

“If Sion hill delight thee more:”
Temple Imagery in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*

By Jacob Rennaker

“The first book proposes,...in brief, the whole subject: Man’s disobedience and the loss thereupon of Paradise wherein he was placed.”¹

In the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*, the narrator invokes the “Heav’nly Muse” to assist him in spinning his epic tale. He states: “If Sion hill / Delight thee more [than Horeb or Sinai] and Siloa’s brook that flowed / Fast by the oracle of God, I thence / Invoke thy aid to my advent’rous song / That with no middle flight intends to soar / Above th’ Aonian mount while it pursues / Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme” (I:10-16). Here, then, is the first reference to a temple (and a formidable one, at that!) within the pages of this classic text. Given this early reference to the temple, what role does temple imagery play in *Paradise Lost*? In examining such imagery in this text, I will first identify the terminology used to describe the Tabernacle, Jerusalem temple, and other temples within the poem. Following this examination, I will look for similar imagery in descriptions of the three primary stages of action in *Paradise Lost*: Heaven, Hell, and Eden.

Of Tabernacles and Temples

As mentioned above, the Jerusalem temple is recognized in the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*. The narrator focuses upon this sacred space once again as he invokes the “Heav’nly Muse” (III:13-26) to aid him in describing the scenes of Heaven. Says the narrator: “But chief / Thee, Sion, and the flow’ry brooks beneath / That wash thy hallowed feet and warbling flow, nightly I

¹ I:Argument. All quotations come from John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (ed. Gordon Teskey; New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005).

visit” (III:29-32). This reference to the holy hill of Sion (Zion) suggests that the narrator sees the temple (the source of its holiness) as a conceptual point of reference, one which he “nightly...visit[ed].”

The material precursor to this sacred temple complex, the Israelite Tabernacle, receives a rather lengthy description, but is not mentioned until the poem’s final book. As the archangel Michael shows Adam a vision of his posterity’s future, he describes the wandering of Israel in the wilderness and their receipt of a sacred structure in the following words:

[God] descending [to Sinai] will himself / In thunder, lightning, and loud trumpet’s sound / Ordain them laws, part such as appertain / To civil justice, part religious **rites** / Of **sacrifice**... Thus laws and rites / Established, such delight hath God in men / Obedient to His will, that He vouchsafes / Among them to set up his **tabernacle**, / The Holy One with mortal men to **dwell**. / By his prescript a **sanctuary** is framed / Of cedar overlaid with gold, therein / An **ark** and in the ark his testimony, / The records of his covenant. Over these / A **mercy-seat** of gold between the wings / Of two bright **cherubim**. Before Him burn / Seven **lamps** as in a zodiack representing / The heav’nly fires. Over the **tent** a **cloud** / Shall rest by day, a **fiery** gleam by night, / Save when they journey, and at length they come / Conducted by His angel to the land / Promised to Abraham and his seed (XII:228-232, 244-260).²

Many of these same words were used in describing the Jerusalem temple, which was to be a permanent fixture of worship and subsequently served as the great symbol of Israelite religion. In describing the transition from Tabernacle to Jerusalem temple, the archangel Michael utters the following words to Adam:

[David’s] next son [Solomon], for wealth and wisdom famed, / The **clouded ark** of God till then in **tents**, / Wand’ring, shall in a glorious **temple enshrine**. / Such follow him as shall be registered / Part good, part bad, of bad the longer scroll / Whose foul idolatries and other faults / Heaped to the popular sum will so incense / God, as to leave them and expose their land, / Their city, his **temple** and his **holy ark** / With all **his sacred things** a scorn and prey / To that proud city whose high walls thou saw’st / Left in confusion, Babylon thence called (XII:332-343).

² To aid in recognition, I will put temple-related words in **bold** letters.

The temple itself is painted in a positive light, but a majority of those who serve within its walls manage to pollute its sacred space.

This desacralizing of temple grounds is the subject of many passages at the beginning of *Paradise Lost*. The scene opens as Satan and his angels discover themselves cast from Heaven. In depicting this mass of angels, the narrator describes the newest tenants of Hell in the following:

The chief [of the fallen angels] were those who from the pit of Hell / Roaming to seek their prey on Earth, durst fix / Their **seats** long after next the **seat** of God, / Their **altars** by his **altar**, gods ador'd / Among the nations round, and durst abide / Jehovah thund'ring out of **Zion, throned** / Between the **cherubim**; yea, often placed / Within His **sanctuary** itself their **shrines**, / Abominations; and with cursed things / His holy **rites**, and solemn feasts profaned, / And with their darkness durst affront his light (I:381-391).

Part of their affront appears to be the imitation of legitimate fixtures, some even within the temple itself: false “seats,” “altars,” and “shrines.”³ This general statement receives greater specificity as the narrator describes individual fallen angels and how they affected the temple and worship in Jerusalem.

The narrator goes on to catalogue such offenses by these fallen angels, whose names coincide with later non-Israelite deities (whose worship plagued Israel for most of its history). The narrator points out that it was for these fallen angels / non-Israelite deities that “the race of Israel oft forsook / Their Living Strength and unfrequented left / His righteous **altar**” (I:432-434). The narrator provides several reasons why this was the case. One way that the fallen angels diverted attention from the sanctioned worship at the Jerusalem temple was the establishment of competing temples. For instance, one particular fallen angel “in his own **temple** on the grunsel edge...Dagon his name, sea monster, upward man / and downward fish,

³ Teskey notes that these lines allude to the “pagan deities worshipped near and even on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, brought thither by the foreign wives of kings such as Solomon,” citing 1 Kings 11:1-9. See Milton, *Paradise Lost*, p. 14, n. 383-91.

yet had his **temple high** / Reared in Azotus” (I:458-464). Another was “Rimmon whose delightful **seat** / was fair Damascus...He also ’gainst the **house** of God was bold...Ahaz, his sottish conqueror, whom he drew / God’s **altar** to disparage and displace / For one of Syrian mode whereon to burn / His odious offerings and adore the gods / Whom he had vanquished” (I:467-476).

Some tactics were more subtle. For the fallen angel Belial, “than whom a spirit more lewd / Fell not from Heaven or more gross to love / Vice for itself. To him no **temple** stood / Or **altar** smoked. Yet who more oft than he / in **temples** and at **altars** when **priest** / Turns atheist, as did Eli’s sons, who filled / With lust and violence the **house** of God?” (I:490-496).⁴ In this manner, the personnel who served in the temple became corrupted and led to a gradual diminishment of the presence of God within that formerly sanctified space.

Yet other fallen angels were much more direct in their intrusion upon the sacred space of the Jerusalem temple. Moloch, one of the chief fallen angels, led king Solomon “by fraud to build / His **temple** right against the **templ’** of God / On that opprobrious **hill**” (I:401-403). So, while not exactly encroaching upon the temple complex, his temple was reared as close as possible, perhaps gaining credibility in the eyes of Israel by being established on the same holy hill.

