

The Biblical Allusions in John Milton's Paradise Lost

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Abstract

This paper tries to trace out some of the ALLUSIONS that are found in the PASSAGES of Paradise Lost to REFERENCES in the BIBLE. A list of important quotations is taken from "Paradise Lost" by John Milton that would help me to support the statements. All of the important quotes from "Paradise Lost" listed here correspond, at least in some way, to the topic above and by themselves can give great ideas for an essay by offering quotes about the theme of Biblical Allusions in "Paradise Lost."

Keywords: Milton-Paradise Lost-Biblical Allusions.

Introduction

John Milton was a very important English poet, author of the monumental Paradise Lost (1667), which was one of the great literary masterpieces of the seventeenth century, which was also to have a major influence on literature in his country, and especially on the romantic poets. He was born in 1608 on Cheapside Street in London. Born into a cultured, religious bourgeois family, Milton is intended to take holy orders, but a trip to Italy after his mother's death together with reading the Italian poets Torquato Tasso (1544 - 1595) and Dante (1265 - 1321) would make him want to become a writer.

After studying at Cambridge, he decides against all odds to abandon the all-ready mapped out career in either the church or even at a university to be able to dedicate him to the art of writing. Some say today that already then Milton would have a sense he would leave the world the gift of his production. In any case, at this point, he would retire instead to the family home and would spend a lot of his time reading Greek and Latin classics, as well as studying political and religious history. It is then also he would start writing his first poems.

During the 1640s John Milton wrote a series of political pamphlets. Some would be against the church, both the Catholic and the Protestant, always as a fierce advocate of the freedom of worship.

Others would for the freedom of the press and for the right to divorce and civil liberty, becoming the foremost speaker of his day.

He published his first collection of poems in 1646. He composed the ten books of *Paradise Lost* between 1658 and 1663. He had first prearranged the work as early as 1640, expecting to write a tragedy titled *Adam Unparadised*. *Paradise Lost* was first published in 1667 even though it had been written almost 10 years before. Milton was getting blind by the time he started work on it. To help him with his writing he would get assistants, and most notably the English metaphysical poet Andrew Marvell (1621-1678). A second edition embellished with minor revisions would follow in 1674.

The present paper tries to ground how Milton has used the Biblical Allusions as influential theme in his remarkable epic *Paradise Lost*.

The poem concerns the Biblical story of the Fall of Man and tells the story of Lucifer, the fallen angel the temptation of Adam and Eve by the fallen angel Satan. More specifically, the poem deals with the Christian view on the origin of man and refer to the temptation of Adam and Eve by Satan as well as their eventual expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The way in which they are rendered by Milton in "*Paradise Lost*" offers a new reading of the biblical Adam and Eve. Understandably, a great deal of critical and scholarly attention has been devoted to deconstructing Milton's versions of the biblical characters Adam and Eve in "*Paradise Lost*." A kind of theological settlement through poetry on the origin of man, the work gets its inspiration as much from the Bible for its content as from Virgil's (70 - 19 BC) twelve-book Latin epic poem *Aeneid* for its form.

Milton's intent, expressed clearly in the epic poem's opening lines, was to "justify the ways of God to men" (Book I, l. 26) that Milton wished to justify where he succeed in fulfilling his purpose to the maximum extent. The Biblical account of the fall in the Book of Genesis, with his epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, John Milton adds a lot of detail about the complete story of Man, the beginning of Satan, his rise and Man's Fall. Although the ideas for *Paradise Lost* came from a few pages in the Book of Genesis, Milton's account kept readers wondering what was going to happen next. Because he was going against the church already with *Paradise Lost*, it was more intriguing for him to take the same ideas in the Bible

and extend them into more detail, making Satan look like the Hero and succeeding at what he wanted to do. Satan, the perfect angel, banished from nothing to the pits of Hell, with no chance of return, conjures up a plan to get revenge, building a legacy and an army to overthrow those who put him there.

Then God created the Son, the angels, Man, Heaven, Earth and everything else. Milton faced a difficult task with creating tension about what would happen since God already knew. In *Paradise Lost*, God is almost emotionless or aloof; he embodies pure reason and pure justice, and every response he gives seems to be cold. In Genesis God is wise and known as the creator and is more the narrator of what is happening than in Milton's epic. Also, He is referred to as Lord God, instead of God, as Milton refers to Him. So, in close the start and fall Man to summarize the creation and reason for human nature are "God gave Man free will, from Man's free will, sin and death came into the world."

