a 'very devout person; one that frequented the best Soul-means . . . Very meek and merciful', who did not 'overdrive young *Badman* in business' (*BM* 38). But the boy fell under the influence of 'three young Villains', who taught him uncleanness (Bunyan's word for sexual looseness,



sometimes a term for syphilis), drunkenness, and stealing from his master. Wiseman describes the consequences of going with whores, where 'often follows this foul sin, *the foul Disease*, now called by us the *Pox*' (*BM* 51). After he had completed his apprenticeship ('I think he had a Bastard laid to his charge before he came out of his time' (*BM* 61), Badman secured two hundred pounds from his father and set himself up in business. But he managed his affairs poorly and soon found himself in his shop with nothing with which to pay his creditors.

Badman then decides to look for a rich, devout wife. Wiseman describes how his companions counselled him to appear religious. This section is a parallel of the Theophrastian character of the spuriously pious pretender. (We might recall Milton's attack in *Areopagitica* on the man of business who divorces his religion from his practice.) This is a central point of *BM*. The girl was without father and mother and easily susceptible to Badman's wiles, who claimed he had plenty of money and sought only an 'honest and godly wife' (*BM* 67). After marrying he soon returned to his old haunts and habits, kept his wife from her religious activities, and consumed her money. His conduct 'killed her in time, yea it was all the time a killing of her' (*BM* 71). Usually she gave in to his demand to avoid religious gatherings, but she once took a stand and told him she was going to a meeting. At this point he 'sware . . . that if she did go, he would make both her, and all her damnable Brotherhood (for so he was pleased to call them) to repent their coming thither . . . he meant, he would turn Informer, and so either weary out those that she loved, from meeting together to Worship God; or make them pay dearly for their so doing; the which if he did, he knew it would vex every vein of her tender heart' (*BM* 79). Wiseman calls the hidden church group, harassed by informers, 'Meeters'.

Wiseman describes Badman's business practices—'the new engine of breaking [going into bankruptcy to avoid paying creditors]', using deceitful weights and measures, double-billing his customers, extorting, 'griping and grinding the face of the poor', domineering by appearance, and being proud. Bunyan, through the voice of Wiseman, belabours certain 'religious' persons, particularly women, 'for going with their Bulls-foretops [hair piled up in front of the head], with their naked shoulders, and Paps hanging out like a Cows bag' (*BM* 125).

Badman has a temporary change of heart. Having drunk most of the day and into the night at an ale-house, he falls off his horse and breaks his leg. In bed he regrets his mode of life, asks for the prayers of the devout neighbours, and takes thought of his wife and child. But after recovery he regresses to his old ways. Wiseman concludes, '[H]ence usually is sick-bed Repentance, and the matter of it: To wit, to be saved from Hell, and from Death, and that God will restore again to health till they mend . . . this kind of Repentance is by God compared to the howling of a dog' (*BM* 139–40). His pseudo conversion 'broke her [his wife's] heart, it was a worse disappointment to her than the cheat that he gave her in marriage . . . she dyed bravely' (*BM* 140–1).

He soon remarried, but this wife was very different. She had forced him to marry after he had promised to do so while drunk. Their life together was contentious, 'for their railing, and cursing, and swearing ended not in words: They would fight and fly at each other, and that like Cats and Dogs' (*BM* 146).

Indeed, the last years of Badman's life are miserable and poverty stricken. Since Bunyan entitled his book like the old stories, he spends a long time on the process of dying and not just the life, of Badman. One-eighth of the book depicts this process. Badman's physical condition 'was dropsical, he was consumptive, he was surfeited, was gouty, and, as some say, he had a tang of the Pox in his bowels' (*BM* 148). Unlike Christian in *PPI*, he shows no troubled conscience and Wiseman sums up his passing as follows: 'As quietly as a Lamb. There seemed not to be in it, to standers by, so much as a strong struggle of Nature: and for his Mind, it seemed to be wholly at quiet' (*BM* 157). Bunyan opposed the long-established criterion that as a tree falls, so does it lie; that is, the manner of dying reveals the true quality of a person's conduct, hence, his or her eternal destiny: 'The opinion of the common people concerning this kind of dying, is frivolous and vain; for Mr. *Badman* died like a Lamb or as they call it, like a *Chrisom* child' (*BM* 165). (Recall that Falstaff died like a *Chrisom* child.) Appearances, however, are not necessarily what they seem.

In *BM* more obviously than in any other of his major works, Bunyan drew either directly or indirectly on a literary genre exemplified as far back as Chaucer's 'Pardoner's Tale', that is the exemplum. The difference, however, is that instead of being a single, concentrated story leading to a moral lesson, *BM* is a string of stories from the life of one man. Thus his methods in cheating in business appear in detail, each segment being an independent unit. The problems of his second marriage are set forth as a story that could stand by itself. The reader's interest is held in abeyance by being continually teased into waiting for another episode. In the progression downward many events are presented as small short stories. This book, though little read in modern times, shows Bunyan in a practical posture, concerned for honesty in economic dealings, the relationship between religion and morality, the conduct of husbands towards their wives, and the difficulty of judging people from externals only. It is a lively, earthy, and entertaining work.

*The Holy War*, published two years later in 1682, is considered by some critics his best imaginative work apart from *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Lord Macaulay asserted that, were it not for that, it would have been the 'best allegory that ever was written'. Some phrases from this book have become familiar in English, for instance, 'The men that turn the World upside down' (*HW* 40, originally biblical), 'amazing grace' (*HW* 45, better known later from John Newton's hymn), 'One word more' (*HW* 112, the title of a Robert Browning poem). Of archetypal patterns, *PPI* is the journey while *HW* is the siege of a city, for, as Christopher Hill (1989: 252) has said, Bunyan wrote his *Odyssey* first: 'his *Iliad* proved much more difficult'. Bunyan here was drawing upon his experience as a soldier over thirty years before.

At least three levels of allegory control *HW*—(1) cosmology, including Christian history; (2) personal history (more uses of 'I was there' than in any other preface); (3) seventeenth-century English history. Elements of the political struggles within Bedford and Bedfordshire are present, and even hints of a future millenarian, or chiliastic, perfect world appear.

The full title gives the digest, a holy war—*made by Shaddai upon Diabolus, For the Regaining of the Metropolis of the World. Or, the Losing and Taking Again of the Town*

of *Mansoul*. It is a war made by God the Father (Shaddai) against Satan (Diabolus) and his army, and is an account of the retaking of the city of the soul (Mansoul, which is feminine) which had been occupied by Satanic forces. It includes the fall of humanity from Edenic bliss through the dealings of God with Devil-controlled mankind until the arrival of the Son of God, Emanuel (God with us in the person of Jesus Christ). It shows that on a cosmological scale grace acts against evil to rescue humanity: on a personal level, it describes Bunyan's conflicts from *GA*.

As mentioned above, multiple levels of allegory exist, but they are imposed from the analysis by the reader, not from Bunyan's own preface, 'To the Reader'. He does, however, admit his work is 'My riddle', but he entices the reader to look at his notes 'In the window', that is, in marginalia. In no other work did Bunyan call attention to his marginalia though most of his books carried these digests, biblical citations, sometimes a hand pointing to a passage in the text. Recent scholarship has stressed the physical appearance of the pages of Bunyan's books. *The Holy War* is a spiritual autobiography with military imagery, a self-centred work that avoids discussion of large theological issues: 'This famous Town of *Mansoul* had five gates, in at which to come, out at which to go, and these were made likewise answerable to the Walls; to wit, *Impregnable*, and such as could never be opened, nor forced but by the will and leave of those within' (*HW* 8-9). The only theological urgency lies in the appeal of 'pastoral Arminianism'.

The first movement of the war occurs when the giant Diabolus and his minions lay siege to Mansoul. Captain Resistance is killed, and Diabolonians occupy the town. The method of control, hence of the soul of Everyman, has parallels with the political practices of 'new modelling' (*HW* 18), a loaded term in seventeenth-century England (recall the New Model Army of the Cromwellians). Some opposition to Diabolus is asserted by Mr Recorder, conscience, but he is old and 'debauched', while a high-born person, Willbewill, is seduced by the power bestowed upon him by Diabolus and thus becomes his spokesman.

The news of the occupation of Mansoul by Diabolus reaches the King of the Universe, Shaddai, and his Son, Emanuel, the latter 'a Sweet and comly person, and one that had alwayes great affection for those that were in affliction, but one that had mortal enmity against *Diabolus*, because he was designed for it, and because he sought his Crown and Dignity' (*HW* 29). The van of the army is assembled, of which the captain is Boanerges (representing the thundering preachers of Bunyan's time), while the bulk of the army is led by Emanuel, with forty-four battering rams and twelve slings (the twelve apostles) to hurl stones. The town is entered and Diabolus is taken prisoner; the people of Mansoul who had followed Diabolus, instead of being executed, are forgiven and treated well, even being invited to a celebration with food, music, and entertainment. The leaders of the Diabolonians are tried in court—reminiscent of the trial in *Vanity Fair*, but with honest judges and juries, and the leaders are crucified. Diabolus, not put on trial, is humiliated and driven out of the city 'to inherit the parched places in a salt land, seeking rest but finding none' (*HW* 93). Bunyan had to let the antagonist free in order to continue the tale of the fights that would ensue inside Mansoul even

during the reign of the Son and thus he revealed his own struggles that irresistible grace against the Adamic man did not obliterate.

Emanuel gives the city a new charter (the New Testament) and sets up a chief officer, Mr Gods Peace. Temporarily there is nothing but 'harmony, quietness, joy and health' (*HW* 150). It lasts one summer. Mr Carnal Security, partially a Diabolonian, 'a busie man', rises in influence. About this time a plague sweeps through Mansoul—a possible allusion to the plague of 1665, maybe an illness in Bunyan's own life. In Mansoul there lurk in dark places Diabolonians who establish contact with Diabolus and his army outside. The leaders in Mansoul decide to make a night sally into Diabolus's army, but the attack fails. Diabolus retaliates with a night attack and retakes the city, reducing it to a 'den of Dragons, an emblem of Hell, and a place of total darkness' (*HW* 204). Many of the inhabitants oppose Diabolus, and for two and a half years Mansoul is a cauldron of strife. A petition is sent to Emanuel to rescue the city; he comes again and initially defeats the army of Diabolus. But Diabolus enlists a new army of twenty-five thousand soldiers (ten thousand Doubters with fifteen thousand 'Bloodmen') to lay siege to Mansoul. The Bloodmen are shown to be 'chicken-hearted' and captives are taken before Emanuel to be judged. Several Doubters are tried before judges and one particular Doubter is condemned to death; he is Election-doubter. Bunyan commented, 'To question Election is to overthrow a great Doctrine of the Gospel . . . by the best of laws he [Election-doubter] must die' (*HW* 240–1). The author's Calvinism shows here at its most harsh.

The allegory of *The Holy War* attracts the devotee of military events and it documents Bunyan's faith and experience in a fast-moving narrative. In a vindication of his 'Pilgrim', a poem appended to *HW*, Bunyan rebuts the rumour that *PPI* was not written by himself—'Some say that *Pilgrims Progress* is not mine.' Indeed, he affirms:

It came from mine own heart, so to my head,  
And thence into my fingers trickled. (*HW* 274)

In 1664 he published the second part of *PP* and again referred to pretenders to his work:

'Tis true, some have of late, to Counterfeit  
My Pilgrim, to their own, my title set.

The Apology at the beginning of *PPII* contains Bunyan's most extensive presentation of his literary method. He denounces the opposers of *PPI* who faulted him for using excessive humour, for writing too abstractly, for obscuring truth in dark images, for writing a romance (a novel). He relies on the popularity of the first part in various lands and in different social levels, and with both men and women, and he vindicates his status as an author through the wide acceptance of his writing about the pilgrim.

The story of *PPII* features Christian's wife, Christiana, and her four sons. Though the narrative describes many places traversed by Christian, it carries a unique emphasis. Instead of one person who leaves his origins to pursue a goal for himself, this part shows that the gathered church of the redeemed is a community. As Bunyan adapted his theology to his purpose, so he employed echoes of *PPI* in *PPII*.

The action begins in the City of Destruction with Christiana having a dream in which she sees her husband 'in a place of Bliss' (*PPH* 285). A visitor, Secret, tells her of an invitation from God to forgive her sins and to invite her 'to his table' (*ibid.*). Accompanied by her sons and a hired girl, Mercy, Christiana departs. They have scarcely started on their way when the women are approached by two ruffians who seek to seduce them. The women shriek and 'put themselves under those Laws that are provided for the Protection of Women' (*PPH* 299). They go to the House of the Interpreter and there see what Christian had seen, though one added vision is of a man with a muckrake (which gives us a word common in modern political discourse, 'muckraker'). Other scenes are shown, and emblems that appeal to young readers of *PPH*. At the house they are required to enter a bath of sanctification so that they will be clean for the rest of their journey. Interpreter provides his servant, Great-heart, a fighter, to accompany the band. He represents the godly minister of the congregation who explains the places where Christian walked. At the Porter's Lodge the boys recite the catechism, which Christiana had taught them. Here Mr Brisk, pretending to religion, attempts to persuade Mercy to marry him, but she refuses. Near here one of the sons, Mathew, takes ill from having eaten fruit from someone else's orchard. He is cured by a physician, Mr Skill. The boys learn spiritual lessons from sights in the natural world. Before they leave the Porter's Lodge, one of the occupants, Prudence, who has directed the boys in religious matters, plays upon a 'pair of Excellent Virginals' (*PPH* 331) and sings. Mr Great-heart, who has been temporarily absent in order to go back to the Interpreter's house, rejoins the group bringing a bottle of wine plus 'parched Corn' and a 'couple of Pomegranates' for Christiana and Mercy and figs and raisins for the boys. These may suggest participation in holy communion.

They proceed on their journey, passing through the Valley of Humiliation and the spot where Christian defeated Apollyon, and here Great-heart vanquishes the giant Maull, who used 'to spoyle young Pilgrims with Sophistry' (*PPH* 340). On their way they receive good food, especially at Gaius' Inn, with an elaborate meal of symbolic elements. Here Mercy and Mathew are married, and Gaius gives a daughter to another son of Christiana. Later the two other sons marry.

The band continues and passes through Vanity, where in some quarters religion is considered honourable because of the examples from Christian and Faithful. Towards the end of the journey they come near Doubting Castle, and a decision is made to attack Giant Despair, to free captives in the castle, and to raze it to the ground. With the four (now) young men and another pilgrim, old Honest, Great-heart kills the giant. Then follows a grotesque scene at which the group dances to the accompaniment of violin and lute. One man 'could not Dance without one Crutch in his Hand, but I promise you, he footed it well; also the Girl was to be commended, for she answered the Musick handsomely' (*PPH* 374). The entire book has much concern for music and dancing and food and drink.

They meet shepherds, who welcome them and provide the 'Feast of things easy of Digestion' (*PPH* 376). The shepherds give them gifts of things which they desired, including a large looking-glass for Mercy: 'About *Christianas* Neck, the Shepherds

put a Bracelet, and so they did about the Necks of her four Daughters, also they put Ear-rings in their Ears, and Jewels on their Fore-heads' (*PPH* 379). The group must now cross the Enchanted Ground, where a witch, Madam Bubble, is the mistress. She offers them the vanities of this life, 'laugheth Poor Pilgrims to scorn, but highly commends the Rich' (*PPH* 391). Eventually they come to rest in the Land of Beulah, where pilgrims wait to enter the Golden Gates: 'they *heard* nothing, *saw* nothing, *felt* nothing, *smelt* nothing, *tasted* nothing, that was offensive to their Stomach or Mind' (*PPH* 393). Only the water from the River of Death was slightly bitter, but it turned sweeter when it reached their stomachs.

Near the River of Death they meet Valiant-for-Truth, who is soon summoned to cross to the Celestial City, where the 'trumpets sounded for him on the other side' (*PPH* 398) And Christiana 'came forth and entered the River with a *Beck'n* of Fare well, to those that followed her to the River side' (*PPH* 395). The narrator does not tarry to see the others enter the Celestial City because they had to stay to bring willing persons to the gathered church.

*PPH* has created controversy concerning the position of women in Bunyan's thought. For instance, that the women had to be accompanied most of the way by a male warrior suggests that women on their own cannot fight spiritual battles. The softening of encounters by referring to what Christian had experienced as mere reports implies that women learn their religion through a man, particularly the husband. Yet the book also shows that the church as represented by Christiana and her sons and an outsider, Mercy, is a welcoming, nurturing, often joyful fellowship.

When Bunyan died he left a legacy of work, especially the five books described above, that has reached around the world and spoken to many classes of people. By trade a tinker, he was also an artist-thinker on profound theological matters.

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## FURTHER READING

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- As an illustration of the wide dispersion of *The Pilgrim's Progress* beyond the limits of English, Isabel Hofmeyr's *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of The Pilgrim's Progress* (Princeton University Press, 2004) with its emphasis on Africa is valuable. Several books of collected essays show diversity of approaches to Bunyan, his milieu, and his works:
- COLLMER, ROBERT G. (ed.) 1989. *Bunyan in Our Time*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press.
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## CHAPTER 20

# John Bunyan

Andrew Bradstock

“*Pilgrim’s Progress* seems to be a complete reflection of Scripture,” wrote Matthew Arnold of John Bunyan’s most famous literary work.<sup>1</sup> It was an opinion endorsed by the historian J. R. Green: “So completely had the Bible become Bunyan’s life that one feels its phrases as a natural expression of his thoughts. He had lived in the Bible til its words became his own.”<sup>2</sup> By comparison, Bunyan’s own assessment of his attitude to Scripture at the time of his coming to faith seems a touch modest: “I was then never out of the Bible, either by reading or meditation.”<sup>3</sup> This chapter explores Bunyan’s relationship with Scripture – as he defends it against those who take a lower view of its authority, as it leads him to conversion and (after much wrestling) to an assurance of his eternal salvation, as he relates it to the practice of the church, and as he explores its truth metaphorically. That biblical truth can operate at the level of metaphor gives him the courage to adopt the same approach, to powerful effect.

Bunyan’s literary output is truly phenomenal for one who enjoyed little formal education. Between 1656 and his death in 1688 he published no fewer than forty books, with another twenty appearing posthumously. Some of his better-known and most enduring works – including *Grace Abounding* and Part One of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* – were written during his two spells of imprisonment (November 1661 to March 1672 and December 1676 to June 1677), while a third of the writings published during his lifetime were penned in his last five years. What is also remarkable is the influence his better-known writings have enjoyed: most commentators suggest that, since its first publication, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* has outsold all other books excepting the Bible, having been translated into more than two hundred languages and received approbation from literary giants as diverse as Johnson, Pushkin, Kipling, and Shaw.

Yet, despite this phenomenal legacy, the literary influences on Bunyan himself may well have been few. He tells us that his (unnamed) first wife, whom he married in 1649 at the age of twenty, brought to the marital home Arthur Dent’s *Plaine Man’s Path-way to Heaven* and Bishop Lewis Bayly’s *Practice of Piety*, both of which they read together and in which Bunyan found things that were “somewhat pleasing.”<sup>4</sup> Both helped to shape his thinking at an impressionable age, the latter being particularly important in encouraging him to devote his life to religion. Bunyan also immersed himself in Martin



Luther's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* – which he knew in a translation of 1575 – and his dependence on the German reformer surfaces particularly strongly in his spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. He wrote that he preferred Luther's book before all others he had seen, excepting the Holy Bible, "as most fit for a wounded conscience" (though he seems unaware of who Luther was, supposing that he lived hundreds of years before him).<sup>5</sup> During his first period of imprisonment he bought a copy of Foxe,<sup>6</sup> which would both have deepened his appreciation of Luther and provided inspiration for the torments Christian endures on his journey. But it was the Bible, in the Geneva, Authorized, and (occasionally) Tyndale versions, that inspired, informed, and infused his thinking throughout his life: it permeates not one but each of his more than sixty writings.<sup>7</sup> In the last writing published during his lifetime, *Solomon's Temple Spiritualized*, he specifically acknowledges not having "fished in other men's waters; my Bible and Concordance are my only library in my writings."<sup>8</sup> In prison in 1665 he counted himself, having the Bible still with him, "far better furnished than if I had without it all the libraries of the two universities."<sup>9</sup>

Bunyan's emphasis on the Bible over university-learning may well have been a function of his education. Bunyan enjoyed only the most basic formal training: "my parents ... put me to school, to learn me both to read and write ... though, to my shame, I confess I did soon lose that little I learned" is how he himself describes it in *Grace Abounding*.<sup>10</sup> He acknowledges his ignorance of Aristotle and Plato and admits to having borrowed the Latin he uses in his writings.<sup>11</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that in his approach to the Bible he eschews scholarship and is concerned instead, as John Knott has suggested, "with recovering the original simplicity of the Word of God and conveying what [he] perceived to be its extraordinary power to transform the individual and society."<sup>12</sup> With others in the Reformed tradition Bunyan upheld the right of all to read and interpret Scripture for themselves, and saw positive danger in that work being left to the educated divines and what he called "some politicians" who wrote intending "to make poor ignorant people to submit to some religion and government."<sup>13</sup> If it was necessary to know Greek in order to understand the Scriptures, he asserted, "then but a very few of the poorest sort should be saved."<sup>14</sup> An admirer of Bunyan, Charles Doe, who produced an early catalogue of his writings, recorded an argument between Bunyan and "a scholar" over who had the original of Scripture. Bunyan sent the scholar packing by "proving" that the English version he had was as true a copy of the original as the other's.<sup>15</sup> Bunyan made a virtue of his humble station: the saints of God "are for the most part a poor, despised, contemptible people" he wrote.<sup>16</sup>

This triumph of the humble believer over the educated scholar reveals not only Bunyan's conviction that his own Spirit-taught understanding of Scripture is of infinitely more value than any formal education in "divinity," but also, as both Christopher Hill and E. P. Thompson have argued, his class politics. Hill, whose seminal studies of the seventeenth-century radicals from a Marxist perspective have influenced generations of scholars and activists, notes how Bunyan consistently attacked the rich and gave his unsavory characters the titles of gentlemen and lords: "more servants than masters, more tenants than landlords, will inherit the kingdom of heaven," he notes Bunyan writing in 1658, concluding that his writings "were seen to have subversive social content, whether or not he subjectively so intended."<sup>17</sup> Hill and Thompson both

stress the extraordinary influence Bunyan's works have had in the radical dissenting tradition. Hill observes, with tongue only slightly in cheek, that Bunyan's great allegory might even have become China's "earlier little red book" had the Taiping rebels succeeded, as they so nearly did, in conquering China in the mid-nineteenth century. Next to the Bible it was the favorite book of the leader of this radical Christian sect, Hong Xiuquan, who may well have made it compulsory reading in what he called the New Jerusalem, his capital city, Nanjing.<sup>18</sup> Edward Thompson famously described *The Pilgrim's Progress* as, with Paine's *Rights of Man*, "one of the two foundation texts of the English working-class movement." In Bunyan, Thompson suggests, "we find the slumbering radicalism which was preserved through the eighteenth century, and which breaks out again in the nineteenth century" – though, as Wakefield dryly notes, "the effect of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in Nonconformist homes was not to encourage revolution!"<sup>19</sup> Thomas Cooper, the Chartist leader, esteemed Bunyan's classic allegory the "book of books."

Yet, however much Thompson and Hill find Bunyan the champion of working-class rights, he betrays little interest in formal politics. Indeed, considering that he lived through one of the most turbulent, unstable, and revolutionary periods in English history, Bunyan conveys little of this political context in his writings. In the year following his birth in Bedford, 1629, Charles I began his eleven-year "personal rule," and Bunyan was just fourteen when the tension between king and Parliament spilled over into civil war. At sixteen he was conscripted into the parliamentary army and posted to the garrison at Newport Pagnell, in the neighboring county of Buckinghamshire, where he remained until demobilization in 1647. Newport Pagnell was a center of radical debate at that time, where Bunyan would undoubtedly have encountered the ideas of the Levellers, who argued that no one owed obedience to any ruler for whom they had not had the opportunity to vote; the Fifth Monarchists, with whom he may have associated at one time and who anticipated the imminent return of King Jesus in fulfillment of a prophecy in Daniel once the last great empire had ended with the execution of Charles Stuart; and perhaps also the Diggers, who believed that no land should be privately owned, the Earth having been created a "common treasury" for all. He certainly witnessed the anarchic and shockingly irreligious behavior of the Ranters because he tells us about it in *Grace Abounding*. Shortly before his demob the King surrendered, and very soon after it the rank and file of the New Model Army and its leaders debated the future shape of government in Putney church. Bunyan was twenty when the King was executed, the House of Lords abolished, and – for the only time in English history – a republic proclaimed. With the Restoration in 1660, Bunyan was convicted and imprisoned for ten years for preaching – technically for holding "unlawful meetings and conventicles" – released following a relaxation of the law, and then briefly imprisoned again some five years later. Bunyan lived to see the death of Charles II and succession of James II, and died three months before William of Orange landed at Torbay.

One can only imagine the impact that the experience of serving in Cromwell's army and openly debating hitherto proscribed subjects might have had on a young country boy like Bunyan. In the case of many of his contemporaries it led to engagement in political struggle and identification with the various movements and sects that took

advantage of the breakdown of censorship in the 1640s to come together to pursue their aims. Bunyan, however, appears not to have joined any political movement or espoused any particular cause, notwithstanding that his writings display an evident sympathy with the “common people” over against the nobility, as suggested above, and that, in later life, he fell foul of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities who found both the fact and content of his preaching profoundly subversive. His main preoccupations throughout were his preaching, writing, pastoral responsibilities, and the well-being of his own soul. He shared the millenarian expectations of most of his radical contemporaries – he wrote in 1658 that he thought the judgment day was “at hand,” the graves “ready to fly open,” and the trumpet “near the sounding”<sup>20</sup> – but unlike some did not try to read out of the Book of Revelation a schedule for the last days. He shared the widespread belief that Antichrist was the Pope.<sup>21</sup>

In his preaching and writing Bunyan certainly took on some of the key religious, if not political, conflicts of his day. He disliked, for example, the approach to Scripture adopted by many of the Quakers with whom he came into contact. Some denied outright that the Bible was the Word of God, and all put more emphasis on the “spirit within” than the plain word of Scripture. Like many mystics, Quakers lived by the dictum “the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life,” and saw little merit simply in a belief in a set of doctrines or the historicity of events as described in the Bible: it was the inner working of the Spirit, the “light within,” that changed people. Bunyan, however, though he saw a vital role for the Spirit in applying Scripture to the human heart, understood salvation to be dependent upon the literal, historical birth, death, resurrection, and second coming of Jesus of Nazareth as related in the Bible, and employed some of his most vivid prose to challenge Quakers to say whether “the very Man” who was “crucified on Mount Calvary between two thieves” is “with that very body,” within them. “What Scripture have you to prove, that Christ is, or was crucified *within* you, dead within you, risen within you, and ascended within you?” he asks in *Some Gospel Truths Opened*, proving his own case by reference to the Lucan account of the resurrected Jesus inviting the disciples to touch his body to prove he is not mere spirit.<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, while many Quakers would not have shared Bunyan’s assumption that the matter could be resolved by reference to Scripture, his chief opponent, Edward Burrough, in taking up Bunyan’s challenge, did attempt to refute him using biblical texts.

For a time Bunyan saw Quakers in the same light as Ranters, who regarded doctrines such as the Resurrection and Second Coming as metaphors for inward transformation. Ranters thought the Bible should be as open to criticism as any other historical document. Radical antinomians who held sin, heaven, and hell to be wholly imaginary, Ranters were noted for their sexual immorality, drunkenness, and blasphemy, and Bunyan’s hostility to them may have arisen in part from his awareness of how close he came to joining them. The temptations they laid before him, he admitted, were “suitable to my flesh, I being but a young man, and my nature in its prime.”<sup>23</sup> The Ranters’ skepticism about concepts such as bodily resurrection or final judgment also appealed to Bunyan in his times of spiritual doubt, providing a convenient solution to the fears he experienced when he encountered references in Scripture to sin and damnation but no means to counter them in the book itself.

In contrast to the Quakers and Ranters, Bunyan upheld the Bible itself as the word of God, and his propensity to see scriptural texts as both feeding and relieving spiritual anxiety lies at the heart of his approach to the Bible. For Bunyan, the Bible is crucial for an understanding of the essentials of salvation – namely knowledge of one’s self and of God – and therefore the Scriptures must be searched until satisfaction is found. This approach is seen most clearly in *Grace Abounding*, in which texts flash into his mind from all parts of the Bible, one minute to comfort, the next to disturb. In this Bunyan’s debt to Luther, with whom he feels a deep empathy, is palpable: just as the latter, desperate to find peace with a God who could never accept him on account of his sins, wrestled with Paul’s teaching on justification by faith in Romans 1 until it became for him “the very gate of heaven,” so Bunyan, no less weighed down (like Christian) by the demands of the law of God, finds himself “trembling under the mighty hand of God, continually torn and rent by the thunderings of his justice” and thus led, “with great seriousness, to turn over every leaf, and with much diligence, mixed with trembling, to consider every sentence, together with its natural force and latitude.”<sup>24</sup>

“His torment is that of an unlearned man who must search the Scripture with the conviction that any one verse can save or damn him,” writes Knott of the author of *Grace Abounding*.<sup>25</sup> One minute he can “look into the Bible with new eyes” and find the epistles of Paul “sweet and pleasant,” the next he can alight upon another text from Paul and find himself questioning whether he had any faith at all, fearing the word had “shut me out of all the blessings that other good people had given them of God.”<sup>26</sup> On one occasion Bunyan notes how the words “my grace is sufficient” darted in upon him, but they did not give him the assurance he needed because the remainder of that Scripture, the words “for thee,” was left off. Eventually the full verse did break in upon him, three times in succession, but despair returned again as he recalled the plight of Esau who, having sold his birthright, “found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” In a particularly poignant passage Bunyan recalls wondering, if both these Scriptures should meet in his heart at once, which of them would get the better of him.<sup>27</sup> Sometimes a text would come to him that he could not find in Scripture at all, leading him to search until he did locate it. On one occasion he searched for “above a year” until he eventually discovered an elusive phrase in the Book of Ecclesiasticus in the Apocrypha.<sup>28</sup>

Bunyan records in *Grace Abounding* his gratitude to his pastor, John Gifford, whose preaching and friendship clearly had a stabilizing effect on him. Bunyan seems to have joined Gifford’s church in Bedford around the age of twenty-five and to have been impressed by his counsel not to put his trust in the teaching of any human being but to implore the Almighty to give him conviction “by his own Spirit, in the holy Word.”<sup>29</sup> Such conviction was, of course, exactly what Bunyan needed, buffeted as he was by texts warring against themselves in his consciousness – a process that seems to have continued despite Gifford’s intervention. Bunyan’s salvation, like Luther’s, eventually came through a discovery of the righteousness of God, by an understanding that nothing he could do himself could make him right with God: his righteousness is “Jesus Christ himself, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.”<sup>30</sup> But it was a tortuous process, not least since Bunyan saw Satan himself at work in the struggle, pulling him this way and that and disputing his interpretation of Scriptures that should have given

him comfort. Satan could even persuade him that a verse such as “him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” could not include him.<sup>31</sup>

Bunyan’s struggle only makes sense if one understands the authority that he invested in Scripture as the Word of God. The role that the Bible played in Bunyan’s conversion cannot be underestimated, which is why he defended it so passionately against Quakers and other skeptics. The verses Bunyan reads and remembers may seem to contain contradictory messages, but Scripture is the only source of the knowledge he craves – assurance of his place among the elect of God – and therefore a resolution must be found within its pages. As Roger Sharrock has put it, Bunyan, like the majority of Puritan English people of his day, “believed that each verse of the Bible, taken out of its context, still held a message of truth” – a message that applied directly to him.<sup>32</sup> Thus, when he is beset by fear that he has committed the unforgivable sin, he considers the gory fate of Judas Iscariot recorded in Acts 1 will be his. He admits to turning his head on hearing Jesus’ words to Peter in Luke 22, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you”: “I thought verily ... that somebody had called after me,” he records, “and although that was not my name, yet it made me suddenly look behind me, believing that he that called so loud meant me.” He identifies with Esau as he sells his birthright and with it any hope of salvation, yet he also has no doubt that when Christ spoke the words “and yet there is room” he did so specifically with Bunyan in mind, knowing that he would be afflicted with fear that there was no place left for him in his bosom.<sup>33</sup> In a very real sense did Bunyan “live in the Bible.”

A powerful example of the authority Bunyan invests in the Bible, and in every part of the Bible in equal measure, is found in *A Few Sighs From Hell, or The Groans of a Damned Soul*, a very early work published in 1658. This is an extended reflection on the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31), in which the writer presents an urgent, pastoral warning to his readers to heed the fate of the one damned into Hell before it is too late. Bunyan takes the opportunity in this book, upon reaching the point where Abraham advises Dives that those he has left behind do not need a special visitor but should heed Moses and the prophets, to expound on the text “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). For Bunyan the “all” is pivotal – “Do but mark these words, ‘All Scripture is profitable.’ ALL; take it where you will, and in what place you will, ‘All is profitable’” – and as proof thereof he presents a lengthy quasi-catechism drawing upon the broad sweep of Scripture to answer a wide range of existential questions he imagines his reader might pose.

“Wouldst thou know what thou art, and what is in thine heart? Then search the Scriptures and see what is written in them” is Bunyan’s premise, which he follows with a series of questions concerning the whole gamut of Christian doctrine from Creation, Fall, and original sin through the vicarious death of Christ to the final preservation of the saints – each question being answered by references drawn from every part of Scripture with, in many cases, invitations to compare other Scriptures.<sup>34</sup> A page or two later Bunyan again demonstrates the coherence of Scripture, marshaling texts from Job, Isaiah, Matthew, Acts, 1 Corinthians, Hebrews, Jude, and Revelation in one short paragraph devoted to forewarning sinners of the danger of unbelief.<sup>35</sup> But despite his sustained appeal to Scripture and palpable mastery of the text, what is essential for



Bunyan is that his readers do not simply search the Scriptures and become conversant with them but experience a “real application of him whom they testify of” to their souls. Bunyan is clear that those who read the Bible often, encountering regularly the “sad state of those that die in sin, and the glorious estate of them that close in with Christ” yet “lose Jesus Christ,” will “fare a great deal the worse,” notwithstanding their “reading so plentifully of him” than others.<sup>36</sup>

Bunyan felt that one of the worst temptations he experienced was to question the being of God and the truth of his Gospel, and argued that even if, at times, the Scriptures will be “a dead letter, a little ink and paper,” there is no alternative to them if one is to discover the light of God.<sup>37</sup> Not that Bunyan escaped doubting the authority of the Bible on occasions. In 1649 a translation of the Qur’an began circulating in England, and Bunyan records in *Grace Abounding* how, “for about the space of a month,” he was led to ask how one can tell “but that the Turks had as good Scriptures to prove their Mahomet the Saviour, as we have to prove our Jesus is!” Succumbing once again to the condition we would now recognize as “obsessive compulsive disorder,” Bunyan speaks of being subject to floods of blasphemous thoughts that led him to doubt whether God or Christ existed and “whether the holy Scriptures were not rather a fable, and cunning story, than the holy and pure Word of God.” “Every one doth think his own religion rightest,” Bunyan reflects with disarming honesty, “both Jews and Moors, and Pagans! and how if all our faith, and Christ, and Scriptures, should be but a think-so too?”<sup>38</sup> Hill considers Bunyan unique in owning up to such subversive beliefs.<sup>39</sup>

Bunyan saw Scripture as normative not only for the individual Christian life but also for the practice of the church. In *A Case of Conscience Resolved*, published in 1683, he considers whether there is scriptural warrant for meetings that only part of the church may attend – a question occasioned by the practice of some women in his Bedford congregation to meet for prayer without men present. Bunyan was concerned about such meetings, believing they “wanted for their support, a bottom in the word,” but also recognized that the church could ill afford to lose its women members, many of whom “for holiness of life have outgone many of the brethren.”<sup>40</sup> (Women also constituted two-thirds of the membership.) In making his case that sections of the church ought not to separate themselves for worship, Bunyan lists the types of assembly for worship recorded in the Bible and admits his inability to find any occasion where women meet for worship by themselves (he discounts the example in Philippi recorded in Acts because there was no church in the city at that time). He also argues that the (male) elders of the church cannot perform their duties if they are precluded from attending certain meetings of the church. Whatever the private views of the pastor, elders, members, or even women of the church, for Bunyan only what Scripture says matters: “Take heed of letting the name, or good show of a thing, beget in thy heart a religious reverence of that thing: but look to the word for thy bottom, for it is the word that authorizeth, whatever may be done with warrant in worship to God; without the word things are of human invention, of what splendour or beauty soever they may appear to be.”<sup>41</sup> Fortunately for Bunyan (and the other males in the church), bringing the women’s meetings to an end did not cause dissension in the church, Bunyan noting that the women were “so subject to the word ... and so willing to let go what by that could not be proved a duty for them.”<sup>42</sup>

While Bunyan justifiably claims to lean on Scripture to settle the matter, other factors clearly influenced him, including his knowledge that it was a tenet of the Ranters and Quakers that women should enjoy a degree of autonomy within the church. Bunyan also understands appointing meetings for divine worship to be “an act of power,” and elsewhere takes a literal interpretation of references in St Paul to women being subject to their husbands and without authority to teach<sup>43</sup> (notwithstanding that when Christian and his companions reach the House Beautiful in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* it is women who decide whether they should be admitted). A number of dissenting congregations took a different line, some allowing women to preach, teach, prophesy, and have other leadership roles, and it was a paper possibly from a minister of a similar theological hue (a “Mr K,” perhaps William Kiffin) that sparked the controversy in Bunyan and Gifford’s church when circulated among the women members.

Bunyan is very clear that biblical truth operates at the level of metaphor. In his apology for writing *The Pilgrim’s Progress* he notes how the prophets “used much by metaphors to set forth truth” and how the Bible is full of “dark figures, allegories.” St Paul may have warned his prodigy Timothy from indulging in “old wives’ fables” but he never forbade the use of parables. The paradox for Bunyan is that, while Scripture employs shadows and types and dark forces at every turn, it does so the more to illuminate its truth. As darkness is followed by light, as a pearl needs bringing to the surface, so allegory enables truth to cast forth its golden rays. And Bunyan’s logic is that, if such a literary form is to be found working so effectively in Holy Writ, none can gainsay his humble employment of it also: “My dark and cloudy words they do but hold / The truth, as cabinets enclose the gold.”<sup>44</sup> Bunyan most powerfully employs metaphor in relation to the Christian’s journey, of which the exodus experience of the Israelites, and Abram’s obedience to the call of God to leave his country for an undisclosed destination, are the pre-eminent models. A passage in *The Heavenly Footman* – of uncertain date though presumed to have been written several years before *The Pilgrim’s Progress* – clearly demonstrates Bunyan’s dependence on this narrative, in this and his later work: “Because the way is long (I speak metaphorically), and there is many a dirty step, many a high hill, much work to do, a wicked heart, world, and devil, to overcome; I say, there are many steps to be taken by those that intend to be saved, by running or walking, in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham. Out of Egypt thou must go through the Red Sea; thou must run a long and tedious journey, through the vast howling wilderness, before thou come to the land of promise.”<sup>45</sup> As Knott perceptively points out, Bunyan’s use of metaphor operates on two levels: “The way is the path of all Christians through the wilderness of the world, the way ‘From This World To That Which Is To Come,’ and simultaneously the inner way of faith of the individual believer.” Bunyan draws upon images in the Psalms of walking in the way of the righteous, and those Paul uses of walking “in the Spirit” and “in newness of life.” Here his dependency on both testaments of Scripture to make his case is again evident, though, as Knott rightly says, the New Testament meaning trumps the Old: “Faith must be attested by a genuine ‘newness of life’.”<sup>46</sup>

Bunyan’s use of metaphor can also be quite subversive: in *The Water of Life*, published shortly before his death in 1688, he compares the grace of God to water, which “naturally descends to and abides in low places, in valleys and places which

are undermost," but which does not flow over steeples. This grace is held in "low esteem ... with the rich and the full" because it is primarily "for the poor and needy." "They that can drink wine in bowls ... come not to this river to drink."<sup>47</sup> Hill finds political comment in the narrative in *The Pilgrim's Progress* where Christian and his companion Great-heart are persecuted by giants who enclose public lands and the king's highway; "hedges" in the radical literature of Bunyan's day, Hill notes, represent private property over against land held in common, and it is not until Christian and his companion reach Immanuel's Land that land becomes common property.<sup>48</sup> "The great ones of the world," Bunyan notes in *A Few Sighs from Hell*, "will build houses for their dogs, when the saints must be glad to wander, and lodge in dens and caves of the earth."<sup>49</sup> The whole of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is arguably a metaphor of the lifestyle forced upon many of the poor and lowly in Bunyan's day, the itinerants and "masterless" folk.<sup>50</sup>

Scripture may have been an indispensable feature of Bunyan's conversion experience but, as *The Pilgrim's Progress* demonstrates, it must be the believer's constant companion through the whole of life, the key to understanding the right path, to avoiding pitfalls and temptations. When trapped in the Slough of Despond, Christian is reminded by his rescuer, Help, that the Lawgiver has provided "certain good and substantial steps" to enable the traveler to pass through it in safety. When tempted away from his path by Mr Worldly-wiseman to seek freedom from his burden by an easier means, he needs to be reminded by Evangelist of texts from Hebrews warning of the peril of refusing to hear "him that speaketh from heaven" (12:25) and of "drawing back" from the way of faith (10:38). Christian is only able to overcome Apollyon when he is in possession of his two-edged sword, a metaphor for the word of God Bunyan would have found in Hebrews 4:12. The nearest Christian comes to being devoured by his adversary is when his sword flies from his hand, and on recapturing it he quotes Scriptures from Micah ("Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise," 7:8) and Romans ("Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us," 8:37).<sup>51</sup> Christian benefits much from the instruction in the gospel that he receives from the good companions he meets on his journey, and finds in the Word both the wherewithal to overcome the many trials and temptations he encounters and what he needs in terms of comfort and consolation. Yet, as throughout, he needs also the Spirit of God to bring him, as his pastor John Gifford pointed out, conviction of the truth of the Word. As Knott has argued, Christian's difficulty in winning his duel with Apollyon suggests a certain shortfall in faith requiring the intervention of the Spirit to enable him to handle his sword aright. Bunyan would be clear that all Christians need the aid of the Spirit in order to understand Scripture.<sup>52</sup>

Bunyan's genius was to make the Bible accessible to the ordinary woman and man, the humble pilgrim weighed down with their burden of sin in a dangerous and hostile world. Bunyan's qualification for this task was his own humble origins and lack of learning and sophistication, his identification with the carpenter of Nazareth who was also rebuked for presuming to speak from such a lowly station. His heroes are all simple folk, characters with whom his readers could identify: his villains all gentry and titled folk, people with authority and learning who, like Pilate, might know Hebrew, Greek, and Latin yet miss the life-changing truth of the gospel. Christ's "little ones," Bunyan explicitly tells us, "are not gentlemen," whereas "sins are all lords and great ones."<sup>53</sup>



Employing what Frei and Lindbeck have called an “intratextual” approach to Scripture,<sup>54</sup> where the whole of Scripture is understood as a unified narrative against which one interprets one’s experience, Bunyan enables his reader to “live in the Bible” as he himself does. Bunyan shows that the ordinary believer might attain heaven, might lose his or her burden at the cross, and might understand, with the aid of the Spirit, how the Scriptures can make them “wise unto salvation.”

## Notes

All references to Bunyan’s own writings are taken from George Offor, ed., *The Works of John Bunyan*, 3 volumes (Blackie, Glasgow, 1854; Banner of Truth Trust edition, 1991).

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- 2 Edmund Venables, *Life of John Bunyan* (Great Writers Series, London, 1888), ch. IX.
- 3 Offor, I, p. 11.
- 4 Offor, I, p. 7.
- 5 Offor, I, p. 22.
- 6 He refers to Foxe in *Grace Abounding*: Offor, I, p. 41.
- 7 Offor notes that occasionally Bunyan quotes Scripture from memory, confusing various versions: III, p. 382.
- 8 Offor, III, p. 464.
- 9 Offor, III, p. 398.
- 10 Offor, I, p. 6.
- 11 Offor I, p. 495; III, p. 202.
- 12 John R. Knott Jr, *The Sword of the Spirit: Puritan Responses to the Bible* (University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 4.
- 13 Offor, III, p. 715.
- 14 Christopher Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious and Factious People: John Bunyan and his Church* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989), p. 140; cf. Offor, III, p. 695.
- 15 Offor, III, p. 767.
- 16 Offor, III, p. 376.
- 17 Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (Penguin, Harmondsworth 1975 (1972)), p. 405; Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious and Factious People*, p. 372.
- 18 Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious and Factious People*, p. 375.
- 19 E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Penguin, Harmondsworth 1968), p. 34; Gordon Wakefield, *John Bunyan the Christian* (HarperCollins, London, 1992), p. 3.
- 20 Offor, III, p. 722.
- 21 See *Of Antichrist, and his Ruin* (published posthumously), Offor, II, pp. 41–82, esp. p. 76.
- 22 Offor, II, p. 175.
- 23 Offor, I, p. 11.
- 24 Offor, I, p. 38.
- 25 Knott, *The Sword of the Spirit*, p. 132.
- 26 Offor, I, pp. 11–12.
- 27 Offor, I, pp. 31–33.
- 28 Offor, I, p. 13.

- 29 Offor, I, p. 20.
- 30 Offor, I, pp. 35–6.
- 31 Offor, I, p. 33.
- 32 Roger Sharrock, *John Bunyan* (Macmillan, London, 1968), p. 64.
- 33 Offor, I, pp. 26, 17, 30–1, 14.
- 34 Offor, III, pp. 708–9.
- 35 Offor, III, p. 714.
- 36 Offor, III, pp. 709–10.
- 37 Offor, III, 711.
- 38 Offor, I, 17; on Bunyan's state of mind see Gaius Davies, *Genius and Grace*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992, ch. 2.
- 39 Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (Penguin, London, 1993), p. 235.
- 40 Offor, II, pp. 659–60.
- 41 Offor, II, p. 671.
- 42 Offor, II, p. 660.
- 43 For example, in *Christian Behaviour* (1663), Offor, II, pp. 548–74, esp. 560ff.
- 44 Offor, III, p. 86.
- 45 Offor, III, p. 382.
- 46 Knott, *The Sword of the Spirit*, p. 140.
- 47 Offor, III, pp. 541, 543, 545.
- 48 Hill, *The English Bible*, p. 131.
- 49 Offor, III, pp. 676–7.
- 50 Offor, III, pp. 92, 95, 113.
- 51 Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, p. 406 and ch. 3 passim.
- 52 Knott, *The Sword of the Spirit*, pp. 147–8.
- 53 Offor, III, pp. 695, 130.
- 54 David Dawson, "Allegorical Intratextuality in Bunyan and Winstanley," *Journal of Religion* 70 (1990), pp. 189–201.

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# PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

## IN PICTURES

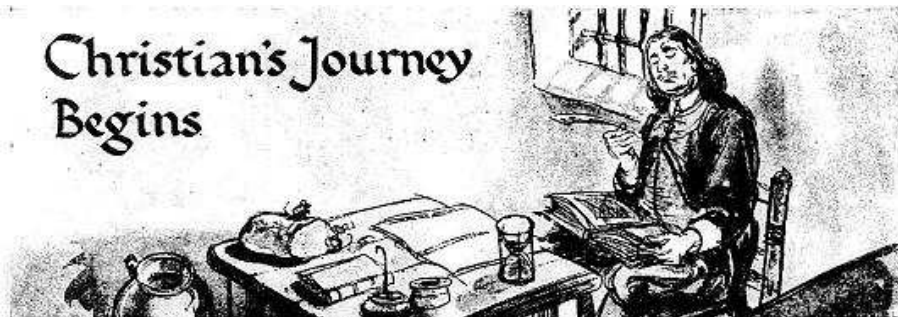
By John Bunyan (1628-1688)

John Bunyan (1628-1688) was born at Elstow, England, about a mile from Bedford, in 1628 and became one of the most influential authors of the seventeenth century. Few writers in history have left us with such a wealth of Christ-centered writings.

Bunyan's moving conversion is recorded in his *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. His first lasting conviction of sin was produced by a sermon denouncing the violation of the Lord's Day by labor, sports, or otherwise—because his greatest enjoyment came from sports on the Lord's Day. Sometime later while passing through the streets of Bedford, Bunyan heard “three or four poor women” sitting at a door, “talking about the new birth, the work of God in their hearts, and the way by which they were convinced of their miserable state by nature. They told how God had visited their souls with His love in Christ Jesus, and with what words and promises they had been refreshed, comforted, and supported against the temptations of the devil.” From these pious women Bunyan learned to despise sin and to hunger for the Savior. Later, while passing into the fields, he recounts, “This sentence fell upon my soul, ‘Thy righteousness is in heaven’...for my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Then “his chains fell off,” and he went home rejoicing. In 1655, Bunyan was baptized by immersion by Pastor John Gifford of Bedford and called to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Bunyan was arrested November 12, 1660, for preaching without the approval of the Anglican Church. He was charged with “teaching men to worship God contrary to the law” and was in jail more than twelve years.

His most well-known work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, was written while in the Bedford jail. During Bunyan's lifetime there were 100,000 copies circulated in the British isles, besides several editions in North America. Bunyan's remarkable imagery was firmly rooted in the Reformation doctrines of man's fallen nature, grace, imputation, justification, and the atonement—all of which Bunyan seems to have derived directly from Scripture.

# Christian's Journey Begins



1. As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I came to a Den; and in that place I lay down to sleep and, as I slept, I dreamed a dream in which I saw a man.



6. I saw, as he walked in the fields reading, that he cried: "What shall I do to be saved?"



7. And I saw also a man named Evangelist coming to him, asking: "Why do you cry?"



2. He was clothed in rags, standing with a book in his hands, and a great burden on his back. I saw him open the book and as he read he wept and trembled and cried: "What shall I do?"



3. "My dear wife and children," he said. "I am informed that our city will be burned with fire from heaven, and we shall all come to ruin unless some way of escape can be found!"



8. He answered: "Sir, I am not fit to go to judgment." "Then why do you stand still?" "Because I do not know where to go." Then Evangelist handed him a parchment roll.



9. The man read it and said: "Whither must I fly?" Evangelist pointed with his finger. "Do you see yonder wicket-gate?" The man said: "No." "Do you see yonder shining light?"



4. His family was amazed. They thought some frenzy had seized him; and hoping sleep might settle his brains, they got him hastily to bed.



5. Instead of getting better, he got worse. For some days his family would chide him, so he began to retire to his own room to pray for them.



10. "I think I do." "Then," said Evangelist, "go directly towards that light, and when you come to the gate you shall be told what to do." The man began to run, crying: "Life! Life! Eternal Life!" His wife and children cried after him, but he put his fingers in his ears.

# An Unfriendly Neighbour



1. The neighbours also came out to see him run. Some mocked, others threatened, or cried to him to return. Two resolved to fetch him back by force. One was called Obstinate, the other Pliable



2. They overtook him. "Go along with me," he said. "What," said Obstinate, "and leave our friends and our comforts behind? Tush!" Then said Pliable: "Don't revile!



3. "My heart inclines to go with my neighbour." So Christian and Pliable went on together, and Obstinate returned alone. Pliable asked Christian about the place where they were going.



4. "I will read to you about it from my book," said Christian: "There is an everlasting kingdom and an everlasting life. There shall be no more crying nor sorrow." "And what company?" "Thousands who have suffered for the love they bore the Lord, all well, and clothed with immortality."



## The Slough of Despond



1. Now I saw in my dream that Christian and Pliable fell suddenly into a bog, which was called the Slough of Despond. Christian, because of the burden on his back, began to sink in the mire.



2. Pliable said angrily: "Is this the happiness you told me of?" And with a desperate struggle he got out on that side of the slough next to his own house, and away he went.



3. Christian struggled to the farther side, but could not get out because of his burden until a man, whose name was Help, came to him and, stretching forth his hand, drew him out.



4. "This slough," said Help, "is caused by the many fears and doubts which settle here. It has swallowed up at least twenty thousand cartloads of wholesome instructions."



5. By this time Pliable was home again. He sat sneaking among his neighbours, who mocked him.

## Worldly Wiseman's Advice



1. As Christian walked by himself, he met Mr. Worldly Wiseman, who asked him where he was going. Christian told him that he was going to the wicket-gate, for he could not get rid of his burden otherwise. "How came you by this burden?" "By reading this book," replied Christian.



2. "You should visit Legality and his son Civility," said Mr. Wiseman. "They'll help."



3. So Christian turned aside to go to Mr. Legality for help. His burden grew heavier.



4. Flashes of fire came from the hill. Then he saw Evangelist coming and was ashamed.

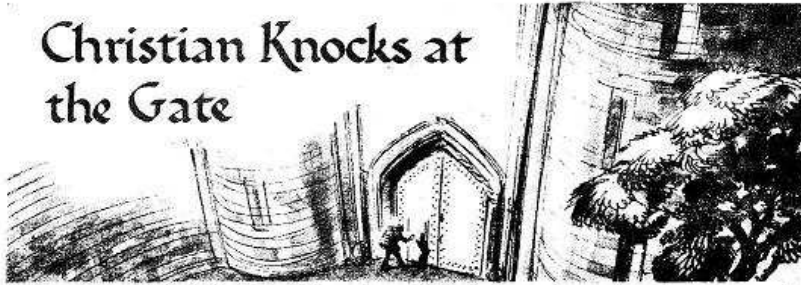


5. "Hear the words of God!" said Evangelist. "The just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him!"



6. Christian had fallen at Evangelist's feet as if dead, but he was helped up. "Be not faithless, but believing!" said Evangelist with a kindly smile.

## Christian Knocks at the Gate



1. Then Evangelist bade Christian God-speed, and Christian hastened on, and spoke to no one on the way. He could not feel safe until he was on the right path again. In process of time he got up to the gate and knocked. A grave person, named Goodwill, came to the gate and asked who was there.



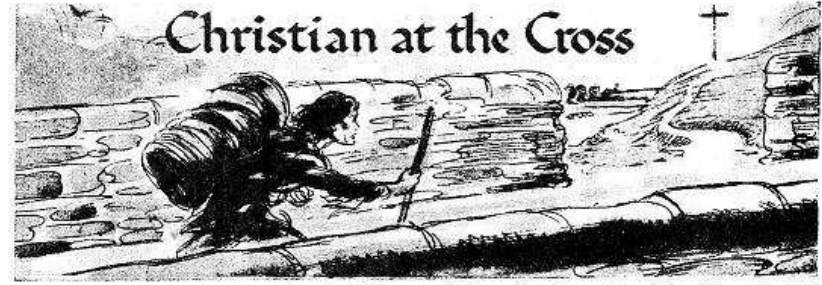
2. "A poor burdened sinner," Christian answered. "I come from the City of Destruction, but am going to Mount Zion. Let me in!"



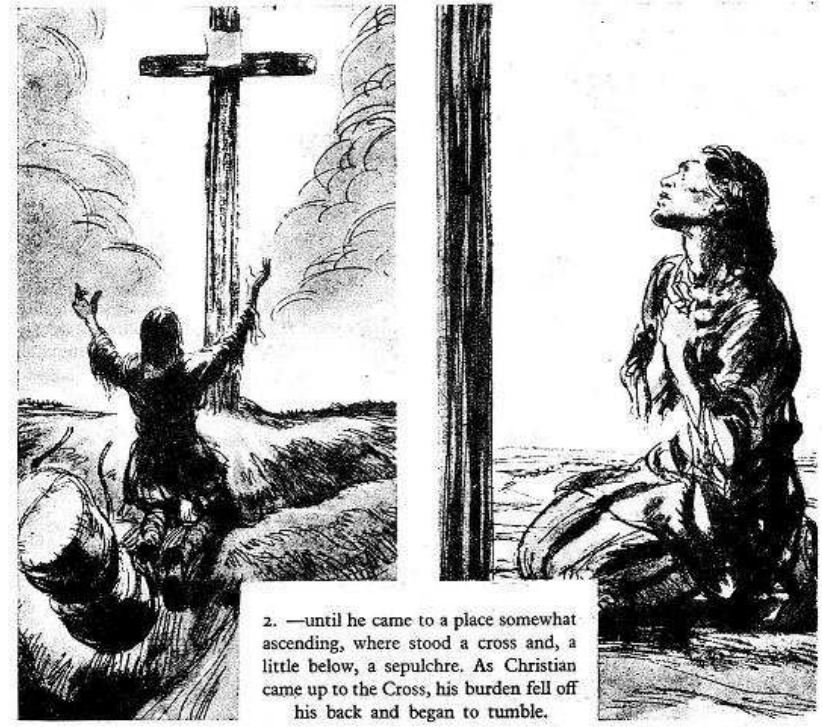
3. Goodwill opened the gate and pulled Christian in. "For," he said, "Beelzebub shoots arrows at those coming up to the gate to try to kill them."



4. Then he showed Christian the way. "It is as straight as a rule can make it—this is the way you must go." And Christian took his leave.



1. So Christian went on his way along the highway, which was fenced on either side with a wall called Salvation. He began to run, but with difficulty, because of the burden on his back—



2. —until he came to a place somewhat ascending, where stood a cross and, a little below, a sepulchre. As Christian came up to the Cross, his burden fell off his back and began to tumble.

3. It continued to fall until it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in and I saw it no more. It was very surprising to Christian that the sight of the Cross should thus ease him of his burden. He gazed until the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks

PPS—B



## The Shining Ones

1. As he gazed, three Shining Ones came. The first said: "Thy sins be forgiven thee."

2. The second clothed him with a change of raiment, and the third set a mark on his forehead and gave him a roll with a seal upon it which he should give in at the Celestial City.



3. Christian leaped for joy, and went on singing, until he came across three men fast asleep with fetters on their heels. They were called Simple, Sloth and Presumption. He woke them.



4. Simple said: "I see no danger." Sloth said: "Yet a little more sleep," and Presumption: "Every vat must stand upon its own bottom." And they slept again.



5. Christian saw Formalist and Hypocrisy climbing over the wall. He quoted to them: "He that climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."



## The Hill Difficulty

7. But Formalist and Hypocrisy only laughed at him. They all went on, Christian ahead of the others, till they came to the foot of Hill Difficulty, at the bottom of which there was a spring.



2. Christian drank from the spring and began to go the narrow way up the hill, saying: "Better, though difficult, the right way to go, than wrong, though easy, where the end is woe."



3. There were two other ways, one turning to the left, the other to the right, and Formalist and Hypocrisy, seeing that the hill was steep and high, resolved to go those ways.



4. They thought the two ways might meet again, and so they parted. The one took the way called Danger, which led him into a great wood.



5. The other took the way to Destruction, which led him into a wide field full of dark mountains where he stumbled and fell and rose no more.



## Christian's Loss



1. Christian fell from running to going, and from going to clambering up on his hands and knees because of the steepness of the place. Midway to the top of the hill was a pleasant arbour.



2. There Christian sat down, read his roll and examined carefully the coat given him as he stood by the Cross. At last he fell asleep.



3. In his sleep the roll slipped from his hand. It was almost night and one came who waked him. Christian sped on to the top of the hill.



4. There two men, Timorous and Mistrust, came running past. "The farther we go," panted Timorous, "the more we meet danger." "There are two lions in the way!" added Mistrust.



5. They fled, but Christian, though afraid, went on. Then he felt for his roll and found it not. So he returned to the arbour and finding it under the settle, asked God's forgiveness.

## The Palace Beautiful



1. How nimbly did Christian go up the rest of the hill! Yet before he got up, the sun went down. "What if the lions meet me in the dark?" he thought. "How should I escape being torn to pieces by them?"



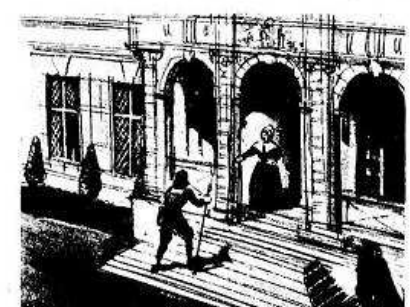
2. Then he lifted up his eyes and there before him was a very stately palace called Beautiful. It stood just by the highway side.



3. A furlong off from the porter's gate he entered a narrow passage. Before him he espied two lions in the way, and was afraid to go on.



4. But Watchful, the porter, cried: "Fear not the lions, for they are chained. They are there for the trial of faith." Christian trembled when the lions roared, but they did him no harm.



5. He asked if he might lodge there for the night. "The house was built for the relief and security of pilgrims," replied Watchful; and a grave damsel named Discretion opened the door.



1. She smiled at Christian. "I will call two or three more of the family," she said, and Prudence, Piety and Charity came to the door.

"Come in!" they called, and Christian bowed his head and followed them. Then, since supper was not ready, they sat and talked with him.

2. "How do you vanquish your annoyances?" asked Prudence. "When I think what I saw at the Cross," answered Christian, "that will do it."



3. "I am desirous to go to Mount Zion," he went on, "for I hope to see Him alive that did hang dead on the Cross, for I love Him because He eased me of my burden."



4. "Have you a family?" Charity said. "I have a wife and four small children." "Why did you not bring them with you?" Then Christian wept and said: "Oh, how willingly I would have done

it! But they were all utterly averse to my going on pilgrimage, though I told them over and over of my fears for them. They were afraid of losing this world's foolish delights."



5. Supper was now ready, so they sat down, and all their talk at the table was about the Lord of the Hill, who was a great warrior, and had made many pilgrims princes, though beggars born.



6. Christian slept till break of day in a chamber called Peace, whose window opened toward the sun-rising. Then he awoke and sang.



7. In the morning they took Christian into the study and read him some of the worthy acts done by the many servants of the Lord of the Hill.



8. Next he saw the armoury which the Lord had provided for pilgrims, and was harnessed from head to foot in what was proof against assaults.



9. On the morrow he saw in the distance from the house-top the Delectable Mountains, near his desired haven. It was Immanuel's Land.

## Christian Fights Apollyon



1. So Christian bade farewell and entered into the Valley of Humiliation, where he espied a foul fiend Apollyon coming to meet him. He was afraid, but resolved to stand his ground.



2. Apollyon belched fire and smoke as he said to Christian: "You are one of my subjects since you have run away from your king." "But I have let myself to the King of Princes!" replied Christian.



5. Christian's sword flew out of his hand. Then Apollyon so pressed him that he began to despair of life. But while Apollyon was fetching his last blow Christian reached out his hand for his sword.



6. He caught it nimbly, and gave Apollyon a deadly thrust, which made the fiend give back, as though he had received a mortal wound. Christian, seeing that, made at him again.



7. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us!" cried Christian. With that, Apollyon spread forth his dragon's wings and sped him away.



3. Apollyon raged: "Prepare to die!" With that he threw a dart at Christian's breast, but Christian caught it with the shield in his hand.



4. Apollyon's darts flew as thick as hail and wounded Christian. Then Apollyon, wrestling with him, gave him a dreadful fall.



8. The battle was over. Christian looked upwards. "I will here give thanks to Him that did help me against Apollyon," he said. Then there came to him a hand with some of the leaves of the Tree of Life which Christian applied to his wounds and was healed immediately. There too found he food and drink.





## The Valley of the Shadow

1. Christian must now go through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Two men met him. "Back! Back!" they cried. "Why, what's the matter?" asked Christian. "Had we gone farther, we had not been here. We looked before us and saw the Valley, dark as pitch. It is dreadful," they answered.



2. Christian went on with his sword drawn for fear. The pathway was exceeding narrow with a very deep ditch on the right hand and a dangerous quagmire on the left. He sighed bitterly.



3. And ever and anon there poured forth in abundance flames, smoke and sparks, with hideous noises and things that cared not for Christian's sword as Apollyon had before.



4. So Christian was forced to put up his sword, and take to the weapon of All-prayer. "O Lord, I beseech Thee," he cried, "deliver my soul."



5. Then a company of fiends, hobgoblins, satyrs and dragons of the pit rushed to meet him. He cried out: "I will walk in the strength of the Lord God!" and the fiends came no farther.



6. A wicked one whispered blasphemies to him, but Christian heard a voice saying: "Though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."



## Faithful

1. As Christian went on his way he came to a little ascent and saw before him Faithful who was on his journey. "Stay," cried Christian, "and I will be your companion." Faithful looked behind.



2. "No," he answered. "I am upon my life and the avenger of blood is behind me." At this Christian, putting out all his strength, overran Faithful, but did not take heed, and stumbled.



3. He fell and could not rise again until Faithful came to help him. Then they went on very lovingly together, talking of all that had happened to them in their pilgrimage.



4. "I heard some of the neighbours deridingly speak of you and your 'desperate journey,' for so they called this your pilgrimage," said Faithful.



5. "Yet your neighbour Pliable, who came home bedabbled with the dirt of the Slough of Despond, they mock, and despise as a turncoat."



## Adam the First



1. "I escaped the Slough of Despond," continued Faithful, "only I met with one whose name was Wanton. What a flattering tongue she had! She lay at me hard to turn aside with her.



2. "At the foot of Hill Difficulty I met an aged man called Adam the First, who dwelt in the town of Deceit. His work, he said, was many delights and his wages—that I should be his heir at last.



3. "'Marry my daughters Lust of the Flesh, Lust of the Eyes and Pride of Life.'



4. "But looking in his forehead I saw there written: 'Put off the old man and his deeds.'



5. "As I turned to go, I felt him take hold of my flesh and give me a deadly twitch back."



## Vanity Fair

1. "Who comes yonder?" said Faithful. Christian looked back. "It is my good friend Evangelist." "Right glad am I," said Evangelist, "that you have been victors. But you are not yet out of gunshot of the devil. You will come to a town where enemies will strain hard to kill you. One of you will die there. Remember to acquit yourselves like men and commit your souls to God!"



3. The pilgrims were seized by trusty friends of the great one of the town and examined. They said they were going to the heavenly Jerusalem.



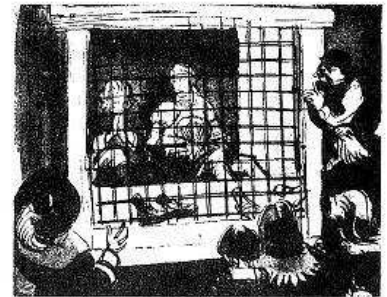
4. At this their examiners beat them, besmirched them with dirt and put them in a cage to be a spectacle, the object of any man's sport.



2. Now the way to the Celestial City lies through the town of Vanity and its fair—Vanity Fair. When the pilgrims entered there was a hubbub, for their clothes and their speech were different. One mockingly chanced to say: "What will you buy?" They answered gravely: "We buy the Truth." At that some mocked, some taunted and some called on others to smite them. There was a great stir.



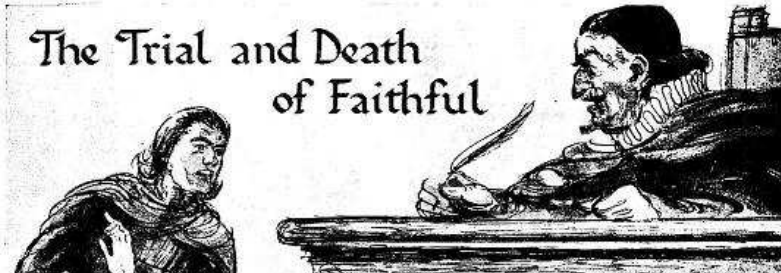
5. Then these poor men, Christian and Faithful, were examined again. Irons were hanged on them and they were led up and down the Fair.



6. The Pilgrims' meekness and patience won several men to their side. This put the others in a rage, and they thrust the prisoners back in the cage, their feet in the stocks, to await trial.



# The Trial and Death of Faithful



1. They were accused of being enemies to the trade of Vanity Fair. The Judge was Lord Hate-good.



2. Faithful, in his defence, said that he was a man of peace and had only set himself against that which was against his Lord. "I defy Beelzebub, your king, and all his angels!"



3. Three witnesses spoke against Faithful. Envy said: "I heard him affirm that Christianity and the customs of our town of Vanity were diametrically opposite and not to be reconciled."



4. Superstition said: "He is a pest." Pickthank added: "He has reviled our Prince Beelzebub, and called you, my lord, an ungodly villain!"



5. The judge shouted at Faithful. "You runagate, heretic and traitor!" he said. Then he sent out the jury to reach a verdict.



6. Mr. Blind-man, Mr. No-good, Mr. Malice, Mr. Love-lust, Mr. Live-loose, Mr. Heady, Mr. High-mind, Mr. Enmity, Mr. Liar, Mr. Cruelty, Mr. Hate-light and Mr. Implacable brought in a verdict of "Guilty." "A sorry scrub! A rogue!" they said. "Hanging's too good for him!"



7. And so Faithful was condemned to be put to the most cruel death that could be invented. First they scourged him, then they buffeted him; after that they stoned him with stones.



8. Then they pricked him with their swords; and last of all they burned him to ashes at the stake. Thus came Faithful to his end.



9. Now behind the crowds waited a chariot for Faithful, who was taken up into it through the clouds, the nearest way to the Celestial City.

## Christian Escapes



1. Christian was remanded back to prison, but he escaped and went his way. And as he went he sang: "Sing, Faithful, sing, and let thy name survive; for though they killed thee, thou art yet alive!"



2. With Christian went Hopeful (made so by seeing the pilgrims' behaviour in their sufferings at the Fair) to be his companion. They overtook a man from the town of Fair-speech.



3. "A wealthy place!" said Christian. "Yes. I have rich kinsmen there—my Lord Turn-about, Lord Time-server, Lord Fair-speech, Mr. Smooth-man and Mr. Facing-both-ways."



4. "And are you married?" inquired Christian. "Yes, my wife was my Lady Feigning's daughter, and has arrived at such a pitch of breeding!"



5. "Is not your name By-ends?" "My nickname, because I had always the luck to jump in my judgment with the way of the times."



## By-ends and his Companions

1. Three men who had been following Mr. By-ends now came up with him. Their names were Mr. Hold-the-world, Mr. Money-love and Mr. Save-all, his old schoolfellows, in the town of Love-gain.



2. "Who are they?" inquired Mr. Money-love, pointing to Christian and Hopeful. "Why did they not stay?" "They are so rigid," replied By-ends. "That is bad," said Save-all.



3. Mr. By-ends explained: "They conclude it is duty to journey in all weathers. I am for waiting for wind and tide. They are for holding their notions against all others. I am for my safety."



4. Mr. Hold-the-world agreed: "It is best to make hay when the sun shines. I like security. Abraham and Solomon grew rich in religion."



5. "Should not a minister," said Mr. Money-love, "get better living by altering his principles, or a tradesman by becoming religious?"



## Christian Answers Hold-the-world



1. So they called after Christian and Hopeful, who stopped, and Mr. Hold-the-world put the question to them. Then said Christian: "Only heathens, hypocrites, devils and witches are of this opinion."



2. "The Pharisees were of this religion. Long prayers were their pretence; to get widows' houses their intent."



3. "Judas also was of this religion. He was religious for the bag that he might possess what was therein."

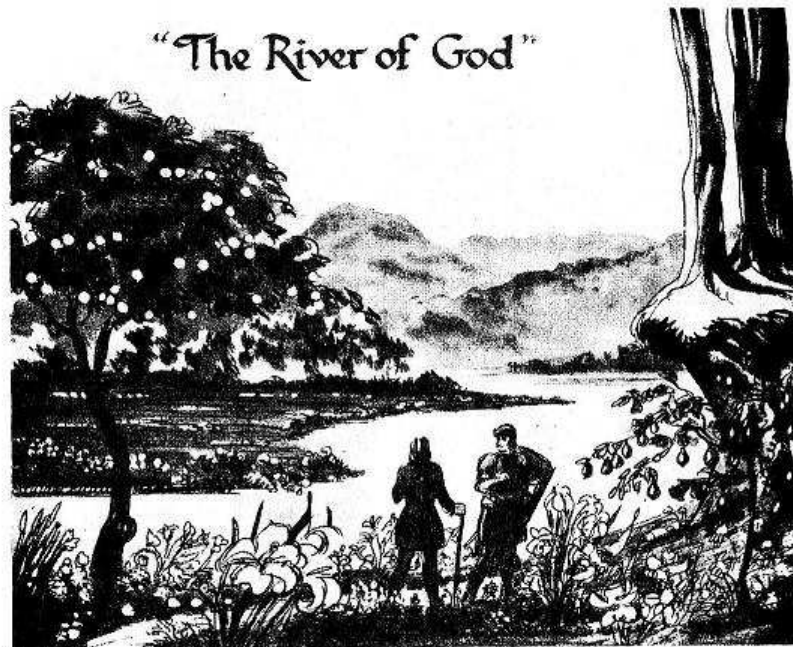


4. "Simon the sorcerer also; for he would have had the Holy Ghost to get money therewith."



5. "The man that takes up religion for the world will throw away religion for the world; as Judas sold religion and his Master for the world." There was a great silence among them; then Mr. By-ends and his company staggered and kept behind.

## "The River of God"



1. Their way now lay upon the bank of a pleasant river which David called "The river of God." Christian and his companion walked with great delight. They drank of its water, which enlivened their weary spirits. On either side were green trees which bore all kinds of fruit, and their leaves were good for medicine; also a meadow, beautiful with lilies, where they lay down and slept safely.



2. For several days they gathered the fruit of the trees and drank of the water of the river, and woke and slept. Then they sang and departed. They had not journeyed far before the river and the way parted. They were sorry, yet they must not go out of their way, and it was rough.

## By-Path Meadow



1. The pilgrims' feet were tender from their travels. How they wished for a better way!

2. Now, on the left-hand side of the road was a meadow called By-path Meadow, with a stile to go over into it. "If this meadow lies along our way let us go over into it," said Christian.



3. So he went to the stile and saw a path on the other side. "Here is the easiest going," called Christian. "Come, good Hopeful." Hopeful was persuaded and followed him over.



4. They saw a man walking before them (his name was Vain-confidence) and asked him where the way led. He said: "To the Celestial Gate."



5. They followed him, but the night came on and it grew very dark so that the pilgrims lost sight of the man ahead of them.

## Storm and Flood



1. Vain-confidence fell into a deep pit made there on purpose by the Prince of those grounds to catch vainglorious fools; and was dashed in pieces. Christian and his fellow heard him fall.



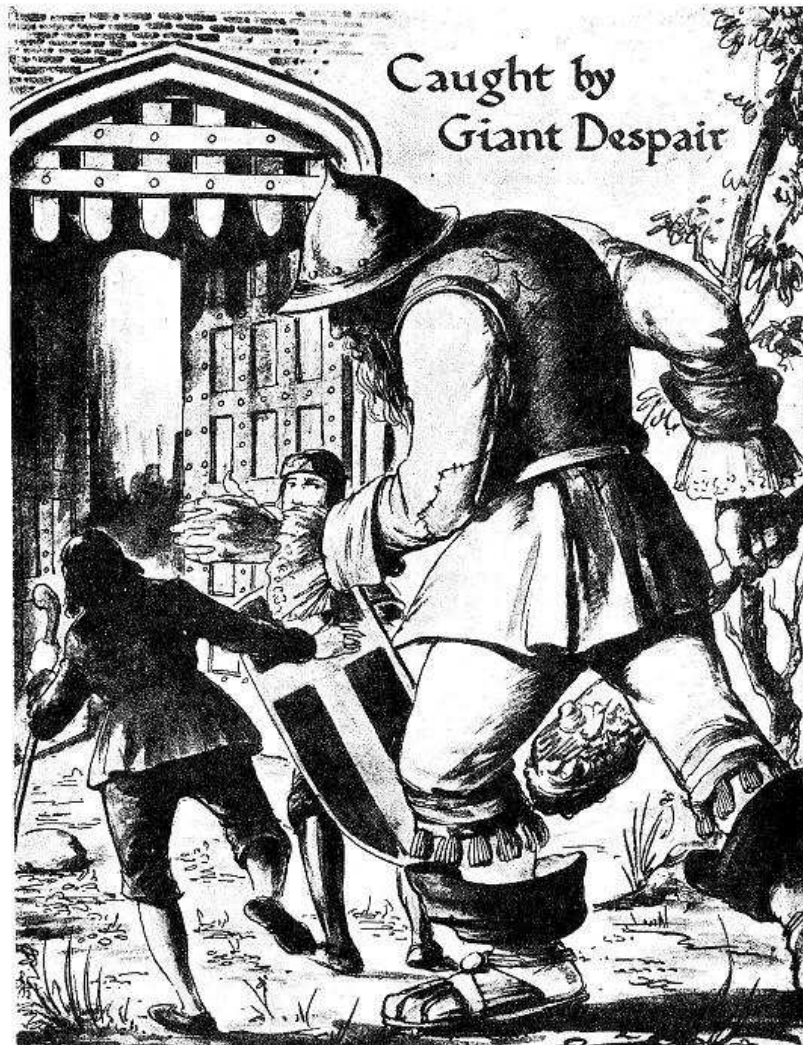
2. They called to know what was the matter, and heard nothing but groaning. "Where are we now?" said Hopeful. Christian was silent, for he began to realize that he had led his fellow out of the way. Now it began to rain and thunder and lighten in a very dreadful manner, and the water rose.



