

THE COMPLETE
OLD ENGLISH
POEMS



Translated by
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With an introduction by TOM SHIPPEY

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GENESIS (A AND B)

The OE poetic *Genesis (A and B)* covers material in the first book of the Bible from the Creation to Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22) and also draws upon exegetical materials about the angelic rebellion in heaven. It focuses on certain events—the Creation, the rebellion of Lucifer, the casting out of the rebellious angels from heaven to hell, the creation of an earthly paradise and of Adam and Eve, their temptation and fall, Cain's murder of Abel, the succeeding generations beginning with Seth, Noah's flood, the story of Lot, and the extended account of Abraham's life which takes up nearly half of the poem. Many details in the biblical Genesis are omitted, such as the extensive genealogical lists, while others are added, such as the fall of Lucifer and the detailed exploration of the temptation of Adam and Eve—where, as Anlezark notes, “the poem often explains motivation where this is not found in the biblical original” (2011, ix). Some of the added or expanded events, such as the war in heaven and the battle of the kings, are places where “the martial diction of the native verse form is given free rein” (Fulk and Cain, 113). For more on biblical additions and omissions, see Doane, 1978, 62–70; 1991, 93–107; and Remley, 1996, 94–167.

Some of the themes of the poem noted by the critics include the balance between creation and destruction in the poem (the promise of paradise and the threat of the flood), man's inherent need to praise God, the contrast between obedience and rebellion, the figurative connections between Old and New Testament concerns (for example, the sacrifice of Isaac reflecting the murder of Abel and the crucifixion and redemption of Christ), the importance of property and kinship ties in creating stability, the difficulty of dis-

covering the truth in a world of appearances and disguises, and the relative innocence and guilt of Adam and Eve (see Fulck and Cain, 206–23, for a summary). On this last point, Eve’s *wacran hige*, which has often been translated as “weaker mind,” is now much debated. Chance argues for translating OE *wac* as “‘more yielding’ or ‘more pliant’ or ‘more wanting in courage, or mental or moral strength’ as in manly strength” (1986, 74), and Robinson argues for a translation of “soft, pliant, yielding,” in line with Old High German and Old Saxon forms (1994, 124–27).

The relation of the two parts of the poem, now known as *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*, is complex. Lines 235–851 in the Old English (225–942 in my translation) have different linguistic features and poetic styles, including a large number of long lines in *Genesis B* (which accounts for the greater number of lines in my translation). In 1875, Sievers pointed out the differences between the two portions of *Genesis* and surmised that the central passage (now called *Genesis B*) was translated from an unknown Old Saxon source that was later discovered in 1894 in a Vatican manuscript. The Old Saxon poem is included in Doane’s edition of *Genesis B* in *The Saxon Genesis*. Doane argues that the translation, or more properly “transformation,” of *Genesis B* and its insertion into the existing poem, *Genesis A*, probably took place in the late ninth or early tenth century (1991, 47 ff.). The composition date for *Genesis A* cannot be precisely determined, but Doane argues for sometime between 650 and 900 (1978, 36). Parts of *Genesis A* seem to have been revised at the point of the insertion of *Genesis B* (see Doane, 1978, 35–36, and 1991, 48). Doane (citing Evans) notes that *Genesis B* “is not a translation or paraphrase [of *The Saxon Genesis*] but an explanatory renarrativization, a *haggadah*,” explaining that “the first substantial episode we have, the Fall of the angels . . . has no direct biblical counterpart (though it goes back ultimately to certain biblical verses (Genesis 6.2–4, Isaiah 14.12–15, Apocalypse 12.9, etc.), but was, of course, a well-established traditional topos indispensable in Christian preaching and commentary” (1991, 93). Many details of *Genesis B* draw upon biblical passages but expand them or differ from them in significant ways. For example, Doane notes the following differences with respect to the Fall:

In Genesis B the Prohibition against eating of the Tree of Knowledge is given to both Adam and Eve, not Adam alone; the unbiblical Fall of Satan, providing the efficient and formal causes of sin, filled with dramatic speeches, is placed between the Creation of Man and the Fall of Man; Adam and Eve are tempted not by Satan or a snake, but

by Satan's messenger who enters a snake's body; the tempter approaches Adam first, and failing, tempts Eve; Eve is tempted by being told that the command not to eat has been rescinded; Eve's tempter appears to her as an "angel of light"; when she eats, Eve has an "angelic" vision; all this action is revealed in or accompanied by elaborate psychologically motivated speeches; Adam reproaches Eve and then acknowledges his guilt; Adam and Eve repent before they are reproached by God who does not appear to Adam and Eve after their sin. (1991, 94)

Fulk and Cain point out that "unlike his nameless counterpart in *Genesis A*, Satan is individualized in *Genesis B* by his heroic speeches to his fallen comrades, speeches that are Miltonic in their stoic commitment to resistance and vengeance," noting further that "the sentiments and diction may be explained as heroic conventions, but it remains remarkable that the poet, like Milton, chose to narrate these events from Satan's point of view, placing God in the inscrutable distance" (113–14). Doane points out that the end of *Genesis B* has a tone "reminiscent of the ending of *Paradise Lost*, with its tentative quietness and a sense of an ending that is a new beginning" (1991, 302). Milton wrote about Anglo-Saxon matters in his *History of Britain* and was a friend of Junius, so he may well have known about the Old English poem, yet most authorities acknowledge that the "Old English influence on Milton's epic remains impossible to prove" (Fulk and Cain, 228). It is remarkable that Milton's verse in *Paradise Lost* is heavily alliterative; and often because of the presence of a weak foot in the poetic line, it can be scanned as both iambic pentameter and as a loose form of strong-stress, alliterative verse. This is clear, for example, in the opening lines, scanned below in both ways. In the first example, the weak foot in each line appears in italics; in the second, the stressed syllables that alliterate are underlined:

Scanned as iambic pentameter

Of *mán's* first *disobédience*, *and* the *frúit*
Of thát forbídden *trée* whose *mórtal* *táste*
 Brought *déath* *intó* the *wórl*d and *áll* our *wóe*

Scanned as OE-style strong-stress verse

Of mán's first disobédience, and the frúit
 Of that forbídden trée whose mórtal táste
 Brought déath into the wórld and áll our wóe

My own experience as a translator leads me to believe that there is some connection in terms of form, characterization, and narrative thread between the two poems.

There are a number of gaps in the poetic text of *Genesis*, either because of missing manuscript pages or inexplicable omissions in the narrative. Where these gaps are short and simple, I have sometimes filled them in with brackets by drawing upon the Vulgate Bible. Where longer passages are lost, I have tried in a similar fashion to give a poetic indication in brackets of who is speaking or what the situation is when the narrative or dialogue takes up after a lacuna.

