

THE USE OF THE BIBLE IN MILTON'S POETRY

by

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INTRODUCTION

As subjects of research Milton's use of the Bible in both his poetical and prose work has been neglected by students and scholars. In 1916 E. N. S. Thompson published the John Milton Topical Bibliography in which he failed to show as a subject of investigation any phase of Milton's use of the Bible. Since that time almost nothing has been done to supply specific information of Milton's indebtedness to the Bible, and to Hebraic writers for many of the allusions found in his works.

The annotated editions by Hume, Bentley, Newton, War-ton, Masson, Todd, and Verity refer constantly to Biblical references, but these authorities not only do not agree, they also fail to give enough detailed information to be of much value to the student. Masson's information is more adequate than that of the others, but even he fails to give fair recognition to Milton's use of the Bible.

Harris Francis Fletcher of the University of Illinois has realized this lack of recognition and has made a splendid contribution to this field of study in his works, The Use of the Bible in Milton's Prose and Milton's Rabbinical Readings. His statement is that ¹ "there is nowhere a

¹ Fletcher: The Use of the Bible in Milton's Prose. page 9.

study either precise or definite that informs the student with respect to the most elemental questions concerned with the form of Scripture Milton most frequently employed."

All authorities agree that Milton was intimately acquainted with the Bible, that his knowledge of it is unparalleled, and that he read it in Hebrew and Greek with great accuracy, but little is known of his exact knowledge.

Fletcher indicates the importance of a study of Milton's use of the Bible in his prose because it is easier to find the exact chapter and verse. These cannot be found definitely in his poetry in many instances, and are left largely to the interpretation and erudition of the student, except where the Biblical references are so plain as to be easily discernible even to the reader with only a casual knowledge of Biblical literature.

¹It is evident that a careful study of Milton's prose will give the student considerable knowledge of his interpretation of the Bible. Fletcher calls attention to the fact that a study of Milton's use of the Bible in his prose works makes necessary a re-valuation of the use of the Bible in his poetry. He ascribes many of the deviations from the Scripture in the poetry to modern lack of knowl-

¹ Patterson: The Students' Milton
Moulton: The Modern Reader's Bible

edge of what the Bible meant to Milton. We go to the English translations of the Bible for our knowledge. Milton read the Hebrew and Greek and got the exact meaning. Recent and more literal translations of the Bible show that the King James version erred in many instances in making the translation as nearly like the original Hebrew as it might be.

This study will be concerned with how Milton used the Bible in his major and minor poems, his expansion and interpretation of Biblical references, his adaptation of Biblical material to the context, his combination of pagan and Christian thought, his Arianism, and his inclusion of Christian imagery and motifs.

The method of procedure in this investigation involved an exhaustive study of Milton's poems, and an annotation of all lines which directly or indirectly appear to have their origin in the Old and New Testament or in the rabbinical readings and Christian theology with which Milton is known to have been acquainted, so far as pointed out by Fletcher and Saurat. It was necessary first to study his prose works, especially De Doctrina, which had to be referred to again and again.

The background of reading necessary to any detailed investigation of this type demands a careful study of some

of the literature previous to the time of Milton, of the characteristic work of his contemporaries, and of the historical and social forces which were at work, and which contributed to the production of literature as magnificent in conception as that of Milton.

It is evident that the age would not have been complete without the contribution of a man like Milton. He sums up the age in which he lived, makes more significant the works of his predecessors, and combines the spirit of the Renaissance, the Restoration, and Puritanism.

In addition to reading Caedmon's *Genesis* of the late seventh century, in translation, Greek and Roman mythology, some of the works of Herbert, Crashaw, Earle, Burton, Vaughn, Thomas Browne, and Thomas Ellwood, other works relating directly and indirectly to the subject of investigation were: Du Bartas' La Semaine ou la Creation, Spenser's Faerie Queene, the annotated editions of Milton's poetry prepared by Masson, Verity, and references to Newton, Todd, and Hume; Studies in the Literature of Northern Europe, by Edmund Gosse; Milton: Man and Thinker, by Saurat; A History of English Literature, by Legouis and Cazamian; Milton's Rabbinical Readings, by H. F. Fletcher; A Book of Seventeenth Century Prose, by Coffin and Witherspoon; Cambridge Modern History, volume 5; articles in the Living Age of 1909;

Harper's Magazine for January, 1850; the Concordance of the Bible; Milton's prose works; Dante's Inferno; Giles Fletcher's Christ's Victory and Triumph in Heaven; Grotius's Adamus Exul, and other narrative poems of the Renaissance.

THE USE OF THE BIBLE IN THE MAJOR POEMS WITH CHRONOLOGICAL INDEX

A study of the poems shows that a large amount of their literary materials is drawn from the Bible, from the writings of the rabbis, and from Christian theology.

Paradise Lost, as well as *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, is so suffused with the author's personality and so filled with Christian imagery as to be very distinctive. In *Paradise Lost* Milton represents the clash of good and evil. His theological purpose in writing the poem is epitomized in lines 1 to 5

"Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat."

It is impossible in this study to discuss the complete list of the Biblical references in Milton's poems. To do so would make more obscure the aim and purpose of the investigation. Also many of the Biblical ideas have no definite

references in any English authorized version, or are so vague as to make a definite chapter and verse location impossible. It is notable that while Milton's interpretation in many cases may vary from the ordinary interpretations of the text, he is very careful to follow closely the Biblical account when quoting the words of the Father and Son.

In his prose works Milton referred often to definite chapters or verses to support his statements. This is not the case in his poems, although frequent references to De Doctrina with its 7,000 Biblical quotations were of great value in making this study.

The following is a chronologically arranged table of Bible references in the major poems beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation. The chief result reached by study of Milton's use of the Bible in these poems is the indication of the parts of the Bible from which he secured his material. References to Genesis, Revelation, Judges, Psalms, and the Gospels are the most numerous, although the poet refers to nearly all the Books of the Bible. Considering the number of references, it is evident that Milton must have tabulated them for years before writing the poems. Another result of the tabulation is to show that a careful reading of the chapters and verses mentioned reproduces to an extent the basic material of the poems.