Similarly, Astoreth had a temple built for her “in **Sion**...where stood / Her [Astoreth’s] **temple** on th’ offensive **mountain**, built / By that uxorious king [Solomon] whose heart, though large, / Beguiled by fair idolatresses, fell / To idols foul” (I:442-446). Hitting closer to the divine home, however, was Thammuz, whose “love-tale / Infected Sion’s daughters with like heat / Whose wanton passions in the **sacred porch** / Ezekiel saw when by the vision led / His eye

⁴ This reference to “Eli’s sons” recounts the situation in 1 Sam. 2:12 where the priestly children of the temple’s high priest, Eli, are described as “sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord.”

surveyed the dark idolatries / Of alienated Judah” (I:452-457). The reaches of this fallen angel extended onto the “sacred porch” of the Jerusalem temple, which was actually part of a larger trend of temple de-sanctification.⁵

This brings us back to the archangel Michael’s original reference to the Jerusalem temple. As a result of such “foul idolatries and other faults,” God leaves his people and exposes “their land, / Their city, his **temple** and his **holy ark** / With all his **sacred things**” (XII:337, 339-341), and they are left prey to Babylon. In four lines, the archangel Michael summarizes the Babylonian exile and then *immediately* turns to the subject of the temple:

Returned from Babylon by leave of kings / Their lords (whom God disposed) **the house of God** / They first re-edify and for a while / In mean estate live moderate, till grown / In wealth and multitude, factious they grow. / But first among the **priests** dissention springs, / Men who attend the **altar** and should most / Endeavour peace. Their strife pollution brings / Upon the **temple** itself (XII:348-356).

Once again, the temple is depicted as a supremely sacred space, but a space that is not immune to outside influences; the actions of the priesthood ultimately pollute its sacred precincts.

Perhaps it is not the frequent corruption, but the *corruptibility* of this particular holy place that leads the narrator to favor the non-temporal aspects of worship. During his invocation of the “Heavn’ly Muse,” and after praising “Sion hill” which contained “the oracle of God” (I:10,12), the narrator states, “O Spirit, that dost prefer before all **temples** th’ upright heart and pure” (I:17-18). Along these same lines, the archangel Michael describes the pious as God’s “living **temples** built by faith to stand” (XII:527).⁶ Such intangible “temples” were much more difficult to

⁵ Teskey comments that “In Ezekiel 8 the prophet is carried in spirit to Jerusalem and shown various sacrileges being committed there, among which were women sitting by the gate of the temple precinct weeping for Thammuz...and men inside the temple committing the *dark idolatry* of turning their backs to the altar and facing east to worship the sun.” See Milton, *Paradise Lost* p. 16, n. 452-57.

⁶ This view was common in Christianity, as Teskey explains: “Each Christian is a *living temple*, surpassing the temple at Jerusalem (which was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D.)” See Milton, *Paradise Lost*, p. 300, n. 527.

destroy. However, despite the general skepticism towards the role of the Jerusalem temple, temple imagery appears throughout *Paradise Lost*, especially in its depictions of Heaven, Hell, and Eden. Before turning to these, however, I will first examine two elements of temple-related imagery that run throughout the poem: angels and priesthood.

Angels

Angels play a significant role in *Paradise Lost*. This primary populous of heaven is divided into a number of different ranks,⁷ many of which are mentioned by the angel Raphael as he describes to Adam the effort to cast the fallen angels from Heaven:

The Son / On his great expedition now appeared / Girt with omnipotence, with radiance crowned / Of majesty divine, sapience and love / Immense, and all his Father in him shone. / About his chariot numberless were poured / Cherub, and seraph, potentates and thrones, / And virtues, winged spirits, and chariots winged / From th' armory of God (VII:192-200).

Among these myriads of angels, the most common (and noteworthy) are the “Seraphim” and the “Cherubim,” the only two types of angels explicitly linked to temples in the Hebrew Bible.

The Seraphim, the highest order of angels in the poem, are mentioned twenty times in *Paradise Lost*.⁸ The aforementioned Raphael was designated as a Seraph, and was described by the narrator in the following: “At once on th’ eastern cliff of Paradise / He lights and to his proper shape returns / A seraph winged. Six wings he wore to shade / His lineaments divine”

This view is rooted in the apostle Paul’s statement that “God’s temple is holy, and you [the church community] are that temple” (1 Cor. 3:17).

⁷ The complete list of angels by rank, arranged from highest to lowest is: seraphim, cherubim, thrones, dominations, virtues, powers, principalities, archangels, and angels. See Milton, *Paradise Lost*, p. 556, s.v. Cherubim.

⁸ I:129, 324, 539, 794; II:512, 750; III:381, 667; V:Argument, 277, 749, 804, 875, 896; VI:249, 579, 604, 841; VII:113, 198.

(V:275-277). This type of angel only appears once in the Hebrew Bible, in a temple setting.

Isaiah 6:13 reads,

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraph[im] were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

The six-winged Seraphim, then, are directly tied to the temple from a biblical perspective; they are present in the presence of God, which is symbolically represented by the temple (and which, in Isaiah’s mind, may have been one and the same location).

While the Seraphim are the highest order of angels in *Paradise Lost*, the second-ranking Cherubim are the type of angel appearing most frequently: they are mentioned twenty-nine times, appearing in all but two books.⁹ In *Paradise Lost*, they were “responsible for guarding the presence of God from profanity.”¹⁰ This role is depicted clearly by the narrator as he describes the gate of Eden: “Now had night measured with her shadowy cone / Half way up hill this vast sublunar vault / And from their ivory port the cherubim / Forth issuing at th’ accustomed hour stood armed / To their night watches in warlike parade” (IV:776-780). The Hebrew Bible mentions Cherubim as guardians of the way to Eden (Gen. 3:24), but also in connection with both the Tabernacle (Ex. 25:18) and Jerusalem temple (1 Kgs. 6:27).

In relationship to the Tabernacle, the Cherubim are related to the Ark of the Covenant, as described by the archangel Michael to Adam: “By his [God’s] prescript a sanctuary is framed / Of cedar overlaid with gold, therein / An ark and in the ark his testimony, / The records of his covenant. Over these / A mercy-seat of gold between the wings / Of two bright cherubim”

⁹ I:157, 324, 387, 534, 665, 794; II:516; III:636, 666; IV:778, 844, 971; V:547; VI:102, 413, 535, 753, 771; VII:198, 218; IX:61, 68; XI:Argument, 100, 120, 128; XII:Argument, 254, 628.

¹⁰ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, p. 556, s.v. Cherubim.

(XII:249-254). In regards to the Jerusalem temple, the same Cherubim-covered Ark was housed inside its sacred walls (see XII:332-343). This imagery of Cherubim bearing Deity on their wings also appears as Raphael describes the movements of the Son in two different fields of action, and both describe the Cherubim as part of the chariot-throne of God. Raphael tells Adam that during the final campaign of the war in Heaven, “He [the Son] on **the wings of cherub** rode sublime / On the crystalline sky in sapphire **throned**” (VI:771-772) to vanquish the rebellious angels. It is from this same chariot-throne that the Son engages in the acts of creating the world, where he “on **the wings of cherubim** / Uplifted in paternal glory rode / Far into chaos and the world unborn” (VII:218-220).

The chariot-throne appears in greater detail in Raphael’s descriptions of the heavenly battle between Satan (with his band of rebellious angels) and the Son (with the rest of the loyal angels):

Forth rushed with whirlwind sound / The **Chariot of Paternal Deity**, / Flashing thick flames, **wheel within wheel** undrawn, / Itself instinct with spirit, but convoyed / By **four cherubic shapes**. / Four faces each / Had wondrous. / As with stars, their bodies all / And wings were set with eyes, with eyes the wheels / Of beryl and careering fires between. / Over their heads a **crystal firmament** / Whereon a **sapphire throne** inlaid with pure / Amber, and colours of the showery arch (VI: 749-759).

Shortly thereafter, Raphael adds this to his description:

At once the **four [cherubim]** spread out their starry wings / With dreadful shade contiguous and the **orbs** / Of **his fierce chariot** rolled as with the sound / Of torrent floods or of a num’rous host. / He on his impious foes right onward drove / Gloomy as night. Under his burning wheels / The steadfast empyrean shook throughout / All but **the throne itself of God**¹¹...Nor less on either side tempestuous fell / His arrows from **the fourfold-visaged four** / Distinct with eyes and from the living wheels / Distinct alike with multitude of eyes (VI:827-834, 844-847).

