



**ON THE ROAD FROM
PARADISE: JOHN MILTON'S
INFLUENCE ON RELIGION,
LITERATURE, AND CULTURE**

Quayle Bible Collection
Open Saturdays & Sundays
September 11, 2021 ~ May 15, 2022

Literature of Utmost Significance

Many Christians believe that Lucifer became a serpent and tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They believe he did so out of spite and jealousy of no longer being the favored creation of God. In his jealousy, he rebelled against God and the angels enacting a civil war in heaven. A third of angels that sided with him fell from heaven and became demons that would tempt humanity and inflict them with disease. With the exception of minor allusion, none of this is biblical. Most Christians continually believe this narrative because John Milton wrote it. Although these ideas were already popular in Christianity before the 1600s, Milton codified and canonized these ideas with his work. Milton was an interesting figure. He was an advisor and translator to the Cromwell government that was in place after the English Civil War, even writing a tract on freedom of speech. He was well traveled and was inspired by many Christian theologies and traditions, even though he primarily held Puritan sensibilities. And yet, *Paradise Lost* contains heterodox ideas such as Arianism, the belief that the Son was separate and subordinate to the Father. The text itself, regardless of theological contributions, is considered remarkable. As a result, Milton's *Paradise Lost* is arguably the singular most important piece of English literature. More than *Pilgrim's Progress* or the works of Shakespeare. To honor Dr. John Forbes, a previous curator of the Quayle Bible Collection, we acquired this significant piece of literature to fill in a much-needed gap to our collection. The 2021-2022 exhibit is in meant to honor Dr. Forbes and this piece of literature that changed Western Christianity.

Special thanks to those who contributed to the production of this exhibit including:

Jamie Pellikaan, Baker Alum '21

Dr. Lucy Price, Baker Emeritus Faculty

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Paradise Explained

The north wall contains additional examinations of *Paradise Lost* and more context to the Christian Epic. Milton's text is heavily influential and scholars have debated it for centuries. The posters posit various debates that continue to be discussed which are meant to spark interest in visitors to the Quayle and to show the importance of *Paradise Lost*.

Case 1: Milton's Paradise

First published in 1667, John Milton's work came at a time of religious division. Catholics, Anglicans, and Puritans debated religious issues, in a post-apocalyptic Britain following the English Civil War. Milton took ideas from his context and synthesized it into the fundamental Christian myth of the fall of Adam and Eve from Paradise at the hands of Lucifer. For many Christians, this event brought sin and death into the world, depicted in *Paradise Lost* as the children of Lucifer. Milton, like contemporary believers, was focused on the first humans and the proclaimed eschaton, which ultimately connected all of humanity together. Illustrated by John Baptist Medina, the edition before you from 1688 is the first to include images. On the right is an illustrated Geneva Bible. Given Milton's Puritan sensibilities, he would have been well aware of the messages found in this type of Bible, such as the poem illustrated on the front. The Geneva Bible contained numerous explanations, with Genesis containing several attesting to the fall being a central part of Puritan belief.

Case 2: The Bibles of Milton

Although Milton knew and used several Bible translations, including the Geneva, there were two Bible's that he used more than any other. Like any good translator, Milton believed the best translation of the Bible was his own. He was well versed in Aramaic, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew.

However, he preferred to use the Greek and Latin of the Bible found on the left. He used Theodore Beze's Greek, but more often he used his English translation of the Latin of Immanuel Tremelius. Outside of using Tremelius, the most common book that he quoted was the King James Bible. Roughly 80% of all English translations came from the KJV. After Milton goes blind, almost all of his Bible references are from the KJV.

Case 3: Influence on Milton

There are several influences on Milton's life. Living a hundred years after the Protestant Reformation, many of the after effects are felt on Milton as a "Renaissance Man." Milton was heavily influenced by English Calvinism, not only found in his theology but also his sensibilities towards Humanism. Milton aligned well with Calvin's ideas of Predestination and Grace; however, through his travels, he absorbed much of European thought. While Calvin would disagree with including Greek myth, Arianism, and Catholicism, Milton combined all. After finishing university Milton took a "grand tour" and traveled throughout France and Italy, meeting scholars along the way including Galileo. One of Milton's biggest influences was Dante's *Divine Comedy*. During his travels to Florence he visited the birth place of Dante. In reality, Milton was no theologian, and many of his beliefs would have been heretical, but it required his love of Calvinistic Humanism and his travels to bring together the thought that created *Paradise Lost*.