The Biblical references are the skeleton upon which Milton's vivid imagination built the poetry.

Index to Books of the Bible Referred
to in the Major Poems

The abbreviations used are as follows:

P. L. Paradise Lost

P. R. Paradise Regained

S. A. Samson Agonistes

P. L.	Genesis	1:2	P. L.	Genesis	2:20
		2:14			3:24
		1:3-5			2:17
		12:25			1:2
		6:4			1:6-8
		2:9			1:11-13
		2:8			1:14-19
		2:10			1:20-23
		2:10-14			3:1
		3:18			1:26-31
		1:26-27			2:2-3
		2:23			2:15-17
		1:28			1:28
		3:5			12:30
		2:7			2:18
		12:16			2:21-22

P. L.	Genesis	2:21	P. L.	Genesis	4:4
		2:23-24			1:26
		2:24			4:20
		2:10			4:16
		3:1			6:1-2
		8:21			6:2
		3:1-3			6:4
		3:4-5			6:7
		3:5			7:2
		3:6			8:1
		3:3			8
		1:26			8:4
		3:8			8:9
		3:8-21			9:11-17
		3:17			6:6
		1:28			6:9
		3:22-23			6:11-12
		3:24			10:9
		3:15			11:2-9
		3:20			11:9
		3:17-19			9:21-25
		32:1-2			14:13
		4			9:12
		4:2			12

P. L.	Genesis	14:14	P. L.	Exodus	14
		17			14:13-14
		32:28			20:2
		3:5			33:9-10
		5:5			12:36
		3:24			7:12
P. R.		33:18			13:17-18
		6:2			13:21-22
		16:6			24
		25:13			19:20
		15:18			11:34-38
S. A.		14:5			23:23
		10:14			8:15
		30:23	P. R.		28:43
		3:15			16:1
P. L.	Exodus	19:31	S. A.		11:5
		10:12-15			17
		6:20	P. L.	Leviticus	17:7
		10:15			25:19
		32			11:13
		12			1:9
		12:29			18:25
		12:12	P. R.		0
		19:16-18	S. A.		0
		19:16-19	P. L.	Numbers	32

P. L.	Numbers	21:26	S. A. Deuteronomy	2:10-11
		25	P. L. Joshua	10:12-14
		16:26		24:2-3
		24:4		24:2
		34:7-8		24:2
		34:3	P. R.	0
		24:6	S. A.	15:13-14
		11:16-24		19:41
P. R.		16:48		15:33
S. A.		13:33	P. L. Judges	11:13
		6		16:4-20
P. L. Deuteronomy		32:2	P. R.	6:15
		32:49		11:1-2
		32:17	S. A.	13:3-11-20
		23:24		15:17
		32:35		13:2
		32:27		13:25
		3:9		15:8
		18:15-19		8:4-9
		34		11:15-22
		21:23		12:1-6
P. R.		8:3		16:16-17
		34:3		16:23
S. A.		3:2		9:13

S. A.	Judges	12:7	S. A.	Judges	4:18
		15:18-19			14:12-14
		14:20			13:25
		16:30			13:1
		16:31			14:19
		13:3			14:15
		16:3			3:9
		13:5			11:9
		16:21			16:27
		16:17			16:26
		14:6	P. L.	Ruth	0
		14:19	P. R.		0
		15:17	S. A.		0
		13:2	P. L.	1 Samuel	1:12-17
		15:8			2:12
		20:12			15:32
		8:8	P. R.		23:14
		12:4-6			9:20-21
		16:31	S. A.		0
		16:6-14	P. L.	2 Samuel	12:27
		16:17			5:4
		14:3			7:16
		16:23	P.R.		0
		3:5-8	S.A.		21:15-22
		11:40	P.L.	1 Kings	11:7

P. L.	1 Kings	4:29	P. L.	1 Chronicles	23:25
		22:20			20:5
		22:19			5:23
		4	P. R.		21:1
		3:1	S. A.		0
		8:10-11	P. L.	2 Chronicles	18:22
		6			3:4
P. R.		22:19	P. R.		32:8
		22:6	S. A.		0
		17:5-6	P. L.	Ezra	Book
		14:4	P. R.		0
S. A.		0	S. A.		0
P. L.	2 Kings	23:10	P. L.	Nehemiah	0
		11:7	P. R.		0
		16:10	S. A.		0
		5	P. L.	Esther	0
		2:11	P. R.		0
		19:22	S. A.		0
		19:37	P. L.	Job	38:19
		6:13-17			1:6
		2:11			7:10
P. R.		18:11			38
		17			38:31
S. A.		0			39:27-38
P. L.	1 Chronicles	28:23			1:7

P. L.	Job	22:13-14	P. L.	Psalms	127:2
		17:8			148:
		1:6			58
		14:14			121:4
		7:12			2:6-7
P. R.		1:7			110:1
		26:11			36:8-9
G. A.		0			45:4
P. L.	Psalms	145:17			12:4
		11:16			49:7
		104:4			14:7
		74:14			14:3-4
		9:5-6			39:21
		106:37			18:8
		80:1			9,8:17
		106:37-38			18:10
		106:20			78:38
		2:4			106:16
		18:11-13			24:8
		97:2			89:11
		16:10			19:4
		28:18			104:7-8
		8:5			19:4-5
		74:167			24:7

P. L.	Psalms	8:6-8	P. R.	Psalms	58:19
		146:1			19:9
		147:4			106:23
		45:2			137:1
		91:2			124:7
		10:2	S. A.		16:1
		109:29			58:4-5
		85:10	P. L.	Proverbs	8:23-30
		58:18			8:27
		141:2			3:19
		104:29			7:18
		58:	P. R.		23:31
		139			18:22
		36:9			19:4
		84:10	S. A.		0
		36:6	P. L.	Ecclesiastes	3:2
		89:12			12:12
		89:36-37	P. R.		22:6
		56:2			26:7
		114:9			31:1-2
P. R.		8:2	S. A.		0
		119:103	P. L.	Song of Solomon	0
		1:2	P. R.		0
		24:7,9	S. A.		0
		4:4	P. L.	Isaiah	14:13