¹¹ It is interesting to note that in this passage, a distinction is made between God’s eternally stable, stationary throne and God’s chariot; for Satan, they are one and the same (see VI:100-103).

The Father and the Son, however, are not the only ones to utilize such a glorious mode of transportation. Satan creates a counterfeit¹² chariot-throne in his bid to rival the God of Heaven: “High in the midst exalted as a god / Th’ Apostate [Satan] in his sun-bright **chariot** sat, / Idol of majesty divine, enclosed / With flaming **cherubim** and golden shields, / Then lighted from his gorgeous **throne**” (VI:99-103).¹³ These cherubic chariot-thrones are described in ways that clearly link them to the imagery of the temple.

The narrator draws heavily upon Ezekiel’s initial vision as recorded in the Hebrew Bible. There is a whirlwind and fire (1:4), four creatures each with four faces (1:5-6), a multiplicity of wheels within wheels (1:15-16), a firmament of crystal (1:22), and a sapphire throne (1:26). These images are then linked directly to the temple as Ezekiel has a similar vision, this time of the temple complex itself. In Ezekiel 10, there is a firmament and a sapphire throne above the cherubim (10:1), fire (10:2, 6-7), wheels within wheels (10:9-10), and four-faced cherubim (10:14, 21).¹⁴ Also, in this subsequent description of God’s chariot-throne, the narrator adds the detail that the wheels and the cherubim are completely covered in eyes (10:12). Taken together, these temple-related elements appear in Raphael’s description of the chariot-throne used by the Son,¹⁵ as well as that created and used by Satan.

¹² In case there is any question that Satan’s chariot-throne is meant to evoke the chariot-throne of God, upon seeing Satan’s glorious mode of transportation, the angel Abdiel laments, “O Heav’n! That such resemblance of the Highest / Should yet remain where faith and fealty / Remain not!” (VI: 114-116).

¹³ The chariots used by the other fallen angels are of a completely different and unremarkable make. See VI:210-211.

¹⁴ In fact, at this point the narrator makes an explicit connection between the two visions: “These were the living creatures that I saw underneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar [cf. Ezek. 1:1, 5-10]; and I knew that they were cherubim. Each had four faces, each four wings, and underneath their wings something like human hands. As for what their faces were like, they were the same faces whose appearance I had seen by the river Chebar” (Ezek. 10:20-22).

¹⁵ The Son’s chariot-throne actually belongs to the Father (see VI:750).

Priesthood

Another somewhat subtle element of temple imagery functioning within the narrative of *Paradise Lost* is language alluding to priesthood, the caretakers and officiators within those sacred precincts. We encountered this above with the narrator's statement in the first book that because of the influence of the fallen angels "in temples and at altars...priest / Turns atheist, as did Eli's sons, who filled / With lust and violence the house of God" (I:494-496). The priestly role of the angels is described by the Father to the Son in the following statement. The Father explains that even though a large number of angels were cast out of heaven, "Heav'n yet populous retains / Number sufficient to possess her realms, / Though wide, and this **high temple** to frequent / With **ministeries** due and **solemn rites**" (VII:146-149). The angels are also described as performing the priestly act of singing and making music.¹⁶ The narrator states at the outset of book seven that God "sends his Son with glory and attendance of angels to perform the work of Creation in six days; the **angels celebrate with hymns** the performance thereof" (VII: Argument) and "So sung they [the angels] and the empyrean rung / With hallelujahs" (VII:633-634).¹⁷

Priestly sacrifice was a major element of temple worship.¹⁸ The narrator describes Adam's vision of his future son Abel's sacrifice in these words: "A shepherd next / More meek came with the firstlings of his flock / Choicest and best, then sacrificing laid / The inwards and their fat with **incense** strewed / On the cleft woo, and all due **rites** performed. / His **offering** soon

¹⁶ See 2 Chron. 5:11-13; 29:30.

¹⁷ For the contents of this song, see VII:602-632.

¹⁸ According to 2 Kgs. 18:22, proper sacrifice and worship was only possible within the confines of the Jerusalem temple.

propitious **fire from Heav'n** / Consumed with nimble glance and grateful steam" (XI:436-442). Significantly, the imagery of fire from Heaven consuming a sacrifice appears in the dedication of Solomon's temple: "When Solomon had ended his prayer, *fire came down from heaven* and consumed the burnt *offering* and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple" (2 Chron. 7:1, emphasis mine). The priestly duty of sacrificing and making other offerings to God is explained to Adam by the archangel Michael regarding the actions of Adam's posterity after the great flood: "[Some] shall lead their lives and multiply apace, / Laboring the soil and reaping plenteous crop, / Corn, wine, and oil, and from the herd or flock / Oft **sacrificing** bullock, lamb or kid / With large wine **off'rings** poured an sacred feast, / Shall spend their days in joy unblamed and dwell / Long time in peace by families and tribes / Under paternal rule" (XII:17-24). Thus, for the narrator, proper sacrifices to God were *necessary* for prosperity and joy.

Another significant collection of priestly imagery in *Paradise Lost* relates to the Son as both a priest and as a sacrifice.¹⁹ The Son makes the former explicit following Adam and Eve's penitence upon their expulsion from Eden:

See, Father, what first fruits on earth are sprung / From Thy implanted grace in Man,
these sighs / And prayers, which in this **golden censer** mixed / With **incense I Thy priest**
before thee bring, / Fruits of more pleasing savor from Thy seed / Sown with contrition in
his heart than those / Which his own hand manuring all the trees / Of Paradise could have
produced ere fallen / From innocence (XI:22-30).

The burning of incense was a task to be performed by the high priest Aaron and his descendants before the Tabernacle's veil concealing the Holy of Holies (see Ex. 30:1-8).

The Son is described elsewhere using terminology only associated with the high priest. Here, Raphael is describing to Adam the scene of the heavenly battle between the rebellious and faithful angels: "He [the Son], in celestial panoply all armed / Of radiant **Urim**, work divinely

¹⁹ Both themes appear throughout the New Testament epistle to the Hebrews.

wrought, / Ascended” to the field of battle (VI:760-762). In Leviticus, Moses is portrayed as endowing the high priest Aaron with the following items: “He put the tunic on him, fastened the sash around him, clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod on him. He then put the decorated band of the ephod around him, tying the ephod to him with it. He placed the breastpiece on him, and in the breastpiece he put the Urim and the Thummim” (Lev. 8:7-8).²⁰ In *Paradise Lost*, the Son is the only being described in this way.²¹

In addition to being described as a priestly figure, the Son is also portrayed as the priestly sacrifice, further casting him in the light of the temple. Speaking to the Father of humanity’s deplorable condition after the transgression of Adam and Eve, the Son says, “once dead in sins and lost: / **Atonement** for himself or offering meet, / Indebted and undone, hath none to bring. / Behold Me then, Me for him, life for life / I offer” (III:233-237). Atonement was made by the high priest for himself as well as for the entire congregation of Israel on the Day of Atonement according to Lev. 16:-2-14. In a subtle move, the Son becomes the offering made to grant such atonement, when the narrator states, “As a **sacrifice**, / glad to be offered, He [the Son] attends the will of his great Father” (III:269-271). This temple-related sacrifice of the Son is alluded to by the archangel Michael as he explains to Adam the allusive nature of the law given to Moses: “Law can discover sin but not remove / Save by those shadowy **expiations** weak, / **The blood of**

²⁰ The Urim are mentioned again in Num. 27:21, where Joshua is to use these mysterious items to obtain the will of God: “He [Joshua] shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the decision of the Urim before the LORD; at his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the Israelites with him, the whole congregation.”