Genesis A

It is right to praise the Lord of heaven
 With wise words and loving hearts.
 He is almighty, infinite, eternal, abiding—
 Source and Shaper, Guardian of glory,
 King of all exalted creatures, Lord of hosts. 5
 He exists before beginning, beyond ending.
 Righteous and steadfast, he will rule forever
 The embracing expanse of high heaven,
 Its length and breadth, its range and reach,
 First established for the children of glory, 10
 The guardian angels, the hallowed host,
 Who held a bounty of brightness and bliss
 Through the emanating might of their bold Maker.
 The triumphant angels raised glad-hearted hymns,
 Loving their Lord, living in his light. 15
 Their being was bliss. Their glory was great.
 They knew no sin, conceived no crime—
 Their hearts and minds were wholly with God.
 They praised and revealed only righteousness
 In their home in heaven, manifesting truth— 20
 Until some unwise angels fell into error,
 Seduced by pride and perversity into rebellion
 Against God by their arrogant leader.
 They lost the Lord's love and their own good,
 Turning from friends to fiends, from bliss to bale. 25
 That band of traitors shamelessly boasted
 That they intended to section off and share

God's glorious mansion, ration its rooms,
 Brashly apportion its brightness and beauty.
 That idea undid them. Their thoughts were thieves, 30
 Their words were wounds. The unruly rebel
 Who conceived that crime thirsted for power,
 Weaving a web of pride and presumption,
 Urging his unholy band to embrace envy
 And seize their freedom from the holy tyrant 35
 Who ruled the realm. He wanted a home
 With his own bright, breathtaking throne
 In the northern regions of heaven's kingdom.
 Then God responded with righteous wrath
 Against those angels he had gracefully created 40
 In beauty and bliss. He shaped a space
 For that proud traitor, a place of torment,
 A renegades' realm, a howling hell—
 Deep, enduring, dark, despairing—
 Filled with flames, blood-red and biting, 45
 Saturated with bitter, singeing smoke,
 And the chilling clutch of intense cold.
 Then over that eternal prison of pain,
 He set an endless, brooding horror,
 A monstrous terror, harsh and howling, 50
 Those angels brashly rebelled against God;
 Those devils reaped the reward of the damned.
 The ravaging demons desired a kingdom—
 They imagined it easy, underestimating God,
 Who stifled their hopes of sharing his power 55
 By raising his hand against their arrogance.
 He defeated his enemy, crushing their courage,
 Punishing their pride, abolishing their bliss.
 In his sovereign strength, he ordered them out
 Of their home in heaven—his wrath, their ruin. 60
 So our Creator thrust out the throng
 Of unthriving angels, twisted traitors,
 Who traveled endlessly an exile-road,
 Lamenting their loss, keening for their crime.
 Their boasting was blistered, their pride punctured, 65

Their dreams debunked, their beauty destroyed.
 Those malevolent demons lived in misery,
 Drinking down sorrow, feasting on woe.
 They had gone from angels to outcasts,
 Laughing little at the horrors of hell. 70
 They dwelled in darkness, defiled, defamed,
 Caught in the clutch of deathless terror—
 Suffering exile for their strife against God.
 Then fellowship was once again restored
 In heaven where peace and promise prevailed, 75
 And the Lord of hosts was loved by his thanes,
 That faithful band of unfallen angels,
 Gathered in glory, bound in bliss.

All enmity was outlawed, all strife sequestered, 80
 All dissent delivered to an everlasting doom,
 When the rebel host was expelled from the light
 And love of God. After the fiends' fall,
 There were empty thrones throughout heaven,
 Seats of grandeur and glory, waiting for other
 Inhabitants to occupy since the fallen angels 85
 Who betrayed their trust were disbanded, disowned—
 Discovering their demon-selves in hell's dungeon.
 Then our Lord meditated in his infinite mind
 How he might resettle the lost lands
 Of the overthrown angels, bring a better host 90
 Than those boasters and brazen unbuilders
 To the now empty thrones. So God ordained
 In his endless imagination and sustaining strength
 That he would shape a brave new world
 Under heaven's roof for creatures to come, 95
 An expanse of air and earth, sea and sky,
 A realm called paradise for a race of people
 Who would take the place of the fallen angels,
 Who rebelled against glory and were gathered up
 And expelled into darkness, hurled in the abyss, 100
 Where nothing existed in that unshaped space,
 That untouched time. The void was desolate,

Dark and deep, empty and idle,
 Fruitless and fallow, unmade, unmoving.
 Resolute and righteous, God began to gaze 105
 Into the empty clutch of unfolding creation,
 Powering possibilities according to his plan.
 That cheerless abyss of never-ending night
 Was next to nothing till the mighty one made
 A wondrous world from the dark wasteland 110
 With his shaping word. The King of glory
 First created heaven and earth, laying out the land,
 Lifting up the sky. He was the boldest of builders,
 Surest of shapers, Maker unmatched.
 But the verdant sweep could not be seen— 115
 The plains of earth were not green with grass,
 The seas were not yet shimmering blue—
 And blackness shrouded the curve of creation.
 Then the bright spirit of heaven's Keeper,
 Our Shaper and Sustainer, arose endowing 120
 Life over the deep, out of the abyss.
 The bold Lord of angels, Bestower of life,
 Commanded brightness born in the void,
 And the light shone forth as God had said,
 So his will was realized, his purpose fulfilled. 125
 Then the Lord triumphant, our radiant Ruler,
 Divided light from darkness over the waves,
 Separating the space into radiance and shadow.
 He called each force of creation forth
 With his wondrous word, giving each its name. 130
 The light he called "Day," beautiful and bright,
 And the Lord was pleased with his first day's work.
 His light created and constrained the shadow,
 Sometimes defining or deepening the shade,
 Sometimes dispelling it, driving it into darkness. 135

When time transpired and the spirit of making
 Moved over the material of middle-earth,
 The Lord made evening and in its wake,
 A sweeping darkness he named "Night,"
 Shaping and separating Day from Night, 140

So that ever after they should come and go,
 Always one hard on the heels of the other.
 After the first night came the second day,
 When the Lord of life made the heavens,
 Fashioned the firmament separate in the sky 145
 From the great waters covering the earth.
 He lifted a part of the broad sea
 Into the vast expanse of sky, raising a roof
 Over middle-earth with his shaping word.
 Then the glorious morning of the third day 150
 Arrived on earth, a shimmering brightness
 Over an endless flood. There was no dry land
 Till the Lord of angels commanded the waters
 To keep confined to bed and stream,
 Running in river-roads from land to sea. 155
 The endless oceans gathered and held,
 Created and constrained by the word of God.
 The sea was separated from the dry land.
 So the Shepherd of life gazed at the ground,
 Wide and dry, and named it "Earth." 160
 He bound the waves, brought them to the shore,
 Making the strand, the sea's landed edge.