P. L.	Isaiah	14:12-15	S. A.	Isaiah	53:2
		14:12			29:9
		16:8	P. L.	Jeremiah	20:7
		30:33			4:6
		59:16			1:25
		6:2			23:24
		34:12			21:6
		14:9			31:33
		66:19	P. R.		49:19
		45:23			17:5
		14:13			5:19
		37:38	S. A.		46:4
		56:24	P. L.	Lamentations	0
		56:15	P. R.		0
		5:14	S. A.		0
		57:20	P. L.	Ezekiel	8:12
		45:9			37:9
		14:10			20
		9:7			16:26
P. R.		1:3			28:134
		58:1			1
		53:6			1:14
		11:15			1:4
S. A.		5:7			1:5

P. L.	Ezekiel	1:16	P. L.	Hosea	0
		1:19	P. R.		0
		1:20	S. A.		0
		1:6	P. L.	Joel	0
		1:13,16	P. R.		2:3
		1:22	S. A.		0
		1:26	P. L.	Amos	0
		1:28	P. R.		0
		1:20	S. A.		2:12
		10:4	P. L.	Obadiah	0
		11:19	P. R.		0
		8:3	S. A.		0
		29:3	P. L.	Jonah	0
P. R.		0	P. R.		2:3
S. A.		0	S. A.		0
P. L.	Daniel	5:20	P. L.	Micah	0
		8:9	P. R.		0
		10:14	S. A.		0
		10:8	P. L.	Nahum	0
		7:13	P. R.		0
		7:14	S. A.		0
		7:22	P. L.	Habakkuk	3:6
P. R.		0	P. R.		0
S. A.		0	S. A.		0

P. L. Zephaniah	0	P. L. Matthew	16:19
P. R.	0		25:21
S. A.	0		17:5
P. L. Haggai	0		24:50
P. R.	0		19:4-6
S. A.	0		6:34
P. L. Zechariah	4:10		18:7
	6:1		3
P. R.	0		19:28
S. A.	0	P. R.	24:30
P. L. Malachi	0		4:1
P. R.	4:5		3:14
S. A.	0		3:16
P. L. Tobit	Book		4:14
	12:19		7:2
P. R.	4:4		4:15
S. A.	0		12:45
P. L. Wisdom of Solomon	0		5:6
			26:53
P. R.	18:23		
S. A.	0		13:32
P. L. Matthew	5:8		23
	3:17		11:29
	24:30-31	S. A.	0
	28:18	P. L. Mark	14:3

P. L.	Mark	9:44	P. R.	2:36
		10:6-8		2:52
P. R.		1:10		1:78
		1:13		2:34-35
S. A.		0		2:49
P. L.	Luke	3:22		4:5
		16:22		3:23
		1:78		2:41
		1:35		4:6
		2:13-14		10:18
		3:22	S. A.	11:12
		18:13	P. L.	John
		2		9:7,11
		1:32-33		1:5
		1:28		1:18
		21:27		1:1-3
		24:26		5:26
		24:49		14:41
				10
P. R.		3:22		12:3
		2:47		8:45
		1:32		8:44
		2:25		17:4-5
		2:36		17:1
		2:25		17:4

P. L.	John	17:5	P. R.	John	1:4
		17:21			1:23
		17:23			1:36
		1:1-3			1:41
		5:3			1:28
		1:5			1:46
		15:16			2:17
		5:22			1:14
		13:5			10:1
		2:1-2	S. A.		0
		17	P. L.	The Acts	2:27
		2:21-23			17:25
		5:16			17:28-29
		5:28-29			7
		14:18,23			7:24
		15:26			7:4
		16:3			3:22
		4:23			20:29
P. R.		1:33			3:19
		3:3	P. R.		7:38
		16:33			1:7
		1:28	S. A.		0
		18:37	P. L.	Romans	6:16
		1:31,33			1:22

P. L.	Romans	12:19	P. L. 1 Corinthians	15:45
		11:33		15:28
		2:14		11:3
		16:20		15:45
		7:20		15:52
		8:26		9:24
		3:20		3:17
		4:22-25		1:27
		13:8,10		13
		6:9	P. R.	1:27
		4:16		13:2
		5:20	S. A.	0
		8:22	P. L. 2 Corinthians	7:2
		12:21		4:15
P. R.		5:19		3:17
		9:5	P. R.	32:8
S. A.		0		4:4
P. L. 1 Corinthians		15:26,55	S. A.	0
		11:3	P. L. Galatians	3:9
		15:22		3:4
		15:51-52		3:13
		15:28		3:7,16
		11:14-15		5:6
		12:23-24	P. R.	4:4

S. A.	Galatians	0	S.A.	Colossians	0
P. L.	Ephesians	4:15	P.L.	1 Thessalonians	4:16
		2:2	P.R.		0
		6:11	S.A.		0
		4:8-10	P.L.	2 Thessalonians	1:7-8
		1:20-21	P.R.		0
		6:2	S.A.		0
P. R.		2:2	P.L.	1 Timothy	6:16
		6:12			4:1-3
S. A.		0			3:16
P. L.	Philippians	2:10-11			1:17
		2:6			4:10
		1:9	P.R.		6:15
		2:10	S.A.		0
		2:7	P.L.	2 Timothy	4:7
P. R.		0			2:15
S. A.		0			2:13
P. L.	Colossians	2:15	P.R.		0
		1:16-17	S.A.		0
		1:18	P.L.	Titus	0
		3:9-10	P.R.		0
		2:15	S.A.		0
P. R.		2:14	P.L.	Philemon	0
S. A.		0	P.R.		0