²¹ Only one other explicit reference to the high priest’s clothing is made in *Paradise Lost*: the narrator describes the material of which the sun is made of as he recounts Satan’s closest contact with this glorious light-giving orb: “The place he [Satan] found beyond expression bright / Compared with aught on earth, metal or stone. / Not all parts like but all alike informed / With radiant light as glowing iron with fire. / If metal, part seemed gold, part silver clear. / If stone, carbuncle most or chrysolite, / Ruby or topaz, to the twelve that shone / In **Aaron’s breastplate**” (III:591-598).

bulls and goats, they may conclude / Some blood more precious must be paid for Man” (XII:290-293). This “blood more precious” was offered by the priestly Son- both as the one offering sacrifice (XI:22-30) *and* as the sacrificial victim (III:269-271).

Heaven, Hell, and Eden as Temples

Perhaps the most intriguing aspects of temple imagery in *Paradise Lost* are the depictions of the book’s three primary arenas of action: Heaven, Hell, and Eden. Scattered throughout descriptions of each are phrases used elsewhere in the poem describing the Tabernacle and Jerusalem temple. In addition, some of the imagery used to describe these locations, although not used elsewhere in the book, nevertheless reflects the biblical depictions of sacred space. I will examine the depictions of each in turn, highlighting the use of such language.

Temple Imagery in Heaven

As the dwelling place of God, it is not surprising that the language used to describe Heaven is similar to that used to describe the Tabernacle and Jerusalem temple. In two separate passages, an *explicit* connection is made between Heaven and the temple. One such statement was quoted above: in answering the Son’s concern that the expelled fallen angels had depleted the populous of Heaven too much, the Father answers, “Heav’n yet populous retains / Number sufficient to possess her realms, / Though wide, and **this high temple** to frequent / With **ministeries** due and **solemn rites**” (VII:146-149). Not only is the Heaven depicted as a temple in this passage, but the actions of the angels are equated with those performed by the priesthood in the Tabernacle and Jerusalem temple.

The other explicit reference to Heaven as a temple appears in the poem's preceding book. Here, the angel Raphael describes the triumphant return of the Son to the presence of the Father following his expulsion of the rebellious angels from Heaven: "Sole Victor, from th' expulsion of his foes / Messiah his triumphal **chariot** turned...He, celebrated, rode / Triumphant through mid Heav'n into the **courts** / And **temple** of his mighty Father **throned** / **On high** who into glory Him received / Where now He sits at the right hand of bliss" (VI:880-881, 888-892). This passage associates the heavenly temple with courts, a throne, and sacred heights.

The "courts" of Heaven make one other appearance in Raphael's discussion with Adam concerning the nature of the war in Heaven. In describing the events leading up to this conflict, Raphael states,

Wide over all the plain and wider far / Than all the globous earth in plain outspread, / (Such are the **courts of God**) th' angelic throng, / Dispersed in bands and files, their camp extend / By living streams among the trees of life, / Pavilions numberless, and sudden reared, / **Celestial tabernacles**, where they [the angels] slept / Fanned with cool winds; save those who in **their course** / Melodious **hymns** about the **sov'reign throne** / Alternate all night long (V:648-657).

Included in this depiction of temple-related courts are the dwelling-places of angels, which are referred to as "tabernacles," thus indicating their holiness as well as their relative sanctity compared to the permanently established temple-throne of God seen elsewhere. The angels present here are described as having "courses," which in biblical terminology refers to the positions of responsibility for temple-related services that different priestly families held.²²

²² For example, the King James Version describes the Passover of Josiah, the divisions of the priests, and their related temple offerings in the following: "Moreover Josiah kept a passover unto the Lord in Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the Lord, And said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the Lord, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders: serve now the Lord your God, and his people Israel, And prepare yourselves by the houses of your fathers, *after your courses*, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son...So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their place, and the Levites *in*

According to this passage, these priest-like angels were surrounding the sacred throne of God, to which we now turn.

The throne of God receives a great deal of attention in passages dealing with Heaven, and as previously stated, was tied to the imagery of the heavenly temple (VI: 888-892). This is reaffirmed by the language of Mammon, a rebellious angel, as he describes his disdain for the traditional actions of angels: “With what eyes could we / Stand in his presence humble, and receive / Strict laws imposed, to celebrate His **throne** / With warbled **hymns**, and to his Godhead sing / Forced hallelujahs; while He lordly **sits** / Our envied sov’ reign, and His **altar** breathes / Ambrosial odors and ambrosial flowers, / Our servile **offerings**?” (II:239-246).²³ This negative valuation of the temple-throne of God is frequent in the first two books of *Paradise Lost*, which chronicle the character and council of the fallen angels in Hell. Satan states that “He who reigns / Monarch [God]...sat on His **throne** upheld by old repute” (I:638-639). He then goes on to boast that if his plan against Heaven is successful, God will behold “horror shot with equal rage / Among His angels and His **throne** itself / Mixed with Tartarean sulphur and strange fire” (II:67-69). Similarly, the fallen angel Moloch believes that the fallen angels’ power is “sufficient to disturb His Heav’n / And with perpetual inroads to alarm, / Though inaccessible, His [God’s] fatal **throne**, / Which if not victory is yet revenge” (II:102-105).

their courses, according to the king’s commandment.” (2 Chron. 35:1-4, 10, emphasis mine). For king David’s initial priestly divisions, see 1 Chron. 23.

²³ Mammon again mentions the throne of God shortly thereafter: “How oft amidst / Thick clouds and dark doth Heav’n’s all-ruling Sire / Choose to reside, His glory unobscured, / And with the majesty of darkness round / Covers His **throne** from whence deep thunders roar” (II:263-268). He also uses “throne” language in an earlier statement. The fallen angel Mammon speaks skeptically concerning the chances of a victorious affront against the temple-throne of God in the following: “Either to dis**enth**rone the King of Heav’n / We war, if war be best, or to regain / Our own right lost. Him to **unth**rone we then / May hope when everlasting Fate shall yield / To fickle Chance and Chaos judge the strife” (II:229-233).

The fallen angel Belial, however, believes that an attack against Heaven would fail, due to the sanctity of God's throne. He states, "Heav'n's purest light, yet our great Enemy / All incorruptible would on His [God's] **throne** / Sit unpolluted and th'ethereal mould,²⁴ / Incapable of stain, would soon expel / Her mischief and purge off the baser fire [from Hell], / Victorious" (II:137-142). Along these same lines, in a confrontation with Satan, the righteous angel Abdiel outlines Satan's plan regarding God's holy habitation: "Proud, art thou [Satan] met? Thy hope was to have reached / The heighth of thy aspiring unopposed, / The **Throne of God** unguarded and His side / Abandoned at the terror of thy power / Or potent tongue" (VI:131-135). In similar terms, the angel Raphael describes Satan's plan to overtake the heavenly throne of God: "They [the rebellious angels] weened / That selfsame day by fight or by surprise / To win the **Mount of God** and on **His throne** / To set the envier of His state, the proud Aspirer [Satan]" (VI:86-90).²⁵ This plan proved fruitless, as Satan and his fellow rebellious angels were ultimately cast into Hell.