Case 4: Cromwell's Republic

One of the biggest influences on John Milton was Oliver Cromwell. Milton believed in the concept of freedom and the republic. He was appointed by Cromwell as the "Secretary of Foreign Tongues," where he composed defenses of the Commonwealth in Latin, some of which involved defending Cromwell. Oliver Cromwell became Lord

Protector of the Commonwealth from 1653 to 1658. In that time, Milton praised Cromwell for his revolutionary ideas, although Cromwell would backslide from them. Cromwell was influenced by radical Puritanism shown through ideas of freedom and democratic government, including democratic ecclesiastical structures. As a result, Cromwell believed Catholic and Anglican “high church” was not scriptural and went against his Puritan notion of the primacy of the Bible. On the left, is the London Polyglot, a text originally dedicated to Cromwell when it was published. It contained texts in several languages, most of which Milton could read. On the right is a Cromwell Pocket Soldier’s Bible. Cromwell’s soldiers were supposed to carry this text over their heart, sing Psalms, and pray before battle. On the far right is the liturgical text, the Book of Common Prayer. Since this was a text that dictated the role of priests in Anglicanism, Cromwell banned it during his reign. Lastly, below is a copy of Bishop Quayle’s *Poet’s Poet*. In one of the chapters the Bishop discusses the greatness of “King Cromwell.” He looked up to Cromwell as someone who advocated for freedom, democracy, and the Bible.

Case 5: Satan in the Old Testament

The Hebrew word *satan* occurs over 27 times in the Old Testament; however, it is not translated into English as “Satan” all of those times. In fact, a few occurrences appear where the angel of the Lord refers to God using the term, such as Numbers 22. The meaning of the word here seems to refer to “accuser” or even “obstruction.” In the most familiar appearance of Satan in the Hebrew text is in the book of Job (as seen in Blake’s work in Case 7). What is odd about that appearance is that the word contains the definite article “the” and should translate as “the satan” instead of Satan (the Hebrew is *ha-satan*). This gives the appearance of a job title that an angel holds in the heavenly court. What is even more confusing is that we do not know when and how

this evolution occurs. What is even more influential to Milton is where Satan does not appear, but has classically been read into the gaps. Depicted on the left is Adam and Eve talking to the serpent, which has a human head alluding to the fact that this is Satan. The word *satan* never appears in Genesis. On the right, we have Isaiah 14:12, containing the word Lucifer in most English translations. However, the word Lucifer is Latin and does not appear in the Hebrew. Instead, the word is Morningstar. Some attribute this to a different mythic reference, where the translators of the Vulgate took this to mean the brightest angel who fell from the heavens.

Case 6: The Devil in the New Testament

The New Testament was written in Greek so the word *satan* had to be translated as well. The Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) used the term *diábolos*, or “devil” in English, and the New Testament kept the tradition. The word itself can mean “accuser” but also could be translated “to throw.” While the Old Testament has an ambiguous nature to the word, it seems in the New Testament the figure was a very specific person. The more famous area where this figure appears is the temptation of Jesus, as seen on the left. Unlike many aspects of Jesus’ life, this scene is detailed in every Gospel. The other major area where the Devil appears is the Apocalypse of John, also known as the book of Revelation. In this iteration, the Devil appears as a great dragon who is bringing destruction to the world. Unlike other ambiguous metaphoric images and beasts in the Apocalypse, the dragon is named as the Devil. In Revelation 12, we get the appearance of the war in heaven. These images set up the basis for *Paradise Lost* that the Devil fought the angels but also is enemy of Christ. We see how the tradition of translation influenced the idea of a multiplicity of names for the figure. Hebrew gives us Satan;

Greek gives us Devil; and Latin gives us Lucifer. All are synthesized into the main character of *Paradise Lost*.

Case 7: Artists of Paradise: Blake

There were several artists known for depicting *Paradise Lost*. The following three are the most famous. This case deals with William Blake who was a British poet, artist, engraver, and printmaker who lived from 1757-1827. Many of his works involved biblical themes such as evil in the world, the devil, and oddities found in the biblical text. His depictions of the book of Job (as seen on the left) are famous for the depiction of Satan but also for depictions of Leviathan and Behemoth, which drew inspiration from Albrecht Dürer. Blake was especially inspired by Milton and *Paradise Lost* considering it dealt with themes such as the fall of Adam and Eve and the role of Satan in the Bible. He felt that many of the illustrations of previous artists had failed. Blake created 12 images, one for each book, that encapsulated what he felt was the purpose of each text.

