

### Introduction:

John Milton (1608-1674) is one of the most influential of English poets, perhaps second only to Shakespeare. He was a scholar, philosopher and statesman. From his boyhood, Milton dedicated himself to the ideal of being a great poet. He had a wide interest in languages and knew Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Italian and Dutch. At a time when Latin was still the language of science and philosophy, Milton proclaimed his faith in the potential of English for the highest poetic expression.

He is best known for his epic, the **Paradise Lost** (1658-1663). In the majesty of style and the grandeur of the subject, Milton ranks with **Homer, Virgil and Dante**. He was a master of plain diction as well as poetic style. Milton was greatly influenced by the **Bible translations and Shakespeare**.

**C. L. Wrenn** comments:

Like the Bible translations and Shakespeare, Milton's more outstanding permanent influence on the English language is to be seen in his **phrases**.....

Milton used some compound words for the first time, for example far-sighted, full-grown, hot-headed, idol-worship, self-delusion etc.

Some phrases that Milton used for the first time are now part of the English language. These included – a heaven on earth, all hell broke loose, every cloud has a silver lining, a pillar of strength, prove a bitter marsh, to save appearances, secret conclave etc. In Milton's **Paradise Lost**, the capital city of hell is called 'Pandemonium' (chaos). The word is formed with the combination of two Greek origin words "pan" (all) "daimon" (demon).

## Milton's Contribution In English Vocabulary

By Milton's time, Elizabethan irregularity in English grammar had greatly reduced. His major contribution to the English language is the invention of a number of new words, phrases and expressions.

Milton has contributed about 630 new words to English including -anarch, complacency, debauchery, didactic, ecstatic, embittered, enjoyable, fragrance, horrent, impressive, irresponsible, liturgical, sensuous, stunning, terrify, unenviable, unhealthy etc.

## Conclusion:

Thus, Milton had a genuine faculty for word making but he exercised it sparingly. In spite of his literary brilliance, the extent of Milton's influence on common English speech is much less than Shakespeare. Milton served as a minister under Oliver Cromwell. He was a public spirited politician. He wrote tracts and pamphlets.

Gavin Alexander comments:

Milton was an extraordinary linguist and his freedom with language can be related to his advocacy of personal, political and religious freedom.