Much more frequent in *Paradise Lost* are positive statements regarding the holy throne of God. Speaking of the Father's vantage point over creation, the narrator states, "Now had th' almighty Father from above, / From the pure empyrean where He sits / **High throned** above all heighth, bent down His eye / His own works and their works at once to view" (III:56-59).²⁶ In

²⁴ Teskey notes that the phrase "ethereal mould" refers to the throne of God as a "heavenly structure, which would of itself expel the foreign substance of infernal fire." See Milton, *Paradise Lost*, p. 30, n. 139.

²⁵ The narrator of the first book also describes Satan as one with "ambitious aim against the **throne**...of God" (I:41-42).

²⁶ At the outset of this third book, the narrator describes "God sitting on His **throne** see[ing] Satan flying towards this world" (III: Argument). In a similar depiction, Raphael describes the following to Adam regarding God's posture following the battle in Heaven: "th' Omnipotent / Eternal Father from His **throne** beheld / Their [the fallen angels'] multitude" (VII:136-138). Later in *Paradise Lost*, an equivalent phrase is used to describe the place from which God sees creation: "Th' Almighty seeing / From His **transcendent seat** the saints among / To those bright orders [of angels] uttered thus His voice" (X:613-615). See below for a discussion of the sacred "seat" of God.

praising God, the angels of Heaven emphasize the sacredness of this throne: “Thee Author of all being, / Fountain of light, Thyself invisible / Amidst the glorious brightness where Thou sitt’st / **Throned** inaccessible” (III:374-377). In addition, an angel’s proximity to this throne is indicative of the angel’s status; the closer the angel is, the holier the angel (see III:648-650, 654-661). Adam and Eve describe the activities in Heaven in relation to the throne of God in their morning worship in Eden: “For ye [angels] behold Him and with songs / And choral symphonies day without night / Circle His **throne** rejoicing, ye in Heav’n!” (V:161-163). This throne, then, is the sacred center of heaven, with angels encircling it.²⁷

The term “seat” also appears to have served a similar function as “throne” in describing the temple-throne of God and its environs. The Father describes his temple-throne in the following way: “Our envious foe [Satan] hath failed tho thought / All like himself rebellious, by whose aid / This inaccessible high strength, **the seat / Of Deity supreme**, us dispossessed” (139-142). In a similar way, the fallen angels speak of the place in Heaven from which they were cast out as their “native seat” (I:634; II:75-76, 1047-1050; see also VI:223-229).²⁸ This phrase “seat of God”²⁹ is also evocative of the “mercy seat” of the Tabernacle, where God was said to sit “enthroned upon the cherubim”³⁰ of the ark within the Holy of Holies.³¹ This “mercy seat” is

²⁷ See also Raphael’s description of Heaven to Adam: “Heav’n’s Great Year brings forth th’ empyreal host / Of angels, by imperial summons called, / Innum’rable before th’ Almighty’s **throne** / Forthwith, from all the ends of Heav’n, appeared / Under their hierarchs in orders bright, / Ten thousand thousand ensigns high advanced” (V:583-585). This most powerful contingent of angels was sent forth against the rebellious angels, as described by Satan in the following: “What Heaven’s Lord had pow’rfullest to send / Against us from about **His throne** and judged / Sufficient to subdue us to His will” (VI:425-427). The Father’s will also radiates from this sacred location: “from **His throne supreme** / Th’ Almighty thus pronounced His sov’rign will” (XI:82-83).

²⁸ Satan, in addressing the fallen angels, uses slightly different language: “Great things [have been] resolved which from the lowest deep / Will once more lift us up, in spite of fate, / Nearer our ancient **seat**” (II:392-394), but “native seat” and “ancient seat” can be seen as equivalent phrases here.

²⁹E.g. “Yet this will prayer [do] / Or one short sigh of human breath upborn / Ev’n to **the seat of God**” (XI:146-148). See also above for references.

³⁰ Ps. 99:1.

described in *Paradise Lost* as Adam and Eve pray for forgiveness following their expulsion from Eden: “Thus they in lowliest plight repentant stood / Praying for from the **mercy-seat above** / Prevenient grace descending had removed / The stony from their hearts and made new flesh / Regenerate grow instead” (XI:1-5). This connection between the “seat of God” and the “mercy seat” of the Tabernacle and temple serves to strengthen the literary image of a temple in Heaven.

Both the “throne”³² and “sacred seat”³³ of God are equated with yet another temple-related image: the sacred heights of Heaven. This elevated place where God dwells is affirmed as sacred space as the Father says the following to the Son preceding the battle in Heaven: “A foe / Is rising who intends t’ erect his **throne** / Equal to ours throughout the spacious north!...Let us advise and to his hazard draw / With speed what force is left and all employ / In our defense , lest unawares we lose / This our **high place**, our **sanctuary**, our **hill**” (V:724-726, 729-732).³⁴ Thus, the “high abode,”³⁵ “holy hill,”³⁶ “sacred hill,”³⁷ and “high Mount of God”³⁸ should all be

³¹ See Ex. 25:10-22 and 1 Kgs. 8:6-7.

³² “They [the rebellious angels] weened / That selfsame day by fight or by surprise / To win the **Mount of God** and on **His throne** / To set the envier of His state, the proud Aspirer [Satan]” (VI:86-90).

³³ “Onto the **sacred hill** / They led him [Abdiel, the faithful angel who challenged Satan’s plan to overthrow the throne of God] high applauded and present / Before the **Seat Supreme**” (VI:25-27).

³⁴ Raphael describes the Father sitting upon this elevated holy place in the following: “the Father Infinite, / By whom in bliss imbosomed sat the Son, / Amidst as from a **flaming mount**, whose top / Brightness had made invisible” (V:596-599).

³⁵ “So ev’n and morn accomplished the sixth day, / Yet not till the Creator from his work / Desisting, though unwearied, up returned, / Up to the Heav’n of Heav’ns his **high abode** / Thence to behold this new created world, / Th’ addition of his empire, how it showed / In prospect from his **throne**, how good, how fair, / Answering his great idea” (VII:550-557).

³⁶ “This day I have begot whom I declare / My only Son and on this **holy hill** / Him have **anointed** whom ye now behold / At My right hand” (V:603-606). Cf. Ps. 2:7; see also Ps. 110:1-4.

³⁷ “Onto the **sacred hill** / They led him [Abdiel, the faithful angel who challenged Satan’s plan to overthrow the throne of God] high applauded and present / Before the **Seat Supreme**” (VI:25-27).

seen in light of the temple. Raphael's depiction of the seventh day of creation makes this connection even more clear:

And now on earth the seventh / Evening arose in Eden for the sun / Was set and twilight
form the east came on / Forerunning night when at the **holy mount** / Of **Heav'n's high-
seated top, th' imperial throne** / Of Godhead fixed for ever firm and sure, / The Filial
Pow'r arrived and sat Him down / With his great Father...Of **incense** clouds / Fuming
from **golden censers** hid the Mount (VII:581-588, 599-600).

In this passage, the "holy mount" is depicted with a sacred "throne," and is also surrounded by the same "incense" that the priests would offer in the Tabernacle and Jerusalem temple.³⁹

As seen in the previous quotation, Heaven is sometimes depicted using language reminiscent of the priestly world associated with the Tabernacle and Jerusalem temple. In addition to angels functioning as priesthood in Heaven,⁴⁰ there are a number of references to priestly images in Heaven. As noted above, songs of worship are sung in Heaven, and angelic trumpets⁴¹ resemble the priestly שופר, which was also used in temple worship.⁴² Incense was offered before the Holy of Holies,⁴³ as well as the temple in Heaven,⁴⁴ and the golden lamps of

³⁸ "Ambrosial night with clouds exhaled from that **high Mount of God** (whence light and shade / Spring both)" (V:642-64; cf. Ezek. 43:15. The "hearth" of the altar is actually the *har el*, literally, "mount of God"). See also Raphael's statements to Adam: "There is a cave / Within the **Mount of God** fast by **His throne** / Where light and darkness in perpetual round / Lodge and dislodge by turns" (VI:4-7), and "They [the rebellious angels] weened / That selfsame day by fight or by surprise / To win the **Mount of God** and on **His throne** / To set the envier of His state, the proud Aspirer [Satan]" (VI:86-90).