* * *

It did not seem right to the Ruler of heaven
 That Adam should remain alone in paradise,
 Sole keeper and caretaker of his new creation, 165
 So the Lord almighty, high King of heaven,
 Source and Shaper of light and life,
 Created a helpmate in the form of a woman,
 A beautiful wife for his beloved Adam.
 He drew her substance from Adam's rib 170
 While the man was safe in the arms of sleep.
 He felt no pain, no rip of rib,
 No broken limb or bloody wound.
 The Lord of angels drew the burgeoning bone
 From his unwounded body and wrought a woman, 175
 Breathing into her flourishing form
 The breath of life, her immortal soul.
 Their spirits quickened—they were like angels,

Adam and Eve, bride and groom,
 Born immediately into bright youth, 180
 Entering Eden through their Maker's might.
 They knew no evil, felt no enmity,
 Suffered no sin. Their minds were meant
 To follow faithfully God's commands.
 Their hearts burned pure with the Lord's love. 185
 The happy-hearted King of the world's creatures
 Then blessed the first man and woman,
 Mother and father of mankind, saying:
 "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth with offspring.
 Gather your children in the green garden, 190
 Your sons and daughters. Cherish your family.
 You shall have dominion over all the earth
 And the salt-seas. Enjoy the land's harvest,
 The sweet song of birds, the fish of the ocean,
 The cattle in the fields, the beasts in the wild, 195
 Whatever walks on the land or swims in the sea,
 Flies in the air or burrows in the ground—
 Every living mystery is made for you."
 Then our Lord saw the wonder of his works,
 The fruit of his labors, the quickening of creation. 200
 Paradise was a glorious guest-house filled
 With the shape and spirit of God's intentions,
 Glorious bodies with a natural grace.
 Water rose from deep well-springs
 To saturate the land, sustaining life. 205
 Rain-clouds did not yet roam the skies,
 Sweeping storms across fields and plains,
 But the earth was still alive with crops,
 Vital with verdant shoots and leaves,
 Bright blooms muscling toward full fruit. 210
 Four great rivers ran out of paradise,
 Separated and sustained by the Lord's power,
 Fed by the well-springs at the heart of Eden,
 Where a radiant fountain ascended in the air.
 One ancient river is named Phison—it flows 215
 Around the land of Havilah with bright waters,
 Where men find gold and gemstones,

As the books tell us. The second river,
 Named Gihon, runs around Ethiopia,
 That broad realm. The third great river 220
 Is called the Tigris—it runs swiftly,
 Full-flowing around the Assyrian nation,
 As does the fourth great river there,
 Which many men now name the Euphrates.

* * *

Genesis B

[Then God firmly warned Adam and Eve:] 225
 “Enjoy the fruits of every other tree
 Except this one—leave this fruit alone.
 Its taste is doom. Obey this command
 And you will need nothing else in paradise—
 All your worldly wants will be fulfilled.” 230
 Then they bowed their heads to heaven’s King
 And held his words carefully in their hearts,
 Thanking him for both his care and counsel,
 His truth and teaching. Then creation’s King,
 The resolute Ruler, let them live 235
 In that perfect land and rose, returning
 Homeward into heaven. His handiwork remained,
 A miracle of his making, two together
 On that sacred ground. They knew no care,
 Felt no loss, made no moan, suffered no sorrow, 240
 Never understood what grief might be gathered
 If they ceased to obey the word of God.
 Their undaunted desire was to fulfill forever
 The Lord’s loving will. They were dear to him
 As long as they carefully kept his commandments, 245
 Trusting in his teaching, living by his laws.

The Lord had shaped through his hand-strength
 And spirit-power ten orders of angels,
 All of whom he trusted to serve him well
 And work his will. He gave them the gifts 250
 Of intelligence and insight, an embodied glory.

One angel he made so mighty in his mind
 That he was created to be second-in-command
 Of that illustrious company after his Ruler
 In heaven's realm. This angel was brilliant— 255
 His life and limbs were enthralled with light.
 He was a blazing beauty, a dazzling delight
 To all around him, like one of the stars.
 He should have celebrated God's gifts,
 Cherishing his brightness, his gown of glory, 260
 His power and place in the angelic host—
 Then he might have been sub-ruler of heaven,
 A prince of power in the sweep of creation.
 But he began to meditate on his own beauty,
 His majesty and might, and to stir up strife 265
 Against the real Ruler of heaven's kingdom,
 Who created all life from his holy throne.
 He was dear to our Lord, but couldn't easily hide
 His hatred and hostility, his envy and ill will.
 He sought to find words to express his enmity, 270
 Trying to discover his own devious voice.
 He began to boast that he would never obey
 A ruling master, never stoop to serving God.
 He began to celebrate his own special light,
 Blessing his beauty, bearing his luster 275
 Like creation's delight. He had his own servants,
 Angelic soldiers, a faithful following
 Of brazen fighters, who seemed to him greater
 Than the troops of the Lord. The angel of insolence
 Brooded on power. Before heaven's throng 280
 He wanted his own throne. He embraced envy
 And his own exaltation. He thought he could build
 A stronger seat of power to the north and west,
 A higher throne in heaven. His radiance was a rush.
 He determined never to be God's disciple, 285
 His servile minion, and said to his troops:
 "Why should I slave for a lord and master?
 There's no need to serve this holy tyrant.
 I can muster up miracles with my own hands.
 I have plenty of power to build a throne. 290

This fealty is false—this service, revolting.
 I can gather enough grace to be a god
 And command an army of warrior-angels,
 Fierce troops who will not fail me in battle.
 They have boldly chosen me as their champion. 295
 I can shape a strategy and slay my enemy.
 My company is devoted—they will never desert.
 Their hearts are loyal—their faith holds true.
 I can attack my master and rule this realm.
 Why should I serve and flatter this god? 300
 There's no good for me in this groveling.
 Why should I bow and scrape before him?
 Why should I act the role of the inferior?
 I won't obey this arrogant lord any longer."

When the Ruler of everything heard this ranting 305
 And saw his angel puffed up with pride,
 Foolishly reviling his Leader and Lord,
 He decided to reward this rebel for his strife.
 He would pay his commander for his brash conceit
 With defeat and darkness, punishment and pain, 310
 A grim gift of torment. So each one suffers
 Who embraces evil, strives against God,
 The Guardian of glory. Then the Ruler of heaven
 In his infinite power and eternal wisdom
 Raised up his hands in righteous anger 315
 And threw down the throng of revolting angels
 Who rebelled with the traitor, trusting his lies.
 They envied heaven and ended in hell,
 Forfeiting God's favor in their fierce pride.
 Their false commander committed a crime 320
 So foul he was hurled into hell's abyss,
 Where he soon discovered endless agony.
 That proud angel turned perverse devil—
 In his sin he slew his own best self.
 He was bound forever with a horde of demons 325
 In a pit of pain. They were harsh companions.
 The rebel angels were expelled from heaven—
 The fierce ones suffered an endless fall

For three long days and nights, ending at last
 In hell's abyss where God transformed 330
 The devious traitors into tortured devils,
 Their holy radiance into flaming flesh.
 They refused to revere his words and works,
 So he turned their triumph into dark defeat,
 An agony of existence under the earth. 335
 They balked in heaven and were blistered in hell,
 Where they spend each restless night in flames,
 An ever-ready, relentless fire. At dawn, cold comes,
 An eastern wind of almost ice. They're caught
 Between the twin torments of frost and fire, 340
 The stabbing heat, the piercing cold.
 Hell holds them both in bitter balance.
 Their world was turned upside down
 When God transformed their precious paradise
 Into a noxious nightmare, a world of woe. 345
 The faithful angels kept their place
 In the heights of heaven, a holy kingdom—
 They held God's favor. The other angels
 Fell from grace, now fiends of fury
 In the house of flames. For their strife they suffer 350
 Singe and smoke, ice and fire, unending torment,
 Because they denied their duty to their Lord.
 They dreamed of rebellion and raised a ruckus.
 They desired a kingdom and deserved damnation,
 Betrayed by a giddy delight in their leader's pride. 355
 They warmed to power and fell into fire,
 A candling darkness, a lightless flame.
 A terrible truth dawned on them too late—
 They traded God's glory for hell's grim fate.

