A Quiz on *Paradise Lost*, Book 8

*The Creation of Earth*

Have you ever read the first three books of *Genesis*?

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If no, why not?

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Eve’s Creation

We have read and discussed, in Book IV, Eve’s description of the events that followed her creation. Her actions clearly hearken back to the mythological self-love of Narcissus, and I wondered about the integrity of her character.

READ Book 8, ll. 460-477. This is Adam’s version of the Creation of Eve.

What does this section tell us about Adam?

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READ Book 8, ll. 500-510. Adam’s description of meeting Eve makes excuses for her demeanor. Why?
At the opening of Book 8, Raphael and Adam begin to discuss cosmology, and whether the earth is the center of the universe or not. Raphael provides elaborate, though indefinite, answers. READ ll. 160-178.

What is the underlying point of this section? What do you think of this sentiment? Is it good advice? Why is it an important thought in light of what will happen in book 9?
Back to Adam on Eve

READ Book 8, ll. 521-59.

READ Book 8, ll. 561-566. Raphael gives Adam a stiff warning. “In loving thou dost well, in passion not.”

Raphael goes on to deliver some rather blunt advise: Have greater self-esteem and don’t get wrapped up in sex—READ ll. 567-585.

WHY DOES RAPHAEL DELIVER SUCH A STERN WARNING? After all, Adam is seemingly showing his love for the bride God made him.

The Grand Set Up

Milton is setting us up for the big fall. Most of Book Eight, he spends drawing tight the dramatic tension that will snap in the next book when Eve eats the apple. Milton does this in interesting ways.

Book Eight opens after Raphael is finished relating the war in Heaven and the creation of the Earth in Books Six and Seven. Those books were meant as education for Adam and Eve: Look what happened to Satan, don’t let it happen to you; look at the work involved in creating this world for you, don’t screw it up.

Adam, desirous to detain Raphael as long as possible asks about the relationship between the Sun, Stars, and Earth. It seems strange, Adam states, that all the stars and the sun should revolve around this small earth: “. . . merely to officiate light / Round this opacous Earth, this punctual spot” (ll. 22-23).

Seeing that the Boys are about get into some heavy discourse, Eve
leaves to spend some time with her plants.

Then Adam and Raphael go at it. Does the Sun revolve around the Earth; does the Earth revolve around the sun.

READ ll. 140-152. What if the Moon is like the Earth, and inhabited?

What is the point of Raphael’s elaborate, though indefinite, discourse: That man should not concern himself with matters above himself.

READ ll. 160-178.

*What do you think of this sentiment? Is it good advice?*

*Why is this an important thought, in light of what will happen in Book Nine?*

Raphael tells Adam that he does not need more knowledge than he has.

*And Adam gets it. Read from 179 through 197. How does Adam’s answer reflect on his eventual sin?*

Eve, significantly, is this time absent from the discourse.

*Milton regularly refers to the Angels as Gods or as God-like. Why? For the same reason, it seems to me, that he refers to both Christ and Us as “sons of God.” We can all be one with God. Compare with 8. 412-21.*

BOOK VIII, ll. 316-333; BOOK VIII, ll. 98-114.
VI. *Just In Case*

Milton is giving no way out. Ll. 316-333 are Adam’s repetition of God’s commandment. He remembers well.

Then, prefacing Adam’s description of God’s creation of Eve is the strange dialogue between the two where the newly created Adam is bashfully asking God where his mate is.

> Let not my words offend thee, Heav’ny Power,
> My Maker, be propitious while I speak.
> Hast thou not made me here thy substitute,
> And these inferior far beneath me set?
> Among unequals what society
> Can sort, what harmony or true delight? (ll. 379-84)

God coyly replies, I don’t have a mate, do I seem displeased? Adam of course is ready for this and says, basically, you need no equal for you are everything. And if you need someone to talk to, you can make someone your equal. I can’t do that.

All of this leads to God’s statement that he knew what Adam wanted, a mate, and had planned it out beforehand.

> READ ll. 444-448.

If God knows all, why try Adam? God made Adam, so he knows how he ought to act doesn’t he?

—Yes and no.

Of course, being omniscient, God knows how Adam will act and what he will ask. But God made Adam with free will, so he lets Adam act. This is an example of God giving Adam the chance to act on his own. God allows Adam to bashfully spit out a difficult question. Adam does it quite well.
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For Next Time:
BOOK IX