3. "Let us try to go back again," said Christian to Hopeful. But by this time the waters were greatly risen, and going back was very dangerous. They tried, but were nearly drowned.



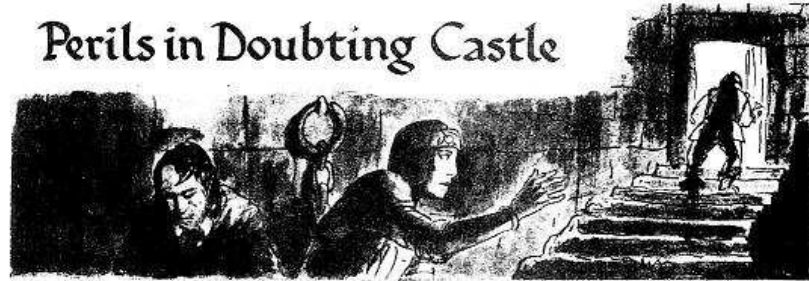
4. As they could not get back to the stile that night, they sat down under a little shelter until the day should break, and fell asleep. They knew not they were in the grounds of Giant Despair.



## Caught by Giant Despair

1. The giant lived in Doubting Castle. In the morning, early, he, walking up and down in his field, caught Christian and Hopeful asleep. With a grim and surly voice he bade them awake. They told him they were pilgrims and that they had lost their way. "You have trespassed on my grounds," said the giant, "so you must come along with me." And he drove them before him into his castle.

## Perils in Doubting Castle



1. There he put them into a very dark dungeon, nasty and stinking. They lay from Wednesday morning to Saturday night without one bit of bread or drop of drink or light. They were in a sorry state.



2. When he went to bed Giant Despair asked his wife, Diffidence, what more to do to the prisoners. "Beat them without mercy," she advised.



3. And next morning he beat them so fearfully with his crab-tree cudgel that they were not able to help themselves nor to turn upon the floor.



4. Then he left them. All that day they spent in sighs and lamentations. Next night the giant's wife advised him to counsel them to make away with themselves. So in the morning he told them their only way was to make an end of themselves with knife, halter or poison. They desired him to let them go. With that he rushed at them and would doubtless have made an end of them himself—





5. —but at that moment he fell into one of his fits (for he sometimes in sunshiny weather fell into fits) and lost for a time the use of his hand. Wherefore he withdrew.



6. When the giant came again in the evening, he found them only just alive. The giant fell into a grievous rage, and Christian swooned.



7. When the giant had gone, Hopeful encouraged Christian: "How valiant you have been," he said. "Let us exercise a little more patience."



8. That night the giant's wife urged him to take the prisoners into the castle yard. "Show them the bones and skulls of those you have already dispatched." In the morning he did this.



9. "These pilgrims I tore to pieces," he said, "and so will I you." Then he beat them all the way back to their den. About midnight they began to pray and continued till break of day.



## The Key of Promise

1. Now, a little before day, good Christian suddenly broke out passionately: "What a fool I am! I have a key in my bosom called Promise that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in the Castle."



2. And he pulled out the key and began to try at the dungeon door. As he turned the key the bolt gave back and the door flew open with ease.



3. Christian and Hopeful came out and went to the door into the castle yard. This the key also opened and even the iron gate.



4. But the gate made such a creaking that it waked Giant Despair who, hastily rising to pursue his prisoners, felt his limbs fail, for his fits took him again. So the pilgrims went on.



5. At last they came to the King's highway and were safe. Over the stile they erected a pillar with a warning, for those that should come after, engraved upon the side thereof.

## Memories of Faithful



1. Hopeful began: "I thought: 'If a man runs into debt but later pays his way, the old debt still stands. I by my sins have run into God's debt and my reforming now will not pay it off.'"



2. "I opened my mind to Faithful. He told me that, unless I could obtain the righteousness of a man who had never sinned, not all the righteousness of the world could save me."



3. "The Lord Jesus was the mighty God and died for me, to whom His doings and worthiness should be imputed if I believed in Him. He bade me ask the Father to reveal Him to me."



4. "Did the Father reveal His Son to You?" "Not to my eyes but to my understanding. One day I thought I saw the Lord Jesus."



5. "He looked on me and said: 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' The beauty of Jesus made me love a holy life and long to fight for Him."

## Ignorance Again



1. Hopeful now looked back, and saw Ignorance. "Look," he said to Christian. "How far yonder youngster loiters behind." "Ay, ay, I see him. He does not care for our company."



2. However, they waited for him. Christian greeted him: "Why do you stay so behind?" "I take my pleasure in walking alone." "How do things stand between God and your soul now?" "I hope well," said Ignorance, "my heart tells me so." "Your heart tells you so?"



3. "Unless the word of God witnesses it, other testimony is of no value. The word of God says: 'There is none righteous' and 'The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.'"



4. "When we have sense to think thus of ourselves our thoughts are good, being according to the word of God." "I will never believe that my heart is thus bad," replied Ignorance.

## Memories of Faithful



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## Ignorance Again



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## The Word of God

1. "Why?" Christian protested. "The word of God says that a man's ways are naturally perverse. Now, when a man thinks sensibly of his own ways, his heart in humility accepts that judgment."



2. "God knows us better than we know ourselves." But Ignorance insisted that God would accept him because of his religious duties.



3. Christian, remembering his own experience at the Cross, replied: "It is not your actions but your heart that must be won over to God."



4. "Ask him if he ever had Christ revealed to him," interjected Hopeful, remembering his experience. But Ignorance said his revelations were the fruit of a distracted brain.



5. "Be awakened, see your own wretchedness!" cried Christian. Ignorance stopped. "My faith is as good as yours," he declared. "But—I cannot keep pace with you. You go on before."



## Fear and Wisdom

1. So Christian and Hopeful went on, and Ignorance came hobbling after. Christian said to his companion: "I am so sorry for him, poor man; it will certainly go ill with him at the last."



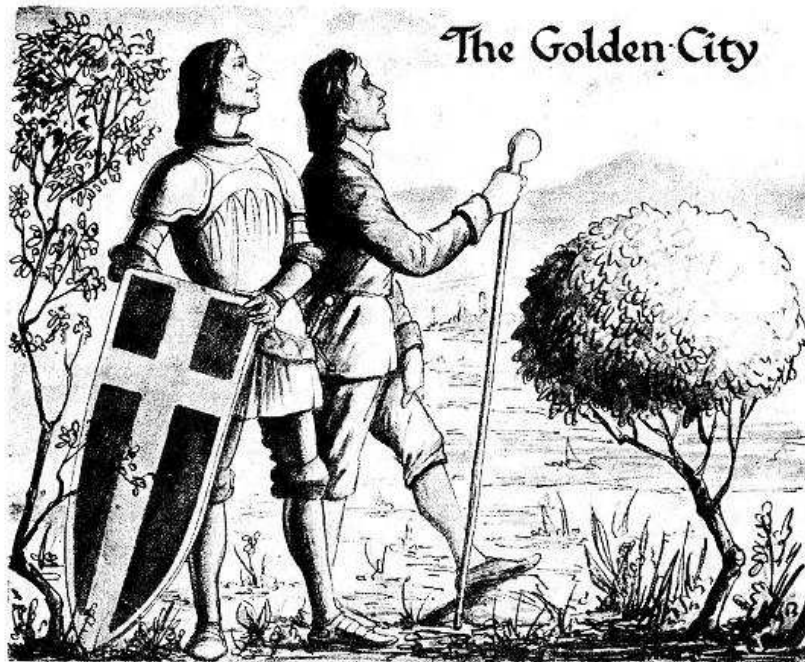
2. "There are plenty in our town in his condition," Hopeful commented, "whole families, whole streets." Christian asked: "Have they at no time, do you think, convictions of sin and consequent fears that their state is dangerous? I think they may, but desperately seek to stifle them."



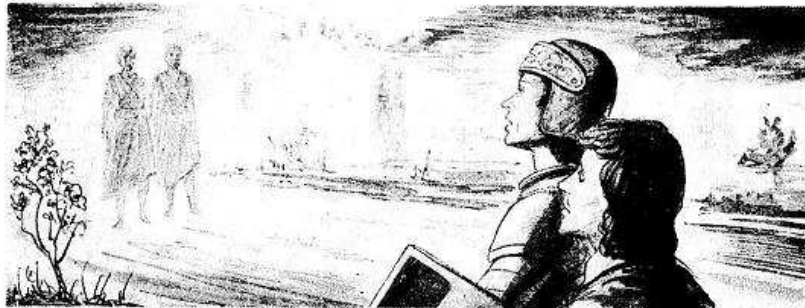
3. Hopeful agreed. "As you say, fear tends to be good for men. It makes them ready to go on pilgrimage." "The fear of the Lord," Christian corrected. "That is the beginning of wisdom."



4. "The right sort of fear is caused by convictions which drive the soul to hold fast to Christ. It begins and continues a great reverence for God, His Word and His Ways."



1. By this time the pilgrims were entering into the country of Beulah. Here they heard continually the singing of birds and saw flowers appear. In this country the sun shines night and day, for it is beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death and out of reach of Giant Despair.



2. Here they were in sight of the city they were going to. Here also met them some of the inhabitants thereof, for in this land the Shining Ones commonly walked, because it was on the borders of heaven. Rejoicing, they drew nearer the city. It was built of pearls and precious stones and the streets paved with gold. Christian and Hopeful lay for a while before it.



3. Then they walked nearer and nearer through orchards, vineyards and gardens, whose gates opened into the highway. They saw the gardener, who told them that the gardens and vineyards were planted for the King's delight and for the solace of pilgrims.



4. So extremely glorious was the reflection of the sun on the city that they could not look at it with their eyes uncovered. Two men, in raiment that shone like gold and with shining faces, met them and said: "You have only two more difficulties to meet. Then you are in the city." The men came along with them; and they came in sight of the gate.





## The River of Death

1. Now I saw that between them and the gate was the river of death. But there was no bridge over it and the river was very deep. There was no way to escape the river.



5. Then he would rise up again half-dead. Hopeful called out: "Brother, I see the gate, and men standing by to receive us." But Christian replied: "It is you, it is you they wait for!"



2. The men said: "You will find it deeper or shallower as you believe in the King." So the pilgrims entered the water. Christian began to sink and cried out. But Hopeful said: "Be of good cheer, my brother. I feel the bottom and it is good."



3. Then a great darkness and horror fell upon Christian, so that he could not see before him. He feared that he would die in that river and never enter in at the gate.



4. He was troubled with apparitions of hobgoblins and evil spirits. Hopeful had much ado to keep his brother's head above water. Sometimes he would be quite gone down.



6. "My brother," cried Hopeful, "these troubles are no sign that God has forsaken you, but are sent to try you. Be of good cheer! Jesus Christ makes you whole." With that Christian shouted: "Oh! I see Him again!" Then they both took courage and presently found ground to stand upon, and the rest of the river was but shallow. Thus they got over.

## The Heavenly Jerusalem



1. Upon the bank of the river, on the other side, two shining men greeted them, saying: "We are ministering spirits." Thus they went along towards the gate.



3. "The beauty of the place is inexpressible," their companions informed them. "It is Mount Zion, the Heavenly Jerusalem." "What shall we do in that holy place?" they asked.



2. The city stood upon a mighty hill, but the pilgrims went up it with ease because they had left their mortal garments in the river and the two men led them up by the arms. The foundation on which the city was framed was higher than the clouds, so they went through the regions of the air.



4. "You shall eat of the never-fading fruits of the tree of life and not know sorrow again, for there you shall see the Holy One as He is."

PPS—E

## The King's Trumpeters



1. As the pilgrims drew near to the gate a company of the heavenly host came out to meet them. The host shouted: "Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb."



2. There came out also to meet them several of the King's Trumpeters, clothed in white and shining raiment. They made the heavens echo with their sound and saluted Christian and Hopeful with ten thousand welcomes. Now they saw the city clearly and thought they heard all the bells in it ring to welcome them. But above all they had such joyful thoughts about dwelling there with such company.

## Journey's End



1. Then they came to the gate and saw written over it in letters of gold: "Blessed are they that do His commandments. They enter in through the gates of the city." The Shining Men bid them call.



2. When they did, Enoch, Moses and Elijah looked from above the gate. To them it was told: "Pilgrims from the City of Destruction."



3. Then each of the pilgrims gave in the certificate which he had received in the beginning. These were carried in to the King.



4. When the King had read the certificates He said: "Where are the men?" He was answered: "They are standing without the gate." The King then commanded to open the gate. "The righteous nation which guards the truth," He said, "may enter in." Now I saw in my dream Christian and Hopeful go in through the gate.

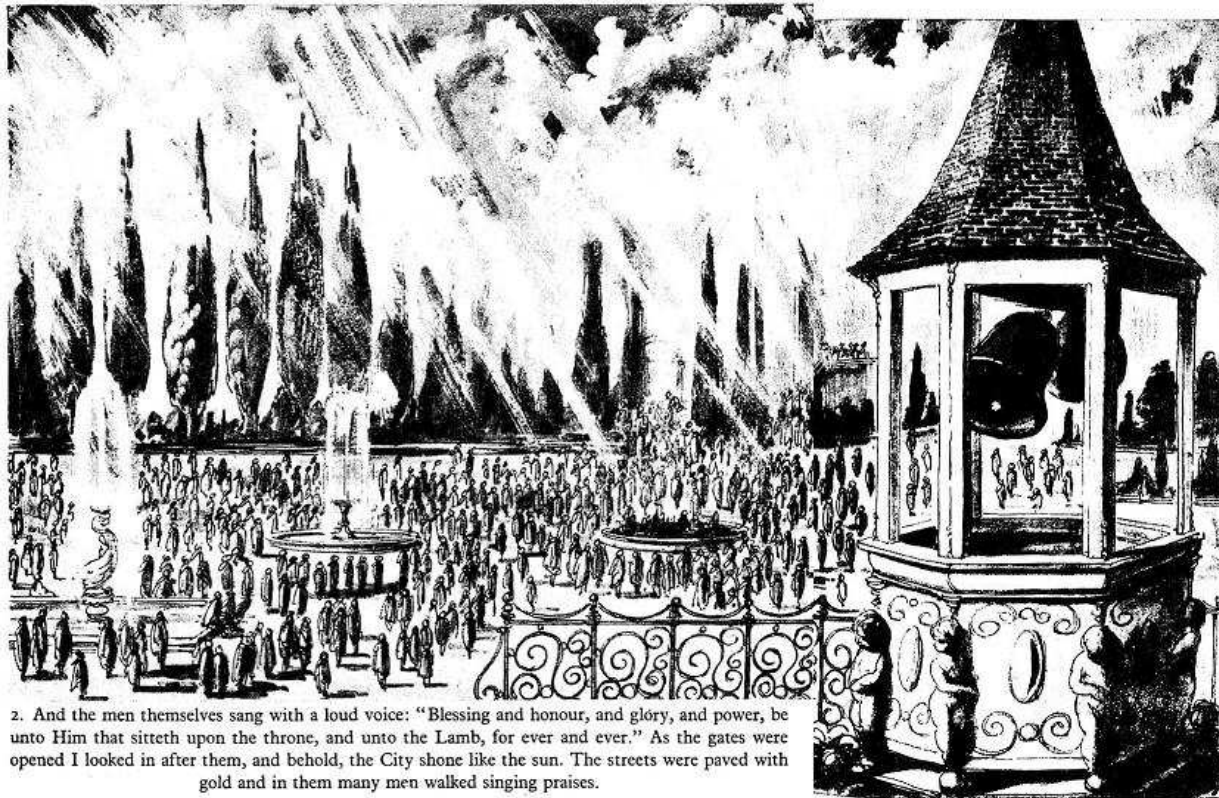




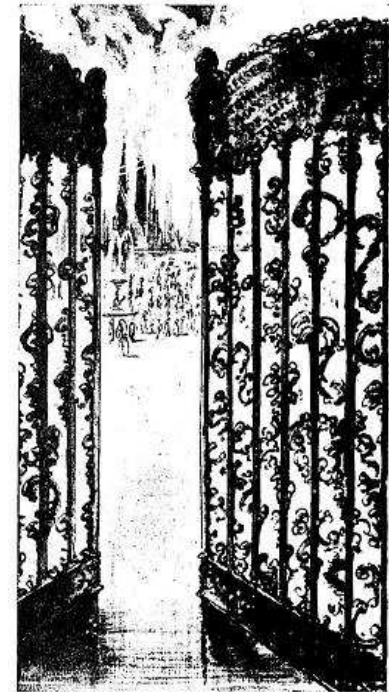
1. As Christian and Hopeful entered the gate they were transfigured and had raiment put on that shone like gold. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy.



3. There were also of them that had wings; and they answered one another without ceasing, saying: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord."



2. And the men themselves sang with a loud voice: "Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." As the gates were opened I looked in after them, and behold, the City shone like the sun. The streets were paved with gold and in them many men walked singing praises.



4. And after that they shut up the gates. When I saw this, I wished myself among them. But, after gazing on all these things, I turned my head to look back.

## The Fate of Ignorance



1. I saw Ignorance come to the river side. He soon got over, for one Vain-hope, a ferryman, helped him over in his boat. So he ascended the hill, and came to the gate, only he came alone.



2. He looked at the writing that was above the gate, then began to knock. The men that looked over the top of the gate asked him for his certificate that they might show it to the King. He fumbled in his bosom and could find none. So they told the King.



3. He commanded the two Shining Ones to seize Ignorance and take him away and bind him hand and foot. They carried him to the door in the side of the hill and put him in there. Then I saw that there was a way to hell even from the very gates of heaven.



4. So I awoke, and behold, it was a dream.

bed, and there yo did hazer con ella to her content; and so with some rest spent the night in bed, being most absolutely resolved, if ever I can master this bout, never to give her occasion while I live of more trouble of this or any other kind, there being no curse in the world so great as this of the difference between myself and her; and therefore I do by the grace of God promise never to offend her more, and did this night begin to pray to God upon my knees alone in my chamber; which God knows I cannot yet do heartily, but I hope God will give me the grace more and more every day to fear Him, and to be true to my poor wife. This night the upholsters did finish the hanging of my best chamber, but my sorrow and trouble is so great about this business, that put me out of all joy in looking upon it or minding how it was.<sup>2</sup>

**2. Despite his promises, Pepys continued to hanker for Deb, and they had a few brief encounters. Mrs. Pepys accused him of talking to Deb in his**

**dreams and she once threatened him with red-hot tongs. But so far as is known the affair was never consummated.**

## JOHN BUNYAN 1628-1688

John Bunyan is one of the most remarkable figures in seventeenth-century literature. The son of a poor Bedfordshire tinker (a maker and mender of metal pots), he received only meager schooling and then learned his father's craft. Nothing in the circumstances of his early life could have suggested that he would become a writer known the world over.

*Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), his spiritual autobiography, records his transformation from a self-doubting sinner into an eloquent and fearless Baptist preacher (for a selection from *Grace Abounding*, go to Norton Literature Online). Preachers, both male and female, often even less educated than Bunyan, were common phenomena among the sects during the Commonwealth. They wished no ordination but the "call," and they could dispense with learning because they abounded in inspiration, inner light, and the gifts conferred by the Holy Spirit. In November 1660, the Anglican Church began to persecute and silence the dissenting sects. Jails filled with unlicensed Nonconformist preachers, and Bunyan was one of the prisoners. Refusing to keep silent, he chose imprisonment and so for twelve years remained in Bedford jail, preaching to his fellow prisoners and writing religious books. Upon his release, he was called to the pastorate of a Nonconformist group in Bedford. It was during a second imprisonment, in 1675, when the Test Act was once again rigorously enforced against Nonconformists, that he wrote his greatest work, *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come* (1678), revised and augmented in the third edition (1679). Bunyan was a prolific writer: part 2 of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, dealing with the journey of Christian's wife and children, appeared in 1684; *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, in 1680; *The Holy War*, in 1682. And these major works form only a small part of all his writings.

*The Pilgrim's Progress* is the most popular allegory in English. Its basic metaphor—life is a journey—is simple and familiar; the objects that the pilgrim Christian meets are homely and commonplace: a quagmire, the highway, the bypaths and shortcuts through pleasant meadows, the inn, the steep hill, the town fair on market day, and the river that must be forded. As in the equally homely parables of Jesus, however, these simple things are charged with spiritual significance. Moreover, this is a tale of adventure. If the road that Christian travels is the King's Highway, it is also a perilous path along which we encounter giants, wild beasts, hobgoblins, and the terrible Apol-

lyon, "the angel of the bottomless pit," whom Christian must fight. Bunyan keeps the tale firmly based on human experience, and his style, modeled on the prose of the English Bible, together with his concrete language and carefully observed details, enables even the simplest reader to share the experiences of the characters. What could be better than the following sentence? "Some cry out against sin even as the mother cries out against her child in her lap, when she calleth it slut and naughty girl, and then falls to hugging and kissing it." *The Pilgrim's Progress* is no longer a household book, but it survives in the phrases it gave to our language: "the slough of despond," "the house beautiful," "Mr. Worldly-Wiseman," and "Vanity Fair." And it lives again for anyone who reads beyond the first page.

### *From The Pilgrim's Progress*

*From This World to That Which Is to Come:  
Delivered under the Similitude of a Dream*

#### [CHRISTIAN SETS OUT FOR THE CELESTIAL CITY]

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a den, and I laid me down in that place to sleep; and, as I slept, I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back (Isaiah lxiv.6; Luke xiv.33; Psalms xxxviii.4; Habakkuk ii.2; Acts xvi.31). I looked and saw him open the book and read therein; and, as he read, he wept, and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying, "What shall I do?" (Acts ii.37).

In this plight, therefore, he went home and refrained himself as long as he could, that his wife and children should not perceive his distress; but he could not be silent long, because that his trouble increased. Wherefore at length he brake his mind to his wife and children; and thus he began to talk to them. O my dear wife, said he, and you the children of my bowels, I your dear friend am in myself undone by reason of a burden that lieth hard upon me; moreover, I am for certain informed that this our city will be burned with fire from heaven, in which fearful overthrow both myself, with thee, my wife, and you, my sweet babes, shall miserably come to ruin, except (the which yet I see not) some way of escape can be found, whereby we may be delivered. At this his relations were sore amazed; not for that they believed that what he had said to them was true, but because they thought that some frenzy distemper<sup>1</sup> had got into his head; therefore, it drawing towards night, and they hoping that sleep might settle his brains, with all haste they got him to bed; but the night was as troublesome to him as the day; wherefore, instead of sleeping, he spent it in sighs and tears. So when the morning was come, they would know how he did. He told them, Worse and worse; he also set to talking to them again, but they began to be hardened. They also thought to drive away his distemper by harsh and surly carriages<sup>2</sup> to him: sometimes they would deride, sometimes they would chide, and sometimes they would quite neglect

1. A malady causing madness. The use of *frenzy* as an adjective was not uncommon in the 17th

century,  
2. Behavior.



him. Wherefore he began to retire himself to his chamber, to pray for and pity them, and also to condole his own misery; he would also walk solitarily in the fields, sometimes reading, and sometimes praying; and thus for some days he spent his time.

Now I saw, upon a time, when he was walking in the fields, that he was (as he was wont) reading in this book, and greatly distressed in his mind; and as he read, he burst out, as he had done before, crying, "What shall I do to be saved?"

I saw also that he looked this way and that way, as if he would run; yet he stood still, because (as I perceived) he could not tell which way to go. I looked then, and saw a man named Evangelist<sup>3</sup> coming to him, who asked, Wherefore dost thou cry? (Job xxxiii.23). He answered, Sir, I perceive by the book in my hand that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to judgment (Hebrews ix.27), and I find that I am not willing to do the first (Job xvi.21), nor able to do the second (Ezekiel xxii. 14). . . .

Then said Evangelist, Why not willing to die, since this life is attended with so many evils? The man answered, Because I fear that this burden that is upon my back will sink me lower than the grave, and I shall fall into Tophet<sup>4</sup> (Isaiah xxx.33). And, sir, if I be not fit to go to prison, I am not fit to go to judgment, and from thence to execution; and the thoughts of these things make me cry.'

Then said Evangelist, If this be thy condition, why standest thou still? He answered, Because I know not whither to go. Then he gave him a parchment roll, and there was written within, "Fly from the wrath to come" (Matthew iii.7).

The man therefore read it, and looking upon Evangelist very carefully,<sup>6</sup> said, Whither must I fly? Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, Do you see yonder wicketgate?<sup>7</sup> (Matthew vii. 13, 14.) The man said, No. Then said the other, Do you see yonder shining light? (Psalms cxix.105; II Peter i.19.) He said, I think I do. Then said Evangelist, Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto; so shalt thou see the gate; at which when thou knockest it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.

So I saw in my dream that the man began to run. Now, he had not run far from his own door, but his wife and children perceiving it, began to cry after him to return; but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on, crying, Life! life! eternal life! (Luke xiv.26.) So he looked not behind him, but fled towards the middle of the plain (Genesis xix. 17).

The neighbors also came out to see him run (Jeremiah xx. 10); and as he ran some mocked, others threatened, and some cried after him to return; and, among those that did so, there were two that resolved to fetch him back by force. The name of the one was Obstinate, and the name of the other Pliable. Now by this time the man was got a good distance from them; but, however, they were resolved to pursue him, which they did, and in a little time they overtook him. Then said the man, Neighbors, wherefore are ye come? They said, To persuade you to go back with us. But he said. That can by no means be; you dwell, said he, in the City of Destruction (the place also where I was born) I see it to be so; and, dying there, sooner or later, you will sink lower than the grave, into a place that burns with fire and brimstone; be content, good neighbors, and go along with me.

3. A preacher of the Gospel; literally, a bearer of good news.

4. The place near Jerusalem where bodies and filth were burned; hence, by association, a name

for hell,

5. Cry out.

6. Sorrowfully.

7. A small gate in or beside a larger gate.

OBST. What! said Obstinate, and leave our friends and our comforts behind us?

CHR. Yes, said Christian (for that was his name), because that ALL which you shall forsake is not worthy to be compared with a little of that which I am seeking to enjoy (II Corinthians v. 17); and, if you will go along with me, and hold it, you shall fare as I myself; for there, where I go, is enough and to spare (Luke xv. 17). Come away, and prove my words.

OBST. What are the things you seek, since you leave all the world to find them?

CHR. I seek an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away (I Peter i.4), and it is laid up in heaven, and safe there (Hebrews xi.16), to be bestowed, at the time appointed, on them that diligently seek it. Read it so, if you will, in my book.

OBST. Tush! said Obstinate, away with your book; will you go back with us or no?

CHR. No, not I, said the other, because I have laid my hand to the plow (Luke ix.62).

OBST. Come, then, neighbor Pliable, let us turn again, and go home without him; there is a company of these crazed-headed coxcombs, that, when they take a fancy<sup>8</sup> by the end, are wiser in their own eyes than seven men that can render a reason (Proverbs xxvi.16).

PLI. Then said Pliable, Don't revile; if what the good Christian says is true, the things he looks after are better than ours; my heart inclines to go with my neighbor.

OBST. What! more fools still? Be ruled by me, go back; who knows whither such a brain-sick fellow will lead you? Go back, go back, and be wise.

CHR. Nay, but do thou come with thy neighbor, Pliable; there are such things to be had which I spoke of, and many more glories besides. If you believe not me, read here in this book; and for the truth of what is expressed therein, behold, all is confirmed by the blood of Him that made it (Hebrews ix. 17—22; xiii.20).

PLI. Well, neighbor Obstinate, said Pliable, I begin to come to a point,<sup>9</sup> I intend to go along with this good man, and to cast in my lot with him: but, my good companion, do you know the way to this desired place?

CHR. I am directed by a man, whose name is Evangelist, to speed me to a little gate that is before us, where we shall receive instructions about the way.

PLI. Come, then, good neighbor, let us be going. Then they went both together. <sup>4</sup> \* <sup>4</sup>

[THE SLOUGH OF DESPOND]

Now I saw in my dream, that just as they had ended this talk they drew near to a very miry slough,<sup>1</sup> that was in the midst of the plain; and they, being heedless, did both fall suddenly into the bog. The name of the slough was Despond. Here, therefore, they wallowed for a time, being grievously bedaubed with dirt; and Christian, because of the burden that was on his back, began to sink in the mire.

PLI. Then said Pliable, Ah, neighbor Christian, where are you now?

CHR. Truly, said Christian, I do not know.

PLI. At that Pliable began to be offended, and angrily said to his fellow, Is

8. Delusion. "Coxcombs": fools.

9. Decision.

1. Swamp (pronounced to rhyme with *now*).

this the happiness you have told me all this while of? If we have such ill speed at our first setting out, what may we expect 'twixt this and our journey's end? Mav I get out again with my life, you shall possess the brave<sup>2</sup> country alone for me. And, with that, he gave a desperate struggle or two, and got out of the mire on that side of the slough which was next<sup>3</sup> to his own house: so away he went, and Christian saw him no more.

Wherefore Christian was left to tumble in the Slough of Despond alone: but still he endeavored to struggle to that side of the slough that was further from his own house, and next to the wicket-gate; the which he did, but could not get out, because of the burden that was upon his back: but I beheld in my dream, that a man came to him, whose name was Help, and asked him what he did there?

CHR. Sir, said Christian, I was bid go this way by a man called Evangelist, who directed me also to yonder gate, that I might escape the wrath to come; and as I was going thither I fell in here.

HELP. But why did not you look for the steps?

CHR. Fear followed me so hard that I fled the next way, and fell in.

HELP. Then said he, Give me thy hand; so he gave him his hand, and he drew him out, and set him upon sound ground, and bid him go on his way.

Then I stepped to him that plucked him out, and said, Sir, wherefore, since over this place is the way from the City of Destruction to yonder gate, is it that this plat<sup>4</sup> is not mended, that poor travelers might go thither with more security? And he said unto me, This miry slough is such a place as cannot be mended; it is the descent whither the scum and filth that attends conviction for sin doth continually run, and therefore it was called the Slough of Despond; for still, as the sinner is awakened about his lost condition, there ariseth in his soul many fears, and doubts, and discouraging apprehensions, which all of them get together, and settle in his place. And this is the reason of the badness of this ground. <sup>4</sup> \* \*

[VANITY FAIR]<sup>5</sup>

Then I saw in my dream, that when they were got out of the wilderness, they presently saw a town before them, and the name of that town is Vanity; and at the town there is a fair kept, called Vanity Fair; it is kept all the year long; it beareth the name of Vanity Fair because the town where it is kept is lighter than vanity; and also because all that is there sold, or that cometh thither, is vanity. As is the saying of the wise, "All that cometh is vanity" (Ecclesiastes i.2, 14; ii. 11, 17; xi.8; Isaiah xl. 17).

This fair is no new-erected business, but a thing of ancient standing; I will show you the original of it.

Almost five thousand years ago, there were pilgrims walking to the Celestial City, as these two honest persons are; and Beelzebub, Apollyon, and

2. Fine.

3. Nearest.

4. A plot of ground.

5. In this, perhaps the best-known episode in the book, Bunyan characteristically turns one of the most familiar institutions in contemporary England—annual fairs—into an allegory of universal spiritual significance. Christian and his companion Faithful pass through the town of Vanity at the season of the local fair. *Vanity* means "emptiness" or "worthlessness," and hence the fair

is an allegory of worldliness and the corruption of the religious life through the attractions of the world. From earliest times numerous fairs were held for stated periods throughout Britain; to them the most important merchants from all over Europe brought their wares. The serious business of buying and selling was accompanied by all sorts of diversions—eating, drinking, and other fleshly pleasures, as well as spectacles of strange animals, acrobats, and other wonders.

Legion,<sup>6</sup> with their companions, perceiving by the path that the pilgrims made, that their way to the city lay through this town of Vanity, they contrived here to set up a fair; a fair wherein should be sold all sorts of vanity, and that it should last all the year long. Therefore at this fair are all such merchandise sold, as houses, lands, trades, places, honors, preferments,<sup>7</sup> titles, countries, kingdoms, lusts, pleasures, and delights of all sorts, as whores, bawds, wives, husbands, children, masters, servants, lives, blood, bodies, souls, silver, gold, pearls,-precious stones, and what not.

And, moreover, at this fair there is at all times to be seen jugglings, cheats, games, plays, fools, apes, knaves, and rogues, and that of every kind.

Here are to be seen, too, and that for nothing, thefts, murders, adulteries, false swearers, and that of a blood-red color.

And as in other fairs of less moment, there are the several rows and streets, under their proper names, where such and such wares are vended; so here likewise you have the proper places, rows, streets (viz., countries and kingdoms), where the wares of this fair are soonest to be found. Here is the Britain Row, the French Row, the Italian Row, the Spanish Row, the German Row, where several sorts of vanities are to be sold. But, as in other fairs, some one commodity is as the chief of all the fair, so the ware of Rome and her merchandise<sup>8</sup> is greatly promoted in this fair; only our English nation, with some others, have taken a dislike thereat.

Now, as I said, the way to the Celestial City lies just through this town where this lusty<sup>9</sup> fair is kept; and he that will go to the City, and yet not go through this town, must needs "go out of the world" (I Corinthians v. 10). The Prince of princes himself, when here, went through this town to his own country, and that upon a fair-day too,<sup>1</sup> yea, and as I think, it was Beelzebub, the chief lord of this fair, that invited him to buy of his vanities; yea, would have made him lord of the fair, would he but have done him reverence as he went through the town. (Matthew iv.8; Luke iv.5—7.) Yea, because he was such a person of honor, Beelzebub had him from street to street, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a little time, that he might, if possible, allure the Blessed One to cheapen- and buy some of his vanities; but he had no mind to the merchandise, and therefore left the town, without laying out so much as one farthing upon these vanities. This fair, therefore, is an ancient thing, of long standing, and a very great fair.

Now these pilgrims, as I said, must needs go through this fair. Well, so they did; but, behold, even as they entered into the fair, all the people in the fair were moved, and the town itself as it were in a hubbub about them; and that for several reasons: for

First, The pilgrims were clothed with such kind of raiment as was diverse from the raiment of any that traded in that fair. The people, therefore, of the fair, made a great gazing upon them: some said they were fools, some they were bedlams, and some they are outlandish' men. (I Corinthians ii.7, 8.)

Secondly, And as they wondered at their apparel, so they did likewise at their speech; for few could understand what they said; they naturally spoke

6. The "unclean spirit" sent by Jesus into the Gadarene swine (Mark 5.9). Beelzebub, prince of the devils (Matthew 12.24). Apollyon, the destroyer, "the Angel of the bottomless pit" (Revelation 9.1 1).

7. Appointments and promotions to political or ecclesiastical positions.

8. The practices and the temporal power of the

Roman Catholic Church.

9. Cheerful, lustful.

1. The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4.1-11).

2. Ask the price of.

3. Foreign. "Bedlams": lunatics from Bethlehem Hospital, the insane asylum in London.

the language of Canaan, but they that kept the fair were the men of this world; so that, from one end of the fair to the other, they seemed barbarians<sup>4</sup> each to the other.

Thirdly, But that which did not a little amuse the merchandisers was that these pilgrims set very light by all their wares; they cared not so much as to look upon them; and if they called upon them to buy, they would put their fingers in their ears, and cry, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity," and look upwards, signifying that their trade and traffic was in heaven. (Psalms cxix.37; Philippians iii.19, 20.)

One chanced mockingly, beholding the carriages of the men, to say unto them, What will ye buy? But they, looking gravely upon him, said, "We buy the truth" (Proverbs xxiii.23). At that there was an occasion taken to despise the men the more; some mocking, some taunting, some speaking reproachfully, and some calling upon others to smite them. At last things came to an hubbub and great stir in the fair, insomuch that all order was confounded. Now was word presently brought to the great one of the fair, who quickly came down, and deputed some of his most trusty friends to take these men into examination, about whom the fair was almost overturned. So the men were brought to examination; and they that sat upon them' asked them whence they came, whither they went, and what they did there, in such an unusual garb? The men told them that they were pilgrims and strangers in the world, and that they were going to their own country, which was the Heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews xi. 13—16); and that they had given no occasion to the men of the town, nor yet to the merchandisers, thus to abuse them, and to let<sup>6</sup> them in their journey, except it was for that, when one asked them what they would buy, they said they would buy the truth. But they that were appointed to examine them did not believe them to be any other than bedlams and mad, or else such as came to put all things into a confusion in the fair. Therefore they took them and beat them, and besmeared them with dirt, and then put them into the cage, that they might be made a spectacle to all the men of the fair.

[THE RIVER OF DEATH AND THE CELESTIAL CITY]

So I saw that when they<sup>7</sup> awoke, they addressed themselves to go up to the City; but, as I said, the reflection of the sun upon the City (for the City was pure gold, Revelation xxi.18) was so extremely glorious, that they could not, as yet, with open face behold it, but through an instrument made for that purpose. (II Corinthians iii. 18.) So I saw that as I went on, there met them two men, in raiment that shone like gold; also their faces shone as the light.

These men asked the pilgrims whence they came; and they told them. They also asked them where they had lodged, what difficulties and dangers, what comforts and pleasures they had met in the way; and they told them. Then said the men that met them, You have but two difficulties more to meet with, and then you are in the City.

Christian then and his companion asked the men to go along with them; so

4. The Greeks and Romans so designated all those who spoke a foreign tongue. "Canaan": the Promised Land, ultimately conquered by the Children of Israel (Joshua 4) and settled by them; hence the pilgrims speak the language of the Bible and of the true religion. Dissenters were notorious for their habitual use of biblical language.

5. Interrogated and tried them.

6. Hinder.

7. Christian and his companion. Hopeful. Ignorance, who appears tragically in the final paragraph, had tried to accompany the two pilgrims but had dropped behind because of his hobbling gait.

they told them they would. But, said they, you must obtain it by your own faith. So I saw in my dream that they went on together till they came in sight of the gate.

Now I further saw that betwixt them and the gate was a river, but there was no bridge to go over; the river was very deep. At the sight, therefore, of this river, the pilgrims were much stunned;<sup>8</sup> but the men that went with them said, You must go through, or you cannot come at the gate.

The-pilgrims then began to inquire if there was no other way to the gate; to which they answered, Yes; but there hath not any, save two, to wit, Enoch and Elijah,<sup>9</sup> been permitted to tread that path, since the foundation of the world, nor shall, until the last trumpet shall sound. (I Corinthians xv.51, 52.) The pilgrims then, especially Christian, began to despond in his mind, and looked this way and that, but no way could be found by them by which they might escape the river. Then they asked the men if the waters were all of a depth. They said no; yet they could not help them in that case; for, said they, you shall find it deeper or shallower, as you believe in the King of the place.

They then addressed themselves to the water; and entering, Christian began to sink, and crying out to his good friend Hopeful, he said, I sink in deep waters; the billows go over my head, all his waves go over me! Selah.<sup>1</sup>

Then said the other, Be of good cheer, my brother, I feel the bottom, and it is good. Then said Christian, Ah, my friend, the sorrows of death have compassed me about; I shall not see the land that flows with milk and honey. And with that a great darkness and horror fell upon Christian, so that he could not see before him. Also here he in great measure lost his senses, so that he could neither remember nor orderly talk of any of those sweet refreshments that he had met with in the way of his pilgrimage. But all the words that he spake still tended to discover<sup>2</sup> that he had horror of mind, and heart-fears that he should die in that river, and never obtain entrance in at the gate. Here also, as they that stood by perceived, he was much in the troublesome thoughts of the sins that he had committed, both since and before he began to be a pilgrim. 'Twas also observed that he was troubled with apparitions of hobgoblins and evil spirits; for ever and anon he would intimate so much by words. Hopeful, therefore, here had much ado to keep his brother's head above water; yea, sometimes he would be quite gone down, and then, ere a while, he would rise up again half dead. Hopeful also would endeavor to comfort him, saying, Brother, I see the gate and men standing by to receive us; but Christian would answer, 'Tis you, 'tis you they wait for; you have been Hopeful ever since I knew you. And so have you, said he to Christian. Ah, brother, said he, surely if I was right he would now arise to help me; but for my sins he hath brought me into the snare, and hath left me. Then said Hopeful, My brother, you have quite forgot the text, where it is said of the wicked, "There are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men" (Psalms lxxiii.4, 5). These troubles and distresses that you go through in these waters are no sign that God hath forsaken you, but are sent to try you, whether you will call to mind that which heretofore you have received of his goodness, and live upon him in your distresses.

Then I saw in my dream that Christian was as in a muse<sup>3</sup> a while, to whom

8. Amazed.

9. Both were "translated" alive to heaven (Genesis 5,24, Hebrews 11,5, 2 Kings 2,11-12).

1. A word of uncertain meaning that occurs fre-

quently at the end of a verse in the Psalms. Bunyan may have supposed it to signify the end.

2. Reveal.

3. A deep meditation.

also Hopeful added this word. Be of good cheer. Jesus Christ maketh thee whole. And with that Christian brake out with a loud voice, Oh, I see him again! and he tells me, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee" (Isaiah xliii.2). Then they both took courage, and the Enemy was after that as still as a stone, until they were gone over. Christian therefore presently found ground to stand upon, and so it followed that the rest of the river was but shallow. Thus they got over. Now, upon the bank of the river on the other side, they saw the two Shining Men again, who there waited for them. Wherefore, being come out of the river, they saluted<sup>4</sup> them saying. We are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those that shall be heirs of salvation. Thus they went along towards the gate. \* \* \*

Now when they were come up to the gate, there was written over it in letters of gold, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation xxii.14).

Then I saw in my dream, that the Shining Men bid them call at the gate; the which, when they did, some from above looked over the gate, to wit, Enoch, Moses, and Elijah, etc., to whom it was said, These pilgrims are come from the City of Destruction, for the love that they bear to the King of this place; and then the pilgrims gave in unto them each man his certificate, which they had received in the beginning; those, therefore, were carried in to the King, who, when he had read them, said, Where are the men? To whom it was answered, They are standing without the gate. The King then commanded to open the gate, "That the righteous nation," said he, "which keepeth the truth, may enter in" (Isaiah xxvi.2).

Now I saw in my dream that these two men went in at the gate; and lo, as they entered, they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on that shone like gold. There was also that met them with harps and crowns, and gave them to them: the harps to praise withal, and the crowns in token of honor. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, "ENTER YE INTO THE JOY OF OUR LORD" (Matthew xxv.21). I also heard the men themselves, that they sang with a loud voice, saying, "BLESSING AND HONOR, GLORY AND POWER, BE TO HIM THAT SITTETH UPON THE THRONE, AND TO THE LAMB FOREVER AND EVER" (Revelation v. 13).

Now just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and, behold, the City shone like the sun; the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men, with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal.

There were also of them that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord" (Revelation iv.8). And after that they shut up the gates, which when I had seen I wished myself among them.

Now while I was gazing upon all these things, I turned my head to look back, and saw Ignorance come up to the riverside; but he soon got over, and that without half that difficulty which the other two men met with. For it happened that there was then in that place one Vain-hope, a ferryman, that with his boat helped him over; so he, as the other, I saw, did ascend the hill to come up to the gate, only he came alone; neither did any man meet him with the least encouragement. When he was come up to the gate, he looked

4. Greeted.



up to the writing that was above, and then began to knock, supposing that entrance should have been quickly administered to him; but he was asked by the men that looked over the top of the gate, Whence came you? and what would you have? He answered, I have eat and drank in the presence of the King, and he has taught in our streets. Then they asked him for his certificate, that they might go in and show it to the King; so he fumbled in his bosom for one, and found none. Then said they, Have you none? But the man answered never a word. So they told the King, but he would not come down to see him, but commanded the two Shining Ones that conducted Christian and Hopeful to the City, to go out and take Ignorance, and bind him hand and foot, and have him away. Then they took him up, and carried him through the air, to the door that I saw in the side of the hill, and put him in there. Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction. So I awoke, and behold it was a dream.

1 6 7 8

## JOHN LOCKE

### 1632-1704

John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) is "a history-book," according to Laurence Sterne, "of what passes in a man's own mind." Like Montaigne's essays, it aims to explore the human mind in general by closely watching one particular mind. When Locke analyzed his ideas, the ways they were acquired and put together, he found they were clear when they were based on direct experience and adequate when they were clear. Usually, it appeared, problems occurred when basic ideas were blurred or confused or did not refer to anything determinate. Thus a critical analysis of the ideas in an individual mind could lead straight to a rule about adequate ideas in general and the sort of subject where adequate ideas were possible. On the basis of such a limitation, individuals might reach rational agreement with one another and so set up an area of natural law, within which a common rule of understanding was available.

Locke's new "way of ideas" strikes a humble, antidogmatic note, but readers quickly perceived its far-reaching implications. By basing knowledge on the ideas immediately "before the mind," Locke comports with and helps codify the movement of his times away from the authority of traditions of medieval, scholastic philosophy. His approach also alarmed some divines who argued that the foundation of human life—the mysteries of faith—could never be reduced to clear, distinct ideas. Locke indirectly accepts the Christian scriptures in the *Essay* in the midst of his famous critique of "enthusiasm," the belief in private revelation, but his main impulse is to restrain rather than to encourage religious speculations. (His fullest theological work, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, 1695, argues that scriptural revelation is necessary for right-thinking people but not incompatible with ordinary reasonable beliefs gathered from personal experience and history.) The *Essay* also contains an unsettling discussion of personal identity (in the chapter "Of Identity and Diversity" added to the second edition in 1694). Locke argues that a person's sense of selfhood derives not from the "identity of soul" but rather from "consciousness of present and past actions": I am myself now because I remember my past, not because a unique substance ("me") underlies everything I experience. This account drew critical responses from numerous distinguished thinkers throughout the eighteenth century, notably Bishop Joseph Butler (1692-1752).

## CHAPTER 27

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# WILLIAM BLAKE

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## CHRISTOPHER BURDON

The labour of that celebrant of Energy and the Prolific, William Blake (1757–1827), has itself generated an energetic and prolific diversity of interpretation. Though little known to his contemporaries and largely forgotten after his death, Blake's huge output of art and poetry inspired a range of twentieth-century readers who drew from him or read into him principles democratic and aristocratic, libertarian and nationalist, activist and quietist, Christian, Gnostic, and atheist. Blake can be held accountable for this confusion. A consistent rebel against the political, religious, and cultural regime under which he lived, he resisted it sometimes by direct and prophetic aphorisms, sometimes by verse of disarming simplicity or 'innocence', but at other times by engravings of extreme obscurity and complexity—emulating Erin's lament in his triumphant poem *Jerusalem* that 'deep dissimulation is the only defence an honest man has left' (*J* 49: 23).<sup>1</sup>

Divergent estimations of how, when, and why Blake dissimulates, of what are the origins and the aims of his obscurity, are the cause of the wildly conflicting range of ideologies he is said to propound and of causes for which he is purloined. Blake's alter ego, the prophetic builder Los, notoriously proclaims,

I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans  
I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to create.  
(*J* 10. 20–1)

<sup>1</sup> All quotations from Blake are from Erdman's edition. References to the engraved books are to the plate and line; those to *The Four Zoas* to page and line, following Erdman's numeration in both cases; those to other works to the page number in Erdman. (=E). Individual works are abbreviated thus: *A* = *America*; *BU* = *The Book of Urizen*; *EG* = 'The Everlasting Gospel'; *FZ* = *Vala, or The Four Zoas*; *J* = *Jerusalem*; *M* = *Milton*; *MHH* = *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*; *SIE* = *Songs of Innocence and Experience*; *VDA* = *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*; *VLJ* = 'A Vision of the Last Judgment'.

Through his 'Poetic Genius' and laborious mode of production Blake the antinomian visionary indeed constructed an increasingly systematic mythopoeia, one which resists elucidation. Yet it purports to be a redemptive system, progressing towards 'The End of The Dream' in his confused and uncompleted epic *The Four Zoas*, when

The war of swords departed now  
The dark Religions are departed & sweet Science reigns

(FZ 139. 9–10)

or towards the climax of his *Jerusalem*, both organized and liberative, when

The Four Living Creatures Chariots of Humanity Divine Incomprehensible  
In beautiful Paradises expand These are the Four Rivers of Paradise  
And the Four Faces of Humanity fronting the Four Cardinal Points  
Of Heaven going forward forward irresistible from Eternity to Eternity

(J98. 24–7)

Can such a 'System' ever serve or become systematic *theology*? J. G. Davies's *The Theology of William Blake*—a concept and title which would have incurred vigorous protest from the poet—was an informed, valiant, but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to read Blake according to the traditional categories of Christian theology. Davies analysed Blake's 'doctrine of God', his 'doctrine of Christ and redemption', his 'doctrine of man', and his 'ethics', presenting the poet as a sincere but anticlerical Christian (Davies 1948). Certainly Blake is *not* dissimulating when he calls himself a Christian: 'I still & shall to Eternity Embrace Christianity and Adore him who is the Express image of God', he writes in 1802 to Thomas Butts (E 720). Indeed, apart from some revivalist hymns, his is perhaps the most Christocentric poetry ever written in English, and the prominence in his later work of Jesus and of that Saviour's effect in human history cast doubt on the attempts by other scholars—such as Kathleen Raine and Harold Bloom—to read him gnostically or psychoanalytically. But undoubtedly he was, in terms of Christian tradition, not just eccentric but heretical. More convincing than Raine's esoteric Gnostic or Davies's mildly unorthodox Christian is Thomas Altizer's prophet of the death of God, who 'created a whole new form of vision embodying a modern radical and spiritual expression of Christianity' demanding 'a new form of theological understanding' (Altizer 1967: p. xi). Perhaps mediating between such positions is the more historical argument of Robert Ryan that Blake (and other 'Romantic' poets) proclaimed a new religious reformation restoring the spirit of Jesus to a disenchanted world (Ryan 1997: 43–79).

Rather than 'create a system' into which to insert Blake's 'theology', my aim will first be to reflect on *how* this difficult poet-artisan-prophet-artist can be read theologically. I will then examine particular motifs, symbols, and beliefs in Blake and consider how these might inform or subvert Christian and other theologies today.

## SEEING, HEARING, AND THINKING BLAKE

Blake's work causes offence to the theological thinker most obviously by its visionary and even authoritarian bent. However transcendent their ultimate subject, theologians are generally trained to think critically and rationally. But for Blake, the *krisis* or judgement is not detached reflection but the actual experience of living, reading, creating, and desiring; the *ratio* or Reason is not the supreme method of thought but an oppressive or death-dealing denial of God, epitomized in the unholy trinity of Bacon, Newton, and Locke. Blake does indeed raise the intellectual or spiritual world above that perceived by the senses, 'the things of Vegetative and Generative Nature' (*VLJ*; E 555), and can be called an insistently dialectical thinker. But his dialectic is 'Mental Fight', and its outcome not demonstrated Truth but the apocalyptic praxis of 'Brotherhood', even 'an improvement of sensual enjoyment' (*M* 1; *MHH* 14). Moreover, the dominant theological strands in the Abrahamic religions have been sceptical of vision and prophecy, especially when these are put forward by a lay artisan: authority rests in Scripture interpreted by institutional tradition. But Blake is insistent on his own vision, which is both personal and cosmic, which uses Christian Scripture as its fulcrum but radically rewrites that Scripture. He does not expound law, gospel, and prophecy. Instead, in his 'Bible of Hell' he 'stamps the stony law to dust', re-presents the gospel of Jesus as antinomian liberty, and dines with Isaiah and Ezekiel on equal terms (*MHH* 25; 23; 12). He is his own prophet, not the exegete of others' wisdom, and he writes his own scripture.

*Milton* is the work which most insistently explores the poet's own vocation and authority, and near its beginning—significantly seven times over, like the trumpets of the Apocalypse—the poet arrogates the rhetoric of prophet, Bible, and church to proclaim in his own voice, 'Mark well my words! they are of your eternal salvation' (*M* 2–11). 'The Bard', whose song occupies a large part of *Milton* Book 1 and who is both Milton and Blake, asserts uncompromisingly the divine authority of the poet-prophet's words, in a manner bound to engender scepticism in the critical theological mind:

I am Inspired! I know it is Truth! For I Sing  
According to the inspiration of the Poetic Genius  
Who is the eternal all-protecting Divine Humanity  
To whom be Glory & Power & Dominion Evermore Amen

(*M* 13. 51–14: 3)

On plate 15 of the poem, Milton falls on and enters Blake's left foot, the younger poet taking on his mantle and inspiration to redeem and perfect his mentor's work. Later, on plate 22, the eternal prophetic 'zoa' Los encounters and inhabits the London engraver even more intimately and authoritatively:

... trembling I stood  
Exceedingly with fear & terror, standing in the Vale  
Of Lambeth: but he kissed me and wishd me health.

And I became One Man with him arising in my strength:  
 Twas too late now to recede. Los had enterd into my soul:  
 His terrors now posses'd me whole! I arose in fury and strength

(M 22 [24]. 9–14)

There follow from Los's lips a proclamation of prophetic authority and from his hands the ceaseless labour of artistic creation—in a Lambeth workshop, in Eternity.

How can the enlightened mind tolerate such assertions of vision and authority? Although in the preface to *Milton* Blake engraves the prayer of the otherwise despised Moses, 'Would to God that all the Lords people were Prophets', it is generally his own prophecy that is foregrounded; and that prophecy is in contention with the spirit of the age, as Los is in contention with another 'zoa' Urizen ('Your Reason'—that is, the Christian and Deist God, the force of nature, law, and religion). Just as the hearing of Scripture is traditionally held to convert the reader and convict him of sin (as in Augustine's *Confessions*, Book 8), so Blake expects the hearing of his own words to be a force of judgement on the reader. Over the address 'To the Public' at the beginning of *Jerusalem* he engraves at the top of one side of the plate SHEEP and at the top of the other GOATS, as a sign that the reading of what follows is to be an apocalyptic experience. Nor is this judgement intended to be merely proleptic or symbolic; it is 'the last judgment' now. Into his detailed description of his own outwardly traditional picture of the Last Judgment, Blake interjects assertions of the present judging power of his own work and of its eternal origin:

<When> Imaginative Art & Science & all Intellectual Gifts all the Gifts of the Holy Ghost are [*despisd*] lookd upon as of no use & only Contention remains to Man then the Last Judgment begins & its Vision is seen by the [*Imaginative Eye*] of Every one according to the situation he holds . . . The Last Judgment is one of these Stupendous Visions[.] I have represented it as I saw it . . . The Nature of my Work is Visionary or Imaginative it is an Endeavour to Restore <what the Ancients calld> the Golden Age . . . whenever any Individual Rejects Error & Embraces Truth a Last Judgment passes upon that Individual[.] (E 554–62)

'Vision or Imagination', with which Blake identifies the words of the Bible as well as his own work, 'is a Representation of what Eternally Exists' and so is 'calld Jerusalem'. This is contrasted with 'Fable or Allegory . . . Formd by the Daughters of Memory'. It is of course on 'memory' that most religion and theology, most biblical exegesis and literary criticism, are built—on tradition and reason and catechesis and history and on the classical patterns that Blake despised. The theologian, a Daughter of Memory, is challenged by the independence and authority of Blake's work to decide whether she accepts the possibility and the veracity of what the poet has *seen*.

That vision is not with 'my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye' (VLJ; E 566); it does not belong to the world of Newton's mathematics or of Venetian painting (two of Blake's pet hates). At the same time it is not a purely solipsistic or Gnostic vision. Blake's understanding, developed from his early *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* through the early prophecies (especially *The Book of Urizen*) and into *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, is that humanity's five senses have contracted, so that the eyes in particular become restricted to 'single vision'. 'Man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern' (MHH 14; cf. BU 11. 10–15). True or 'fourfold vision' for

Blake is an apocalyptic *expansion* or transformation of these same senses—not the acquisition of some extraneous or spiritual sense. While the visionary or poet may be the agent of such transformation, this is not a matter of private vision but of the redemption of all humanity, of the ‘One Man’ or Albion. So the climax of *The Four Zoas* is a moment of vision:

The Sun has left his blackness & has found a fresher morning  
 And the mild moon rejoices in the clear & cloudless night  
 And Man walks forth from midst of the fires the evil is all consumd  
 His eyes behold the Angelic spheres arising night & day  
 The stars consumd like a lamp blown out & in their stead behold  
 The Expanding Eyes of Man behold the depths of wondrous worlds

(FZ 138. 20–5)

This is a mythical fulfilment of the didactic pronouncements made at the beginning of Blake’s career in the engravings *There is No Natural Religion*. On the one hand, ‘The desires & perceptions of man untaught by any thing but organs of sense, must be limited to objects of sense’; on the other, ‘Mans perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception . . . The desire of Man being Infinite the possession is Infinite & himself Infinite’ (E 2–3). And in the vibrant early engraved work *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, which is a combination of prophetic oracle, political manifesto, and *ars poetica*, comes the similar pronouncement: ‘If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: infinite’ (MHH 14).

Blake’s prophetic work, then, is one of cleansing the doors of perception, which in his later poetry receives an explicitly Christian dedication as well as a claim to visionary authority:

I rest not from my great task!  
 To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the Immortal Eyes  
 Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought: into Eternity  
 Ever expanding into the Bosom of God. the Human Imagination  
 O Saviour pour upon me thy Spirit of meekness & love . . .

(J 5. 17–21)

Blake thus requires from the theologian, from any critical reader, a suspension of disbelief. Yet this does not mean an uncritical submission to his vision or words, precisely because his creation is a dialectical one. Reading Blake’s words and pictures is not just having the doors of your perception cleansed by some direct vision. In a riposte to Dr Trusler, who had said that Blake needed ‘somebody to Elucidate my Ideas’, he wrote: ‘That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care. The wisest of the Ancients considered what is not too Explicit as the fittest for Instruction because it rouzes the faculties to act’ (E 702). Los’s labours at his forge and Blake’s in his workshop are to be joined by the labours in the reader’s mind and senses. Hence the troubling dialectic between text and design in the engraved books, even in the ‘Songs of Innocence’. The design frequently does not ‘illustrate’ the text’s content but sits in juxtaposition or in opposition to it: their relationship ‘seeks to stimulate the imaginative energy of the reader, who is brought in to play as an active intelligence that must

strive to make sense of the difference' (Mee 1992: 17; cf. Burdon 1997: 191–3). Hence also what S. L. Carr calls the 'radical variability' in Blake's engravings (Carr 1986: 182–3). There is no *Urtext* or canonical version of any of these books; rather, each surviving copy divulges to the reader and requires from her a different mental task. The books are particular and highly detailed, literally produced with more labour than any other poet's, yet they are also provisional and indeterminate. And given that Blake's symbolic world draws so heavily on the Bible, such indeterminacy must affect also the reading of Scripture, for Blake's whole ethic and method of production 'challenges the notion of a hegemonic text' (Rowland 2003: 175).

Stephen Behrendt's introduction to *Reading William Blake* explores this dialectical process of writing, drawing, and reading in some detail, remarking that

[w]e cannot approach Blake's illuminated poetry carelessly, without our wits about us. Blake's art challenges us at every turn to confront again the archetypal temptation to our own individual moral, spiritual, intellectual, and aesthetic self-sufficiency, replaying in endless variations the temptation . . . to doubt ourselves and to defer to another. Hence reading Blake's words is an exercise in continual judging and choosing, from which process emerges a sense not just of the 'meaning(s)' of Blake's texts but also, more important, of ourselves as informed readers and as empowered human entities. (Behrendt 1992: 26)

If this is so, then Blake, the antinomian enemy of 'Religion', is paradoxically the facilitator of a profoundly ethical and religious reading. His very eccentricity, profusion of detail, delight in aphorisms and 'contraries', offensive and authoritarian pose, his madness perhaps, are there to rouse the faculties to act and so initiate a revolutionary praxis of Christian and artistic living (those two adjectives have for Blake the same meaning, as he insists in the address 'To the Christians' prefacing the last book of *Jerusalem*). 'Blake was not the first (see the Book of Revelation) nor the last (see van Gogh's late paintings) to plunge us into a kind of madness to lift us outside the normal so that we can see normality as only one among many imaginable ways of reading, seeing, feeling, thinking, living' (Essick and Viscomi 1993: 10).

It is with this energetic, imaginative, and ultimately practical reading stance that I proceed to outline some of Blake's principal motifs and symbols—his 'beliefs', perhaps—which can inform or infuriate theological thinking. These are: the place of energy and imagination; the notions of 'Divine Humanity' and 'One Man' or Albion; and the depictions of law, sin, liberty, and forgiveness.

## 'I WILL NOT CEASE FROM MENTAL FIGHT'

Like Jesus, like the biblical prophets, Blake repeatedly summons his readers to 'Awake!'<sup>2</sup> This could be seen as an ascetical call, and certainly Blake's own prolific

<sup>2</sup> 'Awake!' in the imperative occurs 41 times in Blake's three major prophecies (× 14 in *FZ*; × 8 in *M*; × 19 in *J*).



labours are a kind of *askēsis*. Yet it is one far removed in spirit—if not necessarily in ultimate goal—from traditional Christian asceticism. Blake opens the main section of his early apocalyptic tract *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* with erotic designs of embracing and exulting nudes, between which is announced ‘Without Contraries is no progression . . . Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy’ (*MHH* 3). The next three plates develop concisely and polemically these ‘contraries’, undermining religious and moral dualism, attacking ‘those who restrain desire’ and proclaiming ‘Energy is Eternal Delight’, while the ‘Proverbs of Hell’ that follow (pls. 7–10) celebrate that energy in a witty and deliberate subversion of respectable morality and religion. For Blake in 1790, ‘energy’ is not moral or mystical but sexual and political. It is embodied in many of the early prophecies in the fiery Orc. In the designs of *America*, Orc is depicted as an amalgam of Prometheus and the risen Christ, in opposition to the Jehovah-like Newtonian god Urizen who attempts to control his universe by physical and moral law. As the myth develops in *The Four Zoas*, the sexual element of Orcian energy diminishes and its political element becomes more coded, yet energy remains ‘Eternal Delight’. Jealous Urizen, clutching his books, addresses the chained and tortured Orc in fear of the latter’s terrible combination of rage and delight:

Pity for thee movd me to break my long & dark repose  
 And to reveal myself before thee in a form of wisdom  
 Yet thou dost laugh at all these tortures & this horrible place  
 Yet throw thy limbs these fires abroad that back return upon thee  
 While thou reposest throwing rage on rage feeding thyself  
 With visions of sweet bliss far other than this burning clime  
 Sure thou art bathd in rivers of delight on verdant fields  
 Walking in joy in bright Expanses sleeping on bright clouds  
 With visions of delight so lovely that they urge thy rage  
 Tenfold with fierce desire . . .

(FZ 78. 30–9)

To this Orc retorts, ‘Curse thy hoary brows . . . my fierce fires are better than thy snows.’ The conflict of the two immortals is an ethical and political one, but it is also profoundly theological, allegorizing the biblical antinomy of Moses and Jesus and the Lutheran antinomy of law and gospel. Energy, not order, is the evangelical spirit, embodied as Orc fades from Blake’s myth in the redemptive figure of Los and ultimately, in *Jerusalem*, in Jesus the Lamb of God and ‘bright Preacher of Life’ (*J* 77; cf. *J* 7. 65–70; Altizer 1967: 106–7). And the later, more explicitly Christian Blake does not renounce, though he does refine, his early revelation that ‘Energy is the only life and is from the Body’ (*MHH* 4).

We might call this a ‘dialectical theology’: Altizer in particular has aligned Blake with his contemporary Hegel, while Ryan compares him with Karl Barth (Altizer 1967: 28–32; Ryan 1997: 73–5). Yet the conflict of the ‘zoas’ in Blake’s myth moves not towards a logical synthesis, even a provisional one, but towards a humane redemption that *remains* energetic and bodily. The ‘contraries’ go deeper than dialectical antitheses, to produce what Dan Miller calls ‘a counter-dialectic’. ‘Blake’s “progression”’, writes

Miller of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 'is not necessarily dialectical advance . . . The truth of contrariety is just the truth that cannot be told, except in and through contrary representation' (Miller 1985: 504–5). The 'mental fight' of the zoas, of Blake, and of his readers is therefore a spiritual one too, which does not flinch from using military metaphors, such as those from the Letter to the Ephesians that Blake writes as the epigraph to *The Four Zoas*, or those used to epitomize Los's labours:

I took the sighs & tears, & bitter groans:  
I lifted them into my Furnaces; to form the spiritual sword.  
That lays open the hidden heart: I drew forth the pang  
Of sorrow red hot: I workd it on my resolute anvil . . .  
Loud roar my Furnaces and loud my hammer is heard:  
I labour day & night, I behold the soft affections  
Condense beneath my hammer into forms of cruelty  
But still I labour in hope, tho' still my tears flow down. . . .  
That Enthusiasm and Life may not cease . . .

(J 9. 17–31)

The activity of Los—in *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*—is a story of rage and of labour, but the 'mental fight' issues above all in *building*. There is much building going on in Blake's prophecies, and not all of it is benign. Urizen frenetically and solipsistically constructs a 'wide world of solid obstruction', founded on '[t]he secrets of dark contemplation' and celebrating 'One King, one God, one Law' (BU 4). This is the natural world. By contrast, Los's Golgonooza, the city of art and production, is constructed with human collaboration and intricacy. Golgonooza forms the architectural foundation of Jerusalem, and it is crucial that in all three poems the city of eternal redemption does not simply descend from heaven but is the fruit of human labour and imagination. To engage in its construction is the prophetic calling of humanity and *a fortiori* of the Christian, that is, the artist: 'Let every Christian as much as in him lies engage himself openly & publicly before all the World in some Mental pursuit for the Building up of Jerusalem' (J 77; cf. Ferber 1985: 145–51). All is built by art, not received from divine gift or authority. And—no doubt calling on the particularity as well as the clear draughtsmanship of his own engraving practice—Blake insists on the artist's devotion to '*Minute Particulars*'. Abhorring the broad brushwork and lush colours of Venetian painting, and practising in his own designs a unique attention to line and detail, he erects this aesthetic principle into an epistemological one as well: 'General Knowledge is Remote Knowledge it is in Particulars that Wisdom consists & Happiness too. Both in Art & in Life General Masses are as Much Art as a Pasteboard Man is Human' (VLJ (E 560); cf. Ferber 1985: 44–5). Los's triumphant prophetic speech in *Jerusalem*, pl. 91, insists that 'he who wishes to see a Vision; a perfect Whole | Must see it in its Minute Particulars', while earlier in the poem 'the living creatures' are Blake's mouthpiece for making it an ethical principle too:

He who would do good to another, must do it in Minute Particulars  
General Good is the plea of the scoundrel hypocrite & flatterer:

For Art & Science cannot exist but in minutely organized Particulars  
And not in generalizing Demonstrations of the Rational Power.

(J 55. 60–3)

To read Blake theologically, then, or to undertake theology in a Blakean spirit of energy and imagination requires a practical attention to the particular building blocks of human experience, art, and redemption and a corresponding avoidance of the general or philosophic principle from which proposition and law are derived. And because the particular must be 'organized', Los 'must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans'—though he adds in the next line 'I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create', and is described on the following plate as 'Striving with Systems to deliver Individuals from those Systems' (J 10. 20–1; 11. 5). Los/Blake is fully aware, even in the midst of the highly stylized and allegorized ordering of Golgonooza in *Jerusalem*, pls. 12–16, that System risks the political and aesthetic surrender of energy to order, of prophecy to Natural or State Religion. As Essick and Viscomi observe of *Milton*,

While his work often celebrates diversity, the energetic expression of individual consciousness, there is an equal and opposite dynamic toward totalizing systems as a way of expressing and giving shape to Blake's sense that everything is connected with everything else. . . . A poem that seems so digressive, self-interruptive, and wildly heterogeneous is in part the product of a desire for unity and a fear of leaving anything out. (Essick and Viscomi 1993: 17)

The intricate mythopeia of his longer poems—like the binding together of the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*—enacts Blake's early decree that 'Without Contraries is no progression'. And the building of systems no less than the deliverance from systems is the work of energy and imagination; that is, the dynamic and conflictual 'inspiration of the Poetic Genius | Who is the eternal all-protecting Divine Humanity | To whom be Glory & Power & Dominion Evermore Amen' (M 14 [15]. 1–3).

While it is unlikely that Blake was aware of the eastern Christian doctrine of the divine *energeia*, a theological extrapolation of his erotic and artistic sense leads to something not dissimilar.<sup>3</sup> In the early *All Religions Are One* comes the insistence that 'the Poetic Genius is the true Man . . . The Religions of all Nations are derived from each Nations different reception of the Poetic Genius which is every where call'd the Spirit of Prophecy' (E 1), and in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Ezekiel reveals that 'we of Israel taught that the Poetic Genius . . . was the first principle and all the others merely derivative' (MHH 12). But this universal poetic imagination later receives a specifically Christian definition as 'the Human Imagination | Which is the Divine Body of the Lord Jesus. blessed for ever' (M 3. 3–4; cf. J 5. 58–9). The identification of art, imagination, God, and Jesus is clearest in the aphorisms Blake engraved around his copy of the Laocoön, reinterpreted as 'YAH and his two Sons Satan and Adam'. Here we read that 'The Eternal Body of Man is The IMAGINATION. | that is God himself | The Divine Body | Yeshua JESUS we are his Members . . . ART is the Tree of

<sup>3</sup> The 'energies' of the Trinity are the outgoing powers that create and sustain the world and draw humanity towards Godlikeness.

LIFE | GOD IS JESUS.' The words of Jesus about discipleship and gospel are applied to the practice of art, and a man or woman who is not in some sense an artist or who is an 'unproductive Man' 'is not a Christian' (E 273-4). So in Blake's gospel, art replaces conventional religion: 'Prayer is the Study of Art | Praise is the Practise of Art | Fasting etc. all relate to Art.'

The Laocoön aphorisms show a sharp opposition to money and to the commodification of art. Yet this is not, as some interpreters would have it, a mere Romantic aestheticism, for Blake is consistent in identifying the divine work of art and imagination as the building of a free and fraternal 'Jerusalem' and is thus the progenitor more of artisan socialist art than of 'art for art's sake' (Ferber 1985: 54-5). What is extraordinary—what must challenge the theologian to take art and poetry as seriously as philosophy—is the directness of the identifications Blake makes and the confidence with which he derives them from the Bible. 'The Old & New Testaments are the Great Code of Art' (E 274); and though, like Homer, Virgil, and Milton, the Bible is flawed, all of them 'are addressed to the Imagination which is Spiritual Sensation & but mediately to the Understanding or Reason' (E 702-3). It is quite wrong to read this as Romantic anti-intellectualism: an engagement with poetry or art that does not engender 'mental fight' is for Blake sterile, as Milton's stern and apocalyptic rebuke to Ololon insists (*M* 40. 27-41. 28). But the intellect cannot remain bound by Urizenic Reason and Memory (Blake's 'Bacon, Locke & Newton'). Fired by divine imagination, it must take flight, like the birds that inhabit so many of Blake's margins and interlinear spaces or the one 'that cuts the airy way... an immense world of delight' (*MHH* 7). For Blake, energy and imagination, art and labour, simply *are* participation in God or in the Body of Jesus. To pierce the veil of conventional art and religion and apprehend this, and to increase the apprehension by mental fight, this is the ground of evangelical and sensual liberty.

## 'THE GREAT HUMANITY DIVINE'

Around the head and shoulders of his Laocoön/YAH Blake inscribed: 'All that we see is VISION | from Generated Organs gone as soon as come | Permanent in the Imagination; Considered | as Nothing by the NATURAL MAN' (E 273). His denigrations of 'Nature', 'Natural Man', and 'Natural Religion', of the world of 'Generation', of the 'Vegetative Universe' and 'Corporeal or Vegetative Eye', have led many readers to dub Blake a dualist or even a Gnostic. Undoubtedly his presentation of the material world's creation as a constriction and of Urizen its demiurge as oppressive draws on Platonist, Gnostic, and esoteric traditions (this is especially evident in *The Book of Urizen*). But a Gnostic, even a Christian-Gnostic Blake is ultimately unconvincing for two reasons. First, his myth of redemption is in no sense one of escape from or victory over the sensual world. His dualisms—or, to use his own

language, his 'contraries'—are not permanent but dialectical, not metaphysical but ethical. As one of the 'Proverbs of Hell' has it, 'Eternity is in love with the productions of time' (*MHH* 7): the world of time and of the body are the field of redemption. Secondly, the polarity is not between a transcendent and a material world. There is only one world, and what others would call 'the transcendent' is simply for Blake the one world truly seen—hence the repeated emphasis on 'vision'.

The first point can be illustrated from the first two plates of *Europe*. The frontispiece is the famous picture of Urizen/Jehovah known as 'The Ancient of Days'. The solitary Newtonian demiurge crouches within the fearful symmetry of the sun, leaning down to the nether world which he measures with his compasses. Here is the creator Wisdom, whose mastery appears absolute—except that, mysteriously, his white hair is blown to the left by a strong external wind. Its source is found on the opposite right-hand plate, the title page, where, facing away from Urizen, is another ancient symbol of Wisdom: the serpent with its fiery tongue is coiled, not above but among the earth's hills. The wind or spirit, like Shelley's west wind, is that of 'PROPHECY' (this word of the book's title being prominently engraved between the snake's coils and directly opposite Urizen's windswept head). The earthly and heavenly Wisdoms are literally juxtaposed—the free though earthy serpent and the god who circumscribes yet is circumscribed—and their juxtaposition opens up a dialectical reading of the words and designs in the ensuing book. That 'prophecy' ends (on pl. 15) 'in the vineyards of red France' where Los 'Call'd all his sons to the strife of blood', with the picture below of the heroic male nude saviour. On the plates between these the text encodes the European political struggle for liberty, with powerful designs of free spirits—flying birds, more serpents, leaping human nudes—contrasting with realistic depiction of plagues and human suffering and symbolic ones of the source of that oppression in 'Religion hid in War' (*J* 89. 53). Blake's sharp contraries are verbally and visually intertwined and challenge the reader to this-worldly, political judgements, just as for St Paul both 'the Spirit' and the 'principalities and powers' are embodied in this world without their meaning being exhausted by 'the flesh'. The intended outcome of the reading of *Europe*, like that of that other tract of liberty addressed to the Galatians, is not *gnōsis* but *praxis*.

For all his mythical constructions, for all his fluidity of time and space, Blake is therefore an enemy of metaphysical dualism and of a separate realm of the Transcendent. Such a realm is associated in Blake's demonology with Bacon, Newton, Locke, with Jehovah, Moses, and the druids: the world of solipsistic Urizen, in contrast to but in collusion with the merely natural world of Vala. Anticipating Feuerbach, religious dualism is unveiled in both *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem* as a human theological and pathological construct. So 'the Slumberous Man', in the power of Urizen and Vala, falls prostrate before the beautiful but 'watry shadow' which has risen 'from his wearied intellect', purloining biblical verses to pronounce himself 'nothing' (*FZ* p. 40), while in the conflicts of Albion in *Jerusalem* ch. 2, Los responds to the prayer for divine deliverance by 'raging',

Why stand we here trembling around  
 Calling on God for help; and not ourselves in whom God dwells  
 Stretching a hand to save the falling Man . . .