³⁹ See above.

⁴⁰ See above. In addition, hymns sung by a heavenly choir (without explicit mention of angels) are mentioned in III:147-149; III:217-218; III:347-350; IV:943-945; and V:251-254.

⁴¹ VI:59-64.

⁴² E.g. Ps. 150:1, 3. See also Josh. 6:15-16 and Joel 2:1.

⁴³ See Lev. 16:12-13.

⁴⁴ VII:599-600.

the **מנרה** were kept burning by priests in the Tabernacle,⁴⁵ Jerusalem temple,⁴⁶ and the heavenly temple.⁴⁷ Priests were charged with guarding the gates of the temple,⁴⁸ and frequent mention is made in *Paradise Lost* to the “gates” of Heaven.⁴⁹ Certain priests were anointed to perform their temple duties,⁵⁰ and in Heaven, the high priestly Son of God was depicted as being “anointed”⁵¹ by a “sacred unction.”⁵² The most striking passage describing priestly action in the temple-like Heaven occurs when the Son appears before the Father presenting the petitions of Adam and Eve after their expulsion from Eden:

To Heaven their prayers / Flew up, nor missed the way by envious winds / Blown
vagabond or frustrate. In they passed / Dimensionless through **heavenly doors**, then clad
/ With **incense** where **the golden altar fumed** / By their great Intercessor came in sight /
Before the Father's **throne**. Them the glad Son / Presenting thus to intercede began: See,
Father, what **first fruits** on earth are sprung / From Thy implanted grace in Man, these
sighs / And prayers, which in this **golden censer** mixed / With **incense I Thy priest**
before thee bring, / **Fruits of more pleasing savor** from Thy seed / Sown with contrition
in his heart than those / Which his own hand manuring all the trees / Of Paradise could
have produced ere fallen / From innocence (XI:14-30).

⁴⁵ See Ex. 25:31-37.

⁴⁶ See 1 Chron. 28:10, 14-15 and 2 Chron. 13:10-11.

⁴⁷ V:711-715.

⁴⁸ See 1 Chron. 9:26. The priest Ezekiel, in his vision of the temple, special emphasis is placed on the gates (see Ezek. 40-43. The “gates” are mentioned an incredible 43 times in chapter 40 alone).

⁴⁹ See V:197-198, 251-254; VII:205-209, 565-567, 573-576; and X:21-23, 28-30, 85-89. For a possible reference in the Hebrew Bible to the gates of Heaven, see Ps. 24:7-9.

⁵⁰ In particular, the High Priest was to be anointed (see Ex. 29:29, as well as Lev. 4:3-5, 16; 6:20).

⁵¹ See III:313-317 and VI:669-679. Closely associated with the anointing of the high priest was the anointing of the king of Israel (e.g. 1 Sam. 16:13 and Ps. 132:10), and the Son is referred to as the “Anointed King” in V:662-664; V:777; V:866-871.

⁵² See VI:707-712. Teskey explains that “sacred unction” means “anointing with oil” (Milton, *Paradise Lost*, p. 152, n. 709).

Here, the Son is explicitly paralleled to the Israelite high priest, which would be necessary only if one envisioned Heaven as a temple. In summary, temple imagery abounds in heaven. In fact, temple imagery pervades the depictions of Heaven so much that Raphael tells Adam that “th’ Almighty Father...**He sits / Shrined** in His **sanctuary** of Heav’n secure.”⁵³ Thus, the realm of Heaven could be seen in its entirety as a temple.

Temple Imagery in Hell

The heavenly temple, however, had its counterpart in Hell. The seeds of such a sacred structure in Hell are seen in Satan’s actions even before he was cast out of Heaven. Raphael explains to Adam that Satan set up his own sacred structure in Heaven preparatory to his assault on God’s temple-throne:

Having passed / At length into the limits of the north / They [the rebellious angels] came and Satan to his **royal seat** / (High on a **hill, far blazing as a mount / Raised on a mount** with pyramids and towers / From diamond quarries hewn and rocks of gold) / The **palace** of great Lucifer, (so call / That structure in the dialect of men / Interpreted) which not long after he / (Affecting all equality with God / *In imitation of that mount whereon / Messiah was declared in sight of Heaven*) (V:754-765, emphasis mine).

Here we have Satan explicitly fashioning a structure to imitate God’s sacred space using the same type of language depicting the temple-like Heaven: there is a royal “seat,” a “hill,” and a “mount.”

Once cast into Hell, Satan resumes his building efforts to construct Pandemonium, which is similarly described in language reminiscent of the temple-like dwelling place of God in Heaven. The name Pandemonium itself suggests such a connection. Teskey notes that “the

⁵³ VI:671-672. Another, more subtle reference to Heaven as a temple is made by Sin as he speaks with Satan following Adam and Eve’s transgression in Eden. Heaven is described as a “quadrature” (X:375-382), which Teskey suggests refers to the “square-shaped heaven” (see Teskey, *PL*, p. 239, n. 381). A square-shaped temple appears in Ezekiel’s vision (Ezek. 42:15-20), as well as in Rev. 21:16.

word is Milton's coinage, formed from Greek *pan*, 'all;' *daimon*, 'demon, supernatural being;' and the suffix *-ion*, indicating a place of worship, a building."⁵⁴ That Pandemonium can be seen as a "place of worship" is significant, especially in light of the temple imagery in Heaven upon which Pandemonium was constructed.

Such imagery appears throughout the description of Hell, especially at the outset of *Paradise Lost*. To begin with, the most prevalent inhabitants of Hell are specified as the same types of temple-related angels that were seen in Heaven: Cherubim and Seraphim.⁵⁵ These contribute to the building of Pandemonium, which, like the heavenly temple, is depicted as being built on a hill.⁵⁶ This elevated location is to become the "throne"⁵⁷ or "seat"⁵⁸ of Satan, just as Heaven's sacred structure was referred to as the "throne" and "seat" of God.⁵⁹ This great structure in Hell, like its pattern in Heaven, was lighted by lamps,⁶⁰ and had a number of gates.⁶¹

⁵⁴ Teskey, *PL*, p. 25, n. 756.

⁵⁵ See I:323-326, 792-797; and II:511-518. At one point, a special group of four cherubim in Hell are sent out survey the landscape, a group not unlike the special group of four cherubim associated with the Father's glorious temple-throne (see VI: 749-759, 827-834, 844-847, and discussion above).

⁵⁶ I:230-231, 670, and 689-690. It is also noteworthy that "hill" was used in association with the Jerusalem temple in I:10, preceding all of these references to the set-apart, fiendishly sacred "hill" in Hell.

⁵⁷ See II:1-5, 23, 445-450; IV:86-89; and X:443-452. Interestingly, the only characters mentioned in the limbo-like realm outside of Hell are also depicted using throne imagery: "Behold! the **throne** / Of Chaos and his dark pavilion spread / Wide on the wasteful deep. With him **enthroned** / Sat sable-vested Night, eldest of things, / The consort of his reign" (II:959-963).

⁵⁸ See I:243-245, 792-797; and X:424-425. Perhaps I:717-721, which suggests that Pandemonium was more magnificent than any "seat" built for pagan gods or kings, is also invoking this imagery of a sacred "seat."