Then the proud and presumptuous prince of darkness, 360
 Who was once the most radiant angel of light,
 Brightest in heaven, beloved by his Master,
 Who cherished him till his arrogant rebellion
 Led to God's righteous wrath and the fiend's fall,
 Gathered his troops. The Creator had cast him 365
 Like a living corpse down on a death-bed

Of terror and torment, calling him Satan
 And securing his charge as commander of hell,
 That black abyss of unending agony,
 Where he would suffer and never again contend 370
 With almighty God. Then Satan spoke,
 Choking on sorrow, sick at his charge
 Of ruling over hell. He had once held
 A high place in heaven, an angel of brightness,
 Until he was seduced by his own inflamed, 375
 Overbearing pride. He refused to respect
 His Creator's commandments because his heart
 Harbored envy and ambition, hatred and guile.
 Finally he found his voice and spoke:
 "Now we're constrained in this endless abyss, 380
 Unable to fly freely as we once did
 In ethereal heaven. God granted us bliss
 But restrained our longing, robbing us blind
 Of our rightful rule, stealing our thunder,
 Casting us down in this scorching pit, 385
 And creating a paradise from our lost place
 In heaven for mankind to prosper and thrive.
 My bitterest bone to pick with God
 Is that Adam, who was shaped out of earth,
 Will sit on my throne, surviving in bliss, 390
 While we suffer torment, exile and agony,
 In the flaming hollows of unholy hell.
 If only I could use these devilish hands
 To break my bonds and escape the flames
 For a cold winter's hour, I could lead my troop— 395
 But these iron chains constrain my freedom,
 Bite at my body, menace my mind.
 I'm a realmless ruler, a heavenless hellion.
 The ravenous fire rages above and below.
 I've never seen such a hostile landscape. 400
 These flames are unchecked, unlike my arms
 Which are bound in chains. My strength is shackled.
 The hell-gates are locked and so are my limbs.
 I am bolted in iron forged in the fire.
 That grim God holds me bound by the neck. 405

Now I can see that he was a spy—
 He monitored my mind, perceived my purpose,
 Figuring before that I would surely fall
 And would eagerly bring evil to Adam
 If my bonds were broken, my hands freed. 410
 Now truly we suffer the torments of hell—
 Both fierce flames and the black abyss.
 God has swept us into a fiery haze
 Of blazing bodies and blind unseeing.
 What sin can he charge us with in heaven? 415
 What harm did we ever accomplish there?
 What weapons wield, what wounds inflict?
 Why are we banished from brightness and bliss?
 Where is our due process in this punishment?
 Can we not claim recompense for this wrong, 420
 Vengeance for this violation? An eye for an eye,
 A tooth for a tooth? Let's undo God's plan.
 We know he has marked out middle-earth,
 Where he has made mankind in his own image.
 He hopes to resettle our place in heaven 425
 With these pure souls. This is our chance
 To spoil his plan, avenging ourselves
 On his precious Adam and all of his heirs.
 In that new world we'll frustrate his will.
 Now I no longer aspire to the holy light 430
 Or hope for heaven where the Lord intends
 To enjoy eternity with his host of angels.
 We'll never succeed in weakening God's will,
 So let's just subvert it with the children of men.
 Let's teach them untruths, seduce them to sin, 435
 Lead them to lie. Let's worm our way
 Into this world and undo God's work.
 In his wrath he will inflict terrible vengeance
 Upon mankind, pitch them from paradise,
 As he heaved us from heaven. Together in hell 440
 We'll all be in exile, angels and men.
 We'll make them our slaves, put them in chains,
 Torture and torment them. Those human sinners
 Will share our pain, and God will regret
 That he ever made man. It's a devious plan 445

And a devil's delight. Let's begin the campaign!
 If I ever gave any of you precious treasures,
 Gems or gold, when we held our thrones
 In the realm of heaven, then now is the time
 To repay my gifts if you desire to do it 450
 And can summon the strength to flee this dungeon,
 Break through the gates, wing your way upward
 On your feathery cloaks, and soar through the skies
 To the new world where Adam and Eve
 Have been created in the kingdom of middle-earth, 455
 Richly rewarded with the pleasures of paradise
 While we remain painfully homeless in hell.
 They are precious to the Lord. We are only outcasts.
 They have stolen our birthright of heavenly bliss.
 This thievery endlessly eats at my heart— 460
 They will own our place in heaven forever.
 If someone could seduce them to sin against God,
 Renouncing their promise, rejecting his law,
 Then they will become loathsome to the Lord.
 If they break his commandment, he will turn cruel, 465
 Fueled by their unfaith in his wrath and rage.
 Then they will trade paradise for this torturous place
 Of punishing pain. Think about this,
 My exiled thanes. How can we betray them?
 I can sleep in my shackles with a grim satisfaction 470
 If I know that the Lord's bliss is lost to them.
 Whoever seduces Adam and Eve will thrive
 In this fallen throng, reaping whatever reward
 Is possible to find in this haven of fire.
 That angel will serve as my second-in-command, 475
 Sit next to me here on this throne in hell,
 If he can come back reporting that all's not well
 In heaven and earth, that these two humans
 Have rejected God's law, perverted his purpose
 In their words and works and were seduced into sin, 480
 Desiring in their deeds some forbidden fruit.”

* * *

Then one of the demons, an enemy of God,
 Broke out his battle-gear, eager for the assault,
 Proudly embracing that evil purpose.

He put on his head a helmet of invisibility 485
 With secret clasps to conceal himself.
 He carried within him a hoard of words,
 Devious and dark, unprincipled and perverse.
 He wound his way upward on unbright wings,
 Stealing secretly through the gates of hell. 490
 His mind was menacing, his spirit strong.
 He beat back the blazing hell-flames
 On both sides of his body with fiendish skill.
 He intended to approach Adam and Eve,
 Concealing his purpose—to coax and seduce them 495
 Into breaking their Father's commandment,
 Engaging in sin, afflicted with guilt,
 Suffering shame, hateful to God.
 Then he flew onward with fiendish cunning
 Until he found the newly created kingdom 500
 And discovered Adam, God's handiwork,
 Skillfully shaped, together with Eve,
 His beloved wife, the most beautiful woman.
 They served God's will, fulfilling his purpose
 As his designated disciples doing good works. 505
 Two trees stood nearby, filled with fruit.
 God had planted them there in paradise
 With his own hands so that man might choose
 Between good and evil, weal and woe.
 Those trees offered fruits that were not alike! 510
 One tree was beautiful, abounding in bliss,
 Sacred and sweet—that was the tree of life.
 Whoever tasted the fruit of that tree
 Would live forever in the fullness of glory,
 In that eternal paradise with the favor of God. 515
 Age would not wither him or illness undo him.
 He would wake each morning, his hope assured
 Of fulfilling God's promise and attaining a home
 With the angelic hosts in heaven on high.
 The other tree, dangerous and dark, 520
 Offered undoing—that was the tree of death.
 Its treacherous fruit was bitter and blasted—
 Its taste was lethal. Whoever ate that fruit