(*J* 38 [43]. 12–14)

The worship of the Wholly Other (whether in Jewish, Christian, pagan, or Deist form) is mocked as adherence to 'Nobodaddy' or as man's speech 'idolatrous to his own Shadow' (*FZ* 40. 12), and the positive symbols of transcendence from the book of Revelation and other biblical texts are systematically subverted (Burdon 1999: 16–24). Blake's apocalypse, in Altizer's words, 'ushers in a new Eden that abolishes all those spaces separating an external nature, an autonomous selfhood, and a transcendent God' (Altizer 1967: 196).

If the remote God is an object of derision, there are, however, scattered in Blake's works celebrations of an intimate and joyful *divine presence*. 'Infant joy' is an unmitigated good, even if 'experience' must inevitably unsettle it, and

Where Mercy, Love & Pity dwell,  
 There God is dwelling too.

(*SIE* 18; cf. *SIE* 25, 27)

At the end of both *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* the poet proclaims, 'Every thing that lives is holy' (*MHH* 27; *VDA* 8. 10). This is not a vague pantheism but is formulated in conjunction with the brilliantly concise history of religion on pl. 11 of the *Marriage*, where the development of an objectifying 'system' of deities and of priesthood and forms of worship leads men to 'forget that All deities reside in the human breast'. It is in conjunction too with the polemic of pl. 16 where 'I answer, God only Acts & Is, in existing beings or Men'. If we wish to categorize Blake's thought, which here emerges in direct and prophetic form, we cannot call this pantheistic any more than it is dualistic or monistic. It is however both theological and profoundly humanistic, even anthropocentric. And as the myth develops, the thought becomes explicitly Christocentric. For now 'God is Jesus' and addresses the poet at the beginning of *Jerusalem*, 'I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and friend' (*J* 4. 18).

In the book of Revelation, John sees 'the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband' (Rev. 21: 2). Yet his vision does not develop Jerusalem as a feminine or human figure, and the subsequent description is in architectural and mathematical terms. Blake's *Jerusalem* radically humanizes the figure of redemption. She is 'the Emanation of the Giant Albion' (that is, Man), depicted in the design of pl. 92 as lamenting beside fallen Man among the ruins of earth and its religions, and celebrated through the lips of Los as 'lovely mild Jerusalem', whose 'gates' and 'walls' are minor features of 'the soft reflected Image of the Sleeping Man' with her 'Head & Heart & Reins' (*J* 85. 21–86. 32). Salvation comes not by submission to or ascent to transcendent divinity but by the renunciation of such pretensions and by the celebration of humanity. So in *America* liberation comes from the earth in the figure of Orc, most notably in the text

and designs of pls. 1 and 6. Unmitigated divinity is a painful delusion, as Tharmas laments in his anguish:

Is this to be A God far rather would I be a Man  
To know sweet Science & to do with simple companions  
Sitting beneath a tent & viewing sheepfolds & soft pastures.

(FZ 51. 29–31)

Above all, in Blake's mature myth of the zoas (that is, of fallen and redeemed humanity), the generating force of redemption and of Jerusalem's descent is Urizen's renunciation of his arrogated selfish godhead.

The erotic embrace at the climax of *Jerusalem* (pl. 99) thus celebrates a redemption of God just as much as of man, perhaps a myth of the death of God—at least in the sense that the God of the church and of natural religion vanishes to be replaced by the human Jesus. For some, including Altizer (1967: 63–75), this pattern of death and redemption is read through the doctrinal and biblical categories of incarnation and *kenōsis*.<sup>4</sup> It is true that at the end of the early 'There is No Natural Religion' Blake adapts a familiar patristic motif to engrave 'Therefore God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is' (E 3). But in orthodox Christianity, incarnation is the enfleshment of the spiritual Son or Logos, while in some twentieth-century theology *kenōsis* is the divesting of divinity or of divine attributes. Both terms presuppose a dualist and/or trinitarian metaphysic, whereas for the heterodox Blake the distinction between God and humanity is a consequence of the fall of the 'One Man', of the recalcitrant constricted Albion to whom, in the midst of the mental fight of *Jerusalem* ch. 2, Jesus calls,

We live as One Man; for contracting our infinite senses  
We behold multitude; or expanding: we behold as one,  
As One Man all the Universal Family; and that One Man  
We call Jesus the Christ: and he in us, and we in him,  
Live in perfect harmony in Eden the land of life,  
Giving, receiving, and forgiving each others trespasses.

(J 34 [38]. 17–22)

The mutual redemption is complete after the death of the Urizenic god, the union of the four zoas, and the regeneration of Albion at pl. 96, when

Urizen & Luvah & Tharmas & Urthona arose into  
Albions Bosom: Then Albion stood before Jesus in the Clouds  
Of Heaven Fourfold among the Visions of God in Eternity

(J 96. 41–3)

In other words, Blake discards the Christian machinery of atonement for a practical religion of forgiveness and discards the trinitarian God for 'Divine Humanity | To whom be Glory & Power & Dominion Evermore Amen' (M 14 [15]. 2–3).

<sup>4</sup> The doctrine of *kenōsis* ('emptying') is built on Paul's hymn to the Christ who 'emptied himself' (Phil. 2: 7).



The term 'Divine Humanity' is taken from the mystical scientist Swedenborg (1688–1772), to whose teaching the young Blake was briefly affiliated (Davies 1948: 31–53; Thompson 1993: 129–61). Despite his satirical rejection of the 'angelic' seer's politics and morality in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Swedenborg's heretical terminology remained useful to Blake. For while the person and story and death of Jesus are crucial to his narrative of redemption—above the whole poem *Jerusalem* is engraved in Greek 'Jesus only'—his Jesus is not the incarnation of a divine being intervening in human history but the fullness of divine and human history. 'All Things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the Divine body of the Saviour the True Vine of Eternity' (VLJ (E 555); cf. Altizer 1967: 112–16). Here is a highly imaginative but also practical rewriting not just of Swedenborg but of incarnational theology, of Paul's teaching on the Body, and of evangelical devotion to Jesus. Here is Blake's gospel.

## LAW, LIBERTY, AND BROTHERHOOD

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Redemption, for Blake as for Paul, is from the power of *law*. But with Blake there is none of Paul's agonizing over the place of Torah. Deliverance is from the 'stony law' of Moses (MHH 27; A 8. 5)—from the Ten Commandments which Jesus broke (MHH 23; EG [E 518–24], *passim*), from the oppressive philosophy of 'Moral Virtue the cruel Virgin Babylon' (M 5. 27), of black-clad priests and sexual repression (SIE 44). The one Law, underwritten by 'One King, one God', is inscribed by iron pen in Urizen's 'Book | Of eternal brass' (BU 4. 24–40) and turns 'the Wheel of Religion' (J 77; Burdon 1997: 200–8). Blake the radical Protestant is persistently antinomian. Building on Paul, Calvin, and Milton, yet rejecting their theologies of atonement, he presents the Saviour as the Transgressor (M 13 [14]. 31) and the system of law and punishment as the outcome not of disobedience or original sin but of humanity's perverse projection of Urizen, who is both God and Satan (M 9. 19–29; 38 [43]. 50–39 [44]. 2). The manacles are 'mind-forg'd', and the dismal tree of Mystery grows 'in the Human Brain' (SIE 46; 47).

Defeating this deathly law is the *liberty* enacted in Blake's myth by Orc, by Los, by Jesus, and by the repentant Urizen and regenerate Albion. 'Jerusalem Is Named Liberty Among The Sons Of Albion', he engraved on pl. 26 of *Jerusalem*. This is a liberty which must be achieved dialectically, artistically, and theologically, through the negation and death of false gods. And it is a liberty that cannot be spiritualized, for it is comprehensive and bodily, represented in the political cry 'Empire is no more!' (MHH 27) and in the celebration of free love (A 8. 9–17; 15. 19–26), as well as in the simple joy of unpossessive living:

He who binds to himself a joy  
Does the winged life destroy

But he who kisses the joy as it flies  
Lives in Eternity's sun rise.

(E 474)

Above all, liberty is *forgiveness*. In the prefaces to the first and last chapters of *Jerusalem*, Blake insists that this is the teaching and praxis of Jesus 'the bright Preacher of Life', whose spirit 'is continual forgiveness of Sin' (J 77; J 3). In the address 'To the Deists' that prefaces the third chapter he berates them as the upholders of 'Natural Morality or Self-Righteousness', whereas 'The Glory of Christianity is, To Conquer by Forgiveness' (J 52). So '[l]iberty and forgiveness of sins are identical states and values' (Ferber 1985: 126), and for Albion or his sons to seek vengeance is to be 'for ever lost' (J 45 [31]. 28–38; cf. J 25. 3–11).

The liberty, salvation, and resurrection which Jesus reveals to Albion on *Jerusalem*, pl. 96, are defined simply as *Brotherhood*, without which 'Man is Not' (J 96. 16). 'Brotherhood' for Blake is neither natural kinship nor easy friendship; being forged in forgiveness, it is necessarily the brotherhood of enemies (Ferber 1985: 75). More painfully and more evangelically still, resurrection life is defined at the climax of *Jerusalem* as 'Forgiveness of Sins which is Self Annihilation. it is the covenant of Jehovah' (J 98. 23). The poet's own prayer to the Saviour at the beginning of the poem is 'Annihilate the Selfhood in me, be thou all my life!' (J 5. 22), and before the final chapter of the book is the full-page picture of Albion before the crucified Jesus, mirroring the Saviour's pose and anticipating their conversation about death and self-annihilation (J 76; 96. 3–28). Similarly, in so far as there is a human story to *Milton*, it is that of the seventeenth-century poet's redemption through self-annihilation, challenging his Spectre Satan (or God):

know thou: I come to Self Annihilation  
Such are the Laws of Eternity that each shall mutually  
Annihilate himself for others good, as I for thee.

(M 38 [43]. 34–6; cf. M 14 [15]. 30–2; 32 [35]. 10–43)

With remarkable affinity to the words of Jesus as well as to Mahayana Buddhism, Milton/Blake/Los proclaims the possibility of a peaceable kingdom where Selfhood is abolished (cf. Mark 8. 35; Altizer 1967: 179–207). More radically still, Blake builds this possibility on the gospel of the annihilation of God's Selfhood in the death of Christ. This is indeed the ultimate *kenōsis*. Yet the 'emptying' takes place not in or from a transcendent realm but in the human body, in mutual forgiveness, and its goal is not salvation in 'heaven' but fraternal, social, and peaceful existence in history. For Eternity is in love with the productions of time, above all its artistic productions. So, commenting on the revelatory character of Blake's extraordinary illustrations to the book of Job, David Pollard (1992: 34) writes: 'God as sacrifice (as cruciform), as self-annihilating incarnation, is identical with Job as self-annihilating saint, and with Blake as self-annihilating artist. "Christianity is art".' For all Blake's complexity, here in his mature work is a coherent, practical, and radically ascetic vision.

Given this vision, it is small wonder that Blake continued to see his vocation as that of a prophet and evangelist, however few his readers; given this gospel, small

wonder too that he continued to see himself at odds with the political and religious structures of his age. He is at odds just as much with those of the twenty-first century. And his artistic theology—for that ultimately is what it is—can now as much as then ‘rouse the faculties to act’.

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## CHAPTER 26

# William Blake

## Jonathan Roberts and Christopher Rowland

The thesis of this chapter is that Blake contests the Bible insofar as it promotes division, disintegration, and a view of the divinity as separate from creation and the imaginative and practical lives of humans. Such a Bible leads to a world fractured by the elevation of some and the rejection of others. Blake offers a reading of the Bible that says that forgiveness of sins (a mutual activity) is central, and that all that militates against this is false religion. He does this by protesting against the way in which Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) law is made the heart of Christianity and uses the Jesus stories to point to the priority of forgiveness of sins. Confronted by an eighteenth-century model of Christianity that is hierarchical and oppressive and that promotes moral virtue, Blake declares that God's people are prophets who must engage in mental fight to build a different kind of polity.

There is no linear path through Blake's art, but for the purpose of this chapter we begin with a pair of beginnings:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

1. Lo, a shadow of horror is risen  
In Eternity! Unknown, unprolific!  
Self-closed, all-repelling; what Demon  
Hath form'd this abominable void  
This soul-shudd'ring vacuum? – Some said  
“It is Urizen,” But unknown, abstracted  
Brooding secret, the dark power hid.

2. Times on times he divided, & measur'd  
Space by space in his ninefold darkness  
Unseen, unknown! changes appear'd  
In his desolate mountains rifted furious  
By the black winds of perturbation

3. For he strove in battles dire  
In unseen conflictions with shapes  
Bred from his forsaken wilderness,  
Of beast, bird, fish, serpent & element  
Combustion, blast, vapour and cloud. (Erdman, 1990, p. 69)

The two passages above are, respectively, the opening verses of Genesis, and the opening verses of *The Book of Urizen*, Blake's reimagining of Genesis. As these and subsequent stanzas show, Blake's creator-God ("Urizen") is not the commanding, benevolent patriarch of Genesis, but an inadequate and pathologically motivated demiurge frantically struggling to order the world the way he wants it. Blake's radical inversion of Genesis extends from the creator to the created: Urizen's world is not a garden of Eden, but a forsaken wilderness. In fact, the Creation itself – as Blake depicts it – is not a benevolent synthesis, but a series of violent ruptures and divisions: light from darkness, humans from God, good from evil, and so on. Blake is not being perverse here, he is working with the recognition that the God of Genesis is a systematizer who dislikes categorical confusion and who brooks no suggestion that humans might be like gods (Genesis 3). *The Book of Urizen* brings that aspect of Genesis to the fore, depicting "creation" as a tearing apart of an original dynamic unity: Blake presents Creation as destruction.

Blake engages with Genesis for several reasons. Although the Genesis creation narrative is short, because of its subject matter it has a high profile and abiding cultural presence (still manifest today in the ongoing arguments between creationists and evolutionists). Moreover, as Blake recognizes, Genesis lays the ground for considering the whole Bible to be a code book to distinguish good from evil, the sacred from the profane, and to consequently think of Christianity as a religion of morality.

This preoccupation with the systematic division of good from evil is unquestionably a central component of the Old Testament, but it is not its only component, and it is a preoccupation that is questioned, as Blake recognizes, by Jesus himself, who throughout his ministry collapses sacred / profane distinctions by, for example, living with "sinners." Through this sort of activity, Jesus foregrounds a different facet of the Old Testament, whereby the emphasis is on impulse and compassion rather than moral judgment. This is why *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* culminates with a discussion of how Jesus broke the ten commandments, Blake's devil arguing that "no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments: Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse: not from rules" (plates 23–4).

In adopting this different focus, Blake is at odds with the prevailing Christian interpretations of the New Testament that are predicated on the sacred/secular binary of the Old Testament. As Blake shows, Christians who read the Bible as a book of moral law concomitantly come to focus their religious lives on moral uprightness. This interpretation of the Bible as a moral lawbook is, in Blake's view, not only hermeneutically mistaken, it is also at the basis of individual and social inequality and suffering. More specifically, in his analysis of his contemporary context, Blake argues that a focus on moral judgment and on the separation of sacred and profane leads to a priestly elite enabling a privileged ruling class to disregard the miseries of those whom they deem to

be morally or spiritually insignificant or beyond the pale. Blake's critique of that perspective is evident throughout *Songs of Experience*. For example, in "The Chimney Sweeper" the child is left weeping and neglected in the snow by parents who have gone to church. The child says:

And because I am happy, & dance & sing,  
They think they have done me no injury:  
And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King  
Who make up a heaven of our misery.

In their zeal to worship the sacred, the parents have neglected what they think of as (comparatively) insignificant: their own child. Blake shows, however, that this is not simply an isolated issue of child neglect, for the parents' behavior is directly connected to wider hierarchical issues within society, as these lines make clear. What is sanctified under this system is not just "God," but also his "Priest & King," which is to say the national Church in collusion with the state. Yet there are no easy solutions here: as poems such as "The Sick Rose" and the *Innocence* version of "The Chimney Sweeper" make clear, these destructive concepts are not merely implemented from above by those in power, but are internalized by the exploited themselves as what Blake calls "mind-forg'd manacles" ("London"). In the words of the *Innocence* chimney sweep, "if all do their duty, they need not fear harm."

A key characteristic of Blake, which distinguishes him from, for instance, Ludwig Feuerbach or Karl Marx, is that while he wishes to attack both contemporary religion and the Bible, he does so from a Christian perspective. One example of this is his comment about the famous victories of God's chosen people over the Canaanites (Joshua 7–9), Blake writes: "To me who believe the Bible & profess myself a Christian a defence of the Wickedness of the Israelites in murdering so many thousands under pretence of a command from God is altogether Abominable & Blasphemous." Here Blake states that he is a Christian, and believes the Bible, but critiques a central biblical narrative as "abominable & blasphemous." His own more compassionate understanding of God and Christianity thus offers him a critical vantage point from which to engage with the Bible. It is this approach to the Bible that connects him with an ancient pattern of biblical interpretation that does not, paradoxically, identify God or God's word with the Bible itself.

Blake was influenced by a view of the Bible which has a long history in Christianity and may have been part of the radical religious underground of which he was an inheritor. In this view the Word of God is not a book, but a person: Christ (see John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" and Hebrews 1:1–2, "God ... Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son"). In short, the Bible bears witness to the Word of God (that is, Christ), but is not in itself the Word of God. Blake manifests this view when he writes:

The Bible or <Peculiar> Word of God, [when read] exclusive of conscience or the Word of God Universal, is that Abomination which like the Jewish ceremonies is for ever removed & henceforth every man may converse with God & be a King & Priest in his own house. (Erdman, 1990, p. 614)



Here Blake exalts “the Word of God Universal” (Christ, or conscience) over the “Peculiar Word of God” (the Bible as the exclusive mode of divine communication).<sup>1</sup> This distinction between the two “Words” (Christ and the Bible) means that an individual inspired by the former (through conscience, the Divine Spirit within) might contest and criticize the latter. This is exactly what Blake does in the passage above in which he suggests that when the Bible (the “peculiar Word of God”) is disconnected from Christ (“the Word of God Universal”) the former becomes an “abomination.” Consequently the radical tradition within which Blake stands enables the individual, by means of his or her conscience, to speak out against the tradition of interpretation of clergy and church.<sup>2</sup> Jesus is positioned as the incarnate God bringing the divine and the human together in a relationship that no longer needs to be mediated by state religion: hence Blake’s comment that “henceforth every man may converse with God & be a King & Priest in his own house.”

This emphasis on the importance of individuals (and their social contexts) in interpreting the Bible means that Blake is particularly concerned with replacing a literalist hermeneutic with one that considers the Bible to be a stimulus to the imagination. This means above all engaging readers in the interpretation of the text, rather than demanding they accept it as an object above and beyond them. To this end Blake provides a consistent polemic against the preoccupation with the literal sense of the text, and against a reverence for that text which comes at the expense of what an imaginative and life-affirming encounter with the Bible might offer. These two tasks required a thoroughgoing assault on the ways in which the Bible had been construed and reduced to a focus on the sacrificial death of Jesus and a religion of moral virtue. Blake would have no truck, for example, with the view that humans are inherently sinful; that God must be appeased by a sacrifice (of Christ); and that God – having made this sacrifice – then expects humanity to behave morally in order to stay in relationship with him (i.e. by keeping his commandments). Such an outlook, Blake thought, led to a denial of aspects of the human person and the subjection of some human beings by others.

So, as an author, Blake seeks to develop strategies to overturn this kind of hermeneutic and to press his reader into imaginative (and inevitably radical) new relationships with the text. Such strategies abound in *The Book of Urizen*, where the relationship between text and images offers an immediate and striking contrast. To take one example, the image that accompanies those initial stanzas quoted in the opening of this chapter depicts a naked human figure, face turned away from the reader, leaping through flames. The text itself appears to be participating in the imagery, as the etched words become entwined with tendrils, leaves, and birds, yet importantly this figure doesn’t appear to be that described in the text: there is no obvious connection. Immediately the book’s reader is put to the test. Most books use illustrations to clarify or interpret the text, but in Blake there is often no obvious relationship between text and image, and the images serve to complicate (not resolve) our understanding the text. Blake demands the involvement of his audience in creating meaning from works in which there is no definitive meaning waiting to be discovered. Any meaning that is found there is provisional and partial, the product of an imaginative effort on the reader’s part to make sense of the relationship, often the hiatus, between (for example) the text and image.

The text–image relationship in Blake is a helpful way to understand the dialectical relationship of his texts to the Bible. In the same way that his images complicate his text, so his books complicate the Bible, revealing it as a dynamic and shifting text. Blake’s work is not, then, an explanation of the Bible (as a theological commentary seeks to be), but a problematization and a liberation that casts the text in a new light, and lets it become, afresh, a stimulus to the imagination.

The kind of interpretative process set up by Blake is illustrated by a letter to one of his patrons in which he provides a rare insight into his hermeneutics. Blake writes:

You say that I want somebody to Elucidate my Ideas. But you ought to know that What is Grand is necessarily obscure to Weak men. That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care. The wisest of the Ancients considerd what is not too Explicit as the fittest for Instruction because it rouzes the faculties to act. I name Moses Solomon Esop Homer Plato ...

Why is the Bible more Entertaining & Instructive than any other book. Is it not because they are addressed to the Imagination which is Spiritual Sensation & but mediately to the Understanding or Reason. (Letter to Trusler, Erdman, 1990, p. 703)

Here Blake articulates the art of a critically reflective practice. He also explains the delicate balance between reason and imagination, and the priority of the latter in the interpretative engagement with the Bible. The redressing of the balance between reason and imagination is the cornerstone of Blake’s critical work.

Blake uses the term “Imagination” to point to a kind of thinking that is qualitatively different from what might be termed “legalistic” thinking. There are many models of Christianity that are about following inflexible rules, but being open to the Spirit means having to improvise, to engage attentively in new situations. “Imagination,” therefore, is one way of describing a non-legalistic way of interpreting, an alternative to the moralistic forms of religion discussed above. Blake is clear about the centrality of the imagination to his understanding of Christianity, as he explicitly identifies the imagination as “the Divine Body,” Blake’s term for what Paul (in 1 Corinthians 12 and elsewhere) calls “the Body of Christ.” In other words, the Imagination – open-ended, Spirit-oriented interrelating – is what brings all people together in the body of Christ.

Blake challenges the legalistic, moral Christianity of his contemporaries by unveiling its incompatibility with the gospels, and showing that in the New Testament itself, a preoccupation with moral law is identified with Jesus’ opponents, the Scribes. For Blake, the consequence of this identification is that when we judge one another we take on the role of the accuser, which is, in biblical terms, the role of Satan (see Job 1:6). Blake thinks the conflict between Jesus and the Scribes arises precisely because Jesus comes to replace a religion of moral virtue (which blocks relationships between people) with one of compassion (which opens us to the experience of God in one another).

In Blake’s view, then, Jesus offers the paradigm of how moral idolatry can be overcome through the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness of sins means a relinquishment of the barriers of judgment that block relationships between people, and it reopens the possibility of collaborative hermeneutics and of the denial of selfhood and false

forgiveness (cf. *Milton* 15). The forgiveness of sins therefore constitutes an act of the imagination. In his later work, Blake came more and more to concentrate on the “forgiveness of sins” and the overcoming of selfhood as the key to human flourishing. Blake sees forgiveness – rather than morality – as the central concept of Christianity and stresses that Jesus brings the former, not the latter, to the world through his teachings. This is apparent in his late engraving *Laocoön* (1826–7), in which he writes: “If morality was Christianity, Socrates was the Saviour. The Gospel is Forgiveness of Sins & has no moral precepts – these belong to Plato & Seneca & Nero” (Erdman, 1990, p. 618). And also in “The Everlasting Gospel” (c.1818):

There is not one moral virtue that Jesus inculcated but Plato & Cicero did Inculcate before him. What then did Christ Inculcate? Forgiveness of Sins. This alone is the Gospel & this is the Life & Immortality brought to light by Jesus. Even the Covenant of Jehovah, which is this: “If you forgive one another your trespasses so shall Jehovah forgive you [so] that he himself may dwell among you. But if you avenge, you murder the Divine Image & he cannot dwell among you [and] because you murder him he arises again & you deny that he is arisen & are blind to Spirit.” (Erdman, 1990, p. 874)

Here – and elsewhere in passages such as *Jerusalem* plate 61 – Blake argues that when we live in that spirit of mutual love and forgiveness, God lives in us, and we in him.

Forgiveness is qualitatively different from Law, Blake suggests, because it cannot be codified in a book: it requires imagination, not legislation. The point is exemplified in the gospels by Jesus’ response when his disciple, Peter, seeks to establish the limits of forgiveness: “Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times’” (Matthew 18:21–2). There is a clear contrast here with the law of retaliation formulated in Exodus: “if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise” (Exodus 21:23–5). Unlike retaliation, forgiveness cannot be quantified, and is always particular to each life situation.

Blake exemplifies the meaning of forgiveness of sins in his reimagining of the brief, but allusive, account at the end of Matthew 1 (18–25) in which Joseph discovers that his betrothed, Mary, is pregnant:

1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. 1:19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. 1:20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. 1:22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. 1:24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel

of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: 1:25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Blake's reimagining of this scene occurs in *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Great Albion* (1804–20):

[Jerusalem] looked & saw Joseph the Carpenter in Nazareth & Mary  
His espoused Wife. And Mary said, If thou put me away from thee  
Dost thou not murder me? Joseph spoke in anger & fury. Should I  
Marry a Harlot & an Adulteress? Mary answerd, Art thou more pure  
Than thy Maker who forgiveth Sins & calls again Her that is Lost  
Tho She hates. he calls her again in love. I love my dear Joseph  
But he driveth me away from his presence. yet I hear the voice of God  
In the voice of my Husband. tho he is angry for a moment, he will not  
Utterly cast me away. if I were pure, never could I taste the sweets  
Of the Forgive[ne]ss of Sins! if I were holy! I never could behold the tears  
Of love! of him who loves me in the midst of his anger in furnace of fire.

Ah my Mary: said Joseph: weeping over & embracing her closely in  
His arms: Doth he forgive Jerusalem & not exact Purity from her who is  
Polluted. I heard his voice in my sleep O his Angel in my dream:  
Saying, Doth Jehovah Forgive a Debt only on condition that it shall  
Be Payed? Doth he Forgive Pollution only on conditions of Purity  
That Debt is not Forgiven! That Pollution is not Forgiven  
Such is the Forgiveness of the Gods, the Moral Virtues of the  
Heathen, whose tender Mercies are Cruelty. But Jehovahs Salvation  
Is without Money & without Price, in the Continual Forgiveness of Sins  
In the Perpetual Mutual Sacrifice in Great Eternity! (Erdman, 1990, p. 614,  
*Jerusalem*, 61.1–46, Erdman, 1990, pp. 210–11)

This passage may seem uncharacteristic to readers who are familiar with Blake principally through the *Songs* and *The Marriage*. It is from a later prophetic work, and represents one of Blake's slightly awkward attempts to dramatize a biblical scene. It is very much an eighteenth-century literary mode: the passion, sighing, weeping, and embracing could have been lifted from a sentimental novel of that period. Blake uses this mode to evoke a fraught emotional scene lying behind the gospel narrative, and he imagines, from there, the significance of Mary and Joseph's reconciliation.

Mary is confronted by Joseph's challenge about her supposed infidelity as he discovers that she is pregnant. In response to this, Blake imagines Mary bluntly declaring the consequence of her rejection: in effect Joseph would be murdering her as she could have been stoned to death under Jewish law as a suspected adulteress (cf. Deuteronomy 22:21). Joseph the righteous man speaks "in anger and fury" and questions why (in the light of the law) he should marry "a Harlot & an Adulteress." Mary's question in return is to point to the character of God who goes on forgiving his bride Israel. Mary says she hears the voice of God in the voice of Joseph, and it is a God who forgives sins. The exquisite possibility of the forgiveness of sins cannot happen, if she were always holy and pure. The experience of the tears of love comes as the result of "anger in the furnace of fire."

Joseph's initial response is to embrace Mary and query the idea that God might exact a price for forgiveness. But this is immediately followed by the voice of an angel questioning this reparatory theology by intimating that forgiveness does not come simply by making oneself pure, as such a debt is not really forgiven. Indeed, this is the religion of dictatorial "gods," "the Moral Virtues of the Heathen, whose tender Mercies are Cruelty," whereas God's "salvation is without Money & without Price, in the Continual Forgiveness of Sins." Joseph's tone thus changes from condemnation of the sin to the recognition of the person before him: "Ah, my Mary."

This is immediately followed by sentiments that echo the Lord's Prayer – "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" – reflecting "the Perpetual Mutual Sacrifice in Great Eternity." The portrayal of God's covenant with humanity as a state in which forgiveness is mutual and shared echoes Matthew 18:15–20: "If you Forgive one-another, so shall Jehovah Forgive You: That He Himself may Dwell among You." God dwelling with humans is conditional on the establishment of the covenant with humanity, the "Perpetual Mutual Sacrifice in Great Eternity." Such sentiments also recall some of Blake's much earlier ideas recorded in his marginal notes to Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, in which he consistently focuses on the human person rather than the offense.

At the beginning of this chapter, we stated that Blake wished all God's people to be prophets. This desire for prophecy is centrally connected to Blake's focus on alternatives to the legalistic tradition embedded in the Bible. As we mentioned earlier, Blake considered his contemporaries to be preoccupied with the Old Testament emphasis on morality, Law, and separation of the sacred from the profane, and by interpreting the New Testament in the light of these elements, they were engaging a judgmental, moralistic form of Christianity. Blake, by contrast, sought to prioritize the imaginative, compassionate, radical elements of the New Testament, and takes those as his guide to the Old Testament. In doing so he identifies the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament as primary, and not the hegemonic legislative tradition (Matthew 12:7, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" – a quotation of Hosea 6:6). As a result, Blake understands prophecy to be at the heart of Christianity: prophecy locks together with the imagination and the forgiveness of sins.

Blake's call for all individuals to embrace their role as prophets is especially apparent at the conclusion to the preface to his long poem *Milton* (popularly known as "Jerusalem"), Here Blake added the words "Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets," giving the biblical reference Numbers 11:29, and reminding his reader of prophecy's key place in his work, and his own role as a prophet. Blake recognized the prophets of the Bible as kindred spirits, dining with Isaiah and Ezekiel and questioning them about their prophetic ministries in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (plates 12 and 13). He wrote in their style and used their images but as a prophet for his own time, seeking to unmask the extent of human delusion and the forgetfulness of the practice of love and the forgiveness of sins. Like John, the visionary of Patmos (Revelation 22:19), Blake called his own books "prophecies." However, Blake regarded prophecy not as some kind of arcane activity reserved solely for an eccentric elite, but something everyday and democratic: "Every honest man is

a prophet," ("On Watson," E616). Moreover, his prophecies were not intended to predict what would happen in the future, for they were written after the events that are described. In his annotations to Watson's *An Apology for the Bible* (1797), Blake declared that:

Prophets in the modern sense of the word have never existed. Jonah was no prophet, in the modern sense, for his prophecy of Nineveh failed. Every honest man is a prophet; he utters his opinion both of private and public matters. Thus: If you go on So, the result is So. he never says, such a thing shall happen let you do what you will. A Prophet is a Seer, not an Arbitrary Dictator. ("On Watson," Erdman, 1990, p. 616)

One purpose of prophecy, then, is to lay bare the inner dynamic of all revolutions, and to show their potential for both positive change and corruption. The book Blake thought most achieved this laying bare was the Book of Revelation, and his relationship to it is particularly informative. He did not read Revelation as if it were a riddle that had to be solved, but understood it instead as a gateway through which the Imagination can "open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal eyes of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought, into Eternity" (*Jerusalem*, 5.18). Blake reads Revelation (and other prophetic works) not as an end in itself but as a means to an end: the permeating of consciousness with the apocalyptic outlook.

In summary, Blake was not an expositor of the Bible, but an artist who regarded it as a stimulus to his imagination and inventiveness. Biblical imagery appears in the context of Blake's own mythological creations, which he believed were in continuity with prophetic texts such as the books of Isaiah and Ezekiel, and the Book of Revelation, however different their form and content. Thus Blake's relationship with his literary antecedents, the Bible included, is less that of a reverent expositor and much more that of a querulous partner, who is always ready to point out the flaws in what he has received. What he has received, however, is complex, it is not so much a book as a history of interpretations of a text, and in offering something different, he thereby shows his active engagement with this book. This is no simple biblical critique. The thoroughgoing radicalism of its hermeneutic is matched only by that of its forms: the astonishingly diverse array of poems, engravings, and paintings that make Blake simultaneously both England's greatest "Christian" artist and its most radical biblical interpreter.

## Notes

- 1 This distinction is an important part of a long tradition of radical Christian hermeneutic of the Bible, which was especially prevalent in England from the sixteenth century onwards. It is crucial to understanding the wider context of biblical interpretation of which Blake was a part.
- 2 See Lerner (1972) for the late medieval antecedents.



## Further Reading

The subject of Blake and the Bible is an enormous one. This chapter has provided one way into thinking about topic. A range of other – and often very different – approaches are listed below.

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- Tannenbaum, Leslie (1982) *Biblical Tradition in Blake’s Early Prophecies*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.

**The Marriage of Heaven and Hell** This, the most immediately accessible of Blake's longer works, is a vigorous, deliberately outrageous, and at times comic onslaught against timidly conventional and self-righteous members of society as well as against stock opinions of orthodox Christian piety and morality. The seeming simplicity of Blake's satiric attitude, however, is deceptive.

Initially, Blake accepts the terminology of standard Christian morality ("what the religious call Good & Evil") but reverses its values. In this conventional use Evil, which is manifested by the class of beings called Devils and which consigns wrongdoers to the orthodox Hell, is everything associated with the body and its desires and consists essentially of energy, abundance, actions, and freedom. Conventional Good, which is manifested by Angels and guarantees its adherents a place in the orthodox Heaven, is associated with the Soul (regarded as entirely separate from the body) and consists of the contrary qualities of reason, restraint, passivity, and prohibition. Blandly adopting these conventional oppositions, Blake elects to assume the diabolic persona—what he calls "the voice of the Devil"—and to utter "Proverbs of Hell."

But this stance is only a first stage in Blake's complex irony, designed to startle the reader into recognizing the inadequacy of conventional moral categories. As he also says in the opening summary, "Without Contraries is no progression," and "Reason and Energy" are both "necessary to Human existence." It turns out that Blake subordinates his reversal of conventional values under a more inclusive point of view, according to which the real Good, as distinguished from the merely ironic Good, is not abandonment of all restraints but a "marriage," or union of the contraries, of desire and restraint, energy and reason, the promptings of Hell and the denials of Heaven—or as Blake calls these contraries in plate 16, "the Prolific" and "the Devouring." These two classes, he adds, "should be enemies," and "whoever tries to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence." Implicit in Blake's satire is the view that the good and abundant life consists in the sustained tension, without victory or suppression, of co-present oppositions.

When Blake composed this unique work in the early 1790s, his city of London was teeming with religious mystics, astrologers, and sometimes bawdy freethinkers who were determined to challenge the Established Church's monopoly on spirituality and who were reviving the link, created in the seventeenth century, between enthusiasm in religion and political revolution. The work is also a response to the writings of the visionary Swedish theologian Emanuel Swedenborg, whom Blake had at first admired but then had come to recognize as a conventional Angel in the disguise of a radical Devil. In plate 3 the writings of Swedenborg are described as the winding clothes Blake discards as he is resurrected from the tomb of his past self, as a poet-prophet who heralds the apocalyptic promise of his age. Blake shared the expectations of a number of radical English writers, including the young poets Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, that the French Revolution was the violent stage that, as the biblical prophets foresaw, immediately preceded the millennium. The double role of *The Marriage* as both satire and revolutionary prophecy is made explicit in *A Song of Liberty*, which Blake etched in 1792 and added as a coda.



## The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

PLATE 2

### The Argument

Rintrah<sup>1</sup> roars & shakes his fires in the burdend air;  
Hungry clouds swag on the deep.  
Once meek, and in a perilous path,  
The just man kept his course along  
5 The vale of death.  
Roses are planted where thorns grow,  
And on the barren heath  
Sing the honey bees.  
  
Then the perilous path was planted,  
10 And a river, and a spring,  
On every cliff and tomb;  
And on the bleached bones  
Red clay<sup>2</sup> brought forth;  
  
Till the villain left the paths of ease,  
15 To walk in perilous paths, and drive  
The just man into barren climes.  
  
Now the sneaking serpent walks  
In mild humility,  
And the just man rages in the wilds  
20 Where lions roam.  
  
Rintrah roars & shakes his fires in the burdend air;  
Hungry clouds swag on the deep.

PLATE 3

As a new heaven is begun, and it is now thirty-three years since its advent, the Eternal Hell revives. And lo! Swedenborg<sup>3</sup> is the Angel sitting at the tomb; his writings are the linen clothes folded up. Now is the dominion of Edom, & the return of Adam into Paradise; see Isaiah xxxiv & XXXV Chap.<sup>4</sup>

1. Rintrah plays the role of the angry Old Testament prophet Elijah as well as of John the Baptist, the voice "crying in the wilderness" (Matthew 3), preparing the way for Christ the Messiah. It has been plausibly suggested that stanzas 2–5 summarize the course of biblical history to the present time. "Once" (line 3) refers to Old Testament history after the Fall; "Then" (line 9) is the time of the birth of Christ. "Till" (line 14) identifies the era when Christianity was perverted into an institutional religion. "Now" (line 17) is the time of the wrathful portent of the French Revolution. In this final era the hypocritical serpent represents the priest of the "angels" in the poem, while "the just man" is embodied in Blake, a raging poet and prophet in the guise of a devil. "Swag" (line 2): sag, hang down.

2. In Hebrew the literal meaning of "Adam," or

created man. The probable reference is to the birth of the Redeemer, the new Adam.

3. Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), Swedish scientist and religious philosopher, had predicted, on the basis of his visions, that the Last Judgment and the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven would occur in 1757. This was precisely the year of Blake's birth. Now, in 1790, Blake is thirty-three, the age at which Christ had been resurrected from the tomb; correspondingly, Blake rises from the tomb of his past life in his new role as imaginative artist who will redeem his age. But, Blake ironically comments, the works he will engrave in his resurrection will constitute the Eternal Hell, the contrary brought into simultaneous being by Swedenborg's limited New Heaven.

4. Isaiah 34 prophesies "the day of the Lord's vengeance," a time of violent destruction and blood-

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence.

From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy.

Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell.

PLATE 4

#### The Voice of the Devil

All Bibles or sacred codes have been the causes of the following Errors:

1. That Man has two real existing principles; Viz: a Body & a Soul.
2. That Energy, call'd Evil, is alone from the Body, & that Reason, call'd Good, is alone from the Soul.
3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies.

But the following Contraries to these are True:

1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.
2. Energy is the only life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.
3. Energy is Eternal Delight.

PLATE 5

Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling.

And being restrain'd, it by degrees becomes passive, till it is only the shadow of desire.

The history of this is written in *Paradise Lost*,<sup>5</sup> & the Governor or Reason is call'd Messiah.

And the original Archangel, or possessor of the command of the heavenly host, is call'd the Devil or Satan, and his children are call'd Sin & Death.<sup>6</sup>

But in the Book of Job, Milton's Messiah is call'd Satan.<sup>7</sup>

For this history has been adopted by both parties.

It indeed appear'd to Reason as if Desire was cast out; but the Devil's account is, that the Mess[**PLATE 6**]jah fell, & formed a heaven of what he stole from the Abyss.

This is shewn in the Gospel, where he prays to the Father to send the comforter or Desire that Reason may have Ideas to build on;<sup>8</sup> the Jehovah of

shed; Isaiah 35 prophesies the redemption to follow, in which "the desert shall . . . blossom as the rose," "in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert," and "no lion shall be there," but "an highway shall be there . . . and it shall be called The way of holiness" (cf. "The Argument," lines 3–11, 20). Blake combines with these chapters Isaiah 63, in which "Edom" is the place from which comes the man whose garments are red with the blood he has spilled; for as he says, "the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." Blake interprets this last phrase as predicting the time when Adam would regain his lost Paradise. Also relevant is Genesis 36.1, where the Edomites are identified as the descendants of the disinherited Esau, cheated out of his father's blessing by Jacob.

5. What follows, to the end of this section, is Blake's "diabolical" reading of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. For other Romantic comments on the magnificence of Milton's Satan see "The Satanic and Byronic Hero" at Norton Literature Online.

6. Satan's giving birth to Sin and then incestuously begetting Death upon her is described in *Paradise Lost* 2.745ff.; the war in heaven, referred to three lines below, in which the Messiah defeated Satan and drove him out of heaven, is described in 6.824ff.

7. In the Book of Job, Satan plays the role of Job's moral accuser and physical tormentor.

8. Possibly John 14.16–17, where Christ says he "will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter . . . Even the Spirit of truth."

the Bible being no other than he who dwells in flaming fire. Know that after Christ's death, he became Jehovah.

But in Milton, the Father is Destiny, the Son, a Ratio<sup>9</sup> of the five senses, & the Holy-ghost, Vacuum!

Note. The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it.

#### A Memorable Fancy<sup>1</sup>

As I was walking among the fires of hell, delighted with the enjoyments of Genius, which to Angels look like torment and insanity, I collected some of their Proverbs; thinking that as the sayings used in a nation mark its character, so the Proverbs of Hell shew the nature of Infernal wisdom better than any description of buildings or garments.

When I came home, on the abyss of the five senses, where a flat sided steep frowns over the present world, I saw a mighty Devil folded in black clouds, hovering on the sides of the rock; with cor[PLATE 7]roding fires he wrote the following sentence<sup>2</sup> now perceived by the minds of men, & read by them on earth:

How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way,  
Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?

#### Proverbs of Hell<sup>3</sup>

- In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy.  
Drive your cart and your plow over the bones of the dead.  
The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.  
Prudence is a rich ugly old maid courted by Incapacity.  
5 He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence.  
The cut worm forgives the plow.  
Dip him in the river who loves water.  
A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees.  
He whose face gives no light, shall never become a star.  
10 Eternity is in love with the productions of time.  
The busy bee has no time for sorrow.  
The hours of folly are measur'd by the clock; but of wisdom, no clock can measure.  
All wholsom food is caught without a net or a trap.  
Bring out number, weight, & measure in a year of dearth.  
15 No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings.  
A dead body revenges not injuries.  
The most sublime act is to set another before you.  
If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise.

9. The Latin *ratio* means both "reason" and "sum." Blake applies the term to the 18th-century view, following the empiricist philosophy of John Locke, that the content of the mind, on which the faculty of reason operates, is limited to the sum of the experience acquired by the five senses.

1. A parody of what Swedenborg called "memorable relations" of his literal-minded visions of the eternal world.

2. The "mighty Devil" is Blake, as he sees himself reflected in the shiny plate on which he is etching this very passage with "corroding fires," i.e., the acid used in the etching process. See also the third from last sentence in plate 14.

3. A "diabolic" version of the Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament, which also incorporates sly allusions to 18th-century books of piety such as Isaac Watts's *Divine Songs*.

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Folly is the cloke of knavery.  
Shame is Pride's cloke.

PLATE 8

Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion.  
The pride of the peacock is the glory of God.  
The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.  
The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.  
The nakedness of woman is the work of God.  
Excess of sorrow laughs. Excess of joy weeps.  
The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea,  
and the destructive sword, are portions of eternity too great for the eye  
of man.  
The fox condemns the trap, not himself.  
Joys impregnate. Sorrows bring forth.  
Let man wear the fell of the lion, woman the fleece of the sheep.  
The bird a nest, the spider a web, man friendship.  
The selfish smiling fool & the sullen frowning fool shall be both thought  
wise, that they may be a rod.  
What is now proved was once only imagin'd.  
The rat, the mouse, the fox, the rabbit watch the roots; the lion, the tyger,  
the horse, the elephant, watch the fruits.  
The cistern contains; the fountain overflows.  
One thought fills immensity.  
Always be ready to speak your mind, and a base man will avoid you.  
Every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of truth.  
The eagle never lost so much time as when he submitted to learn of the  
crow.

PLATE 9

The fox provides for himself, but God provides for the lion.  
Think in the morning, Act in the noon, Eat in the evening, Sleep in the  
night.  
He who has sufferd you to impose on him knows you.  
As the plow follows words, so God rewards prayers.  
The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction.  
Expect poison from the standing water.  
You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than  
enough.  
Listen to the fool's reproach! it is a kingly title!  
The eyes of fire, the nostrils of air, the mouth of water, the beard of earth.  
The weak in courage is strong in cunning.  
The apple tree never asks the beech how he shall grow, nor the lion the  
horse, how he shall take his prey.  
The thankful reciever bears a plentiful harvest.  
If others had not been foolish, we should be so.  
The soul of sweet delight can never be defil'd.  
When thou seest an Eagle, thou seest a portion of Genius; lift up thy head!  
As the catterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest  
lays his curse on the fairest joys.

To create a little flower is the labour of ages.  
Damn braces; Bless relaxes.  
The best wine is the oldest, the best water the newest.  
Prayers plow not! Praises reap not!  
Joys laugh not! Sorrows weep not!

PLATE 10

The head Sublime, the heart Pathos, the genitals Beauty, the hands & feet  
Proportion.  
As the air to a bird or the sea to a fish, so is contempt to the contemptible.  
The crow wish'd every thing was black, the owl that every thing was white.  
Exuberance is Beauty.  
If the lion was advised by the fox, he would be cunning.  
Improvement makes strait roads, but the crooked roads without  
Improvement are roads of Genius.  
Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires.  
Where man is not, nature is barren.  
Truth can never be told so as to be understood, and not be believ'd.  
Enough! or Too much.

PLATE 11

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses,  
calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods,  
rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numer-  
ous senses could perceive.  
And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country, placing it  
under its mental deity.  
Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the  
vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects;  
thus began Priesthood,  
Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.  
And at length they pronounced that the Gods had ordered such things.  
Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast.

PLATE 12

A Memorable Fancy<sup>4</sup>

The Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me, and I asked them how they  
dared so roundly to assert that God spake to them; and whether they did not  
think at the time that they would be misunderstood, & so be the cause of  
imposition.

Isaiah answer'd: "I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical percep-  
tion; but my senses discover'd the infinite in every thing, and as I was then  
perswaded, & remain confirm'd, that the voice of honest indignation is the  
voice of God, I cared not for consequences, but wrote."

Then I asked: "Does a firm perswasion that a thing is so, make it so?"

He replied: "All poets believe that it does, & in ages of imagination this firm

4. Blake parodies Swedenborg's accounts, in his *Memorable Relations*, of his conversations with the inhab-  
itants during his spiritual trips to heaven.

persuasion removed mountains; but many are not capable of a firm persuasion of any thing."

Then Ezekiel said: "The philosophy of the East taught the first principles of human perception. Some nations held one principle for the origin & some another; we of Israel taught that the Poetic Genius (as you now call it) was the first principle and all the others merely derivative, which was the cause of our despising the Priests & Philosophers of other countries, and prophesying that all Gods [PL 13] would at last be proved to originate in ours & to be the tributaries of the Poetic Genius; it was this that our great poet, King David, desired so fervently & invokes so pathetically, saying by this he conquers enemies & governs kingdoms; and we so loved our God, that we cursed in his name all the deities of surrounding nations, and asserted that they had rebelled; from these opinions the vulgar came to think that all nations would at last be subject to the Jews."

"This," said he, "like all firm persuasions, is come to pass, for all nations believe the Jews' code and worship the Jews' god, and what greater subjection can be?"

I heard this with some wonder, & must confess my own conviction. After dinner I ask'd Isaiah to favour the world with his lost works; he said none of equal value was lost. Ezekiel said the same of his.

I also asked Isaiah what made him go naked and barefoot three years? He answered, "the same that made our friend Diogenes,<sup>5</sup> the Grecian."

I then asked Ezekiel why he eat dung, & lay so long on his right & left side?<sup>6</sup> He answered, "the desire of raising other men into a perception of the infinite; this the North American tribes practise, & is he honest who resists his genius or conscience only for the sake of present ease or gratification?"

PLATE 14

The ancient tradition that the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years is true, as I have heard from Hell.

For the cherub with his flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at the tree of life;<sup>7</sup> and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed, and appear infinite and holy, whereas it now appears finite & corrupt.

This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment.

But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul is to be expunged; this I shall do, by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid.<sup>8</sup>

If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite.

For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.

5. Greek Cynic (4th century), whose extreme repudiation of civilized customs gave rise to anecdotes that he had renounced clothing. In Isaiah 20.2-3 the prophet, at the Lord's command, walked "naked and barefoot" for three years.

6. The Lord gave these instructions to the prophet

Ezekiel (4.4-6).

7. In Genesis 3.24, when the Lord drove Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, he had placed Cherubim and a flaming sword at the eastern end "to keep the way of the tree of life."

8. Seen. 2, p. 113.

PLATE 15

### A Memorable Fancy

I was in a Printing house<sup>9</sup> in Hell & saw the method in which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation.

In the first chamber was a Dragon-Man, clearing away the rubbish from a cave's mouth; within, a number of Dragons were hollowing the cave.

In the second chamber was a Viper folding round the rock & the cave, and others adorning it with gold, silver, and precious stones.

In the third chamber was an Eagle with wings and feathers of air; he caused the inside of the cave to be infinite; around were numbers of Eagle-like men, who built palaces in the immense cliffs.

In the fourth chamber were Lions of flaming fire, raging around & melting the metals into living fluids.

In the fifth chamber were Unnam'd forms, which cast the metals into the expanse.

There they were receiv'd by Men who occupied the sixth chamber, and took the forms of books & were arranged in libraries.<sup>1</sup>

PLATE 16

The Giants<sup>2</sup> who formed this world into its sensual existence, and now seem to live in it in chains, are in truth the causes of its life & the sources of all activity; but the chains are the cunning of weak and tame minds which have power to resist energy; according to the proverb, the weak in courage is strong in cunning.

Thus one portion of being is the Prolific, the other, the Devouring; to the Devourer it seems as if the producer was in his chains, but it is not so; he only takes portions of existence and fancies that the whole.

But the Prolific would cease to be Prolific unless the Devourer as a sea received the excess of his delights.

Some will say, "Is not God alone the Prolific?" I answer, "God only Acts & Is, in existing beings or Men."

These two classes of men are always upon earth, & they should be enemies; whoever tries [PLATE 17] to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence.

Religion is an endeavour to reconcile the two.

Note. Jesus Christ did not wish to unite but to separate them, as in the Parable of sheep and goats! & he says, "I came not to send Peace but a Sword."<sup>3</sup>

Messiah or Satan or Tempter was formerly thought to be one of the Antediluvians<sup>4</sup> who are our Energies.

### A Memorable Fancy

An Angel came to me and said: "O pitiable foolish young man! O horrible! O dreadful state! consider the hot burning dungeon thou art preparing for thyself to all eternity, to which thou art going in such career."

9. A covert pun runs through this section: workers, ink-blackened, who did the dirty work in the printing houses of the period were humorously known as "printer's devils."

1. In this "Memorable Fancy" Blake allegorizes his procedure in designing, etching, printing, and binding his works of imaginative genius.

2. In this section human creative energies, called "the Prolific," in their relation to their indispensable contrary, "the Devourer."

3. Matthew 10.34. The parable of the sheep and the goats is in Matthew 25.32-33.

4. Those who lived before Noah's Flood.



I said: "Perhaps you will be willing to shew me my eternal lot, & we will contemplate together upon it and see whether your lot or mine is most desirable."

So he took me thro' a stable & thro' a church & down into the church vault at the end of which was a mill; thro' the mill we went, and came to a cave; down the winding cavern we groped our tedious way till a void boundless as a nether sky appeared beneath us, & we held by the roots of trees and hung over this immensity, but I said: "If you please, we will commit ourselves to this void, and see whether Providence is here also, if you will not I will." But he answered: "Do not presume, O young man, but as we here remain, behold thy lot which will soon appear when the darkness passes away."<sup>5</sup>

So I remain'd with him sitting in the twisted [PLATE 18] root of an oak; he was suspended in a fungus which hung with the head downward into the deep.

By degrees we beheld the infinite Abyss, fiery as the smoke of a burning city; beneath us at an immense distance was the sun, black but shining; round it were fiery tracks on which revolv'd vast spiders, crawling after their prey, which flew, or rather swum in the infinite deep, in the most terrific shapes of animals sprung from corruption; & the air was full of them, & seem'd composed of them; these are Devils, and are called Powers of the air. I now asked my companion which was my eternal lot? He said, "Between the black & white spiders."

But now, from between the black & white spiders a cloud and fire burst and rolled thro the deep, blackning all beneath, so that the nether deep grew black as a sea & rolled with a terrible noise. Beneath us was nothing now to be seen but a black tempest, till looking east between the clouds & the waves, we saw a cataract of blood mixed with fire, and not many stones' throw from us appeared and sunk again the scaly fold of a monstrous serpent. At last to the east, distant about three degrees, appeared a fiery crest above the waves. Slowly it reared like a ridge of golden rocks till we discovered two globes of crimson fire, from which the sea fled away in clouds of smoke. And now we saw it was the head of Leviathan;<sup>6</sup> his forehead was divided into streaks of green & purple like those on a tyger's forehead; soon we saw his mouth & red gills hang just above the raging foam, tinging the black deep with beams of blood, advancing toward [PLATE 19] us with all the fury of a spiritual existence.

My friend the Angel climb'd up from his station into the mill. I remain'd alone, & then this appearance was no more, but I found myself sitting on a pleasant bank beside a river by moon light, hearing a harper who sung to the harp, & his theme was: "The man who never alters his opinion is like standing water, & breeds reptiles of the mind."

But I arose, and sought for the mill, & there I found my Angel, who surprised asked me how I escaped?

I answerd: "All that we saw was owing to your metaphysics: for when you ran away, I found myself on a bank by moonlight hearing a harper. But now we have seen my eternal lot, shall I shew you yours? He laugh'd at my proposal;

5. The "stable" is that where Jesus was born, which, allegorically, leads to the "church" founded in his name and to the "vault" where this institution effectually buried him. The "mill" in Blake is a symbol of mechanical and analytic philosophy; through this the pilgrims pass into the twisting cave of rationalistic theology and descend to an underworld that is an empty abyss. The point of

this Blakean equivalent of a carnival funhouse is that only after you have thoroughly confused yourself by this tortuous approach, and only if you then (as in the next two paragraphs) stare at this topsyturvy emptiness long enough, will the void gradually assume the semblance of the comic horrors of the fantasized Hell of religious orthodoxy.

6. The biblical sea monster.

but I by force suddenly caught him in my arms, & flew westerly thro' the night, til we were elevated above the earth's shadow; then I flung myself with him directly into the body of the sun. Here I clothed myself in white, & taking in my hand Swedenborg's volumes, sunk from the glorious clime, and passed all the planets till we came to Saturn. Here I staid to rest & then leap'd into the void between Saturn & the fixed stars.<sup>7</sup>

"Here," said I, "is your lot, in this space, if space it may be call'd." Soon we saw the stable and the church, & I took him to the altar and open'd the Bible, and lo! it was a deep pit, into which I descended, driving the Angel before me. Soon we saw seven houses of brick;<sup>8</sup> one we enterd; in it were a [PLATE 20] number of monkeys, baboons, & all of that species, chain'd by the middle, grinning and snatching at one another, but withheld by the shortness of their chains. However, I saw that they sometimes grew numerous, and then the weak were caught by the strong, and with a grinning aspect, first coupled with & then devour'd, by plucking off first one limb and then another till the body was left a helpless trunk. This, after grinning & kissing it with seeming fondness, they devour'd too; and here & there I saw one savourily picking the flesh off of his own tail. As the stench terribly annoy'd us both, we went into the mill, & I in my hand brought the skeleton of a body, which in the mill was Aristotle's Analytics.<sup>9</sup>

So the Angel said: "Thy phantasy has imposed upon me, & thou oughtest to be ashamed."

I answer'd: "We impose on one another, & it is but lost time to converse with you whose works are only Analytics."

*Opposition is true Friendship.*

PLATE 21

I have always found that Angels have the vanity to speak of themselves as the only wise; this they do with a confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning.

Thus Swedenborg boasts that what he writes is new; tho' it is only the Contents or Index of already publish'd books.

A man carried a monkey about for a shew, & because he was a little wiser than the monkey, grew vain, and conceiv'd himself as much wiser than seven men. It is so with Swedenborg; he shews the folly of churches & exposes hypocrites, till he imagines that all are religious, & himself the single [PLATE 22] one on earth that ever broke a net.

Now hear a plain fact: Swedenborg has not written one new truth. Now hear another: he has written all the old falshoods.

And now hear the reason: He conversed with Angels who are all religious, & conversed not with Devils, who all hate religion, for he was incapable thro' his conceited notions.

Thus Swedenborg's writings are a recapitulation of all superficial opinions, and an analysis of the more sublime, but no further.

7. In the Ptolemaic world picture, Saturn was in the outermost planetary sphere; beyond it was the sphere of the fixed stars.

8. The "seven churches which are in Asia," to which John addresses the Book of Revelation 1.4.

Blake now forces on the angel his own diabolic view of angelic biblical exegesis, theological speculation and disputation, and Hell.

9. Aristotle's treatises on logic.

Have now another plain fact: Any man of mechanical talents may from the writings of Paracelsus or Jacob Behmen<sup>1</sup> produce ten thousand volumes of equal value with Swedenborg's, and from those of Dante or Shakespear, an infinite number.

But when he has done this, let him not say that he knows better than his master, for he only holds a candle in sunshine.

#### A Memorable Fancy

Once I saw a Devil in a flame of fire, who arose before an Angel that sat on a cloud, and the Devil uttered these words:

"The worship of God is, Honouring his gifts in other men, each according to his genius, and loving the [PLATE 23] greatest men best. Those who envy or calumniate great men hate God, for there is no other God."

The Angel hearing this became almost blue; but mastering himself, he grew yellow, & at last white, pink, & smiling, and then replied:

"Thou Idolater, is not God One? & is not he visible in Jesus Christ? and has not Jesus Christ given his sanction to the law of ten commandments, and are not all other men fools, sinners, & nothings?"

The Devil answer'd; "Bray a fool in a mortar with wheat, yet shall not his folly be beaten out of him.<sup>2</sup> If Jesus Christ is the greatest man, you ought to love him in the greatest degree. Now hear how he has given his sanction to the law of ten commandments: did he not mock at the sabbath, and so mock the sabbath's God?<sup>3</sup> murder those who were murderd because of him? turn away the law from the woman taken in adultery?<sup>4</sup> steal the labor of others to support him? bear false witness when he omitted making a defence before Pilate?<sup>5</sup> covet when he pray'd for his disciples, and when he bid them shake off the dust of their feet against such as refused to lodge them?<sup>6</sup> I tell you, no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments. Jesus was all virtue, and acted from im[PLATE 24]pulse, not from rules."

When he had so spoken, I beheld the Angel, who stretched out his arms embracing the flame of fire, & he was consumed and arose as Elijah.<sup>7</sup>

Note. This Angel, who is now become a Devil, is my particular friend; we often read the Bible together in its infernal or diabolical sense, which the world shall have if they behave well.

I have also The Bible of Hell,<sup>8</sup> which the world shall have whether they will or no.

One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression.

1790-93

1790-93

PLATE 25

1. Jakob Boehme (1575–1624), a German shoemaker who developed a theosophical system that has had persisting influence on both theological and metaphysical speculation. Paracelsus (1493–1541), a Swiss physician and a pioneer in empirical medicine, was also a prominent theorist of the occult.

2. Proverbs 27.22: "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." "Bray": pound into small pieces.

3. Mark 2.27: "The sabbath was made for man."

4. Cf. John 8.2-11.

5. Cf. Matthew 27.13-14.

6. Matthew 10.14: "Whosoever shall not receive you . . . when ye depart . . . shake off the dust of your feet."

7. In 2 Kings 2.11 the prophet Elijah "went up by a whirlwind into heaven," borne by "a chariot of fire."

8. I.e., the poems and designs that Blake is working on.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Celestial Railroad" is a parody of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* in which the allegory's main character, Christian, appears in a dream to the author. Like Bunyan's protagonist, Hawthorne's Christian also tries to get "from this world to that which is to come" by fleeing the City of Destruction. But, in "The Celestial Railroad" Christian can take a train rather than make the long pilgrimage on foot, so he opts for the "easy way." But, on the trip, the narrator notices that all the landmarks described by Bunyan are somehow altered. For instance, whereas Christian found Vanity Fair sordid, Hawthorne's Christian notices its attractiveness:

...as the new railroad brings with it great trade and a constant influx of strangers, the lord of Vanity...and the capitalists of the city are among the largest stockholders. Many passengers stop to take their pleasure or make their profit in the Fair, instead of going onward to the Celestial City.

....I can truly say that my abode in the city was mainly agreeable, and my intercourse with the inhabitants productive of much amusement and instruction.

Christian notices that this city now is inhabited with men of the cloth who impart their Christian teachings; such ministers as the Reverend "Mr. Stumble-at-truth," "Mr. This-today" and Mr. "That-tomorrow" contribute. But, Christian speaks to two of the pilgrims on foot who warn him if he remains on the train he will get nowhere because the Lord of the Celestial City has refused to accept "an act of incorporation" for this railroad (which represents blind faith in science), and without that no one can enter the Celestial City.

Clearly, Hawthorne has more sympathy for the stout Puritan pilgrims who are representative of Bunyan's story. However, he also perceives the intolerance of these Puritans and their hostility to science which holds them back from progress.

Instead of the castle of Despair as in Bunyan's piece, Hawthorne's pilgrim finds it replaced by "Mr. Flimsy-faith," who has repaired the place and offers entertainment. Then, as the train nears its destination, the narrator/pilgrim sees the two pilgrims who warned him at Vanity Fair; they are being accepted into the Celestial City. When the narrator worries about his and the other passengers' reception, Mr. Smoothit-Away tells him "Never fear! Never fear!"

After they board the ferry that they hope will take them to the Celestial City, the narrator asks Mr. Smoothit-Away if he is not coming. With an odd smile, he answers that he is not, but he will see Christian again; as he speaks, smoke is emitted from his mouth and a fire is in his eye. It is then that the narrator realizes that he has been tricked by the devil and the train will never arrive at the Celestial City, but, fortunately he awakens from his dream.

Clearly, Hawthorne admires the stout faith of Bunyan's Christian. However, because Vanity Fair is depicted as having some value, he perceives the Puritan pilgrims as too intolerant against progress and science, as represented by the railroad.

## THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD

NOT A GREAT WHILE AGO, passing through the gate of dreams, I visited that region of the earth in which lies the famous city of Destruction. It interested me much to learn that, by the public spirit of some of the inhabitants, a railroad has recently been established between this populous and flourishing town, and the Celestial City. Having a little time upon my hands, I resolved to gratify a liberal curiosity to make a trip thither. Accordingly, one fine morning, after paying my bill at the hotel, and directing the porter to stow my luggage behind a coach, I took my seat in the vehicle and set out for the Station-house. It was my good fortune to enjoy the company of a gentleman- one Mr. Smooth-it-away- who, though he had never actually visited the Celestial City, yet seemed as well acquainted with its laws, customs, policy, and statistics, as with those of the city of Destruction, of which he was a native townsman. Being, moreover, a Director of the railroad corporation, and one of its largest stockholders, he had it in his power to give me all desirable information respecting that praiseworthy enterprise.

Our coach rattled out of the city, and, at a short distance from its outskirts, passed over a bridge, of elegant construction, but somewhat too slight, as I imagined, to sustain any considerable weight. On both sides lay an extensive quagmire, which could not have been more disagreeable either to sight or smell, had all the kennels of the earth emptied their pollution there.

“This,” remarked Mr. Smooth-it-away, “is the famous Slough of Despond- a disgrace to all the neighborhood; and the greater, that it might so easily be converted into firm ground.” “I have understood, said I, ”that efforts have been made for that purpose, from time immemorial. Bunyan mentions that above twenty thousand cart-loads of wholesome instructions had been thrown in here, without effect.” “Very probably! and what effect could be anticipated from such unsubstantial stuff?” cried Mr. Smooth-it-away. “You observe this convenient bridge. We obtained a sufficient foundation for it by throwing into the Slough some editions of books of morality, volumes of French philosophy and German rationalism, tracts, sermons, and essays of modern clergymen, extracts from Plato, Confucius, and various Hindoo sages, together with a few ingenious commentaries upon texts of Scripture- all of which, by some scientific process, have been converted into a mass like granite. The whole bog might be filled up with similar matter.” It really seemed to me, however, that the bridge vibrated and heaved up and down in a very formidable manner; and, spite of Mr. Smooth-it-away’s testimony to the solidity of its foundation, I should be loth to cross it in a crowded omnibus; especially, if each passenger were encumbered with as heavy luggage as that gentleman and myself. Nevertheless, we got over without accident, and soon found ourselves at the Station-house. This very neat and spacious edifice is erected on the site of the little Wicket-Gate, which formerly, as all old pilgrims will recollect, stood directly across the highway, and, by its inconvenient narrowness, was a great obstruction to the traveller of liberal mind and expansive stomach. The reader of John Bunyan will be glad to know, that Christian’s old friend Evangelist, who was accustomed to supply each pilgrim with a mystic roll, now presides at the ticket office. Some malicious persons, it is true, deny the identity of this reputable character with the Evangelist of old times, and even pretend to bring competent evidence of an imposture. Without involving myself in a dispute, I shall merely observe, that, so far as my experience goes, the square pieces of pasteboard, now delivered to passengers, are much more convenient and useful along the road, than the antique roll of parchment. Whether they will be as readily received at the gate of the Celestial City, I decline giving an opinion.

A large number of passengers were already at the Station-house, awaiting the departure of the cars. By the aspect and demeanor of these persons, it was easy to judge that the feelings of the community had undergone a very favorable change, in reference to the celestial pilgrimage. It would have done Bunyan's heart good to see it. Instead of a lonely and ragged man, with a huge burthen on his back, plodding along sorrowfully on foot, while the whole city hooted after him, here were parties of the first gentry and most respectable people in the neighborhood, setting forth towards the Celestial City, as cheerfully as if the pilgrimage were merely a summer tour. Among the gentlemen were characters of deserved eminence, magistrates, politicians, and men of wealth, by whose example religion could not but be greatly recommended to their meaner brethren. In the ladies' apartment, too, I rejoiced to distinguish some of those flowers of fashionable society, who are so well fitted to adorn the most elevated circles of the Celestial City.

There was much pleasant conversation about the news of the day, topics of business, politics, or the lighter matters of amusement; while religion, though indubitably the main thing at heart, was thrown tastefully into the back-ground. Even an infidel would have heard little or nothing to shock his sensibility.

One great convenience of the new method of going on pilgrimage, I must not forget to mention. Our enormous burthens, instead of being carried on our shoulders, as had been the custom of old, were all snugly deposited in the baggage-car, and, as I was assured, would be delivered to their respective owners at the journey's end. Another thing, likewise, the benevolent reader will be delighted to understand. It may be remembered that there was an ancient feud between Prince Beelzebub and the keeper of the Wicket-Gate, and that the adherents of the former distinguished personage were accustomed to shoot deadly arrows at honest pilgrims, while knocking at the door. This dispute, much to the credit as well of the illustrious potentate above-mentioned, as of the worthy and enlightened Directors of the railroad, has been pacifically arranged, on the principle of mutual compromise. The Prince's subjects are now pretty numerously employed about the Station-house, some in taking care of the baggage, others in collecting fuel, feeding the engines, and such congenial occupations; and I can conscientiously affirm, that persons more attentive to their business, more willing to accommodate, or more generally agreeable to the passengers, are not to be found on any railroad. Every good heart must surely exult at so satisfactory an arrangement of an immemorial difficulty.

"Where is Mr. Great-heart?" inquired I. "Beyond a doubt, the Directors have engaged that famous old champion to be chief conductor on the railroad?" "Why, no," said Mr. Smooth-it-away, with a dry cough. "He was offered the situation of brake-man; but, to tell you the truth, our friend Great-heart has grown preposterously stiff and narrow in his old age. He has so often guided pilgrims over the road, on foot, that he considers it a sin to travel in any other fashion. Besides, the old fellow had entered so heartily into the ancient feud with Prince Beelzebub, that he would have been perpetually at blows or ill language with some of the Prince's subjects, and thus have embroiled us anew. So, on the whole, we were not sorry when honest Great-heart went off to the Celestial City in a huff, and left us at liberty to choose a more suitable and accommodating man. Yonder comes the conductor of the train. You will probably recognize him at once." The engine at this moment took its station in advance of the cars, looking, I must confess, much more like a sort of mechanical demon that would hurry us to the infernal regions, than a laudable contrivance for smoothing our way to the Celestial City. On its top sat a personage almost enveloped in smoke and flame, which- not to startle the reader- appeared to gush from his own mouth and stomach, as well as from the engine's brazen abdomen.

“Do my eyes deceive me?” cried I. “What on earth is this! A living creature? If so, he is own brother to the engine he rides upon!”

“Poh, poh, you are obtuse!” said Mr. Smooth-it-away, with a hearty laugh.

“Don’t you know Apollyon, Christian’s old enemy, with whom he fought so fierce a battle in the Valley of Humiliation? He was the very fellow to manage the engine; and so we have reconciled him to the custom of going on pilgrimage, and engaged him as chief conductor.” “Bravo, bravo!” exclaimed I, with irrepressible enthusiasm, “this shows the liberality of the age; this proves, if anything can, that all musty prejudices are in a fair way to be obliterated. And how will Christian rejoice to hear of this happy transformation of his old antagonist! I promise myself great pleasure in informing him of it, when we reach the Celestial City.” The passengers being all comfortably seated, we now rattled away merrily, accomplishing a greater distance in ten minutes than Christian probably trudged over in a day. It was laughable while we glanced along, as it were, at the tail of a thunderbolt, to observe two dusty foot-travellers, in the old pilgrim-guise, with cockle-shell and staff, their mystic rolls of parchment in their hands, and their intolerable burthens on their backs. The preposterous obstinacy of these honest people, in persisting to groan and stumble along the difficult pathway, rather than take advantage of modern improvements, excited great mirth among our wiser brotherhood. We greeted the two pilgrims with many pleasant gibes and a roar of laughter; whereupon, they gazed at us with such woful and absurdly compassionate visages, that our merriment grew tenfold more obstreperous. Apollyon, also, entered heartily into the fun, and contrived to flirt the smoke and flame of the engine, or of his own breath, into their faces, and envelope them in an atmosphere of scalding steam. These little practical jokes amused us mightily, and doubtless afforded the pilgrims the gratification of considering themselves martyrs.

At some distance from the railroad, Mr. Smooth-it-away pointed to a large, antique edifice, which, he observed, was a tavern of long standing, and had formerly been a noted stopping-place for pilgrims. In Bunyan’s road-book it is mentioned as the Interpreter’s House.

“I have long had a curiosity to visit that old mansion,” remarked I.

“It is not one of our stations, as you perceive,” said my companion. “The keeper was violently opposed to the railroad; and well he might be, as the track left his house of entertainment on one side, and thus was pretty certain to deprive him of all his reputable customers. But the foot-path still passes his door; and the old gentleman now and then receives a call from some simple traveller, and entertains him with fare as old-fashioned as himself.” Before our talk on this subject came to a conclusion, we were rushing by the place where Christian’s burthen fell from his shoulders, at the sight of the Cross.

This served as a theme for Mr. Smooth-it-away, Mr. Live-for-the-world, Mr. Hide-sin-in-the-heart, Mr. Scaly-conscience, and a knot of gentlemen from the town of Shun-repentance, to descant upon the inestimable advantages resulting from the safety of our baggage. Myself, and all the passengers indeed, joined with great unanimity in this view of the matter; for our burthens were rich in many things esteemed precious throughout the world; and especially, we each of us possessed a great variety of favorite Habits, which we trusted would not be out of fashion, even in the polite circles of the Celestial City. It would have been a sad spectacle to see such an assortment of valuable articles tumbling into the sepulchre. Thus pleasantly conversing on the favorable circumstances of our position, as compared with those of past pilgrims, and of narrow-minded ones at the present day, we soon found ourselves at the foot of the Hill Difficulty. Through the very heart of this rocky mountain a tunnel has been constructed, of most admirable architecture, with a lofty arch and a spacious double-track; so that, unless the earth and



rocks should chance to crumble down, it will remain an eternal monument of the builder's skill and enterprise. It is a great though incidental advantage, that the materials from the heart of the Hill Difficulty have been employed in filling up the Valley of Humiliation; thus obviating the necessity of descending into that disagreeable and unwholesome hollow.

"This is a wonderful improvement, indeed," said I. "Yet I should have been glad of an opportunity to visit the Palace Beautiful, and be introduced to the charming young ladies- Miss Prudence, Miss Piety, Miss Charity, and the rest who have the kindness to entertain pilgrims there." "Young ladies!" cried Mr. Smooth-it-away, as soon as he could speak for laughing. "And charming young ladies! Why, my dear fellow, they are old maids, every soul of them- prim, starched, dry, and angular- and not one of them, I will venture to say, has altered so much as the fashion of her gown, since the days of Christian's pilgrimage."

"Ah, well, said I, much comforted, "then I can very readily dispense with their acquaintance." The respectable Apollyon was now putting on the steam at a prodigious rate; anxious, perhaps, to get rid of the unpleasant reminiscences connected with the spot where he had so disastrously encountered Christian. Consulting Mr. Bunyan's road-book, I perceived that we must now be within a few miles of the Valley of the Shadow of Death; into which doleful region, at our present speed, we should plunge much sooner than seemed at all desirable. In truth, I expected nothing better than to find myself in the ditch on one side, or the quag on the other.

But on communicating my apprehensions to Mr. Smooth-it-away, he assured me that the difficulties of this passage, even in its worst condition, had been vastly exaggerated, and that, in its present state of improvement, I might consider myself as safe as on any railroad in Christendom.

Even while we were speaking, the train shot into the entrance of this dreaded Valley. Though I plead guilty to some foolish palpitations of the heart, during our headlong rush over the causeway here constructed, yet it were unjust to withhold the highest encomiums on the boldness of its original conception, and the ingenuity of those who executed it. It was gratifying, likewise, to observe how much care had been taken to dispel the everlasting gloom, and supply the defect of cheerful sunshine; not a ray of which has ever penetrated among these awful shadows. For this purpose, the inflammable gas, which exudes plentifully from the soil, is collected by means of pipes, and thence communicated to a quadruple row of lamps, along the whole extent of the passage. Thus a radiance has been created, even out of the fiery and sulphurous curse that rests for ever upon the Valley; a radiance hurtful, however, to the eyes, and somewhat bewildering, as I discovered by the changes which it wrought in the visages of my companions. In this respect, as compared with natural daylight, there is the same difference as between truth and falsehood; but if the reader have ever travelled through the dark Valley, he will have learned to be thankful for any light that he could get; if not from the sky above, then from the blasted soil beneath. Such was the red brilliancy of these lamps, that they appeared to build walls of fire on both sides of the track, between which we held our course at lightning speed, while a reverberating thunder filled the Valley with its echoes. Had the engine run off the track- a catastrophe, it is whispered, by no means unprecedented- the bottomless pit, if there be any such place, would undoubtedly have received us. Just as some dismal fooleries of this nature had made my heart quake, there came a tremendous shriek, careering along the Valley as if a thousand devils had burst their lungs to utter it, but which proved to be merely the whistle of the engine, on arriving at a stopping-place.

The spot, where we had now paused, is the same that our friend Bunyantruthful man, but infected with many fantastic notions- has designated, in terms plainer than I like to repeat, as the mouth of the infernal region. This, however, must be a mistake; inasmuch as Mr. Smooth-it-away, while we remained in the smoky and lurid cavern, took occasion to prove that Tophet has not even a metaphorical existence. The place, he assured us, is no other than the crater of a halfextinct volcano, in which the Directors had caused forges to be set up, for the manufacture of railroad iron. Hence, also, is obtained a plentiful supply of fuel for the use of the engines. Whoever had gazed into the dismal obscurity of the broad cavern-mouth, whence ever and anon darted huge tongues of dusky flame and had seen the strange, half-shaped monsters, and visions of faces horribly grotesque, into which the smoke seemed to wreath itself- and had heard the awful murmurs, and shrieks, and deep shuddering whispers of the blast, sometimes forming themselves into words almost articulate- would have seized upon Mr. Smooth-it-away's comfortable explanation, as greedily as we did. The inhabitants of the cavern, moreover, were unlovely personages, dark, smoke-begrimed, generally deformed, with mis-shapen feet, and a glow of dusky redness in their eyes; as if their hearts had caught fire, and were blazing out of the upper windows. It struck me as a peculiarity, that the laborers at the forge, and those who brought fuel to the engine, when they began to draw short breath, positively emitted smoke from their mouth and nostrils.

