

Építész a kőfejtőben Architect in the Quarry



Tanulmányok
Dávidházi Péter
hatvanadik születésnapjára

Studies Presented to
Péter Dávidházi
On His Sixtieth Birthday

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GÁBOR ITTZÉS

*Satan's Return on the Eighth Night
and Epic Chronology in Paradise Lost*

Milton scholarship has failed to produce a consensus on the chronology of *Paradise Lost*. The question has been repeatedly raised since the eighteenth century, when critics created the first tallies of the days of epic action, sometimes in spite of their own protestation that the exercise was impossible.¹ More sustained efforts have been made since the middle of the twentieth century, but the result so far has been a proliferation of rival proposals, ranging at least from twenty-eight to thirty-three-plus-four days, rather than a convergence of opinion.² There are

¹ See, e.g., ADDISON, Joseph, *Criticism on Milton's Paradise Lost: From 'The Spectator' 31 December, 1711 – 3 May, 1712 in English Reprints*, ed. Edward ARBER, 8 vols. London. 1869–1871. Repr. New York: AMS, 1966, 2:20 (No. 267, 5 Jan 1712) and 151 (No. 369, 3 May 1712); NEWTON, Thomas, ed., *Paradise Lost: Poem in Twelve Books. The Author John Milton. A New Edition with Notes of Various Authors*, 2 vols. London. 1749. 2:313–316; and MASSON, David, ed., *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, 2 vols. London: Macmillan. 1874. 1:357–358.

² Cf. MCCOLLEY, Grant, *Paradise Lost: An Account of Its Growth and Major Origins, with a Discussion of Milton's Use of Sources and Literary Patterns*, (1940) repr.; New York: Russel & Russel. 1963, 16–17 and *passim*; QVARNSTRÖM, Gunnar, *The Enchanted Palace: Some Aspects of Paradise Lost*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell. 1967, 10–54 and 168–173; FOWLER, Alistair, ed., *John Milton, Paradise Lost*, rev. 2nd ed.; Harlow etc.: Longman. 2007,

numerous contentious details,³ but one episode has particularly vexed critics. Satan's journey through darkness recounted at the beginning of Book 9 is one of the longest single episodes of epic action, yet in terms of narration it is one of the shortest.

In the 1960s, there emerged a powerful reconstruction of epic chronology, including Satan's sojourn, in *Paradise Lost* that we might term the "canonical reading." Prompted by Grant McColley's work,⁴ it was developed by Gunnar Qvarnström⁵ and Alastair Fowler and gained wide currency through the latter author's influential critical edition of *Paradise Lost*.⁶ It assigns the action of the epic to thirty-three days, including a week between Satan's expulsion from and return to Eden (4.1013–1015 and 9.53–57). From the 1970s on, several important challenges have been made to the canonical reading. One trend is to question the very possibility of an overarching epic chronology for *Paradise Lost*. The thesis has been most recently presented by Anthony Welch, "arguing that the idea of chronology itself needs rethinking"⁷ and concluding that "Milton rejects a single overarching chronology in favor of several" (14), but it has a prestigious pedigree reaching back all the way to the eighteenth century.⁸ The point is certainly not to

29–33 and *passim*; CRUMP, Galbraith M., *The Mystical Design of Paradise Lost*, Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1975, 163–181; ZIVLEY, Sherry L., 'The Thirty-Three Days of *Paradise Lost*,' *MQ* 34, 2000, 117–127.; and WELCH, Anthony, 'Reconsidering Chronology in *Paradise Lost*,' *MS* 41, 2002, 1–17.

³ They include, just to name a few, the time of the Son's victory over the rebels, the chronology of the infernal scenes, the dating of creation, the number of nights intervening between the fall and the expulsion as well as the meaning of "the hour precise" (12.589) at the end of the epic – not to mention the need to establish the very possibility of an overarching chronology.

⁴ MCCOLLEY 1940.

⁵ QVARNSTRÖM 1967.

⁶ FOWLER 1968, 2007.

⁷ WELCH 2002, 1.