Would know both good and evil,
 Their ways in this world, their home in the heart, 525
 Their eternal ends, their certain divergence
 Into bliss and bale. That one is doomed
 To live in labor, suffer in sorrow,
 Withered by age, defeated by death.
 He might enjoy his life a little while 530
 Until he descends into flaming darkness
 To enter the service of the savage fiends,
 Where he will live forever in peril and pain.
 The devil's disciple, Satan's surrogate,
 Knew all this and exulted in his heart. 535
 He meant to tempt that happy couple
 Into breaking God's clear commandment.
 He was the evil enemy of God and man.
 Then the devious fiend muscled his way
 Into the skin of a venomous serpent, 540
 Took the shape of a snake, slithering treachery,
 Twisting his body about the tree of death
 With cold cunning. He plucked the fruit
 And wormed his way back to God's handiwork,
 Where he smiled slyly, saying to Adam: 545
 "My dear Adam, do you live in longing
 For anything from God? He sent me here
 To discover your needs, fulfill your dreams,
 Offer you anything your heart desires.
 Not long ago I sat by his side, basking in bliss. 550
 He made clear my mission to minister to you
 And teach you the truth of this divine tree.
 He commands you to taste this fair fruit
 That he knows you crave. Its gifts are legion:
 Your strength will surge, your mind magnify, 555
 Your spirit exult, your body grow beautiful.
 You will taste the truth and discover the wonders
 Revealed to you. You will want no wealth
 When you have gained the grace and glory
 This fruit contains. You have worked God's will, 560
 Accomplished his ends. You are perfect and precious
 To your loving Lord. I have heard him speak

Of your way of life, proudly praising
 Your words and works. Now he wants you to hear
 His messenger's commands and carry them out 565
 In this lovely country. This earth is endless,
 Vital and green under God's heaven.
 The Lord himself hesitates to travel
 Such a long, hard road down from heaven,
 So he sent me here as his faithful servant 570
 To speak with you now about his mission,
 Teaching you the truth of this enabling tree
 By my wise words and cunning thought.
 Carry out his command. Take this fruit!
 Bite it! Taste it! Your mind will expand, 575
 Your heart enlarge, your form grow fair.
 This is God's gift from his home in heaven."
 Adam answered the serpent where he stood,
 Exercising faithfully his own free will,
 Alive to the effect of his making a choice: 580
 "When I listened to the solemn voice of the Lord,
 He gave me this land with commandments to keep
 And offered me Eve as my beauty-bright wife.
 He warned me not to be betrayed or bedeviled,
 Risking ruin for this dangerous fruit, 585
 Saying that whoever chooses evil in his heart
 Will inhabit hell, a dark house of pain.
 It's difficult to know what your purpose is.
 Are you an angelic messenger from heaven
 Or some devious liar with a hellish plan? 590
 Your so-called mission doesn't make much sense.
 Your tongue is twisted, your words are bewildering.
 I remember what our Lord and Savior said
 When I saw him last: he ordered me plainly
 To honor his word and keep his commands. 595
 You don't look much like an angel from heaven,
 Nor do you offer any token of God's favor,
 So I'm sorry to say I can't swallow your scheme.
 You should go away. I trust the power and truth
 Of the Master who made me with his own hands, 600
 Created me from clay, who raised up this woman

Out of my rib. He is able to bestow his favors
From highest heaven without sending a subordinate.”

Then the angry demon turned to Eve,
Beautifully formed, threatening harm to her 605
And all the children of earth to come,
Saying, “I know that God will be enraged
With both of you for being so stubborn,
When I fly home to heaven on the long road
And tell him you’ve rejected the righteous command 610
That he offered from the east. He will rise up in rage,
Forced to follow his own messenger here
Into Eden. I can’t predict what God will do,
But I know he will become a menace to you
Unless you accept this offer, a willing woman, 615
Obey these words and reach for a remedy,
Following his command without hesitation,
Escaping the pain of his punishing wrath.
If you listen to me, I’ll show you the way.
Eat this fruit, taste its sweetness, 620
Savor its power to open your eyes,
So that you can see beyond yourself,
Beyond this world to the throne of God
And curry favor with your own Creator.
You will also be able to lord it over Adam, 625
Control his desire, determine his will,
If that’s what you want and he trusts your words.
Just tell your husband you have in your heart
Fulfilled God’s purpose. He’ll believe in you
And give up his stubborn opposition and strife. 630
We can counsel him together, coax him carefully
To renounce his resistance, lest you should both
Prove loathsome to your Lord. Lean to the law,
O brightest and best of women—listen to me.
If you perform God’s purpose, I will come to your aid 635
In concealing Adam’s insults, his rebellious replies,
His arrogant, wounding words to God’s servant.
He thinks me malicious, calls me a liar,
Believes I have some secret, malevolent scheme,

And says unashamedly that I am no angel. 640
 But I have served a long life in heaven
 With my angelic thanes, loyal to the Lord.
 I know them well. I'm not just some devil."
 So the enemy of God urged Eve on,
 The deceitful serpent, coaxing her toward evil 645
 With his tempting lies until his devious words
 Grew hot in her heart, surging up in her mind.
 She began to surrender. Her will was weaker,
 Her nature more yielding, her promises more pliant
 Under God's shaping plan, so she was swept along 650
 By the devil's desires, his pernicious plot.
 She took from the fiend the fatal fruit
 From the tree of death against God's word.
 No worse deed was ever conceived.
 It's a great wonder that eternal God, 655
 The Prince of peace, would endure such enmity,
 And suffer his servants to be led astray
 By that subtle demon who seduced Eve,
 Marking mankind for endless suffering.
 Then Eve ate the fruit, swallowing sin, 660
 Tasting death, against the will
 And word of the Lord. Through the gift
 Of that fiend, God's foe, who beguiled her
 With winsome words, betrayed her with lies,
 Eve's eyes were empowered. She seemed to see 665
 The brightness and beauty of heaven and earth,
 The power and glory of God's creation,
 Not through her own human eyes and mind,
 But through the demon's grafted gaze
 And his blazing vision, a devious dream. 670
 Then the fiend we have forsworn spoke—
 His counsel was cunning, his word-gift no good:
 "Darling Eve, now that you've drunk this nectar,
 Tasting the fruit, trusting my words,
 You can see for yourself that your form is fairer, 675
 Your beauty brighter, your goodness more gracious.
 Now the light before and within you

Beams from your body, blazes from your eyes.
 The world rejoices in your waking radiance.
 Use this for a purpose—tell Adam your tale. 680
 Explain how you acquired such subtle vision
 After hearing and heeding my wise counsel.
 Offer him this promise: if he yearns for the light
 That he sees in your eyes and will obey me now,
 Then I will hold him blameless for his blasphemies, 685
 Even though he deserves no redeeming pardon
 For his hateful words. I will also offer him
 A small portion of what I gave to you,
 The gift of God's vision, the eyes of light."
 So now the children of Eve know sin 690
 When they fall as all of mankind must,
 Though they may find through their suffering
 And amending their ways their Maker's mercy
 And be restored to their Lord again.
 So Eve came to Adam, carrying dark fruit 695
 And the demon's words—breathtaking, beautiful—
 The fairest woman in this new world,
 Because she was shaped by the hand of God,
 Even though she was seduced and snared
 By the devil's deceit into a web of sin. 700
 So both were unblessed, losing God's favor,
 Forfeiting heaven for many seasons.
 We mourn this loss. Woe to the one
 Who doesn't hear or heed this lesson,
 Who still has a chance to make a choice. 705
 Eve carried a sumptuous secret in her hands
 And a tempting truth hidden in her heart—
 The delicious fruit of the tree of death,
 Which God had forbidden his children to eat.
 That unblessed apple was the source and sign 710
 Of more sin to come. God set the terms:
 His servants did not have to suffer death—
 They could rise to the richness of heaven's hold
 If they refused the bait of that bitter fruit.
 God's enemy seduced Adam and Eve 715