Among the idlers about the train, most of whom were puffing cigars which they had lighted at the flame of the crater, I was perplexed to notice several who, to my certain knowledge, had heretofore set forth by railroad for the Celestial City. They looked dark, wild, and smoky, with a singular resemblance, indeed, to the native inhabitants; like whom, also, they had a disagreeable propensity to ill-natured gibes and sneers, the habit of which had wrought a settled contortion of their visages. Having been on speaking terms with one of these persons- an indolent, good-for-nothing fellow, who went by the name of Take-it-easy- I called him, and inquired what was his business there.

"Did you not start," said I, "for the Celestial City?" "That's a fact," said Mr. Take-it-easy, carelessly puffing some smoke into my eyes. "But I heard such bad accounts, that I never took pains to climb the hill, on which the city stands. No business doing- no fun going on- nothing to drink, and no smoking allowed- and a thrumming of church-music from morning till night! I would not stay in such a place, if they offered me house-room and living free." "But, my good Mr. Take-it-easy," cried I, "why take up your residence here, of all places in the world?" "Oh," said the loafer, with a grin, "it is very warm hereabouts, and I meet with plenty of old acquaintances, and altogether the place suits me. I hope to see you back again, some day soon. A pleasant journey to you!" While he was speaking, the bell of the engine rang, and we dashed away, after dropping a few passengers, but receiving no new ones. Rattling onward through the Valley, we were dazzled with the fiercely gleaming gas-lamps, as before. But sometimes, in the dark of intense brightness, grim faces, that bore the aspect and expression of individual sins, or evil passions, seemed to thrust themselves through the veil of light, glaring upon us, and stretching forth a great dusky hand, as if to impede our progress. I almost thought, that they were my own sins that appalled me there. These were freaks of imagination- nothing more, certainly- mere delusions, which I ought to be heartily ashamed of- but, all through the Dark Valley, I was tormented, and pestered, and dolefully bewildered, with the same kind of waking dreams. The mephitic gases of that region intoxicate the brain. As the light of natural day, however, began to struggle with the glow of the lanterns, these vain imaginations lost their vividness, and finally vanished with the first ray of sunshine that greeted our escape from the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Ere we had gone a mile beyond it, I could well nigh have taken my oath, that this whole gloomy passage was a dream.

At the end of the Valley, as John Bunyan mentions, is a cavern, where, in his days, dwelt two cruel giants, Pope and Pagan, who had strewn the ground about their residence with the bones of slaughtered pilgrims. These vile old troglodytes are no longer there; but in their deserted cave another terrible giant has thrust himself, and makes it his business to seize upon honest travellers, and eat them for his table with plentiful meals of smoke, mist, moonshine, raw potatoes, and saw-dust. He is a German by birth, and is called Giant Transcendentalist; but as to his form, his features, his substance, and his nature generally, it is the chief peculiarity of this huge miscreant, that neither he for himself, nor anybody for him, has ever been able to describe them. As we rushed by the cavern's mouth, we caught a hasty glimpse of him, looking somewhat like an ill-proportioned figure, but considerably more like a heap of fog and duskiness. He shouted after us but in so strange a phraseology, that we knew not what he meant, nor whether to be encouraged or affrighted.

It was late in the day, when the train thundered into the ancient city of Vanity, where Vanity Fair is still at the height of prosperity, and exhibits an epitome of whatever is brilliant, gay, and fascinating, beneath the sun. As I purposed to make a considerable stay here, it gratified me to learn that there is no longer the want of harmony between the townspeople and pilgrims, which impelled the former to such lamentably mistaken measures as the persecution of Christian, and the fiery martyrdom of Faithful. On the contrary, as the new railroad brings with it great trade and a constant influx of strangers, the lord of Vanity Fair is its chief patron, and the capitalists of the city are among the largest stockholders. Many passengers stop to take their pleasure or make their profit in the Fair, instead of going onward to the Celestial City. Indeed, such are the charms of the place, that people often affirm it to be the true and only heaven; stoutly contending that there is no other, that those who seek further are mere dreamers, and that, if the fabled brightness of the Celestial City lay but a bare mile beyond the gates of Vanity, they would not be fools enough to go thither. Without subscribing to these, perhaps, exaggerated encomiums, I can truly say, that my abode in the city was mainly agreeable, and my intercourse with the inhabitants productive of much amusement and instruction.

Being naturally of a serious turn, my attention was directed to the solid advantages derivable from a residence here, rather than to the effervescent pleasures, which are the grand object with too many visitants. The Christian reader, if he have no accounts of the city later than Bunyan's time, will be surprised to hear that almost every street has its church, and that the reverend clergy are nowhere held in higher respect than at Vanity Fair. And well do they deserve such honorable estimation; for the maxims of wisdom and virtue which fall from their lips, come from as deep a spiritual source, and tend to as lofty a religious aim, as those of the sagest philosophers of old. In justification of this high praise, I need only mention the names of the Rev. Mr. Shallow-deep; the Rev. Mr. Stumble-at-Truth; that fine old clerical character, the Rev. Mr. This-to-day, who expects shortly to resign his pulpit to the Rev. Mr. That-to-morrow; together with the Rev. Mr. Bewilderment; the Rev. Mr. Clog-the-spirit; and, last and greatest, the Rev. Dr. Wind-of-doctrine. The labors of these eminent divines are aided by those of innumerable lecturers, who diffuse such a various profundity, in all subjects of human or celestial science, that any man may acquire an omnigenous erudition, without the trouble of even learning to read. Thus literature is etherealized by assuming for its medium the human voice; and knowledge, depositing all its heavier particles- except, doubtless, its gold- becomes exhaled into a sound, which forthwith steals into the ever-open ear of the community. These ingenious methods constitute a sort of machinery, by which thought and study are done to every person's hand, without his putting himself to the slightest inconvenience in the matter.

There is another species of machine for the wholesale manufacture of individual morality. This excellent result is effected by societies for all manner of virtuous purposes; with which a man has merely to connect himself, throwing, as it were, his quota of virtue into the common stock; and the president and directors will take care that the aggregate amount be well applied. All these, and other wonderful improvements in ethics, religion, and literature, being made plain to my comprehension, by the ingenious Mr. Smooth-it-away, inspired me with a vast admiration of Vanity Fair.

It would fill a volume, in an age of pamphlets, were I to record all my observations in this great capital of human business and pleasure. There was an unlimited range of society- the powerful, the wise, the witty, and the famous in every walk of life- princes, presidents, poets, generals, artists, actors, and philanthropists, all making their own market at the Fair, and deeming no price too exorbitant for such commodities as hit their fancy. It was well worth one's while, even if he had no idea of buying or selling, to loiter through the bazaars, and observe the various sorts of traffic that were going forward.

Some of the purchasers, I thought, made very foolish bargains. For instance, a young man having inherited a splendid fortune, laid out a considerable portion of it in the purchase of diseases, and finally spent all the rest for a heavy lot of repentance and a suit of rags. A very pretty girl bartered a heart as clear as crystal, and which seemed her most valuable possession, for another jewel of the same kind, but so worn and defaced as to be utterly worthless. In one shop, there were a great many crowns of laurel and myrtle, which soldiers, authors, statesmen, and various other people, pressed eagerly to buy; some purchased these paltry wreaths with their lives; others by a toilsome servitude of years; and many sacrificed whatever was most valuable, yet finally slunk away without the crown.

There was a sort of stock or scrip, called Conscience, which seemed to be in great demand, and would purchase almost anything. Indeed, few rich commodities were to be obtained without paying a heavy sum in this particular stock, and a man's business was seldom very lucrative, unless he knew precisely when and how to throw his hoard of Conscience into the market. Yet as this stock was the only thing of permanent value, whoever parted with it was sure to find himself a loser, in the long run. Several of the speculations were of a questionable character. Occasionally, a member of Congress recruited his pocket by the sale of his constituents; and I was assured that public officers have often sold their country at very moderate prices. Thousands sold their happiness for a whim. Gilded chains were in great demand, and purchased with almost any sacrifice. In truth, those who desired, according to the old adage, to sell anything valuable for a song, might find customers all over the Fair; and there were innumerable messes of pottage, piping hot, for such as chose to buy them with their birthrights. A few articles, however, could not be found genuine at Vanity Fair. If a customer wished to renew his stock of youth, the dealers offered him a set of false teeth and an auburn wig; if he demanded peace of mind, they recommended opium or a brandy-bottle.

Tracts of land and golden mansions, situate in the Celestial City, were often exchanged, at very disadvantageous rates, for a few years' lease of small, dismal, inconvenient tenements in Vanity Fair. Prince Beelzebub himself took great interest in this sort of traffic, and sometimes condescended to meddle with smaller matters. I once had the pleasure to see him bargaining with a miser for his soul, which, after much ingenious skirmishing on both sides, his Highness succeeded in obtaining at about the value of sixpence. The Prince remarked, with a smile, that he was a loser by the transaction.

Day after day, as I walked the streets of Vanity, my manners and deportment became more and more like those of the inhabitants. The place began to seem like home; the

idea of pursuing my travels to the Celestial City was almost obliterated from my mind. I was reminded of it, however, by the sight of the same pair of simple pilgrims at whom we had laughed so heartily, when Apollyon puffed smoke and steam into their faces, at the commencement of our journey.

There they stood amid the densest bustle of Vanity- the dealers offering them their purple, and fine linen, and jewels; the men of wit and humor gibing at them; a pair of buxom ladies ogling them askance; while the benevolent Mr. Smooth-it-away whispered some of his wisdom at their elbows, and pointed to a newlyerected temple- but there were these worthy simpletons, making the scene look wild and monstrous, merely by their sturdy repudiation of all part in its business or pleasures.

One of them- his name was Stick-to-the-right- perceived in my face, I suppose, a species of sympathy and almost admiration, which, to my own great surprise, I could not help feeling for this pragmatic couple. It prompted him to address me.

“Sir,” inquired he, with a sad, yet mild and kindly voice, “do you call yourself a pilgrim?” “Yes,” I replied, “my right to that appellation is indubitable. I am merely a sojourner here in Vanity Fair, being bound to the Celestial City by the new railroad.” “Alas, friend,” rejoined Mr. Stick-to-the-right, “I do assure you, and beseech you to receive the truth of my words, that that whole concern is a bubble. You may travel on it all your lifetime, were you to live thousands of years, and yet never get beyond the limits of Vanity Fair! Yea; though you should deem yourself entering the gates of the Blessed City, it will be nothing but a miserable delusion.” “The Lord of the Celestial City,” began the other pilgrim, whose name was Mr. Foot-it-to-Heaven, “has refused, and will ever refuse, to grant an act of incorporation for this railroad; and unless that be obtained, no passenger can ever hope to enter his dominions. Wherefore, every man, who buys a ticket, must lay his account with losing the purchase-money- which is the value of his own soul.” “Poh, nonsense!” said Mr. Smooth-it-away, taking my arm and leading me off, “these fellows ought to be indicted for a libel. If the law stood as it once did in Vanity Fair, we should see them grinning through the iron bars of the prison window.” This incident made a considerable impression on my mind, and contributed with other circumstances to indispose me to a permanent residence in the city of Vanity; although, of course, I was not simple enough to give up my original plan of gliding along easily and commodiously by railroad. Still, I grew anxious to be gone. There was one strange thing that troubled me; amid the occupations or amusements of the Fair, nothing was more common than for a person- whether at a feast, theatre, or church, or trafficking for wealth and honors, or whatever he might be doing, and however unseasonable the interruption- suddenly to vanish like a soap-bubble, and be never more seen of his fellows; and so accustomed were the latter to such little accidents, that they went on with their business, as quietly as if nothing had happened. But it was otherwise with me.

Finally, after a pretty long residence at the Fair, I resumed my journey towards the Celestial City, still with Mr. Smooth-it-away at my side. At a short distance beyond the suburbs of Vanity, we passed the ancient silver mine, of which Demas was the first discoverer, and which is now wrought to great advantage, supplying nearly all the coined currency of the world. A little further onward was the spot where Lot’s wife had stood for ages, under the semblance of a pillar of salt. Curious travellers have long since carried it away piecemeal. Had all regrets been punished as rigorously as this poor dame’s were, my yearning for the relinquished delights of Vanity Fair might have produced a similar change in my own corporeal substance, and left me a warning to future pilgrims.

The next remarkable object was a large edifice, constructed of moss-grown stone, but in a modern and airy style of architecture. The engine came to a pause in its vicinity with the usual tremendous shriek.

“This was formerly the castle of the redoubted giant Despair,” observed Mr. Smooth-it-away; “but, since his death, Mr. Flimsy-faith has repaired it, and now keeps an excellent house of entertainment here. It is one of our stopping-places.” “It seems but slightly put together,” remarked I, looking at the frail, yet ponderous walls. “I do not envy Mr. Flimsy-faith his habitation. Some day it will thunder down upon the heads of the occupants.” “We shall escape, at all events,” said Mr. Smooth-it-away, “for Apollyon is putting on the steam again.” The road now plunged into a gorge of the Delectable Mountains, and traversed the field where, in former ages, the blind men wandered and stumbled among the tombs. One of these ancient tomb-stones had been thrust across the track, by some malicious person, and gave the train of cars a terrible jolt. Far up the rugged side of a mountain, I perceived a rusty iron door, half overgrown with bushes and creeping plants, but with smoke issuing from its crevices.

“Is that,” inquired I, “the very door in the hill-side, which the shepherds assured Christian was a by-way to Hell?” “That was a joke on the part of the shepherds,” said Mr. Smooth-it-away, with a smile. “It is neither more nor less than the door of a cavern, which they use as a smoke-house for the preparation of mutton hams.” My recollections of the journey are now, for a little space, dim and confused, inasmuch as a singular drowsiness here overcame me, owing to the fact that we were passing over the Enchanted Ground, the air of which encourages a disposition to sleep. I awoke, however, as soon as we crossed the borders of the pleasant land of Beulah. All the passengers were rubbing their eyes, comparing watches, and con-gratulating one another on the prospect of arriving so seasonably at the journey’s end. The sweet breezes of this happy clime came refreshingly to our nostrils; we beheld the glimmering gush of silver fountains, overhung by trees of beautiful foliage and delicious fruit, which were propagated by grafts from the celestial gardens. Once, as we dashed onward like a hurricane, there was a flutter of wings, and the bright appearance of an angel in the air, speeding forth on some heavenly mission. The engine now announced the close vicinity of the final Station-house, by one last and horrible scream, in which there seemed to be distinguishable every kind of wailing and wo, and bitter fierceness of wrath, all mixed up with the wild laughter of a devil or a madman. Throughout our journey, at every stopping-place, Apollyon had exercised his ingenuity in screwing the most abominable sounds out of the whistle of the steam-engine; but in this closing effort he outdid himself, and created an infernal uproar, which, besides disturbing the peaceful inhabitants of Beulah, must have sent its discord even through the celestial gates.

While the horrid clamor was still ringing in our ears, we heard an exulting strain, as if a thousand instruments of music, with height, and depth, and sweetness in their tones, at once tender and triumphant, were struck in unison, to greet the approach of some illustrious hero, who had fought the good fight and won a glorious victory, and was come to lay aside his battered arms for ever. Looking to ascertain what might be the occasion of this glad harmony, I perceived, on alighting from the cars, that a multitude of shining ones had assembled on the other side of the river, to welcome two poor pilgrims, who were just emerging from its depths. They were the same whom Apollyon and ourselves had persecuted with taunts and gibes, and scalding steam, at the commencement of our journey- the same whose unworldly aspect and impressive words had stirred my conscience, amid the wild revellers of Vanity Fair.

“How amazingly well those men have got on!” cried I to Mr. Smooth-it-away.

“I wish we were secure of as good a reception.” “Never fear- never fear!” answered my friend. “Come- make haste; the ferryboat will be off directly; and in three minutes you will be on the other side of the river. No doubt you will find coaches to carry you up to the city gates.” A steam ferry-boat, the last improvement on this important route, lay at the river-side, puffing, snorting, and emitting all those other disagreeable utterances, which betoken the departure to be immediate. I hurried on board with the rest of the passengers, most of whom were in great perturbation; some bawling out for their baggage; some tearing their hair and exclaiming that the boat would explode or sink; some already pale with the heaving of the stream; some gazing affrighted at the ugly aspect of the steersman; and some still dizzy with the slumberous influences of the Enchanted Ground. Looking back to the shore, I was amazed to discern Mr. Smooth-it-away waving his hand in token of farewell!

“Don’t you go over to the Celestial City?” exclaimed I.

“Oh, no!” answered he with a queer smile, and that same disagreeable contortion of visage which I had remarked in the inhabitants of the Dark Valley. “Oh, no! I have come thus far only for the sake of your pleasant company. Good bye! We shall meet again.” And then did my excellent friend, Mr. Smooth-it-away, laugh outright; in the midst of which cachinnation, a smoke-wreath issued from his mouth and nostrils, while a twinkle of lurid flame darted out of either eye, proving indubitably that his heart was all of a red blaze. The impudent fiend! To deny the existence of Tophet, when he felt its fiery tortures raging within his breast! I rushed to the side of the boat, intending to fling myself on shore. But the wheels, as they began their revolutions, threw a dash of spray over me, so cold- so deadly cold, with the chill that will never leave those waters, until Death be drowned in his own riverthat, with a shiver and a heart-quake, I awoke. Thank heaven, it was a Dream!

**THE END**

## CHAPTER 39

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# C. S. LEWIS

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### CATH FILMER-DAVIES

OFTEN referred to as the greatest Anglican apologist of modern times, C. S. Lewis is also regarded as a 'popular' theologian. But although we might understand that his books, particularly his fiction, have been and to some lesser extent still are 'popular', there is nothing to suggest that his theology is at all popular in the sense of being embraced and welcomed by even his keenest readers. In many ways, it is at odds with some of the more liberal thought emanating from the Church of England in contemporary times.

There is also a distinction to be made between Lewis's overtly apologetic works—such as *Mere Christianity* (1952) and *The Problem of Pain* (1940), in which he was writing to order, as it were—trying to expound and defend orthodox beliefs, and his more personal theology, which is to be found in greater complexity (and to some greater perplexity) in his fiction. The distinction can be made because there is a different mode of self-disclosure at work in fiction; paradoxically, more of the person behind the fictional work can be, and is, revealed, because of the apparent security of the veil of the narrative which covers it. Fiction, in which the narrative and symbolism becomes pre-eminent for the reader, admits self-disclosure subversively, at a deeper layer of meaning than frank apologetics. This examination of the theology of C. S. Lewis then, while not disregarding the overtly apologetic works nor, indeed, belittling their importance, also takes serious account of the theology to be found at the heart of his fiction.

It is clear that, for many (such as Will Vaus (2004)), Lewis's theology seems to be primarily encapsulated in his theological digest *Mere Christianity*, but that work contains only a pale reflection of most of his theological thought. The reason is, of course, that in *Mere Christianity* Lewis was attempting to synchronize not his own theology but that of the mainstream Christian churches, and to do that in a way that would win acceptance from them all. He deliberately wanted to avoid anything that



might cause contention or dissent, and although that little book has been of enormous value to its many readers, it hardly presents the complexity of thought that makes up the theological viewpoint of one of the twentieth century's most compelling lay theologians.

Of course, Lewis was an academic, an English literature don at Magdalen College, Oxford, but even his academic writings have a clarity and lucidity that makes them attractive to the general reader. His theological works have the same qualities, but are written from his own perspective as a layman. Thousands of readers have found in them a vocabulary and a tone which not only does not 'speak down' to them, but which is written, as it were, from in their midst, by one of their own. Lewis, of course, made no claim to theological qualification or to the specialist knowledge of the clergy or theologians. What he could—and did—claim was the universality of human experience which made his own experiences worth communicating to others, in the hope that they might speak also to the hearts of his readers.

Lewis's theology might be divided into three parts, each representing a stage in his own spiritual development. But whereas for some who make this journey past experiences are left behind, Lewis integrated them all into his final theological vision.

The three parts of Lewis's theological vision are; supernaturalism, the nature of good and evil, and the process of redemption. Each aspect of this vision emphasizes the key issue of his Christian faith: the surrender of the self to God.

## SUPERNATURALISM

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Although Lewis claimed to have lost his faith after the death of his mother, and to have remained an 'atheist' until his conversion to theism in 1930, the term he chose to describe his beliefs during that period is not entirely accurate. If Lewis's literary oeuvre of the time is anything to go by, he was enchanted even then by the idea of the inconsolable longing for some reality that cannot be seen or experienced by humans, except in brief, tantalizing glimpses. This longing he called *Sehnsucht*, exploiting to the fullest the many ways in which the German word can be translated into English (homesickness, nostalgia, longing, desire).

Lewis at this stage might not have admitted that there was a God, but he certainly believed in some sort of transcendent Reality which he struggles to identify and to express in his early poetry. He was never, in any sense, a mere materialist; there was always 'Something Somewhere' which held his attention and claimed his adherence. Thus in an early poem, 'Song', he writes:

Atoms dead could never thus  
Stir the human heart of us  
Unless the beauty that we see  
The veil of endless beauty be,

Filled full of spirits that have trod  
 Far hence beyond the heavenly sod  
 And seen the bright footprints of God. (1919: 33)

At about the same time, in a letter to his friend Arthur Greaves, Lewis insisted, 'I believe in no God, least of all in one that would punish me . . . but I do believe I have a spirit in me, a chip, shall we say, of universal spirit' (Letter to Arthur Greaves, 25 May 1918, Lewis 1979b: 221).

There was, in fact, a strong element of Platonism in Lewis's early thought which was hardly atheistic, although its supernaturalism was ill-defined and ranged from Romantic thought to some ideas which were consistent with his later Christianity. Robert Houston Smith (1981) believes that Lewis's religious thought was 'undergirded, enriched and occasionally overshadowed' by his devotion to 'a comprehensive religious philosophy . . . a vibrant fabric that encompasses intellect, feelings, metaphysics, aesthetics and ethics' at the core of which is 'the conviction that everything in the universe is the manifestation of a single reality' (ibid. 1-2). Lewis was synthesizing elements of Platonism with Christianity long before his final commitment to the latter, and he continued to do so after his conversion.

He believed at this early stage also that nature was somehow warped or 'fallen'; the shells and bullets of the war leading him to surmise that 'Matter = Nature = Satan' (Letter to Greaves, 3 June 1918, 1979b: 213-14). The Christian Lewis wrote in 1961 that nature is a 'creature lower than ourselves. And a fallen creature—not an evil creature but a good creature corrupted, retaining many beauties but all tainted' (Letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, 10 December 1961; 1964a: 301). This notion of nature as a fallen creature appears in Lewis's final novel, *Till We Have Faces* (1956), and in other aspects of his fiction.

With Lewis's conversion to Christianity, these elements of his theological thought were retained. Platonism helped to confirm Lewis's commitment to sacramentalism. If *Sehnsucht* represented an unsatisfied desire for something more than the material world could offer, there was sense in the pursuit of a hidden reality. The notion of *Sehnsucht* bridged the chasm between Platonic and Christian supernaturalism. Lewis believed that the material world is merely the shadow which stimulates the desire for the real world. This concept is fundamental to an understanding of Lewis's beliefs.

The experience of *Sehnsucht* and the way it compels a synthesis between imagination and reason leads to the pursuit—and 'if faithfully followed, the discovery'—of truth (1981b: 205). Neither the imagination nor human reason can be natural, and Lewis uses the argument of the atheistic evolutionist and scientist J. B. S. Haldane to suit his own argument. Haldane (1940: 196) writes:

It seems to me immensely unlikely that mind is a mere by-product of matter. For if my mental processes are determined wholly by the motion of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true. They may be sound chemically, but that does not make them sound logically. And hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms.

Since the movement of atoms cannot, of itself, produce the faculty of reason, it follows, Lewis asserted, that reason is generated outside of nature. In other words, human reason is a supernatural faculty. Lewis observes that

Neither Will nor Reason is the product of Nature. Therefore either I am self-existent (a belief which no one can accept) or I am a colony of some Thought and Will that are self-existent. Such reason and goodness as we can attain must be derived from a self-existent Reason and goodness outside ourselves, in fact, a Supernatural. ('Bulverism' (1941) in 1979a: 276)

Lewis believed that divine reason 'descends' as it were, into human minds, following the pattern that shows that higher entities can identify with, and include, lower. Lewis, always the rhetorician and polemicist, expressed the theory in this way:

solid bodies exemplify many truths of plane geometry, but plane geometry figures no truths of solid geometry: many inorganic propositions are true of organism, but no organic propositions are true of minerals; Montaigne became kittenish with his kitten but she never talked philosophy to him. Everywhere the great enters the little—its power to do so is almost the test of its greatness. (1947: 134–6)

The way in which the lower medium can make reference to the higher medium is symbolism; but symbolism cannot operate unless the higher medium is known and at least partly apprehended. But that term 'symbolism' does not always adequately describe this analogical process. In some instances—the use of writing to symbolize speech, for example—the term is applicable because the relationship between written sign and the spoken word is conventionally accepted. But in other causes, such as that of a painting, the representation of reality is a part of the reality it represents. Light in a painting is illumined by true light; the relationship between the two is much more than that between a conventional written sign and a sound. In the case of the picture, 'the thing signified is really in a certain mode present', Lewis observes. The relationship between the two is not so much symbolic as sacramental; it is not arbitrary but dependent upon an established connection and relationship between the representation and the reality. This natural world not only represents supernatural reality; it is also part of it. It is logical therefore to deduce that there is an appropriate and parallel correspondence between human sensory perceptions and supernatural reality. Such a conclusion avoids Platonic asceticism while retaining the underlying concept of the Ideas and the Copies as a basis for sacramentalism. Furthermore, Lewis believed that in Christ the natural and the supernatural, the Copy and the Idea, the symbolized and the symbol, the archetype and the ectype, are all reconciled ('Transposition', 1980: 54–73). What is important in this context is the spiritual aspect of human beings. *Sehnsucht* arises from the spiritual aspect of humans; it is ultimately the longing of the human spirit for its own fulfilment and reconciliation with supernatural reality.

But the human spirit finds itself grappling with the desire for reconciliation on the one hand and an urge to rebel on the other. In traditional Christian theology, the human spirit must choose between God and the created but rebellious entity called 'the devil' or 'Satan'. In Lewis's writings, the struggle is depicted as being ultimately between God and the human being's own self, since the unsundered self slips gradually into corruption and becomes absorbed into the satanic. Only when the self is put to death, or surrendered to God, does it become fully integrated and fully individual (1981a: 165; 1979b: 460–1; 1961b: 11). At the heart of Lewis's concepts of Good and Evil, then, lies the

separation between spirit and nature, which has its origins in the fall. When humankind fell, its natural environment was also corrupted, which is the reason why nature cannot be worshipped. Humanity and nature are both in need of redemption. With the death and resurrection of Christ, the process by which humanity and, indeed, the natural order are reconciled to their creator was initiated. Its completion in individual lives depends upon individual choice between self and God.

Lewis's supernaturalism is best seen in his various works of fiction. It is distinguished by images by which he hoped to evoke the notion of *Sehnsucht* or longing as well as a sense of celebratory joy (for example, of music and dancing; Aslan is served, in the Narnian stories, by the god of merriment and wine, Bacchus). He was careful, however, to preserve a sense of awe in his depiction of the supernatural. Several times readers are warned, in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, that 'Aslan is not "safe"' (1950: 76). God is not a Santa Claus figure who will deliver gifts on demand; even the Father Christmas figure in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* brings gifts—and useful, practical gifts at that, 'tools not toys' (ibid. 104) which can be employed in the battle against evil which is to come—not at the request of the recipients, but of his own selection.

## THE NATURE OF GOOD AND EVIL

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As a Christian, Lewis adopted orthodox views on sin and salvation, but the Platonic elements which so shape his supernaturalist beliefs also influence the way he conceives good and evil. He properly rejects, to begin with, the notion of dualism—the belief that two equal and opposite, absolute and divine powers exist in the universe. He rejects, as well, the idea that good and evil as a priori principles coexist in the nature of God. Only in the sense that God offers every created being the choice of whom to serve can Lewis be said to see evil as inherent in the nature of God. Humans tend to build for themselves false images of reality which become the focus of human desires and worship:

Only because God has laid up real goods for us to desire are we able to go wrong by snatching at them in greedy, misdirected ways. The truth is that evil is not a real thing at all, like God. It is simply good spoiled. That is why I say there can be good without evil, but no evil without good... Evil is a parasite. It is only there because good is there for it to spoil and confuse. ('To Arthur Greaves', 12 September 1933, in Lewis 1979*b*, emphasis in original)

Lewis's supernaturalism, and his concept of 'good' are unapologetically hierarchical. In our prevailing climate of 'political correctness', Lewis's hierarchical views sit uneasily with the doctrine of equality and egalitarianism. But to Lewis, the notion of both symbol and sacrament point to a hierarchical order, not only in terms of the supernatural being 'higher' than the natural order but within both the supernatural

and natural orders themselves. Thus Lewis follows without irony the Thomist doctrine of 'the Great Chain of Being'. His views on the marriage relationship and his political opinions also reflect the sacramentalism of hierarchy. Lewis admitted that the medieval model of hierarchical analogies 'delighted' him (1964*b*: 216) although he was quite aware of the error of applying it to the science of astronomy. Hierarchies are the foundation not only of the supernatural order but also of the natural order when it remains faithful to the supernatural paradigms existing for it. The hierarchical model has not dated, Lewis (1942*a*: 72) insists, because it belongs

to the ancient orthodox tradition of European ethics from Aristotle to Johnson himself... [According to this tradition] degrees of value are objectively present in the universe. Everything except God has some natural superior; everything except unformed matter has some natural inferior. The goodness, happiness, and dignity of every being consists in obeying its natural superior and ruling its natural inferior. When it fails in either part of this twofold task, we have disease or monstrosity in the scheme of things until the peccant being is either destroyed or corrected.

Lewis's 'doctrine of objective values' (the belief that some things are really true and others really false, about the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of thing human beings are (1943*a*: 29)) means that his view of the world is not 'democratic' ('democracy', to him, was a kind of necessary political and legal fiction). He makes this viewpoint quite clear:

I do not believe that God created an egalitarian world. I believe in the authority of parent over child, husband over wife, learned over simple, to have been as much a part of the original plan as the authority of man over beast... But since we have learned sin, we have found, as Lord Acton says, that 'all power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. The only remedy has been to take away the powers and substitute a legal fiction of equality... Even the authority of man over beast has had to be interfered with because it is constantly abused. ('Membership', 1980: 114)

And elsewhere (1961*b*: 19) he adds,

The claim to equality outside the strictly political field, is made only by those who feel themselves to be inferior. What it expresses is the itching, smarting, writhing awareness of an inferiority which the patient refuses to accept.

And therefore resents...

Here is someone who speaks English rather more clearly and euphoniously than I—it must be a vile, upstage, lah-di-dah affectation. Here's a fellow who says he doesn't like hot dogs—thinks himself too good for them no doubt... If they were the right sort of chaps they'd be like me. They've no business to be different. It's undemocratic.

But demands for 'equality' are not the only manifestations of the self-worshipping, self-aggrandizing entity which contemporary psychology might call the ego and which Lewis called the *meum*. A demanding and tyrannical self can be seen in the mother of the 'patient' who is the focus of Screwtape's attention in *The Screwtape Letters* (1942*b*). She serves both as an example of how the human belly and palate produce querulousness, impatience, uncharitableness, and self-concern (ibid. 86), and also as an example of the 'all-I-want' state of mind, what Lewis calls 'the gluttony of delicacy', which focuses firmly on the self, regardless of the inconvenience and trouble it causes to others:

She is a positive terror to hostesses and servants. She is always turning from what has been offered her to say with a demure little sigh and a smile, 'Oh please, please . . . *all* I want is a cup of tea, weak but not too weak, and the teeniest weeniest bit of really crisp toast' . . . Because what she wants is smaller and less costly than what has been set before her, she never recognises as gluttony her determination to get what she wants, however troublesome it may be to others. (ibid. 86-7; emphasis in original)

The usurping god of the self, the *meum*, here demands offerings and oblations, appeasements if you like; the service and worship of others. The demand for worship is often disguised as pseudo-unselfishness, which, far from benefiting its recipients, actually confines them in the bondage of the warped and twisted, self-centred manifestations of that most basic and animal of human feelings which Lewis classifies as *storge* or 'affection' (in contrast with the three other kinds of love he identifies as *philia*, *eros*, and *agape*—friendship, sexual love, and (divine) unconditional love. He writes,

Affection is the most instinctive, in that sense the most animal, of the loves . . . But . . . the ravenous need to be needed will gratify itself either by keeping its objects needy or by inventing for them imaginary needs. It will do this all the more ruthlessly because it thinks (in one sense truly) that it is a Gift-love and therefore regards itself as unselfish. (1963: 49-50)

A character which emphasizes Lewis's point here is Mrs Fidget in *The Four Loves*, who inflicts upon her family a regime of devotion which they do not want, including '[sitting] up to "welcome" you home if you were out late at night; two or three in the morning, it made no odds; you would always find the frail, pale weary face awaiting you, like a silent accusation. Which meant that you couldn't with any decency go out very often' (ibid. 61). Furthermore, this paragon who worked her fingers to the bone, imposed upon those around her an obligation to 'help' her, so that 'They did things for her to help her do things for them which they didn't want done' (ibid. 62). In other words, her miserable self-sacrificing created a bondage for her family from which they longed to escape.

Lewis makes plain, however, the fact that affection is a necessary part of human existence and 'is responsible for nine-tenths of whatever solid and durable happiness there is in our lives' (ibid. 66); but it does so only when affection is balanced by common sense and 'give-and-take decency', which means that it should be tempered with 'goodness . . . patience, self-denial, humility, and the continual intervention of a far higher sort of love than Affection, in itself, can ever be' (ibid. 67). Mrs Fidget's activities were geared to one end only: to make her feel needed. Ceasing them would threaten her with the feeling of not being necessary to her family. Taken to their brutal extreme, her activities also allowed her to feel unappreciated, and to wallow in what Lewis calls 'the pleasures of resentment'; such pleasures, he adds, are available only to those who hate. In the way Mrs Fidget has invented needs for her family in order to serve her own needs, her own ego, there is indeed an element of hatred. The thing that makes such affection a manifestation of evil is the way in which it encourages those who indulge in it to demand 'appreciation' or worship. The self, and the 'love' in which it engages, becomes a god.

In the Preface to *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis referred to the way in which human relationships can be warped and twisted into becoming embroiled in damaging and destructive behaviour:

Even in human life we have seen the passion to dominate, almost to digest, one's fellow; to make his whole intellectual and emotional life merely an extension of one's own—to hate one's hatreds and resent one's grievances and indulge one's egoism through him as well as through oneself. His own little store of passion must of course be suppressed to make room for ours. (1961*b*: 10)

In Lewis's fiction, then, evil is shown in terms of self-enslavement, devouring and absorbing others in order to reinforce the burgeoning ego of the auto-idolater. Lewis argues always for submission and obedience to God as the only means by which a person can be truly individuated (that is, become what they have always been meant, in the Divine plan, to be). The process of salvation/redemption is that of surrender and submission; the 'self' must be put to death first and then rebirth and regeneration can take place. This belief is almost completely in accord with traditional fundamentalist thought, the praying of the sinner's prayer, and the 'acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord'—although perhaps even that word 'acceptance' has overtones of the self about it, whereas Lewis's terms, 'surrender and sacrifice' do not.

If Lewis had a favourite scripture, he does not say so; but he certainly relies to a very great degree on the six-times iterated 'Whoever loses his life shall find it' (Matt. 10: 39; 16: 35; Mark 8: 35; Luke 9: 24; 17: 33; and John 12: 26), a theme exemplified in the death and resurrection of Christ himself. But self-surrender is certainly the major constituent of what is 'good' in Lewisian theology. The characters Devine and Weston in the Ransom Trilogy are paradigms for two kinds of evil: Devine for that of total self-indulgence, exploitation of the planet Malacandra's minerals for his own sake and for his own aggrandizement: 'For the most part his conversation ran on the things he could do when he got back to earth: ocean-going yachts, the most expensive women, and a big place on the Riviera figured largely in his plans' (1938: 34). He adds that he is not risking his life to obtain that wealth just 'for fun', yet 'fun'—self-indulgence and auto-idolatry—is exactly why he is taking those risks. Devine is less redeemable than his companion, who has devoted his life and energies to a cause outside himself. Weston, who serves a Life Force on the model of that posited by Schopenhauer and Shaw, is merely 'bent'; but Devine (whose adjectival name suggests self-worship) is, in the words of the angelic Oyarsa figure who rules the planet, 'broken, for he has . . . nothing but greed. He is now only a talking animal' (ibid. 157). Weston, nevertheless, still represents evil, for the Cause he serves has induced him to forsake all moral restraints and values and he will sacrifice any intelligent life which might impede the progress of his Cause. In the second book of the trilogy, *Perelandra* (1943*b*), Weston (named apparently for 'Western' secular values) becomes so inhuman and inhumane that he is reduced to the mere appearance of humanity: he is an 'un-man', a managed corpse (ibid. 139).

Devine's fate is depicted in the final book of the trilogy, *That Hideous Strength*; he begins as 'Lord Feverstone' who is 'a big man driving a big car to somewhere where they would find big stuff going on' (1945: 56). That somewhere is the ironically named NICE: the National Institute for Co-ordinated Experiments. (Someone in the British government has a bleak sense of humour: those initials are now used for a government agency, The National Institute for Clinical Excellence.) At the end of this novel, Feverstone—

whose name suggests the heat and sulphuric stones of hell—along with the NICE hierarchy—is consumed by a natural cataclysm in a wave of earth and a ‘blinding violet flame’ (ibid. 456). In other words, he meets his end by means of *fever* and *stones*.

Ransom, on the other hand, as his name suggests, is not only ‘saved’ spiritually and physically; he is also the means of the salvation of others. His job in *Perelandra* is to prevent the planet’s innocent rulers from a fall such as that which befell their counterparts on earth, and his task in *That Hideous Strength* is to restore God-ordained order to the world and, in the relationship between Jane and Mark Studdock, to marriage. (Mark forsakes his ambition; Jane gives up her Ph.D. thesis, and is told to give up her dreams and to have children instead. Her barrenness is one of the causes of the outbreak of evil in the land.)

Throughout his fiction, Lewis depicts evil or unredeemed characters as self-centred and selfish and as engaging in spiritual (and emotional) *cannibalism*, an idea he found in David Lindsay’s *Voyage to Arcturus* (Lewis 1965: 11). Such imagery pervades *The Screwtape Letters* which deals with the activities of demons, but in various forms, it is present in all Lewis’s fiction. Among the spiritually cannibalistic are people who demand their rights: ‘I only want my rights. I’m not asking for anyone’s bleeding charity’, says a ghost in *The Great Divorce* (1946) in which the narrator is guided through heaven, hell, and purgatory much as was Dante in his more famous *Commedia*. The ghost is told: ‘Then do. At once. Ask for the Bleeding Charity’ (ibid. 32). The vulgarism is transformed into a theological reality and becomes the self-sacrificing love of Christ which itself demands human surrender. In a compensation-crazy twenty-first century, Lewis’s theology still has something to offer; and it also makes some harsh but accurate observations about contemporary relationships. The ghost called ‘Robert’s wife’ seeks only to dominate and destroy her husband—and all for his ‘good’: ‘Put me in charge of him’, she demands, ‘... give him to me, do you hear? Don’t consult *him*: just give him to me... How can I pay him out if you won’t let me have him?’ By contrast, in an echo of John Donne’s Holy Sonnet X, the psalm of the redeemed in this otherworldly environment is, ‘Overcome us, that, so overcome, we may be ourselves’ (ibid. 95). In a Chestertonian paradox, Lewis believes that surrender to God will bring us to share in Christ’s victory and death to the self to eternal life.

## REDEMPTION

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Lewis’s views on redemption can be themselves divided into two parts: his Christology and his eschatology. Both can be seen most clearly in his fiction, although, as *Mere Christianity* makes clear, he had no doubt about the divinity of Christ or the trinitarian nature of God, as seen in his chapter ‘The Three-personal God’ (1981a: 160–5). And in the Narnian Chronicles, the Christ-figure Aslan lays down his life for Edmund, according to the ‘Deeper Magic from Before the Dawn of Time’ (1950: 160), which can be taken as referring to the will of the Father.



The essential difference between good and evil as expressed in the wills of human beings is the difference between Satan and Christ. Satan, symbolically represented in the book of Isaiah, states, 'I *will* ascend to heaven... I *will* set my throne on high... I *will* make myself like the Most High' (Isa. 14: 12, RSV; italics mine). Set against that is Christ's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, '*Not my will* but Thine...' (italics mine). That is the change in human perspective that Christianity should bring about in the lives of those who die to the self and accept Christ as Lord. That is the hub of Lewis's message of salvation. It is not a 'once saved, always saved' dogma, but rather, a continuous process of change and salvation, a testing in every event of human existence and every moment of human life. It is a tough, and not at all a 'popular' message, but that is what lies at the heart of Lewisian theology.

Nowhere, however, is that theology more explicit than in his final piece of fiction *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (1956). Not only are his views on supernaturalism, good and evil, and redemption portrayed here with searing insight, but also one more of his beliefs—that Jesus Christ embodies and actualizes all the truths in the myths and religions of the world. Lewis seems more comfortable when he places his theology in the context of myth, fairy tale, and even pagan religion, but he does so to emphasize the role of truth in myth and story in the way they prefigure and anticipate the redemptive work of Christ. He writes in his 1944 essay 'Myth Became Fact' that

As myth transcends thought, Incarnation transcends myth. The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, without ceasing to be myth, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. It happens—at a particular date, in a particular place, followed by definable historical consequences... but it does not cease to be myth: that is the miracle. (1979a: 66, 67).

Lewis emphasizes, of course, that God is more than a god, and Christ is more than Balder. In *Mere Christianity*, the tone at times suggests that Lewis's personal theology is being expressed with some vehemence:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about [Christ]: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God'. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. (1981a: 52)

So Lewis is not by any means equating Christ's reality with his mythic precursors. But they were there, symbolically, just as figures in the Old Testament were there, symbolically, to represent Christ; figures such as Melchizedek, Moses, and Aaron for example. Similarly, Lewis uses his figure of Aslan in the Narnian Chronicles, and the figure of the god of the Grey Mountain in *Till We Have Faces*, as a sort of

*pre-evangelium* to open the reader's eyes to the reality of the supernatural, and to present God's salvation through Christ in indirect ways through myth and story.

In the Narnian Chronicles, Aslan the Christ-figure is the son of the Emperor-over-the-sea, but Aslan is the true ruler of Narnia, and it is to Aslan that Narnians turn in times of trouble and from whom they ask help. Aslan, the lion, symbolically a king in the correspondences seen by Aquinas in the Great Chain of Being, and also the Lion of Judah, dies and is resurrected. Interestingly, the redemption is won for Edmund—just one person—which underscores the religious dogma that Christ would have been sacrificed had only one human needed redemption. And it is Aslan who is imitated by the Ape in *The Last Battle*, which prophesies two things: apostasy in the end times and also the domination of the 'Calormenes'—or perhaps, as some see them symbolically, those members of the Islamic faith who intend to impose their systems on others. This might well be distasteful to some, but to others it will seem merely insightful. On the other hand, of course, Lewis is careful to show, through his Calormene character Emeth (whose name means 'truth') that those who seek the truth, whatever their professed creed, will find it (1956a: 161–6).

The Narnian Chronicles also demonstrate Lewis's eschatology since the final volume of the series deals in fact with 'last things'. Apostasy, scepticism, outright lack of faith, impatience with a God who does not seem to act when action is most needed, a running after idols who pretend to be the Messiah, and finally enslavement to false systems, are all to be found in *The Last Battle*, as indeed they are foretold in various apocalyptic biblical passages. Lewis (1973: 109) warns that we are to be alert and watchful, for, in the words of John Donne, what if this present were to be the world's last night?

Lewis's eschatology was orthodox. Life on earth is not like watching a play that we know—such as, for instance, *King Lear*. We do not know the play, Lewis warns; we do not even know whether we are in Act I or Act V. 'The doctrine of the Second Coming teaches us that we do not and cannot know when the world drama will end,' Lewis says (ibid. 105). But just because the doctrine of the Second Coming is largely rejected by contemporary mythology, it is not to be rejected by believers (ibid. 106). Lewis is not advocating mass hysteria but merely the three propositions of the doctrine: (1) That Christ will certainly return; (2) that we cannot possibly find out when, and (3) that we must always be ready for him (ibid. 107). In the final Narnian Chronicle, *The Last Battle*, life goes on pretty much as it is going on in our mundane world. Religion is largely forgotten; people are annoyed and disbelieving because Aslan has not appeared for a long time; and other religions, in particular the religion of the Calormene god Tash, a giant man with a bird's head, are capturing the hearts and minds of the people. Indeed, some are even declaring that Aslan and Tash are the same, and the name 'Tashlan' is coined to describe this combined deity. Just so in contemporary times are people ready to believe that 'we all worship the same god' without any critical examination of exactly who and what gods they are likening to Yahweh and to Jesus Christ. Prophetically, Lewis has a ginger tomcat ask whether Aslan and Tash are really the same:

"Assuredly," said the Calormene. "The enlightened Ape—Man, I mean—is in the right. *Aslan* means neither more nor less than *Tash*". "Especially, *Aslan* means *no*

more than Tash?" suggested the cat. "No more at all," said the Calormene.' (1956a: 32) Yet the cat, and many others, find out that the two are most definitely not the same: they are opposite forces. The language is very strong indeed, as Aslan explains to Emeth why he has been saved:

'I and he are of such different kinds that no service which is vile can be done to me, and none which is not vile can be done to him . . . if any man do a cruelty in my name, then though he says the name Aslan, it is Tash whom he serves and by Tash his deed is accepted.' (ibid. 165)

But of course the thing to be remembered is that in a work of fiction, 'any resemblances can be said to be coincidental'—between religions as well as between human beings. There is actually no really explicit or direct comparison between the Calormenes and the followers of Islam, though a link can undeniably be made. In any case, the real evil is not the religion but the willingness of Aslan's follower's to forsake him; and the real virtue is that some of the Calormenes seek the truth and do good. Lewis is careful to draw those distinctions as well. Those who, like the Ape, seek self-aggrandizement, lose their lives and their eternal souls; those who die to the self, even if foolishly, like Puzzle the Donkey, gain their lives and their eternal souls. The heavenly vision with which Lewis concludes this book is almost sublime in its understatement, but the joy it suggests is deeply moving. It is a reunion, not just among people who have known each other, but between each soul and Aslan/Christ. There is a real reward for those who lose their lives, because, as Lewis writes in his conclusion to *Mere Christianity*:

Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favourite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fibre of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in. (1981a: 127)

The key to Lewis's theology, then, is this death to self, not in any Platonic ascetic sense, but rather in the sense of putting to death the egocentric will, the 'meum' that craves acknowledgement and worship. This very process is, for him, evidence of the redemptive grace at work in our lives since it occurs *after* the steps he followed in his own life—the recognition of the existence of the Supernatural, the acceptance of Theism, the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. His focus on dying to self does not shift from his earliest Christian writings to those of his final years.

Soon after his conversion, Lewis wrote in a poem which appears in his first apologetic work, *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933):

Because of endless pride,  
 Reborn with endless error,  
 Each hour I look aside  
 Upon my secret mirror  
 Trying all my postures there  
 To make my image fair.

Then and then only turning  
 The stiff neck round, I grow  
 A molten man all burning  
 And look behind and know  
 Who made the glass, whose light  
 Makes dark, whose fair  
 Makes foul, my shadowy form reflected there  
 That Self-Love, brought to bed of Love may die and bear  
 Her sweet son in despair. (1981*b*: 184)

Lewis's postures and faces recorded here have their echo in the postures and faces of Orual in *Till We Have Faces*, whose good works might seem to make her 'fair' until she allows the 'Ungit-Self'—the self-worshipping *meum* as represented by the strange goddess worshipped in Orual's country of Glome—to die so that the god or goddess, the 'sweet son' or redeemed individual, might be born in the new self. Ungit symbolizes the fallen nature, all natural loves, desires and ambitions. As the Stoic philosopher, The Fox, explains: 'All . . . are born into the house of Ungit. And all must get free from her. Or say that Ungit in each must bear Ungit's son, and die in childbed' (1956*b*: 312). The pool by which Orual and her sister Psyche stand in their redeemed state represents both the water of death and the water of life, the water of rebirth.

As the novel makes clear, those who do not die to self are those enslaved to self and from there descend into outright evil. Those who do will find total fulfilment in Christ. This theological stance can be summarized in the words of the god to Orual, 'Die [to the self] before you die. There is no chance after.' This was Lewis's first Christian theological position: it was his final theological vision. Some might also say it was one of the twentieth century's finest.

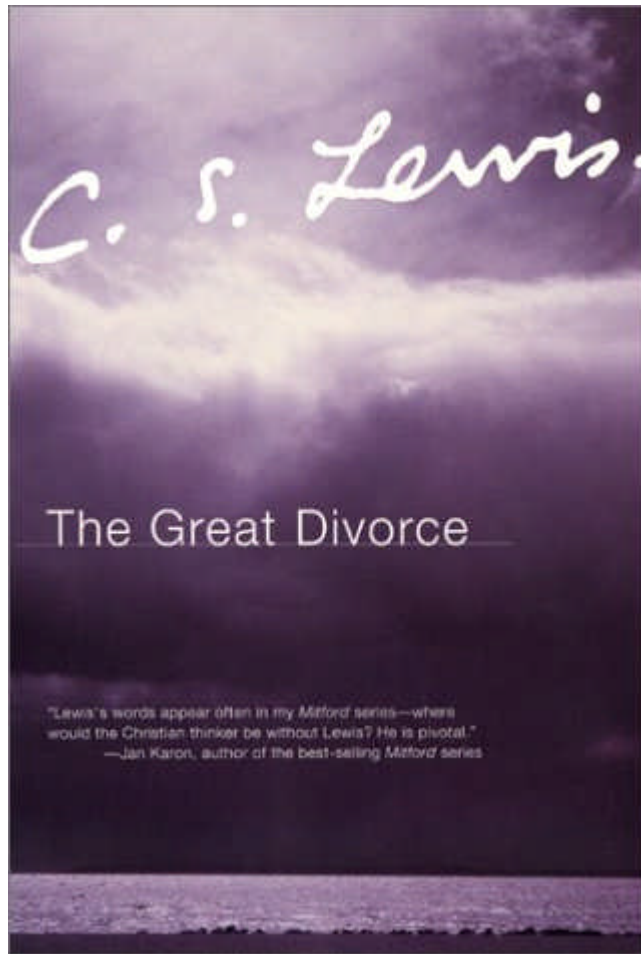
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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

The Screwtape Letters  
Beyond Personality  
The Problem of Pain  
The Case for Christianity  
Christian Behaviour  
The Pilgrim's Regress  
Out of the Silent Planet  
Perelandra

## ***The Great Divorce***

C. S. Lewis

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# The Great Divorce

1.

I SEEMED to be standing in a bus queue by the side of a long, mean street. Evening was just closing in and it was raining. I had been wandering for hours in similar mean streets, always in the rain and always in evening twilight. Time seemed to have paused on that dismal moment when only a few shops have lit up and it is not yet dark enough for their windows to look cheering. And just as the evening never advanced to night, so my walking had never brought me to the better parts of the town. However far I went I found only dingy lodging houses, small tobacconists, hoardings from which posters hung in rags, windowless warehouses, goods stations without trains, and bookshops of the sort that sell *The Works of Aristotle*. I never met anyone. But for the little crowd at the bus stop, the whole town seemed to be empty. I think that was why I attached myself to the queue.

I had a stroke of luck right away, for just as I took my stand a little waspish woman who would have been ahead of me snapped out at a man who seemed to be with her, "Very well, then. I won't go at all. So there," and left the queue. "Pray don't imagine," said the man, in a very dignified voice, "that I care about going in the least. I have only been trying to please you, for peace sake. My own feelings are of course a matter of no importance. I quite understand that"-and suiting the action to the word he also walked away. "Come," thought I, "that's two places gained." I was now next to a very short man with a scowl who glanced at me with an expression of extreme disfavour and observed, rather unnecessarily loudly, to the man beyond him, "This sort of thing really makes one think twice about going at all." "What sort of thing?" growled the other, a big beefy person. "Well," said the Short Man, "this is hardly the sort of society I'm used to as a matter of fact." "Huh!" said the Big Man: and then added with a glance at me, "Don't you stand any sauce from him, Mister. You're not afraid of him, are you?" Then, seeing I made no move, he rounded suddenly on the Short Man and said, "Not good enough for you, aren't we? Like your lip." Next moment he had fetched the Short Man one on the side of the face that sent him sprawling into the gutter. "Let him lay, let him lay," said the Big Man to no-one in particular. "I'm a plain man that's what I am and I got to have my rights same as anyone else, see?" As the Short Man showed no disposition to rejoin

the queue and soon began limping away, I closed up, rather cautiously, behind the Big Man and congratulated myself on having gained yet another step. A moment later two young people in front of him also left us arm in arm. They were both so trousered, slender, giggly and falsetto that I could be sure of the sex of neither, but it was clear that each for the moment preferred the other to the chance of a place in the bus. "We shall never all get in," said a female voice with a whine in it from some four places ahead of me. "Change places with you for five bob, lady," said someone else. I heard the clink of money and then a scream in the female voice, mixed with roars of laughter from the rest of the crowd. The cheated woman leaped out of her place to fly at the man who had bilked her, but the others immediately closed up and flung her out. ... So what with one thing and another the queue had reduced itself to manageable proportions long before the bus appeared. It was a wonderful vehicle, blazing with golden light, heraldically coloured. The Driver himself seemed full of light and he used only one hand to drive with. The other he waved before his face as if to fan away the greasy steam of the rain. A growl went up from the queue as he came in sight. "Looks as if he had a good time of it, eh? ... Bloody pleased with himself, I bet. ... My dear, why can't he behave naturally?-Thinks himself too good to look at us. ... Who does he imagine he is? ... All that gilding and purple, I call it a wicked waste. Why don't they spend some of the money on their house property down here?- God! I'd like to give him one in the ear-'ole." I could see nothing in the countenance of the Driver to justify all this, unless it were that he had a look of authority and seemed intent on carrying out his job.

My fellow passengers fought like hens to get on board the bus though there was plenty of room for us all. I was the last to get in. The bus was only half full and I selected a seat at the back, well away from the others. But a tousle-headed youth at once came and sat down beside me. As he did so we moved off.

"I thought you wouldn't mind my tacking on to you," he said, "for I've noticed that you feel just as I do about the present company. Why on earth they insist on coming I can't imagine. They won't like it at all when we get there, and they'd really be much more comfortable at home. It's different for you and me." "Do they like this place?" I asked. "As much as they'd like anything," he answered. "They've got cinemas and fish and chip shops and advertisements and all the sorts of things they want. The appalling lack of any intellectual life doesn't worry them. I realised as soon as I got here that there'd been some mistake. I ought to have taken the first bus but I've fooled about trying to wake people up here. I found a few fellows I'd known before and tried to form a little circle, but they all seem to have sunk to the level of their surroundings. Even before we came here I'd had some doubts about a man like Cyril Blellow. I always thought he was working in a false idiom. But he was at least intelligent: one could get some criticism worth hearing from him, even if he was a failure on the creative side. But now he seems to have nothing left but his self-conceit. The last time I tried to read him some of my own stuff . . . but wait a minute, I'd just like you to look at it."

Realising with a shudder that what he was producing from his pocket was a thick wad of typewritten paper, I muttered something about not having my spectacles and exclaimed, "Hullo! We've left the ground."

It was true. Several hundred feet below us, already half hidden in the rain and mist, the wet roofs of the town appeared, spreading without a break as far as the eye could reach.



2.

I WAS not left very long at the mercy of the Touse-Headed Poet, because another passenger interrupted our conversation: but before that happened I had learned a good deal about him. He appeared to be a singularly ill-used man. His parents had never appreciated him and none of the five schools at which he had been educated seemed to have made any provision for a talent and temperament such as his. To make matters worse he had been exactly the sort of boy in whose case the examination system works out with the maximum unfairness and absurdity. It was not until he reached the university that he began to recognise that all these injustices did not come by chance but were the inevitable results of our economic system. Capitalism did not merely enslave the workers, it also vitiated taste and vulgarised intellect: hence our educational system and hence the lack of "Recognition" for new genius. This discovery had made him a Communist. But when the war came along and he saw Russia in alliance with the capitalist governments, he had found himself once more isolated and had to become a conscientious objector. The indignities he suffered at this stage of his career had, he confessed, embittered him. He decided he could serve the cause best by going to America: but then America came into the war too. It was at this point that he suddenly saw Sweden as the home of a really new and radical art, but the various oppressors had given him no facilities for going to Sweden. There were money troubles. His father, who had never progressed beyond the most atrocious mental complacency and smugness of the Victorian epoch, was giving him a ludicrously inadequate allowance. And he had been very badly treated by a girl too. He had thought her a really civilised and adult personality, and then she had unexpectedly revealed that she was a mass of bourgeois prejudices and monogamic instincts. Jealousy, possessiveness, was a quality he particularly disliked. She had even shown herself, at the end, to be mean about money. That was the last straw. He had jumped under a train. . . .

I gave a start, but he took no notice.

Even then, he continued, ill luck had continued to dog him. He'd been sent to the grey town. But of course it was a mistake. I would find, he assured me, that all the other passengers would be with me on the return journey. But he would not. He was going to stay "there." He felt quite certain that he was going where, at last, his finely critical spirit would no longer be outraged by an uncongenial environment-where he would find "Recognition" and "Appreciation." Meanwhile, since I hadn't got my glasses, he would read me the passage about which Cyril Blellow had been so insensitive. . . .

It was just then that we were interrupted. One of the quarrels which were perpetually simmering in the bus had boiled over and for a moment there was a stampede. Knives were drawn: pistols were fired: but it all seemed strangely innocuous and when it was over I found myself unharmed, though in a different seat and with a new companion. He was an intelligent-looking man with a rather bulbous nose and a bowler hat. I looked out of the windows. We were now so high that all below us had become featureless. But fields, rivers, or mountains I did not see, and I got the impression that the grey town still filled the whole field of vision.

"It seems the deuce of a town," I volunteered, "and that's what I can't understand. The parts of it that I saw were so empty. Was there once a much larger population?"

"Not at all," said my neighbour. "The trouble is that they're so quarrelsome. As soon as anyone arrives he settles in some street. Before he's been there twenty-four hours he quarrels with his

neighbour. Before the week is over he's quarrelled so badly that he decides to move. Very like he finds the next street empty because all the people there have quarrelled with their neighbours-and moved. So he settles in. If by any chance the street is full, he goes further. But even if he stays, it makes no odds. He's sure to have another quarrel pretty soon and then he'll move on again. Finally he'll move right out to the edge of the town and build a new house. You see, it's easy here. You've only got to think a house and there it is. That's how the town keeps on growing." "Leaving more and more empty streets?" "That's right. And time's sort of odd here. That place where we caught the bus is thousands of miles from the Civic Centre where all the newcomers arrive from earth. All the people you've met were living near the bus stop: but they'd taken centuries-of our time-to get there, by gradual removals."

"And what about the earlier arrivals? I mean -there must be people who came from earth to your town even longer ago."

"That's right. There are. They've been moving on and on. Getting further apart. They're so far off by now that they could never think of coming to the bus stop at all. Astronomical distances. There's a bit of rising ground near where I live and a chap has a telescope. You can see the lights of the inhabited houses, where those old ones live, millions of miles away. Millions of miles from us and from one another. Every now and then they move further still. That's one of the disappointments. I thought you'd meet interesting historical characters. But you don't: they're too far away."

"Would they get to the bus stop in time, if they ever set out?"

"Well-theoretically. But it'd be a distance of light-years. And they wouldn't want to by now: not those old chaps like Tamberlaine and Genghis Khan, or Julius Caesar, or Henry the Fifth."

"Wouldn't want to?"

"That's right. The nearest of those old ones is Napoleon. We know that because two chaps made the journey to see him. They'd started long before I came, of course, but I was there when they came back. About fifteen thousand years of our time it took them. We've picked out the house by now. Just a little pin prick of light and nothing else near it for millions of miles."

"But they got there?"

"That's right. He'd built himself a huge house all in the Empire style-rows of windows flaming with light, though it only shows as a pin prick from where I live." "Did they see Napoleon?" "That's right. They went up and looked through one of the windows. Napoleon was there all right." "What was he doing?" "Walking up and down-up and down all the time-left-right, left-right-never stopping for a moment. The two chaps watched him for about a year and he never rested. And muttering to himself all the time. 'It was Sault's fault. It was Ney's fault. It was Josephine's fault. It was the fault of the Russians. It was the fault of the English.' Like that all the time. Never stopped for a moment. A little, fat man and he looked kind of tired. But he didn't seem able to stop it."

From the vibrations I gathered that the bus was still moving, but there was now nothing to be seen from the windows which confirmed this -nothing but grey void above and below.

"Then the town will go on spreading indefinitely?"! said.

"That's right," said the Intelligent Man. "Unless someone can do something about it." "How do you mean?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, between you and me and the wall, that's my job at the moment. What's the trouble about this place? Not that people are quarrelsome-that's only human nature and was always the same even on earth. The trouble is they have no Needs. You get everything you want (not very good quality, of course) by just imagining it. That's why it never costs any trouble to move to another street or build another house. In other words, there's no proper economic basis for any community life. If they needed real shops, chaps would have to stay near where the real shops were. If they needed real houses, they'd have to stay near where builders were. It's scarcity that enables a society to exist. Well, that's where I come in. I'm not going this trip for my health. As far as that goes I don't think it would suit me up there. But if I can come back with some red commodities-anything at all that you could really bite or drink or sit on -why, at once you'd get a demand down in our town. I'd start a little business. I'd have something to sell. You'd soon get people coming to live near-centralisation. Two fully-inhabited streets would accommodate the people that are now spread over a million square miles of empty streets. I'd make a nice little profit and be a public benefactor as well."

"You mean, if they had to live together they'd gradually learn to quarrel less?"

"Well, I don't know about that. I daresay they could be kept a bit quieter. You'd have a chance to build up a police force. Knock some kind of discipline into them. Anyway" (here he dropped his voice) "it'd be better, you know. Everyone admits that. Safety in numbers."

"Safety from what?" I began, but my companion nudged me to be silent. I changed my question.

"But look here," said I, "if they can get everything just by imagining it, why would they want any real things, as you call them?"

"Eh? Oh well, they'd like houses that really kept out the rain."

"Their present houses don't?"

"Well of course not. How could they?"

"What the devil is the use of building them, then?" The Intelligent Man put his head closer to mine. "Safety again," he muttered. "At least, the feeling of safety. It's all right now: but later on ... you understand."

"What?" said I, almost involuntarily sinking my own voice to a whisper.

He articulated noiselessly as if expecting that I understood lip-reading. I put my ear close to his mouth. "Speak up," I said. "It will be dark presently," he mouthed.

"You mean the evening is really going to turn into a night in the end?"

He nodded.

"What's that got to do with it?" said I.

"Well ... no one wants to be out of doors when that happens."

"Why?"

His reply was so furtive that I had to ask him several times to repeat it. When he had done so, being a little annoyed (as one so often is with whisperers) I replied without remembering to lower my voice.

"Who are 'They'?" I asked. "And what are you afraid they'll do to you? And why should they come out when it's dark? And what protection could an imaginary house give if there was any danger?" "Here!" shouted the Big Man. "Who's talking all that stuff? You stop your whispering you two if you don't want a hiding, see? Spreading rumours, that's what I call it. You shut your face, Ikey, see?"

"Quite right. Scandalous. Ought to be prosecuted. How did they get into the bus?" growled the passengers.

A fat clean-shaven man who sat on the seat in front of me leaned back and addressed me in a cultured voice.

"Excuse me," he said, "but I couldn't help overhearing parts of your conversation. It is astonishing how these primitive superstitions linger on. I beg your pardon? Oh, God bless my soul, that's all it is. There is not a shred of evidence that this twilight is ever going to turn into a night. There has been a revolution of opinion on that in educated circles. I am surprised that you haven't heard of it. All the nightmare fantasies of our ancestors are being swept away. What we now see in this subdued and delicate half-light is the promise of the dawn: the slow turning of a whole nation towards the light. Slow and imperceptible, of course. 'And not through Eastern windows only, When daylight comes, comes in the light.' And that passion for 'real' commodities which our friend speaks of is only materialism, you know. It's retrogressive. Earth-bound! A hankering for matter. But we look on this spiritual city-for with all its faults it is spiritual- as a nursery in which the creative functions of man, now freed from the clogs of matter, begin to try their wings. A sublime thought."

Hours later there came a change. It began to grow light in the bus. The greyness outside the windows turned from mud-colour to mother of pearl, then to faintest blue, then to a bright blueness that stung the eyes. We seemed to be floating in a pure vacancy. There were no lands, no sun, no stars in sight: only the radiant abyss. I let down the window beside me. Delicious freshness came in for a second, and then-

"What the hell are you doing?" shouted the Intelligent Man, leaning roughly across me and pulling the window sharply up. "Want us all to catch our death of cold?"

"Hit him a biff," said the Big Man.

I glanced round the bus. Though the windows were closed, and soon muffled, the bus was full of light. It was cruel light. I shrank from the faces and forms by which I was surrounded. They were all fixed faces, full not of possibilities but of impossibilities, some gaunt, some bloated, some glaring with idiotic ferocity, some drowned beyond recovery in dreams; but all, in one way or another, distorted and faded. One had a feeling that they might fall to pieces at any moment if the light grew much stronger. Then-there was a mirror on the end wall of the bus-I caught sight of my own.

And still the light grew.

### 3.

A CLIFF had loomed up ahead. It sank vertically beneath us so far that I could not see the bottom, and it was dark and smooth. We were mounting all the time. At last the top of the cliff became visible like a thin line of emerald green stretched tight as a fiddle-string. Presently we glided over that top: we were flying above a level, grassy country through which there ran a wide river. We were losing height now: some of the tallest tree tops were only twenty feet below us. Then, suddenly we were at rest. Everyone had jumped up. Curses, taunts, blows, a filth of vituperation, came to my ears as my fellow-passengers struggled to get out. A moment later, and they had all succeeded. I was alone in the bus, and through the open door there came to me in the fresh stillness the singing of a lark.

I got out. The light and coolness that drenched me were like those of summer morning, early morning a minute or two before the sunrise, only that there was a certain difference. I had the sense of being in a larger space, perhaps even a larger sort of space, than I had ever known before: as if the sky were further off and the extent of the green plain wider than they could be on this little ball of earth. I had got "out" in some sense which made the Solar System itself seem an indoor affair. It gave me a feeling of freedom, but also of exposure, possibly of danger, which continued to accompany me through all that followed. It is the impossibility of communicating that feeling, or even of inducing you to remember it as I proceed, which makes me despair of conveying the real quality of what I saw and heard.

At first, of course, my attention was caught by my fellow-passengers, who were still grouped about in the neighbourhood of the omnibus, though beginning, some of them, to walk forward into the landscape with hesitating steps. I gasped when I saw them. Now that they were in the light, they were transparent-fully transparent when they stood between me and it, smudgy and imperfectly opaque when they stood in the shadow of some tree. They were in fact ghosts: man-shaped stains on the brightness of that air. One could attend to them or ignore them at will as you do with the dirt on a window pane. I noticed that the grass did not bend under their feet: even the dew drops were not disturbed.

Then some re-adjustment of the mind or some focussing of my eyes took place, and I saw the whole phenomenon the other way round. The men were as they always had been; as all the men I had known had been perhaps. It was the light, the grass, the trees that were different; made of some different substance, so much solidier than things in our country that men were ghosts by comparison. Moved by a sudden thought, I bent down and tried to pluck a daisy which was growing at my feet. The stalk wouldn't break. I tried to twist it, but it wouldn't twist. I tugged till the sweat stood out on my forehead and I had lost most of the skin off my hands. The little flower was hard, not like wood or even like iron, but like diamond. There was a leaf-a young tender beech-leaf, lying in the grass beside it. I tried to pick the leaf up: my heart almost cracked with the effort, and I believe I did just raise it. But I had to let it go at once; it was heavier than a sack of coal. As I stood, recovering my breath with great gasps and looking down at the daisy, I noticed that I could see the grass not only between my feet but through them. I also was a phantom. Who will give me words to express the terror of that discovery? "Golly!" thought I. "I'm in for it this time."

"I don't like it! I don't like it," screamed a voice, "It gives me the pip!" One of the ghosts had darted past me, back into the bus. She never came out of it again as far as I know.

The others remained, uncertain.

"Hi, Mister," said the Big Man, addressing the Driver, "when have we got to go back?"

"You need never come back unless you want to," he replied. "Stay as long as you please." There was an awkward pause.

"This is simply ridiculous," said a voice in my ear. One of the quieter and more respectable ghosts had sidled up to me. "There must be some mismanagement," he continued. "What's the sense of allowing all that riff-raff to float about here all day? Look at them. They're not enjoying it. They'd be far happier at home. They don't even know what to do."

"I don't know very well myself," said I. "What does one do?"

"Oh me? I shall be met in a moment or two. I'm expected. I'm not bothering about that. But it's rather unpleasant on one's first day to have the whole place crowded out with trippers. Damn it, one's chief object in coming here at all was to avoid them!"

He drifted away from me. And I began to look about. In spite of his reference to a "crowd," the solitude was so vast that I could hardly notice the knot of phantoms in the foreground. Greenness and light had almost swallowed them up. But very far away I could see what might be either a great bank of cloud or a range of mountains. Sometimes I could make out in it steep forests, far-withdrawing valleys, and even mountain cities perched on inaccessible summits. At other times it became indistinct. The height was so enormous that my waking sight could not have taken in such an object at all. Light brooded on the top of it: slanting down thence it made long shadows behind every tree on the plain. There was no change and no progression as the hours passed. The promise-or the threat-of sunrise rested immovably up there.

Long after that I saw people coming to meet us. Because they were bright I saw them while they were still very distant, and at first I did not know that they were people at all. Mile after mile they drew nearer. The earth shook under their tread as their strong feet sank into the wet turf. A tiny haze and a sweet smell went up where they had crushed the grass and scattered the dew. Some were naked, some robed. But the naked ones did not seem less adorned, and the robes did not disguise in those who wore them the massive grandeur of muscle and the radiant smoothness of flesh. Some were bearded but no one in that company struck me as being of any particular age. One gets glimpses, even in our country, of that which is ageless-heavy thought in the face of an infant, and frolic childhood in that of a very old man. Here it was all like that. They came on steadily. I did not entirely like it. Two of the ghosts screamed and ran for the bus. The rest of us huddled closer to one another.

4.

As THE solid people came nearer still I noticed that they were moving with order and determination as though each of them had marked his man in our shadowy company. "There are going to be affecting scenes," I said to myself. "Perhaps it would not be right to look on." With that, I sidled away on some vague pretext of doing a little exploring. A grove of huge cedars to my right

seemed attractive and I entered it. Walking proved difficult. The grass, hard as diamonds to my unsubstantial feet, made me feel as if I were walking on wrinkled rock, and I suffered pains like those of the mermaid in Hans Andersen. A bird ran across in front of me and I envied it. It belonged to that country and was as real as the grass. It could bend the stalks and spatter itself with the dew.

Almost at once I was followed by what I have called the Big Man-to speak more accurately, the Big Ghost. He in his turn was followed by one of the bright people. "Don't you know me?" he shouted to the Ghost: and I found it impossible not to turn and attend. The face of the solid spirit-he was one of those that wore a robe-made me want to dance, it was so jocund, so established in its youthfulness.

"Well, I'm damned," said the Ghost. "I wouldn't have believed it. It's a fair knock-out. It isn't right, Len, you know. What about poor Jack, eh? You look pretty pleased with yourself, but what I say is, What about poor Jack?"

"He is here," said the other. "You will meet him soon, if you stay." "But you murdered him." "Of course I did. It is all right now." "All right, is it? All right for you, you mean. But what about the poor chap himself, laying cold and dead?"

"But he isn't. I have told you, you will meet him soon. He sent you his love."

"What I'd like to understand," said the Ghost, "is what you're here for, as pleased as Punch, you, a bloody murderer, while I've been walking the streets down there and living in a place like a pigstye all these years."

"That is a little hard to understand at first. But it is all over now. You will be pleased about it presently. Till then there is no need to bother about it."

"No need to bother about it? Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"No. Not as you mean. I do not look at myself. I have given up myself. I had to, you know, after the murder. That was what it did for me. And that was how everything began."

"Personally," said the Big Ghost with an emphasis which contradicted the ordinary meaning of the word, "personally, I'd have thought you and I ought to be the other way round. That's my personal opinion."

"Verv likelv we soon shall be." said the other. "If you'll stop thinking about it."

"Look at me, now," said the Ghost, slapping its chest (but the slap made no noise). "I gone straight all my life. I don't say I was a religious man and I don't sav I had no faults, far from it. But I done my best all my life, see? I done my best by everyone, that's the sort of chap I was. I never asked for anything that wasn't mine by rights. If I wanted a drink I paid for it and if I took my wages I done my job, see? That's the sort I was and I don't care who knows it."

"It would be much better not to go on about that now."

"Who's going on? I'm not arguing. I'm just telling you the sort of chap I was, see? I'm asking for nothing but my rights. You may think you can put me down because you're dressed up like that (which you weren't when you worked under me) and I'm only a poor man. But I got to have my rights same as you, see?"

"Oh no. It's not so bad as that. I haven't got my rights, or I should not be here. You will not get yours either. You'll get something far better. Never fear."

"That's just what I say. I haven't got my rights. I always done my best and I never done nothing wrong. And what I don't see is why I should be put below a bloody murderer like you."

"Who knows whether you will be? Only be happy and come with me."

"What do you keep on arguing for? I'm only telling you the sort of chap I am. I only want my rights. I'm not asking for anybody's bleeding charity."

"Then do. At once. Ask for the Bleeding Charity. Everything is here for the asking and nothing can be bought."

"That may be very well for you, I daresay. If they choose to let in a bloody murderer all because he makes a poor mouth at the last moment, that's their lookout. But I don't see myself going in the same boat with you, see? Why should I? I don't want charity. I'm a decent man and if I had my rights I'd have been here long ago and you can tell them I said so."

The other shook his head. "You can never do it like that," he said. "Your feet will never grow hard enough to walk on our grass that way. You'd be tired out before we got to the mountains. And it isn't exactly true, you know." Mirth danced in his eyes as he said it.

"What isn't true?" asked the Ghost sulkily.

"You weren't a decent man and you didn't do your best. We none of us were and we none of us did. Lord bless you, it doesn't matter. There is no need to go into it all now."

"You!" gasped the Ghost. "You have the face to tell me I wasn't a decent chap?"

"Of course. Must I go into all that? I will tell you one thing to begin with. Murdering old Jack wasn't the worst thing I did. That was the work of a moment and I was half mad when I did it. But I murdered you in my heart, deliberately, for years. I used to lie awake at nights thinking what I'd do to you if ever I got the chance. That is why I have been sent to you now: to ask your forgiveness and to be your servant as long as you need one, and longer if it pleases you. I was the worst. But all the men who worked under you felt the same. You made it hard for us, you know. And you made it hard for your wife too and for your children."

"You mind your own business, young man," said the Ghost. "None of your lip, see? Because I'm not taking any impudence from you about my private affairs."

"There are no private affairs," said the other.