S. A.	Philemon	0	P. L.	1 Peter	3:18
P. L.	Hebrews	2:14			5:8
		1:3			3:7
		12:17			3:18
		13:4			3:19-20
		1:5	P. R.		0
		1:3	S. A.		0
		13:4	P. L.	2 Peter	3:12-13
		1:3			2:4
		6:18			3:7,10-13
		11:4			3:12-13
		3:12			1:5-7
		11:18	P. R.		1:19
		7:19			1:6
		9:13-14	S. A.		0
		10:1,4,5	P. L.	1 John	0
		7:1	P. R.		1:36
P. R.		12:18-19			1:41
S. A.		0			1:28
P. L.		1:15			3:3
		1:5			1:28
P. R.		0			1:4
S. A.		0			1:29
P. L.	1 Peter	1:8	S. A.		0

P. L.	2 John	0	P. L.	Revelation	1:4
P. R.		0			12:12
S. A.		0			12:7
P. L.	3 John	0			12:17
P. R.		0			21:25
S. A.		0			4:5
P. L.	Jude	6			12:3-4
		14			13:6
		14:15			12:7-8
P. R.		0			20:1-2
S. A.		0			7:4
P. L.	Revelation	15:3			6:6
		20:1-2			4:11
		3:5			4:2
		12			8:3-5
		6:2			22:9
		12:4			4:5
		8:1			8:6
		20:14			19:6
		21:1			15:3
		4			21:1-2
		22:2			8:3-4
		4:6			8:13
		19:17			1:17
		8:2			2:25-27

P. L. Revelation	11:18
P. R.	20:2
	16:12
	18:2
	20:1-2-3
S. A.	0

MILTON'S EXPANSION AND INTERPRETATION OF BIBLICAL REFERENCES

In his book, The Use of the Bible in Milton's Prose,
Harris Francis Fletcher says,

¹He (Milton) has been found to have possessed a very thorough and accurate knowledge of the Hebrew text. The best criterion of his competency is the appearance of his own translation of the original Hebrew, due to a desire on his part for a closer reproduction of the spirit or sense of the original. In addition to this excellent knowledge of the Hebrew original, he has also been found to have possessed an acquaintance with much critical apparatus connected with the Hebrew text. He has also

¹Fletcher: The Use of the Bible in Milton's Prose. page 90.

cited the Targums and other Semitic versions of the Old Testament.

The results of this investigation show very clearly that Milton held to the authenticity of but a single text of the Bible. Only the Hebrew original of the Old Testament was the Old Testament so far as he was concerned, and the New Testament was the Greek. No version or translation of the Bible sufficed, although he showed definite preference for a particular Latin version, that of Junius-Tremellius the Bible for Milton was the Bible in its original, and his complete familiarity with and mastery of those original texts."

The foregoing is quoted to show Milton's attitude toward Biblical translations. Assuming that Milton had the knowledge of the original text that Fletcher says he had, it is likely that he would be accurate in translation.

To attain his perfection of meter and rhetorical effectiveness Milton had to use some change of diction in his poetical works. but he did not deliberately change the meaning of a Biblical reference as it already existed. He is remarkably accurate, yet his vivid imagination so enlarged the Biblical version of an event that the casual reader

might assume that he deliberately changed the meaning.

Since Milton used the original translation of Hebrew and Greek his interpretations would logically be more accurate than if taken from the English.

Passages which differ from any recognized text do not necessarily show a wide difference from the original, nor an unexplainable variance. Milton had read widely of the Rabbinical works and medieval church writings, and considered himself able to arrive at a more correct understanding of the originals than his contemporaries and successors from which attitude the apparent discrepancy between his passages and the recognized texts is caused. Present day students of Milton speak of "Milton's version of Biblical passages" without pausing to reflect that perhaps in many instances his version is perhaps the version of the original Hebrew and Greek writer.

The following examples of Milton's individual version are taken from his major poems:

S. A. 216-218. "Why thou shouldst wed Philistian

women rather

Than of thine own tribe fairer, or

as fair,

At least of thy own nation, and

as noble."

The Biblical reference gives no indication that either of Samson's wives was noble. Milton seems to have written without authority here, or he infers that the greatness of Samson and his work as an instrument of God made it impossible for him to choose a wife who was entirely lacking in nobility of character. No version of the Bible ascribes nobility to the woman of Timna or Delilah.

P. L. VII. "He took the golden compasses, prepared
225-227. In God's eternal store, to circumscribe
This universe, and all created things."

The twenty-seventh verse of the eighth chapter of Proverbs says, "When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depth."

None of the original texts to which Milton had access used the word compass. The word in the original Hebrew is circle. Since Milton read the Bible in Hebrew it is difficult to understand his usage of the word. It is possible that he was influenced by Dante who used it, also.

Milton had also made a close study of the three rabbis, Ben Gerson, Ibn Ezra, and Rashi, all of whom explained the circle as a compass. Ben Gerson's commentary is as follows:

1^aAnd this was as if there were a pivotal
point for dividing the heavens by means

of a compass. This was how he established the heavens (the confines of the Universe): he drew around a leg of the compass, and (the marking of the heavens) came about as the compass turned around."

Thus, there is some evidence that Milton went to the commentaries of the rabbis for his idea of the compass.

P. L. I. "A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round

61-69. As one great furnace flam'd, yet from
those flames

No light, but rather darkness visible
Served only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shade,
where peace

And rest can never dwell, hope never
comes

That comes to all: but torture without
end

Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed
With ever-burning Sulphur unconsum'd."

Milton draws freely upon his imagination for this description. Cowper says that "of all the articles, of which the dreadful scenery of Milton's Hell consists, Scripture furnished him only with a Lake of Fire and Brimstone."

P. L. I. 306-309.

"whose waves o'erthrew

Busiris and his Memphian chivalrie

While with perfidious hatred they pursued

The sojourners of Goshen"

Milton perhaps followed some unknown authority here, or he uses Busiris as a general title for the rulers of Egypt like Pharaoh. Raleigh says that Busiris was "the first oppressor of the Israelites."