⁸ See, e.g., ADDISON 1966, 2:20 (No. 267, 5 Jan 1712); NEWTON 1749, 1:275; GILBERT, Allen H., *On the Composition of Paradise Lost: A Study of the Ordering and Insertion of Material*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947, 147–150; STAPLETON, Laurence, 'Perspectives of Time in *Paradise Lost*,' *PQ* 45, 1966, 734–748; HUNTER, William B., Jr., 'Eternity

be taken lightly and deserves close scrutiny, but since most authors in the skeptical camp do not actually differ from the canonical reading in terms of their interpretation of Satan's journey through darkness as a weeklong episode, an engagement with it falls beyond the scope of this paper.

Another group of authors disagree with Fowler and his colleagues about the whereabouts of the colures that play a key role in Satan's travels. Malabika Sarkar argued that the fiend must have been traveling through space rather than on, or close to, the surface of the earth because he was "traversing each Colure" (9.66), which are great circles on the celestial sphere.⁹ That intriguing, but mistaken,¹⁰ proposal might have far-reaching repercussions, but Sarkar, in fact, accepted Fowler's epic chronology essentially unchanged.¹¹ It was Sherry L. Zivley, who, building on Sarkar's interpretation, proposed a substantial alternative to the Qvarnström–Fowler timeline.¹² She argued that *Paradise Lost* 9.58–62a, 62b–67 and 75–86 must be understood as three consecutive events, ultimately adding up to ten days in all.¹³ Since I have responded

and Time' in William B. Hunter, Jr., gen. ed., *A Milton Encyclopedia*, 9 vols. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP; London: Associated UP, 1978–1983. 3:71.

⁹ SARKAR, Malabika, 'Satan's Astronomical Journey, *Paradise Lost*, IX. 63–66,' *N&Q* n.s. 26 [vol. 224 of cont. ser.], 1979. 417–422.

¹⁰ The principal difficulty is that the celestial sphere is an *imaginary* sphere that has no specific radius and holds the heavenly bodies only by projection: ITTZÉS, Gábor, 'Satan's Journey through Darkness (*Paradise Lost* 9.53–86),' *MQ* 41, 2007. 14. (12–21.)

¹¹ In a similar vein, Harinder S. Marjara, although probably unfamiliar with Sarkar's paper, emphatically points out that the colures and Satan's movements have to do with space, not the face of the earth. He makes nearly ten references to the issue in a single page (MARJARA, Harinder S., *Contemplation of Created Things: Science in Paradise Lost*, Toronto, Buffalo & London: University of Toronto Press, 1992, 194–195.) but has no interest in chronology even though he explicitly links earth's shadow to time keeping. His attention is exclusively claimed by the geometricity, technical precision, and moral symbolism of Milton's imagery.

¹² ZIVLEY, Sherry L., 'Satan in Orbit: *Paradise Lost* IX. 48–86,' *MQ* 31, 1997, 130–136; ZIVLEY 2000, 121.

¹³ Incidentally, she also advocated a discontinuous timeline (esp. ZIVLEY 2000, 118–119). That, in addition to four days allocated to the heavenly scenes from

to her reading at length elsewhere and sought to uphold the traditional reading that, first, the three returns of which 9.57, 58 and 67 speak are one and the same event and, second, the geographical orbits in 9.76–83 *re*describe more fully the astronomical trajectory from 9.63–69,¹⁴ I shall not rehearse once more the whole debate here.

A third kind of challenge, to which I shall return in detail, is predicated on the interpretation of “seven continu’d Nights” (9.63) as three and a half, rather than seven, twenty-four-hour periods, again significantly redrawing the temporal map of epic action.¹⁵ While the canonical reading has thus ultimately failed to command uniform scholarly assent, that reading has established itself as a normative point of reference that simply cannot be ignored. All later proposals must take account of it and situate themselves with reference to it. What is somewhat surprising is that this carefully crafted, well thought-out proposal has some internal inconsistencies that seem to have gone unnoticed for decades. In the following pages, I shall take a closer look at those problematic details and thereby clear the ground for a larger constructive discussion of the question of epic chronology in *Paradise Lost*.