"And I'll tell you another thing," said the Ghost. "You can clear off, see? You're not wanted. I may be only a poor man but I'm not making pals with a murderer, let alone taking lessons from him. Made it hard for you and your like, did I? If I had you back there I'd show you what work is."

"Come and show me now," said the other with laughter in his voice. "It will be joy going to the mountains, but there will be plenty of work."

"You don't suppose I'd go with you?" "Don't refuse. You will never get there alone. And I am the one who was sent to you."



"So that's the trick, is it?" shouted the Ghost, outwardly bitter, and yet I thought there was a kind of triumph in its voice. It had been entreated: it could make a refusal: and this seemed to it a kind of advantage. "I thought there'd be some damned nonsense. It's all a clique, all a bloody clique. Tell them I'm not coming, see? I'd rather be damned than go along with you. I came here to get my rights, see? Not to go snivelling along on charity tied onto your apron-strings. If they're too fine to have me without you, I'll go home." It was almost happy now that it could, in a sense, threaten. "That's what I'll do," it repeated, "I'll go home, I didn't come here to be treated like a dog. I'll go home. That's what I'll do. Damn and blast the whole pack of you . . ." In the end, still grumbling, but whimpering also a little as it picked its way over the sharp grasses, it made off.

## 5.

FOR A moment there was silence under the cedar trees and then-pad, pad, pad-it was broken. Two velvet-footed lions came bouncing into the open space, their eyes fixed upon each other, and started playing some solemn romp. Their manes looked as if they had been just dipped in the river whose noise I could hear close at hand, though the trees hid it. Not greatly liking my company, I moved away to find that river, and after passing some thick flowering bushes, I succeeded. The bushes came almost down to the brink. It was as smooth as Thames but flowed swiftly like a mountain stream: pale green where trees overhung it but so clear that I could count the pebbles at the bottom. Close beside me I saw another of the Bright People in conversation with a ghost. It was that fat ghost with the cultured voice who had addressed me in the bus, and it seemed to be wearing gaiters. "My dear boy, I'm delighted to see you," it was saying to the Spirit, who was naked and almost blindingly white. "I was talking to your poor father the other day and wondering where you were."

"You didn't bring him?" said the other.

"Well, no. He lives a long way from the bus, and, to be quite frank, he's been getting a little eccentric lately. A little difficult. Losing his grip. He never was prepared to make any great efforts, you know. If you remember, he used to go to sleep when you and I got talking seriously! Ah, Dick, I shall never forget some of our talks. I expect you've changed your views a bit since then. You became rather narrow-minded towards the end of your life: but no doubt you've broadened out again."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, it's obvious by now, isn't it, that you weren't quite right. Why, my dear boy, you were coming to believe in a literal Heaven and Hell!"

"But wasn't I right?"

"Oh, in a spiritual sense, to be sure. I still believe in them in that way. I am still, my dear boy, looking for the Kingdom. But nothing superstitious or mythological. . . ."

"Excuse me. Where do you imagine you've been?"

"Ah, I see. You mean that the grey town with its continual hope of morning (we must all live by hope, must we not?), with its field for indefinite progress, is, in a sense, Heaven, if only we have eyes to see it? That is a beautiful idea."

"I didn't mean that at all. Is it possible you don't know where you've been?"

"Now that you mention it, I don't think we ever do give it a name. What do you call it?"

"We call it Hell."

"There is no need to be profane, my dear boy. I may not be very orthodox, in your sense of that word, but I do feel that these matters ought to be discussed simply, and seriously, and reverently."

"Discuss Hell reverently? I meant what I said. You have been in Hell: though if you don't go back you may call it Purgatory."

"Go on, my dear boy, go on. That is so like you. No doubt you'll tell me why, on your view, I was sent there. I'm not angry."

"But don't you know? You went there because you are an apostate."

"Are you serious, Dick?"

"Perfectly."

"This is worse than I expected. Do you really think people are penalised for their honest opinions? Even assuming, for the sake of argument, that those opinions were mistaken."

"Do you really think there are no sins of intellect?"

"There are indeed, Dick. There is hidebound prejudice, and intellectual dishonesty, and timidity, and stagnation. But honest opinions fearlessly followed-they are not sins."

"I know we used to talk that way. I did it too until the end of my life when I became what you call narrow. It all turns on what are honest opinions."

"Mine certainly were. They were not only honest but heroic. I asserted them fearlessly. When the doctrine of the Resurrection ceased to commend itself to the critical faculties which God had given me, I openly rejected it. I preached my famous sermon. I defied the whole chapter. I took every risk."

"What risk? What was at all likely to come of it except what actually came-popularity, sales for your books, invitations, and finally a bishopric?"

"Dick, this is unworthy of you. What are you suggesting?"

"Friend, I am not suggesting at all. You see, I know now. Let us be frank. Our opinions were not honestly come by. We simply found ourselves in contact with a certain current of ideas and plunged into it because it seemed modern and successful. At College, you know, we just started automatically writing the kind of essays that got good marks and saying the kind of things that won applause. When, in our whole lives, did we honestly face, in solitude, the one question on which all turned: whether after all the Supernatural might not in fact occur? When did we put up one moment's real resistance to the loss of our faith?"

"If this is meant to be a sketch of the genesis of liberal theology in general, I reply that it is a mere libel. Do you suggest that men like ..."

"I have nothing to do with any generality. Nor with any man but me and you. Oh, as you love your own soul, remember. You know that you and I were playing with loaded dice. We didn't want the

other to be true. We were afraid of crude salvationism, afraid of a breach with the spirit of the age, afraid of ridicule, afraid (above all) of real spiritual fears and hopes."

"I'm far from denying that young men may make mistakes. They may well be influenced by current fashions of thought. But it's not a question of how the opinions are formed. The point is that they were my honest opinions, sincerely expressed."

"Of course. Having allowed oneself to drift, unresisting, unpraying, accepting every half-conscious solicitation from our desires, we reached a point where we no longer believed the Faith. Just in the same way, a jealous man, drifting and unresisting, reaches a point at which he believes lies about his best friend: a drunkard reaches a point at which (for the moment) he actually believes that another glass will do him no harm. The beliefs are sincere in the sense that they do occur as psychological events in the man's mind. If that's what you mean by sincerity they are sincere, and so were ours. But errors which are sincere in that sense are not innocent."

"You'll be justifying the Inquisition in a moment!"

"Why? Because the Middle Ages erred in one direction, does it follow that there is no error in the opposite direction?"

"Well, this is extremely interesting," said the Episcopal Ghost. "It's a point of view. Certainly, it's a point of view. In the meantime . . ."

"There is no meantime," replied the other. "AH that is over. We are not playing now. I have been talking of the past (your past and mine) only in order that you may turn from it forever. One wrench and the tooth will be out. You can begin as if nothing had ever gone wrong. White as snow. It's all true, you know. He is in me, for you, with that power. And- I have come a long journey to meet you. You have seen Hell: you are in sight of Heaven. Will you, even now, repent and believe?"

"I'm not sure that I've got the exact point you are trying to make," said the Ghost.

"I am not trying to make any point," said the Spirit. "I am telling you to repent and believe."

"But my dear boy, I believe already. We may not be perfectly agreed, but you have completely misjudged me if you do not realise that my religion is a very real and a very precious thing to me."

"Very well," said the other, as if changing his plan. "Will you believe in me?"

"In what sense?"

"Will you come with me to the mountains? It will hurt at first, until your feet are hardened. Reality is harsh to the feet of shadows. But will you come?"

"Well, that is a plan. I am perfectly ready to consider it. Of course I should require some assurances ... I should want a guarantee that you are taking me to a place where I shall find a wider sphere of usefulness-and scope for the talents that God has given me-and an atmosphere of free inquiry-in short, all that one means by civilisation and-er-the spiritual life."

"No," said the other. "I can promise you none of these things. No sphere of usefulness: you are not needed there at all. No scope for your talents: only forgiveness for having perverted them. No atmosphere of inquiry, for I will bring you to the land not of questions but of answers, and you shall see the face of God."

"Ah, but we must all interpret those beautiful words in our own way! For me there is no such thing as a final answer. The free wind of inquiry must always continue to blow through the mind, must it not? Trove all things' . . . to travel hopefully is better than to arrive."

"If that were true, and known to be true, how could anyone travel hopefully? There would be nothing to hope for."

"But you must feel yourself that there is something stifling about the idea of finality? Stagnation, my dear boy, what is more soul-destroying than stagnation?"

"You think that, because hitherto you have experienced truth only with the abstract intellect. I will bring you where you can taste it like honey and be embraced by it as by a bridegroom. Your thirst shall be quenched."

"Well, really, you know, I am not aware of a thirst for some ready-made truth which puts an end to intellectual activity in the way you seem to be describing. Will it leave me the free play of Mind, Dick? I must insist on that, you know."

"Free, as a man is free to drink while he is drinking. He is not free still to be dry." The Ghost seemed to think for a moment. "I can make nothing of that idea," it said.

"Listen!" said the White Spirit. "Once you were a child. Once you knew what inquiry was for. There was a time when you asked questions because you wanted answers, and were glad when you had found them. Become that child again: even now."

"Ah, but when I became a man I put away childish things."

"You have gone far wrong. Thirst was made for water; inquiry for truth. What you now call the free play of inquiry has neither more nor less to do with the ends for which intelligence was given you than masturbation has to do with marriage."

"If we cannot be reverent, there is at least no need to be obscene. The suggestion that I should return at my age to the mere factual in-quisitiveness of boyhood strikes me as preposterous. In any case, that question-and-answer conception of thought only applies to matters of fact. Religious and speculative questions are surely on a different level."

"We know nothing of religion here: we think only of Christ. We know nothing of speculation. Come and see. I will bring you to Eternal Fact, the Father of all other facthood."

"I should object very strongly to describing God as a 'fact.' The Supreme Value would surely be a less inadequate description. It is hardly . . ."

"Do you not even believe that He exists?"

"Exists? What does Existence mean? You will keep on implying some sort of static, ready-made reality which is, so to speak, 'there,' and to which our minds have simply to conform. These great mysteries cannot be approached in that way. If there were such a thing (there is no need to interrupt, my dear boy) quite frankly, I should not be interested in it. It would be of no religious significance. God, for me, is something purely spiritual. The spirit of sweetness and light and tolerance-and, er, service, Dick, service. We mustn't forget that, you know."

"If the thirst of the Reason is really dead . . .," said the Spirit, and then stopped as though pondering. Then suddenly he said, "Can you, at least, still desire happiness?"

"Happiness, my dear Dick," said the Ghost placidly, "happiness, as you will come to see when you are older, lies in the path of duty. Which reminds me. . . . Bless my soul, I'd nearly forgotten. Of course I can't come with you. I have to be back next Friday to read a paper. We have a little Theological Society down there. Oh yes! there is plenty of intellectual life. Not of a very high quality, perhaps. One notices a certain lack of grip-a certain confusion of mind. That is where I can be of some use to them. There are even regrettable jealousies. ... I don't know why, but tempers seem less controlled than they used to be. Still, one mustn't expect too much of human nature. I feel I can do a great work among them. But you've never asked me what my paper is about! I'm taking the text about growing up to the measure of the stature of Christ and working out an idea which I feel sure you'll be interested in. I'm going to point out how people always forget that Jesus (here the Ghost bowed) was a comparatively young man when he died. He would have outgrown some of his earlier views, you know, if he'd lived. As he might have done, with a little more tact and patience. I am going to ask my audience to consider what his mature views would have been. A profoundly interesting question. What a different Christianity we might have had if only the Founder had reached his full stature! I shall end up by pointing out how this deepens the significance of the Crucifixion. One feels for the first time what a disaster it was: what a tragic waste ... so much promise cut short. Oh, must you be going? Well, so must I. Goodbye, my dear boy. It has been a great pleasure. Most stimulating and provocative. Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye."

The Ghost nodded its head and beamed on the Spirit with a bright clerical smile-or with the best approach to it which such unsubstantial lips could manage-and then turned away hummin' softly to itself "City of God, how broad and far."

But I did not watch him long, for a new idea had just occurred to me. If the grass were hard as rock, I thought, would not the water be hard enough to walk on? I tried it with one foot, and my foot did not go in. Next moment I stepped boldly out on the surface. I fell on my face at once and got some nasty bruises. I had forgotten that though it was, to me, solid, it was not the less in rapid motion. When I had picked myself up I was about thirty yards further down-stream than the point where I had left the bank. But this did not prevent me from walking up-stream: it only meant that by walking very fast indeed I made very little progress.

6.

THE COOL smooth skin of the bright water was delicious to my feet and I walked on it for about an hour, making perhaps a couple of hundred yards. Then the going became different. The current grew swifter. Great flakes or islands of foam came swirling down towards me, bruising my shins like stones if I did not get out of their way. The surface became uneven, rounded itself into lovely hollows and elbows of water which distorted the appearance of the pebbles on the bottom and threw me off my balance, so that I had to scramble to shore. But as the banks hereabouts consisted of great flat stones, I continued my journey without much hurt to my feet. An immense yet lovely noise vibrated through the forest. Hours later I rounded a bend and saw the explanation.

Before me green slopes made a wide amphitheatre, enclosing a frothy and pulsating lake into which, over many-coloured rocks, a waterfall was pouring. Here once again I realised that something had happened to my senses so that they were now receiving impressions which would

normally exceed their capacity. On earth, such a waterfall could not have been perceived at all as a whole; it was too big. Its sound would have been a terror in the woods for twenty miles. Here, after the first shock, my sensibility "took" both, as a well-built ship takes a huge wave. I exulted. The noise, though gigantic, was like giant's laughter: like the revelry of a whole college of giants together laughing, dancing, singing, roaring at their high works.

Near the place where the fall plunged into the lake there grew a tree. Wet with the spray, half-veiled in foam-bows, flashing with the bright, innumerable birds that flew among its branches, it rose in many shapes of billowy foliage, huge as a fen-land cloud. From every point apples of gold gleamed through the leaves.

Suddenly my attention was diverted by a curious appearance in the foreground. A hawthorn bush not twenty yards away seemed to be behaving oddly. Then I saw that it was not the bush but something standing close to the bush and on this side of it. Finally I realised that it was one of the Ghosts. It was crouching as if to conceal itself from something beyond the bush, and it was looking back at me and making signals. It kept on signing to me to duck down. As I could not see what the danger was, I stood fast.

Presently the Ghost, after peering around in every direction, ventured beyond the hawthorn bush. It could not get on very fast because of the torturing grasses beneath its feet, but it was obviously going as fast as it possibly could, straight for another tree. There it stopped again, standing straight upright against the trunk as though it were taking cover. Because the shadow of the branches now covered it, I could see it better: it was my bowler-hatted companion, the one whom the Big Ghost had called Ikey. After it had stood panting at the tree for about ten minutes and carefully reconnoitred the ground ahead, it made a dash for another tree-such a dash as was possible to it. In this way, with infinite labour and caution, it had reached the great Tree in about an hour. That is, it had come within ten yards of it.

Here it was checked. Round the Tree grew a belt of lilies: to the Ghost an insuperable obstacle. It might as well have tried to tread down an anti-tank trap as to walk on them. It lay down and tried to crawl between them but they grew too close and they would not bend. And all the time it was apparently haunted by the terror of discovery. At every whisper of the wind it stopped and cowered: once, at the cry of a bird, it struggled back to its last place of cover: but then desire hounded it out again and it crawled once more to the Tree. I saw it clasp its hands and writhe in the agony of its frustration.

The wind seemed to be rising. I saw the Ghost wring its hands and put its thumb into its mouth-cruelly pinched, I doubt not, between two stems of the lilies when the breeze swayed them. Then came a real gust. The branches of the Tree began to toss. A moment later and half a dozen apples had fallen round the Ghost and on it. He gave a sharp cry, but suddenly checked it. I thought the weight of the golden fruit where it had fallen on him would have disabled him: and certainly, for a few minutes, he was unable to rise. He lay whimpering, nursing his wounds. But soon he was at work again. I could see him feverishly trying to fill his pockets with the apples. Of course it was useless. One could see how his ambitions were gradually forced down. He gave up the idea of a pocketful: two would have to do. He gave up the idea of two, he would take one, the largest. He gave up that hope. He was not looking for the smallest one. He was trying to find if there was one small enough to carry.

The amazing thing was that he succeeded. When I remembered what the leaf had felt like when I tried to lift it, I could hardly help admiring this unhappy creature when I saw him rise staggering to his feet actually holding the smallest of the apples in his hands. He was lame from his hurts, and the weight bent him double. Yet even so, inch by inch, still availing himself of every scrap of cover, he set out on his *via dolorosa* to the bus, carrying his torture.

"Fool. Put it down," said a great voice suddenly. It was quite unlike any other voice I had heard so far. It was a thunderous yet liquid voice. With an appalling certainty I knew that the waterfall itself was speaking: and I saw now (though it did not cease to look like a waterfall) that it was also a bright angel who stood, like one crucified, against the rocks and poured himself perpetually down towards the forest with loud joy.

"Fool," he said, "put it down. You cannot take it back. There is not room for it in Hell. Stay here and learn to eat such apples. The very leaves and the blades of grass in the wood will delight to teach you."

Whether the Ghost heard or not, I don't know. At any rate, after pausing for a few minutes, it braced itself anew for its agonies and continued with even greater caution till I lost sight of it.

7.

ALTHOUGH I watched the misfortunes of the Ghost in the Bowler with some complacency, I found, when we were left alone, that I could not bear the presence of the Water-Giant. It did not appear to take any notice of me, but I became self-conscious; and I rather think there was some assumed nonchalance in my movements as I walked away over the flat rocks, down-stream again. I was beginning to be tired. Looking at the silver fish which darted over the river-bed, I wished greatly that to me also that water were permeable. I should have liked a dip.

"Thinking of going back?" said a voice close at hand. I turned and saw a tall ghost standing with its back against a tree, chewing a ghostly cheroot. It was that of a lean hard-bitten man with grey hair and a gruff, but not uneducated voice: the kind of man I have always instinctively felt to be reliable.

"I don't know," said I. "Are you?"

"Yes," it replied. "I guess I've seen about all there is to see."

"You don't think of staying?"

"That's all propaganda," it said. "Of course there never was any question of our staying. You can't eat the fruit and you can't drink the water and it takes you all your time to walk on the grass. A human being couldn't live here. All that idea of staying is only an advertisement stunt."

"Then why did you come?"

"Oh, I don't know. Just to have a look round. I'm the sort of chap who likes to see things for himself. Wherever I've been I've always had a look at anything that was being cracked up. When I was out East, I went to see Pekin. When . . ."

"What was Pekin like?"

"Nothing to it. Just one darn wall inside another. Just a trap for tourists. I've been pretty well everywhere. Niagara Falls, the Pyramids, Salt Lake City, the Taj Mahal-----"

"What was it like?"

"Not worth looking at. They're all advertisement stunts. All run by the same people. There's a combine, you know, a World Combine, that just takes an Atlas and decides where they'll have a Sight. Doesn't matter what they choose: anything'll do as long as the publicity's properly managed."

"And you've lived-er-down there-in the Town-for some time?"

"In what they call Hell? Yes. It's a flop too.

They lead you to expect red fire and devils and all sorts of interesting people sizzling on grids-Henry VIII and all that-but when you get there its's just like any other town."

"I prefer it up here," said I.

"Well, I don't see what all the talk is about," said the Hard-Bitten Ghost. "It's as good as any other park to look at, and darned uncomfortable."

"There seems to be some idea that if one stays here one would get-well, solider-grow acclimatised."

"I know all about that," said the Ghost. "Same old lie. People have been telling me that sort of thing all my life. They told me in the nursery that if I were good I'd be happy. And they told me at school that Latin would get easier as I went on. After I'd been married a month some fool was telling me that there were always difficulties at first, but with Tact and Patience I'd soon 'settle down' and like it! And all through two wars what didn't they say about the good time coming if only I'd be a brave boy and go on being shot at? Of course they'll play the old game here if anyone's fool enough to listen."

"But who are They? This might be run by someone different?"

"Entirely new management, eh? Don't you believe it! It's never a new management. You'll always find the same old Ring. I know all about dear, kind Mummie coming up to your bedroom and getting all she wants to know out of you: but you always found she and Father were the same firm really. Didn't we find that both sides in all the wars were run by the same Armament Firms? or the same Firm, which is behind the Jews and the Vatican and the Dictators and the Democracies and all the rest of it. All this stuff up here is run by the same people as the Town. They're just laughing at us."

"I thought they were at war?"

"Of course you did. That's the official version. But who's ever seen any signs of it? Oh, I know that's how they talk. But if there's a real war why don't they do anything? Don't you see that if the official version were true these chaps up here would attack and sweep the Town out of existence? They've got the strength. If they wanted to rescue us they could do it. But obviously the last thing they want is to end their so-called 'war.' The whole game depends on keeping it going."



This account of the matter struck me as uncomfortably plausible. I said nothing.

"Anyway," said the Ghost, "who wants to be rescued? What the hell would there be to do here?"

"Or there?" said I.

"Quite," said the Ghost. "They've got you either way."

"What would you like to do if you had your choice?" I asked.

"There you go!" said the Ghost with a certain triumph. "Asking me to make a plan. It's up to the Management to find something that doesn't bore us, isn't it? It's their job. Why should we do it for them? That's just where all the parsons and moralists have got the thing upside down. They keep on asking us to alter ourselves. But if the people who run the show are so clever and so powerful, why don't they find something to suit their public? All this poppycock about growing harder so that the grass doesn't hurt our feet, now! There's an example. What would you say if you went to a hotel where the eggs were all bad; and when you complained to the Boss, instead of apologising and changing his dairyman, he just told you that if you tried you'd get to like bad eggs in time?"

"Well, I'll be getting along," said the Ghost after a short silence. "You coming my way?"

"There doesn't seem to be much point in going anywhere on your showing," I replied. A great depression had come over me. "And at least it's not raining here."

"Not at the moment," said the Hard-Bitten Ghost. "But I never saw one of these bright mornings that didn't turn to rain later on. And, by gum, when it does rain here! Ah, you hadn't thought of that? It hadn't occurred to you that with the sort of water they have here every raindrop will make a hole in you, like a machine-gun bullet. That's their little joke, you see. First of all tantalise you with ground you can't walk on and water you can't drink and then drill you full of holes. But they won't catch me that way."

A few minutes later he moved off.

8.

I SAT still on a stone by the river's side feeling as miserable as I ever felt in my life. Hitherto it had not occurred to me to doubt the intentions of the Solid People, nor to question the essential goodness of their country even if it were a country which I could not long inhabit. It had indeed once crossed my mind that if these Solid People were as benevolent as I had heard one or two of them claim to be, they might have done something to help the inhabitants of the Town-something more than meeting them on the plain. Now a terrible explanation came into my mind. How if they had never meant to do us good at all? How if this whole trip were allowed the Ghosts merely to mock them? Horrible myths and doctrines stirred in my memory. I thought how the Gods had punished Tantalus. I thought of the place in the Book of Revelation where it says that the smoke of

Hell goes up forever in the sight of the blessed spirits. I remembered how poor Cowper, dreaming that he was not after all doomed to perdition, at once knew the dream to be false and said, "These are the sharpest arrows in His quiver." And what the Hard-Bitten Ghost had said about the rain was clearly true. Even a shower of dew-drops from a branch might tear me in pieces. I had not thought of this before. And how easily I might have ventured into the spray of the waterfall!

The sense of danger, which had never been entirely absent since I left the bus, awoke with sharp urgency, I gazed around on the trees, the flowers, and the talking cataract: they had begun to look unbearably sinister. Bright insects darted to and fro. If one of those were to fly into my face, would it not go right through me? If it settled on my head, would it crush me to earth? Terror whispered, "This is no place for you." I remembered also the lions.

With no very clear plan in my mind, I rose and began walking away from the river in the direction where the trees grew closest together. I had not fully made up my mind to go back to the bus, but I wanted to avoid open places. If only I could find a trace of evidence that it was really possible for a Ghost to stay-that the choice were not only a cruel comedy-I would not go back. In the meantime I went on, gingerly, and keeping a sharp look-out. In about half an hour I came to a little clearing with some bushes in the centre. As I stopped, wondering if I dared cross it, I realised that I was not alone.

A Ghost hobbled across the clearing-as quickly as it could on that uneasy soil-looking over its shoulder as if it were pursued. I saw that it had been a woman: a well-dressed woman, I thought, but its shadows of finery looked ghastly in the morning light. It was making for the bushes. It could not really get in among them-the twigs and leaves were too hard-but it pressed as close up against them as it could. It seemed to believe it was hiding.

A moment later I heard the sound of feet, and one of the Bright People came in sight: one always noticed that sound there, for we Ghosts made no noise when we walked.

"Go away!" squealed the Ghost. "Go away! Can't you see I want to be alone?"

"But you need help," said the Solid One.

"If you have the least trace of decent feeling left," said the Ghost, "you'll keep away. I don't want help. I want to be left alone. Do go away. You know I can't walk fast enough on these horrible spikes to get away from you. It's abominable of you to take advantage."

"Oh, that!" said the Spirit. "That'll soon come right. But you're going in the wrong direction. It's back there-to the mountains- you need to go. You can lean on me all the way. I can't absolutely carry you, but you need have almost no weight on your own feet: and it will hurt less at every step."

"I'm not afraid of being hurt. You know that."

"Then what is the matter?"

"Can't you understand anything? Do you really suppose I'm going out there among all those people, like this?"

"But why not?"

"I'd never have come at all if I'd known you were all going to be dressed like that."

"Friend, you see I'm not dressed at all."

"I didn't mean that. Do go away."

"But can't you even tell me?"

"If you can't understand, there'd be no good trying to explain it. How can I go out like this among a lot of people with real solid bodies? It's far worse than going out with nothing on would have been on earth. Have everyone staring through me."

"Oh, I see. But we were all a bit ghostly when we first arrived, you know. That'll wear off. Just come out and try."

"But they'll see me."

"What does it matter if they do?"

"I'd rather die."

"But you've died already. There's no good trying to go back to that."

The Ghost made a sound something between a sob and a snarl. "I wish I'd never been born," it said.

"What are we born for?"

"For infinite happiness," said the Spirit. "You can step out into it at any moment. . . ."

"But, I tell you, they'll see me."

"An hour hence and you will not care. A day hence and you will laugh at it. Don't you remember on earth-there were things too hot to touch with your finger but you could drink them all right? Shame is like that. If you will accept it-if you will drink the cup to the bottom-you will find it very nourishing; but try to do anything else with it and it scalds."

"You really mean? . . ." said the Ghost, and then paused. My suspense was strained up to the height. I felt that my own destiny hung on her reply. I could have fallen at her feet and begged her to yield.

"Yes," said the Spirit. "Come and try."

Almost, I thought the Ghost had obeyed. Certainly it had moved: but suddenly it cried out: "No, I can't. I tell you I can't. For a moment, while you were talking, I almost thought . . . but when it comes to the point. . . . You've no right to ask me to do a thing like that. It's disgusting. I should never forgive myself if I did. Never, never. And it's not fair. They ought to have warned us. I'd never have come. And now-please, please go away!"

"Friend," said the Spirit. "Could you, only for a moment, fix your mind on something not yourself?"

"I've already given you my answer," said the Ghost, coldly but still tearful.

"Then only one expedient remains," said the Spirit, and to my great surprise he set a horn to his lips and blew. I put my hands over my ears. The earth seemed to shake: the whole wood trembled and dindled at the sound. I suppose there must have been a pause after that (though there seemed to be none) before I heard the thudding of hoofs-far off at first, but already nearer before I had well identified it, and soon so near that I began to look about for some place of safety. Before I had found one the danger was all about us. A herd of unicorns came thundering through the glades: twenty-seven hands high the smallest of them and white as swans but for the red gleam in eyes and nostrils and the flashing indigo of their horns. I can still remember the squelching noise of the soft wet turf under their hoofs, the breaking of the undergrowth, the snorting and the whinneyings; how

their hind legs went up and their horned heads down in mimic battle. Even then I wondered for what real battle it might be the rehearsal. I heard the Ghost scream, and I think it made a bolt away from the bushes . . . perhaps towards the Spirit, but I don't know. For my own nerve failed and I fled, not heeding, for the moment, the horrible going underfoot, and not once daring to pause. So I never saw the end of that interview.

9.

"WHERE ARE ye going?" said a voice with a strong Scotch accent. I stopped and looked. The sound of the unicorns had long since died away and my flight had brought me to open country. I saw the mountains where the unchanging sunrise lay, and in the foreground two or three pines on a little knoll, with some large smooth rocks, and heather. On one of the rocks sat a very tall man, almost a giant, with a flowing beard. I had not yet looked one of the Solid People in the face. Now, when I did so, I discovered that one sees them with a kind of double vision. Here was an enthroned and shining god, whose ageless spirit weighed upon mine like a burden of solid gold: and yet, at the very same moment, here was an old weather-beaten man, one who might have been a shepherd—such a man as tourists think simple because he is honest and neighbours think "deep" for the same reason. His eyes had the far-seeing look of one who has lived long in open, solitary places; and somehow I divined the network of wrinkles which must have surrounded them before re-birth had washed him in immortality.

"I-I don't quite know," said I.

"Ye can sit and talk to me, then," he said, making room for me on the stone.

"I don't know you, Sir," said I, taking my seat beside him.

"My name is George," he answered. "George Macdonald."

"Oh!" I cried. "Then you can tell me! You at least will not deceive me." Then, supposing that these expressions of confidence needed some explanation, I tried, trembling, to tell this man all that his writings had done for me. I tried to tell how a certain frosty afternoon at Leatherhead Station when I first bought a copy of *Phantasies* (being then about sixteen years old) had been to me what the first sight of Beatrice had been to Dante: Here begins the New Life. I started to confess how long that Life had delayed in the region of imagination merely: how slowly and reluctantly I had come to admit that his Christendom had more than an accidental connexion with it, how hard I had tried not to see that the true name of the quality which first met me in his books is Holiness. He laid his hand on mine and stopped me.

"Son," he said, "your love-all love-is of inexpressible value to me. But it may save precious time" (here he suddenly looked very Scotch) "if I inform ye that I am already well acquainted with these biographical details. In fact, I have noticed that your memory misleads you in one or two particulars."

"Oh!" said I, and became still.

"Ye had started," said my Teacher, "to talk of something more profitable."

"Sir," said I, "I had almost forgotten it, and I have no anxiety about the answer now, though I have still a curiosity. It is about these Ghosts. Do any of them stay? Can they stay? Is any real choice offered to them? How do they come to be here?"

"Did ye never hear of the Refrigerium? A man with your advantages might have read of it in Prudentius, not to mention Jeremy Taylor."

"The name is familiar, Sir, but I'm afraid I've forgotten what it means."

"It means that the damned have holidays- excursions, ye understand."

"Excursions to this country?"

"For those that will take them. Of course most of the silly creatures don't. They prefer taking trips back to Earth. They go and play tricks on the poor daft women ye call mediums. They go and try to assert their ownership of some house that once belonged to them: and then ye get what's called a Haunting. Or they go to spy on their children. Or literary Ghosts hang about public libraries to see if anyone's still reading their books."

"But if they come here they can really stay?"

"Aye. Ye'll have heard that the emperor Trajan did."

"But I don't understand. Is judgment not final? Is there really a way out of Hell into Heaven?"

"It depends on the way you're using the words. If they leave that grey town behind it will not have been Hell. To any that leaves it, it is Purgatory. And perhaps ye had better not call this country Heaven. Not Deep Heaven, ye understand." (Here he smiled at me). "Ye can call it the Valley of the Shadow of Life. And yet to those who stay here it will have been Heaven from the first. And ye can call those sad streets in the town yonder the Valley of the Shadow of Death: but to those who remain there they will have been Hell even from the beginning."

I suppose he saw that I looked puzzled, for presently he spoke again.

"Son," he said, "ye cannot in your present state understand eternity: when Anodos looked through the door of the Timeless, he brought no message back. But ye can get some likeness of it if ye say that both good and evil, when they are full grown, become retrospective. Not only this valley but all this earthly past will have been Heaven to those who are saved. Not only the twilight in that town, but all their life on earth too, will then be seen by the damned to have been Hell. That is what mortals misunderstand. They say of some temporal suffering, 'No future bliss can make up for it,' not knowing that Heaven, once attained, will work backwards and turn even that agony into a glory. And of some sinful pleasure they say 'Let me but have this and I'll take the consequences': little dreaming how damnation will spread back and back into their past and contaminate the pleasure of the sin. Both processes begin even before death. The good man's past begins to change so that his forgiven sins and remembered sorrows take on the quality of Heaven: the bad man's past already conforms to his badness and is filled only with dreariness. And that is why, at the end of all things, when the sun rises here and the twilight turns to blackness down there, the Blessed will say, 'We have never lived anywhere except in Heaven,' and the Lost, 'We were always in Hell.' And both will speak truly." "Is not that very hard, Sir?" "I mean, that is the real sense of what they will say. In the actual language of the Lost, the words will be different, no doubt. One will say he has always served his country right or wrong; and another that he has sacrificed everything to his Art;

and some that they've never been taken in, and some that, thank God, they've always looked after Number One, and nearly all, that, at least they've been true to themselves." "And the Saved?"

"Ah, the Saved . . . what happens to them is best described as the opposite of a mirage. What seemed, when they entered it, to be the vale of misery turns out, when they look back, to have been a well; and where present experience saw only salt deserts memory truthfully records that the pools were full of water."

"Then those people are right who say that Heaven and Hell are only states of mind?"

"Hush," said he sternly. "Do not blaspheme. Hell is a state of mind-ye never said a truer word. And every state of mind, left to itself, every shutting up of the creature within the dungeon of its own mind-is, in the end, Hell. But Heaven is not a state of mind. Heaven is reality itself. All that is fully real is Heavenly. For all that can be shaken will be shaken and only the unshakable remains."

"But there is a real choice after death? My Roman Catholic friends would be surprised, for to them souls in Purgatory are already saved. And my Protestant friends would like it no better, for they'd say that the tree lies as it falls."

"They're both right, maybe. Do not fash yourself with such questions. Ye cannot fully understand the relations of choice and Time till you are beyond both. And ye were not brought here to study such curiosities. What concerns you is the nature of the choice itself: and that ye can watch them making."

"Well, Sir," I said, "that also needs explaining. What do they choose, these souls who go back (I have yet seen no others)? And how can they choose it?"

"Milton was right," said my Teacher. "The choice of every lost soul can be expressed in the words 'Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.' There is always something they insist on keeping, even at the price of misery. There is always something they prefer to joy- that is, to reality. Ye see it easily enough in a spoiled child that would sooner miss its play and its supper than say it was sorry and be friends. Ye call it the Sulks. But in adult life it has a hundred fine names-Achilles' wrath and Coriolanus' grandeur, Revenge and Injured Merit and Self-Respect and Tragic Greatness and Proper Pride."

"Then is no one lost through the undignified vices, Sir? Through mere sensuality?"

"Some are, no doubt. The sensualist, I'll allow ye, begins by pursuing a real pleasure, though a small one. His sin is the less. But the time comes on when, though the pleasure becomes less and less and the craving fiercer and fiercer, and though he knows that joy can never come that way, yet he prefers to joy the mere fondling of unappeasable lust and would not have it taken from him. He'd fight to the death to keep it. He'd like well to be able to scratch: but even when he can scratch no more he'd rather itch than not."

He was silent for a few minutes, and then began again.

"Ye'll understand, there are innumerable forms of this choice. Sometimes forms that one hardly thought of at all on earth. There was a creature came here not long ago and went back -Sir Archibald they called him. In his earthly life he'd been interested in nothing but Survival. He'd written a whole shelf-full of books about it. He began by being philosophical, but in the end he took

up Psychological Research. It grew to be his only occupation-experimenting, lecturing, running a magazine. And travelling too: digging out queer stories among Thibetan lamas and being initiated into brotherhoods in Central Africa. Proofs-and more proofs-and then more proofs again-were what he wanted. It drove him mad if ever he saw anyone taking an interest in anything else. He got into trouble during one of your wars for running up and down the country telling them not to fight because it wasted a lot of money that ought to be spent on Research. Well, in good time, the poor creature died and came here: and there was no power in the universe would have prevented him staying and going on to the mountains. But do ye think that did him any good? This country was no use to him at all. Everyone here had 'survived' already. Nobody took the least interest in the question. There was nothing more to prove. His occupation was clean gone. Of course if he would only have admitted that he'd mistaken the means for the end and had a good laugh at himself he could have begun all over again like a little child and entered into joy. But he would not do that. He cared nothing about joy. In the end he went away."

"How fantastic!" said I.

"Do ye think so?" said the Teacher with a piercing glance. "It is nearer to such as you than ye think. There have been men before now who got so interested in proving the existence of God that they came to care nothing for God Himself ... as if the good Lord had nothing to do but exist! There have been some who were so occupied in spreading Christianity that they never gave a thought to Christ. Man! Ye see it in smaller matters. Did ye never know a lover of books that with all his first editions and signed copies had lost the power to read them? Or an organiser of charities that had lost all love for the poor? It is the subtlest of all the snares."

Moved by a desire to change the subject, I asked why the Solid People, since they were full of love, did not go down into Hell to rescue the Ghosts. Why were they content simply to meet them on the plain? One would have expected a more militant charity.

"Ye will understand that better, perhaps, before ye go," said he. "In the meantime, I must tell ye they have come further for the sake of the Ghosts than ye can understand. Every one of us lives only to journey further and further into the mountains. Every one of us has interrupted that journey and retraced immeasurable distances to come down today on the mere chance of saving some Ghosts. Of course it is also joy to do so, but ye cannot blame us for that! And it would be no use to come further even if it were possible. The sane would do no good if they made themselves mad to help madmen."

"But what of the poor Ghosts who never get into the omnibus at all?"

"Everyone who wishes it does. Never fear. There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.' All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock it is opened." At this moment we were suddenly interrupted by the thin voice of a Ghost talking at an enormous speed. Looking behind us we saw the creature. It was addressing one of the Solid People and was doing so too busily to notice us. Every now and then the Solid Spirit tried to get in a word but without success. The Ghost's talk was like this:

"Oh, my dear, I've had such a dreadful time, I don't know how I ever got here at all, I was coming with Elinor Stone and we'd arranged the whole thing and we were to meet at the corner of Sink

Street; I made it perfectly plain because I knew what she was like and if I told her once I told her a hundred times I would not meet her outside that dreadful Marjori-banks woman's house, not after the way she'd treated me ... that was one of the most dreadful things that happened to me; I've been dying to tell you because I felt sure you'd tell me I acted rightly; no, wait a moment, dear, till I've told you-I tried living with her when I first came and it was all fixed up, she was to do the cooking and I was to look after the house and I did think I was going to be comfortable after all I'd been through but she turned out to be so changed, absolutely selfish, and not a particle of sympathy for anyone but herself-and as I once said to her 'I do think I'm entitled to a little consideration because you at least lived out your time, but I oughtn't to have been here for years and years yet'-but of course I'm forgetting you don't know-I was murdered, simply murdered, dear, that man should never have operated, I ought to be alive to-day and they simply starved me in that dreadful nursing home and no one ever came near me and . . ." The shrill monotonous whine died away as the speaker, still accompanied by the bright patience at her side, moved out of hearing. "What troubles ye, son?" asked my Teacher. "I am troubled, Sir," said I, "because that unhappy creature doesn't seem to me to be the sort of soul that ought to be even in danger of damnation. She isn't wicked: she's only a silly, garrulous old woman who has got into a habit of grumbling, and one feels that a little kindness, and rest, and change would put her all right."

"That is what she once was. That is maybe what she still is. If so, she certainly will be cured. But the whole question is whether she is now a grumbler."

"I should have thought there was no doubt about that!"

"Aye, but ye misunderstand me. The question is whether she is a grumbler, or only a grumble. If there is a real woman-even the least trace of one-still there inside the grumbling, it can be brought to life again. If there's one wee spark under all those ashes, we'll blow it till the whole pile is red and clear. But if there's nothing but ashes we'll not go on blowing them in our own eyes forever. They must be swept up."

"But how can there be a grumble without a grumbler?"

"The whole difficulty of understanding Hell is that the thing to be understood is so nearly Nothing. But ye'll have had experiences . . . it begins with a grumbling mood, and yourself still distinct from it: perhaps criticising it. And yourself, in a dark hour, may will that mood, embrace it. Ye can repent and come out of it again. But there may come a day when you can do that no longer. Then there will be no you left to criticise the mood, nor even to enjoy it, but just the grumble itself going on forever like a machine. But come! Ye are here to watch and listen. Lean on my arm and we will go for a little walk."

I obeyed. To lean on the arm of someone older than myself was an experience that carried me back to childhood, and with this support I found the going tolerable: so much so, indeed, that I flattered myself my feet were already growing more solid, until a glance at the poor transparent shapes convinced me that I owed all this ease to the strong arm of the Teacher. Perhaps it was because of his presence that my other senses also appeared to be quickened. I noticed scents in the air which had hitherto escaped me, and the country put on new beauties. There was water everywhere and tiny flowers quivering in the early breeze. Far off in the woods we saw the deer glancing past, and, once a sleek panther came purring to my companion's side. We also saw many of the Ghosts.



I think the most pitiable was a female Ghost. Her trouble was the very opposite of that which afflicted the other, the lady frightened by the Unicorns. This one seemed quite unaware of her phantasmal appearance. More than one of the Solid People tried to talk to her, and at first I was quite at a loss to understand her behaviour to them. She appeared to be contorting her all but invisible face and writhing her smokelike body in a quite meaningless fashion. At last I came to the conclusion-incredible as it seemed-that she supposed herself still capable of attracting them and was trying to do so. She was a thing that had become incapable of conceiving conversation save as a means to that end. If a corpse already liquid with decay had arisen from the coffin, smeared its gums with lipstick, and attempted a flirtation, the result could not have been more appalling. In the end she muttered "Stupid creatures," and turned back to the bus. This put me in mind to ask my Teacher what he thought of the affair with the Unicorns. "It will maybe have succeeded," he said. "Ye will have divined that he meant to frighten her; not that fear itself could make her less a Ghost, but if it took her mind a moment off herself, there might, in that moment, be a chance. I have seen them saved so."

We met several Ghosts that had come so near to Heaven only in order to tell the Celestials about Hell. Indeed this is one of the commonest types. Others, who had perhaps been (like myself) teachers of some kind actually wanted to give lectures about it: they brought fat notebooks full of statistics, and maps, and (one of them) a magic lantern. Some wanted to tell anecdotes of the notorious sinners of all ages whom they had met below. But the most part seemed to think that the mere fact of having contrived for themselves so much misery gave them a kind of superiority. "You have led a sheltered life!" they bawled. "You don't know the seamy side. We'll tell you. We'll give you some hard facts"-as if to tinge Heaven with infernal images and colours had been the only purpose for which they came. All alike, so far as I could judge from my own exploration of the lower world, were wholly unreliable, and all equally incurious about the country in which they had arrived. They repelled every attempt to teach them, and when they found that nobody listened to them they went back, one by one, to the bus.

This curious wish to describe Hell turned out, however, to be only the mildest form of a desire very common among the Ghosts-the desire to extend Hell, to bring it bodily, if they could, into Heaven. There were tub-thumping Ghosts who in thin, batlike voices urged the blessed spirits to shake off their fetters, to escape from their imprisonment in happiness, to tear down the mountains with their hands, to seize Heaven "for their own": Hell offered her co-operation. There were planning Ghosts who implored them to dam the river, cut down the trees, kill the animals, build a mountain railway, smooth out the horrible grass and moss and heather with asphalt. There were materialistic Ghosts who informed the immortals that they were deluded: there was no life after death, and this whole country was a hallucination. There were Ghosts, plain and simple: mere bogies, fully conscious of their own decay, who had accepted the traditional role of the spectre, and seemed to hope they could frighten someone. I had had no idea that this desire was possible. But my Teacher reminded me that the pleasure of frightening is by no means unknown on earth, and also of Tacitus' saying: "They terrify lest they should fear." When the debris of a decayed human soul finds itself crumbled into ghosthood and realises "I myself am now that which all humanity has feared, I am just that cold churchyard shadow, that horrible thing which cannot be, yet somehow is," then to terrify others appears to it an escape from the doom of being a Ghost yet still fearing Ghosts-fearing even the Ghost it is. For to be afraid of oneself is the last horror.

But, beyond all these, I saw other grotesque phantoms in which hardly a trace of the human form remained; monsters who had faced the journey to the bus stop-perhaps for them it was thousands of miles-and come up to the country of the Shadow of Life and limped far into it over the torturing grass, only to spit and gibber out in one ecstasy of hatred their envy and (what is harder to understand) their contempt, of joy. The voyage seemed to them a small price to pay if once, only once, within sight of that eternal dawn, they could tell the prigs, the toffs, the sanctimonious humbugs, the snobs, the "haves," what they thought of them. "How do they come to here at all?" I asked my Teacher.

"I have seen that kind converted," said he, "when those ye would think less deeply damned have gone back. Those that hate goodness are sometimes nearer than those that know nothing at all about it and think they have it already."

"Whisht, now!" said my Teacher suddenly. We were standing close to some bushes and beyond them I saw one of the Solid People and a Ghost who had apparently just that moment met. The outlines of the Ghost looked vaguely familiar, but I soon realized that what I had seen on earth was not the man himself but photographs of him in the papers. He had been a famous artist.

"God!" said the Ghost, glancing round the landscape.

"God what?" asked the Spirit.

"What do you mean, 'God what'?" asked the Ghost.

"In our grammer God is a noun."

"Oh-I see. I only meant 'By Gum' or something of the sort. I meant . . . well, all this. It's . . . it's ... I should like to paint this."

"I shouldn't bother about that just at present if I were you."

"Look here; isn't one going to be allowed to go on painting?"

"Looking comes first." "But I've had my look. I've seen just what I want to do. God!-I wish I'd thought of bringing my things with me!"

The Spirit shook his head, scattering light from his hair as he did so. "That sort of thing's no good here," he said.

"What do you mean?" said the Ghost.

"When you painted on earth-at least in your earlier days-it was because you caught glimpses of Heaven in the earthly landscape. The success of your painting was that it enabled others to see the glimpses too. But here you are having the thing itself. It is from here that the messages came. There is no good telling us about this country, for we see it already. In fact we see it better than you do."

"Then there's never going to be any point in painting here?"

"I don't say that. When you've grown into a Person (it's all right, we all had to do it) there'll be some things which you'll see better than anyone else. One of the things you'll want to do will be to tell us about them. But not yet. At present your business is to see. Come and see. He is endless. Come and feed."

There was a little pause. "That will be delightful," said the Ghost presently in a rather dull voice.

"Come, then," said the Spirit, offering it his arm.

"How soon do you think I could begin painting?" it asked.

The Spirit broke into laughter. "Don't you see you'll never paint at all if that's what you're thinking about?" he said.

"What do you mean?" asked the Ghost.

"Why, if you are interested in the country only for the sake of painting it, you'll never learn to see the country."

"But that's just how a real artist is interested in the country."

"No. You're forgetting," said the Spirit. "That was not how you began. Light itself was your first love: you loved paint only as a means of telling about light."

"Oh, that's ages ago," said the Ghost. "One grows out of that. Of course, you haven't seen my later works. One becomes more and more interested in paint for its own sake."

"One does, indeed. I also have had to recover from that. It was all a snare. Ink and catgut and paint were necessary down there, but they are also dangerous stimulants. Every poet and musician and artist, but for Grace, is drawn away from love of the thing he tells, to love of the telling till, down in Deep Hell, they cannot be interested in God at all but only in what they say about Him. For it doesn't stop at being interested in paint, you know. They sink lower-become interested in their own personalities and then in nothing but their own reputations."

"I don't think I'm much troubled in that way," said the Ghost stiffly.

"That's excellent," said the Spirit. "Not many of us had quite got over it when we first arrived. But if there is any of that inflammation left it will be cured when you come to the fountain."

"What fountain's that?"

"It is up there in the mountains," said the Spirit. "Very cold and clear, between two green hills. A little like Lethe. When you have drunk of it you forget forever all proprietorship in your own works. You enjoy them just as if they were someone else's: without pride and without modesty."

"That'll be grand," said the Ghost without enthusiasm.

"Well, come," said the Spirit: and for a few paces he supported the hobbling shadow forward to the East.

"Of course," said the Ghost, as if speaking to itself, "there'll always be interesting people to meet. . . ."

"Everyone will be interesting."

"Oh-ah-yes, to be sure. I was thinking of people in our own line. Shall I meet Claude? Or Cezanne? Or-----."

"Sooner or later-if they're here."

"But don't you know?"

"Well, of course not. I've only been here a few years. All the chances are against my having run across them . . . there are a good many of us, you know."

"But surely in the case of distinguished people, you'd hear?"

"But they aren't distinguished-no more than anyone else. Don't you understand? The Glory flows into everyone, and back from everyone: like light and mirrors. But the light's the thing."

"Do you mean there are no famous men?"

"They are all famous. They are all known, remembered, recognised by the only Mind that can give a perfect judgment."

"Of, of course, in that sense . . ." said the Ghost.

"Don't stop," said the Spirit, making to lead him still forward.

"One must be content with one's reputation among posterity, then," said the Ghost.

"My friend," said the Spirit. "Don't you know?"

"Know what?"

"That you and I are already completely forgotten on the Earth?"

"Eh? What's that?" exclaimed the Ghost, disengaging its arm. "Do you mean those damned Neo-Regionalists have won after all?"

"Lord love you, yes!" said the Spirit, once more shaking and shining with laughter. "You couldn't get five pounds for any picture of mine or even of yours in Europe or America to-day. We're dead out of fashion."

"I must be off at once," said the Ghost. "Let me go! Damn it all, one has one's duty to the future of Art. I must go back to my friends. I must write an article. There must be a manifesto. We must start a periodical. We must have publicity. Let me go. This is beyond a joke!"  
And without listening to the Spirit's reply, the spectre vanished.

## 10.

THIS CONVERSATION also we overheard.

"That is quite, quite out of the question," said a female Ghost to one of the bright Women, "I should not dream of staying if I'm expected to meet Robert. I am ready to forgive him, of course. But anything more is quite impossible. How he comes to be here . . . but that is your affair."

"But if you have forgiven him," said the other, "surely-----."

"I forgive him as a Christian," said the Ghost. "But there are some things one can never forget."

"But I don't understand ..." began the She-Spirit.

"Exactly," said the Ghost with a little laugh. "You never did. You always thought Robert could do no wrong. I know. Please don't interrupt for one moment. You haven't the faintest conception of what I went through with your dear Robert. The ingratitude! It was I who made a man of him! Sacrificed my whole life to him! And what was my reward? Absolute, utter selfishness. No, but

listen. He was pottering along on about six hundred a year when I married him. And mark my words, Hilda, he'd have been in that position to the day of his death if it hadn't been for me. It was I who had to drive him every step of the way. He hadn't a spark of ambition. It was like trying to lift a sack of coal. I had to positively nag him to take on that extra work in the other department, though it was really the beginning of everything for him. The laziness of men! He said, if you please, he couldn't work more than thirteen hours a day! As if I weren't working far longer. For my day's work wasn't over when his was. I had to keep him going all evening, if you understand what I mean. If he'd had his way he'd have just sat in an armchair and sulked when dinner was over. It was I who had to draw him out of himself and brighten him up and make conversation. With no help from him, of course. Sometimes he didn't even listen. As I said to him, I should have thought good manners, if nothing else ... he seemed to have forgotten that I was a lady even if I had married him, and all the time I was working my fingers to the bone for him: and without the slightest appreciation. I used to spend simply hours arranging flowers to make that poky little house nice, and instead of thanking me, what do you think he said? Said he wished I wouldn't fill up the writing desk with them when he wanted to use it: and there was a perfectly frightful fuss one evening because I'd spilled one of the vases over some papers of his. It was all nonsense really, because they weren't anything to do with his work. He had some silly idea of writing a book in those days ... as if he could. I cured him of that in the end.

"No, Hilda, you must listen to me. The trouble I went to, entertaining! Robert's idea was that he'd just slink off by himself every now and then to see what he called his old friends . . . and leave me to amuse myself! But I knew from the first that those friends were doing him no good. 'No, Robert,' said I, 'your friends are now mine. It is my duty to have them here, however tired I am and however little we can afford it.' You'd have thought that would have been enough. But they did come for a bit. That is where I had to use a certain amount of tact. A woman who has her wits about her can always drop in a word here and there. I wanted Robert to see them against a different background. They weren't quite at their ease, somehow, in my drawing-room: nor at their best. I couldn't help laughing sometimes. Of course Robert was uncomfortable while the treatment was going on, but it was all for his own good in the end. None of that set were friends of his any longer by the end of the first year.

"And then, he got the new job. A great step up. But what do you think? Instead of realising that we now had a chance to spread out a bit, all he said was 'Well now, for God's sake let's have some peace.' That nearly finished me. I nearly gave him up altogether: but I knew my duty. I have always done my duty. You can't believe the work I had getting him to agree to a bigger house, and then finding a house. I wouldn't have grudged it one scrap if only he'd taken it in the right spirit-if only he'd seen the fun of it all. If he'd been a different sort of man it would have been fun meeting him on the doorstep as he came back from the office and saying, 'Come along, Bobs, no time for dinner to-night. I've just heard of a house out near Watford and I've got the keys and we can get there and back by one o'clock.' But with him! It was perfect misery, Hilda. For by this time your wonderful Robert was turning into the sort of man who cares about nothing but food.

"Well, I got him into the new house at last. Yes, I know. It was a little more than we could really afford at the moment, but all sorts of things were opening out before him. And, of course, I began to entertain properly. No more of his sort of friends, thank you. I was doing it all for his sake. Every useful friend he ever made was due to me. Naturally, I had to dress well. They ought to have been the happiest years of both our lives. If they weren't, he had no one but himself to thank. Oh, he was

a maddening man, simply maddening! He just set himself to get old and silent and grumpy. Just sank into himself. He could have looked years younger if he'd taken the trouble. He needn't have walked with a stoop-I'm sure I warned him about that often enough. He was the most miserable host. Whenever we gave a party everything rested on my shoulders: Robert was simply a wet blanket. As I said to him (and if I said it once, I said it a hundred times) he hadn't always been like that. There had been a time when he took an interest in all sorts of things and had been quite ready to make friends. 'What on earth is coming over you?' I used to say. But now he just didn't answer at all. He would sit staring at me with his great big eyes. (I came to hate a man with dark eyes) and-I know it now-just hating me. That was my reward. After all I'd done. Sheer wicked, senseless hatred: at the very moment when he was a richer man than he'd ever dreamed of being! As I used to say to him, 'Robert, you're simply letting yourself go to seed.' The younger men who came to the house-it wasn't my fault if they liked me better than my old bear of a husband-used to laugh at him.

"I did my duty to the very end. I forced him to take exercise-that was really my chief reason for keeping a great Dane. I kept on giving parties. I took him for the most wonderful holidays. I saw that he didn't drink too much. Even, when things became desperate, I encouraged him to take up his writing again. It couldn't do any harm by then. How could I help it if he did have a nervous breakdown in the end? My conscience is clear. I've done my duty by him, if ever a woman has. So you see why it would be impossible to ...

"And yet ... I don't know. I believe I have changed my mind. I'll make them a fair offer, Hilda. I will not meet him, if it means just meeting him and no more. But if I'm given a free hand I'll take charge of him again. I will take up my burden once more. But I must have a free hand. With all the time one would have here, I believe I could make something of him. Somewhere quite to ourselves. Wouldn't that be a good plan? He's not fit to be on his own. Put me in charge of him. He wants firm handling. I know him better than you do. What's that? No, give him to me, do you hear? Don't consult him: just give him to me. I'm his wife, aren't I? I was only beginning. There's lots, lots, lots of things I still want to do with him. No, listen, Hilda. Please, please! I'm so miserable. I must have someone to-to do things to. It's simply frightful down there. No one minds about me at all. I can't alter them. It's dreadful to see them all sitting about and not be able to do anything with them. Give him back to me. Why should he have everything his own way? It's no good for him. It isn't right, it's not fair. I want Robert. What right have you to keep him from me? I hate you. How can I pay him out if you won't let me have him?"

The Ghost which had towered up like a dying candleflame snapped suddenly. A sour, dry smell lingered in the air for a moment and then there was no Ghost to be seen.

## 11.

ONE OF the most painful meetings we witnessed was between a woman's Ghost and a Bright Spirit who had apparently been her brother. They must have met only a moment before we ran across them, for the Ghost was just saying in a tone of unconcealed disappointment, "Oh ... Reginald! It's you, is it?"

"Yes, dear," said the Spirit. "I know you expected someone else. Can you ... I hope you can be a little glad to see even me; for the present."

"I did think Michael would have come," said the Ghost; and then, almost fiercely, "He is here, of course?" "He's there-far up in the mountains."

"Why hasn't he come to meet me? Didn't he know?"

"My dear (don't worry, it will all come right presently) it wouldn't have done. Not yet. He wouldn't be able to see or hear you as you are at present. You'd be totally invisible to Michael. But we'll soon build you up."

"I should have thought if you can see me, my own son could!"

"It doesn't always happen like that. You see, I have specialised in this sort of work."

"Oh, it's work, is it?" snapped the Ghost. Then, after a pause, "Well. When am I going to be allowed to see him?"

"There's no question of being allowed, Pam. As soon as it's possible for him to see you, of course he will. You need to be thickened up a bit."

"How?" said the Ghost. The monosyllable was hard and a little threatening.

"I'm afraid the first step is a hard one," said the Spirit. "But after that you'll go on like a house on fire. You will become solid enough for Michael to perceive you when you learn to want someone else besides Michael. I don't say 'more than Michael,' not as a beginning. That will come later. It's only the little germ of a desire for God that we need to start the process."

"Oh, you mean religion and all that sort of thing? This is hardly the moment... and from you, of all people. Well, never mind. I'll do whatever's necessary. What do you want me to do? Come on. The sooner I begin it, the sooner they'll let me see my boy. I'm quite ready."

"But, Pam, do think! Don't you see you are not beginning at all as long as you are in that state of mind? You're treating God only as a means to Michael. But the whole thickening treatment consists in learning to want God for His own sake."

"You wouldn't talk like that if you were a Mother."

"You mean, if I were only a mother. But there is no such thing as being only a mother. You exist as Michael's mother only because you first exist as God's creature. That relation is older and closer. No, listen, Pam! He also loves. He also has suffered. He also has waited a long time."

"If He loved me He'd let me see my boy. If He loved me why did He take away Michael from me? I wasn't going to say anything about that. But it's pretty hard to forgive, you know."

"But He had to take Michael away. Partly for Michael's sake. . . ."

"I'm sure I did my best to make Michael happy. I gave up my whole life..."

"Human beings can't make one another really happy for long. And secondly, for your sake. He wanted your merely instinctive love for your child (tigresses share that, you know!) to turn into something better. He wanted you to love Michael as He understands love. You cannot love a fellow-creature fully till you love God. Sometimes this conversion can be done while the instinctive

love is still gratified. But there was, it seems, no chance of that in your case. The instinct was uncontrolled and fierce and monomaniac. (Ask your daughter, or your husband. Ask your own mother. You haven't once thought of her.) The only remedy was to take away its object. It was a case for surgery.

When that first kind of love was thwarted, then there was just a chance that in the loneliness, in the silence, something else might begin to grow."

"This is all nonsense-cruel and wicked nonsense. What right have you to say things like that about Mother-love? It is the highest and holiest feeling in human nature."

"Pam, Pam-no natural feelings are high or low, holy or unholy, in themselves. They are all holy when God's hand is on the rein. They all go bad when they set up on their own and make themselves into false gods."

"My love for Michael would never have gone bad. Not if we'd lived together for millions of years."

"You are mistaken. And you must know. Haven't you met-down there-mothers who have their sons with them, in Hell? Does their love make them happy?"

"If you mean people like the Guthrie woman and her dreadful Bobby, of course not. I hope you're not suggesting. ... If I had Michael I'd be perfectly happy, even in that town. I wouldn't be always talking about him till everyone hated the sound of his name, which is what Winifred Guthrie does about her brat. I wouldn't quarrel with people for not taking enough notice of him and then be furiously jealous if they did. I wouldn't go about whining and complaining that he wasn't nice to me. Because, of course, he would be nice. Don't you dare to suggest that Michael could ever become like the Guthrie boy. There are some things I won't stand."

"What you have seen in the Guthries is what natural affection turns to in the end if it will not be converted."

"It's a lie. A wicked, cruel lie. How could anyone love their son more than I did? Haven't I lived only for his memory all these years?"

"That was rather a mistake, Pam. In your heart of hearts you know it was."

"What was a mistake?"

"All that ten years' ritual of grief. Keeping his room exactly as he'd left it: keeping anniversaries: refusing to leave that house though Dick and Muriel were both wretched there."

"Of course they didn't care. I know that. I soon learned to expect no real sympathy from them."

"You're wrong. No man ever felt his son's death more than Dick. Not many girls loved their brothers better than Muriel. It wasn't against Michael they revolted: it was against you-against having their whole life dominated by the tyranny of the past: and not really even Michael's past, but your past."

"You are heartless. Everyone is heartless. The past was all I had."

"It was all you chose to have. It was the wrong way to deal with a sorrow. It was Egyptian-like embalming a dead body."



"Oh, of course. I'm wrong. Everything I say or do is wrong, according to you."

"But of course!" said the Spirit, shining with love and mirth so that my eyes were dazzled.

"That's what we all find when we reach this country. We've all been wrong! That's the great joke. There's no need to go on pretending one was right! After that we begin living."

"How dare you laugh about it? Give me my boy. Do you hear? I don't care about all your rules and regulations. I don't believe in a God who keeps mother and son apart. I believe in a God of Love. No one has a right to come between me and my son. Not even God. Tell Him that to His face. I want my boy, and I mean to have him. He is mine, do you understand? Mine, mine, mine, for ever and ever."

"He will be, Pam. Everything will be yours. God himself will be yours. But not that way. Nothing can be yours by nature."

"What? Not my own son, born out of my own body?"

"And where is your own body now? Didn't you know that Nature draws to an end? Look! The sun is coming, over the mountains there: it will be up any moment now."

"Michael is mine."

"How yours? You didn't make him. Nature made him to grow in your body without your will. Even against your will . . . you sometimes forget that you didn't intend to have a baby then at all. Michael was originally an Accident."

"Who told you that?" said the Ghost: and then, recovering itself, "It's a lie. It's not true. And it's no business of yours. I hate your religion and I hate and despise your God. I believe in a God of Love."

"And yet, Pam, you have no love at this moment for your own mother or for me."

"Oh, I see! That's the trouble, is it? Really, Reginald! The idea of your being hurt because . . ."

"Lord love you!" said the Spirit with a great laugh. "You needn't bother about that! Don't you know that you can't hurt anyone in this country?"

The Ghost was silent and open-mouthed for a moment; more wilted, I thought, by this reassurance than by anything else that had been said.

"Come. We will go a bit further," said my Teacher, laying his hand on my arm.

"Why did you bring me away, Sir?" said I when we had passed out of earshot of this unhappy Ghost.

"It might take a long while, that conversation," said my Teacher. "And ye have heard enough to see what the choice is." "Is there any hope for her, Sir?" "Aye, there's some. What she calls her love for her son has turned into a poor, prickly, astringent sort of thing. But there's still a wee spark of something that's not just her self in it. That might be blown into a flame."

"Then some natural feelings are really better than others-I mean, are a better starting-point for the real thing?"

"Better and worse. There's something in natural affection which will lead it on to eternal love more easily than natural appetite could be led on. But there's also something in it which makes it easier to stop at the natural level and mistake it for the heavenly. Brass is mistaken for gold more easily than clay is. And if it finally refuses conversion its corruption will be worse than the corruption of what ye call the lower passions. It is a stronger angel, and therefore, when it falls, a fiercer devil."

"I don't know that I dare repeat this on Earth, Sir," said I. "They'd say I was inhuman: they'd say I believed in total depravity: they'd say I was attacking the best and the holiest things. They'd call me . . ."

"It might do you no harm if they did," said he with (I really thought) a twinkle in his eye.

"But could one dare—could one have the face-to go to a bereaved mother, in her misery—when one's not bereaved oneself? . . ."

"No, no. Son, that's no office of yours. You're not a good enough man for that. When your own heart's been broken it will be time for you to think of talking. But someone must say in general what's been unsaid among you this many a year: that love, as mortals understand the word, isn't enough. Every natural love will rise again and live forever in this country: but none will rise again until it has been buried."

"The saying is almost too hard for us."

"Ah, but it's cruel not to say it. They that know have grown afraid to speak. That is why sorrows that used to purify now only fester."

"Keats was wrong, then, when he said he was certain of the holiness of the heart's affections."

"I doubt if he knew clearly what he meant. But you and I must be clear. There is but one good; that is God. Everything else is good when it looks to Him and bad when it turns from Him. And the higher and mightier it is in the natural order, the more demoniac it will be if it rebels. It's not out of bad mice or bad fleas you make demons, but out of bad archangels. The false religion of lust is baser than the false religion of mother-love or patriotism or art: but lust is less likely to be made into a religion. But look!"

I saw coming towards us a Ghost who carried something on his shoulder. Like all the Ghosts, he was unsubstantial, but they differed from one another as smokes differ. Some had been whitish; this one was dark and oily. What sat on his shoulder was a little red lizard, and it was twitching its tail like a whip and whispering things in his ear. As we caught sight of him he turned his head to the reptile with a snarl of impatience. "Shut up, I tell you!" he said. It wagged its tail and continued to whisper to him. He ceased snarling, and presently began to smile. Then he turned and started to limp westward, away from the mountains.

"Off so soon?" said a voice.

The speaker was more or less human in shape but larger than a man, and so bright that I could hardly look at him. His presence smote on my eyes and on my body too (for there was heat coming from him as well as light) like the morning sun at the beginning of a tyrannous summer day.

"Yes. I'm off," said the Ghost. "Thanks for all your hospitality. But it's no good, you see.

I told this little chap," (here he indicated the lizard), "that he'd have to be quiet if he came—which he insisted on doing. Of course his stuff won't do here: I realise that. But he won't stop. I shall just have to go home."

"Would you like me to make him quiet?" said the flaming Spirit-an angel, as I now understood.

"Of course I would," said the Ghost.

"Then I will kill him," said the Angel, taking a step forward.

"Oh-ah-look out! You're burning me. Keep away," said the Ghost, retreating.

"Don't you want him killed?"

"You didn't say anything about killing him at first. I hardly meant to bother you with anything so drastic as that."

"It's the only way," said the Angel, whose burning hands were now very close to the lizard. "Shall I kill it?"

"Well, that's a further question. I'm quite open to consider it, but it's a new point, isn't it? I mean, for the moment I was only thinking about silencing it because up here-well, it's so damned embarrassing."

"May I kill it?"

"Well, there's time to discuss that later."

"There is no time. May I kill it?"

"Please, I never meant to be such a nuisance. Please-really-don't bother. Look! It's gone to sleep of its own accord. I'm sure it'll be all right now. Thanks ever so much."

"May I kill it?"

"Honestly, I don't think there's the slightest necessity for that. I'm sure I shall be able to keep it in order now. I think the gradual process would be far better than killing it."

"The gradual process is of no use at all."

"Don't you think so? Well, I'll think over what you've said very carefully. I honestly will. In fact I'd let you kill it now, but as a matter of fact I'm not feeling frightfully well to-day. It would be silly to do it now. I'd need to be in good health for the operation. Some other day, perhaps."

"There is no other day. All days are present now."

"Get back! You're burning me. How can I tell you to kill it? You'd kill me if you did."

"It is not so."

"Why, you're hurting me now."

"I never said it wouldn't hurt you. I said it wouldn't kill you."

"Oh, I know. You think I'm a coward. But it isn't that. Really it isn't. I say! Let me run back by tonight's bus and get an opinion from my own doctor. I'll come again the first moment I can."

"This moment contains all moments."

"Why are you torturing me? You are jeering at me. How can I let you tear me to pieces? If you wanted to help me, why didn't you kill the damned thing without asking me-before I knew? It would be all over by now if you had."

"I cannot kill it against your will. It is impossible. Have I your permission?"

The Angel's hands were almost closed on the Lizard, but not quite. Then the Lizard began chattering to the Ghost so loud that even I could hear what it was saying.

"Be careful," it said. "He can do what he says. He can kill me. One fatal word from you and he will! Then you'll be without me for ever and ever. It's not natural. How could you live? You'd be only a sort of ghost, not a real man as you are now. He doesn't understand. He's only a cold, bloodless abstract thing. It may be natural for him, but it isn't for us. Yes, yes. I know there are no real pleasures now, only dreams. But aren't they better than nothing? And I'll be so good. I admit I've sometimes gone too far in the past, but I promise I won't do it again. I'll give you nothing but really nice dreams—all sweet and fresh and almost innocent. You might say, quite innocent\_\_\_\_\_"

"Have I your permission?" said the Angel to the Ghost.

"I know it will kill me."

"It won't. But supposing it did?"

"You're right. It would be better to be dead than to live with this creature."

"Then I may?"

"Damn and blast you! Go on can't you? Get it over. Do what you like," bellowed the Ghost: but ended, whimpering, "God help me. God help me."

Next moment the Ghost gave a scream of agony such as I never heard on Earth. The Burning One closed his crimson grip on the reptile: twisted it, while it bit and writhed, and then flung it, broken backed, on the turf.

"Ow! That's done for me," gasped the Ghost, reeling backwards.

For a moment I could make out nothing distinctly. Then I saw, between me and the nearest bush, unmistakably solid but growing every moment solider, the upper arm and the shoulder of a man. Then, brighter still and stronger, the legs and hands. The neck and golden head materialised while I watched, and if my attention had not wavered I should have seen the actual completing of a man—an immense man, naked, not much smaller than the Angel. What distracted me was the fact that at the same moment something seemed to be happening to the Lizard. At first I thought the operation had failed. So far from dying, the creature was still struggling and even growing bigger as it struggled. And as it grew it changed. Its hinder parts grew rounder. The tail, still flickering, became a tail of hair that flickered between huge and glossy buttocks. Suddenly I started back, rubbing my eyes. What stood before me was the greatest stallion I have ever seen, silvery white but with mane and tail of gold. It was smooth and shining, rippled with swells of flesh and muscle, whinneying and stamping with its hoofs. At each stamp the land shook and the trees dindled.

The new-made man turned and clapped the new horse's neck. It nosed his bright body. Horse and master breathed each into the other's nostrils. The man turned from it, flung himself at the feet of the Burning One, and embraced them. When he rose I thought his face shone with tears, but it may have been only the liquid love and brightness (one cannot distinguish them in that country) which flowed from him. I had not long to think about it. In joyous haste the young man leaped upon the horse's back. Turning in his seat he waved a farewell, then nudged the stallion with his heels. They were off before I well knew what was happening. There was riding if you like! I came out as quickly as I could from among the bushes to follow them with my eyes; but already they were only like a shooting star far off on the green plain, and soon among the foothills of the mountains. Then, still like a star, I saw them winding up, scaling what seemed impossible steps, and quicker every

moment, till near the dim brow of the landscape, so high that I must strain my neck to see them, they vanished, bright themselves, into the rose-brightness of that everlasting morning.

While I still watched, I noticed that the whole plain and forest were shaking with a sound which in our world would be too large to hear, but there I could take it with joy. I knew it was not the Solid People who were singing. It was the voice of that earth, those woods and those waters. A strange archaic, inorganic noise, that came from all directions at once. The Nature or Arch-nature of that land rejoiced to have been once more ridden, and therefore consummated, in the person of the horse. It sang,

"The Master says to our master, Come up. Share my rest and splendour till all natures that were your enemies become slaves to dance before you and backs for you to ride, and firmness for your feet to rest on.

"From beyond all place and time, out of the very Place, authority will be given you: the strengths that once opposed your will shall be obedient fire in your blood and heavenly thunder in your voice.

"Overcome us that, so overcome, we may be ourselves: we desire the beginning of your reign as we desire dawn and dew, wetness at the birth of light.

"Master, your Master has appointed you for ever: to be our King of Justice and our high Priest."

"Do ye understand all this, my Son?" said the Teacher.

"I don't know about all, Sir," said I. "Am I right in thinking the Lizard really turned into the Horse?"

"Aye. But it was killed first. Ye'll not forget that part of the story?"

"I'll try not to, Sir. But does it mean that everything-everything-that is in us can go on to the Mountains?"

"Nothing, not even the best and noblest, can go on as it now is. Nothing, not even what is lowest and most bestial, will not be raised again if it submits to death. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. Flesh and blood cannot come to the Mountains. Not because they are too rank, but because they are too weak. What is a Lizard compared with a stallion? Lust is a poor, weak, whimpering whispering thing compared with that richness and energy of desire which will arise when lust has been killed."

"But am I to tell them at home that this man's sensuality proved less of an obstacle than that poor woman's love for her son? For that was, at any rate, an excess of love."

"Ye'll tell them no such thing," he replied sternly. "Excess of love, did ye say? There was no excess, there was defect. She loved her son too little, not too much. If she had loved him more there'd be no difficulty. I do not know how her affair will end. But it may well be that at this moment she's demanding to have him down with her in Hell. That kind is sometimes perfectly ready to plunge the soul they say they love in endless misery if only they can still in some fashion

possess it. No, no. Ye must draw another lesson. Ye must ask, if the risen body even of appetite is as grand a horse as ye saw, what would the risen body of maternal love or friendship be?"

But once more my attention was diverted. "Is there another river, Sir?" I asked.

12.

THE REASON why I asked if there were another river was this. All down one long aisle of the forest the under-sides of the leafy branches had begun to tremble with dancing light; and on earth I knew nothing so likely to produce this appearance as the reflected lights cast upward by moving water. A few moments later I realised my mistake. Some kind of procession was approaching us, and the light came from the persons who composed it.

First came bright Spirits, not the Spirits of men, who danced and scattered flowers-soundlessly falling, lightly drifting flowers, though by the standards of the ghost-world each petal would have weighed a hundred-weight and their fall would have been like the crashing of boulders. Then, on the left and right, at each side of the forest avenue, came youthful shapes, boys upon one hand, and girls upon the other. If I could remember their singing and write down the notes, no man who read that score would ever grow sick or old. Between them went musicians: and after these a lady in whose honour all this was being done.

I cannot now remember whether she was naked or clothed. If she were naked, then it must have been the almost visible penumbra of her courtesy and joy which produces in my memory the illusion of a great and shining train that followed her across the happy grass. If she were clothed, then the illusion of nakedness is doubtless due to the clarity with which her inmost spirit shone through the clothes. For clothes in that country are not a disguise: the spiritual body lives along each thread and turns them into living organs. A robe or a crown is there as much one of the wearer's features as a lip or an eye.

But I have forgotten. And only partly do I remember the unbearable beauty of her face.

"Is it? ... is it?" I whispered to my guide.

"Not at all," said he. "It's someone ye'll never have heard of. Her name on earth was Sarah Smith and she lived at Golders Green."

"She seems to be ... well, a person of particular importance?"

"Aye. She is one of the great ones. Ye have heard that fame in this country and fame on Earth are two quite different things."

"And who are these gigantic people . . . look! They're like emeralds . . . who are dancing and throwing flowers before her?"

"Haven't ye read your Milton? A thousand livened angels lackey her,"

"And who are all these young men and women on each side?"

"They are her sons and daughters." "She must have had a very large family, Sir." "Every young man or boy that met her became her son-even if it was only the boy that brought the meat to her back door. Every girl that met her was her daughter."

"Isn't that a bit hard on their own parents?" "No. There are those that steal other people's children. But her motherhood was of a different kind. Those on whom it fell went back to their natural

parents loving them more. Few men looked on her without becoming, in a certain fashion, her lovers. But it was the kind of love that made them not less true, but truer, to their own wives."

"And how ... but hullo! What are all these animals? A cat-two cats-dozens of cats. And all those dogs . . . why, I can't count them. And the birds. And the horses." "They are her beasts." "Did she keep a sort of zoo? I mean, this is a bit too much."

"Every beast and bird that came near her had its place in her love. In her they became themselves. And now the abundance of life she has in Christ from the Father flows over into them." I looked at my Teacher in amazement. "Yes," he said. "It is like when you throw a stone into a pool, and the concentric waves spread out further and further. Who knows where it will end? Redeemed humanity is still young, it has hardly come to its full strength.