The following table indicates other passages illustrating the poet's interpretation and expansion of Biblical quotations:

<u>Poem</u>	<u>Lines</u>	<u>Source</u>
P.L.IV	1-2	Rev.12:12
P.L.IV	381-83	Isaiah 14:9
P.L.VI	738-39	Rev.20:1-2
P.L.VII	201	Zechariah 6:1
P.R.I	9	Matthew 4:1
P.R.I.	193-94	Matthew 3:1
P.R.III	15	Luke 3:23
P.R.III	183	Eccles. 3:1
P.R.IV	103	Luke 4:6
P.L.VII	137	Rev.4:2
P.L.V	292-93	Mark 14:3
P.L.V	321-22	Genesis 2-7
P.L.I	45	Luke X:18

BIBLICAL MATERIAL FITTED TO THE CONTEXT

¹In Milton's prose works a great many Biblical quotations were used in such a way as to become a part of his own sentences. When he did this and changed the quotation ever so slightly, the change was made to convey the meaning of the original Hebrew more accurately. Milton did not believe the Authorized Version to be infallible, sacred or unalterable. In order to secure greater accuracy he used his own translations. This point illustrates Milton's characteristic attitude in regard to Biblical literature. His translations had to be thorough and accurate because he used them so frequently in his prose to prove many of his statements.

Fletcher cites the following examples of Biblical material which Milton fitted to his context in his prose works.

Tenure of Kings, Vol. IV:453. "their mercies, wee
read are cruelties"

Prov. 12:10

A.V. "but the tender mercies of the wicked are
cruell"

Reason of Church Government, Vol. III:172. "This
is the approved way which the Gospell pre-

¹Fletcher: The Use of the Bible in Milton's Prose. page 38.

scribes, these are the spirituall weapons
of holy censure, and ministerial warfare,
not carnall, but mighty through God to the
pulling downe of strong holds, casting
down imaginations, and every high thing
that exalteth it selfe against the knowl-
edge of God, and bringing into captivity
every thought to the obedience of Christ.
 (2 Cor.10:4-5)

A.V. "(For the weapons of our warfare are not
 carnall, but mighty through God to the
 pulling downe of strong holds.) Casting
 downe imaginations, and every high thing
 that exalteth it selfe against the knowl-
 edge of God, and bringing into captivity
 every thought to the obedience of Christ."

It can be seen from the above that he fits the Biblical
 material easily and logically into the context. His prose
 works abound in just such notable examples as the above,
 but when he met the same situation in his poetry it was im-
 possible to fit in the material as accurately. To do so
 would have made it necessary to sacrifice meter and rheto-
 rical effect, and it is Milton's rhetorical passages which
 give the sublimity to his *Paradise Lost*.

The following examples are only a few of the many to be found in his major poems. One instance of Milton's handling of the Biblical material in his poems and the rhetorical ability he attained when fitting the passage to his context is line 495 of Book VII of *Paradise Lost*, the phrase, "the serpent, subtlest Beast of all the field" is much more effective and musical than the first verse of the third chapter of *Genesis*, "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." The latter can scarcely be equalled for simplicity and restraint in prose, however.

Another notable example is line 205 of Book I in *Paradise Regained*, "Born to that end, born to promote all truth" which refers to John 18:37: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." In this example the poet expresses the thought of the Biblical verse in nine words without sacrificing either meter or effectiveness. Other examples follow:

P. L. 111:169. "Son of my bosom, Son who art alone"

John 1:18. "The only begotten Son, which is in the
bosom of the father"

P. L. 111:341. "God shall be all in all"

1 Cor. IV:28. "And when all these things shall be sub-

dued unto him, then shall the Son also
himself be subject unto him that put
all things under him that, God may be
all in all."

P. L. V:845. "for night comes not there"

Rev. I:25 "And the gates of it shall not be shut at
all by day: for there shall be no
night there."

P. L. VII:144. "Whom thir place knows here no more"

Psalm CIII:16. "For the wind passeth over it, and it is
gone: and the place thereof shall know
it no more."

Job VII:10. "And he shall return no more to his house,
neither shall his place know him
any more."

P. L. VII:243. "Let ther be light, said God."

Genesis I:3. "And God said, Let there be light: and
there was light."

P. L. VII:495. "The serpent suttlest Beast of all the field."

Genesis III:1. "Now the serpent was more subtle than any
beast of the field which the Lord God
had made. And he said unto the woman.
Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat
of every tree of the garden"?

P. R. I:30-33. "Heaven opened and in likeness of a
 Dove
 The spirit descended, while the Father's
 voice
 From Heaven pronounced him his beloved
 Son."

Matt. III:16-17 "And Jesus, when he was baptized went up
 straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were
 opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descend-
 ing like a dove, and lighting upon him.

And, lo, a voice from heaven, saying,
 This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

Mark I:10 "and straightway coming up out of the wa-
 ter, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit, like a
 dove, descending upon him.

And there came a voice from heaven, say-
 ing, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well
 pleased."

P. R. I:205. "Born to that end, born to promote all
 truth."

John XVIII:37. "To this end was I born, and for this
 cause came I into the world, that I should bear wit-
 ness unto the truth."

P. R. II:98-99. "but went about his Father's business"

Luke II:49. "And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

P. R. II:304. "Command a table in this wilderness"

Psalms LXXVIII:19. "They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?"

P. R. III:91-92. "by wisdom eminent,
By patience, temperance"

2 Peter I:6. "Add to knowledge, temperance, and to temperance, patience."

S. A. 38-39. "Promise was that I
Should Israel from Philistian yoke deliver"
Judges XIII:5. "and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines."

S. A. 127. "Who tore the Lion, as the Lion tears the kid"
Judges XIV:6. "and he rent him as he would have rent a kid"

S. A. 545. "or taste that cheers the heart of Gods and men".

Judges IX:13. "And the vine said unto them, Shall I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be prompted over the trees?"

Although Biblical literature is seldom surpassed in simplicity and beauty, Milton has taken verses and parts of verses from the Bible and fitted them into his poetry with

a precision and restraint which produces a rhetorical effectiveness superior to the Bible.

Milton has surpassed the Bible in his ability to portray a thought with the fewest possible words. It is only in his intense descriptive passages that he becomes profuse. The rhetorical improvement which he has made on Biblical verses is particularly notable in that it produces a fine poetical effect.