Biblical Allusions

Blind Milton might be when he wrote "*Paradise Lost*," but to him, the Bible remained an open book. After reading his "*Paradise Lost*," any one shall appreciate the exactness of his knowledge in using the allusions form the Bible. No doubt there were passages and certain sections of passages of the Scriptures over which Milton had long brooded as being especially suitable for his great project. A study of the allusions emphasizes the specialized theme of *Paradise Lost*. It is not to look for a balanced treatment of Christianity or of religion.

Genesis is used in great detail for the story of the Fall and the Creation and the early history of the race and Israel. Isaiah alludes to a good many times. The allusion is made to the world-wide extension of the blessing given to Abraham and his seed. Ezekiel furnishes a useful source, especially in the passages about the wheels and eyes instinct with spirit, from which Milton enriches his description of the war in Heaven. The Apocalypse is a very valuable basis for his descriptions of Heaven and Hell.

Every decade of the book of Psalms contributes references. To him, as to the Christian Church in his own and other ages, the Book of Psalms was a treasure-house of devotional and inspirational

writings. It is perhaps surprising to find 360, more than 25% of the whole body of references in this single book. Similarly, there are more references to the theology of the Pauline Epistles than to the life or teachings of Jesus Christ in the Gospels. The single page of Jude's Epistle has more references than the whole of the Gospel according to St. Mark. For Milton, in writing this poem must have had a special fascination in first and last pages of the Bible.

There are hundreds of allusions in Paradise Lost, many of them to the Bible. Rather than list every single possible allusion- which would probably take a few years, some of the more important ones are listed below.

Jesus Christ		(1.4)
Moses		(1.8; 1.338)
Adam and Eve		(1.29)
Genesis	2:17	(1.32)
Leviathan, from Isaiah	27:1 and Job 41:34	(1.201)
Exodus	10:13-5	(1.338)
1 Kings	11:1-9	(1.383-91)
2 Samuel	12: 26-27	(1.396)
2 Chronicles	34:4-5	(1.418)
Genesis	11:4	(1.694)
Psalms	2:4	(2.191)
1 Kings	12:11	(2.701)
Revelations	21:19	(2.1050)
Genesis	6:4	(3.463; 11.573-627)
Genesis	11:1-9	(3.466-7)
Genesis	28.17	(3.510-5)
Exodus	28:17-24	(3.597)
Revelation	12:3-12	(4.1-5)
1 Corinthians	11:15	(4.308)
Psalms	2:6-7	(5.603)
2 Timothy	4:7	(6.30)
Genesis	2: 19	(6.76)
2 Kings	19:37	(6.365)
Matthew	3:17, 17:5	(6.728)
Mark	1:11	(6.728)
Ezekiel	10: 9-10	(6.749-59)
Proverbs	8: 25-30	(7.7-12)

Genesis	2:19-20	(8.350).
Genesis	2:18	(8.445)
1 Peter	3:7	(9.383)
Song of Solomon	6:2	(9.442)
Romans	2:14	(9.654)
1 Timothy	2:14	(9.916)
Samson and Delilah		(9.1059-60)
Luke	10:18	(10.84)
Isaiah	61:10	(10.222)
Luke	1:28	(11.158)
Genesis	32:1-2	(11.214)
Ezekiel	40:2	(11.377)

The Direct References that Milton had taken for his Paradise Lost from the Old Testament

Genesis	360
Exodus	99
Leviticus	7
Numbers	19
Deuteronomy	21
Joshua	12
Total	518

Judges	11
1 Samuel	23
2 Samuel	8
1 Kings	37
2 Kings	39
1 Chronicles	7
2 Chronicles	2
Ezra	4
Nehemiah	2
Esther	2
Total	135

Job	32
Psalms	90
Total	122

Proverbs	9
Ecclesiastes	5
Total	14

Isaiah	50
Jeremiah	14
Ezekiel	37
Daniel	5
Total	106

Hosea	5
Amos	3
Micah	1
Habakkuk	2
Zechariah	3
Total	14

Total Allusions to Old Testament = 909

The Direct References that Milton had taken for his Paradise Lost from the New Testament

Matthew	55
Mark	9
Luke	36
John	45
Acts	20
Total	165

Romans	61
1 Corinthians	23
2 Corinthians	7
Galatians	13
Ephesians	19
Philippians	13
Colossians	10
1 Thessalonians	7
2 Thessalonians	1
1 Timothy	4
2 Timothy	2
Hebrews	32
Total	192

James	5
1 Peter	11
2 Peter	11
1 John	10
Jude	14
Total	51

Revelation	82
Total	82

Total Allusions to New Testament = 490

Putting all allusions together to the Bible 909 + 490= 1399

Conclusion

And of course, the entire poem is one gigantic allusion to the book of Genesis, from which the story of Adam and Eve is taken. Likewise, Milton has taken many references from both Old Testament and New Testament as shown above.

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