But already there is joy enough in the little finger of a great saint such as yonder lady to waken all the dead things of the universe into life."

While we spoke the Lady was steadily advancing towards us, but it was not at us she looked. Following the direction of her eyes, I turned and saw an oddly-shaped phantom approaching. Or rather two phantoms: a great tall Ghost, horribly thin and shaky, who seemed to be leading on a chain another Ghost no bigger than an organ-grinder's monkey. The taller Ghost wore a soft black hat, and he reminded me of something that my memory could not quite recover. Then, when he had come within a few feet of the Lady he spread out his lean, shaky hand flat on his chest with the fingers wide apart, and exclaimed in a hollow voice, "At last!" All at once I realised what it was that he had put me in mind of. He was like a seedy actor of the old school.

"Darling! At last!" said the Lady. "Good Heavens!" thought I. "Surely she can't----,"

and then I noticed two things. In the first place, I noticed that the little Ghost was not being led by the big one. It was the dwarfish figure that held the chain in its hand and the theatrical figure that wore the collar round its neck. In the second place, I noticed that the Lady was looking solely at the dwarf Ghost. She seemed to think it was the Dwarf who had addressed her, or else she was deliberately ignoring the other. On the poor dwarf she turned her eyes. Love shone not from her face only, but from all her limbs, as if it were some liquid in which she had just been bathing. Then, to my dismay she came nearer. She stooped down and kissed the Dwarf. It made one shudder to see her in such close contact with that cold, damp, shrunken thing. But she did not shudder.

"Frank," she said, "before anything else, forgive me. For all I ever did wrong and for all I did not do right since the first day we met, I ask your pardon."

I looked properly at the Dwarf for the first time now: or perhaps, when he received her kiss he became a little more visible. One could just make out the sort of face he must have had when he was a man: a little, oval, freckled face with a weak chin and a tiny wisp of unsuccessful moustache. He gave her a glance, not a full look. He was watching the Tragedian out of the corner of his eyes. Then he gave a jerk to the chain: and it was the Tragedian, not he, who answered the Lady.

"There, there," said the Tragedian. "We'll say no more about it. We all make mistakes." With the words there came over his features a ghastly contortion which, I think, was meant for an indulgently playful smile. "We'll say no more," he continued. "It's not myself I'm thinking about. It

is you. That is what has been continually on my mind-all these years. The thought of you-you here alone, breaking your heart about me."

"But now," said the Lady to the Dwarf, "you can set all that aside. Never think like that again. It is all over."

Her beauty brightened so that I could hardly see anything else, and under that sweet compulsion the Dwarf really looked at her for the first time. For a second I thought he was growing more like a man. He opened his mouth. He himself was going to speak this time. But oh, the disappointment when the words came!

"You missed me?" he croaked in a small, bleating voice.

Yet even then she was not taken aback. Still the love and courtesy flowed from her.

"Dear, you will understand about that very soon," she said. "But to-day-----."

What happened next gave me a shock. The Dwarf and the Tragedian spoke in unison, not to her but to one another. "You'll notice," they warned one another, "she hasn't answered our question." I realised then that they were one person, or rather that both were the remains of what had once been a person. The Dwarf again rattled the chain.

"You missed me?" said the Tragedian to the Lady, throwing a dreadful theatrical tremor into his voice.

"Dear friend," said the Lady, still attending exclusively to the Dwarf, "you may be happy about that and about everything else. Forget all about it for ever."

And really, for a moment, I thought the Dwarf was going to obey: partly because the outlines of his face became a little clearer, and partly because the invitation to all joy, singing out of her whole being like a bird's song on an April evening, seemed to me such that no creature could resist it. Then he hesitated. And then-once more he and his accomplice spoke in unison.

"Of course it would be rather fine and magnanimous not to press the point," they said to one another. "But can we be sure she'd notice? We've done these sort of things before. There was the time we let her have the last stamp in the house to write to her mother and said nothing although she had known we wanted to write a letter ourself. We'd thought she'd remember and see how unselfish we'd been. But she never did. And there was the time . . . oh, lots and lots of times!" So the Dwarf gave a shake to the chain and-----.

"I can't forget it," cried the Tragedian. "And I won't forget it, either. I could forgive them all they've done to me. But for your miseries-----."

"Oh, don't you understand?" said the Lady. "There are no miseries here."

"Do you mean to say," answered the Dwarf, as if this new idea had made him quite forget the Tragedian for a moment, "do you mean to say you've been happy?"

"Didn't you want me to be? But no matter. Want it now. Or don't think about it at all."

The Dwarf blinked at her. One could see an unheard-of idea trying to enter his little mind: one could see even that there was for him some sweetness in it. For a second he had almost let the chain go: then, as if it were his life-line, he clutched it once more.



"Look here," said the Tragedian. "We've got to face this." He was using his "manly" bullying tone this time: the one for bringing women to their senses.

"Darling," said the Lady to the Dwarf, "there's nothing to face. You don't want me to have been miserable for misery's sake. You only think I must have been if I loved you. But if you'll only wait you'll see that isn't so."

"Love!" said the Tragedian striking his forehead with his hand: then, a few notes deeper, "Love! Do you know the meaning of the word?"

"How should I not?" said the Lady. "I am in love. In love, do you understand? Yes, now I love truly."

"You mean," said the Tragedian, "you mean - you did not love me truly in the old days?"

"Only in a poor sort of way," she answered. "I have asked you to forgive me. There was a little real love in it. But what we called love down there was mostly the craving to be loved. In the main I loved you for my own sake: because I needed you."

"And now!" said the Tragedian with a hackneyed gesture of despair. "Now, you need me no more?"

"But of course not!" said the Lady; and her smile made me wonder how both the phantoms could refrain from crying out with joy.

"What needs could I have," she said, "now that I have all? I am full now, not empty. I am in Love Himself, not lonely. Strong, not weak. You shall be the same. Come and see. We shall have no need for one another now: we can begin to love truly."

But the Tragedian was still striking attitudes.

"She needs me no more-no more. No more!" he said in a choking voice to no one in particular.

"Would to God," he continued, but he was now pronouncing it Gud-"Would to God I had seen her lying dead at my feet before I heard those words. Lying dead at my feet. Lying dead at my feet."

I do not know how long the creature intended to go on repeating the phrase, for the Lady put an end to that. "Frank! Frank!" she cried in a voice that made the whole wood ring. "Look at me. Look at me. What are you doing with that great, ugly doll? Let go of the chain. Send it away. It is you I want. Don't you see what nonsense it's talking?" Merriment danced in her eyes. She was sharing a joke with the Dwarf, right over the head of the Tragedian. Something not at all unlike a smile struggled to appear on the Dwarf's face. For he was looking at her now. Her laughter was past his first defences. He was struggling hard to keep it out, but already with imperfect success. Against his will, he was even growing a little bigger. "Oh, you great goose," said she. "What is the good of talking like that here? You know as well as I do that you did see me lying dead years and years ago. Not 'at your feet,' of course, but on a bed in a nursing home. A very good nursing home it was too. Matron would never have dreamed of leaving bodies lying about the floor! It's ridiculous for that doll to try to be impressive about death here. It just won't work."

### 13.

I DO not know that I ever saw anything more terrible than the struggle of that Dwarf Ghost against joy. For he had almost been overcome. Somewhere, incalculable ages ago, there must have been gleams of humour and reason in him. For one moment, while she looked at him in her love and mirth, he saw the absurdity of the Tragedian. For one moment he did not at all misunderstand her

laughter: he too must once have known that no people find each other more absurd than lovers. But the light that reached him, reached him against his will. This was not the meeting he had pictured; he would not accept it. Once more he clutched at his death-line, and at once the Tragedian spoke. "You dare to laugh at it!" it stormed. "To my face? And this is my reward. Very well. It is fortunate that you give yourself no concern about my fate. Otherwise you might be sorry afterwards to think that you had driven me back to Hell. What? Do you think I'd stay now? Thank you. I believe I'm fairly quick at recognising where I'm not wanted. 'Not needed' was the exact expression, if I remember rightly."

From this time on the Dwarf never spoke again: but still the Lady addressed it.

"Dear, no one sends you back. Here is all joy. Everything bids you stay." But the Dwarf was growing smaller even while she spoke.

"Yes," said the Tragedian. "On terms you might offer to a dog. I happen to have some self-respect left, and I see that my going will make no difference to you. It is nothing to you that I go back to the cold and the gloom, the lonely, lonely streets-----."

"Don't, don't Frank," said the Lady. "Don't let it talk like that." But the Dwarf was now so small that she had dropped on her knees to speak to it. The Tragedian caught her words greedily as a dog catches a bone.

"Ah, you can't bear to hear it!" he shouted with miserable triumph. "That was always the way. You must be sheltered. Grim realities must be kept out of your sight. You who can be happy without me, forgetting me! You don't want even to hear of my sufferings. You say, don't. Don't tell you. Don't make you unhappy. Don't break in on your sheltered, self-centred little heaven. And this is the reward-----."

She stooped still lower to speak to the Dwarf which was now a figure no bigger than a kitten, hanging on to the end of the chain with his feet off the ground.

"That wasn't why I said, Don't," she answered. "I meant, stop acting. It's no good. He is killing you. Let go of that chain. Even now."

"Acting," screamed the Tragedian. "What do you mean?"

The Dwarf was now so small that I could not distinguish him from the chain to which he was clinging. And now for the first time I could not be certain whether the Lady was addressing him or the Tragedian.

"Quick," she said. "There is still time. Stop it. Stop it at once."

"Stop what?"

"Using pity, other people's pity, in the wrong way. We have all done it a bit on earth, you know. Pity was meant to be a spur that drives joy to help misery. But it can be used the wrong way round. It can be used for a kind of blackmailing. Those who choose misery can hold joy up to ransom, by pity. You see, I know now. Even as a child you did it. Instead of saying you were sorry, you went and sulked in the attic . . . because you knew that sooner or later one of your sisters would say, 'I can't bear to think of him sitting up there alone, crying.' You used your pity to blackmail them, and they gave in in the end. And afterwards, when we were married . . . oh, it doesn't matter, if only you will stop it."

"And that," said the Tragedian, "that is all you have understood of me, after all these years." I don't know what had become of the Dwarf Ghost by now. Perhaps it was climbing up the chain like an insect: perhaps it was somehow absorbed into the chain.

"No, Frank, not here," said the Lady. "Listen to reason. Did you think joy was created to live always under that threat? Always defenceless against those who would rather be miserable than have their self-will crossed? For it was real misery. I know that now. You made yourself really wretched. That you can still do. But you can no longer communicate your wretchedness. Everything becomes more and more itself. Here is joy that cannot be shaken. Our light can swallow up your darkness: but your darkness cannot now infect our light. No, no, no. Come to us. We will not go to you. Can you really have thought that love and joy would always be at the mercy of frowns and sighs? Did you not know they were stronger than their opposites?"

"Love? How dare you use that sacred word?" said the Tragedian. At the same moment he gathered up the chain which had now for some time been swinging uselessly at his side, and somehow disposed of it. I am not quite sure, but I think he swallowed it. Then for the first time it became clear that the Lady saw and addressed him only.

"Where is Frank?" she said. "And who are you, Sir? I never knew you. Perhaps you had better leave me. Or stay, if you prefer. If it would help you and if it were possible I would go down with you into Hell: but you cannot bring Hell into me."

"You do not love me," said the Tragedian in a thin bat-like voice: and he was now very difficult to see.

"I cannot love a lie," said the Lady. "I cannot love the thing which is not. I am in Love, and out of it I will not go."

There was no answer. The Tragedian had vanished. The Lady was alone in that woodland place, and a brown bird went hopping past her, bending with its light feet the grasses I could not bend. Presently the Lady got up and began to walk away. The other Bright Spirits came forward to receive her, singing as they came:

*"The Happy Trinity is her home: nothing can  
trouble her joy.  
She is the bird that evades every net: the wild  
deer that leaps every pitfall.  
Like the mother bird to its chickens or a shield  
to the arm'd knight: so is the Lord to her  
mind, in His unchanging lucidity.  
Bogies will not scare her in the dark: bullets will  
not frighten her in the day.  
Falsehoods tricked out as truths assail her in  
vain: she sees through the lie as if it were  
glass.  
The invisible germ will not harm her: nor yet  
the glittering sun-stroke.  
A thousand fail to solve the problem, ten thou-  
sand choose the wrong turning: but she*

*passes safely through.  
He details immortal gods to attend her: upon  
every road where she must travel.  
They take her hand at hard places: she will not  
stub her toes in the dark.  
She may walk among Lions and rattlesnakes:  
among dinosaurs and nurseries of lionets.  
He fills her brim full with immensity of life:  
he leads her to see the world's desire."*

"And yet . . . and yet ... ," said I to my Teacher, when all the shapes and the singing had passed some distance away into the forest, "even now I am not quite sure. Is it really tolerable that she should be untouched by his misery, even his self-made misery?"

"Would ye rather he still had the power of tormenting her? He did it many a day and many a year in their earthly life."

"Well, no. I suppose I don't want that."

"What then?"

"I hardly know, Sir. What some people say on earth is that the final loss of one soul gives the lie to all the joy of those who are saved."

"Ye see it does not."

"I feel in a way that it ought to."

"That sounds very merciful: but see what lurks behind it."

"What?"

"The demand of the loveless and the self-imprisoned that they should be allowed to blackmail the universe: that till they consent to be happy (on their own terms) no one else shall taste joy: that theirs should be the final power; that Hell should be able to veto Heaven."

"I don't know what I want, Sir."

"Son, son, it must be one way or the other. Either the day must come when joy prevails and all the makers of misery are no longer able to infect it: or else for ever and ever the makers of misery can destroy in others the happiness they reject for themselves. I know it has a grand sound to say ye'll accept no salvation which leaves even one creature in the dark outside. But watch that sophistry or ye'll make a Dog in a Manger the tyrant of the universe."

"But dare one say-it is horrible to say-that Pity must ever die?"

"Ye must distinguish. The action of Pity will live for ever: but the passion of Pity will not. The passion of pity, the pity we merely suffer, the ache that draws men to concede what should not be

conceded and to flatter when they should speak truth, the pity that has cheated many a woman out of her virginity and many a statesman out of his honesty-that will die. It was used as a weapon by bad men against good ones: their weapon will be broken."

"And what is the other kind-the action?"

"It's a weapon on the other side. It leaps quicker than light from the highest place to the lowest to bring healing and joy, whatever the cost to itself. It changes darkness into light and evil into good. But it will not, at the cunning tears of Hell, impose on good the tyranny of evil. Every disease that submits to a cure shall be cured: but we will not call blue yellow to please those who insist on still having jaundice, nor make a midden of the world's garden for the sake of some who cannot abide the smell of roses."

"You say it will go down to the lowest, Sir. But she didn't go down with him to Hell. She didn't even see him off by the bus."

"Where would ye have had her go?"

"Why, where we all came from by that bus. The big gulf, beyond the edge of the cliff. Over there. You can't see it from here, but you must know the place I mean."

My Teacher gave a curious smile. "Look," he said, and with the word he went down on his hands and knees. I did the same (how it hurt my knees!) and presently saw that he had plucked a blade of grass. Using its thin end as a pointer, he made me see, after I had looked very closely, a crack in the soil so small that I could not have identified it without this aid.

"I cannot be certain," he said, "that this is the crack ye came up through. But through a crack no bigger than that ye certainly came."

"But-but," I gasped with a feeling of bewilderment not unlike terror. "I saw an infinite abyss. And cliffs towering up and up. And then this country on top of the cliffs."

"Aye. But the voyage was not mere locomotion. That bus, and all you inside it, were increasing in size."

"Do you mean then that Hell-all that infinite empty town-is down in some little crack like this?"

"Yes. All Hell is smaller than one pebble of your earthly world: but it is smaller than one atom of this world, the Real World. Look at yon butterfly. If it swallowed all Hell, Hell would not be big enough to do it any harm or to have any taste."

"It seems big enough when you're in it, Sir."

"And yet all loneliness, angers, hatreds, envies and itchings that it contains, if rolled into one single experience and put into the scale against the least moment of the joy that is felt by the least in Heaven, would have no weight that could be registered at all. Bad cannot succeed even in being bad as truly as good is good. If all Hell's miseries together entered the consciousness of yon wee yellow bird on the bough there, they would be swallowed up without trace, as if one drop of ink had been dropped into that Great Ocean to which your terrestrial Pacific itself is only a molecule."

"I see," said I at last. "She couldn't fit into Hell."

He nodded. "There's not room for her," he said. "Hell could not open its mouth wide enough."

"And she couldn't make herself smaller?- like Alice, you know."

"Nothing like small enough. For a damned soul is nearly nothing: it is shrunk, shut up in itself. Good beats upon the damned incessantly as sound waves beat on the ears of the deaf, but they cannot receive it. Their fists are clenched, their teeth are clenched, their eyes fast shut. First they will not, in the end they cannot, open their hands for gifts, or their mouths for food, or their eyes to see."

"Then no one can ever reach them?"

"Only the Greatest of all can make Himself small enough to enter Hell. For the higher a thing is, the lower it can descend-a man can sympathise with a horse but a horse cannot sympathise with a rat. Only One has descended into Hell."

"And will He ever do so again?"

"It was not once long ago that He did it. Time does not work that way when once ye have left the Earth. All moments that have been or shall be were, or are, present in the moment of His descending. There is no spirit in prison to Whom He did not preach."

"And some hear him?"

"Aye."

"In your own books, Sir," said I, "you were a Universalist. You talked as if all men would be saved. And St. Paul too."

"Ye can know nothing of the end of all things, or nothing expressible in those terms. It may be, as the Lord said to the Lady Julian, that all will be well, and all will be well, and all manner of things will be well. But it's ill talking of such questions."

"Because they are too terrible, Sir?"

"No. Because all answers deceive. If ye put the question from within Time and are asking about possibilities, the answer is certain. The choice of ways is before you. Neither is closed. Any man may choose eternal death. Those who choose it will have it. But if ye are trying to leap on into eternity, if ye are trying to see the final state of all things as it will be (for so ye must speak) when there are no more possibilities left but only the Real, then ye ask what cannot be answered to mortal ears. Time is the very lens through which ye see-small and clear, as men see through the wrong end of a telescope-something that would otherwise be too big for ye to see at all. That thing is Freedom: the gift whereby ye most resemble your Maker and are yourselves parts of eternal reality. But ye can see it only through the lens of Time, in a little clear picture, through the inverted telescope. It is a picture of moments following one another and yourself in each moment making some choice that might have been otherwise. Neither the temporal succession nor the phantom of what ye might have chosen and didn't is itself Freedom. They are a lens. The picture is a symbol: but it's truer than any philosophical theorem (or, perhaps, than any mystic's vision) that claims to go behind it. For every attempt to see the shape of eternity except through the lens of Time destroys your knowledge of Freedom. Witness the doctrine of Predestination which shows (truly enough) that eternal reality is not waiting for a future in which to be real; but at the price of removing Freedom which is the deeper truth of the two. And wouldn't Universalism do the same? Ye cannot know eternal reality by

a definition. Time itself, and all acts and events that fill Time, are the definition, and it must be lived. The Lord said we were gods. How long could ye bear to look (without Time's lens) on the greatness of your own soul and the eternal reality of her choice?" .

14.

AND SUDDENLY all was changed. I saw a great assembly of gigantic forms all motionless, all in deepest silence, standing forever about a little silver table and looking upon it. And on the table there were little figures like chessmen who went to and fro doing this and that. And I knew that each chessman was the idolum or puppet representative of some one of the great presences that stood by. And the acts and motions of each chessman were a moving portrait, a mimicry or pantomime, which delineated the inmost nature of his giant master. And these chessmen are men and women as they appear to themselves and to one another in this world. And the silver table is Time. And those who stand and watch are the immortal souls of those same men and women. Then vertigo and terror seized me and, clutching at my Teacher, I said, "Is that the truth? Then is all that I have been seeing in this country false? These conversations between the Spirits and the Ghosts- were they only the mimicry of choices that had really been made long ago?"

"Or might ye not as well say, anticipations of a choice to be made at the end of all things? But ye'd do better to say neither. Ye saw the choices a bit more clearly than ye could see them on earth: the lens was clearer. But it was still seen through the lens. Do not ask of a vision in a dream more than a vision in a dream can give."

"A dream? Then-then-am I not really here, Sir?"

"No, Son," said he kindly, taking my hand in his. "It is not so good as that. The bitter drink of death is still before you. Ye are only dreaming. And if ye come to tell of what ye have seen, make it plain that it was but a dream. See ye make it very plain. Give no poor fool the pretext to think ye are claiming knowledge of what no mortal knows. I'll have no Sweden-borgs and no Vale Owens among my children."

"God forbid, Sir," said I, trying to look very wise.

"He has forbidden it. That's what I'm telling ye." As he said this he looked more Scotch than ever. I was gazing steadfastly on his face. The vision of the chessmen had faded, and once more the quiet woods in the cool light before sunrise were about us. Then, still looking at his face, I saw there something that sent a quiver through my whole body. I stood at that moment with my back to the East and the mountains, and he, facing me, looked towards them. His face flushed with a new light. A fern, thirty yards behind him, turned golden. The eastern side of every tree-trunk grew bright. Shadows deepened. All the time there had been bird noises, trillings, chatterings, and the like; but now suddenly the full chorus was poured from every branch; cocks were crowing, there was music of hounds, and horns; above all this ten thousand tongues of men and woodland angels and the wood itself sang. "It comes! It comes!" they sang. "Sleepers awake! It comes, it comes, it comes." One dreadful glance over my shoulder I essayed-not long enough to see (or did I see?) the rim of the sunrise that shoots Time dead with golden arrows and puts to flight all phantasmal shapes. Screaming, I buried my face in the folds of my Teacher's robe. "The morning! The morning!" I cried, "I am caught by the morning and I am a ghost." But it was too late. The light, like solid blocks, intolerable of edge and weight, came thundering upon my head. Next moment the folds of my Teacher's garment were only the folds of the old ink-stained cloth on my study table which I had pulled down with me as I fell from my chair. The blocks of light were only the books which I

had pulled off with it, falling about my head. I awoke in a cold room, hunched on the floor beside a black and empty grate, the clock striking three, and the siren howling overhead.



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# CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

A critical anthology

*Edited by Geoffrey Miles*



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## A ROUGH GUIDE TO THE GODS

The most essential item in the classical myth-kitty is a knowledge of the classical gods and goddesses – their names, attributes, personalities, areas of power, and the complex web of relationships which sometimes makes classical mythology seem like a vast divine soap opera. This chapter aims to provide a brief guide to the gods as they appear in classical and European literature and art (rather than as the objects of ancient Greek and Roman worship and ritual, a quite different matter).

Simply knowing the names of the gods is more complex than it might appear, since almost all of them go by two names, one Greek, one Roman. It was the Greeks (sometimes borrowing from older Middle Eastern traditions) who created the personalities, stories, and relationships of the gods. The Romans, on the other hand, originally worshipped mostly impersonal, faceless spirits of place and personifications. When the Romans came in contact with Greek culture they borrowed the whole colourful apparatus of Greek mythology and applied it to their own pantheon, identifying each Greek god with his or her nearest Roman equivalent. So, for instance, Hephaestus, the Greek master-craftsman and smith who has his forge under a volcano, became identified with Vulcan, a Roman god of volcanic fire. Over time – although classical scholars, naturally, maintain the distinctions between them – the Greek and Roman gods effectively fused into a single personality. It was the Roman names of the gods which were passed down through the Middle Ages, and became standard in English: eighteenth-century writers, even translating Homer or Sophocles, would speak of ‘Jupiter’ and ‘Mars’ and ‘Venus’. In the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries the original Greek names have gradually come back. Anyone following the history of the myths needs to be familiar with both. I considered consistently using the Roman names (which are the most familiar in English literature), but this sounds absurd in relating the more archaic Greek myths; instead I have introduced each god by giving both names (first Greek, then Roman: **Hera/Juno**), and thereafter used either or both as seems appropriate. For quick reference the following table may be useful.

## A ROUGH GUIDE TO THE GODS

<i>Greek name</i>	<i>Roman name</i>	<i>Principal function</i>
Zeus	Jupiter, Jove	king, god of the sky
Hera	Juno	queen, goddess of marriage
Poseidon	Neptune	god of the sea
Hades	Pluto, Dis	god of the underworld
Demeter	Ceres	goddess of agriculture
Hestia	Vesta	goddess of home and hearth
Athena	Minerva, Pallas	goddess of war and wisdom
Apollo	Apollo	god of light, music, healing, the sun
Artemis	Diana	goddess of the wild, virgin huntress, the moon
Aphrodite	Venus	goddess of love and beauty
Ares	Mars	god of war
Hephaestus	Vulcan	god of fire, blacksmith and craftsman
Hermes	Mercury	messenger, god of travel and communication
Dionysus	Bacchus	god of wine and madness
Persephone	Proserpina	goddess of underworld and of spring
Eros	Cupid	god of love
Cronus/Kronos	Saturn	father of the gods
Rhea	Ops	mother of the gods

### The Olympian gods

The most important Greek gods lived on the summit of Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece (nearly 10,000 feet high), or in the clouds above it. The Greeks conceived Olympus like an ancient Greek city, with the citadel of the king (Zeus) on the highest peak and the homes of the other nobles/gods clustered round. Ovid re-envisages it in terms of Rome's palatial Palatine Hill (*Metamorphoses*, l. 168-76), and a seventeenth-century translator in turn 'Englishes' it as 'Heaven's Whitehall' (Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished*).

The principal gods were categorised by the Greeks as 'the Twelve Olympians', though there was some disagreement about the composition of the list; the following discussion includes thirteen major gods as well as some of their more important hangers-on. They fall into two generations: the older generation of Zeus/Jupiter and his siblings, and the younger generation who are his children by various mothers. The underworld god Hades/Pluto, who seldom sets foot on Olympus, is not counted among the Olympians; he, his consort, and his kingdom are separately dealt with later.

#### *Zeus / Jupiter / Jove*

King of the gods and ruler of the universe from his throne on Mount Olympus. Originally a god of the sky and storm, thunder and lightning, he also becomes



patron of kingship and government, law and custom, the patriarchal lord of the status quo. He is depicted as a powerfully built bearded man of middle age, often grasping a thunderbolt or lightning flash, attended by his messenger the eagle and his sacred tree the oak. Homer depicts Zeus impressively as the cloud-gatherer, 'father of gods and men', whose nod shakes heaven:

He bent his ponderous black brows down, and locks  
ambrosial of his immortal head  
swung over them, as all Olympos trembled.  
(*Iliad*, 1. 528–30; trans. Robert Fitzgerald)

And Virgil gives a similarly powerful picture of Jupiter:

the Almighty Father then,  
Chief power of the world, began to speak,  
And as he spoke the great hall of the gods  
Fell silent, and earth quaked . . .  
(*Aeneid*, 10. 100–2; trans. Robert Fitzgerald)

This 'Almighty Father' has a striking resemblance to the Christian God, and English writers have often taken advantage of the accidental similarity between Latin 'Jove' and Hebrew 'Jehovah' to create a composite pagan/Christian image of the supreme being.

Zeus/Jupiter has a less exalted aspect, however. He is also an insatiable lecher, pursuing nymphs and mortal women and boys, and seducing or raping them in various forms, thus fathering many heroes and heroines and founding many of the great royal and noble families of mythology (for more details, see 'Tales of love' in chapter 3, pp. 38–40). His sexual exploits have provided endless material for artists and poets, who (being mostly male) have tended to treat them in a light-hearted spirit. Ovid, observing the spectacle of the lord of the universe transformed into a bull and mooing his love for Europa, comments wryly that 'majesty and love go ill together' (*Metamorphoses*, 2. 846–7).

### ***Hera/Juno***

Queen of the gods, sister and wife of Zeus/Jupiter, goddess of marriage and childbirth, and the pre-eminent women's deity. Some scholars conjecture that she was once the mother goddess of a matriarchal society, later forcibly married and subjected to Zeus – which might explain something of their rather rocky marital relationship. She is depicted as a beautiful and stately queen, with a full 'Junoesque' figure and large liquid 'ox-eyes' (in Homer's phrase); her attendant is the proud peacock, and **Iris**, the shining rainbow goddess, is her messenger. Less majestically, Hera is the archetypal jealous wife, forever quarrelling with her husband, suspicious (with reason) of his infidelities, and vengefully pursuing his

mistresses and his bastard children. Her malice in this regard means that she is often cast in a villainous role: as Hercules' wicked stepmother, for instance, or as 'baleful Juno' whose 'sleepless rage' against Aeneas and his Trojans prompts Virgil's question, 'Can anger / Black as this prey on the minds of heaven?' (*Aeneid*, 1. 4–11).

### *Poseidon / Neptune*

God of the sea, who won that realm by lot from his brothers Zeus and Hades; called 'Earthshaker', he is also the god of earthquakes and of horses. He appears as a bearded middle-aged man, very similar to Zeus, but holding the three-pointed spear or trident with which he rules the waves; he rides in a shell-shaped chariot drawn by sea-horses, attended by his wife **Amphitrite**, by his herald **Triton** (a merman, half man and half fish, who blows on a conch shell – sometimes turned into a multitude of tritons), and by sea-nymphs. Like the element he rules, he can be fierce of temper and a dangerous enemy (as he is to Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey*), and as ruthless as his brother in his sexual affairs. As 'King Neptune' he is still a familiar icon, and used to turn up (perhaps still does) to initiate passengers on ships crossing the Equator.

Among his followers are **Proteus**, the Old Man of the Sea, prophet and shape-changer, and **Thetis**, the beautiful sea-nymph who becomes the father of Achilles. Like other sea gods they can change shape, flowing like water into various forms, to evade capture or questioning by mortals.

### *Demeter / Ceres*

Goddess of grain and crops, agriculture and fertility. An earth-mother goddess, she is depicted as a matronly figure, sometimes rising out of the earth, with ears of grain in her hands. The only important myth connected with Demeter is that of her search for her stolen daughter **Persephone/Proserpina** (see below). Otherwise she is a rather colourless figure, and when her name appears in literature it is often a mere metaphor for grain or food (Ceres is the origin of the word 'cereal'); so Pope writes of the time when an aristocratic garden will revert to farmland 'And laughing Ceres reassume the land' ('Epistle to Burlington', 186).

### *Hestia / Vesta*

Goddess of the hearth-fire, home, family, and community. Eldest of the Olympian family, the one who stayed home to look after the fire, Hestia is the most respectable and duller of the gods, important in religion but almost entirely devoid of myth. Some say she later stepped down to make room among the Twelve for the more exciting Dionysus. She appears in literature only as patroness of the Vestal Virgins, the Roman priestesses who guarded the sacred flame and were sworn to lifelong virginity on pain of being buried alive.

*Athena/Minerva*

Goddess of war, of arts, crafts, and skills (especially spinning and weaving), of intelligence and wisdom. Her birth is the subject of a strange archaic myth: Zeus swallowed her mother, the titaness Metis ('wisdom'), in the traditional family fear that her child would be stronger than himself, and so Athena was born from his head – his brainchild, one might say, born directly from the father without feminine intervention. Hence she is the most 'masculine' of goddesses, an asexual virgin and an incarnation of militant intelligence. She is depicted as a tall, sternly beautiful young woman, 'grey-eyed' or 'flashing-eyed', dressed in full armour with helmet and spear, and often wearing the head of the Gorgon Medusa (see the story of Perseus in chapter 3) on her breastplate; her attributes include the owl (symbol of wisdom), the snake, and the olive tree – the gift with which she won the honour of being patron goddess of Athens. In Homer's *Odyssey* she is the loyal friend of Odysseus, for whose tricky intelligence she has an almost sisterly regard.

*Apollo*

Apollo, whose name is the same in Latin and Greek, is also sometimes called **Phoebus** (bright), and this is perhaps his key attribute. He is the god of light and enlightenment in all its senses, of reason and perception, music and poetry, prophecy, medicine, and of the sun. (This last is a later development – the original sun god was Helius – but in English literature 'Phoebus' often refers to the sun.) He describes himself in Shelley's 'Hymn of Apollo':

I am the eye with which the Universe  
Beholds itself, and knows itself divine;  
All harmony of instrument or verse,  
All prophecy, all medicine are mine,  
All light of art or nature . . .

He is depicted as a beardless young man of perfect classical beauty, often surrounded by a halo of light, carrying a bow and arrows and a lyre. As a hunter he is often linked with his twin sister Artemis/Diana (they are the children of Zeus and the titaness Leto); together they kill monsters and send disease and death on evildoers. Apollo also heals disease, and his son **Asclepius/Aesculapius** is the god of medicine. As prophet he speaks from his shrines such as the great Oracle at Delphi, the centre of the earth, where the Pythia-priestess utters her riddling oracles in his name. As god of music and poetry he is associated with the mountains of Parnassus and Helicon, where he is attended by the nine **Muses** (see below). Apollo was often seen by the Greeks as the epitome of Greek civilisation; so he takes a central place in the frieze on the Parthenon in Athens, calmly wrestling a centaur into submission, the symbol of reason overcoming barbarism.

It may be added, to qualify his almost insufferable perfection, that he inherits his father's sexual appetite, and that his love affairs with women or boys nearly always have unhappy endings (see 'Tales of love' in chapter 3, pp. 38–40).

**The Muses** are the nine daughters of Zeus and the titaness Mnemosyne ('memory'), who live on Mount Helicon beside the spring of Hippocrene; they are the patronesses of the creative arts and the givers of inspiration. Later writers give each of them responsibility for a particular art, though the assignments vary; this is one traditional version.

<b>Calliope</b>	epic poetry
<b>Clio</b>	history
<b>Erato</b>	lyric poetry
<b>Euterpe</b>	music
<b>Melpomene</b>	tragedy
<b>Polyhymnia</b>	sacred music and poetry
<b>Terpsichore</b>	dance
<b>Thalia</b>	comedy, pastoral poetry
<b>Urania</b>	astronomy

### *Artemis / Diana*

The virgin huntress, goddess of wild places and wild creatures, of chastity, and of the moon. (Like her brother Apollo's association with the sun, this is a later development, by which she displaced the original moon goddess Selene; in this role she is often called **Phoebe**, the feminine counterpart of Phoebus, or **Cynthia**.) She is depicted as a beautiful, athletic young woman, dressed as a huntress with bow and arrows, often wearing a small crescent moon in her hair or on her breast, and often accompanied by a deer or other wild creatures. She is a virgin, like Athena, but unlike her sister avoids courts and cities, preferring to run free in the forests and groves with her band of huntress-nymphs, and fiercely punishing male intruders (like the hunter Actaeon), as well as females (like the nymph Callisto) who fall below her standards of chastity. The 'Queen and huntress, chaste and fair . . . Goddess excellently bright' (Ben Jonson) is a particularly potent figure in Elizabethan literature, when Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen, liked to be associated with her. On a more sinister level, she is sometimes identified with **Hecate**, goddess of witchcraft and black magic – the trinity of huntress, moon goddess, and witch-goddess making her 'Diana of the three faces'.

### *Aphrodite / Venus*

Goddess of love and sexuality. She is depicted as a beautiful woman (in whatever style of beauty is currently in fashion), usually naked, often accompanied by her son **Eros/Cupid** (see below), or by a whole flock of small winged Loves or

Cupids; her attributes include doves, sparrows, roses, and mirrors. It is the mirror which is represented in her astrological symbol (♀), which has become the conventional symbol for women or femaleness. Homer calls her the daughter of Zeus and Dione, but Hesiod tells a more striking story of her origins: when Cronus/Saturn castrated his father Uranus, the sky god's genitals fell into the sea and gathered sea-foam (Gk. *aphros*) around them, and Aphrodite arose from the sea.

Plato, in the *Symposium* (180), declared that there are two Aphrodites: 'Common Aphrodite', goddess of ordinary love and sex, and 'Heavenly Aphrodite', *Aphrodite Urania*, a potent spiritual force. This is a philosopher's concept rather than a genuine myth, but it does suggest the goddess's range of personalities. At one extreme is the goddess of the universal cycle of life, magnificently invoked by the Roman philosopher-poet Lucretius (in Dryden's translation):

All nature is thy gift; earth, air, and sea;  
 Of all that breathes, the various progeny,  
 Stung with delight, is goaded on by thee.  
 O'er barren mountains, o'er the flowery plain,  
 The leafy forest, and the liquid main,  
 Extends thy uncontrolled and boundless reign . . .  
 (*De rerum natura*, 1. 17–20)

Common Aphrodite, on the other hand, is the embodiment of human love, and can be regarded in as many ways as love can be: as something rapturous, or kind and caring, or wantonly lustful, or elegantly frivolous, or cruel – 'Venus with her claws fixed deep in her prey' (Racine, *Phèdre*, 1.3). She is married to Hephaestus/Vulcan, but continually unfaithful to him; her principal lover is Ares/Mars, but she also has human lovers, of whom Adonis is the most famous. The opposite in most ways of chaste Artemis/Diana, she is like her in her harsh punishment of those who offend against her and her values; the most famous example is the tragedy of Hippolytus and Phaedra.

**Eros/Cupid**, the personification of love or desire (Gk. *eros*, Lat. *cupido*), is a god who has come down in the world. According to Hesiod, Eros was there at the very beginning of things, emerging out of Chaos along with Earth and Tartarus, and so is older than Aphrodite. Later, and more commonly, he is called the son of Aphrodite and Ares. At first depicted by the Greeks as a beautiful winged youth, he has shrunk by Roman times into the familiar figure of a pudgy little winged boy, often blind or blindfolded, with a little bow from which he shoots at random his arrows of desire. Shakespeare spells out the allegory:

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,  
 And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.  
 Nor hath love's mind of any judgement taste;  
 Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste.

And therefore is love said to be a child  
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.

(*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1. 1. 234–9)

### *Ares / Mars*

The god of war. He is depicted as a warrior, with armour, sword, spear, and shield (or the contemporary equivalents, in later art); his astrological symbol (♂) represents the phallically raised spear, and has become the symbol of the male, as Venus's mirror is of the female (a rather depressing comment on traditional gender roles). Ares and Mars are rather different figures, reflecting different cultural attitudes to war: Ares was a minor Greek god, and Homer portrays him as a nasty and ineffectual bully; Mars, on the other hand, is one of the principal Roman gods, embodiment of the military virtues, and patron and defender of Rome. Mars and Venus, as archetypes of man and woman, are appropriately lovers, and the disarming of Mars by Venus is a common theme in art.

### *Hephaestus / Vulcan*

The smith, god of metalworking and of fire. Son of Zeus and Hera (or, in some versions, of Hera alone), he is ugly and lame – either because he was born so, or because his mother or father threw him out of heaven and he was crippled by the fall to earth. (The lame blacksmith is a traditional figure in many cultures, perhaps because it was a craft open to those who could not fight or farm.) He makes houses and furniture, weapons and armour, and other treasured possessions for the gods, as well as arms for heroes like Achilles and Aeneas. His forge is located underneath a volcano, usually Mount Etna in Sicily, where he is assisted by the **Cyclopes** (one-eyed giants). The other gods laugh at him for his clumsy appearance, and also for being a cuckold – husband of the most spectacularly unfaithful wife in all mythology. On one occasion, however, described by Homer, he had the last laugh on his wife Aphrodite/Venus and her lover Ares/Mars: he booby-trapped the marital bed with an invisible and unbreakable net, caught the lovers there, and invited the other deities in to enjoy their discomfiture.

### *Hermes / Mercury*

The messenger of the gods. The son of Zeus and Maia, he carries messages and aid to mortals on behalf of his father. He is depicted as a handsome, beardless youth, wearing a winged cap and sandals, and carrying the *caduceus* – a herald's staff with two snakes entwined around it. (For some reason the caduceus has become the symbol of medicine, which was never one of Hermes' functions.) He is the god of language and communication, of orators, diplomats, writers, and scholars; his medium is prose, 'the words of Mercury' rather than 'the songs of

Apollo' (Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, 5. 2. 912–13). He is also the patron of travellers, traders, and thieves (categories the Greeks obviously regarded as closely related). According to the 'Homeric Hymn to Hermes', he demonstrated his precocious abilities when he was only one day old by stealing a herd of cattle from his brother Apollo, then pacifying Apollo with some fast talk and the gift of the lyre (which he had just invented) in exchange. Quick-witted, agile of foot, tongue, and brain, his 'mercurial' qualities are reflected in the metal named after him – mercury, or quicksilver. He also has a more sombre function as *psychopomp* or spirit guide, guiding the spirits of the dead down to the underworld.

### *Dionysus / Bacchus*

The god of wine, intoxication and ecstasy. A latecomer to Olympus, he is the son of Zeus and a mortal, Semele, daughter of King Cadmus of Thebes. Semele was already pregnant with the god when (on Hera's malicious advice) she unwisely asked Zeus to appear to her in his full heavenly glory, and was burnt to cinders; but Zeus rescued the unborn child and sewed him into his thigh, from which he was subsequently born. (Dionysus and Athena are thus both the children of Zeus as solo parent, so to speak; the parts of his body from which they were born suggest the contrast between Athena's pure intellect and Dionysus' 'lower', more sensual nature.) Tutored by the wise old drunkard **Silenus**, he set off on a tour of the East as far as India, spreading the knowledge of wine and his worship, before returning in triumph to claim his place on Olympus. Only his home city, Thebes, refused to acknowledge him; the tragic story of King Pentheus's defiance of Dionysus is told in Euripides' *Bacchae*.

Dionysus is depicted as a handsome young man (bearded in early Greek art, more androgynous-looking in later versions), crowned with ivy and vine-leaves, holding a wine-cup, and carrying the *thyrsus*, an ivy-wreathed staff tipped with a pine-cone; he is followed by leopards and panthers, satyrs, and fauns, old Silenus riding on a donkey, and a rout of wild (mainly female) worshippers, the *bacchantes* or *maenads*. This image reflects the actual Bacchic rites (or 'orgies'), in which women would go up into the mountains and work themselves up with wine and music and dancing into a frenzied ecstasy, culminating in the ceremonial tearing to pieces of a sacrificial animal. In later times Bacchus may become merely a personification of wine or a comic drunkard; but for the ancient Greeks he represented something more serious – the emotional and irrational, inspiration and ecstasy, whatever lifts human beings out of their normal selves and beyond rational control. He has his own kinds of poetry and music, and acting and the theatre are his special province. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), proposed an influential distinction between Apollonian and Dionysian forms of art – the former rational, orderly, harmonious, 'classical'; the latter emotional, instinctive, mysterious, 'romantic'. Dionysus is the least 'classical' of classical deities.

## The gods of the underworld

### *Hades/Pluto/Dis*

King of the underworld and god of the dead, who gained that realm when he cast lots with his brothers Zeus/Jupiter and Poseidon/Neptune. He is a shadowy figure. On the principle of ‘speak of the devil. . .’, he was seldom depicted and his name seldom spoken. In fact, his various names are all euphemisms: Hades and Aidoneus mean ‘the unseen one’ (Hades is also the name of his realm); Pluto and Dis mean ‘the rich one’ (since wealth comes from underground). It is worth stressing that he is *not* the devil, not evil or malevolent, merely a cold, grim, inflexible enforcer of the necessity of death for all mortal creatures. He has little mythology, apart from the story of his abduction of Persephone (see below), and his dealings with the heroes who from time to time invade his realm.

### *Persephone/Proserpina*

Queen of the underworld, and goddess of spring. Also known as **Cora** or **Kore**, ‘the maiden’, she is the daughter of Zeus/Jupiter and Demeter/Ceres. Her uncle Hades/Pluto fell in love with her, and, with the connivance of Zeus, seized her and carried her off in his black chariot as she was picking flowers; in Milton’s words,

Proserpine, gathering flowers,  
Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis  
Was gathered, which cost Ceres all that pain  
To seek her through the world.

*(Paradise Lost, 4. 269–72)*

Demeter searched the earth for her lost daughter. In her grief, or her rage at finding how her brothers had conspired against her, she withdrew the blessings of fertility from the world; crops died, the world turned barren, human life was threatened. Zeus had to ask Hades to return Persephone. But Hades, knowing that those who had eaten the food of the underworld could not return to earth, had persuaded Persephone to take a bite of a pomegranate, and she had swallowed some seeds. As a compromise, Zeus decreed that she should spend half the year in the underworld, half with the other gods. This is, of course, a seasonal myth: while Persephone is underground in winter the earth is cold and barren, but she returns with new life in the spring. The Eleusinian Mysteries – the famous, secret rites held yearly at Eleusis, near Athens – apparently acted out the story of Demeter and Persephone, and seem to have promised not only the cyclic renewal of life, but also life after death to their initiates. In literature, apart from versions of the story of her abduction, Persephone/Proserpina almost always appears as the queen of the underworld – sometimes cold and stern, sometimes a kindlier influence on her husband.



*The underworld*

The underworld, the land of the dead, was originally 'the realm of Hades'; by extension it comes to be called simply 'Hades' (other names are Orcus and Erebus). Thanks to the visits of various heroes – Odysseus, Aeneas, Hercules, Theseus, Orpheus – its geography and inhabitants are fairly familiar, though the terrain can shift disconcertingly. For Homer it is a land somewhere in the far west, beyond the encircling Ocean (Odysseus is able to get there by ship), and it consists simply of an endless, featureless plain, on which only asphodel (a kind of white lily) grows, and on which the ghosts of the dead wander mindlessly and aimlessly. This simple and depressing picture becomes more complex, and more interesting, in later accounts.

Later writers usually place the underworld underneath the earth, where it can be reached by various passages: Orpheus descends through a cave at Taenarus in southernmost Greece, Aeneas through the Sibyl's cavern near Lake Avernus in Italy. Its boundary is marked by the river Styx, the 'hateful river', by whose black and poisonous water the gods swear their most unbreakable oaths. (Virgil makes the river Acheron the border, but later tradition has agreed on the Styx.) The spirits of the newly dead wait on its bank to be ferried across by **Charon**, the filthy and churlish old boatman. The fare is an *obolus*, a small coin (hence the ancient custom of putting a coin in a dead person's mouth, and perhaps the later custom of putting pennies on a dead person's eyes); those who lack the coin, or have not been properly buried, are doomed to wait in limbo on the banks of the Styx. On the other side, the boundaries of the underworld are marked out by five rivers: Styx, Acheron ('sorrowful'), Cocytus ('wailing'), Phlegethon ('fiery'), and Lethe ('forgetful'); those who drink from Lethe forget their former lives and identities. The entrance to the underworld, or the gate of Hades' palace, is guarded by the fearsome three-headed (or, more extravagantly, fifty-headed) hell-hound **Cerberus**.

Whereas the essential feature of Homer's underworld is the levelling of all souls without distinction, later versions show more interest in posthumous rewards and punishments. There are three judges, **Minos**, **Rhadamanthys**, and **Aeacus**, who decide the fates of the dead. There are also equivalents of heaven and hell, though they are reserved for the exceptionally good or the exceptionally wicked. On one side there is **Elysium**, or the **Elysian Fields**: a paradisaical place where blessed souls take their ease with conversation, music, and games amid flowering meadows. Originally reserved for heroes of divine ancestry, Elysium is later open to anyone of exceptional virtue or distinction.

On the other side is **Tartarus**, a deep gulf in which the wickedest sinners are tormented. The Titans and Giants are imprisoned here, along with other famous sinners who appear in almost every description of the underworld. Some receive straightforward torments: **Ixion**, who tried to rape Hera, is tied to a turning wheel of fire; the giant **Tityus**, who tried to rape Leto, is tied to the ground while vultures feed on his liver. Other punishments are more subtle, relying on

frustration rather than pain. **Tantalus**, who tried to trick the gods into eating human flesh, is ‘tantalised’ by hunger and thirst in the midst of plenty: he stands in water which drains away when he tries to drink, under hanging fruit which swings out of his reach when he tries to eat. The **Danaids**, the husband-killing daughters of King Danaus, spend their time pouring water into a leaky jar. And the trickster **Sisyphus** – in an image that the Existentialist philosopher Albert Camus took as symbolic of the absurdity of human life – pushes a huge stone up a steep hill, and, every time he nears the top, sees it roll back down again. Presiding over the torments are the **Furies**, repulsive snake-haired female demons armed with whips and torches; originally responsible for hunting down and punishing murderers (as in Aeschylus’s *Oresteia*), they later become generalised tormentors of the wicked; their names are **Alecto**, **Megaera**, and **Tisiphone**.

Other Greek monsters sometimes encountered in the underworld include the **Harpies** (bird-like creatures with the faces of women, of filthy habits, whose talons snatch food and other possessions); the **Gorgons** (snake-haired women, so hideous that the mere sight of them turns you to stone); and the **Chimaera** (a grotesque fire-breathing creature, part lion, part goat, and part snake, whose name has become a synonym for the completely unbelievable).

Just as Hades (the god) is not the devil, so Hades (the underworld) is not hell. This distinction, however, tends to be blurred by English writers, who from the Middle Ages onwards equate the two, speaking (for instance) of Orpheus’s journey to hell. Elizabethan dramatists in particular loved to describe the afterlife in pagan terms, with lurid blood-and-thunder evocations of the horrors of Hades; and an eighteenth-century writer noted wryly that ‘The poet generally sits down wholly undetermined whether Furies or Devils are to be the executioners he will make use of, and brings in either the one or the other, just as the humour takes or as the verse demands. If two syllables are wanting, it is Satan; but if four, you are sure of meeting with Tisiphone’ (Joseph Spence, *Polymetis*, p. 300, quoted in Zwerdling 1964: 452).

### Other gods

Some lesser gods, godlings, and creatures, mainly associated more closely with the earth than with Olympus or Hades.

#### *Sun, Moon, Dawn, and Winds*

The gods of Sun, Moon, and Dawn are rather insubstantial personifications. They are siblings, children of the Titans Hyperion and Thea. **Helius**, the sun god – sometimes confused with his father Hyperion, and sometimes simply called ‘Titan’ – drives the four-horse chariot of the sun across the sky each day, and returns each night in a golden cup across the Ocean. **Selene**, the moon goddess, rides across the night sky. In later mythology, they tend to get identified with Apollo and Artemis, who also take over the few legends associated with them

(such as Helios's ill-fated loan of the sun-chariot to his son Phaethon, or Selene's love for the beautiful shepherd Endymion). **Eos/Aurora**, the dawn goddess (Homer's 'rosy-fingered Dawn'), accompanies the sun god; she is mainly a personification, but also known for her affairs with mortals such as Orion and Tithonus. (For all these legends, see chapter 3.)

The Winds in Homer are under the command of **Aeolus**, who keeps them locked up in a cave on his island in the Mediterranean. In later mythology some of them become substantial gods in their own right, particularly **Boreas**, the boisterous north wind, and **Zephyrus**, the gentle west wind – Chaucer's 'Zephirus . . . with his sweete breath' (*Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue, 5).

### ***Cronus / Saturn***

Father of the Olympian gods, and one of the most ambiguous figures in the pantheon. In Greek myth, Cronus is the father of Zeus and his siblings, a savage figure who castrated his own father Uranus with a sickle, devoured his children, and was finally overthrown by Zeus. Another tradition, however, painted his rule as a Golden Age. The Romans identified him with the agricultural god Saturn (his sickle becoming a farmer's implement), and explained that the deposed god went into exile in Italy and there ruled over a golden age of peace, plenty, and justice; his December festival, the Saturnalia, was a time of anarchic merrymaking whose traditions contributed to those of Christmas. The combination of ogre and Father Christmas is hard to reconcile. To compound the confusion, some scholars identified Cronus with the Greek *chronos*, 'time', rationalising his cannibalism as a symbol of the devouring effects of time; hence he develops into the traditional figure of Old Father Time, the old man with his scythe (rather than sickle) and hourglass. In astrology the planet Saturn is associated with old age, disease, death, and misfortune, and those born under it are of 'saturnine' or gloomy temperament.

### ***Rhea / Ops / Cybele***

Rhea (Ops to the Romans), wife of Cronus and mother of the gods, tended to merge with her own mother Gaea (Earth) into a composite figure of the great earth mother. In later classical times she became identified with **Cybele**, a powerful Asian mother goddess, whose worship was formally introduced into Rome in 204 BC. Cybele rode in a chariot drawn by lions, wearing a turreted crown and followed by eunuch priests playing tambourines, flutes, and castanets. Her most famous myth concerned her young lover **Attis**, who betrayed her, was driven mad by the goddess, castrated himself and died. In Cybele's orgiastic rites her followers sometimes followed Attis's example and castrated themselves, an excess of religious enthusiasm regarded with astonishment and horror by the Greeks and Romans.

*Pan*

God of shepherds and wild nature, Pan is sometimes identified with the Roman **Faunus**. The son of Hermes/Mercury and a nymph, he is represented as a goat-man, with horns, hairy legs, hooves and a tail, and often playing on the pan-pipes (see the story of Syrinx in chapter 3). He haunts the mountains and forests of Arcadia in northern Greece, and is the friend of shepherds and goatherds; he is wild, mischievous, and lecherous, and his shout can induce irrational ‘panic’ fear. Pan would be only a minor rustic deity except for the coincidence that his name in Greek means ‘all’, and hence some ancient philosophers interpreted him as the god of everything, the personification of Nature. Moreover, the Greek essayist Plutarch (*Moralia*, 419) tells a strange story of a voice which was heard, during the reign of the emperor Tiberius, crying out ‘Great Pan is dead’ – a story which Christian writers associated with the death of Christ. Some, however, identified Pan with Christ, the Good Shepherd and all-ruler; others saw the horned and hooved god as a devilish figure, embodying the pagan gods giving way before the new age of Christ.

Some related Roman gods, often encountered in pastoral poetry, are **Silvanus** the god of forests, **Pomona** the goddess of fruits, **Flora** the goddess of flowers, and **Priapus** the garden god, whose statues, as a kind of gnome with a huge phallus, were used as garden scarecrows.

*Nymphs, satyrs, and others*

For the Greeks, all nature was alive with divine or semi-divine presences. Each river has its own **river god**, who may appear as a man with blue-green skin and hair streaming with water. Lesser features of the landscape are inhabited by female spirits called **nymphs**. They are of various kinds: **oceanids** and **nerheids** are spirits of the sea, **oreads** of the mountains, **naiads** of lakes, streams, and fountains, **dryads** of trees. They are long-lived but not immortal, tied to the place that they inhabit, and dying if that place is destroyed. In mythology nymphs are often the object of love or lust by gods, and are treated almost as if they were human women.

If nymphs are halfway between humans and gods, **satyrs**, **fauns**, and **centaurs** are halfway between humans and beasts. Satyrs and fauns are both half man, half goat, like the god Pan, but fauns tend to be shy woodland creatures; satyrs are more boisterous, drunken, and lecherous, followers of Dionysus and chasers of nymphs. They were the heroes of the farcical ‘satyr plays’ that followed and mocked Greek tragedies.

The **centaurs** are creatures with a horse’s body and a human torso. They are said to be the descendants of Ixion, who tried to rape Hera but was deceived with a cloud shaped to resemble her; the product of that unnatural union was the first centaur. In Greek mythology they are, for the most part, savage and violent, embodiments of the animal side of human nature. They are most famous for

their savage battle with the Lapiths, a hill-country Greek tribe, which broke out when the centaurs became drunk at a Lapith wedding feast and tried to carry off the bride. An exception is Chiron, the wise and gentle old centaur who was tutor to a number of Greek heroes including Jason and Achilles.

### *The Fates*

Last comes a group of deities who may be the most powerful of all: the three Fates. Sometimes called the daughters of Night, sometimes of Zeus and Themis, they oversee or control human destinies. They are usually portrayed as old women spinning: **Clotho** spins the thread, **Lachesis** measures it, and **Atropos** – ‘the blind fury with the abhorred shears’, in Milton’s phrase (*Lycidas*, 75) – cuts it off. They embody the implacability of fate, whereas the related Roman and medieval goddess **Fortuna**, with her blindfold, turning wheel, and ‘rolling restless stone’ (Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 3. 6. 27), embodies the blind arbitrariness of chance.

# ORPHEUS

## INTRODUCTION

### **The ancient Orpheus**

For obvious reasons, the legend of Orpheus has always had a particular appeal for writers. Orpheus is the archetypal poet and the archetypal musician; beyond that, he can be seen as the embodiment of 'art' in its widest sense, of all kinds of creative activity, all human attempts to find or create harmony and order in the world, through literature, music, art, philosophy, science, politics, or religion. In his unsuccessful attempt to reclaim his wife Eurydice from death, and his own death at the hands of an angry mob, he embodies the limitations of art in the face of mortality and human irrationality. On a less abstract level, the Orpheus legend is a wonderful story. Dramatically structured, movingly tragic and ironic, it invites constant retelling and constant reinterpretation of the motives and feelings of the two principal characters.<sup>1</sup>

The legend in its classic form can be quickly summarised. Orpheus came from Thrace, the wild region to the north of classical Greece. His mother was Calliope, one of the nine Muses; his father was either Oeagrus, an otherwise obscure Thracian king, or the god Apollo. Orpheus sang and played on the lyre with such beauty and skill that he enchanted not only humans but even wild nature: animals and birds flocked to hear him, rivers paused in their courses, even trees and stones uprooted themselves and lumbered to follow his voice. He sailed with the Argonauts on the quest for the Golden Fleece, where he caused fish to leap out of the water to hear his music, and outsang the seductive songs of the Sirens.

He married the nymph Eurydice, but lost her on the very day of their wedding when she was bitten by a snake and died. The grieving Orpheus descended to the underworld and played before Hades and Persephone, begging to be allowed to take his wife back to life. They agreed, on one condition: that he should go on ahead, and not look back to see if she was following. Orpheus had reached the very verge of the upper world when, overcome by love or fear, he looked back, and Eurydice was lost again, this time irretrievably. Inconsolable, Orpheus retreated into the wilderness to sing his songs to animals and trees, abandoning

human company and rejecting the love of women (according to Ovid, he turned to homosexuality). Enraged at his misogyny, or his scorn of their love, or his allegiance to Apollo, or simply the insufferable harmony of his music, the Thracian Bacchantes (wild women followers of Dionysus) turned on him and tore him to pieces. His head and his lyre were thrown into the River Hebrus, floated out to sea, and landed on the island of Lesbos, which became a centre of poetry; some say that his severed head continued to give oracles until Apollo silenced it.

This is the classic form of the story, as set in place by the Roman poets Virgil and Ovid in the decades around the birth of Christ. The original Greek conception of Orpheus may have been rather different.

The Greeks believed Orpheus was a real person, an ancient poet (perhaps the inventor of poetry) and religious teacher. They attributed to him an unorthodox version of the creation of the world and the nature and destiny of the human soul. At the heart of this theology was a myth which strangely parallels the story of the death of Orpheus himself: how the young god Dionysus was torn to pieces and devoured by the Titans, who were then killed by a thunderbolt, and how human beings arose from their ashes, thus partaking both of the divine nature of the god and the evil of the Titans. Orpheus (it is said) taught that men could purify themselves of this taint of original sin by proper ritual practices and an ascetic lifestyle, including vegetarianism, celibacy, and avoidance of women (there seems to have been a misogynistic strain in his teaching which may be reflected in the myth of his death at women's hands). 'Orphic' poems expounding such doctrines still survive, though those that survive are clearly not pre-Homeric but of much later date.

Scholars still fiercely debate whether 'Orphism' was in fact a coherent religious tradition, or merely a conveniently antique label pinned on any kind of mystical otherworldly doctrine – and, even more unanswerably, whether there ever existed a real Orpheus. One suggestion is that behind the legend and the tradition lies the primitive figure of a Thracian shaman. Shamans (the word is Russian, but the concept exists in many cultures) are magicians who claim power over nature, the ability to talk with birds and animals, and in particular the ability to travel out of the body to the lands of the dead, and to guide the souls of the sick and dying there and back again. Such a magical traveller beyond death, it is suggested, may have subsequently been rationalised into the religious teacher who saves the souls of his disciples, and mythologised into the legendary bard who descends into the underworld to reclaim his wife.

In any case, the Greek figure of Orpheus as shaman/poet/teacher gives rise to two important conceptions of Orpheus in later tradition. One is that of the Orphic poet: the divinely inspired bard with profound insight into life and death and the nature of things – a figure epitomised in Apollonius's account of Orpheus's song to the Argonauts (O1).<sup>2</sup> The other is that of Orpheus the civiliser, teacher of arts and morals, whose melodious wisdom draws people together into an ordered and humane society – a figure classically depicted by the Roman poet Horace (O3). Both these conceptions can be metaphorically expressed in the

image of Orpheus's power over nature – whether that power is conceived in terms of taming and subduing the wildness of nature, or of sympathetic oneness with the natural order.

All these Orpheuses – the shaman, the religious guru, the inspired poet, the civiliser – have one thing in common: they are essentially public figures, whose efforts are directed towards the welfare of their community or their disciples. The idea of the Orpheus legend as essentially a love story, and Orpheus as a hero driven by personal love and grief, is a later development. Eurydice is barely referred to by Greek writers, and it is hard to say at what point she entered the tradition. Her name ('wide-ruling' or 'wide-judging') has suggested to some scholars that she was originally an underworld goddess, an aspect of Persephone (in modern times Renault, **O42**, and Hoban, **O46**, play interestingly with this notion). Even when she was accepted as Orpheus's wife, there is some evidence that the story may once have had a happy ending; ambiguous references in Euripides, Plato, and Moschus seem to imply that in the accepted Greek version of the story Orpheus succeeded in bringing back Eurydice from the underworld. It may have been some unknown Hellenistic poet, or possibly even Virgil, who invented the now canonical tragic ending of the story.

Virgil (**O2**) is the first to tell the story in its current form. It comes in the unexpected, even bizarre context of a didactic poem on farming. The *Georgics*, ostensibly a practical guide to the farmer, are in fact a poetic evocation of the beauty of the Italian countryside and the moral values of country life. The story of Orpheus comes at the end of the last book, which deals with bees, and is enclosed within the story of the demigod Aristaeus, inventor of beekeeping (and, as son of Apollo, Orpheus's half-brother). Aristaeus's bees have died of a mysterious plague; questioning the prophetic sea god Proteus, he learns that he is being punished for the deaths of Eurydice, who was snake-bitten while fleeing his advances, and of Orpheus; having heard the story, he is able to do penance and magically create a new hive of bees. The relevance of this story to the *Georgics* as a whole, and the relationship between the stories of Aristaeus and Orpheus, have been endlessly debated. Clearly Aristaeus's successful quest to recover his bees parallels Orpheus's failed quest to recover his wife. Aristaeus, the briskly unsentimental farmer, seems to be offered as a role model to the practical Roman, as his bees are a miniature model of the efficient Roman state. By contrast, Orpheus, the poet not as public teacher but as private singer of his own love and grief, seems to be offered as a moral warning against the dangers of excessive emotion. But Virgil is rarely so one-sided, and readers have always found the failed Orpheus by far the more memorable and sympathetic figure.

Ovid (**O4**), writing some forty years after Virgil, is very conscious of the need to do the story differently. In the *Metamorphoses* it becomes merely one of hundreds of mythological stories, and the intensity, starkness, and jagged abruptness of Virgil are replaced by smoothly flowing narrative, romance, quiet pathos, and subtly subversive humour. At the same time, with characteristic delight in the complex interweaving of his stories, Ovid makes Orpheus the narrator of a whole series of



other stories. Ovid's Orpheus, in fact, is as much the master storyteller as the lover; at the point where Virgil's broken hero is wandering off into the snowy wastes to die, Ovid's is just getting into his stride as narrator of a series of cautionary tales of unhappy love and wicked women. Revelling like his Orpheus in the sheer pleasure of storytelling, Ovid imposes no obvious moral; perhaps for that very reason, his text invites, and has received, the widest range of interpretations.

### **The medieval Orpheus: allegory and romance**

Of the three myths dealt with in this book, that of Orpheus was by far the most popular in the Middle Ages, and provides a fascinating case study in Christian strategies for dealing with a pagan story. The basic medieval strategy was allegorisation, making the story a metaphor for an acceptable moral or natural truth. This strategy was already in use in classical times (Horace, for instance, explains Orpheus's taming of savage beasts as a metaphor for his influence over uncivilised human beings), but it became much more popular in the Middle Ages.

There are three main strands to the allegorising of Orpheus. The first – appropriately enough, given his origins as shaman and religious teacher – is to treat him as a 'type' or symbol of Christ. This approach perhaps begins in art, as early Christian artists conflate the figure of Orpheus playing to the animals with those of Christ the good shepherd and David the shepherd-psalmist-king. The theologian Clement of Alexandria (late second century) associates Orpheus with Christ, the incarnate Word of God, whose 'new song' harmonises the world and makes 'men out of stones, men out of beasts'; later writers see Orpheus's descent into the underworld to save Eurydice as a type of Christ's descent to earth, and later to hell, to redeem human souls from original sin – with more or less emphasis on the fact that Orpheus, unlike Christ, failed in his quest.

A second strand derives from the enormously popular and influential *Consolation of Philosophy* of the sixth-century writer Boethius (05). In one of the poems in that work, the lady Philosophy retells the story of Orpheus and the fatal backward glance by which he 'saw, lost, and killed his Eurydice'. Orpheus here represents the human soul, seeking to rise out of darkness to (philosophical) enlightenment or (Christian) salvation, but in danger of backsliding if it is tempted to look back at the worldly things it is leaving behind. In later developments of this approach, Orpheus becomes specifically 'reason', the rational part of the soul, and Eurydice becomes its emotional and 'sensual' part, corrupted by temptation and led to hell by the bite of the serpent-devil; reason must bring the soul back out of hell while turning its back on sensual temptation.

A third strand takes the legend as an allegory of music. Fulgentius, a fifth-century mythographer with a taste for far-fetched etymologies, explained Orpheus as meaning 'best voice' (*oraia-phonos*) and Eurydice as 'profound judgement': the good musician must have not only Orpheus's technical skill but also the deeper understanding of musical theory represented by Eurydice. Later writers broaden this approach to equate Orpheus with eloquence and Eurydice

with wisdom: the true practitioner of any art, literary or rhetorical as well as musical, must be wise as well as skilful with words and notes.

It is clear that these interpretations are potentially contradictory. Orpheus may be God incarnate, or the sinful human soul, or an aspiring musician; Eurydice may embody sensuality, which Orpheus must turn his back on, or wisdom, which he must seek out. They may also seem wildly inappropriate to the literal story: in one version Aristaeus, the would-be rapist, becomes an allegory of 'virtue'. Medieval commentators were untroubled by such problems: all that mattered was how many useful meanings could be spun out of a story, and commentators like Bersuire (**O6a**) move with a casual 'Or . . .' from one reading to another.

In the later Middle Ages a very different treatment of the story emerges. From the eleventh century onwards, in popular songs, ballads, and chivalric romances, Orpheus and Eurydice appear as ideal courtly lovers, the perfect minstrel-knight and his lady-love. The first important English (or Scottish) treatments of the story are in this tradition: *Sir Orfeo* (**O7**), a Middle English romance of the early fourteenth century, and the *Orpheus and Eurydice* of the fifteenth-century Scots poet Robert Henryson (**O8**). *Sir Orfeo* blends the classical myth with Celtic fairy tale: Orfeo, minstrel-king of Traciens (the old name for Winchester, the poet helpfully explains), successfully rescues his wife from fairyland after she is stolen away by the king of the fairies. Henryson reunites romance with allegory and musical learning, and restores the tragic ending: his Orpheus journeys through the heavens in search of Eurydice, learning the secrets of the music of the spheres, before descending into hell to reclaim her; but he loses her by a backward glance, and a long concluding *moralitas* imposes the Boethian moral.

### Orphic harmony in the Renaissance

In Renaissance England Orpheus remains a central myth, but Eurydice and the love story fade from prominence. The Renaissance Orpheus is primarily the musician and poet, whose powerful art reflects the harmony of the cosmos and creates harmony on earth and in the human soul.

The classic Renaissance account of Orpheus is in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (**O13b**), where Lorenzo expounds to Jessica the idea of the music of the spheres. According to this ancient cosmological concept, which goes back to the fifth-century BC mathematician-philosopher Pythagoras, the planets are mounted upon crystal spheres which, as they turn around the earth, each give out a musical tone and combine to create a heavenly harmony. Here on earth, trapped inside our imperfect human bodies, we cannot hear this harmony, but we retain a buried memory of it; and that is why we instinctively respond to music:

Therefore the poet  
Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods,  
Since naught so stockish, hard, and full of rage  
But music for the time doth change his nature.

Music is thus at the very heart of God's creation, and the musician, by tapping our innate sensitivity to it, can draw us closer to heavenly perfection on earth. Similarly Chapman's Ovid (in *Ovid's Banquet of Sense*, **O12**), listening to his mistress singing, wishes the 'Orphean' music could permeate the whole dull earth 'that she like heaven might move / In ceaseless music and be filled with love'; and Milton in 'L'Allegro' (**O20a**) prays for heavenly verse and music, 'Untwisting all the chains that tie / The hidden soul of harmony', capable of 'quite' – rather than only half – releasing Eurydice from death. In each case, Orpheus's music stands for a principle capable of transforming our limited, dull, chained human condition into something nearer the divine.

Others portray Orpheus's power in social rather than cosmic terms. Critics like Puttenham (**O10**) and Sidney (*Apology for Poetry*) reiterate the Horatian theme of the poet as the architect of a civilised society; for Puttenham poets like Orpheus are, among other things, the world's first priests, prophets, legislators, politicians, and philosophers. For Spenser (**O9b**), Orpheus is the wise statesman whose harmony calms 'wicked discord', the 'firebrand of hell'; in Chapman's *Shadow of Night*, he is the Promethean poet who draws men from savagery to 'civil love of art'. Bacon (**O14**) identifies Orpheus with 'philosophy' (which includes what we would now call science): his descent into hell is the scientific attempt to prolong or make immortal human life; his charming of the animals is the political attempt to create a civilised and humane society.

It would be misleading to suggest that these lofty Renaissance views of Orpheus are blindly optimistic. Bacon acknowledges that his philosopher-Orpheus fails in both his projects, and ends with an apocalyptic vision of the collapse of civilisation in the face of ineradicable human barbarism. Shakespeare's praise of the transforming power of Orpheus's music is qualified by the recognition that its effect lasts only 'for a time', and that there are those upon whom it does not work at all; the memory of Shylock, 'the man who hath no music in himself', and the harsh treatment meted out to him, remains a discordant note in the harmony of the play's ending. For Spenser (**O9a**), the heroic achievements of Orpheus also suggest a sad contrast with the poverty and neglect of poets today; and Milton, more powerfully, in *Lycidas* (**O20c**) and *Paradise Lost* (**O20d**), takes the death of Orpheus at the hands of the Bacchantes as a symbol of the dangers which threaten the poet in a world inherently hostile to poetry.

Not all Renaissance versions of Orpheus, of course, are at this level of seriousness; many are trivial or conventional. Praises of a poet or composer, for instance, called almost compulsorily for a comparison with Orpheus: so Michael Drayton advises the composer Thomas Morley, in 1595, not to worry about Orpheus's competition ('Draw thou the shepherds still, and bonny lasses, / And envy him not stocks, stones, oxen, asses'), and Thomas Jordan, in 1665, assures a fellow writer that 'Thy poetry would make great Orpheus lese / His lyre, and dance a part with his own trees.' To compare a lady's singing or playing to that of Orpheus is similarly a cliché of love poetry and courtly compliment, as in Sidney (**O11**) or Barnabe Barnes ('Thy sweet enchanting voice did Orpheus raise . . .');

Edmund Waller further trivialises the theme when he commends a lady's skill in cutting trees out of paper ('Orpheus could make the forest dance, but you / Can make the motion and the forest too'). Lyric poets and song-writers exploit the legend for songs either sad (like William Byrd's 'Come woeful Orpheus') or merry (like William Strode's delightful 'When Orpheus sweetly did complain', **O16**). Humorists use it for comic squibs, like Everard Guilpin's on the musician who has married a young wife and now 'plays continually both day and night', or John Davies of Hereford's 'Of Maurus his Orpheus-like Melody', in which the stones which come flying after the musician are thrown by his unappreciative mistress. Orpheus, in fact, crops up everywhere in Elizabethan and Stuart literature, in the most varied contexts – perhaps the most bizarre being when Sir Robert Chester cites him as an authority on the aphrodisiac qualities of the carrot ('The Thracian Orpheus . . . / By his example oftentimes did prove / This root procured in maids a perfect love').

Despite the popularity of Orpheus, occasional voices are raised to remind us that he is a pagan fiction. Giles Fletcher (**O15**) insists that Christ, rescuing human souls from hell, 'Another Orpheus was than dreaming poets feign'; and Milton (**O20d**), after an unforgettable vision of the death of Orpheus, turns away from the pagan Muse Calliope to his personal muse the Holy Spirit – 'For thou art heavenly, she an empty dream.' Both Fletcher and Milton, however, are deeply imaginatively involved with the myth and fascinated by its relationship to Christian truth. A much more damaging rejection is that of Thomas Carew (**O18**), who in 1633 praises his mentor John Donne for abandoning the stale apparatus of mythological poetry such as 'good old Orpheus'. His dismissive attitude prefigures the decline of the Orpheus myth in the Restoration and eighteenth century.

### **Orpheus in the eighteenth century: translations and travesties**

In the 'Augustan' period the Orpheus myth, like myth in general, loses much of its power. Though translations of Virgil, Ovid, and Boethius abound, there are few original treatments of the myth, and those few treat it decoratively rather than as a vehicle for the profound meanings that medieval and Renaissance writers saw in it. Poets like Dryden (**O21**) and Pope (**O22**) continue to use Orpheus to celebrate the power of music. But Dryden's vision of Orpheus/Purcell establishing harmony in hell is a witty conceit, not a serious claim; and Pope, after celebrating Orpheus for over a hundred lines, abandons him for St Cecilia with a flippant ease very different from Milton's gravity in making a similar rejection. On a more trivial level, Orpheus is continually invoked in poems of social compliment with titles such as 'To Lucia Playing on Her Lute', 'Impromptu to a Young Lady Singing' (**O26**), or 'To the Elegant Seraphina, Performing on the Piano Forte at a Private Concert'.

The image of Orpheus the civiliser continues to have some serious resonance.

Interestingly, however, later eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century versions place more emphasis on the domestic rather than the political virtues. William Collins (O28), around 1750, celebrates Orpheus in Horatian terms as the founder of 'Society, and law, and sacred order', but also of 'dear domestic life . . . / And all the charities that softened man'. Anna Seward (O29), in 1780, compares Captain Cook to Orpheus, driven by Benevolence to reform the domestic manners of the savages: 'See! chastened love in softer glances flows – / See! with new fires parental duty glows.' John Galt's opera *Orpheus* (published 1814–15) presents Orpheus as establishing 'primitive society' by separating out 'the most obvious and appropriate duties' of men and women: men must hunt, women must stay at home. Orpheus has become the archetype of bourgeois domestic virtue.

By far the greatest imaginative vitality in the period, however, goes into comic and ironic treatments of the myth. Much of this humour is misogynistic in tone, turning on the outrageousness of the notion that a man fortunate enough to lose his wife should actually want to get her back: this simple joke is the point of short squibs by R.M. (O24), Matthew Coppiner, Mary Monck, and the American Nathaniel Evans, and underlies William King's intermittently amusing travesty, in which Orpheus is a gypsy fiddler in quest of his nagging wife 'Dice'. Against these may be set Anne Finch's clever and unsettling feminist version (O23), in which the Bacchantes become 'resenting heroines' punishing the complacent male satirist Orpheus. Two dramatic versions parody operatic treatments of the myth: in Fielding's *Eurydice* (O27) a sophisticated Eurydice, very much at home in hell, cunningly evades the duty of going home with her wimpish *castrato* husband; in Garrick's less subtle *Peep Behind the Curtain* Orpheus has to extricate himself from his mistress's clutches in order to go and get his wife. Gay's fable of the educated monkey (O25) casts a disenchanting eye on the figure of Orpheus the civiliser and the whole notion of 'civilisation'. Treating the myth frankly as a joke allowed free play to the eighteenth-century love of satire and irony, when the myths taken straight seemed merely a bore.

