

NAXOS
AudioBooks

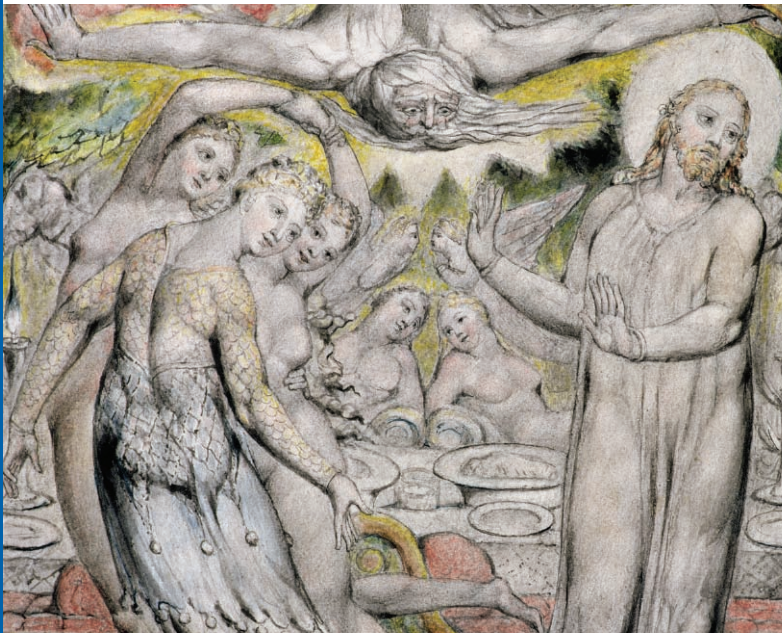
POETRY

John Milton
**Paradise
Regained**

THE
COMPLETE
TEXT

UNABRIDGED

Read by **Anton Lesser**



NA239912D

1	Paradise Regained – The First Book	3:47
2	Oh ancient powers of Air and this wide World	4:31
3	So to the coast of Jordan he directs	3:54
4	Meanwhile the Son of God, who yet some days	4:36
5	This having heard, straight I again revolved	2:52
6	Full forty days he passed – whether on hill	3:54
7	Whom thus answered the Arch-Fiend, now undisguised:	3:10
8	To whom our Saviour sternly thus replied:	3:41
9	So spake our Saviour; but the subtle Fiend,	3:32
10	The Second Book	3:30
11	Thus they out of their complaints new hope resume	3:18
12	The while her Son, tracing the desert wild,	3:51
13	To whom quick answer Satan thus returned:	3:38
14	He ceased, and heard their grant in loud acclaim;	3:46
15	He viewed it round;	4:34
16	‘What doubts the Son of God to sit and eat?’	4:18
17	To whom thus Jesus patiently replied:	4:03

Total time on CD 1: 65:03

18	The Third Book	3:13
19	To whom our Saviour calmly thus replied:	4:10
20	To whom the Tempter, murmuring, thus replied:	4:36
21	To whom our Saviour answer thus returned:	4:15
22	With that (such power was given him then), he took	3:43
23	He looked, and saw what numbers numberless	4:26
24	To whom our Saviour answered thus, unmoved:	4:19
25	The Fourth Book	2:37
26	And now the Tempter thus his silence broke:	4:10
27	To whom the Son of God, unmoved, replied:	3:42
28	Whom thus our Saviour answered with disdain:	4:08
29	Look once more, ere we leave this specular mount,	2:55
30	To whom our Saviour sagely thus replied:	3:04
31	Or, if I would delight my private hours	3:50
32	So saying, he took (for still he knew his power Not yet expired),	3:30
33	Him walking on a sunny hill he found,	3:15
34	To whom the Fiend, now swoln with rage, replied:	3:46
35	But Satan, smitten with amazement, fell.	2:07
36	'True Image of the Father, whether throned...'	5:11

Total time: 2:16:09

John Milton

Paradise Regained

John Milton, born in London on December 9th, 1608 and educated at St Paul's School and Christ's College, Cambridge, intended to become a Church of England clergyman. However, as he grew increasingly dissatisfied with the state of Anglican clergy and ever more interested in the composition of poetry, he changed his mind and devoted himself to reading the Latin and Greek classics, and ecclesiastical and political history.