And all of mankind. The woman's mind
 Was more malleable to him, her heart
 More hospitable to his concealed cunning.
 She was led to believe that the deceitful devil
 Was a divine messenger sent from God. 720
 His tongue seemed truthful, his words wise,
 His sign spectacular. She sidled up
 To her lord and master, saying to Adam:
 "Adam, my lord, this fruit is so sweet—
 It's a taste of bliss and a pleasure to eat. 725
 It will warm your heart and open your eyes
 To the world's brightness. God's beautiful angel
 Is everything he claims. By his radiant robes
 I can see that he's our Maker's messenger,
 Keeping his counsel, bearing us delicious, 730
 Invisible truths from the King of heaven.
 He's better a friend than an adamant foe.
 If you have spoken to him harshly today,
 He will forgive you for your heart's bitter hatred,
 If we promise to serve him and work his will. 735
 What will we gain by quarreling with an angel?
 It bedevils our chances for peace in paradise.
 He can plead our case with almighty God.
 With my unveiled eyes, I can see the Lord
 Who shaped this world, surrounded by splendor, 740
 Gathered in glory in the south-east of heaven,
 Encircled by angels in feathered cloaks.
 Who could offer such an insightful vision,
 If not God? Who could offer such harmonies
 To my human hearing? The Shaper's songs 745
 And the angels' wings are expanding my sight.
 This is no scheme. My mind is a miracle—
 Since I ate the apple, my eyes are enlightened.
 Here, take this fruit I hold in my hands.
 I offer it openly. Share my vision. 750
 Taste this greatness. I believe it's brought
 From the hand of God by his own command
 Through this mighty messenger. His words are wise.

He tells nothing but the truth. Take a bite!
 Nothing else on earth is equal to this. 755
 As the angel says, it's a gift from God."

Eve incessantly urged Adam all day long
 With words thick and fast to taste the fruit.
 This lure was aimed at expanding love
 Or sharing blame. That bite would turn bitter 760
 As they betrayed their Lord. The evil angel
 Encouraged them both to seize the moment
 And sate their desires with a taste of sweetness,
 The drink of death. To ease his envy,
 He meant to draw mankind into mortal error, 765
 To lead both Adam and Eve astray,
 Snared in sin and bound for slaughter.
 That twisted trickster, that hideous hell-hound,
 Knew that they would discover God's wrath
 And destroy their deed to a home in heaven. 770
 That fiend offered Eve his subtle lies,
 Bending her back to his own way of being.
 He delighted in deceiving the loveliest of women
 Into forfeiting God's favor. Seduced to sin,
 She sold her will and spoke his words, 775
 Betraying her heart and God's handiwork.
 His beautiful bride urged Adam on
 To share the fruit, till his spirit softened,
 And trusting her undaunted loyalty and love,
 He took the fruit. He ate the apple 780
 And lost himself. She little knew
 That mankind would suffer sin endlessly
 After taking a taste of that bitter fruit.
 She thought she would gain God's favor
 In obeying his messenger's winsome words. 785
 She talked her way into Adam's trust,
 Until her husband followed his heart
 And wound his will to her own desires.
 His act was an invitation out of Eden.
 What he took from Eve was death and damnation, 790

A savage sleep and a demon-dream,
 The devil's deceit and a home in hell,
 Though in name and nature, it seemed just fruit.
 That apple was endless agony and exile,
 Suffering on earth and torment in hell. 795
 With a shared bite of that unholy fruit,
 They marked themselves and all mankind
 With bitter death. They murdered the future.
 The cruel messenger cavorted around them,
 Skipping in sin, exulting in evil, 800
 Offering thanks to his lord, Satan, saying:
 "Now I have fully worked your will,
 Fulfilling your desire since the day we fell.
 At last I've led Adam and Eve astray.
 They've broken their bond, forsaken their Lord, 805
 Abandoned his word, his trust and teaching,
 Trading bliss for bale, rejoicing for wrath.
 Now they will find a hard path to heaven
 And a broad road to hell. Your envy is ended,
 Your heart's pain has perished. Ignominy is over. 810
 You don't have to grieve that your given place
 In heaven is handed over to usurping mankind,
 While you lie locked in hell's hot torment
 With a host of fiends who followed you down,
 Enthralled with your pride. God flew into a rage 815
 When we refused to bow down before him
 And beg for his blessing. But it was not our want
 To render him homage. We counted the cost
 And found it too great. Better freedom in hell
 Than servitude in heaven. God drove us down 820
 In his unchecked anger, his fiendish fury,
 Hurling bold angels into the fiery abyss,
 The blaze and burn of mind and bone,
 So he could restore the thrones of heaven,
 Handing our place to that muddle of mankind. 825
 We've marred his grace and emptied his thrones
 By misleading man. It's a devil's delight!
 We've caused God double trouble—
 The children of men have lost their hope

Of heaven, sinners bound for hell-fire, 830
 Bypassing bliss—and we've perverted God's purpose,
 Making the Lord lament his precious loss.
 Our Maker will mourn that he ever made man.
 Whatever we suffer is salved in Adam,
 Eased with Eve, as they will know pain, 835
 Passion, and perdition instead of paradise.
 The damnation of man has healed our hearts
 Since we have taken vengeance with victory
 In our endless conflict with our cruel Creator.
 We've endured enough. Now I'm headed home 840
 To greet you, my lord, the great Satan,
 Shackled in black hell in a clutch of fire."
 The meanest of messengers, that fierce fiend,
 Once more flew down to the doors of hell
 To be greeted by flames where his master lay, 845
 Chafing at his bonds, chained to the blaze.
 Then Adam and Eve began grieving.
 They sorrowed and spoke sharp words of woe,
 Discovering the fear that came with the fruit,
 The darkness of mind that death portended. 850
 They dreaded the righteous wrath of God,
 Realizing that they had defied his command.
 The woman wailed, lamenting her loss,
 Reproaching herself, repenting her choice,
 When she saw the radiance dim and disappear, 855
 The once bright sign from the false angel,
 The faithless demon who led them on
 With his devious counsel into dark calamity,
 Sin and shame, humiliation and hell.
 Sorrow smoked and seethed in their hearts. 860
 Sometimes the married pair prayed together,
 Calling on their Creator to punish them properly
 For breaking his command. Suddenly they saw
 The blunt truth that their bodies were bare.
 They needed no house and knew no toil 865
 In that precious land. They could have lived well,
 If only they had learned to obey God's command.
 Bound for misery, they heaped blame