As far as I know, Grant McColley was the first in the twentieth century to offer a chronological table for the whole of *Paradise Lost*. He estimated thirty-one days for the entire action (Table 1, p. 504) but failed to explain the considerations behind his computations. In one instance he certainly miscalculated his days. If Satan’s unsuccessful temptation after which he is expelled from Eden (4.1014–1015) is dated to the night following day 23, and his sojourn lasts seven nights after which he returns “On the eighth” (9.67), he cannot have arrived back on the night *before* day 30 as McColley reckons.¹⁶ Quite apart from losing a few hours between his departure just before dawn (as is commonly though by no means uniformly assumed) and return at midnight (9.58), that would only allow Satan *six* days (that is, days 24–29) to “r[i]de /

the Son’s anointing to the rebels’ expulsion, she proposed a thirty-three-day schedule for the rest of the action (Table 1, p. 504), might bear witness to the lasting influence of the canonical reading.

¹⁴ ITTZÉS 2007.

¹⁵ CRUMP 1975.

¹⁶ MCCOLLEY 1940, 17.

With darkness” (9.63–64). McColley is aware of the relevant Miltonic passage, yet his slip may not simply be oversight.¹⁷ He argues that

[f]or his separate temptations, Milton selected the periods advocated by the two most authoritative interpretations [of Genesis 2–3], one of which maintained Adam fell on the first day; the other, on the eighth. Satan’s initial and unsuccessful seduction, he assigned to the day of Creation; the second and conventional temptation he placed precisely one week later.¹⁸

Since he puts Satan’s first assault on day 23, day 30 apparently presents itself as the correct date, “precisely one week later,” for the second and successful attempt. What McColley evidently overlooked was the problem created by the fact that one attempt had been made at night in a dream (4.799–809 and 5.26–94), the other in broad daylight at noon (9.739). That creates a half-day gap that has to be rounded either up or down if we want to state the relative time of the two temptations in full days. McColley rounds it down to save the *week* between days 23 and 30. That is a mistake, but it does not necessarily ruin his larger argument. The first temptation surely occurred some time between 9 pm (4.776–780) and dawn (4.1014–5.2). McColley counts this time as part of day 23. Milton, however, followed the Hebraic tradition and computed his days from sunset to sunset.¹⁹ The devilish dream should, therefore, be properly seen as an event on day 24. The successful temptation then falls on day 31, allowing the requisite number of nights for Satan’s flight in-between. In any case, an extra day must be introduced in McColley’s chronology, bringing his sum total to thirty-two.

If McColley was the first modern critic to provide a general chronological table for *Paradise Lost*, Gunnar Qvarnström was the first to publish his detailed reasons behind the numbers. He distributes the epic events over a thirty-three-day time span (Table 1, p. 504) and

¹⁷ MCCOLLEY 1940, 168.

¹⁸ MCCOLLEY 1940, 160.

¹⁹ Perhaps the clearest evidence is supplied by Raphael’s rarely quoted “Ere Sabbath Eev’ning” (8.246), where the context makes it incontrovertibly clear that the Sabbath comes after (or rather, begins with) the evening and not the evening after (or rather, at the end of) the Sabbath. See also Milton’s version of the creation story, where he follows the biblical account in mentioning evenings before mornings (7.260, 274–275, 338, 386, 448, 550).

accepts the view that predawn is the time of Satan's expulsion.²⁰ It is day 24. Qvarnström allocates seven complete twenty-four-hour units for his travels, bringing him back at daybreak on day 31. Satan then "spen[ds] the hours of daylight of Day 31 out of sight of the reader" and returns to Eden at midnight on day 32.²¹ The more ambiguous designation of "Days 24/25–31/32" for the duration of Satan's journey in the summary chronological table²² betrays Qvarnström's own unease with that reading. Rightly so since Milton's text can hardly be bent to fit his scheme. The bard is clear that "By Night he [Satan] fled, and at Midnight return'd / From compassing the Earth" (9.58–59). It will not do, then, to suggest, as Qvarnström does, that he returned at predawn from his seven rounds and again at the following midnight from some unspecified further seclusion. There simply does not seem to be any need or textual evidence for that extra time off.

