*Paradise Lost*, Book IX, Lines 531-784

His fraudulent temptation thus began.
Wonder not, sovran Mistress, if perhaps
Thou canst, who art sole Wonder, much less arm
Thy looks, the Heav’n of mildness, with disdain,
Displeas’d that I approach thee thus, and gaze 535
Insatiate, I thus single; nor have feard
Thy awful brow, more awful thus retir’d.
Fairest resemblance of thy Maker faire,
Thee all living things gaze on, all things thine
By gift, and thy Celestial Beautie adore 540
With ravishment beheld, there best beheld
Where universally admir’d; but here
In this enclosure wild, these Beasts among,
Beholders rude, and shallow to discerne
Half what in thee is fair, one man except, 545
Who sees thee? (and what is one?) who shouldst be seen
A Goddess among Gods, ador’d and serv’d
By Angels numberless, thy daily Train.
So gloz’d the Tempter, and his Proem tun’d;
Into the Heart of EVE his words made way, 550
Though at the voice much marveling; at length
Not unamaz’d she thus in answer spake.
What may this mean? Language of Man pronounc’t
By Tongue of Brute, and human sense exprest?
The first at lest of these I thought deni’d 555
To Beasts, whom God on their Creation-Day
Created mute to all articulat sound;
The latter I demurre, for in thir looks
Much reason, and in thir actions oft appeers.
Thee, Serpent, suttlest beast of all the field 560
I knew, but not with human voice endu’d;
Redouble then this miracle, and say,
How cam’st thou speakable of mute, and how
To me so friendly grown above the rest

Of brutal kind, that daily are in sight? 565
Say, for such wonder claims attention due.
To whom the guileful Tempter thus reply’d.
Empress of this fair World, resplendent EVE,
Easie to mee it is to tell thee all
What thou commandst, and right thou shouldst be obeyd: 570
I was at first as other Beasts that graze
The trodden Herb, of abject thoughts and low,
As was my food, nor aught but food discern’d
Or Sex, and apprehended nothing high:
Till on a day roaving the field, I chanc’d 575
A goodly Tree farr distant to behold
Loaden with fruit of fairest colours mixt,
Ruddie and Gold: I nearer drew to gaze;
When from the boughes a savorie odour blow’n,
Grateful to appetite, more pleas’d my sense 580
Then smell of sweetest Fenel, or the Teats
Of Ewe or Goat dropping with Milk at Eevn,
Unsuckt of Lamb or Kid, that tend thir play.
To satisfie the sharp desire I had
Of tasting those fair Apples, I resolv’d 585
Not to deferr; hunger and thirst at once,
Powerful perswaders, quick’nd at the scent
Of that alluring fruit, urg’d me so keene.
About the Mossie Trunk I wound me soon,
For high from ground the branches would require 590
Thy utmost reach or ADAMS: Round the Tree
All other Beasts that saw, with like desire
Longing and envying stood, but could not reach.
Amid the Tree now got, where plentie hung
Tempting so nigh, to pluck and eat my fill 595
I spar’d not, for such pleasure till that hour
At Feed or Fountain never had I found.
Sated at length, ere long I might perceave
Strange alteration in me, to degree
Of Reason in my inward Powers, and Speech 600
Wanted not long, though to this shape retaind.
Thenceforth to Speculations high or deep
I turnd my thoughts, and with capacious mind
Considerd all things visible in Heav’n,
Or Earth, or Middle, all things fair and good; 605
But all that fair and good in thy Divine
Semblance, and in thy Beauties heav’nly Ray
United I beheld; no Fair to thine

Equivalent or second, which compel’d
Mee thus, though importune perhaps, to come 610
And gaze, and worship thee of right declar’d
Sovran of Creatures, universal Dame.
So talk’d the spirited sly Snake; and EVE
Yet more amaz’d unwarie thus reply’d.
Serpent, thy overpraising leaves in doubt 615
The vertue of that Fruit, in thee first prov’d:
But say, where grows the Tree, from hence how far?
For many are the Trees of God that grow
In Paradise, and various, yet unknown
To us, in such abundance lies our choice, 620
As leaves a greater store of Fruit untoucht,
Still hanging incorruptible, till men
Grow up to thir provision, and more hands
Help to disburden Nature of her Bearth.
To whom the wilie Adder, blithe and glad. 625
Empress, the way is readie, and not long,
Beyond a row of Myrtles, on a Flat,
Fast by a Fountain, one small Thicket past
Of blowing Myrrh and Balme; if thou accept
My conduct, I can bring thee thither soon. 630
Lead then, said EVE. Hee leading swiftly rowld
In tangles, and make intricate seem strait,
To mischief swift. Hope elevates, and joy
Bright’ns his Crest, as when a wandring Fire
Compact of unctuous vapor, which the Night 635
Condenses, and the cold invirons round,
Kindl’d through agitation to a Flame,
Which oft, they say, some evil Spirit attends,
Hovering and blazing with delusive Light,
Misleads th’ amaz’d Night-wanderer from his way 640
To Boggs and Mires, & oft through Pond or Poole,
There swallow’d up and lost, from succour farr.
So glister’d the dire Snake and into fraud
Led EVE our credulous Mother, to the Tree
Of prohibition, root of all our woe; 645
Which when she saw, thus to her guide she spake.
Serpent, we might have spar’d our coming hither,
Fruitless to me, though Fruit be here to excess,