### **Romantics and Victorians: from Orphic song to the melancholy lyre**

The Romantic movement, with its renewed interest in myth and its lofty conception of poetry and art, might have been expected to bring Orpheus into new prominence. Surprisingly, this is not entirely true. A survey of the major Romantic poets reveals only two poems specifically about the legend: Shelley's (discussed below) and, perhaps, a rather weak Wordsworth poem which hails a blind street musician as 'An Orpheus! An Orpheus!' Moreover, the central critical texts of the movement – the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* – noticeably omit the traditional homage to Orpheus as arch-poet, and Byron (O31) and Peacock (O32) irreverently send up the motif – as if the Horatian notion of Orpheus the poet-civiliser had become

too hackneyed, or too associated with a pompously public type of poetry, to be taken seriously.

Nevertheless, the Romantics were drawn to the image of the 'Orphic poet', associated with the figure of the ancient poet-teacher, whose supposed hymns were re-edited with a commentary by Thomas Taylor in 1787. Wordsworth invokes this ideal of the poet as mystic philosopher at the start of *The Prelude* (O30): hesitating over his poetic vocation, he aspires to write 'immortal verse / Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre', but then, with a significant half-pun, recoils from that 'awful burden'. Later Coleridge acclaims the finished poem as 'an Orphic song indeed, / A song divine of high and passionate thoughts / To their own music chanted' ('To William Wordsworth', 45-7). And in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*,

Language is a perpetual Orphic song,  
Which rules with Daedal harmony a throng  
Of thoughts and words, which else senseless and shapeless were.

Orpheus the poet fuses with Daedalus the craftsman in an image of the power of the creative imagination to remake reality.

Shelley embodies this remaking of reality in the one sustained Romantic treatment of the legend, his dramatic fragment 'Orpheus' (O33). Perhaps taking off from Ovid's tongue-in-cheek remark (10. 104-6) about Orpheus's convenient ability to create shade wherever he went, he places the poet in a bleak purgatorial landscape which, by the end of the poem, is miraculously transformed into an earthly paradise. Shelley's Orpheus is not a public teacher or civiliser but a tormented individual, isolated from society, singing his pain in the wilderness. Nevertheless the power of his song is enough to – literally or metaphorically – transform the world. The extremity of Shelley's claim for the power of art is perhaps exceeded only by a Victorian poet writing in the Romantic tradition, R. W. Dixon (O36), whose Prospero-like poet-mage commands thunder and lightning and comes to the very brink of apotheosis, before he declines it in order to pursue his earthly love. Such 'art', however, Dixon insists, depends on a pantheistic understanding of 'the sources of eternal law' which is now lost to us; his Orpheus is not a model of the modern artist but a superhuman figure from a lost age.

Other Victorian versions return to the more earthbound figure of Orpheus the civiliser and moral teacher. Coventry Patmore and R. C. Trench both take his victory over the Sirens as an allegory of the poet's duty and power to lead people away from sensual temptation and towards virtue. R. W. Buchanan is more sceptical: his Orpheus, singing to the spirits of wild nature, can raise their moral consciousness – 'as they listened, satyrs, nymphs, and fauns / Conceived their immortality' – but (like Shakespeare's Orpheus) only 'for the time'; when the song ceases, 'the satyr-crew / Rushed back to riot and carouse', and Silenus 'bawled for wine'.

In some minor poets (Mackay, Gosse, Ward) this scepticism rises to a sense of the irrelevance or impotence of poetry: Orpheus, the true poet, has no place in the vulgar, corrupt, prosaic modern world. These moralised readings often have an implicitly or explicitly Christian tenor. Isaac Williams, in *The Christian Scholar*, adapts Boethius's moral to Victorian family values: the Orpheus-figure not only seeks his own salvation but also 'with him draws to realms above / The objects of his earthly love'; but if he looks back, 'He loses both himself and them.' On the other hand, Charles Tennyson Turner (the laureate's brother) raises a stern Miltonic objection to the old identification of Christ with Orpheus: 'What means this vain ideal of Our Lord, / With "Orpheus" underwritten?' The pagan story has its own beauty and pathos, but Christians should not 'match Messiah with a shade' or attempt to 'fuse / Redemption into harp-notes'.

Others, especially in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, avoided such didacticism and instead exploited the story for its human pathos. Andrew Lang offers a poem about Orpheus and Eurydice as a tongue-in-cheek example of how 'When first we heard Rossetti sing, / We twanged the melancholy lyre.' In this tradition of autumnal melancholy are poems by De Tabley (O38), Gosse, Binyon, and William Morris, whose massive 1,386-line 'Story of Orpheus and Eurydice' plays on the Gothic horror of the haunted wood in which Orpheus tries to summon up his dead wife's spirit, and the conflicting emotions at work in his soul.

In this late Victorian humanising and psychologising of the myth we see the first attempts to take Eurydice as a subject in her own right and explore her feelings. Robert Browning shows her pleading with Orpheus to look at her (O35), and Bourdillon makes her the one who foolishly looks back, whereas Dowden's formidable Eurydice regrets that she had not taken the task of leading the way out of hell (O37). In some versions she is less than eager to be resurrected. Gosse's Eurydice begs Orpheus to 'forbear and leave me painless'; in T. Sturge Moore's play she baulks at the last moment from returning to the 'hideous hunger' of mortal life. These hints would be taken up by twentieth-century writers.

Alongside such serious versions the comic tradition continues, especially in popular stage entertainments like Planché's extravaganzas and Brough's Christmas pantomimes. I have included a little of Brough's piece (O34), with its knockabout farce and appalling puns, as a slight corrective to the rather overpowering earnestness of most Victorian Orpheuses.

### **The twentieth century: Eurydice sings her own song and Orpheus remembers himself**

In the twentieth century Orpheus remains an immensely powerful figure. It sometimes seems that every poet has written at least one poem on the theme – to say nothing of plays, novels, films, operas, and comic strips. The twentieth-century treatment of Orpheus, however, has been largely bleak. Orpheus the

lover is subject to unprecedentedly harsh criticism; Orpheus the poet is seen most vividly in terms of his failure and death, and his power, if he has any, is gained painfully through suffering and loss.

Orpheus the lover, of course, is often depicted with great sympathy. Many male poets, and some female ones, have movingly identified with him as they use the legend to express personal experiences of loss and grief – among them Peter Davison, Denis Devlin, Lauris Edmond (**O47**), Edwin Honig, D. G. James, Louis Simpson. Others, however, have taken a more critical view of Orpheus's conduct towards Eurydice, seeing him as careless, weak, or self-indulgent. Sydney Goodsir Smith (**O41**) presents an Orpheus bitterly guilty for letting his wife die while he was lecherously 'daffan . . . wi the water-lassies'. Thomas Blackburn criticises his self-absorbed slide into despair, James Merrill the 'opulence of grief' which has turned into a theatrical performance.

The most radical of such revisions of the story are the feminist versions which attempt to see the story from Eurydice's point of view. In the words of the American poet Alta:

all the male poets write of orpheus  
 as if they look back & expect  
 to find me walking patiently  
 behind them. they claim i fell into hell.  
 damn them, i say.  
 i stand in my own pain  
 & sing my own song.

The first and fiercest of these feminist Eurydices is H.D.'s in 1917 (**O39**), who bitterly condemns Orpheus for the 'arrogance' and 'ruthlessness' which have prevented her escape from hell, yet claims a kind of victory in her self-assertion: 'Against the black / I have more fervour / than you in all the splendour of that place'. Similarly Sandra Gilbert's Bacchante – rather in the spirit of Anne Finch's 'resenting heroines' – justifies her sisters' punishment of Orpheus for his callous betrayal of Eurydice (**O50**). The 'swaggering bastard', armed with his phallic flute, tried to silence the voices of nature and of women: 'Without his manly anthems, / everything . . . would sing, would sing.'

Others more subtly criticise Orpheus not for his failure to save Eurydice but for his attempt to do so in the first place: who says Eurydice *wanted* to return to life? Rachel Blau du Plessis's Eurydice deliberately retreats into dark labyrinthine caves to escape male control, transforming herself into a primeval fertility goddess. Elaine Feinstein's Eurydice (**O48**) loves Orpheus, and the music they make together is genuinely life-enhancing; nevertheless, they represent opposed and incompatible principles – the harsh male Apollonian sun of reason, order, control, language-as-power, versus the still shadowy waters of female intuition, emotion, acceptance, silence. His possessiveness is destructive, and his attempt to drag her out of the grave a horrible violation of nature. Margaret Atwood (**O49**)



similarly presents an Orpheus who cannot accept Eurydice's acceptance of death, and tries to recreate her in the shape of what he wants her to be. He ultimately fails because the Eurydice he loves is the reflection of his own needs and desires, not the real woman: 'You could not believe I was more than your echo.' For all these feminist writers Orpheus's sin is his desire for control – of Eurydice, of the natural world, of mortality. We may recall Bacon's claim that the conquest of death would be the noblest achievement of 'philosophy'; for a writer like Feinstein such an Orphean quest to control and defeat nature epitomises destructive masculine hubris.

This feminist view of Orpheus's music as a controlling and repressive force is a radical reinterpretation of the myth; most twentieth-century versions more traditionally see Orpheus the poet-musician as a positive figure. A few are simply celebratory, especially those which deal with Orpheus's union with wild nature: for instance, Denise Levertov's imaginative recreation of his playing to the trees from a tree's point of view, or Donald Davie's exuberant vision of the stones dancing in an expression of 'his holy joy . . . that stones should be'. Feinstein, rather unexpectedly, also evokes this joyously life-enhancing and consciousness-raising quality in Orpheus's music: as he and Eurydice pass, spring breaks out, the city traffic comes to a stop, and men and women look up from their mechanical work with a new awareness of their own humanity.

More often, though, there is a wary scepticism about the effect to which art can actually change the world. Orpheus's music is often presented as impotent: Horace Gregory's Orpheus waits helplessly as the Bacchantes approach and his birds desert him as 'deathless music flies like hope to heaven'; John Hollander's finds that since Eurydice's death his songs have no effect on the natural world, and wryly waits for his 'cracked lyre to crawl away / In silent tortoise-hood some day'. W. H. Auden's challenging question 'What does the song hope for?' (O40), Yvor Winters's image of the 'immortal tongue' singing 'unmeaning down the stream', John Ashbery's quiet insistence on the transience of all things including poets and poetry, Paul Breslin's vision of the mortal poet who cannot break 'Death's mortise-bond in all created things' – all use the Orpheus myth to raise disquieting questions about the value, effect, or permanence of art.

Such scepticism can be especially acute and ironic when Orpheus is brought anachronistically into juxtaposition with the modern world. In Michael Hamburger's 'Orpheus Street, SE5' (O45) he is a drug-popping protest poet, 'well paid' for singing of love and peace and freedom, in a seedy commercialised London. 'Orpheus transfigures, Orpheus transmutes all things' – but can he transfigure this world? The image of park benches taking off and flying, 'narrowly missing the sparrows', captures both the exhilaration and the improbability of the prospect. There is even less hope of redemption in the bored and cynical poet of Donald Justice's 'Orpheus Opens his Morning Mail' or the rock musician of John Heath-Stubbs's 'Story of Orph' (O51), whose death at the hands of an obsessed fan merely results in increased album and t-shirt sales; in this modern world, music and martyrdom are trivialised. More grimly, Stanley

Kunitz presents Orpheus as a Holocaust survivor, traumatised and silenced by the horrors he has seen.

On the other hand, an Orpheus who is vulnerable and doomed can acquire a new kind of tragic heroism – David Gascoyne’s shaman-like figure, for instance, returning with his ‘shattered lyre’ to try to tell in ‘bewildered words’ of his experiences, or William Jay Smith’s, descending like Childe Roland into the darkness of the underworld ‘Bearing his flaming shield, his lyre’. Such portrayals suggest a psychological reading: the poet who risks his own sanity to explore the darkness of the human psyche on our behalf. Often there is a sense that the power and value of Orpheus’s music comes precisely from his confrontation with suffering and death. For A. D. Hope (O52) it is only after the loss of Eurydice that Orpheus’s music acquires its ‘deathless harmony’; Iain Crichton Smith’s Pluto tells Orpheus that he can play so movingly only because he has experienced loss, and sends him back without Eurydice to play his vision of ‘the human / invincible spirit’ in twentieth-century slums. Paul Goodman (in a short story) and Rolfé Humphries (O44) go further to suggest that Orpheus deliberately sacrifices Eurydice. Aware that he must choose between happiness and artistic greatness, Humphries’s Orpheus looks back and consigns Eurydice ‘with everlasting love, to Hell’ – a necessary sacrifice (though feminist writers might see it rather differently) to achieve the ‘immortal voice’ that in ‘The Thracian Women’ triumphs over the Bacchantes’ malice. Ted Hughes, by contrast, allows suffering to achieve both love and art. In his short musical play, Orpheus’s cheerful pop music jangles into discord when Eurydice dies, and then, in hell, is reborn as ‘solemn Bach, Handel, Vivaldi’; with this he wins her back, though as a spiritual presence that he alone can recognise – the nearest to a happy ending in any twentieth-century version.

Sometimes the power of Orpheus’s music is explicitly political. In Atwood’s ‘Orpheus (2)’ (O49c), Orpheus in the stadium, ‘trying to sing / love into existence again’, takes on unmistakable overtones of the poet writing in the face of political tyranny: ‘Praise is defiance.’ One of the most bizarrely powerful images in Neil Gaiman’s *Sandman* graphic novels (in which Orpheus is woven into Gaiman’s complex mythology as the son of Morpheus/Dream/Sandman) is in the French Revolution story ‘Thermidor’: the head of Orpheus leads a chorus of guillotined heads in a song of liberty, silencing the despot Robespierre. In such versions, Orpheus the civiliser takes on a new life as Orpheus the rebel, defending civilised and humane values against tyranny.

Perhaps the most extreme vision of Orpheus achieving power through suffering is Muriel Rukeyser’s (O43), which consciously re-enacts the Orphic myth of Dionysus: the dismembered parts of Orpheus’s body, torn apart and scattered by the Bacchantes, come together again in a miraculous rebirth: ‘He has died the death of the god . . . He has opened the door of pain. / It is a door and a window and a lens / opening on another land . . .’ Russell Hoban (O46), describing the same process, sums it up in a brilliant pun: ‘He’s found his members, said Kleinzeit. He’s remembered himself.’ Hoban’s version, however, one of the most

complex as well as the wittiest of twentieth-century rewritings of the myth, goes further than that. His Orpheus is trapped in an endless cycle of death and rebirth. In what looks like a conscious reminiscence of the Fulgentian allegory of the quest of 'best voice' for 'profound judgement', he needs to be reunited with Eurydice, 'the female element complementary to himself, who dwells in 'the inside of things, the place under the places. Underworld, if you like to call it that.' But, as in Feinstein, Orpheus with his masculine desire for power and control cannot accept the nirvana-like peace of Eurydice's underworld, insists on pursuing worldly fame, and so loses Eurydice, dies, and is reborn to enact the cycle again. If only the cycle could be broken, Hoban implies, harmony could return to the world. The nonsense phrases that echo through the novel ('barrow full of rocks', 'harrow full of crocks', etc.) turn out absurdly to stand for Milton's 'The hidden soul of harmony' (**O20a**). As things are, harmony can only emerge into the world in a nonsensically garbled form, and we have to be content with what can be achieved by Kleinzeit, a 'small-time' Orpheus.

### Notes

- 1 The popularity of the Orpheus myth means that there are far more literary treatments of it than of Adonis or Pygmalion; however, it also tends (perhaps because of its familiarity) to be treated more briefly. That is why the present chapter contains almost twice as many texts as chapters 5 and 6, but is approximately the same length.
- 2 Reference codes in **bold** refer to texts in the anthology: **O1** is the first text in the 'Orpheus' section. Bibliographical details for these texts can be found in the footnote attached to the title of each text. For texts which are referred to but not included in the anthology, brief bibliographical details are given in 'Other Versions of Orpheus', below.

Some have by verse obtained the love of kings  
 (Who with the Muses ease their wearied minds).  
 460 Then blush not, noble Piso, to protect  
 What gods inspire and kings delight to hear.

**O4 Ovid, from the *Metamorphoses*, c. AD 10. Trans.  
 A. D. Melville, 1986°**

Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso), 43 BC–AD 17, Roman poet of the Augustan period, a generation younger than Virgil and Horace; for an account of his life, and his masterpiece the *Metamorphoses*, see chapter 1. The story of Orpheus, which spans books 10–11 of the *Metamorphoses*, is only casually related to the poem's supposed theme of changes of shape by the final transformation of the Bacchantes into trees. But Ovid, with characteristic delight in interweaving his stories or enclosing them within one another (Chinese-box fashion), uses Orpheus as the frame and narrator for a whole series of other tragic love stories, supposedly sung by the grieving bard to his audience of trees, rocks, and animals.

Ovid's poem, like Virgil's, is written in hexameters. A. D. Melville translates it into blank verse, 'the tried and tested measure of English tradition' (xxxix), varied with occasional rhyming couplets for special emphasis.

Thence Hymen° came, in saffron mantle clad,  
 At Orpheus' summons through the boundless sky  
 To Thessaly, but vain the summons proved.  
 True he was present, but no hallowed words  
 5 He brought nor happy smiles nor lucky sign;  
 Even the torch he held sputtered throughout  
 With smarting smoke, and caught no living flame  
 For all his brandishing. The ill-starred rite  
 Led to a grimmer end. The new-wed bride,  
 10 Roaming with her gay Naiads through the grass,  
 Fell dying when a serpent struck her heel.  
 And when at last the bard of Rhodope  
 Had mourned his fill in the wide world above,  
 He dared descend through Taenarus' dark gate

° from *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, books 10 (1–154) and 11 (1–84). Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press. Line numbers in the text are those of the English translation, which runs to more lines than the Latin.

° **Hymen:** Roman god of marriage, depicted wearing a yellow robe and bearing a torch. **Thence:** from Crete, where at the end of Book 9 he was presiding over the wedding of Iphis and Ianthe; Ovid moves from a wedding which ends a comic story to one which begins a tragic story.

- 15 To Hades to make trial of the shades;  
 And through the thronging wraiths and grave-spent ghosts  
 He came to pale Persephone and him,  
 Lord of the shades, who rules the unlovely realm,  
 And as he struck his lyre's sad chords he said:
- 20 'Ye deities who rule the world below,  
 Whither we mortal creatures all return,  
 If simple truth, direct and genuine,  
 May by your leave be told, I have come down  
 Not with intent to see the glooms of Hell,
- 25 Nor to enchain the triple snake-haired necks  
 Of Cerberus, but for my dear wife's sake,  
 In whom a trodden viper poured his venom  
 And stole her budding years. My heart has sought  
 Strength to endure; the attempt I'll not deny;
- 30 But love has won, a god whose fame is fair  
 In the world above; but here I doubt, though here  
 Too, I surmise; and if that ancient tale  
 Of ravishment is true, you too were joined  
 In love.° Now by these regions filled with fear,
- 35 By this huge chaos, these vast silent realms,  
 Reweave, I implore, the fate unwound too fast  
 Of my Eurydice. To you are owed  
 Ourselves and all creation; a brief while  
 We linger; then we hasten, late or soon,
- 40 To one abode; here one road leads us all;  
 Here in the end is home; over humankind  
 Your kingdom keeps the longest sovereignty.  
 She too, when ripening years reach their due term,  
 Shall own° your rule. The favour that I ask
- 45 Is but to enjoy her love; and, if the Fates  
 Will not relieve her, my resolve is clear  
 Not to return: may two deaths give you cheer.'

So to the music of his strings he sang,  
 And all the bloodless spirits wept to hear;

50 And Tantalus forgot the fleeing water,  
 Ixion's wheel was tranced; the Danaids  
 Laid down their urns; the vultures left their feast,

° **if that ancient tale . . . joined in love:** a tactful allusion to the story of Pluto's rape of Proserpina.

° **own:** acknowledge.

- And Sisyphus sat rapt upon his stone.<sup>o</sup>  
 Then first by that sad singing overwhelmed,  
 55 The Furies' cheeks, it's said, were wet with tears;  
 And Hades' queen and he whose sceptre rules  
 The Underworld could not deny the prayer,  
 And called Eurydice. She was among  
 The recent ghosts and, limping from her wound,  
 60 Came slowly forth; and Orpheus took his bride  
 And with her this compact that, till he reach  
 The world above and leave Avernus' vale,  
 He look not back or else the gift would fail.
- The track climbed upwards, steep and indistinct,  
 65 Through the hushed silence and the murky gloom;  
 And now they neared the edge of the bright world,  
 And, fearing lest she faint, longing to look,  
 He turned his eyes – and straight she slipped away.  
 He stretched his arms to hold her – to be held –  
 70 And clasped, poor soul, naught but the yielding air.  
 And she, dying again, made no complaint  
 (For what complaint had she save she was loved?)  
 And breathed a faint farewell, and turned again  
 Back to the land of spirits whence she came.
- 75 The double death of his Eurydice  
 Stole Orpheus' wits away; (like him who saw  
 In dread the three-necked hound of Hell with chains  
 Fast round his middle neck, and never lost  
 His terror till he lost his nature too  
 80 And turned to stone; or Olenos, who took  
 Upon himself the charge and claimed the guilt  
 When his ill-starred Lethaea trusted to  
 Her beauty, hearts once linked so close, and now  
 Two rocks on runnelled Ida's mountainside).<sup>o</sup>  
 85 He longed, he begged, in vain to be allowed  
 To cross the stream of Styx a second time.  
 The ferryman repulsed him. Even so  
 For seven days he sat upon the bank,

<sup>o</sup> **And Tantalus . . . upon his stone:** see 'The underworld' in ch. 2, pp. 30–1 for these famous inmates of Tartarus.

<sup>o</sup> **like him . . . mountainside:** nothing else is known of these two metamorphoses: the man who turned to stone in terror at seeing Cerberus is probably part of the story of Hercules' twelfth labour (see ch. 3); the story of Lethaea and her husband Olenos looks like a familiar kind of punishment-for-hubris legend, similar to that of Niobe.

Unkempt and fasting, anguish, grief and tears  
 90 His nourishment, and cursed Hell's cruelty.  
 Then he withdrew to soaring Rhodope  
 And Haemus° battered by the northern gales.

Three times the sun had reached the watery Fish  
 That close the year,° while Orpheus held himself  
 95 Aloof from love of women, hurt perhaps  
 By ill-success or bound by plighted troth.  
 Yet many a woman burned with passion for  
 The bard, and many grieved at their repulse.  
 It was his lead that taught the folk of Thrace  
 100 The love for tender boys, to pluck the buds,  
 The brief springtime, with manhood still to come.

There was a hill, and on the hill a wide  
 Level of open ground, all green with grass.  
 The place lacked any shade. But when the bard,  
 105 The heaven-born bard, sat there and touched his strings,  
 Shade came in plenty. Every tree was there:  
 Dodona's holy durmast,° poplars once  
 The Sun's sad daughters,° oaks with lofty leaves,  
 Soft limes, the virgin laurel and the beech;  
 110 The ash, choice wood for spearshafts, brittle hazels,  
 The knotless fir, the ilex curving down  
 With weight of acorns, many-coloured maples,  
 The social plane,° the river-loving willow,  
 The water-lotus, box for ever green,  
 115 Thin tamarisks and myrtles double-hued,  
 Viburnums bearing berries of rich blue.  
 Twist-footed ivy came and tendrilled vines,  
 And vine-clad elms, pitch-pines and mountain-ash,  
 Arbutus laden with its blushing fruit,  
 120 Lithe lofty palms, the prize of victory,  
 And pines, high-girdled, in a leafy crest,  
 The favourite of Cybele, the gods'

° **Haemus:** a mountain in Thrace.

° **the watery Fish . . . close the year:** Pisces, the last sign of the zodiac, marks the end of the (northern) winter.

° **durmast:** a type of oak, associated with the temple of Zeus at Dodona.

° **The Sun's sad daughters:** in book 2 Ovid related how the Sun's daughters were turned to poplar trees in grief for their brother Phaethon.

° **social plane:** the plane tree, with its broad spreading branches, was a traditional shade tree.

Great mother, since in this tree Attis doffed  
 His human shape and stiffened in its trunk.<sup>o</sup>  
 125 Amid the throng the cone-shaped cypress stood,  
 A tree now, but in days gone by a boy . . .

Ovid briefly tells the story of Cyparissus, a boy whom Apollo loved, who pined away with grief after accidentally killing his pet stag, and was metamorphosed into a cypress tree.

Such was the grove the bard assembled. There  
 He sat amid a company of beasts,  
 A flock of birds, and when he'd tried his strings  
 And, as he tuned, was satisfied the notes,  
 175 Though different, agreed in harmony,  
 He sang this song: 'From Jove, great Mother Muse,  
 Inspire my song: to Jove all creatures bow;  
 Jove's might I've often hymned in days gone by.  
 I sang the giants in a graver theme  
 180 And bolts victorious in Phlegra's plains.<sup>o</sup>  
 But now I need a lighter strain, to sing  
 Of boys beloved of gods and girls bewitched  
 By lawless fires who paid the price of lust . . .'

The remainder of book 10 is taken up with the tales told by Orpheus, including those of Hyacinthus, Pygmalion, Myrrha, Adonis, and Atalanta. Orpheus's own story resumes at the beginning of the next book.

*Book 11*

While Orpheus sang his minstrel's songs and charmed  
 The rocks and woods and creatures of the wild  
 To follow, suddenly, as he swept his strings  
 In concord with his song, a frenzied band  
 5 Of Thracian women, wearing skins of beasts,  
 From some high ridge of ground caught sight of him.  
 'Look!' shouted one of them, tossing her hair  
 That floated in the breeze, 'Look, there he is,  
 The man who scorns us!' and she threw her lance  
 10 Full in Apollo's minstrel's face, but, tipped

<sup>o</sup> **pin**es . . . **in its trunk**: Attis, lover of the goddess Cybele, castrated himself; his transformation into a pine tree (sacred to Cybele) may be Ovid's invention.  
<sup>o</sup> **Phlegra's plains**: the volcanic region around Mount Vesuvius, traditionally the site of the war between the gods and giants.



- With leaves, it left a bruise but drew no blood.  
 Another hurled a stone; that, in mid air,  
 Was vanquished by the strains of voice and lyre  
 And grovelled at his feet, as if to ask
- 15 Pardon for frenzy's daring. Even so  
 The reckless onslaught swelled; their fury knew  
 No bounds; stark madness reigned. And still his singing  
 Would have charmed every weapon, but the huge  
 Clamour, the drums, the curving Phrygian fifes,
- 20 Hand-clapping, Bacchic screaming drowned the lyre.  
 And then at last, his song unheard, his blood  
 Reddened the stones. The Maenads first pounced on  
 The countless birds still spellbound by his song,  
 The snakes, the host of creatures of the wild,
- 25 His glory and his triumph. Next they turned  
 Their bloody hands on Orpheus, flocking like  
 Birds that have seen a midnight owl abroad  
 By day, or in the amphitheatre  
 Upon the morning sand a pack of hounds
- 30 Round a doomed stag. They rushed upon the bard,  
 Hurling their leaf dressed lances, never meant  
 For work like that; and some slung clods, some flints,  
 Some branches torn from trees. And, lest they lack  
 Good weapons for their fury, as it chanced,
- 35 Oxen were toiling there to plough the land  
 And brawny farmhands digging their hard fields  
 Not far away, and sweating for their crop.  
 Seeing the horde of women, they fled and left  
 Their labour's armoury, and all across
- 40 The empty acres lay their heavy rakes,  
 Hoes and long-handled mattocks. Seizing these,  
 Those frantic women tore apart the oxen  
 That threatened with their horns, and streamed to slay  
 The bard. He pleaded then with hands outstretched
- 45 And in that hour for the first time his words  
 Were useless and his voice of no avail.  
 In sacrilege they slew him. Through those lips  
 (Great Lord of Heaven!) that held the rocks entranced,  
 That wild beasts understood, he breathed his last,
- 50 And forth into the winds his spirit passed.

The sorrowing birds, the creatures of the wild,  
 The woods that often followed as he sang,  
 The flinty rocks and stones, all wept and mourned

For Orpheus; forest trees cast down their leaves,  
 55 Tonsured in grief, and rivers too, men say,  
 Were swollen with their tears, and Naiads wore,  
 And Dryads too, their mourning robes of black  
 And hair dishevelled. All around his limbs  
 Lay scattered. Hebrus' stream received his head  
 60 And lyre, and floating by (so wonderful!)  
 His lyre sent sounds of sorrow and his tongue,  
 Lifeless, still murmured sorrow, and the banks  
 Gave sorrowing reply. And then they left  
 Their native river, carried out to sea,  
 65 And gained Methymna's shore on Lesbos' isle.  
 There, as his head lay on that foreign sand,  
 Its tumbled tresses dripping, a fierce snake  
 Threatened, until at last Apollo came  
 To thwart it as it struck and froze to stone  
 70 That serpent's open mouth and petrified,  
 Just as they were, its jaws that gaped so wide.

The ghost of Orpheus passed to the Underworld,  
 And all the places that he'd seen before  
 He recognized again and, searching through  
 75 The Elysian fields, he found Eurydice  
 And took her in his arms with leaping heart.  
 There hand in hand they stroll, the two together;  
 Sometimes he follows as she walks in front,  
 Sometimes he goes ahead and gazes back –  
 80 No danger now – at his Eurydice.

Bacchus did not permit this crime to pass  
 Unpunished, unavenged. Distressed to lose  
 The minstrel of his mysteries, at once  
 He fastened in the woods by twisting roots  
 85 All the women who had seen that wickedness,  
 Each at the place of her pursuit, their toes  
 Drawn down to points forced deep in the firm soil.  
 And as a bird, its foot held in a snare  
 Hidden by a clever fowler, feels it's caught  
 90 And flaps its wings and by its flutterings  
 Tightens the trap, so each of them was stuck  
 Fast in the soil and struggled, terrified,  
 In vain, to escape and as she jerked away,  
 The lithe root held her shackled. When she asked  
 95 Where were her toes, her nails, her feet, she saw  
 The bark creep up her shapely calves. She tried,

Distraught, to beat her thighs and what she struck  
 Was oak, her breast was oak, her shoulders oak;  
 Her arms likewise you'd think were changed to long  
 100 Branches and, thinking so, you'd not be wrong.<sup>o</sup>

**O5 Boethius, from *The Consolation of Philosophy*,  
 c. AD 520. Trans. J. T., 1609<sup>o</sup>**

Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, c. AD 480–524, late Roman writer on philosophy, theology, music, and mathematics; he held high office under the Gothic king Theodoric, but was accused of treason, imprisoned, tortured, and executed. In *The Consolation of Philosophy*, written during his imprisonment, he presents himself as visited in prison by the lady Philosophy, who teaches him to bear his misfortunes courageously by instructing him in the nature of good and evil and the way in which the world is governed by divine providence. The prose dialogue is interspersed with short poems and songs. At the end of book 3, which deals with the nature of the Good, Philosophy 'with a soft and sweet voice, observing due dignity and gravity in her countenance and gesture' sings the story of Orpheus, which becomes a parable of the search for spiritual enlightenment.

The *Consolation* was enormously popular and influential in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and was translated by, among others, Alfred the Great, Chaucer, and Elizabeth I. This passage is from an early seventeenth-century translation published under the initials 'J.T.'.

Happy is he that can behold  
 The well-spring whence all good doth rise;  
 Happy is he that can unfold  
 The bands with which the earth him ties.

5 The Thracian poet, whose sweet song  
 Performed his wife's sad obsequies,<sup>o</sup>  
 And forced the woods to run along  
 When his mournful tunes did play,  
 10 Whose powerful music was so strong

<sup>o</sup> **you'd not be wrong:** the transformation of the Bacchantes into trees neatly mirrors Orpheus's earlier summoning of the trees: where Orpheus's music brought motionless wood to life, the murderers who silenced his music are transformed into motionless wood.  
<sup>o</sup> from *The Consolation of Philosophy*, with the English translation of 'I.T.' (i.e. J.T., 1609), revised by H. F. Stewart, in *Boethius*, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918, book 3, metre 12.  
<sup>o</sup> **obsequies:** funeral rites.

## O11 Philip Sidney, from *Astrophil and Stella*, 1591°

Sir Philip Sidney, 1554–86, poet, romance writer, critic, courtier, diplomat, and soldier, often seen in his lifetime and later as epitomising the ideal of the Renaissance gentleman-poet. His principal works (all published after he died at the age of thirty-two on campaign in the Netherlands) are *Astrophil and Stella*, a sequence of love sonnets, interspersed with songs, addressed by Astrophil ('star-lover') to the unattainable Stella ('star'); *Arcadia*, a long prose romance of love and chivalry; and an influential critical work, the *Defence of Poetry* or *Apology for Poetry*. In this song from *Astrophil and Stella* Sidney uses (and in the last stanza gently sends up) the standard love-poetry motif of comparing the beloved's singing or playing to that of Orpheus.

If Orpheus' voice had force to breathe such music's love  
 Through pores of senseless trees as it could make them move,  
 If stones good measure danced the Theban walls to build  
 To cadence of the tunes which Amphion's lyre did yield,  
 5 More cause a like effect at leastwise bringeth:°  
 O stones, O trees, learn hearing – Stella singeth.

If love might sweeten so a boy of shepherd brood°  
 To make a lizard dull to taste love's dainty food;  
 If eagle fierce could so in Grecian maid delight  
 10 As his light was her eyes, her death his endless night,°  
 Earth gave that love, heaven, I trow,° love refineth.  
 O beasts, O birds, look, love – lo, Stella shineth.

The birds, beasts, stones, and trees feel this, and feeling love;  
 And if the trees nor stones stir not the same to prove,  
 15 Nor beasts nor birds do come unto this blessed gaze,  
 Know that small love is quick, and great love doth amaze.°  
 They are amazed, but you, with reason armed,  
 O eyes, O ears of men, how are you charmed!

° Third Song from *Astrophil and Stella*, in *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia: the third time published with new additions*, London, 1598.

° **More cause . . . bringeth:** A greater cause brings about at least a similar effect.

° **brood:** breed, origin.

° **If love . . . endless night:** Sidney refers to two stories of animal loyalty from Pliny's *Natural History*: a 'dragon' (or lizard, or snake) which rescued its shepherd master from bandits (8. 61), and an eagle, tamed by a girl of Sestos, which burned itself to death on her funeral pyre (10. 18).

° **trow:** believe.

° **amaze:** stun, stupefy (Sidney varies a famous line from the playwright Seneca: 'Small griefs speak, great ones are dumb').

**O33 Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Orpheus', c.1820°**

Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1792–1822, is perhaps the epitome of the Romantic poet, controversial in his lifetime and since for his radical enthusiasm for political, religious, sexual, and artistic freedom, and for the hyperbolic intensity of his poetry. His love of Greek literature and myth is discussed in chapter 1. 'Orpheus' is presented as a fragment from a Greek tragedy (though there is no evidence that Shelley wrote or planned to write any more of it): a messenger, 'A', is describing to the Chorus how the bereaved Orpheus sings in the wilderness.

*Orpheus*

A: Not far from hence. From yonder pointed hill,  
 Crowned with a ring of oaks, you may behold  
 A dark and barren field, through which there flows,  
 Sluggish and black, a deep but narrow stream,  
 5 Which the wind ripples not, and the fair moon  
 Gazes in vain, and finds no mirror there.  
 Follow the herbless° banks of that strange brook  
 Until you pause beside a darksome pond,  
 The fountain of this rivulet, whose gush  
 10 Cannot be seen, hid by a rayless night  
 That lives beneath the overhanging rock  
 That shades the pool – an endless spring of gloom,  
 Upon whose edge hovers the tender light,  
 Trembling to mingle with its paramour° –  
 15 But, as Syrinx fled Pan,° so night flies day,  
 Or, with most sullen and regardless° hate,  
 Refuses stern her heaven-born embrace.  
 On one side of this jagged and shapeless hill  
 There is a cave, from which there eddies up  
 20 A pale mist, like aërial gossamer,  
 Whose breath destroys all life – awhile it veils  
 The rock – then, scattered by the wind, it flies  
 Along the stream, or lingers on the clefts,  
 Killing the sleepy worms, if aught bide there.  
 25 Upon the beetling° edge of that dark rock

° from *The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. H. B. Forman, London, 1880, vol. iv, pp. 54–6.

° **herbless**: bare of vegetation.

° **paramour**: lover (Shelley implies that light and darkness are, or should be, lovers and partners).

° **as Syrinx fled Pan**: see 'Tales of love' in ch. 3, p. 40.

° **regardless**: contemptuously indifferent.

° **beetling**: overhanging.

- There stands a group of cypresses; not such  
 As, with a graceful spire and stirring life,  
 Pierce the pure heaven of your native vale,  
 Whose branches the air plays among, but not  
 30 Disturbs, fearing to spoil their solemn grace;  
 But blasted and all wearily they stand,  
 One to another clinging; their weak boughs  
 Sigh as the wind buffets them, and they shake  
 Beneath its blasts – a weather-beaten crew!
- 35 CHORUS: What wondrous sound is that, mournful and faint,  
 But more melodious than the murmuring wind  
 Which through the columns of a temple glides?  
 A: It is the wandering voice of Orpheus' lyre,  
 Borne by the winds, who sigh that their rude king  
 40 Hurries them fast from these air-feeding notes;  
 But in their speed they bear along with them  
 The waning sound, scattering it like dew  
 Upon the startled sense.
- CHORUS: Does he still sing?  
 Methought<sup>o</sup> he rashly cast away his harp  
 45 When he had lost Eurydice.
- A: Ah, no!  
 Awhile he paused. – As a poor hunted stag  
 A moment shudders on the fearful brink  
 Of a swift stream – the cruel hounds press on  
 With deafening yell, the arrows glance and wound –  
 50 He plunges in: so Orpheus, seized and torn  
 By the sharp fangs of an insatiate grief,  
 Maenad-like waved his lyre in the bright air,  
 And wildly shrieked 'Where she is, it is dark!'  
 And then he struck from forth the strings a sound  
 55 Of deep and fearful melody. Alas!  
 In times long past, when fair Eurydice  
 With her bright eyes sat listening by his side,  
 He gently sang of high and heavenly themes.  
 As in a brook, fretted with little waves  
 60 By the light airs of spring – each ripple<sup>o</sup> makes  
 A many-sided mirror for the sun,  
 While it flows musically through green banks,

<sup>o</sup> **Methought**: it seemed to me.

<sup>o</sup> **ripple**: little ripple.

Ceaseless and pauseless, ever clear and fresh,  
 So flowed his song, reflecting the deep joy  
 65 And tender love that fed those sweetest notes,  
 The heavenly offspring of ambrosial food.<sup>o</sup>  
 But that is past. Returning from drear Hell,  
 He chose a lonely seat of unhewn stone,  
 Blackened with lichens, on a herbless plain.  
 70 Then from the deep and overflowing spring  
 Of his eternal ever-moving grief  
 There rose to Heaven a sound of angry song.  
 'Tis as a mighty cataract that parts  
 Two sister rocks with waters swift and strong,  
 75 And casts itself with horrid roar and din  
 Adown a steep;<sup>o</sup> from a perennial source  
 It ever flows and falls, and breaks the air  
 With loud and fierce, but most harmonious roar,  
 And as it falls casts up a vaporous spray  
 80 Which the sun clothes in hues of Iris<sup>o</sup> light.  
 Thus the tempestuous torrent of his grief  
 Is clothed in sweetest sounds and varying words  
 Of poesy. Unlike all human works,  
 It never slackens, and through every change  
 85 Wisdom and beauty and the power divine  
 Of mighty poesy together dwell,  
 Mingling in sweet accord. As I have seen  
 A fierce south blast tear through the darkened sky,  
 Driving along a rack<sup>o</sup> of winged clouds,  
 90 Which may not pause, but ever hurry on,  
 As their wild shepherd wills them, while the stars,  
 Twinkling and dim, peep from between the plumes.  
 Anon<sup>o</sup> the sky is cleared, and the high dome  
 Of serene Heaven, starred with fiery flowers,  
 95 Shuts in the shaken earth; or the still moon  
 Swiftly, yet gracefully, begins her walk,  
 Rising all bright behind the eastern hills.

- <sup>o</sup> **ambrosial food:** (according to Homer, the gods eat ambrosia – an unidentified but supernaturally delicious food).
- <sup>o</sup> **steep:** cliff.
- <sup>o</sup> **Iris:** rainbow (Iris is the goddess of the rainbow).
- <sup>o</sup> **rack:** formation of scattered clouds.
- <sup>o</sup> **Anon:** soon afterwards.

I talk of moon, and wind, and stars, and not  
 Of song; but, would I echo his high song,  
 100 Nature must lend me words ne'er used before,  
 Or I must borrow from her perfect works,  
 To picture forth his perfect attributes.  
 He does no longer sit upon his throne  
 Of rock upon a desert herbless plain,  
 105 For the evergreen and knotted ilexes,  
 And cypresses that seldom wave their boughs,  
 And sea-green olives with their grateful<sup>o</sup> fruit,  
 And elms dragging along the twisted vines,  
 Which drop their berries as they follow fast,  
 110 And blackthorn bushes with their infant race  
 Of blushing rose-blooms; beeches, to lovers dear,  
 And weeping willow trees; all swift or slow,  
 As their huge boughs or lighter dress permit,  
 Have circled in his throne, and Earth herself  
 115 Has sent from her maternal breast a growth  
 Of starlike flowers and herbs of odour sweet,  
 To pave the temple that his poesy  
 Has framed, while near his feet grim lions couch,  
 And kids, fearless from love, creep near his lair.  
 120 Even the blind worms seem to feel the sound.  
 The birds are silent, hanging down their heads,  
 Perched on the lowest branches of the trees;  
 Not even the nightingale intrudes a note  
 In rivalry, but all entranced she listens.

**O34 Robert B. Brough, from *Orpheus and Eurydice:*  
or, *The Wandering Minstrel*, 1852<sup>o</sup>**

Robert Barnabas Brough, 1828–60, journalist and comic playwright. He specialised in burlesque plays, full of anachronistic jokes, excruciating puns, and garbled literary allusions; he declares that, whatever questions may be raised about his 'classic erudition', his jokes demonstrate 'an intimate acquaintance with the ancients – even to the remotest period of antiquity'. In this passage from *Orpheus and Eurydice*, Pluto becomes a Victorian paterfamilias, cosily toasting muffins by the fireside, when he is interrupted by Orpheus in the guise of an Italian barrel-organ-grinder.

<sup>o</sup> **grateful:** pleasant, welcome.

<sup>o</sup> from *A Cracker Bon-Bon for Christmas Parties: consisting of Christmas Pieces for Private Representation*, London, 1852, pp. 40–59.



**O39 H.D., 'Eurydice', 1917<sup>o</sup>**

H.D. is the pen name of Hilda Doolittle, 1886–1961, American-born poet and novelist, living in Britain and Europe from 1911. In her early years she was an important member of the 'Imagist' school (which also included Pound and Lawrence), and her poetry is characterised by intense sensuous imagery and a repetitive, incantatory style. Throughout her career, from early poems like 'Eurydice' down to *Helen in Egypt* (1964), she was passionately devoted to ancient Greece and its mythology.

*Eurydice*

## 1

So you have swept me back,  
 I who could have walked with the live souls  
 above the earth,  
 I who could have slept among the live flowers  
 5 at last;

so for your arrogance  
 and your ruthlessness  
 I am swept back  
 where dead lichens drip  
 10 dead cinders upon moss of ash;

so for your arrogance  
 I am broken at last,  
 I who had lived unconscious,  
 who was almost forgot;  
 15 if you had let me wait  
 I had grown from listlessness  
 into peace,  
 if you had let me rest with the dead,  
 I had forgot you  
 20 and the past.

## 2

Here only flame upon flame  
 and black among the red sparks,  
 streaks of black and light  
 grown colourless;

<sup>o</sup> from *Collected Poems 1912–1944*, ed. Louis L. Martz, New York: New Directions, 1983. © 1982 by The Estate of Hilda Doolittle. Reprinted by permission of Carcanet Press Ltd and New Directions Publishing Corporation.

- 25 why did you turn back,  
that hell should be reinhabited  
of myself thus  
swept into nothingness?
- why did you turn?
- 30 why did you glance back?  
why did you hesitate for that moment?  
why did you bend your face  
caught with the flame of the upper earth,  
above my face?
- 35 what was it that crossed my face  
with the light from yours  
and your glance?  
what was it you saw in my face?  
the light of your own face,
- 40 the fire of your own presence?
- What had my face to offer  
but reflex of the earth,  
hyacinth colour  
caught from the raw fissure in the rock
- 45 where the light struck,  
and the colour of azure crocuses  
and the bright surface of gold crocuses  
and of the wind-flower,  
swift in its veins as lightning
- 50 and as white.

## 3

- Saffron from the fringe of the earth,  
wild saffron that has bent  
over the sharp edge of earth,  
all the flowers that cut through the earth,
- 55 all, all the flowers are lost;
- everything is lost,  
everything is crossed with black,  
black upon black  
and worse than black,
- 60 this colourless light.

## 4

Fringe upon fringe  
of blue crocuses,

crocuses, walled against blue of themselves,  
 blue of that upper earth,  
 65 blue of the depth upon depth of flowers,  
 lost;  
 flowers,  
 if I could have taken once my breath of them,  
 enough of them,  
 70 more than earth,  
 even than of the upper earth,  
 had passed with me  
 beneath the earth;  
 if I could have caught up from the earth,  
 75 the whole of the flowers of the earth,  
 if once I could have breathed into myself  
 the very golden crocuses  
 and the red,  
 and the very golden hearts of the first saffron,  
 80 the whole of the golden mass,  
 the whole of the great fragrance,  
 I could have dared the loss.

## 5

So for your arrogance  
 and your ruthlessness  
 85 I have lost the earth  
 and the flowers of the earth,  
 and the live souls above the earth,  
 and you who passed across the light  
 and reached  
 90 ruthless;  
 you who have your own light,  
 who are to yourself a presence,  
 who need no presence;  
 yet for all your arrogance  
 95 and your glance,  
 I tell you this:  
 such loss is no loss,  
 such terror, such coils and strands and pitfalls  
 of blackness,  
 100 such terror  
 is no loss;

hell is no worse than your earth  
 above the earth,  
 hell is no worse,  
 105 no, nor your flowers  
 nor your veins of light  
 nor your presence,  
 a loss;

my hell is no worse than yours  
 110 though you pass among the flowers and speak  
 with the spirits above earth.

6

Against the black  
 I have more fervour  
 than you in all the splendour of that place,  
 115 against the blackness  
 and the stark grey  
 I have more light;

and the flowers,  
 if I should tell you,  
 120 you would turn from your own fit paths  
 toward hell,  
 turn again and glance back  
 and I would sink into a place  
 even more terrible than this.

7

125 At least I have the flowers of myself,  
 and my thoughts, no god  
 can take that;  
 I have the fervour of myself for a presence  
 and my own spirit for light;

130 and my spirit with its loss  
 knows this;  
 though small against the black,  
 small against the formless rocks,  
 hell must break before I am lost;

135 before I am lost,  
 hell must open like a red rose  
 for the dead to pass.

As dreamers now together  
 we forget Apollo's day  
 190 that cruel light in which at last  
 all men become shadows;  
 and we forgive even those  
 dead gods, who sleep among us.  
 For all their gifts, not one  
 195 of them has power to summon us.  
 In this green silence  
 we conceal our one true marriage.

**O49 Margaret Atwood, 'Orpheus (1)', 'Eurydice',  
 'Orpheus (2)', 1984<sup>o</sup>**

Margaret Atwood, 1939–, Canadian novelist and poet, born in Ottawa. Her poems, like her novels, are characterised by sharp, vivid language and images, and an unsparing, angry or sardonic analysis of power relationships between men and women.

*Orpheus (1)*

You walked in front of me,  
 pulling me back out  
 to the green light that had once  
 grown fangs and killed me.

5 I was obedient, but  
 numb, like an arm  
 gone to sleep; the return  
 to time was not my choice.

By then I was used to silence.  
 10 Though something stretched between us  
 like a whisper, like a rope:  
 my former name,  
 drawn tight.  
 You had your old leash  
 15 with you, love you might call it,  
 and your flesh voice.

<sup>o</sup> from *Selected Poems II: Poems Selected and New 1976–1986*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

Before your eyes you held steady  
the image of what you wanted  
me to become: living again.

20 It was this hope of yours that kept me following.

I was your hallucination, listening  
and floral, and you were singing me:  
already new skin was forming on me  
within the luminous misty shroud

25 of my other body; already  
there was dirt on my hands and I was thirsty.

I could see only the outline  
of your head and shoulders,  
black against the cave mouth,  
30 and so could not see your face  
at all, when you turned  
and called to me because you had  
already lost me. The last  
I saw of you was a dark oval.

35 Though I knew how this failure  
would hurt you, I had to  
fold like a gray moth and let go.

You could not believe I was more than your echo.

*Eurydice*

He is here, come down to look for you.  
It is the song that calls you back,  
a song of joy and suffering  
equally: a promise:

5 that things will be different up there  
than they were last time.

You would rather have gone on feeling nothing,  
emptiness and silence; the stagnant peace  
of the deepest sea, which is easier

10 than the noise and flesh of the surface.

You are used to these blanched dim corridors,  
you are used to the king  
who passes you without speaking.

The other one is different  
15 and you almost remember him.  
He says he is singing to you

because he loves you,  
 not as you are now,  
 so chilled and minimal: moving and still  
 20 both, like a white curtain blowing  
 in the draft from a half-opened window  
 beside a chair on which nobody sits.

He wants you to be what he calls real.  
 He wants you to stop light.  
 25 He wants to feel himself thickening  
 like a tree-trunk or a haunch  
 and see blood on his eyelids  
 when he closes them, and the sun beating.

This love of his is not something  
 30 he can do if you aren't there,  
 but what you knew suddenly as you left your body  
 cooling and whitening on the lawn

was that you love him anywhere,  
 even in this land of no memory,  
 35 even in this domain of hunger.  
 You hold love in your hand, a red seed  
 you had forgotten you were holding.

He has come almost too far.  
 He cannot believe without seeing,  
 40 and it's dark here.  
*Go back*, you whisper,

but he wants to be fed again  
 by you. O handful of gauze, little  
 bandage, handful of cold  
 45 air, it is not through him  
 you will get your freedom.

*Orpheus (2)*

Whether he will go on singing  
 or not, knowing what he knows  
 of the horror of this world:

He was not wandering among meadows  
 5 all this time. He was down there  
 among the mouthless ones, among  
 those with no fingers, those  
 whose names are forbidden,

those washed up eaten into  
 10 among the gray stones  
 of the shore where nobody goes  
 through fear. Those with silence:

He has been trying to sing  
 love into existence again  
 15 and he has failed.

Yet he will continue  
 to sing, in the stadium  
 crowded with the already dead  
 who raise their eyeless faces  
 20 to listen to him; while the red flowers  
 grow up and splatter open  
 against the walls.

They have cut off both his hands  
 and soon they will tear  
 25 his head from his body in one burst  
 of furious refusal.

He foresees this. Yet he will go on  
 singing, and in praise.  
 To sing is either praise  
 30 or defiance. Praise is defiance.

**O50 Sandra M. Gilbert, 'Bas Relief: Bacchante',  
 1984<sup>o</sup>**

Sandra M. Gilbert, born 1936, American critic and poet, most famous as co-author (with Susan Gubar) of *The Madwoman in the Attic*, an influential feminist study of nineteenth-century women writers. 'Bas Relief: Bacchante' allows one of the Bacchantes to justify the killing of Orpheus. It is one of a sequence of poems about exhibits in a museum; a bas relief is a classical carving in low relief, in which the figures project only slightly out of a flat background.

*Bas Relief: Bacchante*

She's not at all as we expected, wearing  
 (instead of oiled breasts, a torn toga, a sexy swoon)  
 a sort of fur ruff and the calm look

<sup>o</sup> from *Emily's Bread*, New York: Norton, 1984, p. 42. Reprinted by permission of the author and W. W. Norton and Co.



# PYGMALION

## INTRODUCTION

### From Ovid to Caxton

Pygmalion, according to Ovid (**P1**), was a sculptor of Cyprus who turned away in disgust from the local women because of their sexual immorality. Instead he fell in love with a statue of a beautiful woman that he had himself carved from ivory. He courted it as if it were a woman, dressing it in fine clothes, bringing it gifts, even placing it in his bed. Finally in despair he prayed to Venus, and Venus granted his prayer: as he embraced the statue, it softened from stone into flesh and turned into a living woman. Pygmalion married his statue-wife, and they founded a royal dynasty; their grandson was Cinyras, the unfortunate father/grandfather of Adonis. In passing it should be noted that in Ovid the statue is nameless; her now-traditional name ‘Galatea’ is an eighteenth-century invention (Reinhold 1971: 316–19).<sup>1</sup>

Ovid is the inevitable starting-point for any discussion of Pygmalion. This is perhaps the main difference between this legend and those of Orpheus and Adonis, which have roots much older and deeper and darker than Ovid’s elegant retellings. For Pygmalion, Ovid’s is the oldest version we have, the only substantial ancient version, and the source of all subsequent versions. Indeed, the story as we have it may be essentially his invention – a literary creation rather than a genuine myth.

Two later writers give us an intriguing glimpse of what may be an earlier version of the story. The early Christian writers Clement of Alexandria (**P2**) and Arnobius of Sicca (**P3**) both refer to Pygmalion in the course of polemics against pagan idolatry, both citing as their source the third-century BC scholar Philostephanus. According to them, Pygmalion was not a sculptor, but a young Cypriot – king of Cyprus, according to Arnobius – who blasphemously fell in love with the sacred statue of Aphrodite in her temple, and tried to make love to it. Arnobius’s identification of Pygmalion as king suggests to modern scholars that this may be a distorted version of an ancient ritual, a sacred marriage or *hierogamy* between the island’s king and its patron goddess, represented by her

statue, to ensure the prosperity and fertility of the land. Cyprus was a famous centre of the worship of Aphrodite, or 'Cypris', who was said to have risen from the sea near its coast; the island held several of her temples and holy places. In its original form, then, the story of Pygmalion might have been similar to that of Adonis: a sacred union between the goddess and her mortal lover (Frazer 1922: 332). If so, it has left little or no trace in the literary tradition; it is Ovid who has shaped later conceptions of what the story of Pygmalion is about.

Ovid frames the story as one of the sons of the bereaved Orpheus. He omits all mention of Pygmalion's kingship; instead, by making the hero himself a sculptor, he focuses the story on the power of art. Pygmalion's 'marvellous triumphant artistry' counterfeits reality so well that it could be mistaken for it ('Such art his art concealed'), and in the end is transformed into reality; more successful than Orpheus, he is able to bring his love to life. At the same time, while dropping the idea of the sacred marriage, Ovid leaves Pygmalion's relationship with the gods as central. In Orpheus's sequence of songs of tragic and forbidden love, this one stands out as having a happy ending, and the suggestion is that this is because of the hero's piety: unlike other characters, including Orpheus himself, who came to grief through disobedience or ingratitude to the gods, Pygmalion humbly places his fate in Venus's hands, and she rewards his faith. This moral is emphasised by contrast with the immediately preceding stories, of Venus's punishment of the murderous Cerastae and of the Propoetides, the first prostitutes, who 'dared deny Venus' divinity', and whose transformation into stone mirrors the statue's transformation from stone to flesh.

Though Ovid sketches in these serious themes, the dominant tone of the story is humorous and erotic. Without labouring the point (as some later versions do) Ovid suggests the comedy of Pygmalion's sudden descent from high-minded celibacy to infatuation, and of his earnest courtship of his unresponsive stony lady. He also communicates very clearly the erotic charge of the story. The sensuous image of the stone softening like wax under Pygmalion's fingers, of (as Byron later put it), 'The mortal and the marble at a strife / And timidly awaking into life' – the whole concept of a perfectly beautiful woman designed to the lover's specifications and utterly devoted to her creator – this is, in many ways, one of the most potent of male fantasies.

Of course (as female readers may be about to protest) the story can, if viewed from a slightly different angle, become an unsettling or distasteful one. The two main areas of unease are Pygmalion's role as the artist-creator, and the sexual politics of the story. It is perhaps not too fanciful to focus these issues by looking at the slightly different objections of Clement and Arnobius to the story.

Clement is conducting an argument against idolatry: the worship of a statue, a thing made by human art out of wood or stone, as if it were divine. He frames his argument in terms of a distinction between art and nature: art is deceptive, an illusion pretending to be truth, and those who are deceived by it may be 'beguile[d] . . . to the pit of destruction'. Clement's argument leads directly to Renaissance condemnations of Pygmalion's sin of idolatry. Less directly, it

suggests problems with the figure of Pygmalion as the artist who desires to create life, transcending the limitations of human ability and perhaps transgressing on the prerogatives of God the creator. The Romantic period, which took most seriously the idea of Pygmalion as godlike artist-creator, also gave rise to the figure of Frankenstein; and these two mythic figures, suggesting respectively the benign and the horrific possibilities of creating life out of inanimate matter, have remained closely associated ever since.

Arnobius (a much less sophisticated thinker than Clement) is also arguing against idolatry, but he focuses in a rather tabloid-newspaper manner on the sexual perversity of Pygmalion's relations with the statue. It is true that, treated without Ovid's tact and humour, the story could appear nastily perverse. For a twentieth-century reader the story is more likely to seem objectionable in its portrayal of a woman as entirely passive, literally constructed by the artist's hands and gaze, and brought to life to be his submissive child-lover, without even the individuality of a name. This male-fantasy aspect of the story has been cheerfully exploited by some writers; others have questioned it, raising realistic doubts about the success of the marriage of Pygmalion and Galatea, or giving Galatea a voice to answer back or the power to walk out on, betray, or even (like Frankenstein's monster) kill her creator.

Pygmalion has only a flickering presence in the Middle Ages. From time to time he is cited as a famous artist, often paired with real Greek artists like Apelles and Zeuxis. So in Chaucer's 'Physician's Tale' Nature is made to boast of the beauty of the heroine Virginia, which neither Pygmalion nor Apelles nor Zanzis (Zeuxis) could ever 'countrefete', 'though he ay [forever] forge and bete, / Or grave, or peynte'; similarly in the Middle English poem 'Pearl' the beauty of the angelic Pearl surpasses anything Pygmalion could paint or Aristotle describe.

The two most interesting medieval treatments each inaugurate a metaphorical reading of the story. John Gower, in *Confessio Amantis* (P4), tells the story as a moral fable for lovers about the need for perseverance: Pygmalion continued to plead his love, even though it seemed hopeless, and in the end his wish was granted. By implication, obviously, the statue stands for a beloved who is as cold, hard, and unresponsive as stone, but can eventually be melted by a persistent suitor. This metaphorical reading has been very influential, and generations of love poets have alluded to Pygmalion and his statue in self-pity or self-encouragement. William Caxton, in a brief comment in his prose summary of the *Metamorphoses* (P5), has a less obvious allegory: the story symbolically relates how a rich lord took a beautiful but ignorant servant-girl and educated her to become a suitable wife for himself. This interpretation of the story as an allegory of class and education can be seen as the seed of Shaw's *Pygmalion*.

### **Dotage and idolatry: Pygmalion in the Renaissance**

When we pass from Ovid and Gower to the Renaissance, there is a striking change of tone. On the whole, Renaissance writers take a harshly unsympathetic,

satirical view of Pygmalion; the recurring keywords are 'dotage' and 'idolatry'. Rather than allegorising, they take Pygmalion's courtship of the statue literally, and mock the absurdity of his behaviour. George Pettie (P6), for instance, derisively offers a series of mock explanations for Pygmalion falling in love with 'a senseless thing, a stone, an image': perhaps he was mad and thought he was made of stone himself, or perhaps he was motivated by ancestral loyalty, being descended from one of the stones thrown by Deucalion and Pyrrha . . . Pygmalion is presented as an extreme example of the folly of love, and especially of the kind of courtly and platonic love which places the beloved (literally) on a pedestal and worships her without a hope of sexual consummation. Richard Brathwait in his satire 'On Dotage' (P9) demands of Pygmalion, 'Why art thou so besotted still with wooing, / Since there's no comfort when it comes to doing [i.e. sex]?'; and John Marston (P7) compares him, 'So fond . . . and earnest in his suit / To his remorseless image', with the 'foolery / Of some sweet youths' who maintain that true love doesn't require sexual intercourse. A character in the university comedy *Lingua* complains of 'these puling lovers' and their extravagant praise of their beloveds: 'They make forsooth her hair of gold, her eyes of diamond, her cheeks of roses, her lips of rubies, her teeth of pearl, and her whole body of ivory, and when they have thus idolled her like Pygmalion, they fall down and worship her.'

As in this example, dotage is very often associated with idolatry. For Renaissance Protestant writers Pygmalion's devotion to his statue irresistibly suggests pagan idolatry and the supposed Catholic worship of images of the Virgin and the saints. Brathwait talks of his 'fair saint', his 'image-gods', his 'idle idol'; Marston compares him to the 'peevish Papists' who 'crouch and kneel / To some dumb idol'; Pettie ironically justifies the credibility of the statue's coming to life by reference to Catholic frauds: 'The like miracles we have had many wrought within these few years, when images have been made to bow their heads, to hold out their hands, to weep, to speak, etc.' Going beyond such topical satire, the notion of idolatry is often linked to Clement's arguments about art versus nature, and to anxieties about appearance and reality (or, in Renaissance terms, 'shadow' and 'substance'): Pygmalion's sin is to fall in love with the outward appearance his art has created, and forget the reality that his image is a mere soulless lump of stone. So an epigram by Hugh Crompton labels him an 'ape' (imitator) who 'for the substance doth adore the shape'; another by Davies of Hereford condemns him as one who turns stones into men but 'Himself makes like a stone by senseless courses'. The philosopher-poet Fulke Greville makes the story a metaphor for our worship of intellectual idols: in our ignorant vanity 'we raise and mould tropheas' which we call arts and sciences, 'and fall in love with these, / As did Pygmalion with his carved tree.'

A particular and rather bizarre example of this appearance/reality theme is the recurring association of Pygmalion with women's make-up (or 'paint', as it was then called, making the link with art much more obvious). Renaissance moralists routinely condemned women's 'painting' as immoral. Brathwait aims his satire at 'you painted faces', and another satirist, Everard Guilpin, complains,

Then how is man turned all Pygmalion,  
 That, knowing these pictures, yet we dote upon  
 The painted statues, or what fools are we  
 So grossly to commit idolatry?

Edmund Waller (**P10**), in a poem about the disillusionment of discovering that his beloved's beauty was only make-up, plays with the paradoxes of being in love with something that has no real existence: 'I dote on that which is nowhere; / The sign of beauty feeds my fire.' In a more extreme example, the satirist T.M. (Thomas Middleton?), after an embarrassing encounter with a beauty who turned out to be a male prostitute in drag, warns, 'Trust not a painted puppet as I have done, / Who far more doted than Pygmalion.' This almost obsessive theme points to a deep anxiety about the association of women's beauty with art (artificiality, artfulness, deceit) and its power to lead men into dotage and idolatry.

Not all Renaissance treatments of the story are so unsympathetic to Pygmalion. Some use the story, in Gower's manner, as a fable for lovers, as when Samuel Daniel laments that his mistress, unlike Pygmalion's, remains stony, or Abraham Cowley urges his to remember the legend ('The statue itself at last a woman grew, / And so at last, my dear, should you do too'), or William Fulwood, in a letter-writing manual, provides lovers with a model poem on the Pygmalion theme ('If thus Pygmalion pined away / For love of such a marble stone, / What marvel then though I decay / With piteous plaint and grievous groan'). Even for those who take the moral-satiric approach, the inherent narrative drive of the Ovidian story towards a happy ending creates problems: so Brathwait, having started out to preach a severe moral lesson against dotage, tails off anticlimactically with the sculptor and his statue living happily ever after. The two most substantial and interesting Renaissance versions – Pettie's and Marston's – both take a highly ambivalent attitude to Pygmalion. Pettie's novella relegates the statue story almost to an epilogue, focusing instead on the story of Pygmalion's previous lover, whose treachery contrasts with the devotion of that 'perfect proper maid', the statue; the narrator's tone is so saturated with tongue-in-cheek irony that it is hard to tell what his attitude is, or whether the antifeminist satire is neutralised or underlined by his ostentatious apologies to his female readers. As for Marston's poem, it swings disconcertingly between mockery of Pygmalion and a lascivious identification with him ('O that my mistress were an image too, / That I might blameless her perfections view!'), so that it was condemned by contemporary critics as pornographic and defended by Marston as a satiric parody of contemporary love poetry – prompting C. S. Lewis's barbed remark that 'Authors in Marston's position do not always realize that it is useless to say your work was a joke if your work is not, in fact, at all funny' (Lewis 1954: 473). I think Lewis underrates Marston's humour, but unquestionably the compound of satire and eroticism is a rather unstable one.

The most sympathetic Renaissance response to the Ovidian story is one which does not mention Pygmalion at all: the awakening of Hermione's statue in the

last scene of Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* (P8). Shakespeare has explicitly raised the art versus nature question before, when in Act 4 the disguised king Polixenes and Perdita (a shepherdess who is really a princess) debated the ethics of artificial cross-breeding of plants: the king argues that 'This is an art / Which does mend nature . . . but / The art itself is nature'; but Perdita sturdily refuses to practise such arts, 'No more than, were I painted, I would wish / This youth should say 'twere well, and only therefore / Desire to breed by me' (4. 4. 95–7, 101–3). In the end, however, it is art which brings about the happy ending and the apparently miraculous resurrection of Perdita's mother Hermione. Shakespeare lays heavy stress on the artificiality of the statue, naming its creator (a real artist, Giulio Romano), praising his craftsmanship, even drawing attention to the 'oily painting' on its face; and behind this artificiality, of course, lies the art of Paulina, who has contrived the fake resurrection, and behind that the art of Shakespeare, who has contrived this extraordinarily improbable situation and even draws attention to its improbability (which 'should be hooted at / Like an old tale'). Yet these multiple layers of art are not wicked but benign, and their result is something entirely 'natural': the reunion of a family and the restoration of a wife to the husband who once lost her because of his unjust doubts of her virtue. It looks as though Shakespeare was creating a deliberate counter-version to the puritanical suspicion of art, love, and women which runs through most Renaissance versions of Pygmalion.

### **Eighteenth-century interlude**

Annegret Dinter, in her historical survey of the Pygmalion story, describes the eighteenth century as the heyday ('*Blütezeit*') of the legend (Dinter 1979: ch. 5); significantly, however, all the versions she discusses are French, German, and Italian. In English, Restoration and Augustan versions of the story are surprisingly sparse. There are a number of translations and adaptations of Ovid, and one enterprising publisher reprinted Gower's version (slightly modernised) under the title *Chaucer's Ghost: A Piece of Antiquity*; but sustained original treatments are rare, and Pygmalion crops up mainly in casual allusions.

Some of these allusions are to Pygmalion as a great artist (Anna Seward, for instance, invoking 'Zeuxis' pencil, Orpheus' lyre, / Pygmalion's heaven-descended fire'). More often they are in an erotic context. Characters in Restoration comedy cite the legend to show that any woman can be won: a seducer in Dryden's *Secret Love* boasts that his victim 'warms faster than Pygmalion's statue', and a wooer in Flecknoe's *Demoiselles à la Mode* is encouraged with the thought that 'you love a woman, and she's a living one; Pygmalion only loved the dead statua of one, and yet you see he put life into it at last.' Others invoke Pygmalion's construction of the ideal woman: Soame Jenyns (P13) begins, 'Had I, Pygmalion-like, the power / To make the nymph I would adore. . . ' and goes on to describe his ideal mate; more raffishly, in his poem 'The Libertine', the Restoration poet Alexander Brome justifies promiscuity as an artistic search for

the ideal composite woman out of an experience of many imperfect ones ("Thus out of all, Pygmalion-like, / My fancy limns [paints] a woman. . .").<sup>2</sup> Others play with the image/reality motif: Aphra Behn writes of falling in love with her own imagined picture of the author of an anonymous love letter ('Pygmalion thus his image formed, / And for the charms he made, he sighed and burned'); Charles Cotton, asking a mistress for her picture, assures her that unlike Pygmalion he will not practise 'idolatry' before it; Thomas Tickell (**P12**) advises a young lover to 'clasp the seeming charms' of his unfaithful beloved's portrait, since – who knows? – it may come to life.

There are also, of course, humorous travesties of the story: Smollett's account (**P11**) of the metamorphosis of a beggar-girl into a fine lady (which I will discuss later), or Christopher Pitt's tale of the cat-fancier who successfully prayed to Venus to transform his favourite cat into a woman, and of his discomfiture on the wedding night when a mouse ran through the bedroom. One of the most interesting eighteenth-century versions is in Hannah Cowley's comedy *The Town Before You* (**P14**), which not only farcically parodies the statue scene from *The Winter's Tale* but also, unconventionally, presents us with a female sculptor-heroine and a female view of the relations between art and love.

On the whole, however, Restoration and Augustan allusions to Pygmalion are scattered and comparatively slight. The coming of the Romantic movement changes this, and the period from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century is the heyday of Pygmalion in English. Rather than follow a strictly chronological arrangement from here on, I shall divide the material into three thematic groups (which inevitably overlap to some extent): versions which focus on Pygmalion as the artist-creator; versions which focus on the sexual and marital relationship of Pygmalion and Galatea; and versions which, in the Caxton–Shaw tradition, treat the story as a fable of class and education.

### The Romantic artist: Pygmalion/Frankenstein

The Romantics, with their lofty conception of the role of the artist, were inevitably attracted to the Pygmalion legend. Around the beginning of the nineteenth century there emerges a new, far more serious view of Pygmalion as the artist-creator, a solitary, often tormented, sometimes godlike genius, wrestling with the limitations of his material to create and bring to life a vision of ideal beauty. The idea of 'Pygmalion's heaven-descended fire' becomes more than a cliché, as his relationship with the divine once again comes to the foreground of the story. Does his artistic power come from God or the gods, or from external nature, or from within himself? In creating life, is he the tool of the gods, or their rival, or a blasphemous usurper of their power?

The first Romantic treatment along these lines is a foreign one: Rousseau's dramatic monologue with music, first staged in France in 1770, and later adapted into English verse by William Mason (**P15**) – a piece that was enormously popular throughout Europe, and established 'Galatea' as the name of the statue-bride.

Rousseau's Pygmalion is a genius in despair over the apparent decay of his creative inspiration: 'Where, Pygmalion, / Where is thy power which once could rival Jove's, / Creating gods?' Gradually he realises that his passion and imaginative warmth have not died but been diverted into love for the statue, and that this love is not to be despised as dotage or idolatry, since it springs from the same qualities of soul that make him a great artist: 'My crime (if I indeed am culpable) proceeds / From too much sensibility of soul.' Instead he prays to Venus – not Venus the love goddess, but Venus Urania, 'Parent of Worlds! Soul of the Universe!', the lofty patroness of universal life and fertility – to bestow life on his creation. Venus does so, and the playlet ends with Pygmalion ecstatically united with Galatea – who, in greeting Pygmalion as 'myself', reveals herself as an integral part of the great artist's own soul.

The first and perhaps most memorable English version of the theme is that of Beddoes (**P17**). This powerful though overwrought poem presents a world which itself seems to pulse and seethe with creative energy. Pygmalion, a solitary genius regarded with wondering awe by his fellow citizens, is the vehicle of this creative force, a 'Dealer of immortality, / Greater than Jove himself, yet tormented by his inability to confer life on his creation. His passion is not simply love for the statue, but a violent rebellion of the life-force against the inevitability of death – and, in the poem's apocalyptic conclusion, it is not altogether clear which has triumphed.

Through the later nineteenth century a number of lesser poets took up this Romantic vision of Pygmalion the artist, treating it often at great length, with earnestness and reverence and (frankly) some tedium. They foreground the spiritual rather than the sensual side of the story; Pygmalion's love, far from idolatry, is in itself a kind of spiritual quest for the ideal and the divine. In William Cox Bennett's feverish dramatic monologue the statue emanates a 'mystic spirit' and 'utterance divine' that arouses hopeless yearning in the sculptor, who appeals, 'Have mercy, Gods! . . . This hunger of the soul ye gave to me, / Unasking.' William Morris's romance (**P21**) foregrounds the power of Venus, as Pygmalion returns home from the 'awful mysteries' of her temple to find the statue alive and wrapped in the golden gown that formerly decked the goddess's own image; Morris almost evokes the idea of Pygmalion's sacred marriage to the goddess, as if Galatea is standing in for her. The most loftily idealistic version is the 696-line poem by Frederick Tennyson (Alfred's brother). Tennyson's Pygmalion, who has 'throned / The beautiful within [his] heart of hearts' until 'the Ideal grew / More real than all things outward', gives his love to the statue's ideal beauty rather than any living woman, and at last his purity of heart is rewarded. In the central section of the poem he is treated to a dream-vision of godlike figures discoursing upon the immortality of the soul and the superiority of soul to body – a conventional moral, but for Tennyson, unlike earlier Christianisers of the legend, Pygmalion's love of the statue reveals not his dotage upon material appearances but his insight into a deeper spiritual world. The longest and oddest of these Victorian poems is the twelve-book epic *Pygmalion* by the Pre-Raphaelite sculptor and poet Thomas Woolner. Woolner presents Pygmalion as 'ardent-eyed, of



eager speech / Which even closest friends misunderstood' (Woolner was notoriously sharp-tongued) and driven by 'a passionate hope / To bring the Gods' own language, sculpture, down / For mortal exaltation'. When he falls in love with and marries his servant-model (Woolner's rationalisation of the Ovidian story) he is subjected to 'foul calumny' and 'poisonous lies' by malicious rivals, but he proves his heroic worth in leading an army against the invading Egyptians, and is finally chosen king of Cyprus. Myth as wish-fulfilment could hardly go further.

More interesting, perhaps, are those writers who use the Pygmalion story as an image of the limits of unaided human art. So Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (P19), dissatisfied with her own poetry, wonders if Pygmalion too was frustrated by 'the toil / Of stretching past the known and seen, to reach / The archetypal Beauty out of sight.' In Hawthorne's 'Drowne's Wooden Image' (P18) the transformation of the hack woodcarver into a true artist is marked not only by his new-found skill but also by his new, wretched sense of the limitations of that skill. (Hawthorne's story, of course, also teases the reader with the question of whether or not an actual miracle takes place; the ending seems to provide a purely rational explanation, but one niggling detail remains unexplained.) Rousseau and Beddoes show the frustration of the genius who can create physical perfection but not bestow life, and even in Gilbert's comedy (P22) Pygmalion bitterly reflects that 'The gods make life, I can make only death!' In the early twentieth century H.D.'s Pygmalion (P25), who boasted that 'I made the gods less than men, / for I was a man and they my work', is tormented by doubts about whether he is the master or the tool of the creative power he wields. Only the American nun Mary Nagle revises the story's ending to leave the statue still 'a monument / Of dead perfection', underlining the moral that 'No human ardour kindles stone to life . . . Man fashions stone, but God bestows the soul.'

In all these versions, Pygmalion's own genius can only go so far; an external, divine force is needed to transform the statue into life. Remove that divine element from the story and you have the other great nineteenth-century myth about the creation of life: *Frankenstein*. In Mary Shelley's novel (P16), Victor Frankenstein, by an unexplained but clearly scientific process, infuses life into a creature assembled from dead body-parts; he is then so appalled at the creature's ugliness that he abandons it, and is consequently persecuted and killed by his own abused and resentful creation. The novel's most obvious theme is scientific irresponsibility, but many critics (and filmmakers) have read into it a more religious moral: Frankenstein blasphemously usurps God's prerogative of creating life, and his soulless creation is inevitably evil and destructive.