The sojourn begins during a first night; the end of the seven-day²³ trip then falls, logically, "On the eighth" (9.67), which is exactly what Milton tells us. To suppose with Qvarnström that between the end of the seventh of the "seven continu'd Nights" (9.63) (return at predawn from circling the globe) and the eighth night (return at midnight from some unspecified further seclusion) a complete daytime period intervenes, goes against common sense. His reading, further, entails an unwarranted disjunction between two mentions of Satan's return, making the second an independent event without the slightest hint as to where he may be returning from. Instead, 9.58–69 contains a beautifully constructed period that completes, between and excluding the first and the last clauses, a full narrative cycle from Satan's return through his travels to their cause (expulsion) and back through his travels to his return (R–T–E–T–R):

²⁰ QVARNSTRÖM 1967, 35 and Appendix 3.

²¹ QVARNSTRÖM 1967, 40.

²² QVARNSTRÖM 1967, 48.

²³ Qvarström rightly argues that *nights* in 9.63 are twenty-four-hour periods, i.e., synonymous with *days*, since they comprise "hours of darkness only. This makes it sufficiently logical to refer to each of the 24-hour periods as a 'night'." QVARNSTRÖM 1967, 40.

<i>By Night he fled,] and at Midnight return'd</i>	⇒	[R]
From compassing the Earth, cautious of day,	⇒	[T]
Since <i>Uriel</i> Regent of the Sun descri'd	⇒	[E]
His entrance, and forewarnd the Cherubim		
That kept thir watch; thence full of anguish driv'n,		
The space of seven continu'd Nights he rode	⇒	[T]
With darkness, thrice the Equinoctial Line		
He circl'd, four times cross'd the Carr of Night		
From Pole to Pole, traversing each Colure;		
On the eighth return'd, [<i>and on the Coast averse</i>	⇒	[R]
<i>From entrance or Cherubic Watch, by stealth</i>		
<i>Found unsuspected way.</i>		

(9.58–69, italics added)

Qvarnström's disjunctive interpretation, cutting the latter return off and claiming it to be a separate episode, seems perfectly unjustified to me.

His observation, evidently based on 9.67–69, that on his midnight approach Satan “arrives from the west”²⁴ and “not from the east, south-east or northeast as one would have expected”²⁵ is forced, for we do not know which direction he is arriving from; we merely learn that he “Found unsuspected way” (9.69) into paradise “on the Coast averse / From entrance or Cherubic Watch” (67–68), that is, on the western side.²⁶ Nor does the argument that “the journey requires a minimum of seven such [twenty-four-hour] periods if Satan is to complete his seven circles around the Earth in darkness” (173, cf. 40) explain why the seven nights could not be rounded down to just over six and three quarters from predawn on day 24 to midnight on day 31. It is, of course, presupposed that Satan is traveling in the shadow of the earth always on the side opposite the sun, but he can travel *somewhat* faster than the sun if he leaves at the end of the shadow (as he does just before daybreak)

²⁴ QVARNSTRÖM 1967, 40.

²⁵ QVARNSTRÖM 1967, 173.

²⁶ Cf. 4.178, 542. Bringing 4.223–232 to bear on 9.69–75, Fowler seems to conclude that Satan entered from the north (FOWLER 2007, 473), and if we accept with Qvarnström (QVARNSTRÖM 1967, 40) the order of the cosmographic description (9.64–66) as the actual sequence of Satan's rounds, we might reach a similar conclusion.

and returns in the middle of it (at midnight). There is, then, no reason to postulate any extra time between Satan's return from his seven-day journey and his entry into Eden at midnight on the day of the fall. What Qvarnström's "Days 24/25–31/32"²⁷ formula really does is paper over the fact that he is allocating eight days (from 24 to 31, inclusive) to a seven-day trip.

Alastair Fowler developed an explanation that helped him avoid Qvarnström's quandary. He understood the closing lines of Book 4 to signify midnight,²⁸ thereby allowing seven full days for Satan's "week of uncreation (midnight to midnight)."²⁹ Disregarding the merits or otherwise of the underlying reading, the interpretation certainly has the advantage of preventing the need to round days either up or down and producing a watertight chronology. It is all the more surprising that Fowler nevertheless assigns the exact same eight days (from 24–31, inclusive) to Satan's sojourn as Qvarnström.