Between 1637 and 1639 he travelled in France and Italy, meeting literary and other leading figures of the day (including Galileo). He then made his home in London where he was engaged in tutoring schoolboys and writing a number of religious and political tracts. A supporter of the Parliamentarians in the Civil War, he became Latin secretary to the Commonwealth in 1649 (despite the growing weakness of his eyesight, which would eventually lead to total blindness). He married three times: his first wife bore him three daughters; his second died shortly after bearing him another, who in turn soon died too; his third wife survived him.

Paradise Lost, though probably completed by 1663, was not published until 1667, twenty-seven years after its first conception. Only four years later, *Paradise Regained* appeared – in a volume which also contained *Samson Agonistes*, his dramatic masterpiece modelled on classical Greek tragedy. Milton was now sixty-three years old. His nephew records that *Paradise Regained* 'was begun and finished and Printed after the other [*Paradise Lost*] was published, and that in a wonderful short space considering the sublimeness of it.' Thomas Ellwood, a pupil of Milton's in the 1660s, had been lent *Paradise Lost* to read and claimed that he said to his teacher, 'Thou hast said much here of *Paradise Lost*; but what hast thou to say of *Paradise Found*?' Some while later the poet presented Ellwood with the shorter work, saying: 'This 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.'

Some have disputed this account of how *Paradise Regained* came to be written,

considering it unlikely that Milton had never before thought about composing such a 'sequel'. *Paradise Regained* is an example of the 'brief epic', which Milton had discussed in his much earlier *The Reason of Church-Government*; the model for it was the biblical *Book of Job*. It is in four books, and the much grander *Paradise Lost* is in twelve.

Paradise Lost comprehensively charts the fall of man while *Paradise Regained* is concerned with the temptation of Christ in the wilderness. This is the one episode from the process of man's redemption which involves a confrontation between the Saviour of Mankind and Adam and Eve's Old Adversary. The later epic failed to engage its early readers and, ever since, has largely been regarded as a lesser work, not only in length and ambition but also in literary power. It is certainly read less frequently.

William Blake controversially declared that Milton was of Satan's party without knowing it, by which he meant that the reader responds to the convincing and lively portrayal of the fallen Lucifer with ready understanding and sympathy while he finds the Supreme Being a remote and characterless abstraction. Milton's God was

Blake's Nobodaddy, a tyrant rather than a fond if disappointed Father of Creation. Milton's difficulty was that which most writers have found: goodness and perfection, like happiness, 'write *white*'. It is no surprise that more readers of Dante engage with *Inferno*, fewer with *Purgatorio* and hardly any with *Paradiso*. The simplest explanation for this might be that man in his fallen state would inevitably find fellow feeling with the rebels, with those suffering.

Brief Summary Book One

Milton declares the intention of the poem before swiftly moving on to John's baptism of Jesus. This prompts Satan to summon the other fallen angels and discuss how to tackle this new threat to their freedom, which currently allows them to leave Hell and wander as they please in the fallen world. Jesus feels moved to enter the desert where he fasts and meditates for forty days and nights. An old man appears and suggests that Jesus, as the Son of God, should change stones to bread to satisfy his hunger. Recognising the old man's true identity, Jesus rebukes him.

Book Two

Satan returns to consult his fellows on a better way to defeat Jesus, which results in his offering Jesus not only a feast, but sufficient wealth to raise followers and thus gain his sought-after influence. Jesus says that angels would feed him if he so bade them and that there are other ways to achieve great things.

Book Three

Now Satan tries to tempt Jesus with total power over the peoples of the earth: they would listen to him and obey him. The reply is that such power is worthless; to enslave people is destructive. Satan counters that God craves glory and, as His Son, why should not Jesus, too? Jesus responds that the only true glory belongs to God alone, that the glory of earthly powers or any other powers is vain and meaningless. Satan leads Jesus to a mountain top to show him all the kingdoms and armies of the world, control over all of which could be his. Jesus reacts by saying that his kingdom will be established but not with Satan's help.

Book Four

Satan persists with his temptation but Jesus dismisses any thought of bowing down to

him. Other enticements are proffered – the wisdom and philosophy of Greece, music and art, etc. – but Jesus, unimpressed, withdraws to sleep. Even troubling dreams and a violent storm sent by Satan fail to perturb him. Finally Satan brings Jesus to the top of the temple in Jerusalem to suggest that he throw himself off and be caught by his angels. This, too, is ineffective; Satan is turned away and departs. Jesus is rewarded with an angelic banquet in celebration of his victory and the poem ends with Jesus returning to his mother's house.