⁵⁹ See above.

⁶⁰ See I:726-730.

⁶¹ See I:761-762. In this passage, the narrator also mentions "porches" within Pandemonium in conjunction with these "gates." The Jerusalem temple also had "porches" inside of its gates. See Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services As They Were at the Time of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1997), pp. 35-38, and John 10:23. Other "gates" appear at the edges of Hell (see II:434-437, 630-632; X:282-285, 368-371, 414-425).

The following passage sums up well this counterfeit temple in Hell. After having left Hell, Satan returns to announce his victory in causing Adam and Eve to transgress the commandment of God in Eden. Satan flies to the gates of Hell, and finds that the fallen angels

were all / Far to th' inland retired about the walls of **Pandemonium**, city and **proud seat** / **Of Lucifer**...From the door / Of that Plutonian [Hellish] hall invisible / Ascended his **high throne** which under state / Of richest texture spread at th' upper end / Was placed in regal luster. Down a while / He sat and round about him saw unseen [by the other fallen angels]. / At last as **from a cloud** his fulgent head / And shape star-bright appeared, or brighter, clad / With what permissive glory since his fall / Was left him, or false glitter (X:422-425, 443-452).

Clearly, Satan was sitting on his throne in Pandemonium in imitation of God on his temple-throne in Heaven.⁶² Finally, lest the reader miss the connection between God's temple-like structure in Heaven and Satan's magnificent Pandemonium in Hell, the narrator states, "Anon out of the earth a fabric huge / Rose like an exhalation with the sound / Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet, / Built like a **temple**" (I:710-713).

Temple Imagery in Eden

Having established the temple imagery present in Heaven and Hell, I will now examine such imagery as present in passages describing Eden. Just as temple imagery appeared regularly in descriptions of the former stages of angelic action, so, too temple imagery permeates descriptions of Eden. While biblical scholars have recognized the connection between the Tabernacle / Jerusalem temple and Eden in biblical texts,⁶³ I will be examining the text of *Paradise Lost* to see if the author created such connections within his own work.

⁶² For instance, Satan here appears on his throne "as from a cloud." God was described at the beginning of that same book as speaking from "His secret cloud" (See X:31-33).

⁶³ For an excellent summary of such scholarship, see T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 2008), pp. 13-73. See also Marvin Sweeney,

As in Heaven and Hell, angels frequently occupy the attention of the reader. Significantly, aside from Satan, only those angels associated with the temple are mentioned in the descriptions of Eden. While only one Seraph is mentioned,⁶⁴ Cherubim appear frequently. Their role is primarily to protect the garden from the potential threat of the fallen angels,⁶⁵ but in the end they also protect the garden from the disobedient Adam and Eve.⁶⁶ Significantly, these Cherubim are stationed at the eastern gate of Eden,⁶⁷ as is described in the following: “On **the east side** of the garden place, / Where **entrance up from Eden easiest climbs**, / **Cherubic** watch and of a sword the flame / Wide waving; all approach far off to fright / And guard all passage to the Tree of Life” (XI: 118-122). Similarly, both the Tabernacle and Jerusalem temple contained tapestries (Ex. 26:31-33) or doors (1 Kgs. 6:31-35; see also Ezek. 41:23-25) that displayed images of Cherubim which guarded the east-facing entrances to the Holy of Holies.

Within the first few lines of *Paradise Lost*, Eden is described as a “blissful seat,” a term used to describe the temple-like structures in Heaven and in Hell.⁶⁸ Teskey notes that the term “seat” carries the meaning of both “home” and “throne,”⁶⁹ the latter appearing a number of times

“Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile”, in *Form and Intertextuality in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2005), pp. 141-42.

⁶⁴ See V:275-277. Another possible reference occurs in IX:152-157, where Satan mentions the presence of “flaming ministers” who have charge over Eden. In Hebrew, Seraph (שרף) literally means “the burning one” (*HALOT*, p. 1360, s.v. שרף).

⁶⁵ See IV:776-780 and IX:67-68. See also V:544-548.

⁶⁶ See XI:99-106, 118-122, 126-130 (in this passage, the author makes explicit the connection between Eden’s Cherubim and the temple Cherubim as depicted in Ezekiel 1 and 10); and XII:590-593.

⁶⁷ Apparently this eastern gate was the *only* gate into Eden. See IV:178-183.

⁶⁸ See above.

⁶⁹ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, p. 3, n. 5.

to describe God's temple-throne in Heaven.⁷⁰ Eden is frequently described as a "seat" throughout the story,⁷¹ and is once described as a "high seat" (IV:370-373, emphasis mine). The heights of Eden receive attention elsewhere,⁷² suggesting that it was situated at a sacred height, much like the temple-like structures of Heaven and Hell.⁷³ Also, like its counterparts, Eden possesses a temple-like gate⁷⁴ and lamps,⁷⁵ and mention is made of offering incense⁷⁶ and worship services⁷⁷ within its walls.

Other imagery in Eden, while not reflecting the temple-related imagery of Heaven and Hell, nevertheless finds analogs with biblical depictions of the Tabernacle and Jerusalem temple. For one, the importance of an eastern entrance is emphasized in the author's descriptions of Eden.⁷⁸ In biblical texts, we find a similar emphasis: the high priest Aaron and his sons camped outside the eastern entrance to the Tabernacle in order to protect this sacred space from those who were impure (Num. 3:38); the priestly choir stood at the east end of the Jerusalem temple's

⁷⁰ See above.

⁷¹ II:345-351; III:526-527, 630-632, 666-672, 724; IV:246-247; VII:328-331, VII:623-625; VIII:296-299; IX:99-101, 152-153; XI:340-346; and XII:641-643.

⁷² Eden is described as a "hill" (IV:172-173, 179-183, 224-227, 776-780; V:260-261, 544-548; XI:366, 377-380, 828-829; and XII:625-626), a "mountain" (IV:225-227; VIII:300-304; XI:320-322, 829-831), and in other words signifying some sort of elevation (IV:131-136; XI:118-122; and XII:637-639).

⁷³ See above.

⁷⁴ IV:178-179, 540-543; XII:637-640, and 641-644.

⁷⁵ IX:102-107 reads, "Terrestrial heav'n danced round by other heav'ns / That shine yet bear their **bright officious lamps**, / Light above light for thee alone, as seems / In thee concent'ring all their precious beams / Of **sacred influence!**"

⁷⁶ Incense appears in a metaphorical sense here: "Now when as sacred light began to dawn / In Eden on the humid flow'rs that breathed / Their morning **incense**, when all things that breathe / From th' **Earth's great altar** send up silent praise / To the Creator and His nostrils fill / With grateful smell" (IX:192-197).

⁷⁷ Adam and Eve participate in both evening (IV:720-724, 736-738) and morning (V:144-146) worship services, and creation itself appears to engage in acts of worshipful offerings (IX:192-197).

⁷⁸ IV:178-179; V:275-277; XI:118-122; and XII:637-640.

altar at the dedicatory service, during which the God's glory filled the temple (2 Chron. 5:12-14); the stairs leading up to the altar in Ezekiel's temple vision required the priests to approach their sacrifices from the east (Ezek. 43:17);⁷⁹ and finally, the Cherubim-covered veil of the Tabernacle and door of the Jerusalem temple were positioned on the east end of the Holy of Holies (see Ex. 26:31-33 and 1 Kgs. 6:31-35; see also Ezek. 41:23-25).