Fowler discussed epic chronology both in the 'Introduction' and the explanatory notes of his influential critical edition of *Paradise Lost*. In the former, he also included a complete table comparable to McColley's and Qvarnström's (Table 1, p. 504). While he did touch up virtually every line in the table from the first to the second edition, the numbering of the days remained unchanged,³⁰ thereby allowing the confusion about the duration of Satan's journey to persist uncorrected. Fowler uses "inclusive" day numbering for intervals when integrating them into his timeline. Thus he puts the rebels' fall to days 4–13 and their stupor to days 13–22. In other words, he allows ten days for each nine-day period (cf. 6.871 and 1.50–52, respectively) obviously meaning that a few hours should fall away both at the beginning and the end. The method works if one overlaps such periods as Fowler correctly does: the war in heaven extends from days 2 to 4; the rebels' fall, from 4 to 13; their unconsciousness, from 13 to 22.³¹ The fallen angels land in hell as late on

²⁷ QVARNSTRÖM 1967, 48.

²⁸ FOWLER 2007, 280n.

²⁹ FOWLER 2007, 31.

³⁰ Cf. FOWLER 2007, 31, with 1968, 26–27.

³¹ Fowler is not entirely consistent concerning these numbers as in a note to 1.50–83 he gives the duration of the stupor as "Days 14–22" (FOWLER 2007, 62.).

day 13 as their fall began on day 4 and as they will regain consciousness on day 22. A problem, however, arises when “inclusive” numbering is employed without overlapping intervals at the edges. That happens with the week of Satan’s flight, which Fowler dates to days 24–31, “midnight to midnight”, evidently meaning that the first six hours of day 24 and the bulk of 31 (from midnight 31 through morning to sunset) do not belong to the requisite period. One would expect quite naturally that Satan’s entry into Eden is, then, dated to midnight 31. But that is not the case. Fowler delays that event until day 32 without ever accounting for the intervening time from midnight 31 to midnight 32 (Table 1, p. 504).

The gap is reproduced in the notes. On “seven continu’d Nights” (9.63) Fowler comments, “From the night of Eve’s dream (Night 24) to Night 31.”³² That is correct as is essentially the next explanatory remark on 9.67–68 (the eighth night, that of Satan’s return), “Midnight before Day 31.”³³ But Fowler then adds, “On the *eighth* night Satan will descend into a serpent” (*italics original*)—suggesting that the eighth night is not the night of Satan’s return (*pace* Milton, 9.67) but a different one, of descent, yet to come. Indeed, when the next morning arrives at 9.192, Satan having just completed “His midnight search” (9.181) and entered the serpent, “waiting close th’ approach of Morn” (9.191), Fowler explains that it is the “[m]orning on Day 32.”³⁴ Here, as in the introduction, no account is given of the hours from midnight 31 to midnight 32.

Unlike Qvarnström, then, who avowedly dispatches Satan to an unknown location for the better part of day 31, Fowler, who, thanks to his watertight midnight-to-midnight schedule, does not have to round up or down, merely ignores Satan for a full day after his return at midnight 31. It is any reader’s guess how the gap might be filled. I suspect that Fowler may have been simply confused on this point rather than had a coherent theory about Satan’s toings and froings on day 31

³² FOWLER 2007, 472n.

³³ FOWLER 2007, 473n. There is, of course, no midnight *before* day 31, for epic days start and end at 6 pm (cf. ITTZÉS, Gábor, ‘Milton’s Sun in the Zodiac,’ *N&Q* n.s. 52 [vol. 250 of the cont. ser.], 2005, 307–310. esp. 308). Fowler’s slip may have been facilitated by the ambiguity of allocating midnights to days in the civic calendar.

³⁴ FOWLER 2007, 480n.

that he failed to explain. Consider his analysis of the symbolism of “Satan’s week of miscreation [... as] framed by the four remaining days, Days 23–24 and 32–33 [of directly represented action].”³⁵ This reading presupposes that the trip takes place between midnight 25 and midnight 32, which represents a one-day shift from his dates proposed elsewhere. Since he dates Raphael’s visit to day 24 in the chronological table,³⁶ there can be no doubt that that day is already *part* of Satan’s trip here, not framing it. Taken as whole, then, the scheme is self-contradictory.