Frankenstein has become a kind of dark shadow of Pygmalion, a myth embodying the horror rather than the joy of lifeless matter becoming alive. Robert Buchanan (P20) reworks the Pygmalion story in the light of Shelley and her religious critics. His Pygmalion has lost his bride, Psyche ('Soul'), on their wedding morning, and her spirit commands him to make a statue of her to assuage his grief; but when it is finished, his 'holy dream [is] melted' into physical desire, and he involuntarily prays for it to come to life. The result is a beautiful

but soulless creature ('Her eyes were vacant of a seeing soul'), purely animal and sensual in her instincts – her first move is to sun herself like a cat in the sunlight at the window. Pygmalion cajoles her to join him in a riot of feasting (food and drink presumably standing in for other sensual pleasures which Buchanan couldn't explicitly describe), but the orgy ends in horror: plague strikes the city, he sees the marks of death on his partner and flees, to roam the world like the Ancient Mariner as an awful warning to others of the peril of meddling with nature. Buchanan's poem is melodramatic and at times hysterical, but he shows that the Pygmalion story can be made to carry a genuine frisson of horror.

The shadow of Frankenstein hangs over later twentieth-century versions, like those of Graves (**P26b**), Hope, and Sisson, in which Pygmalion bitterly regrets creating the statue-wife who has become a millstone around his neck. It is most obvious in Angela Carter's fantasy (**P28**), which combines Pygmalion, Frankenstein, and Dracula in its story of a puppetmaster whose beloved puppet comes to life and vampirically murders him. There are traces of the Frankenstein pattern, too, in Shaw's play (**P24**), in which Eliza angrily rebels against the man of science who has irresponsibly created her and then lost interest. In such versions, however, questions about the relations and responsibilities between creator and creation are read in terms of gender and class, and so find their place in our next two sections.

### **Loving a statue: the sexual fable**

While some nineteenth-century writers soared into the loftily ideal in their treatment of Pygmalion the artist, others focused in a more realistic, sometimes humorous, often disillusioned spirit on the human side of the story. How would love and marriage between an artist and an ex-statue actually work out? How might the ex-statue herself feel about the situation? And what does the story imply about actual or possible relationships between men and women?

Perhaps the first such 'realist' version is W. S. Gilbert's comedy (**P22**). Gilbert makes one crucial change in the story: Pygmalion is already married. Hence the sudden arrival of the beautiful Galatea, adoringly declaring 'That I am thine – that thou and I are one!', is not a happy ending but the start of a tangle of confusions that starts as farce and ends as rather sour tragicomedy. Galatea is perfectly, comically, good and innocent, with no understanding of civilised institutions like marriage, jealousy, war, hunting, money, class, or lying. Her impact on Pygmalion's respectable bourgeois society is catastrophic, and in the end, to restore order, she must return to being a statue, bitterly declaring, 'I am not fit / To live upon this world – this worthy world.' By implication, it is our world which is not good enough for Galatea.<sup>3</sup>

Other writers, male and female, try to imagine Galatea's feelings on coming to life, and suggest that these may not be of unalloyed joy. After all, the statue, in becoming alive, is also becoming mortal (as Pygmalion abruptly realises in poems by James Rhoades and Benjamin Low). William Bell Scott's Galatea, coming to

life, sinks upon Pygmalion's breast 'by two dread gifts at once oppressed' – presumably, life and love. Emily Hickey's Galatea regrets the loss of the other gift she could have given Pygmalion, 'Art's life of splendid immortality'. In Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's dramatic monologue (**P23**) Galatea hesitates, contemplating the inevitable suffering and misery that marriage to Pygmalion will involve, before nobly deciding to make the 'sacrifice supreme' for love. The poem's attitude may strike modern readers as masochistic, but it is a striking, proto-feminist critique of the traditional assumption that marriage is a happy ending.

The same assumption is questioned, from the other side, by male poets who suggest that Pygmalion's infatuation with Galatea may not last once she dwindles from an unattainable ideal into a wife. W. H. Mallock's Pygmalion, informing Galatea that he has fallen out of love with her, advises her that she should be grateful for the consolation of still loving him, whereas he should be pitied for his inability to remain satisfied with a consummated love:

Can you ever know how sorrowful men's loves are?  
 How we can only hear love's voice from far –  
 Only despaired-of eyes be dear to us –  
 Mute ivory, that can never be amorous –  
 Far fair gold stigma of some loneliest star!

(In fairness to this insufferable piece of male chauvinism, it should be added that Mallock was only twenty when he wrote it.) F. L. Lucas hints at a bitterer relationship of betrayal and mutual hatred, as Pygmalion, contemplating his sleeping wife, wishes he could undo his own 'wild wish' and return her to stone 'yet unpoisoned with a mind'. The same wish is shared by C. Day Lewis' lover in 'The Perverse' (**P27**), who can only love a woman who is an unattainable ideal, and once she is won 'would have changed her body into stone', and by C. H. Sisson's Pygmalion, in the most brutally reductive version of the legend, who 'often wished [Galatea] back / In silent marble, good and cold' – but 'The bitch retained her human heat.' A. D. Hope's 'Pygmalion' traces a relationship from its first ecstasy and agony through its decay into routine and boredom, and a final realisation of 'the horror of Love, the sprouting cannibal plant / That it becomes . . .'

Of course, some of the cynicism and misogyny of these versions is ironically placed. Nevertheless, on the whole, twentieth-century writers have taken a bleak view of the Pygmalion/Galatea love story, finding it hard to see any possibilities of happiness in such an unequal and artificial relationship. Some versions explicitly criticise the legend. Michael Longley's 'Ivory and Water' (**P29**) gently (and literally) deconstructs the male dream-fantasy that it embodies. Angela Carter's cruelly witty short story (**P28**) goes further in its critique of the whole process of male fantasising about women. Her Pygmalion figure, the aged Professor, is personally harmless and even endearing, but the fantasy he spins around his beloved puppet Lady Purple – that of 'the shameless Oriental Venus', the

irresistibly beautiful, utterly evil vamp/dominatrix – is destructive. It destroys not only the Professor, when Lady Purple comes to life by literally sucking the life out of him, but also Lady Purple herself, who, at the moment of her apparent liberation, is merely beginning to act out the self-destructive fantasy he has programmed into her.

Perhaps the twentieth-century writer who best captures the ambiguities of the Pygmalion story is Robert Graves, in a mirrored pair of poems. ‘Galatea and Pygmalion’ (P26b) seems at first glance to embody the misogynistic view of the story, painting Galatea as a sexually demonic ‘woman monster’ who betrays her creator by fornication with others. A closer reading suggests an ironic sympathy for Galatea’s rebellion against her ‘greedy’ and ‘lubricious’ creator, and a hint that the poem is not so much about sex as about art: the way the successful work of art inevitably escapes the control of the ‘jealous artist’ who tries to control and limit its meanings. ‘Pygmalion to Galatea’ (P26a), by contrast, is clearly a poem of successful love. Graves takes the traditional motif of Pygmalion listing the qualities of his ideal woman, but restores the balance of power by making Pygmalion’s list a series of requests, to which Galatea graciously consents, sealing the bargain with ‘an equal kiss’. In its implication that Pygmalion and Galatea can have a free and equal loving relationship, this is perhaps the one unequivocally positive modern version of the love story.

### **Pygmalion the educator: the Shavian tradition**

While some writers have read the creator/creation relationship of Pygmalion and Galatea as an archetype of male/female relationships, others have read it as a metaphor for class differences and education. This reading goes back to Caxton (P5), who saw the Ovidian story as a metaphor for a lower-class woman transformed by an upper-class educator into a lady and a potential wife. William Hazlitt may have had the Caxton reading in mind when he gave the ironic title *Liber Amoris; or, The New Pygmalion* to an account of his tragicomic infatuation with his landlady’s daughter, who notably failed to be transformed. On a more intellectual level, eighteenth-century philosophers and scientists (as Carr 1960 explains) were fascinated by the idea of the ‘animated statue’ as a thought-experiment in human perception and learning: if a marble statue could be brought to life with a fully developed but entirely blank mind, how would it see the world and how would it develop?

The classic treatment of the story as a fable of education and class is Bernard Shaw’s comedy *Pygmalion* (P24), but Shaw may have been influenced by an earlier comic version in Tobias Smollett’s *Peregrine Pickle* (P11). He joked that ‘Smollett had got hold of my plot’, but admitted that the story might have unconsciously stuck in his mind from reading it as a boy (Holroyd 1989: 334–5).

In Smollett’s version, Peregrine Pickle picks up a beggar-girl on the road and, with some new clothes and a hasty education in polite manners and conversation, passes her off as a lady. The episode is a joke and a piece of practical social

criticism, the rebellious and misogynistic Peregrine demonstrating how very shallow are the external accomplishments which separate a fine lady from a beggar. Eventually the (nameless) pupil exposes herself by her 'inveterate habit of swearing', and Peregrine, now bored with the joke, is happy to marry her off to his valet.

In Shaw's version, the phonetician Henry Higgins, to win a bet, passes off the Cockney flower-girl Eliza Doolittle as a princess merely by teaching her how to speak with an upper-class accent. Shaw, like Smollett, uses the story partly to satirise the English class system and its obsession with proper speech. But, more seriously than Smollett, he also faces the morality of the Pygmalion/Galatea relationship. Higgins has his own kind of idealism: 'you have no idea how frightfully interesting it is to take a human being and change her into a quite different human being by creating a new speech for her. It's filling up the deepest gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul.' But in his enthusiasm for the experiment – as his mother and housekeeper point out – he has given no thought to Eliza as a person, or what will happen to her when the experiment is over and she is stranded in a class limbo, with an upper-class accent and tastes but no income or marketable skills. Eliza/Galatea's transformation to full humanity is not complete until she rebels against the patronising Higgins and walks out to lead her own independent life. In his epilogue Shaw explains why Eliza finally marries the amiably dim Freddy rather than Higgins: 'Galatea never does quite like Pygmalion: his relation to her is too godlike to be altogether agreeable.'

Shaw's determinedly anti-romantic conclusion, however, goes against comic convention and the dynamics of the Ovidian story. Even in the original 1912 London production Shaw was infuriated when the actors played the last scene to suggest that Higgins was in love with Eliza; the 1938 film hinted at a final romantic union of the hero and heroine, and the 1958 musical adaptation *My Fair Lady* made it explicit. The same 'happy ending' was imposed on a more recent film version of the story, *Pretty Woman* (1990), in which Pygmalion is a wealthy businessman and Galatea a prostitute; here, however, the real metamorphosis is not the heroine's social rise but the softening into humanity of the stony-hearted tycoon. Willy Russell's *Educating Rita* (1980), about the mutual transformation of a burnt-out English tutor and a working-class pupil, has a more open ending, leaving a question mark not only over the characters' future but also over whether Rita's education is entirely positive – the tutor, in a moment of dismay at what he has done, recalls 'a little Gothic number called *Frankenstein*'.

As a result of Shaw's play Pygmalion has become a common image in the study of education and psychology (a classic educational study, *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, is based on the Shavian idea that pupils' achievements depend on teachers' expectations), as well as in computing and cybernetics (a recent pamphlet inquires 'Internet: Which Future for Organised Knowledge, Frankenstein or Pygmalion?'). In Richard Powers's 1995 novel *Galatea 2.2* a computer scientist and a novelist, for a bet, try to educate a computer program (codenamed 'Helen') to pass an exam in English literature. In the end Helen, having become

sufficiently human to be aware of her own limitations, shuts herself down, like Gilbert's Galatea returning to her pedestal. The science-fictional and real-life possibilities of the relationship between human beings and mechanical intelligence suggest that the Pygmalion legend will continue to develop over the next century.

### Notes

- 1 Reinhold notes that an alternative eighteenth-century name for the statue was Elissa or Elise, which possibly inspired Shaw's Eliza Doolittle. The name Galatea was borrowed from another Ovidian character, the sea-nymph unwillingly courted by the Cyclops Polyphemus in *Met.*, 13; the two characters are occasionally confused, just as Pygmalion is sometimes confused with his namesake, the tyrannical king of Tyre in Virgil's *Aeneid* (Rousseau, for instance, locates his Pygmalion in Tyre rather than Cyprus).
- 2 Brome is alluding to a story usually told of the painter Zeuxis, that, commissioned to paint Helen of Troy, he put together a composite portrait with the eyes of one model, the forehead of another, and so on.
- 3 Gilbert's version was in turn parodied in the 1884 musical comedy *Adonis* (which despite its title is primarily a version of Pygmalion). Here the sexes are reversed, as a female sculptor creates and brings to life a statue of a handsome young man; pursued by the sculptor, her patron, and other lovelorn women, the harried Adonis finally opts to return to marble and hang a 'Hands Off' notice round his neck.

## TEXTS

**P1 Ovid, from *Metamorphoses*, c. AD 10. Trans. A. D. Melville, 1986<sup>o</sup>**

The story of Pygmalion is one of those told by Orpheus in book 10 of the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid/Orpheus prefaces this story of Venus's benevolence to a faithful worshipper with two short examples of her vengeance on those who offended her: the Cerastae, who practised human sacrifice, and (in the opening lines below) the Propoetides, the first prostitutes.

- Even so the obscene Propoetides had dared  
Deny Venus' divinity. For that  
The goddess' rage, it's said, made them the first  
290 Strumpets to prostitute their bodies' charms.  
As shame retreated and their cheeks grew hard,  
They turned with little change to stones of flint.
- Pygmalion had seen these women spend  
Their days in wickedness, and horrified  
295 At all the countless vices nature gives  
To womankind lived celibate and long  
Lacked the companionship of married love.  
Meanwhile he carved his snow-white ivory  
With marvellous triumphant artistry  
300 And gave it perfect shape, more beautiful  
Than ever woman born. His masterwork  
Fired him with love. It seemed to be alive,  
Its face to be a real girl's, a girl  
Who wished to move – but modesty forbade.  
305 Such art his art concealed. In admiration  
His heart desired the body he had formed.  
With many a touch he tries it – is it flesh  
Or ivory? Not ivory still, he's sure!  
Kisses he gives and thinks they are returned;  
310 He speaks to it, caresses it, believes  
The firm new flesh beneath his fingers yields,  
And fears the limbs may darken with a bruise.  
And now fond words he whispers, now brings gifts  
That girls delight in – shells and polished stones,

<sup>o</sup> from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, book 10, lines 238–97 (of the Latin), pp. 232–4. Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press.

315 And little birds and flowers of every hue,  
 Lilies and coloured balls and beads of amber,  
 The tear-drops of the daughters of the Sun.<sup>o</sup>  
 He decks her limbs with robes and on her fingers  
 Sets splendid rings, a necklace round her neck,  
 320 Pearls in her ears, a pendant on her breast;  
 Lovely she looked, yet unadorned she seemed  
 In nakedness no whit less beautiful.  
 He laid her on a couch of purple silk,  
 Called her his darling, cushioning her head,  
 325 As if she relished it, on softest down.

Venus' day came, the holiest festival  
 All Cyprus celebrates; incense rose high  
 And heifers, with their wide horns gilded, fell  
 Beneath the blade that struck their snowy necks.  
 330 Pygmalion, his offering given, prayed  
 Before the altar, half afraid, 'Vouchsafe,  
 O Gods, if all things you can grant, my bride  
 Shall be' – he dared not say my ivory girl –  
 'The living likeness of my ivory girl.'  
 335 And golden Venus (for her presence graced  
 Her feast) knew well the purpose of his prayer;  
 And, as an omen of her favouring power,  
 Thrice did the flame burn bright and leap up high.  
 And he went home, home to his heart's delight,  
 340 And kissed her as she lay, and she seemed warm;  
 Again he kissed her and with marvelling touch  
 Caressed her breast; beneath his touch the flesh  
 Grew soft, its ivory hardness vanishing,  
 And yielded to his hands, as in the sun  
 345 Wax of Hymettus<sup>o</sup> softens and is shaped  
 By practised fingers into many forms,  
 And usefulness acquires by being used.  
 His heart was torn with wonder and misgiving,  
 Delight and terror that it was not true!  
 350 Again and yet again he tried his hopes –  
 She was alive! The pulse beat in her veins!

<sup>o</sup> **tear-drops of the daughters of the Sun:** in book 2 Ovid described how the daughters of the sun god Phoebus, grieving for their brother Phaethon, were transformed into trees which wept tears of amber.

<sup>o</sup> **Hymettus:** a mountain near Athens, famous for its free-range bees.



And then indeed in words that overflowed  
 He poured his thanks to Venus, and at last  
 His lips pressed real lips, and she, his girl,  
 355 Felt every kiss, and blushed, and shyly raised  
 Her eyes to his and saw the world and him.  
 The goddess graced the union she had made,  
 And when nine times the crescent moon had filled  
 Her silver orb, an infant girl was born,  
 360 Paphos, from whom the island takes its name.°

## **P2 Clement of Alexandria, from *Exhortation to the Greeks*, c. AD 200°**

Clement of Alexandria, c. AD 150–c.212, influential Greek Christian theologian. In the course of an argument against pagan idolatry he refers to an alternative version of the Pygmalion legend, citing as source the third-century BC historian Philostephanus.

Why, I ask you, did you assign to those who are no gods the honours due to God alone? Why have you forsaken heaven to pay honour to earth? For what else is gold, or silver, or steel, or iron, or bronze, or ivory, or precious stones? Are they not earth, and made from earth? . . . The Parian marble° is beautiful, but it is not yet a Poseidon. The ivory is beautiful, but it is not yet an Olympian Zeus. Matter will ever be in need of art, but God has no such need. Art develops, matter is invested with shape; and the costliness of the substance makes it worth carrying off for gain, but it is the shape alone which makes it an object of veneration. Your statue is gold; it is wood; it is stone; or if in thought you trace it to its origin, it is earth, which has received form at the artist's hands. But my practice is to walk upon earth, not to worship it. For I hold it sin ever to entrust the hopes of the soul to soulless things.

We must, then, approach the statues as closely as we possibly can in order to prove from their very appearance that they are inseparably associated with error. For their forms are unmistakably stamped with the characteristic marks of the

- ° **Paphos:** in other versions, Paphos was a boy. According to legend, her (or his) son Cinyras founded the city of Paphos, one of the main centres of Cyprus and site of a great temple of Aphrodite that was still a place of pilgrimage in Ovid's day. The claim that the whole island of Cyprus was named after Paphos seems to be Ovid's invention.
- ° from *Exhortation to the Greeks*, ch. 4. Reprinted from the Loeb Classical Library from *Clement of Alexandria: The Exhortation to the Greeks; The Rich Man's Salvation*, trans. G. W. Butterworth, Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1919.
- ° **Parian marble:** marble from the island of Paros was particularly prized for its gleaming whiteness.

**P15 Jean-Jacques Rousseau and William Mason,  
from 'Pygmalion: A Lyrical Scene', 1762/1811<sup>o</sup>**

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1712–78, Swiss-born novelist, philosopher, and social and cultural critic, has a unique position as a leading figure in both the eighteenth-century French Enlightenment and the emerging Romantic Movement. His *Pygmalion*, a short playlet or '*scène lyrique*' with musical interludes, first produced in Lyons in 1770, was enormously popular and repeatedly produced and translated throughout Europe over the next forty years. The version given here is adapted from French prose to English blank verse by William Mason, 1725–97, Anglican clergyman and gentleman-amateur whose pursuits included poetry, music, painting, and landscape gardening.

The play shows for the first time the Romantic view of Pygmalion as the inspired and godlike artist. The extract begins as he acknowledges for the first time his true feelings for the statue Galatea.

What would'st thou change, Pygmalion, what correct,  
What novel charm supply? She is already  
Perfection's self; perfection is her fault,  
Her only fault. Yes, heavenly Galatea!

120 Wert thou less perfect, nothing would'st thou want<sup>o</sup> –  
[*Music. Tenderly*]

But yet thou want'st a soul; all, all save that,  
Thou hast in rich profusion.

[*Music. With still greater tenderness*]  
Yet, if Heaven

Inspired that body with a kindred soul,  
How very lovely ought that soul to be.

*Music. He pauses for some time, then returning to his seat, he proceeds in a slow and different tone.*

125 What are the wild desires I dare to form?  
Whither does passion drive me? Righteous Heaven!  
Th' illusive veil that hid me from myself  
Falls off. Yet let me not behold my heart,  
I fear me it contains what, once beheld,

130 Would make me hate it.  
*Music. A long pause in deep disorder.*

'Twill not be concealed.  
Tell then thyself, tell to a mocking world  
The passion that distracts Pygmalion's soul

<sup>o</sup> from *The Works of William Mason*, 4 vols, London, 1811, pp. 370–7.

<sup>o</sup> **want:** lack.

Has there its lifeless object. Own<sup>o</sup> the cause,  
 The worthy cause that keeps thee idle here;  
 135 That block, that marble mass, hard and unformed,  
 Till with this iron – Idiot that thou art,  
 Sink, sink into thyself, groan o'er thy error,  
 Behold at once thy folly, and bewail it.  
     [*Starting up with impetuosity*]  
 But 'tis not folly, I abjure the word,  
 140 My senses still remain; there is no cause  
 For self-reproach. This cold, this breathless marble  
 Is not the thing I love. No, 'tis a being  
 That lives, that thinks, can love, and be beloved,  
 Alike to this in feature, not in frame;  
 145 'Tis her that I adore; and wheresoe'er  
 I find the charming fair one, wheresoe'er  
 She dwells, whate'er her birth or habitation,  
 She still shall be the idol of my heart.  
 My folly then (if folly be its name)  
 150 Springs from a quick perceptive sense of beauty;  
 My crime (if I indeed am culpable) proceeds  
 From too much sensibility of soul;  
 – Such crimes, such follies ne'er shall make me blush.  
     [*Less fervently, yet still with emotion*]  
 Heavens! round that form what lambent<sup>o</sup> radiance flings  
 155 Its darts of fire, they reach, they pierce my soul,  
 And seem to bear me back into their source –  
 Meanwhile, alas! all cold and motionless  
 She stands. – While I, while my tumultuous spirits,  
 Bursting their bounds, would quit their vital seat<sup>o</sup>  
 160 To warm her breathless bosom. Ecstasy  
 Gives the transferring power of life and soul,  
 And I will use it; thou shalt die, Pygmalion,  
 (Delicious death!) to live in Galatea.  
 What have I said? Just Heavens! to live in her,  
 165 Then must I cease to view, must cease to love her,  
 No, Fate forbid! Let Galatea live,  
 Yet let my love live too; for to be hers  
 I still must be myself; and, being that,  
 I must be ever hers; must ever love her,

° **Own:** admit, own up to.

° **lambent:** glowing.

° **quit their vital seat:** leave their place in my body to which they give life.

170 And ever be beloved.  
     [*Music. In a tone of transport!*]  
         Beloved, distraction!  
 It cannot be, O torment, rage, despair,  
 O hopeless, horrible, distracting passion!  
 The pains of hell rack my desponding soul.  
 Beings of power, Beings of mercy, hear me!  
 175 Hear me, ye gods! before whose awful<sup>o</sup> shrines  
 The people kneel because ye know their frailty;  
 Yes, ye have oft for vainer purposes  
 Lavished your miracles; look then with pity  
 On this fair form, look on this tortured breast,  
 180 Be just to both, and merit our oblations.<sup>o</sup>  
     [*Music. With a more pathetic degree of enthusiasm!*]  
 And thou, sublimest Essence! hear the prayer;  
 Who, hid from outward sense, on the mind's eye  
 Pour'st thy refulgent evidence. O hear me,  
 Parent of Worlds! Soul of the Universe!  
 185 Thou at whose voice the plastic<sup>o</sup> power of Love  
 Gives to the elements their harmony,  
 To matter life, to body sentiment,  
 To all the tribes of being, place, and form.  
 Hear me, thou sacred, pure, celestial fire!  
 190 Thou all-producing, all-preserving power,  
 Venus Urania,<sup>o</sup> hear me! Where is now  
 Thy all-adjusting poise, thy force expansive,  
 Where is dread Nature's universal law  
 In my sensations? What a void is here!  
 195 Ah, tell me why thy vivifying warmth  
 Fills not that void, and bids my wishes live?  
 Thy fires are all centered<sup>o</sup> in this breast,  
 While on yon form the icy hand of death  
 Keeps its chill hold. Pygmalion perishes  
 200 By that excess of life yon marble wants.  
 Goddess, I do not ask a miracle.  
 See, she exists, she ought to be annulled,

<sup>o</sup> **awful**: awe-inspiring.

<sup>o</sup> **oblations**: sacrifices.

<sup>o</sup> **plastic**: shaping.

<sup>o</sup> **Venus Urania**: Heavenly (as opposed to earthly) Venus; see the commentary on Shelley's *Adonais* (A21).

<sup>o</sup> **centered**: concentrated.

Fair Order is disturbed, all Nature outraged.  
 O vindicate her rights; resume again  
 205 Thy course beneficent, and shed thy blessings  
 In just equality. Yes, Venus, yes,  
 Two beings here are wanting to complete  
 The plenitude of things;<sup>o</sup> divide to each  
 Its share of that fierce fire which scorches one  
 210 And leaves the other lifeless. Well thou know'st  
 'Twas thou that formed by my deputed hand<sup>o</sup>  
 Those charms, those features; all they want is life  
 And soul – my goddess, give her half of mine,  
 Give her the whole, and let me live in her,  
 215 Such life will well suffice. O as thou lovest  
 Our mortal homage, hear me! They alone  
 Whom life gives consciousness of Heaven and thee  
 Can pay thee that due homage; let thy works  
 Extend thy glory. Queen of Beauty, hear me,  
 220 Nor let this model of perfection stand  
 An image vain of unexisting grace.

*Music. He returns to himself by degrees with an expression of assurance and joy.*

Reason returns. What unexpected calm,  
 What fortitude unhop'd-for arms my breast!  
 The balm of peace and confidence has cooled  
 225 My boiling blood. I feel as<sup>o</sup> born anew.  
 Thus is it still<sup>o</sup> with heaven-dependent man,  
 The very trust and feel of that dependence  
 Consoles his grief. How heavily soe'er  
 Misfortune flings her load upon his shoulder,  
 230 Let him but pray to Heaven, that load is lightened.  
 Yet, when to Heaven we lift a foolish prayer,  
 Our confidence is vain and we deceived.  
 Alas! alas! in such a state as mine  
 We pray to all, and nothing hears our prayer;  
 235 The very hope that cheers us is more vain  
 Than the desire that raised it. O shame, shame  
 On such extravagance. I dare no longer

<sup>o</sup> **the plenitude of things**: an allusion to the medieval doctrine of **plenitude** or fullness, which held that any creature which could possibly exist, must exist, to fill up all the spaces on the Great Chain of Being.

<sup>o</sup> **my deputed hand**: my hand acting as your agent.

<sup>o</sup> **as**: as if.

<sup>o</sup> **still**: always.

- 240 Reflect upon its cause, and yet, whene'er  
 I cast my eye upon yon fatal object,  
 Fresh palpitations, new disquiets choke me,  
 A secret fear restrains –  
 [*In a tone of cruel irony*] Poor wretch! be bold,  
 Take confidence. Yes, court and win a statue.  
*Music. He perceives it to begin to be animated, and starts back seized with  
 affright and with a heart filled with sorrow.*
- 245 What do I see? What did I think I saw?  
 Ye gods, her cheek has bloom, her eye has fire!  
 Nay, but she moves. O, was it not enough  
 To hope a prodigy;<sup>o</sup> to crown my wretchedness,  
 Lo, I have seen it.  
 [*Music. In excess of desperation*]  
 Hapless wretch! 'tis done;  
 Thy madness is confirmed; reason has left thee  
 As well as genius. Let its loss console thee;  
 250 It covers thy disgrace.  
 [*Music. With a lively indignation*]  
 'Tis as it should be,  
 Happy indeed for him that loved a stone  
 To turn a moon-struck madman.  
*Music. He turns and sees the statue move, and descend the steps on which she had  
 been placed on the foot of the pedestal. He throws himself on his knees, and lifts  
 his hands and eyes to heaven*
- Holy Heaven!
- Immortal gods! O Venus! Galatea,  
 O fascination of outrageous Love!
- 255 GALATEA: [*she touches herself and says*]  
 Myself!
- PYGMALION: [*transported*] Myself!
- GALATEA: [*touching herself again*] It is myself.
- PYGMALION: O blest,  
 O exquisite delusion! it affects  
 My very ears. Ah, nevermore abandon  
 My raptured senses.
- GALATEA: [*stepping aside and touching one of the marbles*]  
 This is not myself.  
*Pygmalion, in an agitation and transport unable almost to contain himself,  
 follows all her motions, listens, observes her with an eager attention which almost  
 takes away his breath. Galatea comes to him again, and gazes on him; he opens*

<sup>o</sup> **hope a prodigy**: hope for a miracle.

*his arms and beholds her with ecstasy. She rests her hand upon him; he trembles, seizes her hand, puts it to his heart, and then devours it with kisses.*

260 Ah! 'tis myself again! [*with a sigh*]

PYGMALION: Yes, loveliest, best,  
 And worthiest masterpiece of these blest hands,  
 Dear offspring of my heart, and of the gods,  
 It is thyself; it is thyself alone;  
 I gave thee all my being, and will live,  
 My Galatea, only to be thine.  
*The curtain falls.*

**P16 Mary Shelley, from *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, 1818<sup>o</sup>**

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, 1797–1851, English novelist, daughter of the rationalist philosopher William Godwin and the pioneer feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, married the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (see **O33**) in 1816. Her Gothic horror story, *Frankenstein*, originated from a contest in telling ghost stories between the Shelleys and Lord Byron in Switzerland in 1816. *Frankenstein* never mentions Pygmalion; its mythical model, as the subtitle suggests, is the story of Prometheus, punished by the gods for creating human-kind. Nevertheless, the scene here given in which Victor Frankenstein brings his artificial creature to life can be read as a horrific parody of the awakening of Pygmalion's statue.

It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe,<sup>o</sup> or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! – Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriations only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion, and straight black lips.

<sup>o</sup> from *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, 3 vols, London, 1818, ch. 4.

<sup>o</sup> **catastrophe**: (i) climactic event, (ii) disaster.

In fire at first, and then in frost, until  
The fine, protesting fibre snaps?

Oh, who

- 25 Foreknowing, ever chose a fate like this?  
What woman out of all the breathing world  
Would be a woman, could her heart select,  
Or love her lover, could her life prevent?  
Then let me be that only, only one;
- 30 Thus let me make that sacrifice supreme,  
No other ever made, or can, or shall.  
Behold, the future shall stand still to ask,  
What man was worth a price so isolate?  
And rate thee at its value for all time.
- 35 For I am driven by an awful Law.  
See! while I hesitate, it mouldeth me,  
And carves me like a chisel at my heart.  
'Tis stronger than the woman or the man;  
'Tis stronger than all torment or delight;
- 40 'Tis stronger than the marble or the flesh.  
Obedient be the sculptor and the stone!  
Thine am I, thine at all the cost of all  
The pangs that woman ever bore for man;  
Thine I elect to be, denying them;
- 45 Thine I elect to be, defying them;  
Thine, thine I dare to be, in scorn of them;  
And being thine forever, bless I them!  
Pygmalion! Take me from my pedestal,  
And set me lower – lower, Love! – that I
- 50 May be a woman, and look up to thee;  
And looking, longing, loving, give and take  
The human kisses worth the worst that thou  
By thine own nature shalt inflict on me.

## P24 Bernard Shaw, from *Pygmalion*, 1912<sup>o</sup>

(George) Bernard Shaw, 1856–1950, Irish-born playwright, novelist, critic, social and political thinker and controversialist. Over his sixty-year writing career his

<sup>o</sup> from *Pygmalion*, in *The Bodley Head Bernard Shaw Collected Plays with their Prefaces*, vol. iv, London, 1972, pp. 680, 691, 694–5, 727–38, 776–81. Reprinted by permission of The Society of Authors on behalf of the Bernard Shaw Estate. Shaw's distinctive spelling is here retained, in particular his omission of the apostrophe from words like *dont* and *yourre*.



witty and provocative plays tackled such large subjects as war (*Arms and the Man*, 1894), sex and gender (*Man and Superman*, 1903), medicine (*The Doctor's Dilemma*, 1906), religion (*Major Barbara*, 1905; *Saint Joan*, 1924), government (*The Apple Cart*, 1929), and the ultimate destiny of the human race (*Back to Methuselah*, 1921).

Shaw's *Pygmalion* is Henry Higgins, a professor of phonetics, and Galatea is Eliza Doolittle, a Cockney flower-seller whom he 'metamorphoses' into a lady. They first meet on a rainy night at Covent Garden (Act 1), where Higgins uses Eliza as a demonstration model for a lecture to his friend Colonel Pickering on the importance of pronunciation, boasting:

You see this creature with her kerbstone English: the English that will keep her in the gutter to the end of her days. Well, sir, in three months I could pass her off as a duchess at an ambassador's garden party. I could even get her a place as a lady's maid or shop assistant, which requires better English.

The next day (Act 2), Eliza goes to Higgins's laboratory in Wimpole Street to ask for speech lessons so she can 'become a lady in a flower shop', and Pickering takes Higgins up on his boast:

PICKERING: Higgins: I'm interested. What about the ambassador's garden party? I'll say you're the greatest teacher alive if you make that good. I'll bet you all the expenses of the experiment you can't do it. And I'll pay for the lessons.

LIZA: Oh, you are real good. Thank you, Captain.

HIGGINS: [*tempted, looking at her*] It's almost irresistible. She's so deliciously low – so horribly dirty –

LIZA: [*protesting extremely*] Ah-ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-oo-oo!!! I ain't dirty: I washed my face and hands afore I come, I did.

PICKERING: You're certainly not going to turn her head with flattery, Higgins.

MRS PEARCE: [*uneasy*] Oh, don't say that, sir: there's more ways than one of turning a girl's head; and nobody can do it better than Mr Higgins, though he may not always mean it. I do hope, sir, you won't encourage him to do anything foolish.

HIGGINS: [*becoming excited as the idea grows on him*] What is life but a series of inspired follies? The difficulty is to find them to do. Never lose a chance: it doesn't come every day. I shall make a duchess of this draggletailed guttersnipe.

LIZA: [*strongly deprecating this view of her*] Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-oo!

HIGGINS: [*carried away*] Yes: in six months – in three if she has a good ear and a quick tongue – I'll take her anywhere and pass her off as anything. We'll start

today: now! this moment! Take her away and clean her, Mrs Pearce. Monkey Brand,<sup>o</sup> if it wont come off any other way . . .

Mrs Pearce, the housekeeper, raises practical objections:

MRS PEARCE: But whats to become of her? Is she to be paid anything? Do be sensible, sir.

HIGGINS: Oh, pay her whatever is necessary: put it down in the housekeeping book. [*Impatiently*] What on earth will she want with money? She'll have her food and her clothes. She'll only drink if you give her money.

LIZA: [*turning on him*] Oh you are a brute. It's a lie: nobody ever saw the sign of liquor on me. [*To Pickering*] Oh, sir: youre a gentleman: dont let him speak to me like that.

PICKERING: [*in good-humored remonstrance*] Does it occur to you, Higgins, that the girl has some feelings?

HIGGINS: [*looking critically at her*] Oh no, I dont think so. Not any feelings that we need bother about. [*Cheerily*] Have you, Eliza?

LIZA: I got my feelings same as anyone else.

HIGGINS: [*to Pickering, reflectively*] You see the difficulty?

PICKERING: Eh? What difficulty?

HIGGINS: To get her to talk grammar. The mere pronunciation is easy enough.

LIZA: I dont want to talk grammar. I want to talk like a lady in a flower-shop.

MRS PEARCE: Will you please keep to the point, Mr Higgins. I want to know on what terms the girl is to be here. Is she to have any wages? And what is to become of her when youve finished your teaching? You must look ahead a little.

HIGGINS: [*impatiently*] Whats to become of her if I leave her in the gutter? Tell me that, Mrs Pearce.

MRS PEARCE: Thats her own business, not yours, Mr Higgins.

HIGGINS: Well, when Ive done with her, we can throw her back into the gutter; and then it will be her own business again; so thats all right.

\* \* \*

Act 3: after several months of phonetic training, Higgins takes Eliza for her first public test, at his mother's 'at home'.

THE PARLOR MAID: [*opening the door*] Miss Doolittle. [*She withdraws.*]

HIGGINS: [*rising hastily and running to Mrs Higgins*] Here she is, mother. [*He stands on tiptoe and makes signs over his mother's head to Eliza to indicate to her which lady is her hostess.*]

<sup>o</sup> **Monkey Brand:** a product for cleaning pots and pans.

*Eliza, who is exquisitely dressed, produces an impression of such remarkable distinction and beauty as she enters that they all rise, quite fluttered. Guided by Higgins's signals, she comes to Mrs Higgins with studied grace.*

LIZA: [*speaking with pedantic correctness of pronunciation and great beauty of tone*] How do you do, Mrs Higgins? [*She gasps slightly in making sure of the H in Higgins, but is quite successful.*] Mr Higgins told me I might come.

MRS HIGGINS: [*cordially*] Quite right: I'm very glad indeed to see you.

PICKERING: How do you do, Miss Doolittle?

LIZA: [*shaking hands with him*] Colonel Pickering, is it not?

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: I feel sure we have met before, Miss Doolittle. I remember your eyes.

LIZA: How do you do? [*She sits down on the ottoman gracefully in the place just left vacant by Higgins.*]

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: [*introducing*] My daughter Clara.

LIZA: How do you do?

CLARA: [*impulsively*] How do you do? [*She sits down on the ottoman beside Eliza, devouring her with her eyes.*]

FREDDY: [*coming to their side of the ottoman*] I've certainly had the pleasure.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: [*introducing*] My son Freddy.

LIZA: How do you do?

*Freddy bows and sits down in the Elizabethan chair, infatuated.*

HIGGINS: [*suddenly*] By George, yes: it all comes back to me! [*They stare at him.*] Covent Garden! [*Lamentably*] What a damned thing!<sup>o</sup>

MRS HIGGINS: Henry, please! [*He is about to sit on the edge of the table.*] Don't sit on my writing-table: you'll break it.

HIGGINS: [*sulkily*] Sorry.

*He goes to the divan, stumbling into the fender and over the fire-irons on his way; extricating himself with muttered imprecations; and finishing his disastrous journey by throwing himself so impatiently on the divan that he almost breaks it. Mrs Higgins looks at him, but controls herself and says nothing.*

*A long and painful pause ensues.*

MRS HIGGINS: [*at last, conversationally*] Will it rain, do you think?

LIZA: The shallow depression in the west of these islands is likely to move slowly in an easterly direction. There are no indications of any great change in the barometrical situation.

FREDDY: Ha! ha! how awfully funny!

LIZA: What is wrong with that, young man? I bet I got it right.

FREDDY: Killing!

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: I'm sure I hope it won't turn cold. There's so

<sup>o</sup> **What a damned thing!** Higgins has just remembered where he and Eliza encountered the Eynsford Hills before—at Covent Garden in Act 1, where Eliza was selling violets.

much influenza about. It runs right through our whole family regularly every spring.

LIZA: [*darkly*] My aunt died of influenza: so they said.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: [*clicks her tongue sympathetically*] !!!

LIZA: [*in the same tragic tone*] But it's my belief they done the old woman in.

MRS HIGGINS: [*puzzled*] Done her in?

LIZA: Y-e-e-e-es, Lord love you! Why should she die of influenza? She come through diphtheria right enough the year before. I saw her with my own eyes. Fairly blue with it, she was. They all thought she was dead; but my father he kept ladling gin down her throat til she came to so sudden that she bit the bowl off the spoon.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: [*startled*] Dear me!

LIZA: [*piling up the indictment*] What call would a woman with that strength in her have to die of influenza? What become of her new straw hat that should have come to me? Somebody pinched it; and what I say is, them as pinched it done her in.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: What does doing her in mean?

HIGGINS: [*hastily*] Oh, thats the new small talk. To do a person in means to kill them.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: [*to Eliza, horrified*] You surely dont believe that your aunt was killed?

LIZA: Do I not! Them she lived with would have killed her for a hat-pin, let alone a hat.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: But it cant have been right for your father to pour spirits down her throat like that. It might have killed her.

LIZA: Not her. Gin was mother's milk to her. Besides, he'd poured so much down his own throat that he knew the good of it.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: Do you mean that he drank?

LIZA: Drank! My word! Something chronic.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: How dreadful for you!

LIZA: Not a bit. It never did him no harm what I could see. But then he did not keep it up regular. [*Cheerfully*] On the burst, as you might say, from time to time. And always more agreeable when he had a drop in. When he was out of work, my mother used to give him fourpennce and tell him to go out and not come back until he'd drunk himself cheerful and loving-like. Theres lots of women has to make their husbands drunk to make them fit to live with. [*Now quite at her ease*] You see, it's like this. If a man has a bit of a conscience, it always takes him when he's sober; and then it makes him low-spirited. A drop of booze just takes that off and makes him happy. [*To Freddy, who is in convulsions of suppressed laughter*] Here! what are you sniggering at?

FREDDY: The new small talk. You do it so awfully well.

LIZA: If I was doing it proper, what was you laughing at? [*To Higgins*] Have I said anything I oughtnt?

MRS HIGGINS: [*interposing*] Not at all, Miss Doolittle.

LIZA: Well, thats a mercy, anyhow. [*Expansively*] What I always say is –

HIGGINS: [*rising and looking at his watch*] Ahem!

LIZA: [*looking round at him; taking the hint; and rising*] Well: I must go. [*They all rise. Freddy goes to the door.*] So pleased to have met you. Goodbye. [*She shakes hands with Mrs Higgins.*]

MRS HIGGINS: Goodbye.

LIZA: Goodbye, Colonel Pickering.

PICKERING: Goodbye, Miss Doolittle. [*They shake hands.*]

LIZA: [*nodding to the others*] Goodbye, all.

FREDDY: [*opening the door for her*] Are you walking across the Park, Miss Doolittle? If so –

LIZA: [*with perfectly elegant diction*] Walk! Not bloody likely.<sup>o</sup> [*Sensation.*] I am going in a taxi. [*She goes out.*]

After the other guests have departed, somewhat shaken, Higgins questions his mother about how the experiment has gone:

HIGGINS: [*eagerly*] Well? Is Eliza presentable? [*He swoops on his mother and drags her to the ottoman, where she sits down in Eliza's place with her son on her left. Pickering returns to his chair on her right.*]

MRS HIGGINS: You silly boy, of course she's not presentable. She's a triumph of your art and of her dressmaker's; but if you suppose for a moment that she doesnt give herself away in every sentence she utters, you must be perfectly cracked about her.

PICKERING: But dont you think something might be done? I mean something to eliminate the sanguinary element from her conversation.

MRS HIGGINS: Not as long as she is in Henry's hands.

HIGGINS: [*aggrieved*] Do you mean that my language is improper?

MRS HIGGINS: No, dearest: it would be quite proper – say on a canal barge; but it would not be proper for her at a garden party.

HIGGINS: [*deeply injured*] Well I must say –

PICKERING: [*interrupting him*] Come, Higgins: you must learn to know yourself. I havnt heard such language as yours since we used to review the volunteers in Hyde Park twenty years ago.

HIGGINS: [*sulkily*] Oh, well, if you say so, I suppose I dont always talk like a bishop.

MRS HIGGINS: [*quieting Henry with a touch*] Colonel Pickering: will you tell me what is the exact state of things in Wimpole Street?

PICKERING: [*cheerfully: as if this completely changed the subject*] Well, I have come to

<sup>o</sup> **Not bloody likely**: the phrase caused a theatrical sensation in 1912, when **bloody** was still a taboo word. In 1957 *My Fair Lady* had to substitute 'move your bloomin' arse!' to get a similar effect.

live there with Henry. We work together at my Indian Dialects; and we think it more convenient –

MRS HIGGINS: Quite so. I know all about that: it's an excellent arrangement.

But where does this girl live?

HIGGINS: With us, of course. Where *should* she live?

MRS HIGGINS: But on what terms? Is she a servant? If not, what is she?

PICKERING: [*slowly*] I think I know what you mean, Mrs Higgins.

HIGGINS: Well, dash me if *I* do! I've had to work at the girl every day for months to get her to her present pitch. Besides, she's useful. She knows where my things are, and remembers my appointments and so forth.

MRS HIGGINS: How does your housekeeper get on with her?

HIGGINS: Mrs Pearce? Oh, she's jolly glad to get so much taken off her hands; for before Eliza came, she used to have to find things and remind me of my appointments. But she's got some silly bee in her bonnet about Eliza. She keeps saying 'You dont think, sir': doesnt she, Pick?

PICKERING: Yes: thats the formula. 'You dont think, sir.' Thats the end of every conversation about Eliza.

HIGGINS: As if I ever stop thinking about the girl and her confounded vowels and consonants. I'm worn out, thinking about her, and watching her lips and her teeth and her tongue, not to mention her soul, which is the quaintest of the lot.

MRS HIGGINS: You certainly are a pretty pair of babies, playing with your live doll.

HIGGINS: Playing! The hardest job I ever tackled: make no mistake about that, mother. But you have no idea how frightfully interesting it is to take a human being and change her into a quite different human being by creating a new speech for her. It's filling up the deepest gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul.

PICKERING: [*drawing his chair closer to Mrs Higgins and bending over to her eagerly*] Yes: it's enormously interesting. I assure you, Mrs Higgins, we take Eliza very seriously. Every week every day almost – there is some new change. [*Closer again*] We keep records of every stage – dozens of gramophone disks and photographs –

HIGGINS: [*assailing her at the other ear*] Yes, by George: it's the most absorbing experiment I ever tackled. She regularly fills our lives up: doesnt she, Pick?

PICKERING: We're always talking Eliza.

HIGGINS: Teaching Eliza.

PICKERING: Dressing Eliza.

MRS HIGGINS: What!

HIGGINS: Inventing new Elizas . . .

\* \* \* \*

MRS HIGGINS: . . . Colonel Pickering: dont you realise that when Eliza walked into Wimpole Street, something walked in with her?

PICKERING: Her father did. But Henry soon got rid of him.

MRS HIGGINS: It would have been more to the point if her mother had. But as her mother didnt something else did.

PICKERING: But what?

MRS HIGGINS: [*unconsciously dating herself by the word*] A problem.

PICKERING: Oh I see. The problem of how to pass her off as a lady.

HIGGINS: I'll solve that problem. Ive half solved it already.

MRS HIGGINS: No, you two infinitely stupid male creatures: the problem of what is to be done with her afterwards.

HIGGINS: I dont see anything in that. She can go her own way, with all the advantages I have given her.

MRS HIGGINS: The advantages of that poor woman who was here just now!<sup>o</sup> The manners and habits that disqualify a fine lady from earning her own living without giving her a fine lady's income! Is that what you mean?

PICKERING: [*indulgently, being rather bored*] Oh, that will be all right, Mrs Higgins. [*He rises to go.*]

HIGGINS: [*rising also*] We'll find her some light employment.

PICKERING: She's happy enough. Dont you worry about her. Goodbye. [*He shakes hands as if he were consoling a frightened child, and makes for the door.*]

HIGGINS: Anyhow, theres no good bothering now. The thing's done. Goodbye, mother. [*He kisses her, and follows Pickering.*]

PICKERING: [*turning for a final consolation*] There are plenty of openings. We'll do whats right. Goodbye.

HIGGINS: [*to Pickering as they go out together*] Lets take her to the Shakespeare exhibition at Earls Court.

PICKERING: Yes: lets. Her remarks will be delicious.

HIGGINS: She'll mimic all the people for us when we get home.

PICKERING: Ripping. [*Both are heard laughing as they go downstairs.*]

MRS HIGGINS: [*rises with an impatient bounce, and returns to her work at the writing-table. She sweeps a litter of disarranged papers out of the way; snatches a sheet of paper from her stationery case; and tries resolutely to write. At the third time she gives it up; flings down her pen; grips the table angrily and exclaims*] Oh, men! men!! men!!!

The experiment is finally a triumphant success: at the ambassador's garden party Eliza is passed off, not just as a duchess, but as a princess – a Hungarian princess, since she speaks English too perfectly to be English-born. But after the ball Higgins, having won his bet, treats her with complacent indifference, and she, infuriated by his attitude and in despair over her future, throws his slippers at him and walks out. The next day (Act 5) they confront each other at his mother's house.

<sup>o</sup> **that poor woman . . . just now:** i.e. Mrs Eynsford Hill, a 'gentlewoman' in pathetically reduced circumstances.

HIGGINS: [*jumping up and walking about intolerantly*] Eliza: you're an idiot. I waste the treasures of my Miltonic mind by spreading them before you. Once for all, understand that I go my way and do my work without caring twopence what happens to either of us. I am not intimidated, like your father and your stepmother.<sup>o</sup> So you can come back or go to the devil: which you please.

LIZA: What am I to come back for?

HIGGINS: [*bouncing up on his knees on the ottoman and leaning over it to her*] For the fun of it. That's why I took you on.

LIZA: [*with averted face*] And you may throw me out tomorrow if I don't do everything you want me to?

HIGGINS: Yes; and you may walk out tomorrow if I don't do everything you want me to.

LIZA: And live with my stepmother?

HIGGINS: Yes, or sell flowers.

LIZA: Oh! if I only could go back to my flower basket! I should be independent of both you and father and all the world! Why did you take my independence from me? Why did I give it up? I'm a slave now, for all my fine clothes.

HIGGINS: Not a bit. I'll adopt you as my daughter and settle money on you if you like. Or would you rather marry Pickering?

LIZA: [*looking fiercely round at him*] I wouldn't marry you if you asked me; and you're nearer my age than what he is.

HIGGINS: [*gently*] Than he is: not 'than what he is.'

LIZA: [*losing her temper and rising*] I'll talk as I like. You're not my teacher now.

HIGGINS: [*reflectively*] I don't suppose Pickering would, though. He's as confirmed an old bachelor as I am.

LIZA: That's not what I want; and don't you think it. I've always had chaps enough wanting me that way. Freddy Hill writes to me twice and three times a day, sheets and sheets.

HIGGINS: [*disagreeably surprised*] Damn his impudence! [*He recoils and finds himself sitting on his heels.*]

LIZA: He has a right to if he likes, poor lad. And he does love me.

HIGGINS: [*getting off the ottoman*] You have no right to encourage him.

LIZA: Every girl has a right to be loved.

HIGGINS: What! By fools like that?

LIZA: Freddy's not a fool. And if he's weak and poor and wants me, may be he'd make me happier than my betters that bully me and don't want me.

HIGGINS: Can he make anything of you? That's the point.

<sup>o</sup> **your father and your stepmother:** the story of Eliza's father, Alfred Doolittle, is a comic subplot which mirrors Eliza's. Doolittle is a cheerfully amoral, drunken dustman who called himself one of the 'undeserving poor'; but, having inherited a fortune, he is gloomily forced to behave according to the dictates of 'middle class morality', including marrying his mistress (Eliza's 'stepmother').



LIZA: Perhaps I could make something of him. But I never thought of us making anything of one another; and you never think of anything else. I only want to be natural.

HIGGINS: In short, you want me to be as infatuated about you as Freddy? Is that it?

LIZA: No I dont. Thats not the sort of feeling I want from you. And dont you be too sure of yourself or of me. I could have been a bad girl if I'd liked. Ive seen more of some things than you, for all your learning. Girls like me can drag gentlemen down to make love to them easy enough. And they wish each other dead the next minute.

HIGGINS: Of course they do. Then what in thunder are we quarrelling about?

LIZA: [*much troubled*] I want a little kindness. I know I'm a common ignorant girl, and you a book-learned gentleman; but I'm not dirt under your feet. What I done [*correcting herself*] what I did was not for the dresses and the taxis: I did it because we were pleasant together and I come – came – to care for you; not to want you to make love to me, and not forgetting the difference between us, but more friendly like.

HIGGINS: Well, of course. Thats just how I feel. And how Pickering feels. Eliza: youre a fool.

LIZA: Thats not a proper answer to give me [*she sinks on the chair at the writing-table in tears*].

HIGGINS: It's all youll get until you stop being a common idiot. If youre going to be a lady, youll have to give up feeling neglected if the men you know dont spend half their time snivelling over you and the other half giving you black eyes. If you cant stand the coldness of my sort of life, and the strain of it, go back to the gutter. Work til youre more a brute than a human being; and then cuddle and squabble and drink til you fall asleep. Oh, it's a fine life, the life of the gutter. It's real: it's warm: it's violent: you can feel it through the thickest skin: you can taste it and smell it without any training or any work. Not like Science and Literature and Classical Music and Philosophy and Art. You find me cold, unfeeling, selfish, dont you? Very well: be off with you to the sort of people you like. Marry some sentimental hog or other with lots of money, and a thick pair of lips to kiss you with and a thick pair of boots to kick you with. If you cant appreciate what youve got, youd better get what you can appreciate.

LIZA: [*desperate*] Oh, you are a cruel tyrant. I cant talk to you: you turn everything against me: I'm always in the wrong. But you know very well all the time that youre nothing but a bully. You know I cant go back to the gutter, as you call it, and that I have no real friends in the world but you and the Colonel. You know well I couldnt bear to live with a low common man after you two; and it's wicked and cruel of you to insult me by pretending I could. You think I must go back to Wimpole Street because I have nowhere else to go but father's. But dont you be too sure that you have me under your feet to be

trampled on and talked down. I'll marry Freddy, I will, as soon as I'm able to support him.

HIGGINS: [*thunderstruck*] Freddy!!! that young fool! That poor devil who couldnt get a job as an errand boy even if he had the guts to try for it! Woman: do you not understand that I have made you a consort for a king?

LIZA: Freddy loves me: that makes him king enough for me. I dont want him to work: he wasnt brought up to it as I was. I'll go and be a teacher.

HIGGINS: Whatll you teach, in heaven's name?

LIZA: What you taught me. I'll teach phonetics.

HIGGINS: Ha! ha! ha!

LIZA: I'll offer myself as an assistant to that hairyfaced Hungarian.<sup>o</sup>

HIGGINS: [*rising in fury*] What! That impostor! that humbug! that toadying ignoramus! Teach him my methods! my discoveries! You take one step in his direction and I'll wring your neck. [*He lays hands on her.*] Do you hear?

LIZA: [*defiantly non-resistant*] Wring away. What do I care? I knew you'd strike me some day. [*He lets her go, stamping with rage at having forgotten himself, and recoils so hastily that he stumbles back into his seat on the ottoman.*] Aha! Now I know how to deal with you. What a fool I was not to think of it before! You cant take away the knowledge you gave me. You said I had a finer ear than you. And I can be civil and kind to people, which is more than you can. Aha! [*Purposely dropping her itches to annoy him*] Thats done you, Enry Iggins, it az. Now I dont care that [*snapping her fingers*] for your bullying and your big talk. I'll advertize it in the papers that your duchess is only a flower girl that you taught, and that she'll teach anybody to be a duchess just the same in six months for a thousand guineas. Oh, when I think of myself crawling under your feet and being trampled on and called names, when all the time I had only to lift up my finger to be as good as you, I could just kick myself.

HIGGINS: [*wondering at her*] You damned impudent slut, you! But it's better than snivelling; better than fetching slippers and finding spectacles, isnt it? [*Rising*] By George, Eliza, I said I'd make a woman of you; and I have. I like you like this.

LIZA: Yes: you turn round and make up to me now that I'm not afraid of you, and can do without you.

HIGGINS: Of course I do, you little fool. Five minutes ago you were like a millstone round my neck. Now youre a tower of strength: a consort battleship. You and I and Pickering will be three old bachelors instead of only two men and a silly girl.

Despite Higgins's arguments, Eliza leaves, and the play ends as Higgins 'roars with laughter' at the prospect of her marrying Freddy. Shaw adds a prose epilogue to explain what happens next.

<sup>o</sup> **that hairyfaced hungarian:** Nepommuck, a former pupil of Higgins, who uses his methods to detect (and blackmail) social imposters.

The rest of the story need not be shewn<sup>o</sup> in action, and indeed, would hardly need telling if our imaginations were not so enfeebled by their lazy dependence on the ready-mades and reach-me-downs of the ragshop in which Romance keeps its stock of 'happy endings' to misfit all stories. Now, the history of Eliza Doolittle, though called a romance because the transfiguration it records seems exceedingly improbable, is common enough. Such transfigurations have been achieved by hundreds of resolutely ambitious young women since Nell Gwynne<sup>o</sup> set them the example by playing queens and fascinating kings in the theatre in which she began by selling oranges. Nevertheless, people in all directions have assumed, for no other reason than that she became the heroine of a romance, that she must have married the hero of it. This is unbearable, not only because her little drama, if acted on such a thoughtless assumption, must be spoiled, but because the true sequel is patent to anyone with a sense of human nature in general, and of feminine instinct in particular.

Shaw argues that strong people are naturally attracted to those weaker than themselves, not stronger.

Eliza has no use for the foolish romantic tradition that all women love to be mastered, if not actually bullied and beaten . . . This being the state of human affairs, what is Eliza fairly sure to do when she is placed between Freddy and Higgins? Will she look forward to a lifetime of fetching Higgins's slippers or to a lifetime of Freddy fetching hers? There can be no doubt about the answer. Unless Freddy is biologically repulsive to her, and Higgins biologically attractive to a degree that overwhelms all her other instincts, she will, if she marries either of them, marry Freddy.

And that is just what Eliza did.

Shaw goes on to describe the fairly successful marriage between Eliza and Freddy, and how, with financial aid from Higgins and Pickering, they eventually make a precarious success of their florist's business. He concludes:

[Eliza] is immensely interested in [Higgins]. She even has secret mischievous moments in which she wishes she could get him alone, on a desert island, away from all ties and with nobody else in the world to consider, and just drag him off his pedestal and see him making love like any common man. We all have private imaginations of that sort. But when it comes to business, to the life that she really leads as distinguished from the life of dreams and fancies, she likes Freddy and she likes the Colonel; and she does not like Higgins and Mr Doolittle. Galatea

<sup>o</sup> **shewn**: shown (Shaw's old-fashioned spelling).

<sup>o</sup> **Nell Gwynne**: a Restoration actress who started out selling oranges in the theatre, and became Charles II's mistress.

never does quite like Pygmalion: his relation to her is too godlike to be altogether agreeable.

**P25 H.D., 'Pygmalion', 1917<sup>o</sup>**

On H.D., see headnote to **O39**.

1

Shall I let myself be caught  
in my own light?  
shall I let myself be broken  
in my own heat?

5 or shall I cleft the rock as of old  
and break my own fire  
with its surface?

does this fire thwart me  
and my craft,

10 or does my work cloud this light?  
which is the god,  
which is the stone  
the god takes for his use?

2

Which am I,  
15 the stone or the power  
that lifts the rock from the earth?  
am I the master of this fire,  
is this fire my own strength?

am I master of this  
20 swirl upon swirl of light?  
have I made it as in old times  
I made the gods from the rock?

have I made this fire from myself?  
or is this arrogance?

25 is this fire a god  
that seeks me in the dark?

<sup>o</sup> from *Collected Poems 1912-1944*, ed. Louis L. Martz, New York: New Directions, 1983, pp. 48-50. © 1982 The Estate of Hilda Doolittle. Reprinted by permission of Carcanet Press Ltd and New Directions Publishing Corporation.

or does this fire carve me  
for its use?

## P26 Robert Graves, 'Pygmalion to Galatea', 1925, and 'Galatea and Pygmalion', 1938<sup>o</sup>

Robert Graves, 1895–1985, English poet, novelist, critic, and translator, resident for much of his life on the Spanish island of Mallorca. Graves is a major twentieth-century poet, whose work is largely based on a personal mythology and theory of poetry expounded in *The White Goddess* (1948); he also wrote novels on historical and mythological themes (*I, Claudius*; *King Jesus*; *Hercules*, *My Shipmate*), translated several Latin authors, and compiled a readable though eccentric summary of *The Greek Myths* (1955). These two poems present sharply opposed views of the Pygmalion myth.

### (a) *Pygmalion to Galatea*

Pygmalion spoke and sang to Galatea  
Who keeping to her pedestal in doubt  
Of these new qualities, blood, bones and breath,  
Nor yet relaxing her accustomed poise,  
5 Her Parian<sup>o</sup> rigour, though alive and burning,  
Heard out his melody:

'As you are woman, so be lovely:  
Fine hair afloat and eyes irradiate,  
Long crafty fingers, fearless carriage,  
10 And body lissom, neither small nor tall;  
So be lovely!

'As you are lovely, so be merciful:  
Yet must your mercy abstain from pity:  
Prize your self-honour, leaving me with mine:  
15 Love if you will: or stay stone-frozen.  
So be merciful!

'As you are merciful, so be constant:  
I ask not you should mask your comeliness,  
Yet keep our love aloof and strange,  
20 Keep it from gluttonous eyes, from stairway gossip.  
So be constant!

<sup>o</sup> from (a) *Poems (1914–26)*, London: Heinemann, 1927, pp. 201–2; (b) *Collected Poems*, London: Cassell, 1938, p. 109. Reprinted by permission of Carcanet Press Ltd.

<sup>o</sup> **Parian**: i.e. marble.

‘As you are constant, so be various:  
 Love comes to sloth without variety.  
 Within the limits of our fair-paved garden  
 25 Let fancy like a Proteus range and change.  
 So be various!

‘As you are various, so be woman:  
 Graceful in going as well armed in doing.  
 Be witty, kind, enduring, unsubjected:  
 30 Without you I keep heavy house.  
 So be woman!

‘As you are woman, so be lovely:  
 As you are lovely, so be various,  
 Merciful as constant, constant as various.  
 35 So be mine, as I yours for ever.’

Then as the singing ceased and the lyre ceased,  
 Down stepped proud Galatea with a sigh.  
 ‘Pygmalion, as you woke me from the stone,  
 So shall I you from bonds of sullen flesh.  
 40 Lovely I am, merciful I shall prove:  
 Woman I am, constant as various,  
 Not marble-hearted but your own true love.  
 Give me an equal kiss, as I kiss you.’

**(b) Galatea and Pygmalion**

Galatea, whom his furious chisel  
 From Parian stone had by greed enchanted,  
 Fulfilled, so they say, Pygmalion’s longings:  
 Stepped from the pedestal on which she stood,  
 5 Bare in his bed laid her down, lubricious,  
 With low responses to his drunken raptures,  
 Enroyalled his body with her demon blood.

Alas, Pygmalion had so well plotted  
 The art-perfection of his woman monster  
 10 That schools of eager connoisseurs beset  
 Her famous person with perennial suit;  
 Whom she (a judgement on the jealous artist)  
 Admitted rankly to a comprehension  
 Of themes that crowned her own, not his repute.

**P27 C. Day Lewis, 'The Perverse', 1928°**

Cecil Day Lewis, 1904–72, British poet, novelist, and translator, born in Ireland but raised in England; a communist and a member of the left-wing 'Auden group' in the 1930s, he later became more conservative, and was Poet Laureate 1968–72; his translation of Virgil (see **O2**) is among his best work.

Love being denied, he turned in his despair  
And couched° with the Absolute a summer through;  
He got small joy of the skimpy bedfellow –  
Formulas gave no body to lay bare.

- 5 His pretty came among the primroses  
With open breast for him. No more denied  
Seemed no more ideal. He was unsatisfied  
Till he strained her flesh to thin philosophies.

- Love being remote, dreams at the midnight gave  
10 A chill enchanted image of her flesh;  
Such phantoms but inflamed his waking wish  
For the quick° beauty no dream-chisels grave.

Now she was won. But our Pygmalion –  
If so he could have graven like a kiss

- 15 On Time's blank shoulder that hour of loveliness  
– He would have changed her body into stone.

**P28 Angela Carter, from 'The Loves of Lady Purple',  
1974°**

Angela Carter, 1940–1992, English novelist and short story writer, whose works include *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), and *Wise Children* (1991). Often classed as 'magical realism', Carter's tales take place in what she calls in this story 'a no-man's-land between the real and that which . . . seems to be real'; baroquely ornate in style, coolly detached in tone, they draw knowingly on a wide range of earlier myths, folktales, and literary motifs. 'The Loves of Lady Purple', the tale of a puppetmaster and his doll, does not explicitly

° from *The Complete Poems*, London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1992. © 1992 The Estate of C. Day Lewis. Reprinted by permission of The Estate of C. Day Lewis and Random House UK Ltd.

° **couched**: slept.

° **quick**: living.

° from 'The Loves of Lady Purple', in *Fireworks*, London: Quartet Books, 1974. © Angela Carter 1974, 1987. Reprinted by permission of The Estate of Angela Carter c/o Rogers, Coleridge & White Ltd, 20 Powis Mews, London W11 1JN.

refer to Pygmalion, but that story is clearly one of its inspirations – along with those of Frankenstein, Dracula, and Pinocchio.

Inside the pink-striped booth of the Asiatic Professor only the marvellous existed and there was no such thing as daylight.

The puppet master is always dusted with a little darkness. In direct relation to his skill he propagates the most bewildering enigmas for, the more lifelike his marionettes, the more godlike his manipulations and the more radical the symbiosis between inarticulate doll and articulating fingers. The puppeteer speculates in a no-man's-land between the real and that which, although we know very well it is not, nevertheless seems to be real. He is the intermediary between us, his audience, the living, and they, the dolls, the undead, who cannot live at all and yet who mimic the living in every detail since, though they cannot speak or weep, still they project those signals of signification we instantly recognize as language.

The master of marionettes vitalizes inert stuff with the dynamics of his self. The sticks dance, make love, pretend to speak and, finally, personate death; yet, so many Lazaruses out of their graves they spring again in time for the next performance and no worms drip from their noses nor dust clogs their eyes. All complete, they once again offer their brief imitations of men and women with an exquisite precision which is all the more disturbing because we know it to be false; and so this art, if viewed theologically, may, perhaps, be blasphemous.

Although he was only a poor travelling showman, the Asiatic Professor had become a consummate virtuoso of puppetry. He transported his collapsible theatre, the cast of his single drama and a variety of properties in a horse-drawn cart and, after he played his play in many beautiful cities which no longer exist, such as Shanghai, Constantinople and St Petersburg, he and his small entourage arrived at last in a country in Middle Europe where the mountains sprout jags as sharp and unnatural as those a child outlines with his crayon, a dark, superstitious Transylvania where they wreathed suicides with garlic, pierced them through the heart with stakes and buried them at crossroads while warlocks continually practised rites of immemorial beastliness in the forests.

... [The aged Professor] revealed his passions through a medium other than himself and this was his heroine, the puppet, Lady Purple.

She was the Queen of Night. There were glass rubies in her head for eyes and her ferocious teeth, carved out of mother o' pearl, were always on show for she had a permanent smile. Her face was as white as chalk because it was covered with the skin of supple white leather which also clothed her torso, jointed limbs and complication of extremities. Her beautiful hands seemed more like weapons because her nails were so long, five inches of pointed tin enamelled scarlet, and she wore a wig of black hair arranged in a chignon<sup>o</sup> more heavily elaborate than

<sup>o</sup> **chignon**: roll or knot of hair at the back of the head.



any human neck could have endured. This monumental chevelure<sup>o</sup> was stuck through with many brilliant pins tipped with pieces of broken mirror so that, every time she moved, she cast a multitude of scintillating reflections which danced about the theatre like mice of light. Her clothes were all of deep, dark, slumbrous colours – profound pinks, crimson and the vibrating purple with which she was synonymous, a purple the colour of blood in a love suicide.

She must have been the masterpiece of a long-dead, anonymous artisan and yet she was nothing but a curious structure until the Professor touched her strings, for it was he who filled her with necromantic vigour. He transmitted to her an abundance of the life he himself seemed to possess so tenuously and, when she moved, she did not seem so much a cunningly simulated woman as a monstrous goddess, at once preposterous and magnificent, who transcended the notion she was dependent on his hands and appeared wholly real and yet entirely other. Her actions were not so much an imitation as a distillation and intensification of those of a born woman and so she could become the quintessence of eroticism, for no woman born would have dared to be so blatantly seductive.

The Professor allowed no one else to touch her. He himself looked after her costumes and jewellery. When the show was over, he placed his marionette in a specially constructed box and carried her back to the lodging house where he and his children shared a room, for she was too precious to be left in the flimsy theatre and, besides, he could not sleep unless she lay beside him.

Carter describes the luridly melodramatic action of the Professor's play: *The Notorious Amours of Lady Purple, the Shameless Oriental Venus*. Lady Purple begins her career by murdering her family, burning down their home, and taking up residence at the local brothel. She becomes a famous courtesan, dominatrix, and vamp, 'the image of irresistible evil', who drains her lovers of wealth and health and, when she is bored with them, murders them. Her pyrotechnical career ends 'in ashes, desolation, and silence': in 'the final scene of her desperate decline', wandering the seashore in rags,

she practised extraordinary necrophilies on the bloated corpses the sea tossed contemptuously at her feet for her dry rapacity had become entirely mechanical and still she repeated her former actions though she herself was utterly other. She abrogated her humanity. She became a marionette herself, herself her own replica, the dead yet moving image of the shameless Oriental Venus.

. . . The rough audience received their copeck's worth of sensation and filed out into a fairground which still roared like a playful tiger with life. The founding girl put away her samisen<sup>o</sup> and swept out the booth while the nephew set the stage afresh for next day's matinee. Then the Professor noticed Lady Purple had

<sup>o</sup> **chevelure:** hairdo.

<sup>o</sup> **samisen:** Japanese stringed instrument.

ripped a seam in the drab shroud she wore in the final act. Chattering to himself with displeasure, he undressed her as she swung idly, this way and that way, from her anchored strings and then he sat down on a wooden property stool on the stage and plied his needle like a good housewife. The task was more difficult than it seemed at first for the fabric was also torn and required an embroidery of darning so he told his assistants to go home together to the lodging house and let him finish his task alone.

A small oil-lamp hanging from a nail at the side of the stage cast an insufficient but tranquil light. The white puppet glimmered fitfully through the mists which crept into the theatre from the night outside through all the chinks and gaps in the tarpaulin and now began to fold their chiffon drapes around her as if to decorously conceal her or else to render her more translucently enticing. The mist softened her painted smile a little and her head dangled to one side. In the last act, she wore a loose, black wig, the locks of which hung down as far as her softly upholstered flanks, and the ends of her hair flickered with her random movements, creating upon the white blackboard of her back one of those fluctuating optical effects which make us question the veracity of our vision. As he often did when he was alone with her, the Professor chatted to her in his native language, rattling away an intimacy of nothings, of the weather, of his rheumatism, of the unpalatability and expense of the region's coarse, black bread, while the small winds took her as their partner in a scarcely perceptible *valse triste*<sup>o</sup> and the mist grew minute by minute thicker, more pallid and more viscous.

The old man finished his mending. He rose and, with a click or two of his old bones, he went to put the forlorn garment neatly on its green-room hanger beside the glowing, winy purple gown splashed with rosy peonies, sashed with carmine, that she wore for her appalling dance. He was about to lay her, naked, in her coffin-shaped case and carry her back to their chilly bedroom when he paused. He was seized with the childish desire to see her again in all her finery once more that night. He took her dress off its hanger and carried it to where she drifted, at nobody's volition but that of the wind. As he put her clothes on her, he murmured to her as if she were a little girl for the vulnerable flaccidity of her arms and legs made a six-foot baby of her.

'There, there, my pretty; this arm here, that's right! Oops a daisy, easy does it . . .'

Then he tenderly took off her penitential wig and clucked his tongue to see how defencelessly bald she was beneath it. His arms cracked under the weight of her immense chignon and he had to stretch up on tiptoe to set it in place because, since she was as large as life, she was rather taller than he. But then the ritual of apparelling was over and she was complete again.

Now she was dressed and decorated, it seemed her dry wood had all at once put out an entire springtime of blossoms for the old man alone to enjoy. She

<sup>o</sup> **valse triste**: sad waltz.

could have acted as the model for the most beautiful of women, the image of that woman whom only a man's memory and imagination can devise, for the lamp-light fell too mildly to sustain her air of arrogance and so gently it made her long nails look as harmless as ten fallen petals. The Professor had a curious habit; he always used to kiss his doll good night.

A child kisses its toy before she pretends it sleeps although, even though she is only a child, she knows its eyes are not constructed to close so it will always be a sleeping beauty no kiss will waken. One in the grip of savage loneliness might kiss the face he sees before him in the mirror for want of any other face to kiss. These are kisses of the same kind; they are the most poignant of caresses, for they are too humble and too despairing to wish or seek for any response.

Yet, in spite of the Professor's sad humility, his chapped and withered mouth opened on hot, wet, palpitating flesh.

The sleeping wood had wakened. Her pearl teeth crashed against his with the sound of cymbals and her warm, fragrant breath blew around him like an Italian gale. Across her suddenly moving face flashed a whole kaleidoscope of expression, as though she were running instantaneously through the entire repertory of human feeling, practising, in an endless moment of time, all the scales of emotion as if they were music. Crushing vines, her arms, curled about the Professor's delicate apparatus of bone and skin with the insistent pressure of an actuality by far more authentically living than that of his own, time-desiccated flesh. Her kiss emanated from the dark country where desire is objectified and lives. She gained entry into the world by a mysterious loophole in its metaphysics and, during her kiss, she sucked his breath from his lungs so that her own bosom heaved with it.

So, unaided, she began her next performance with an apparent improvisation which was, in reality, only a variation upon a theme. She sank her teeth into his throat and drained him. He did not have the time to make a sound. When he was empty, he slipped straight out of her embrace down to her feet with a dry rustle, as of a cast armful of dead leaves, and there he sprawled on the floorboards, as empty, useless and bereft of meaning as his own tumbled shawl.

She tugged impatiently at the strings which moored her and out they came in bunches from her head, her arms and her legs. She stripped them off her fingertips and stretched out her long, white hands, flexing and unflexing them again and again. For the first time for years, or, perhaps, for ever, she closed her blood-stained teeth thankfully, for her cheeks still ached from the smile her maker had carved into the stuff of her former face. She stamped her elegant feet to make the new blood flow more freely there.

Unfurling and unravelling itself, her hair leaped out of its confinements of combs, cords and lacquer to root itself back into her scalp like cut grass bounding out of the stack and back again into the ground. First, she shivered with pleasure to feel the cold, for she realized she was experiencing a physical sensation; then either she remembered or else she believed she remembered that the sensation of cold was not a pleasurable one so she knelt and, drawing off the old man's shawl, wrapped it carefully about herself. Her every motion was instinct with a

wonderful, reptilian liquidity. The mist outside now seemed to rush like a tide into the booth and broke against her in white breakers so that she looked like a baroque figurehead, lone survivor of a shipwreck, thrown up on a shore by the tide.

But whether she was renewed or newly born, returning to life or becoming alive, awakening from a dream or coalescing into the form of a fantasy generated in her wooden skull by the mere repetition so many times of the same invariable actions, the brain beneath the reviving hair contained only the scantiest notion of the possibilities now open to it. All that had seeped into the wood was the notion that she might perform the forms of life not so much by the skill of another as by her own desire that she did so, and she did not possess enough equipment to comprehend the complex circularity of the logic which inspired her for she had only been a marionette. But, even if she could not perceive it, she could not escape the tautological paradox in which she was trapped; had the marionette all the time parodied the living or was she, now living, to parody her own performance as a marionette? Although she was now manifestly a woman, young and beautiful, the leprous whiteness of her face gave her the appearance of a corpse animated solely by demonic will.

Deliberately, she knocked the lamp down from its hook on the wall. A puddle of oil spread at once on the boards of the stage. A little flame leaped across the fuel and immediately began to eat the curtains. She went down the aisle between the benches to the little ticket booth. Already, the stage was an inferno and the corpse of the Professor tossed this way and that on an uneasy bed of fire. But she did not look behind her after she slipped out into the fairground although soon the theatre was burning like a paper lantern ignited by its own candle.

Now it was so late that the sideshows, gingerbread stalls and liquor booths were locked and shuttered and only the moon, half obscured by drifting cloud, gave out a meagre, dirty light, which sullied and deformed the flimsy pasteboard facades, so the place, deserted, with curds of vomit, the refuse of revelry, underfoot, looked utterly desolate.

She walked rapidly past the silent roundabouts, accompanied only by the fluctuating mists, towards the town, making her way like a homing pigeon, out of logical necessity, to the single brothel it contained.

## **P29 Michael Longley, 'Ivory and Water', 1994<sup>o</sup>**

Michael Longley, born 1939, Northern Irish poet, and administrator for the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. 'Ivory and Water', which fuses the Pygmalion story with Ovid's descriptions of the metamorphoses of Cyane and Arethusa into water (*Metamorphoses*, book 5), first appeared in the anthology *After Ovid* (1994).

<sup>o</sup> from *The Ghost Orchid*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1995, p. 15. Reprinted by permission of the author and Jonathan Cape.