During this investigation Milton's treatment of Biblical material in reference to his style and versification was noted. By far the most important of these characteristics was his use of the simile in which he follows the style of his predecessors, Homer, Spenser, and Tasso. While he borrows similes from the foregoing authors, those of Biblical origin are ordinarily original with him. It is in this particular that his most noticeable mingling of pagan and Christian mythology appears for the purpose of comparison.

The following similes of Biblical origin occur in the major poems:

P. L. IV. 179-184. "which when th' arch-fellon saw

Due entrance he disdained, and in contempt,

At one slight bound high overleap'd all bound

Of Hill or highest Wall, and sheer within

Lights on his feet. As when a prowling Wolfe,

Whom hunger drives to seek new haunt for prey."

This passage has no definite Biblical reference, but is based largely on Christian imagery and imagination. The following similes were taken from Paradise Lost, and have a definite Biblical reference.

P. L. I. "Yet to their Generals voyce they soon obeyd

337-343. Innumerable. As when the potent Rod
Of Amrams Son in Egypt's evill day
Wav'd round the Coast, up called a pitchy
cloud

Of Locusts, warping on the Eastern Wind,
That ore the Realm of impious Pharaoh hung
Like Night, and darken'd all the Land of
Nile:"

P. L. I. "yet who more oft than hee
493-496. In Temples and at Altars, when the Priest
Turns Atheist, as did Ely's Sons, who
fill'd

With lust and violence the House of God."

P. L. III. "The Stairs were such as whereon Jacob saw
510-511. Angels ascending and descending."

The following similes are based on the imagery which has become a part of the heritage of Christianity.

P. L. III. "Pavement that like a Sea of Jasper shon"
363.

P. L. III.

"sweet

346-348. As from blest voices, uttering joy,
 Heav'n rung
 With jubilee,"

P. L. I.

"Thir visages and stature as of Gods,"

576.

P. L. I.

"As when the Sun new ris'n

594-595. Looks through the Horizontal misty Air"

P. L. V.

"as by work

255-263. Divine the sov'ran Architect had fram'd,
 From hence, no cloud, or, to obstruct
 his sight,
 Starr interpos'd, however small he sees,
 Not unconform to other shining Globes,
 "Earth and the Gard'n of God, with Ce-
 dars crown'd
 Above all Hills. As when by night the
 Glass
 Of Galileo, less assur'd, observes
 Imagined Lands and Regions in the Moon:

PASSAGES WHICH REPRESENT A CLOSE UNION OF
 PAGAN THOUGHT AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Everything in Milton's environment should have made
 him a strict adherent to the authorized version of the

Bible, a firm believer in creed, dogma, and doctrine. But steeped in Puritanism as he was, his vision was not narrowed. His intense belief in freedom and justice broadened his outlook; his study of philosophy and the sources of Biblical literature freed him from the limited viewpoint of the strict believer in doctrine.

To accomplish the purpose of this investigation it was necessary to read carefully Milton's prose works, especially those connected with religion and those using Biblical references as a support for his statements, and De Doctrina in particular. It was noted in this connection that Milton's adherence to dogma decreased with time, with his personal experiences, became less in Paradise Lost, and disappeared entirely in Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes.

Milton's study of mythology, philosophy, pagan and Christian theology led him away from the dogma that narrowed the vision of many of his century. But his studies did more than this. They led him to the place where he had evolved the deistic and pantheistic philosophy of Books V, VII, and VIII, and the mixture of pagan and Christian allusion which is used so plentifully in his poetry.

The following are examples of the close overlapping of the Christian and the pagan in Milton's poetry:

P. L. V. 377-383.

"So to the Silvan Lodge

They came, that like Pomona's

Arbour smil'd

With flourets deck't and fragrant smells;

but Eve

Undeck't, save with her self more lovely

fair

Then Wood-Nymph, or the fairest Goddess

feign'd

Of three that in Mount Ida naked strove,"

P. L. IV.

"I thither went

456-459.

With unexperienc't thought, and laid me

downe

On the green bank, to look into the cleer

Smooth Lake, that to me seemd another Skie."

P. L. IX.

385-389.

"from her husband's hand

Soft she withdrew, and like a Wood-Nymph

light

Oread or Dryad, or of Delia's Traine

Betook her to the Groves, but Delia's self

In gate surpass'd and Goddess-like deport,"

P. L. IV.

"Smil'd with superior Love, as Jupiter

499-500.

On Juno smiles,"

P. L. IV.

714-719.

"More lovely than Pandora, whom the Gods

Endowed with all thir gifts, and O too like

In sad event, when to the unwiser Son

Of Japhet brought by Hermes, she ensnar'd
 Mankind with her faire looks, to be aveng'd
 On him who had stole Joves authentic fire."

The following lines show Milton's belief in free will
 and predestination:

P. L. V.

510-530. "Attend: That thou art happy, owe to God;
 That thou continu'st such, owe to thyself,
 That is, to thy obedience; therein stand.
 This was that caution giv'n thee; be advis'd.
 God made thee perfect, not immutable;
 And good he made thee, but to persevere
 He left it in thy power, ordain'd thy will
 By nature free, not over-rul'd by Fate
 Inextricable, or strict necessity;
 Our voluntarie he requires,
 Not our necessitated, such with him
 Findes no acceptance, nor can find, for how
 Can hearts, not free, be tri'd whether they
 serve
 Willing or no, who will but what they must
 By Destinie, and can no other choose?"

P. L. IX.

348-352.