There is much more at stake here than mere pedantry in detail. Both Qvarnström and Fowler base elaborate numerological interpretations on their chronological schemes, which structure collapses if the foundation proves insecure. Mistakes in numbering the days of the epic would have disastrous consequences for their readings.

Explicitly reacting to the previous three authors, Galbraith Crump offered a revisionist chronology in 1975. “McColley, Qvarnström, and Fowler all mistakenly conceive of the satanic flight from Eden as occupying seven 24-hour periods.”³⁷ The correct interpretation is, rather, “that Satan stayed in the darkness for seven continuous nights, or three-and-a-half 24-hour periods.”³⁸ As a result, Crump cuts the number of days to twenty-eight (Table 1, p. 504). Both suggestions are problematic. First, he argues that twenty-four-hour periods are called “day *and* night” by Milton. If the principle is taken seriously, however, the rebels’ fall, which lasted “Nine dayes” (6.871),³⁹ should be taken to have occupied four and a half twenty-four-hour periods. That, however, is not how

³⁵ FOWLER 2007, 32.

³⁶ FOWLER 2007, 31.

³⁷ CRUMP 1975, 168n.

³⁸ CRUMP 1975, 167. As far as I can see, Crump’s reading is only anticipated by an excruciatingly brief remark of Allen H. Gilbert’s, who tersely comments on 9.63–67, ending mid-line at “On the eighth return’d,” that “[t]his indicates the fourth day” (GILBERT, Allen H., *On the Composition of Paradise Lost: A Study of the Ordering and Insertion of Material*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947, 150.).

³⁹ Crump ignores this line and repeatedly quotes 1.50, a line that describes the devils’ stupor in hell, as evidence of the nine-night-and-day fall (CRUMP, Galbraith M., *The Mystical Design of Paradise Lost*, Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1975, 165, 167, and 181.).

Crump reads the line, for he allows almost nine twenty-four-hour days for the episode (165–166 and 181).⁴⁰

Crump's computation is further inconsistent in that he interprets the nine days of the devils' fall as eight and a half days but the nine days they spend on the fiery lake as indeed nine days. Dating the rebels' defeat to dawn on the fourth day,⁴¹ "it is logical to count the first day and night of [their] fall as the daylight hours of the fourth day and the evening hours of the fifth. Thus Satan's horde falls upon Hell's burning lake appropriately in the evening that begins the thirteenth day of the narrative."⁴² The second statement is a non sequitur. On this reading, the devils should land at the *end* of that night, that is, in the morning of day 13.⁴³ Crump is effectively cutting the time scheme by an additional half-day here. In any case, it is unclear why, in the light of that computation, the rebels should then lift their heads "during the night that begins the twenty-second day,"⁴⁴ that is, nine times twenty-four hours or more after their landing. The discrepancy is inexplicable even if it probably saves the half-day unduly lost from the rebels' fall.

Finally, Crump, assuming an expulsion of the archfiend at dawn at the end of Book 4, thinks that "[s]even or eight continuous 24-hour periods would [...] bring Satan back to Eden at dawn."⁴⁵ The corrective, after "three-and-a-half 24-hour periods [...] he would correctly enter Eden [...] sometime during the night that begins the twenty-seventh day of the narrative."⁴⁶ We know that Satan fled "By Night" (9.58),

⁴⁰ Incidentally, there are other contexts as well where Milton uses "day" in the sense of "day and night"; cf. the Father's synopsis of the first "two dayes" of the war in heaven (the phrase is repeated three times, 6.684, 685, 699) or the days of creation that can be referred to either as "six Nights and Days" (9.137) or simply as "Six days" (7.568, 601; cf. also note 19).

⁴¹ CRUMP 1975, 165.

⁴² CRUMP 1975, 166.

