

MILTON

POETICAL WORKS

LONDON
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1966

EDITED BY

DOUGLAS BUSH

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 375

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

Except with mortal pain. Say where and when

Their fight, what stroke shall bruise the Victor's heel." 385

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

Thy 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, 395

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 appaid.	
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	405
To a reproachful life and cursed 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 accursed, nailed to the Cross	
By his own nation, slain for bringing life;	
But to the cross he nails thy enemies—	415
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	425
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 for ever 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.	435
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	
Baptizing in the profluent stream-the sign	

Of washing them from guilt of sin to life
 Pure, and in mind prepared, if so befall, 445
 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 blest. 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; 455
 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." 465

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 475
 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,

485

358. stranger: Antipater, made governor of Jerusalem by the Romans; father of King Herod.

360 f. Matt. 2, Luke 2. Cf. *Nativity* and P R 1.242-54

363-64. place: Bethlehem.

367. sandwiched: cf. *Nativity* 21.

370-71. Cf. Ps. 2.8; Aen. 1.278-79, 287, 379-80. Luke 1.28.

383. capital (a disyllable): "of the head" (10.181) and "fatal."

392. Disabled . . . give: did not disable from giving.

396. want: lack.

401. appaid: satisfied.

402-20. Cf. 3.227-41, 345 f.

415-17. Col. 2.14.

420-65. Cf. 3.245-65, 315-41.

436-41. Matt. 28.9-20; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20-21.

442. in . . . stream: cf. Milton, *C.D.* 1.28.

445-50. Rom. 4.16; Gal. 3.7-9, 16; Eph. 4.11-12; etc.

451-65. Cf. 3.250-65, 315-41.

453-55. Rev. 11.18, 20.2-3.

460. quick: living (cf. the Apostles' Creed).

469-78. The traditional paradox of Adam's *felix culpa*, "the fortunate fall": Adam's sin, with all its evil consequences, provided the

motive for Christ's incarnation and sacrifice, the working of divine love and grace, and hence man's reception into heavenly bliss.

470-71. Cf. 1.162-65, 217-20.

478. Rom. 5.20.

486. Comforter: the Holy Spirit (John 15.26).

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