"within himself

The danger lies, yet lies within his power

Against his will he can receive no harm.
 But God left free the Will, for what obeyes
 Reason, is free, and Reason he made right"

The following are passages and allusions showing the poet's belief in the spirit of grace, in faith, in the second coming of Christ in the omniscience of God, and his attitude regarding marriage:

P. L. X. 5-7. "for what can scape the eye
 Of God all-seeing, or deceive his Heart
 Omniscient, who in all things wise and just,"

P. L. XII.

486-491. "Hee to his own a Comforter will send,
 The promise of the Father, who shall dwell
 His spirit within them, and the Law of Faith
 Working through love, upon thir hearts
 shall write,
 To guide them in all truth, and also arme
 With spiritual armour"

P. L. XIII.

519-520. "The Spirit of God, promised alike and giv'n
 To all Believers";

P. L. XII.

544-551. "Now amplier known thy Saviour and thy Lord,
 Last in the Clouds from Heav'n to be re-

veald

In glory to the Father, to dissolve
Satan with his perverted World, then raise
From the conflagrant mass, pur'g and refin'd
New Heav'ns, new Earth, Ages of endless date
Founded in righteousness and peace and love,
To bring forth fruits Joy and eternal Bliss."

P. L. IX.

232-234.

"for nothing lovelier can be
found

In woman, then to studie household good,
And good works in her Husband to promote".

P. L. IX.

267-268.

"The Wife, where danger or dishonour lurks,
Safest and seemliest by her Husband staies",

Milton was particularly fortunate in his selection of ideas applicable to his poetry. His wide reading in the field of medieval literature, Hebraic, and patristic writings gave him access to many of the ideas that, through the ages, have become a part of Christianity and have become a part of the dogma of the church. Such ideas as Satan in the serpent became a part of church dogma during the Middle Ages, having been introduced by St. Augustine. It is a fallacy to suppose that Milton originated the dogma to which he

alludes in either his prose or poetry; his own interpretation had some influence on it, undoubtedly, but he was usually consistent in selecting for elaboration ideas which are the heritage of Christian theology, or the outgrowth of pagan philosophy.

MILTON'S ARIANISM

During the course of this investigation repeated examples of Milton's Arianism were noted. Arianism is a heresy which denies that the Son is of the same substance as the Father and reduces him to the rank of a creature, though pre-existent before the world. It was the ruling creed in the eastern church during the fourth century, and was probably the form of Christianity to which many of the barbarian Teutonic races were converted.

Milton did not believe entirely in all the tenets of Arianism; he approached the Arian view on the relation of the Father and Son, and differed from it in spirit and aim. He read widely of the literature of the church, its history and doctrine and probably adopted the Arian view some time before he wrote *Paradise Lost*. It grew with his poetic power, and the course of its growth can be traced through the poems, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*.

In *Paradise Lost* the chief attribute of God is justice with a measure of pity. Milton implies a belief in the Trinity, although there is a difference in his treatment of the Father and Son. The intellectual at all times transcends the emotional in the poem, but does not obscure its richness and colorful imagery.

In *Paradise Regained* the character of the Son is made very human, but the reader feels definitely that Milton makes him subservient to God; the supreme Deity being the Father. By the time Milton had written *Paradise Regained* he had proceeded far on the road to Unitarianism or Arianism and had left dogma behind.

In *Samson Agonistes* Arianism is supreme; the doctrine of the Trinity has entirely disappeared, the Son is not mentioned, and the intellectual is paramount.

That Milton was governed, though not limited, by Biblical quotations is shown by his prose works. He could use a Biblical reference to support his statements, giving it the interpretation which he thought most accurate. The fact that this interpretation might not agree with the authorized version is no reflection on his honesty because his understanding of Hebrew and Greek often made his explanation more authentic. It is notable that his regard for the Bible was such that he never intentionally misquoted or misrepresented

a Biblical reference, nor did any of his beliefs conflict with the Bible. While Arianism finds no support in the Old or New Testament, there is nothing in either to show that the Father and Son are of the same substance.

The following are examples of Arianism:

P. L. VII.

121-123.

"nor let thine own inventions hope
Things not revealed, which th' invisible King
Onley Omniscient hath suprest in Night,"

P. L. V.

602-610.

"Hear my Decree, which unrevok't shall stand,
This day I have begot whom I declare
My onley Son, and on this holy Hill
Him have anointed, whom ye now behold
At my right hand,"

S. A.

"My trust is in the living God"

P. L. VII.

163-164.

"And thou my Word, begotten Son, by thee
This I perform, speak thou, and be it don:"

P. L. VII.

136-137-38.

"th' Omnipotent
Eternal Father from his Throne beheld
Thir multitude"

P. L. V.

735-742.

"Mightie Father, thou thy foes

Justly hast in derision, and secure
 Laugh'st at thir vain designes and tumults
 vain

Matter to mee of Glory, whom thir hate
 illustrates, when they see all Regal Power
 Giv'n me to quell thir pride, and in event
 Know whether I be dextrous to subdue
 Thy Rebels, or be found the worst in Heav'n"

P. L. VI.

795-796.

"and at length prevaile
 Against God and Messiah,"

P. L. III.

372-373.

"Thee Father first they sung Omnipotent,
 Immutable, Immortal, Infinite,"

It can be seen from the foregoing examples that Milton's Arianism was not so extreme as to approach a heresy. He believes the Son to be pre-existent before the world and created by the Father who gives all power to the Son.

CHRISTIAN IMAGERY AND CHRISTIAN MOTIFS

Old Testament history and the folklore connected with it as well as the folklore of many primitive races show a striking similarity in beliefs, superstitions, and motifs.

One of the most common symbols of primitive races and one which Milton used is the snake. The motive of the serpent was to appropriate for himself the blessing of which he deprived man. Frazer in his Folklore of the Old Testament suggests that God may have instructed the serpent to tell man to eat of the tree of life, but the serpent through jealousy reversed the message and this became the origin of death.

It is certain that the serpent has become a symbol of subtlety. Milton speaks in *Paradise Lost* of "the serpent, subtles't beast of all the field." This belief persisted among many primitive peoples. There is also a widespread belief in the immortality of serpents. Savage peoples believed the snake lost his skin and renewed his youth. There is a possibility that the Phoenicians and Hebrews held this belief.

The following are examples of Milton's use of the snake in his poetical works:

P. L. X.

216-218. "As Father of his Familie he clad thir naked-
ness with Skins of Beasts, or slain
Or as the Snake with youthful Coate repaid;"

P. L. IX.

91-92. "for in the willie Snake,
Whatever sleights none would suspicious mark,"

P. L. IX. 613. "So talked the spirited sly Snake,"

P. L. IX.

643-644. "So glister'd the dire Snake, and into
fraud

Led Eve, our credulous Mother".

