



# **A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton: Volume 5, Part 8 [*Paradise Lost*, Books 11-12]**

*Jameela Lares*

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This volume surveys all important and influential line-by-line commentary published between 1667 and 1970 on the impressive conclusion to *Paradise Lost* in books 11-12. In these last two books, Milton has taken the account of biblical history known to all his contemporaries and rendered it fresh by having the archangel Michael relate it to Adam in ways only partly suggested by the original text. In a series of visions in book 11, Michael shows Adam the results of his disobedience, and by a narration in book 12 the promise and revelation of "the greater Man" promised at the epic's beginning (1.5). Adam and Eve move from repentant sorrow to invigorated hope, with the world before them and guided by Providence.

The biblical influences on these last two books would have been instantly recognizable to Milton's original audience, but the helpful notes in this volume identify biblical references and other theological matters for modern audiences. Similarly, Milton's classical references to Homer, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Seneca, and others are located and explained, along with Milton's use of patristic, medieval, and early modern authors as well as later authors' use of Milton.

This volume will challenge the longstanding idea that the last two books of *Paradise Lost* are in any way inferior to the rest of the epic or unrelated to it. Besides the helpful introduction that traces the arguments over the value of the last books, the commentary to books 11 and 12 also demonstrates how many important and influential arguments about the epic are tied into these books. Successfully synthesizing a huge mass of Milton scholarship, Lares presents complex ideas clearly and succinctly.

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