Paradise Regained begins with a baptism – which, according to the Canadian critic Northrop Frye is the moment when the Father recognises Jesus as the Son – and ends with Satan's recognition that Jesus is indeed the one who drove him out of Heaven before the Creation. It is debatable whether Jesus fully recognises his own divinity early on or only comes to know it as a result of his experience in the wilderness, and whether Satan is himself aware of the same truth or likewise becomes enlightened as a consequence of his attempts to undermine Jesus' mission. Most interpreters agree, however, that this Satan is a lesser figure than the one created in the previous work.

L.A. Cormican pertinently comments on the difficulty that readers have with Milton in general:

Every poet must produce the moods and attitudes by which his work is understood and enjoyed... Milton's failure [to do this] has been largely due to two things: his deliberate choice of topics which preclude recurrence to common experience, and the unwillingness of the modern mind to have any precise demands made on its credence or its morals...

He advises a reading of the Psalms and, preferably, further acquaintance with the Bible in order to 'habituate the reader's mind to Milton's mood and purpose'.

Frye summarises the three temptations of Jesus as those of false power, false justice and false wisdom. He also highlights the problem of the poem, from a reader's point of view: 'Dramatically, Christ becomes an increasingly unsympathetic figure, a pusillanimous quietist [in the first temptation]..., an inhuman snob [in the second]... and a peevish obscurantist [in the third].'

Nonetheless, Frye comments that *Paradise Regained* is, in structure and as a technical experiment, a success. However, he also says: 'It is quite possible for a poem to be, as *Paradise Regained* may be, a magnificent success in its structure and yet often tired and perfunctory in its execution,' although he does not finally declare whether this expresses his view.

Coming fresh to *Paradise Regained*, knowing nothing about it other than as having been written after *Paradise Lost*, one might expect something considerably more ambitious – perhaps an account of the entire process by which Adam's fault is set to rights by the sacrifice of the Son of God. It might be argued, however, that even if Milton had been tempted to try this, he was wise in not seeking to outdo himself by the creation of a second epic to rival his first – an *Odyssey* to his *Iliad*, as it were. *Paradise Regained* perhaps should be seen as a coda to *Paradise Lost* rather than as a bathetic afterthought.

Dr Johnson said:

Of *Paradise Regained* the general judgement seems now to be right, that it is in many parts elegant, and

every-where instructive. It was not to be supposed that the writer of *Paradise Lost* could ever write without great effusions of fancy and exalted precepts of wisdom. The basis of *Paradise Regained* is narrow; a dialogue without action can never please like an union of the narrative and dramattick powers. Had this poem been written, not by Milton but by some imitator, it would have claimed and received universal praise.

Notes by Maurice West

The music on this CD is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

JENKINS ALL IN A GARDEN GREEN

8.550687

Divisions for two basses in C major / Pavan in F major

Rose Consort of Viols

Music programmed by Sarah Butcher

Cover picture: *Christ refusing the banquet offered by Satan,*

(w/c, pen and ink by Blake, William (1757-1827))

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Courtesy Bridgeman Art Library

John Milton
Paradise Regained

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Read by **Anton Lesser**

In *Paradise Lost*, Satan successfully engineers the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. In *Paradise Regained*, Satan, discovering that a new figure threatens his dominion on earth, sets out once more to exert his power of temptation. He encounters Jesus in the desert and presents a host of challenges; but Jesus sees through the various wiles set before him. Satan, vanquished, returns to the pit. The magisterial poetry of Milton enriches the encounter and, while not matching the greatness achieved in *Paradise Lost*, provides drama and depth.

Anton Lesser is one of Britain's leading classical actors. He has played many of the principal Shakespearean roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company including Petruchio, Romeo and Richard III. His career has also encompassed contemporary drama, notably *The Birthday Party* by Harold Pinter. Appearances in major TV drama productions include *The Oresteia*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *The Mill on the Floss* and *A Tale of Two Cities*. His readings for Naxos AudioBooks also include *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations*, *Hard Times*, *The Pickwick Papers* and *A Tale of Two Cities* (unabridged).

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