⁴³ Crump's approach here is akin to that he takes to the days of the war in heaven. It "lasts three days and nights. It begins on the morning of the second day and comes to an end at dawn on the fourth day" (CRUMP 1975, 165). Day 2, night and day 3, night 4 to dawn: no manner of addition will bring the sum total to "three days and nights."

⁴⁴ CRUMP 1975, 166.

⁴⁵ CRUMP 1975, 167.

⁴⁶ CRUMP 1975, 167–168.

that is, before daybreak. He should then arrive back, on Crump's principle, *before sunset—more than half* of a twelve-hour unit before his due time at midnight. We have seen that a Qvarnströmian or Fowlerian schedule (disregarding the erroneous extra time) can do better since it can approximate the seven nights, even on an assumption of expulsion at predawn, to *within a quarter* of a twenty-four-hour unit precision. Crump's chronology thus founders on several counts. To make it internally consistent, it should be either further cut or extended by about four days.

What we have seen in the course of the foregoing analysis is a remarkable degree of confusion in suggested chronologies of *Paradise Lost*. What is even more alarming than the debatable points of textual interpretation is the confusion within the various proposals on their own terms. If a consensus is to be reached on the question of epic time scheme, it can be minimally expected that the contending options are internally consistent. All four propositions I have extensively reviewed here fall short of that criterion and must be revised. Chronological calculations have in all four cases been bound up with interpretive considerations, and one is inclined to suspect that mistakes in the former may have in part derived from concerns for the latter. Be that as it may, one point of convergence that has emerged on the previous pages concerns the period intervening between Satan's expulsion from paradise at the end of Book 4 and his descent into the serpent the night before the fall. It is a full week, neither less nor more. Three-and-a-half, six, eight and ten-day estimates are all mistaken. The textual evidence does not bear out the arguments presented in their favor, and they are all beset with internal inconsistencies. We cannot attain to greater precision than Milton offers, but the chronological import of the episode should be sufficiently clear within that framework: "By Night he fled, and at Midnight return'd" (9.58). Satan's entire absence need not occupy exactly 168 hours in order to last for one week, which is doubtless the best interpretation of Milton's text. Further research is needed if Milton scholarship is to convincingly answer the question of epic chronology in *Paradise Lost*, but identifying internal inconsistencies in available time schemes and correcting mistakes about the temporal outlines of a chronologically significant episode have been necessary steps in that direction.

Table 1

Comparison of some proposed chronologies of Paradise Lost

<i>Event</i> ⁴⁷	<i>Day</i> ⁴⁸ <i> in Chronological Scheme Suggested by</i>				
	<i>McColley</i> (1940)	<i>Qvarnström</i> (1967)	<i>Fowler</i> (1968, 2007)	<i>Crump</i> (1975)	<i>Zivley</i> (2000)
Son's anointing	1	1	1	1	1 _h
War in heaven	2 to 4	2 to 4	2 to 4	2 to dawn 4	2 _h -4 _h
Fall and pursuit of rebels	5 to 13	5 to 13	4 to 13	morning 4 to evening 13	1-...
Rebels' stupor	14 to 22	14 to 22	13 to 22 (14 to 22)	evening 13 to night 22	...-18
Week of creation	18 to 24	14 to 20	14 to 20	15 to 21	13-19
Creation of Adam	23	19	19	20	18
Rebels' awakening	23	23	22	evening 22	19
Council in hell	23	23	22	night 22	19
Satans' arrival in Eden...	23	23	23	22	midnight of 20
... and expulsion after his first temptation of Eve	23	predawn 24	midnight 24	dawn 23	daybreak of 21
Raphael's visit to Eden	24	24	24	23	21
Satan's sojourn	night after 23 to beginning of 30	24 to 31 (predawn to predawn)	24 to 31 (midnight to midnight)	23 to night 27	21-30
Fall	30	32	32	27	31
Expulsion	31	end of 33	noon 33	28 ("image of evening")	33
<i>Total</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>4_h + 33</i>

⁴⁷ The table is intended primarily for comparative purposes. The list of events below is suggestive rather than exhaustive. Details are so selected as to give a general idea of the overall progress of epic action and to highlight contentious issues across the proposals.

⁴⁸ From sunset to sunset (nights precede daylight hours).