P. L. VII. 482. "some of Serpent kinde

Wondrous in length and corpulence involv'd
Thir Snakeie foulds,"

P. L. II.

724-25. "Had not the Snake Sorceress that sat
Fast by Hell Gate,"

P. R. I. 120. "girded with snaky wiles"

On the Morning of Christ's Nativity. 226.

"Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine;"

Comus. 446. "What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield"

The dove has the symbolic meaning of peace, or of the
messenger.

P. L. XI. 857. "A Dove sent forth once and agen to spie"

P. L. I. 21. "Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast
Abyss"

P. R. I. 30. "and in likeness of a Dove."

83. "A perfect Dove descend"

262. "The Spirit descended on me like a Dove."

The lamb is connected with the idea of sacrifice in
the literature of the Hebrews, as well as other primitive

peoples.

P. L. IX. 58. "Unsuckt of Lamb or Kid"

P. L. XI. 642. "Ewes and thir bleating Lambs over the
Plaine"

P. L. XII. 20. "Of sacrificing Bullock, Lamb, or Kid,"

P. L. III. 434. "To gorge the flesh of Lambs or yearling
Kids"

Milton uses both accounts of creation as given in Genesis. These two accounts were probably derived from different documents. The first is derived from the Priestly Document composed during or after the Babylonian captivity. The second is from the Jehovistic Document written much earlier, probably in the eighth or ninth century. Both accounts make use of the snake and the tree motif. Two trees are mentioned, the tree of life and the tree of death. There is a suggestion that man may have been given the option of immortality or knowledge, and the snake beguiled man to eat of the wrong tree. Milton in his attempt to "justify the ways of God to man" does not accept this, however.

Trees have been held sacred from antiquity. The oak was the sacred tree of the Hebrews, and a belief existed in Palestine that trees were inhabited by spirits. They have had an important part in religion. Jehovah appeared to God at the oracular oak and the Jewish nation came to an end on the

spot where tradition says it was founded by Abraham, at the sacred oak, one and a half miles west of Hebron. The seats of worship and the shrines of the Hebrews were usually shaded by trees. Worship of trees is not confined to the Hebrews, however. Natives of northern Syria, and the Mohammedans built trees at shrines.

In this investigation a total of ninety-one references to trees were counted. The following are some of the most notable examples:

Tree of Life

- P. L. III. 354. "fast by the Tree of Life"
- P. L. IV. 194. "Thence up he flew, and on the Tree of Life"
- P. L. VIII. 326. "Amid the Garden by the Tree of Life".
- P. R. IV. 589. "Fruits fetcht from the tree of life."
- P. L. V. 652. "By living Streams among the Trees of Life."
- P. L. XI. 94. "Reach also of the Tree of Life, and eat."

Tree of Knowledge

- P. L. IV.
423-424. "not to taste that onley Tree Of knowledge."
- P. L. IX. 651. "But of this Tree we may not taste nor touch;"

P. L. IX. 722-723.

"who enclos'd

Knowledge of Good and Evil in this
Tree."

Stones have been venerated in Arabia, Greece, India, Samoa, Africa, Norway, and sacred stones were anointed in classical antiquity. Many primitive people believed a deity resided in stones. Altars were made of stones as a mark of veneration.

In Hebrew literature Jacob set up the stone he slept on as a pillar at Bethel following his dream of a heavenly ladder. When the covenant was made following Jacob's dispute with Laban a pillar of stones was set up to mark the boundary line which neither should cross for the purpose of harming the other. The following examples of the stone motif are taken from *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*:

P. L. XI. 324.

"and pile up every Stone"

P. L. XI. 658.

"With Dart and Javelin, Stones and sulfurous
Fire;"

P. R. I. 343.

"That out of these hard stones he made
these bread;"

P. R. IV. 149.

"Or as a stone that shall to pieces dash"

Ancient stories that man's strength is in his hair, and folklore similar to the Samson and Delilah story come from Greece and other countries.

S. A. 59. "How slight the gift was, hung it in my hair."

The belief in the heavenly ladder or stair has existed from antiquity. Many primitive peoples believed that a relationship existed between gods or spirits of the sky and men. Some peoples both ancient and modern believed that souls of the dead pass up from earth to heaven by means of a ladder. An example in Hebrew literature is the dream of the heavenly ladder by Jacob. Milton uses the stair as a device for Satan to reach the earth.

P. L. III. 510-511. "The Stairs were such as whereon Jacob
saw

Angels ascending and descending"

P. L. III. 540. "Satan from hence now on the lower
stair"

P. L. III. 523. "The Stairs were then let down."

Water and streams occupy a prominent place in Christian and pagan theology and are associated with the folklore of primitive and modern peoples. Savages invested the stream with a spirit of God. Jacob's wrestling with the adversary at the ford may have been an outgrowth of the belief in a river god who attacked men. Greek mythology records stories of men wrestling with water sprites.

P. L. V. 652. "By living Streams among the Trees of Life."

P. R. II. 124. "Powers of Fire, Air, Water, and Earth beneath."

The foregoing examples of Milton's use of Christian motifs are the result of both pagan and Christian theology, classical and primitive beliefs of many peoples. As widely read as he was in the lore of ancient peoples he undoubtedly knew the origin and significance of all of these motifs.

He also used a large amount of imagery based on Christian theology alone, on thoughts born of the mysticism of the church and the theologians. The following are examples:
On the Death of a Fair Infant dying of a Cough. 74.

"Think what a present thou to God
hast sent."

On the Morning of Christ's Nativity. 1-4.

"This is the mornth and this the happy
morn
Wherein the Son of Heav'ns eternal King,
Of wedded Maid, and Virgin Mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;"

Lycides. 177-178.

"In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the Saints above"

P. L. I. 24-27.

"That to the highth of this great Argument
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justifie the wayes of God to men."

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