On one another. Adam spoke up:
 “O Eve, you have by your egregious sin 870
 Marked us forever bound for death.
 Can you see our destiny, the dark abyss,
 The fierce flames of ruinous hell?
 Can you hear it raging? Heaven’s kingdom
 Is unlike that unholy fire. Here is the best land 875
 We might have held, rejoicing forever
 In this radiant land, God’s gift to us,
 If you had not listened to that inveterate liar
 Who tempted us to turn against our Lord,
 Following that monster instead of our Master. 880
 Now we sorrow in sin and fear our fate
 Because God warned us to guard religiously
 Against betrayal, a breach of trust,
 And the resulting torment, a terrible loss.
 Now hunger and thirst gnaw at my heart. 885
 Care and discomfort have entered Eden.
 How will we survive when the savage wind
 Blows from west or east, south or north?
 Storm-clouds will come, hail from heaven—
 Frost will follow us, snow stalk us, 890
 An evil cold come creeping over us.
 Sometimes the savage sun will blast
 Our frail bodies, scorching our skin
 As we walk naked, exposed to the elements.
 We’ve no free food, no sweet sustenance, 895
 No shield from the storm, no safe shelter
 From God’s righteous wrath, his punishing rage.
 How can we survive? Now I sorely regret
 Requesting God to make me a helpmate,
 Raising you up out of my own rib bone, 900
 For you have led me astray into hateful sin,
 My heart’s shame, and my Lord’s loathing.
 I regret that I ever laid eyes on you.”

Then Eve replied, the loveliest of women,
 Fairest of wives—still the handiwork of God, 905
 Even though ruined by the devious devil—
 Lamenting her loss of the Lord’s trust:

“You are right to reproach me with hard words,
 My lord and husband, yet the gall in your mind
 Cannot be greater than the grief in my heart.” 910
 Then Adam was downcast and answered Eve:
 “If I knew God’s will, perceived his punishment,
 You would see no hesitation in my heart,
 No doubt in my mind. If God commanded me
 To endure the ocean, sail blindly away 915
 On the dangerous waves, I would never flinch,
 But rush to a ship, risk sinking down
 To the sea-bottom and entering the abyss
 To accomplish his will. Now grace is gone,
 Bliss is abandoned. I have lost my precious 920
 Service to the Lord. There’s no joy in paradise.
 We can’t stand here naked forever,
 Baring our bodies for anyone to see.
 We failed God. Let’s head for the forest,
 Seeking a hideout in the wild wood.” 925
 So the two sad sinners turned away
 From their happy home, walking in woe
 Into the green forest where they sat in sorrow,
 Apart from paradise, awaiting their punishment,
 Afraid of the pain that promised to come 930
 Because they had broken their Lord’s command,
 Losing the gifts bestowed by God.
 Then Adam and Eve were sorely ashamed
 Of their bare bodies, covering themselves
 With torn ferns and fallen leaves. 935
 They owned nothing to wear in shame—
 They had no clothes. They bowed down together,
 Prostrated in prayer, begging each morning
 That God might come, that their almighty Father
 Would not forget them, but finding them in the wild, 940
 Would show them how to survive in the world,
 Living in the light after their loss of paradise.

Genesis A (continued)

Then almighty God, the glorious Prince,
 Came into paradise in the middle of the day

For a leisurely stroll. Our Lord and Savior, 945
 Our merciful Father, walked into Eden,
 Wanting to check on his beloved children.
 He knew they had eaten the forbidden fruit—
 Their glory was gone, their innocence undone.
 They scurried away, deprived of their dignity, 950
 To hide in the tree-shadows, torn and tormented
 By their shameful act, shaking with fear.
 They huddled in the gloom, hearing God's voice.
 The Lord of heaven summoned his servant,
 Keeper of each of the creatures in paradise. 955
 God called to Adam, his abject son,
 Who came naked to greet him, saying:
 "Here I am, Life-lord, hiding in the wild,
 For I have no clothes to cover the shame
 Of my bare body so I'm dressed in leaves. 960
 My thoughts are dark—my conscience torments me.
 I'm scathed by sin and dreading doom,
 Standing here stark naked before my Lord."
 God immediately answered Adam:
 "Tell me, my son, why do you seek 965
 These shadows in shame, this hopeless hideout?
 I left you and Eve unembarrassed in Eden,
 Your beautiful spirits bright with grace.
 Why do you cover your body with leaves,
 Inviting misery into your innocent mind 970
 Unless you have tasted the forbidden fruit,
 Eating the apple I forbade you to touch?"
 Then Adam answered his guardian Lord:
 "This beautiful woman, this beloved bride,
 Offered me the fruit, hand to mouth, 975
 Which I accepted in trust, betraying your word.
 Now I am marked within and without
 By a sense of sin. My world is woe."
 Then almighty God questioned Eve:
 "Tell me, my daughter, having touched the tree 980
 And tasted its fruit, what have you learned
 From this sinful way of seeing the world
 And being ashamed of yourself in Eden?

What did it profit you to be free in paradise
 Only to grasp the apple, taste bitter fruit, 985
 Devouring death in spite of my warning,
 My counsel and command? Can you grasp
 Its meaning, its unmaking? Does it twist your being
 From blessing to bale, from bliss to bane?
 Why did you offer Adam the apple to eat?" 990
 Then Eve, the loveliest of women, was ashamed
 As she listened to her lord and answered back:
 "The serpent tricked me, that gaudy devil,
 That devious snake, stalking me always
 With his twisted tongue and tempting words 995
 To grab that fruit, taste its sweetness,
 Gobble it up, swallowing sin,
 Until I snatched it like a shameless thief
 Against your will and wolfed it down.
 I admit I ate the apple. It was not right." 1000
 Then our Savior, the almighty Lord,
 Said to the snake, the guilty serpent:
 "Now you shall wander the face of the earth,
 Crawling through creation on your bare belly,
 Footless, speechless, heartless, and hated 1005
 By all of mankind. You shall eat dirt
 All the days of your life for this loathsome deed.
 The woman will despise you for dishing out discord
 And tread on your unholy head with her heel.
 You will lie in wait to wound her foot 1010
 With your vile, venomous forked tongue.
 The feud between you two will last forever,
 Marking and murdering your children's children.
 Your seeds will never be safe from strife
 As long as the earth exists. Now you know, 1015
 Evil enemy of man, what your life will be like."