The credit of whose vertue rest with thee,
Wondrous indeed, if cause of such effects. 650
But of this Tree we may not taste nor touch;
God so commanded, and left that Command
Sole Daughter of his voice; the rest, we live
Law to our selves, our Reason is our Law.
To whom the Tempter guilefully repli’d. 655
Indeed? hath God then said that of the Fruit
Of all these Garden Trees ye shall not eate,
Yet Lords declar’d of all in Earth or Aire?
To whom thus EVE yet sinless. Of the Fruit
Of each Tree in the Garden we may eate, 660
But of the Fruit of this fair Tree amidst
The Garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eate
Thereof, nor shall ye touch it, least ye die.
She scarse had said, though brief, when now more bold
The Tempter, but with shew of Zeale and Love 665
To Man, and indignation at his wrong,
New part puts on, and as to passion mov’d,
Fluctuats disturbd, yet comely, and in act
Rais’d, as of som great matter to begin.
As when of old som Orator renound 670
In ATHENS or free ROME, where Eloquence
Flourishd, since mute, to som great cause addrest,
Stood in himself collected, while each part,
Motion, each act won audience ere the tongue,
Somtimes in highth began, as no delay 675
Of Preface brooking through his Zeal of Right.
So standing, moving, or to highth upgrown
The Tempter all impassiond thus began.
O Sacred, Wise, and Wisdom-giving Plant,
Mother of Science, Now I feel thy Power 680
Within me cleere, not onely to discerne
Things in thir Causes, but to trace the wayes
Of highest Agents, deemd however wise.
Queen of this Universe, doe not believe
Those rigid threats of Death; ye shall not Die: 685
How should ye? by the Fruit? it gives you Life
To Knowledge? By the Threatner, look on mee,
Mee who have touch’d and tasted, yet both live,
And life more perfet have attaind then Fate

Meant mee, by ventring higher then my Lot. 690
Shall that be shut to Man, which to the Beast
Is open? or will God incense his ire
For such a pretty Trespass, and not praise
Rather your dauntless vertue, whom the pain
Of Death denounc’t, whatever thing Death be, 695
Deterrd not from atchieving what might leade
To happier life, knowledge of Good and Evil;
Of good, how just? of evil, if what is evil
Be real, why not known, since easier shunnd?
God therefore cannot hurt ye, and be just; 700
Not just, not God; not feard then, nor obeid:
Your feare it self of Death removes the feare.
Why then was this forbid? Why but to awe,
Why but to keep ye low and ignorant,
His worshippers; he knows that in the day 705
Ye Eate thereof, your Eyes that seem so cleere,
Yet are but dim, shall perfetly be then
Op’nd and cleerd, and ye shall be as Gods,
Knowing both Good and Evil as they know.
That ye should be as Gods, since I as Man, 710
Internal Man, is but proportion meet,
I of brute human, yee of human Gods.
So ye shalt die perhaps, by putting off
Human, to put on Gods, death to be wisht,
Though threat’nd, which no worse then this can bring 715
And what are Gods that Man may not become
As they, participating God-like food?
The Gods are first, and that advantage use
On our belief, that all from them proceeds,
I question it, for this fair Earth I see, 720
Warm’d by the Sun, producing every kind,
Them nothing: If they all things, who enclos’d
Knowledge of Good and Evil in this Tree,
That whoso eats thereof, forthwith attains
Wisdom without their leave? and wherein lies 725
Th’ offence, that Man should thus attain to know?
What can your knowledge hurt him, or this Tree
Impart against his will if all be his?
Or is it envie, and can envie dwell
In heav’nly brests? these, these and many more 730
Causes import your need of this fair Fruit.
Goddess humane, reach then, and freely taste.
He ended, and his words replete with guile

Into her heart too easie entrance won:
Fixt on the Fruit she gaz’d, which to behold 735
Might tempt alone, and in her ears the sound
Yet rung of his perswasive words, impregn’d
With Reason, to her seeming, and with Truth;
Meanwhile the hour of Noon drew on, and wak’d
An eager appetite, rais’d by the smell 740
So savorie of that Fruit, which with desire,
Inclinable now grown to touch or taste,
Sollicited her longing eye; yet first
Pausing a while, thus to her self she mus’d.
Great are thy Vertues, doubtless, best of Fruits, 745
Though kept from Man, & worthy to be admir’d,
Whose taste, too long forborn, at first assay
Gave elocution to the mute, and taught
The Tongue not made for Speech to speak thy praise:
Thy praise hee also who forbids thy use, 750
Conceales not from us, naming thee the Tree
Of Knowledge, knowledge both of good and evil;
Forbids us then to taste, but his forbidding
Commends thee more, while it inferrs the good
By thee communicated, and our want: 755
For good unknown, sure is not had, or had
And yet unknown, is as not had at all.
In plain then, what forbids he but to know,
Forbids us good, forbids us to be wise?
Such prohibitions binde not. But if Death 760
Bind us with after-bands, what profits then
Our inward freedom? In the day we eate
Of this fair Fruit, our doom is, we shall die.
How dies the Serpent? hee hath eat’n and lives,
And knows, and speaks, and reasons, and discernes, 765
Irrational till then. For us alone
Was death invented? or to us deni’d
This intellectual food, for beasts reserv’d?
For Beasts it seems: yet that one Beast which first
Hath tasted, envies not, but brings with joy 770
The good befall’n him, Author unsuspect,
Friendly to man, farr from deceit or guile.
What fear I then, rather what know to feare
Under this ignorance of Good and Evil,
Of God or Death, of Law or Penaltie? 775
Here grows the Cure of all, this Fruit Divine,
Fair to the Eye, inviting to the Taste,

Of vertue to make wise: what hinders then
To reach, and feed at once both Bodie and Mind?
So saying, her rash hand in evil hour 780
Forth reaching to the Fruit, she pluck’d, she eat:
Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat
Sighing through all her Works gave signs of woe,
That all was lost.