Other similarities include the following: Eden's paradisiacal space was "built" by God,⁸⁰ just as the sanctuary (Ps. 78:69) and Jerusalem temple (1 Kings 5-6) were "built;"⁸¹ the eastern entrance to Eden stood between "rocky pillars" (IV:549), just as the eastern entrance to the Jerusalem temple stood between two pillars (see 1 Kings 7:15; 7:21; 2 Kings 11:14; 23:3); the "liquid plain" next to Eden may be evocative of the "molten sea" stationed next to the Jerusalem temple's sanctuary (1 Kgs. 7:23); and a river runs through Eden (IV:223-227), while in Ezekiel's temple vision, a river flows out from the temple (Ezek. 47:1-6).

Finally, Eden is explicitly described in *Paradise Lost* as a sacred space. In describing the creation of Eden, Raphael says to Adam, "Earth now / Seemed like to Heav'n, a seat where gods might dwell / Or wander with delight and love to haunt / Her **sacred** shades" (VII:328-331). And, within this sacred space, there is an even *more* sacred enclosure that is described in the following:

⁷⁹ This may have been done to correct the temple priests' inappropriate eastern-facing worship towards the sun (see Ezek. 8:16).

⁸⁰ VII:90-94; VIII:100-104; IX:99-101, and 152-154.

⁸¹ The root בנה "build" is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible as a common verb for architectural construction. However, this verb was used in relation to the building of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 5-6), and "occurs an unusually large number of times in these chapters" (Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Vol. II* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977], p. 177).

Thus talking hand in hand alone they [Adam and Eve] passed / On to their blissful bow'r.
It was a place / Chos'n by the sov'reign planter when He framed / All thinkgs to Man's
delightful use...Other creature here / Beast, bird, insect or worm durst enter none, / Such
was their awe of Man. In shadier bow'r / **More sacred** and sequestered, though but
feigned, / Pan or Silvanus never slept nor nymph / Nor Faunus haunted (IV:689-692, 703-
708).

The existence of one most sacred space within another sacred space is reminiscent of the
Tabernacle and Jerusalem temple: inside the walls of these sacred enclosures stood the sanctuary,
which contained the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies (Ex. 26:31-34 and 1 Kgs. 6:19-22; 8:4-
8).⁸²

Ultimately, perhaps the most forceful statement concerning the sacred nature of Eden
occurs towards the end of *Paradise Lost*. Following the transgression of Adam and Eve, the
Father commands the archangel Michael, "Haste thee, and from the Paradise of God / Without
remorse drive out the sinful pair, / **From hallowed ground th' unholy**" (XI:104-106). This
statement from the mouth of God affirms the observations made above that the author used
temple-related imagery in describing Eden, just as the author used temple-related imagery to
describe Heaven and Hell.

Similarities among Heaven, Hell, and Eden

These similarities between Heaven, Hell, and Eden are hardly accidental. In fact, the
author goes to great lengths to make explicit the correspondence between these three realms.
Raphael poses the following question to Adam: "What if Earth / Be but the shadow of Heav'n
and things therein / Each to other like more than on Earth is thought?" (V:574-576). The author
answers this question in the affirmative, making a number of statements comparing Heaven and

⁸² For an intriguing examination of the relationship between the union of Adam and Eve and traditions surrounding the meaning of the Holy of Holies, see Eugene Seaich, *A Great Mystery: The Secret of the Jerusalem Temple, The Embracing Cherubim and At-One-Ment* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2008).

Earth. Similarly, Raphael describes the creation of Eden to Adam in the following: “*Earth now / Seemed like to Heav’n, a seat where gods might dwell*” (VII:328-329, emphasis mine), and the Father echoes this sentiment when he declares to the angels that Eden is “a place so Heav’nly” (X:624). Raphael suggests that “Earth hath [its] variety from Heaven, / Of pleasure situate in hill and dale” (VI:640-641), and draws Adam’s attention to the Heaven-like nature of Eden when he states, “Witness this new-made world, *another Heav’n / From Heaven gate not far*” (VII:617-625, emphasis mine). Finally, Satan himself enters this realm of comparison (albeit hyperbolically) when he says, “O Earth! *how like to Heav’n if not preferred / More justly, seat worthier of gods as built / With second thoughts reforming what was old!*” (IX:99-101, emphasis mine).

The close relationship between Heaven and Eden is underlined by the Father’s statement of intent as he decided to create Eden on Earth:

[I] will create / Another world, out of one man a race / Of men innumerable there to dwell, / Not here, till by degrees of merit raised / They open to themselves at length the way / Up hither, under long obedience tried, / *And Earth be changed to Heav’n and Heav’n to Earth, / One Kingdom, joy and union without end* (VII:154-161, emphasis mine).

In the same vein, Raphael tells Adam that these two stages of action (Heaven and Eden) are seen as being so closely related that a time may come where humanity “may at choice / Here [in Eden] or in *Heav’nly paradises dwell*” (V:499-500, emphasis mine).

Those in Hell, however, also noticed similarities between their realm and the Heaven from whence they came. Following their expulsion from Heaven, Mammon suggests that the fallen angels should be content to remain in Hell. He reasons:

This deep world of darkness do we dread? How oft amidst / Thick **clouds** and dark doth Heav’n’s all-ruling Sire / Choose to reside, His glory unobscured, / And with the majesty of darkness round / Covers His **throne** from whence deep thunders roar, / Must’ring their rage, *and Heav’n resembles Hell?* (II:262-268, emphasis mine).

Mammon here alludes to the similarities between the cloudy darkness surrounding the Father in Heaven⁸³ and the conditions of Hell.⁸⁴ Moreover, the narrator plainly explains that the intent of the fallen angels in Hell was to “found this nether empire which might rise / By policy and long process of time / In *emulation* opposite to Heav’n” (II:296-298, emphasis mine).

Elsewhere, the main arenas of action in *Paradise Lost*- Heaven, Hell, and Eden- are seen as existing on the same conceptual plane. In a dialogue with Sin about whether the newly ruined Earth is preferable to Hell, the character Death says, “To me who with eternal famine pine / *Alike is Hell or Paradise or Heav’n*” (X:597-598, emphasis mine). On the other hand, in Heaven, the Father declares to his Son that, “Whom but thee / Viceregent Son, to thee I have transferred / All judgement *whether in Heav’n, or Earth, or Hell*” (X:55-57, emphasis mine).⁸⁵ For both Death and the Son, the three realms of Heaven, Hell, and Eden are relatively equivalent.

Conclusion: Where Do We Go From Here?

“The world was all before them, where to choose / Their place of rest, and Providence their guide. / They hand in hand with wand’ring steps and slow / Through Eden took their solitary way.”⁸⁶

As demonstrated above, temple imagery abounds in *Paradise Lost*. In addition to describing the Tabernacle and Jerusalem temple, the author incorporates a multitude of temple-related angels into the story and describes their actions in terms of the priesthood’s activities in

⁸³ See III:378-382; V:642-643; VII:599-600; X:31-33.

⁸⁴ See II:486-495.

⁸⁵ It is interesting to note that the order of the three areas is reversed in each; the hellish Death begins a literary *ascent* by listing Hell, then Paradise, and finally Heaven, whereas the heavenly Father begins a literary *descent* by listing Heaven, then Earth, and ends with Hell.

⁸⁶ XII:646-649.

these sacred enclosures. Not only does this type of temple imagery permeate this story, but the three primary stages of action are each described in terms suggestive of the Tabernacle and Jerusalem temple. This correspondence of temple-related imagery in Heaven, Hell, and Eden suggests that the author of *Paradise Lost* saw each of these areas functioning as types of temples. Further studies of Milton and his religious milieu should be pursued in order to shed light on the purposes of using temple imagery in such a multi-faceted way.