In his righteous wrath, God spoke to Eve:
 "Depart from Eden. Turn your back on bliss.
 You shall now serve this man, be under his rule,
 In awe of his authority, in fear of his force. 1020
 You will suffer for your sin, atone for your evil,

Experience death, bear sons and daughters
 In pain and sorrow in this world of woe.”
 Then the eternal Lord spoke again to Adam—
 The Source of light had a dark message: 1025
 “Seek another homeland outside of Eden,
 A house of unhappiness on sorrow’s road,
 As a naked outcast, wandering in exile,
 Deprived of all the pleasures of paradise.
 Your soul and body are bound to be separated, 1030
 For the wages of sin are suffering and death.
 You shall live by your labor, tilling the land,
 Eating what you grow in the good earth,
 Earning your bread by the sweat of your brow
 Until that dreaded disease called death, 1035
 That inescapable illness you ate in the apple,
 Worms its dark way through your decadent body,
 Clutching your heart in a grim death-hold.”
 Listen, as we hear how endless affliction
 And mortal misery became the lot of mankind. 1040
 The Guardian of glory, our Lord and Creator,
 Dressed the couple in clothes, covering their bodies,
 Concealing their shame—then commanded them
 To depart from paradise to discover a life
 Constrained by need. At the Lord’s authority, 1045
 An angel followed with a sword of fire,
 Closing the gates of their joy-filled home,
 Their place in paradise of peace and pleasure.
 No man or woman who is guilty of sin
 Can pass through those gates. God’s guardian angel 1050
 Patrols that pathway, protecting paradise,
 A powerful warden who stands before
 The doors of glory, the life of bliss.
 Yet almighty God never intended
 To withdraw all favor from Adam and Eve, 1055
 Withholding the care and comfort of creation,
 Even though they had rebelled against him.
 Instead he left the heavenly roof
 Studded with holy stars and the day-sun’s

Sustaining light, the bright sky-candle. 1060
 He ordered the earth and sea to produce
 Meat and fruit to sustain the couple
 In their worldly needs. After their sin
 They lived in a land less abounding than Eden,
 A country of care, a world of woe. 1065
 They regretted their sin, reliving their shame.
 Then at God's command they produced children,
 Cain and Abel, two noble sons.
 Books tell us how those willing brothers
 Toiled each day, tilling and herding, 1070
 Amassing a wealth of grain and goods.
 The firstborn, Cain, farmed the land.
 The second, Abel, helped his father herd
 The family flocks. At harvest time,
 They both brought offerings to the Lord. 1075
 Abel offered the best beast he had,
 While Cain gave the worst grain to God.
 The Prince of angels, the King of creation,
 Looked down kindly on Abel's sacrifice
 But wouldn't consider the chaff of Cain. 1080
 Anger and envy entered Cain's heart.
 He thought he had been insulted by God.
 He hated his brother. His rage rose up,
 His hand struck down, killing his kin,
 The innocent Abel. That was unwise. 1085
 Then middle-earth swallowed the bitter gore
 Of brotherly blood. After that death-stroke
 More evil arose, a progeny of crime.
 From that branch grew abominable fruit
 On tenacious vines twisting the hearts 1090
 Of the children of men. Feuds flourished,
 Murders multiplied, grief grew wild.
 Mankind may well lament this history
 Of willful sin and wicked slaying.
 Ruin was forever rampant on earth 1095
 After Eve injured all of mankind
 With her evil sin after Adam was awakened

By the quickening breath from the Shaper's mouth,
And they tasted that baleful, forbidden fruit.

Then the Lord of glory approached Cain, 1100
Asking where on earth his brother Abel
Might be found. The worthless murder-maker,
Sin-shaper, devised this devious reply:
"Am I my brother Abel's keeper?
How can I know his comings and goings? 1105
How can I keep track of my kinsman's journey?"
Then the Prince of angels, the righteous Ruler,
Almighty God, spoke again to Abel:
"Why did you strike down your own kin
With a heart of rage and hands of wrath, 1110
Bury your brother in a slaughter-bed?
You have savagely killed my faithful servant,
And his blood cries out in anguish to me.
For this murderous deed you shall suffer
Pain and punishment, exile and agony, 1115
Endlessly cursed without recourse.
The earth will not offer you fruit or grain,
Bountiful gifts to sustain your needs,
Because you have bloodied her growing-ground
With violent hands. For this cold killing 1120
You must leave the country, flee from your family,
Wander in exile without kith or kin,
Deprived of grace, abhorrent to everyone."
Then Cain answered his Creator and Judge:
"I expect no pity, no mercy from my Maker. 1125
I have forfeited your favor, compassion, and care.
Now my feet must wander a woeful road.
I can expect only enmity from everyone
Who will endlessly hate me and remind me
With cruel hostility of my own crime. 1130
I murdered my brother, shedding his blood
On the innocent earth. Now banish me
From both my family and my fair homeland.
This feud is fixed. A killer will come
To murder me also. Cursed by my crime, 1135

My unholy sin, I will pass out of sight.”
 The Lord of virtue and victory responded:
 “There’s no easy exit for your endless suffering,
 No early death for a brother-destroyer.
 You’ll be a marked man, not easily murdered. 1140
 If anyone slays you, he will soon find
 Sevenfold vengeance upon his head.”
 Then the glorious Creator set a peace-sign,
 A mark of immunity, on that killer Cain,
 Lest some other assassin should ease his pain, 1145
 Steal his suffering, unwind his woe.
 The Lord ordered that unholy brother
 To depart from his mother, his kith and kin.
 Then Cain walked away from the sight of God,
 Condemned to wander an exile’s road, 1150
 An outcast and outlaw without friends and family.
 He went east to live far from his father,
 Where a beautiful woman bore heirs for him.
 His firstborn son was named Enoch.
 The family built a great stronghold, 1155
 The first fortified city of sword-wielding men.
 Then the generations after Enoch arose—
 His firstborn son was named Jarad.
 This was the beginning of the race of Cain.
 After Jarad, Mahalalel was keeper 1160
 Of his father’s inheritance until he died.
 Then his son Methuselah kept control,
 Sharing the family treasure with his kin,
 Son after son, until old and wise
 In accumulated years, he passed away. 1165
 His son Lamech became the new lord,
 Took the family hoard and household goods.
 His two wives, Adah and Zillah,
 Bore him heirs in his homeland.
 One of Lamech’s sons was called Jabal, 1170
 Who first awoke the sounds of the harp
 With his cunning hands, making melody.
 Another son of Lamech called Tubal-Cain
 Was a master-smith, the first of his kind

To shape farm implements of iron and brass, 1175
 Endlessly useful to the children of men.
 His craft was cunning, his skill unsurpassed.
 Lamech once told his two wives,
 Adah and Zillah, a miserable story
 Of family murder, confessing his crime: 1180
 “I murdered a man, an ancient relative,
 By killing Cain. He was my kin,
 The son of Adam, father of Enoch,
 Slayer of Abel. I stained my hands
 And my brooding heart with this bloody crime. 1185
 I watered the ground with his red gore.
 I know I will suffer God’s sevenfold vengeance
 For this kin-killing when I pass on.”

A righteous son was born to Adam
 In Abel’s stead—his name was Seth. 1190
 He was prosperous and blessed, a true comfort
 To his father and mother, Adam and Eve.
 His father, the first of men, said prayerfully:
 “The God of victories, the Lord of life,
 Has offered me another beloved son 1195
 To replace the boy that Cain killed.
 Now my mind is free from mourning,
 The sore grief in my heart is gone.
 I give God thanks for this precious gift.”
 So Adam’s line was brought to life again 1200
 When he had lived one hundred thirty years.
 Writings tell us that he increased his family
 With sons and daughters for eight hundred years
 And lived to be nine hundred thirty,
 When his spirit parted from this earthly life. 1205
 Then his son Seth succeeded Adam.
 He ruled his father’s realm and took a wife.
 He was one hundred five when he first began
 To produce heirs. His eldest son,
 Enosh, was the first of the children of men 1210
 To call on the hallowed name of God
 Since Adam walked on the green grass