Standalone Case: Artists of Paradise: Fuseli

One predecessor that Blake felt needed improvement was Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), who was a contemporary and major influence on Blake. Fuseli was a Swiss artist who lived much of his life in Britain. Like Blake, a large part of his work dealt with biblical themes and focused on the supernatural. Fuseli was interested in dark elements and evil, which drew him to doing several pieces on Milton and *Paradise Lost*, including the depiction of Milton dictating to his daughter as seen on the north wall. The drawings in the case on the south wall below the tapestry show a few of his works found in his Bible illustrations.

Case 8: Artists of Paradise: Doré

The final artist is perhaps the more famous for drawing Milton's work. Gustave Doré was a French artist, engraver, and comic illustrator living from 1832-1883. His engraving work in comics eventually led him to illustrating several major works of literature such as the works of Dante, Cervantes, and Byron. The exhibit as a whole contains his illustrations of *Paradise Lost*, Dante's *Inferno*, and the Bible. By the late 1800s, most illustrated Bibles contained images produced by him. Most of Doré's engravings contain elements of light piercing through resounding darkness, a trope that can be seen again and again in his illustrations of *Paradise Lost* or the Bible. Although the 1688 edition of *Paradise Lost* is the first to contain images, it is Doré's 1866 publication that has the most influential images, which continually live on even in contemporary popular culture.

Case 9: The Influence of Milton

Paradise Lost was immensely influential on writers and thinkers of the Enlightenment and Modern period of the 1700 and 1800s. Many authors alluded to the work or directly cited it. Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* not only depicts a hellish scene of workers during the Napoleonic wars of Europe, but the main protagonist of the story describes what Milton gets wrong in his portrayal of Eve. Having a reverend for a father, all of the Brontë sisters were well versed in the works of John Milton. Melville's *Moby Dick* needs no description. His depiction of Ahab as flawed, anti-hero easily draws comparisons with Lucifer. George Eliot's *Middlemarch* contains a direct comparison with its character Casaubon and Milton himself. Lastly, even the scientific realm was influenced by Milton as seen through the works of Charles Darwin. Not only did Darwin's grandfather Erasmus own copies of Fuseli's works on Milton, but Darwin himself took a copy of *Paradise Lost* with him on his voyages on the HMS Beagle. In fact, it was the only book he brought

with him. Scholars frequently point to the theological language that he uses to describe his observations of the Eden-like Galapagos. It is hard to distinguish what of this is biblical and what is Milton.

Case 10: The Outcast and Anti-Hero

Like the previous case, the influence of Milton can be found throughout literature to modern comic books. One common trope found again and again is the association with Lucifer as the anti-hero. Frankenstein's monster alludes to this in Shelley's *Frankenstein* and states that he should have been considered like Adam, but instead was cast aside like Lucifer in *Paradise Lost*. In his autobiography, Malcolm X tells how he read Milton and alludes to the devil being cast out, only to use white society to try to regain his footing. In the popular medium of comic books, Milton's influence is seen throughout. Whether it is an obsession with the anti-hero such as Hellboy or Thanos or the many "devils" that grace comic books, such as Marvel's Mephisto, Milton's depiction of Lucifer is retold throughout comic books. In the 1980s, British writers, such as Neil Gaiman and Alan Moore, began to put more magic, occult, supernatural, and religious themes into works. Gaiman introduced his take on Milton's Lucifer in the Sandman series. Lucifer would get a series of his own, written by Mike Carey, which would be adapted into a television show. While some of these influences are blatant, many go unnoticed by the reader. Regardless, it is evident that Milton's influence lives on in contemporary pop culture.

For Further Reading

Paradise Lost: The Biblically Annotated Edition. John Milton and Matthew Stallard. (2011)

The Satanic Epic. Neil Forsyth. (2003)

John Milton: A Short Introduction. Roy C. Flannagan. (2002)

Milton's Political Ideas and Paradise Lost as a Political Allegory. Volkan Kilic. (2018)

A Companion to Milton. Thomas Corns, ed. (2003)

Soldiers, Writers and Statesmen of the English Revolution. Blair Worden. (1998)

The Moment of Explosion: Blake and the illustration of Milton. Stephen C. Behrendt. (1983)

Milton and the Preaching Arts. Jameela Lares. (2001)

Milton and the English Revolution. Christopher Hill. (1977)

Milton's God. William Empson. (1961)

To Visit:

Drop in for a visit between 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm any Saturday or Sunday. To arrange for a visit at another time or for a group tour, please call the number below.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, all visitors must wear masks and social distancing is required, as per the Baker University COVID-19 policy.

You may want to consider visiting other sites in Baldwin City such as the Osborne Chapel, the Holt-Russell Gallery, the Old Castle Museum, or the Lumberyard Arts Center.

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